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Primary Education in Bangladesh

Review, Analysis and Recommendations



Styrbjörn Gustavsson



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Styrbjörn Gustavsson
(SIDA CONSULTANT)

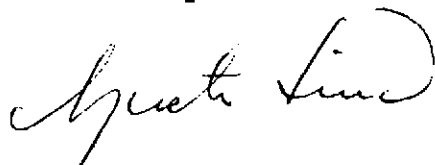
S I D A

PREFACE

Sweden has supported primary education in Bangladesh since 1985/86. In 1989 preparations began in Bangladesh for a new agreement on support to primary education with the rural poor, especially girls, as the target group. This new agreement is part of the Bangladesh General Education Project, 1990/91 - 1994/95, which is supported by a group of donors, UN agencies and international banks with the World Bank as lead agency. The Swedish contribution is concentrated in the areas of non-formal (NGO) primary education, "satellite" schools which feed into larger government primary schools, primary teacher training and primary textbook development.

As part of the preparations for the General Education Project, SIDA commissioned an analysis of the primary education sector in Bangladesh. The analysis, presented in this report, is set against the background of the socio-economic and political situation in Bangladesh. A description of the sector is followed by a review of the major issues facing the Government of Bangladesh and the donor community in their joint effort to expand the provision of primary education whilst improving quality. Non-formal primary education and literacy are also briefly reviewed.

We believe that this report will be of interest to all those concerned about the issues of access to and quality of primary education. It should be noted, however, that the opinions expressed in this study are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of SIDA.



Agneta Lind
Acting Head, Education Division

CURRENCY EQUIVALENTS MAY 1988

1 Taka = US \$ 0,032

31 Taka = US \$ 1,00

1 Taka = SEK 0,19

5,3 Taka = SEK 1,00

1 lakh = Taka 100,000

1 crore = Taka 10,000,000

FISCAL YEAR

July 1 - June 30

SCHOOL YEAR

Grades I - X : January - December

Grades XI and above : July - June

ADMINISTRATIVE UNITS

Division (4) - the largest unit below the national Government

Zila (64) - The largest unit within a Division (formerly District)

Upazila (460) - The basic local government unit (formerly Thana)

Union (6,500) - A grouping of villages with a local council

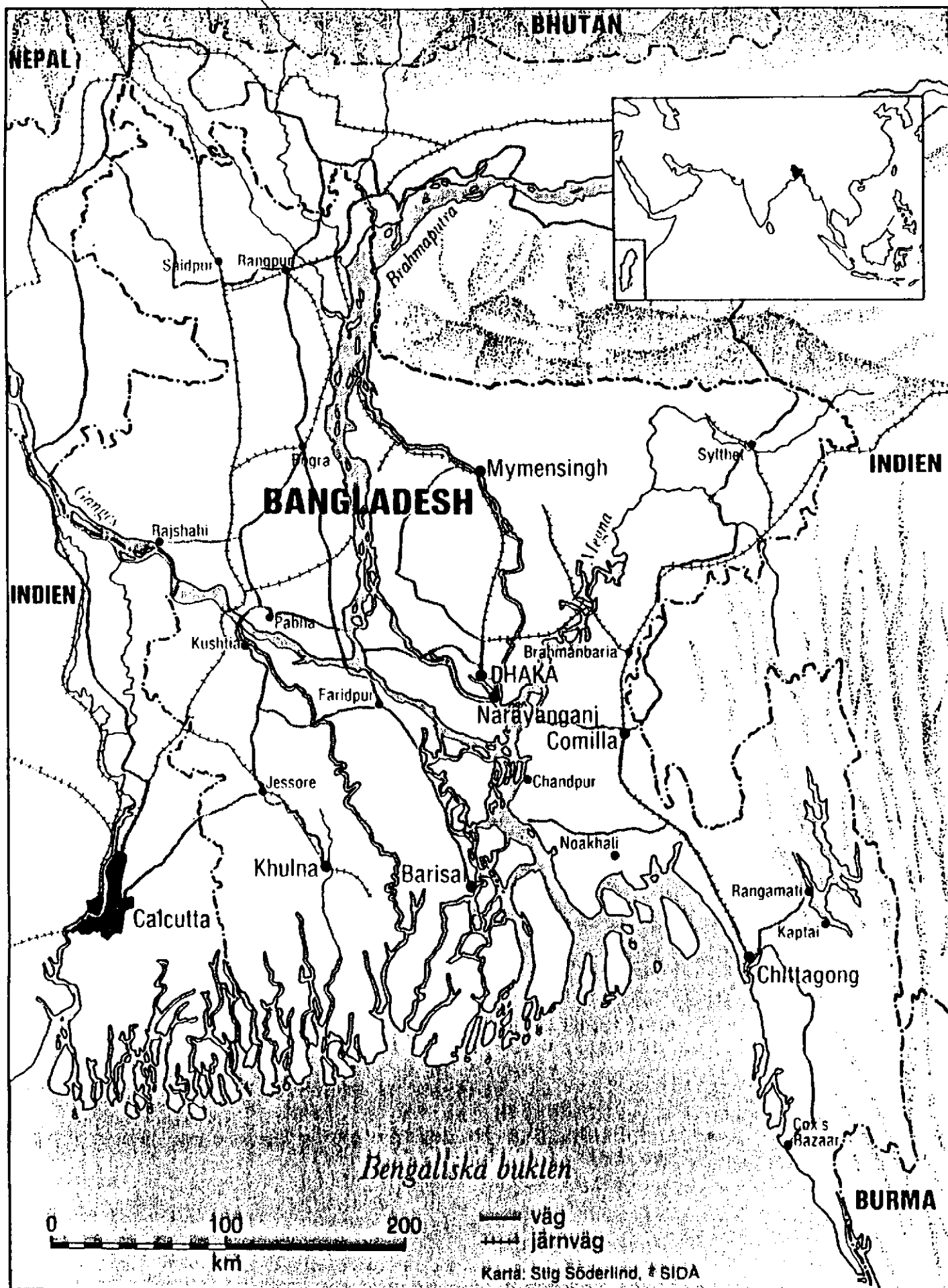
PRINCIPAL ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS USED

AUEO	- Assistant Upazila Education Officer
BANBEIS	- Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics
BARD	- Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development
BBS	- Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics
BIDS	- Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies
BRAC	- Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee
CLC	- Community Learning Center
DPE	- Directorate of Primary Education
DPEO	- District Primary Education Officer
FD	- Facilities Department
IER	- Institute of Education and Research, University of Dhaka
IMPACT	- Instructional Management by Parents, Community and Teachers
ISWR	- Institute of Social Welfare and Research, University of Dhaka
GEP	- General Education Project
GOB	- Government of Bangladesh
HSC	- Higher School Certificate
MOE	- Ministry of Education
NCTB	- National Curriculum and Textbook Board

NAPE - National Academy for Primary Education
NGO - Non-Government Organization
NIEAER - National Institute of Educational Administration
Extension and Research
PEC - Upazila Primary Education Committee
PP - Project Proforma
PTA - Parent-Teachers' Association
PTI - Primary Teachers' Training Institute
SFYP - Second Five Year Plan
SIDA - Swedish International Development Authority
SMC - School Management Committee
SSC - Secondary School Certificate
TFYP - Third Five Year Plan
UEO - Upazila Education Officer
UNDP - United Nations Development Program
UNICEF - United Nations Children's Fund
UPE - Universal Primary Education

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1. THE GENERAL CONTEXT

1.1 The political situation

The political development in Bangladesh since the military take-over in 1982 has been characterized by a relative stability at the central level, steps towards democracy, and the resurgence of Islamic influences on political affairs (Haque 1988).

The external relations are basically determined by the Indian question (water and border disputes) and its impact on the debate about Bangladesh sovereignty. The exposed position of Bangladesh visavi India is balanced by the heavy aid-dependency on Western and Japanese assistance.

The most influential groups in Bangladesh politics are the bureaucracy, the army, the urban and rural elites. Other interest groups with influence are the student community, the urban middle class, the freedom fighters (of war of Independence) and some unions. The union of the primary school teachers is a major actor in the policy and reform work of primary education. The peasants and the rural poor still count for nothing on the political scene (Norad 1986).

These influential groups constitute the forces with vested interests in the prevailing political economic system, e.g. the existing patron-client system and the relatively unconditional and continuous flow of aid money. The power struggle between these groups is increasingly focusing on achieving parliamentary dominance, in this way opening up for a pluralistic system.

A growing number of NGOs are also contributing to pluralism. Some of these, like Grameen Bank and BRAC, work for the poor and are beginning to effect the vested political interests. The government is obviously uneasy about the expanding activities in the rural areas of these NGOs. On one hand it underscores the need for NGOs as complementary agents to government programs (policy papers, donor's meeting Paris 1989), on the other hand it acts to control them economically and politically. Rumours tell (Nov 89) that the government will issue new regulations on funding and management of NGOs.

The ambiguous attitude of the government towards independent organizing and development work among the poor reflects the lack of political legitimacy. The classical dilemma of bridging the gap between the rulers and the ruled has defined the parameters for political development in Bangladesh since independence. The rulers have tried to get political support from the poor four-fifths of the population through forming their own political parties, organize and rig elections, and to create new political structures at the base. As a continuation of the 1982 local government reform the government now tries to re-introduce village based governments.

To date the efforts of successive governments to get the acceptance of the politically alienated poor have been frustrated. The first ruling party, Awami League, was after the overthrow of West-Pakistani dominance clearly seen as a legitimate regime representing the hopes and aspirations of the poor (Norad 1986). This strained the relations to the vested elites in the bureaucracy and the army. AL set up its own paramilitary forces, and built its own patronage system out in the rural areas. Popular support faded as these party dominated structures degenerated. The government was eventually toppled by the army.

The army, through General Ziaur Rahman and his Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), oriented the country away from Indian and Soviet influence and secularism towards the West and privatization, supporting the emerging business and entrepreneur communities as well as the Islamic interests. The efforts of Rahman and BNP to win popular support through rural development schemes failed as in the case of AL due to its inability to bypass or overcome the corrupt patronage system. During the regime of Rahman, Western aid became a dominant feature of the development process and consequently also of the bureaucracy. Although Rahman and BNP had a popular image, their reliance on the established elites made it eventually impossible for him to bridge the gap to the poor masses and to live up to the expectations of the radicals who brought him to power (Norad 1986). As general Rahman failed to legitimize his regime, he became a victim of the rival elites. He was killed by army officers in 1981.

Out of the political turmoil after the assassination of Rahman, the army again emerged as the strongest political force. General Ershad came into power and martial law was promulgated. The opposition of AL and BNP and their efforts to stage a political comeback forced (in 1986) the Ershad regime to give up martial law and go for elections. Rivalry between AL and BNP and manipulated elections made it possible for Ershad and his newly created party to stay in power and to gain further international recognition as a champion for political stability and democracy.

However, the present regime under General Ershad draws as did its predecessor its political support mainly from the major influential groups, the army, the bureaucracy, and the urban and rural business elites (Norad 1986). But contrary to AL and BNP, which have together with the numerous communist groups support from both left wing and conservative intellectuals, Ershad and his Jatiyo party in general lack this kind of support. These groups and the politicised student community constitute the main element in the political opposition. Like the regime, this opposition is alienated from the poor masses, the four fifths of the population.

The predicament of the Ershad regime is to stay in power without the support of the intellectuals, the students, and not least the poor. To resolve this situation, the government has tried to gain political acceptance through decentralization of ministerial mandates to the 460 local administrative units, the

upazilas, and by introducing a system of popularly elected chairmen to these upazilas. The government has also passed a law for elected village councils, similar to the earlier BNP Gram Sarkar councils. In spite of the democratic elements in these reforms, it is difficult to see how the present regime based as it is on powerful but limited groups will be able to gain general political legitimacy. As the regime relies on patronage, on the cooperation with local, often corrupt, elites, the ultimate guarantee for its survival is the international acceptance and support for democratic and macroeconomic reforms (see for example World Bank 1987) and the generous supply of foreign aid.

Local government

Under the Bengal Self-Government Act of 1885 the first attempts were made to create institutions through which the government could work (Norad 1986). Historically, the system of local and regional government in Bangladesh has varied between councils at village, union, upazila or thana levels, zilas at district, and division levels. The present regime is putting the upazilas in focus, but is at the same time balancing the empowerment of these with the vested interests of the district councils and possibly by the recently (1989/90) initiated village councils.

Traditionally, the lowest tier of the government has been at the union level, a union consisting of about 12 villages (Ahmad, Sida 1988). The 1982 Upazila reform, however, subsumed the unions under the upazilas. The elected union chairman is now a member of the upazila parishad (council) where the lobbying and bargaining for available funds take place.

The instability of the structure of the local government system due to continuous remoulding has been paralleled by a gradual loss of autonomy. Before the Upazila reform, the local government bodies would through taxes and revenues raise about 70% of its modest expenditures. Today this local contribution has been reduced to a few percent. (Blair et al 1989). The central government is in practice manning (about 200 government officers) and funding the local upazila governments.

Local government still remains only an extension to the central government. The small democratic windows that have been opened (popularly elected chairmen) are significant democratic reforms. But as long as the upazilas and the unions do not even practice their limited rights to collect revenues, fees and taxes, and as long as the elections of the upazila chairman is a patronage affair, i.e. manipulated by the local elite, the upazilas will hardly change into institutions for democracy and poverty alleviation (ibid). Management of primary education has in large been transferred to the upazilas (see discussion below).

The informal power structure

The concept of patronage provides the conventional framework for analyzing the reality of the informal power structure in Bangladesh. In a society like Bangladesh with an unstable political system (particularly at lower levels), with relatively weak links between the national level and the rural areas and with aid-dependency as dominating factors, patronage becomes all pervasive. A patron must be able to provide certain benefits to his clients, if the clients are to support him (Norad 1986). Although partly disintegrating due to marginalization and migration of the rising number of landless peasants, the patronage culture still determines most social relations. (The children of these migrants, usually to urban areas, will, however, be still less bound to their parents' original patronage, and so further weaken the patronage.)

Patronage as a continuous and predictable system of inequitable exchange of favours is for example reflected in the political system in the form of buying voters. The incumbent chairman or member of parliament will spend a considerable amount of money to people in his constituency in exchange for their ballot. The major political parties do not represent any political ideology or program. They are platforms for patrons and rivalry with other vested interests.

A regular civil servant (including first class officers) cannot survive on his own salary. Unless he/she has assets in land or houses he/she is forced to give in to the corrupt patronage. Personal networks play a major role in the central bureaucracy. They are the underlying power nets deciding, hurrying, delaying or nullifying various proposals. Numerous are the stories and allegations of how money and favours are divided up among the actors of the different patronage hierarchies. The aid money which is channelled through the central bureaucracy out to various projects constitutes the main source for this area of patronage. It is often said among the donors that about one fifth of the aid is an "acceptable" amount of misappropriation.

In the rural areas, the local government officials have as the major mediating agents between the central administration and funds and their local governments to take care to distribute favours among different local leaders in order to obtain their collaboration and support (Norad 1987). Competition for scarce resources (Jansen 1987) leads at the same time to rivalries, often violent, between the contesting local elites. In the absence of any credible system of accountability, corruption becomes rampant. Development programs are rather turned into spoils to be divided or used to benefit the local rich than into projects for alleviation of poverty. World Bank (1987) states that targeted efforts are necessary otherwise the aid will only benefit the well-to-do.

But this is not sufficient. Experiences from employment oriented programs (for example SIDAs) show that "vested interests" bloc the road for lasting poverty alleviation.

Whoever governs Bangladesh will have to master the system of competing patronages, i.e. to win or neutralize the dominant vested interests, central and local elites with benefits. Primary education programs are no exceptions (see for example The Net, BRAC 1983).

1.2 The Economy

The major resources in Bangladesh are its vast human population and its fertile land, permitting up to three crops per year. The population will double to some 200 million people in 30 years time unless the present fertility rate of about 2.5% is brought down. But in spite of this mounting population pressure, it is estimated that Bangladesh has enough land to feed an expanding population well enough and still have a surplus of farm products for export (Norad 1986). Presently the country is only able to produce 80% of its required food intake. Before discussing the reasons to this shortage of food, we may have a brief look at the trends and conditions for economic growth.

Major trends

While average income have fallen by 10% to 25% during the 1980s in most of Africa and much of Latin America (Unicef 1989), there has in Bangladesh been a more positive development. The poverty situation is not deteriorating, and real wages are allegedly improving and reaching for the first time the level at the time of independence (World Bank 1987). But if Bangladesh is seen in its Asian context and is compared to India and Pakistan, the two countries Bangladesh is historically linked to, the picture will be different. These two countries have an economic growth of nearly 10% (Asia Week Oct 1989.), while Bangladesh has not been able to reach its plan targets of about 5% (TFYP). The growth rate has even declined from some 5% to 6% during the 1970s to about 4% in the 1980s.

The growth of industry has further not been able to compensate for the decline in agricultural output. The value added of GDP in agriculture has gone down by some 10 percentage points to 50% since independence, but the share of industry has remained rather stagnant, about 10% (Unicef 1987). Population pressure results in marginalization of farmers pushing people to seek economic opportunities outside agriculture. Services have thus grown steadily by some 6% annually, today making up the remainder of the GDP value added (Ahmad, Sida 1988).

On the positive side Bangladesh has been able to check inflation and to manage the trade balance. Bangladesh has performed well according to the "Structural adjustment" policy of the World Bank. But the overall picture according to World Bank 1987 is very negative. The following positive and negative trends are inferred from that report.

Economy

-* The overall economic growth, averaging about 4% per year in the 1980's is not sufficient to permit much progress in tackling the problem of poverty (The TFYP target of 5.4% growth is considered appropriate).

- The GDP growth declined 1986. An industrial expansion of 1% in 1986 has been well below expectations.

- Agricultural growth, 2.9% in 1986, has been due to more special circumstances. Mediocre production performance has contributed to an apparent reduction in overall food grain availability.

+ The government has brought monetary expansion under control.

+ The rate of inflation has fallen below 10% (1986).

- The deterioration in credit recovery continues.

+ The balance of payments is improving into a surplus, but this is due to a

- decline in investment and consumption rather than to a growth in exports

- The domestic fiscal revenues have ceased to rise (1987)

+ Average real wage labor rates appear to be rising and to reach their pre-independence level for the first time (an unskilled agricultural laborer now earns an average of 4 kg of rice per day or about Tk 30, up from an average of 2,8 kg of rice in the period of 1970-82. This increase remains anyway absolutely inadequate to meet even the most basic needs of a family).

- The undisbursed project aid pipeline is too high.

*

- = negative trend

+ = positive trend

Production

- Water developement remains a huge untapped pontential resource despite major investments.
- Fish production has grown at only 3% per year since 1980.
- The efficiency of agricultural institutions remains too low.
- + Over the last five years significant progress has been made in shifting to a more efficient and faster pattern of industrial growth but growth still slumped down to 1% in 1986 (see above).

Management

- An efficient system of export administration is still lacking
- Reforms have not been sufficient to arrest the deterioration in public sector enterprises. Profits are still negative.
- The Planning Commission is not taking a proper role of leadership.
- Project initiation and approval are taking too long, and too much attention is paid to minor questions.
- Adequate resources for operation and maintenance are lacking mainly due to excluding recurrent personnel expenses in projects, particularly important for programs in education, health etc.
- The planning (ADP) process is in a state of confusion, e.g. high priority projects are designated as non-core programs,
- In spite of some improvements, serious problems still remain in the implementation of almost all development projects.
- There is an apparent decline in the prestige of public service.
- Heavy reliance on the committee system tends to reduce the level of accountability.

Poverty, Labor and NGOs

- + The proportion of poverty of the population fell from 82% to 73% during 1974 - 82, but
- The proportion in extreme poverty rose from 43% to 50% during the same period.

- + Presently the poverty situation appears not to deteriorate further, but
- The quality of diet continues to deteriorate.
- The outlook for the 7 million landless and near landless families is uncertain, as the need for hired labor tends to be reduced as average farm size declines.
- This fragmentation will add 23 million people up to year 2000 dependent on rural non-farm activities or forced to migrate to the cities. (This will likely increase the demand for literacy and education, SG)
- At best, only about 67% of the 1.3 million annual increase in the labor force can be productively employed at current real wages.
- Government programs usually fail to reach the poor.
- The existing rural elites manage to usurp the benefits of poverty programs for themselves.
- + Local organizations such as Grameen Bank manages to counter or bypass the elite's power.
- + Food for Work Programs have had a remarkable impact on rural employment creation. FWP may expand and diversify into activities such as construction of schools.

Women

- Traditional support networks are breaking down and women's earning is becoming a matter of survival for growing numbers of families.
- Women work more than men, but earn wages only half those of men.
- Poor health and nutrition, lack of schooling and limited access to improved technology and social economic services result in low productivity of female labor and low wages.
- + Programs directed towards the most distressed women as Vulnerable Group Feeding Program for over half a million women have improved the lot of these women considerably. School attendance of their children for example doubled to around 23%, still though an unacceptable low rate of participation.
- + Infant mortality declined and access to health and education institutions has increased.
- Poor management in the health and family planning sectors has significantly constrained the implementation of programs.

Education

- The education system remains inefficient and still unfit to cope with a rapidly growing population.
- Low levels of expenditure and underdeveloped planning and management capacities add to the poor performance.
- Less than 20% of the children who enter the system emerge literate.
- + Some progress is being made in management, supervision, teacher training, curriculum development, text book supplies and in improving the physical facilities. But the situation remains very serious. Initial reforms in primary education must be expanded and developed otherwise the system will absolutely fail to provide basic literacy and numeracy.
- + Community based and low-cost non-formal education (as BRAC) have achieved considerable success in offering basic education to rural poor but its progress is still on a small scale.

This picture of constraints and potentialities for development and emancipation of the poor in Bangladesh is in general confirmed by other main reports (see for example Norad 1986 and UNICEF 1987).

The negative indicators of change are reflected in the increased aid dependency. Foreign aid has been the most buoyant source of funding for the public expenditure program, increasing from 35% to 40% of total available resources during the 1980s (World Bank 1989). The development budget was even financed to over 100% in FY 1988 and 1989 (due to the rapid growth of the recurrent budget relative domestic revenues, World Bank 1989). Bangladesh is thus becoming more aid dependent as it enters the next decade rather than getting closer to the stated goal of self-reliance.

The issue of self-reliance is tied to the question of domestic funding. Bangladesh has an extremely low level of domestic resources in the government budgets. Where as around 1900 the land revenue contributed more than half of government revenues, its share had declined by the 1950's to 10-20% and by the early 1980's to just over 1% (Blair et al 1989).

In addition to all these socio-economic and cultural issues there is also the critical question of creating an authoritative and legitimate political structure (the combined problem of "soft state" and political legitimacy).

1.3 Explanations

There is a considerable debate on the causes of poverty and the poor performance of the Bangladesh economy. The donor community initiates and produces continuous analyses and reports on these topics. There are the management-economy approach of the World Bank, socio-economic descriptions by UNICEF, more socio-political analyses by Norad, or anthropological discussions by independent researchers (for example Maloney, see below). The more salient findings of these studies will be discussed here.

Inequity

Income distribution among the population is rather skewed, and appears to have changed little since the 1960's. Between 1963/64 and 1981/82 the share of the national income going to the top 20 per cent of the population appears to have held steady at about 45 per cent. The estimates for the bottom 20 per cent ranged at around 7 per cent (UNICEF 1987). Continued inequity, hunger, malnutrition undermines the capacity of the poor to organize and build up any bargaining power within a system of accountability and democratic processes. Development programs and their outputs remain in this way in the hands of the "top-20" - the elite. The hoped for effects of trickle-down are limited.

The lack of potential legitimacy and political support among the 80 to 90 per cent poor are outcomes of this situation. This makes the political situation imbalanced and unstable. The various elite constituencies become disinterested in development. They are unwilling to take any financial risks, to innovate or to break away from the traditional forms of exploitation.

The rural elite, for example, uses less of modern agricultural inputs and has a lower production than smaller farm holders. Machinery and equipment are left unutilized and uncared for (Norad 1987). The business elites go for trade rather than for investment and production. They want brick and mortar programs (the UPE projects for example) to extract huge trade profits from. There are many empty industrial halls in Bangladesh. The business people spend their money on real estate, consumption, investments and accounts abroad, and education abroad for their children. The bureaucrats have generally no genuine interest in development, only in the donor projects from which they may cut a slice. A civil servant cannot, as said, survive on his salary. His living costs are allegedly financed by one third from the salary, one third from land holdings, and one third from corruption (interview 1988). The politicians part in development schemes seem to be limited to buying voters in exchange for some infrastructural benefits (Blair 1989). Finally, the elites of the army and the police protect the existing inequitable order in exchange for privileged lives (special hospitals, schools, food rations etc).

The World Bank is critical about the disproportion in the budget between high allocations for the hard sectors such as police and military, and soft sectors such as health and education. (World Bank, PER 1989)

Equity is not only a question of raising the bargaining power of the poor, it is also a matter of actually achieving authoritative shifts of allocations through the state. However, the absence of popular participation in local and central government bodies, and the rigid social stratification inhibiting social mobility have alienated the state machinery from the common man. The original idea of the founding fathers to create a welfare state through nationalization and central authority has failed.

The state has remained "soft", i.e. inefficient and incapable of challenging the elites - the core, or hard part of the state.

In sum; This soft state may in the case of Bangladesh be described as a set of institutional conditions unfavourable for development; a land tenure system detrimental to agricultural advances; undeveloped institutions for enterprise, employment, trade and credit; deficiencies of national consolidation; imperfections in the authority of government agencies; instability and low effectiveness in national politics; low standards of efficiency and integrity in public administration; ineffective organs for provincial and local self-government; and a weak infrastructure of voluntary organizations. (Prokaushali 1988)

Behavioral patterns

Bangladesh has, writes Maloney (1986), joined the parade of nations that seek to judge themselves according to standards of "development" compared quantitatively and internationally. Maloney discusses the specific cultural factors that may contribute to the difficulties for Bangladesh to "take off" into a western type of modernization. Such a transformation demands new and "highly complex institutions and social infrastructure". In order to function, a western type of rationalism and management requires certain types of predictable behavior. Maloney argues that these behavioral patterns need to be internalized from childhood. They have to be reflected in the education system. This cultural change has not really started in Bangladesh.

The cultural and behavioral factors that hinders the development of western "predictable" behavior, and that accounts for the inequitous and relatively stagnant situation in Bangladesh (and the rest of the Ganga Plain) are summed up by Maloney as: (My comments in parenthesis)

1. reliance on patronage and indulgence to the extent that these substitute for the creation of new wealth (the disinterest of the elites to invest in national production as discussed above or in general education).

1.4 Summary - Conditions for Educational Reform

The background given shows that the poor performance of the primary schools is a complex outcome of both general problems, like poverty, absence of definite educational policy and its resolute execution, lack of vision, an elitist educational system, lack of proper attitudes, weak managerial capacities, political contradictions, but also of more specific school problems, as will be illustrated later.

Positive factors for a break-through towards UPE and a literate Bangladesh are not obvious or salient in the various reports and studies made. The general conditions for educational reforms appear indeed to be almost absent:

- The economy is not improving sufficiently to decrease poverty.
- Poor level of management is still a major problem affecting almost all development projects.
- There is an apparent decline in the prestige of public service.
- There is a continuous problem of creating an authoritative political leadership. The previous effort by the government to launch a new educational policy in early 1980's was stopped by the educational communities.

In the primary education sector itself some contextual issues stand out (discussed further in following chapter):

- There are few signs of improvement in revitalizing the support of the local communities for the cause of UPE.
- The existing teacher association/unions are professionally weak but politically strong. They have no program for supporting UPE (discussed below). Neither are there presently any other major organizations or political parties making UPE a central issue.
- The elitist character of the primary schools prevails. The growing loss in confidence in the government primary schools poses an immediate threat of further decline of the primary schools.
- The problem of low local engagement for UPE does not seem to be properly addressed in the strategies for UPE. The earlier unreasonable imbalance between allocations for civil works (60% of the investment costs) and programs for "development of human resources" as for example teacher training (only about 1%) has mainly been remedied in the proposal for the coming UPE project 1990-95. But the imbalance between central and local responsibilities remain in large unabated.

- The allocation figure for education in Bangladesh is at the bottom of international statistics, only 1.9% of the GNP. India spends for example, 3.2% (See also TFYP, Education Sector Document October 1985.)
- The government is in practice not giving top priorities to social sectors (World Bank, Public Expenditure Review 1989). It is only contributing some 15 % of the project costs for UPE, and is still far from actually raising local resources to finance primary education.

Inspite of these unfavorable conditions there are still a few signs for some optimism:

- The patron-client relationship in the rural areas is beginning to disintegrate.
- The economy is becoming more diversified in the villages. Day labor wages are reported to increase and, for the first time, regain their pre-independence level.
- The decentralization of political and administrative authority to the Upazilas is likely to become more effective.
- The desire of people (even the poorest ones) to see their children educated is said to be increasing and intensified.

2. The Primary Education Sector

World Bank initiatives in the 1970's resulted in the present system of primary education. In order to understand the character and the form of this system we need a background picture.

2.1 Background

There are some 45000 primary schools in Bangladesh with their approximately 170000 teachers have, working their stipulated two shifts (2x50 students), the potentiality of giving most of the country's children their right to a primary education. But they fail to do so to an alarming extent.

Reports and official accounts indicate a complex set of factors constraining the primary school system. There are the general problems like poverty, an elitist educational system, absence of a definite educational policy and its resolute execution, "lack of proper attitudes", weak managerial capacities and the political legitimacy, but also the more specific school issues like non-committed teachers and poor or no facilities at all.

The government has fixed eradication of illiteracy and UPE as one of its four top priorities. (The other three are self-sufficiency in food, population control and industrialization).

There is a system of school management for primary education covering most of the country. The government has professed its will; fresh funds are allocated. Why then has there not been any breakthrough towards UPE ?

We will illustrate this question by contrasting three different reviews of the past government efforts to achieve UPE, one official view, one wider review, and one critical review.

There is among observers and representatives of the educational sector in Bangladesh a general consensus about the shortcomings of the country's educational system. The most salient of these factors is the inequitable character of the system and its inefficiency and inability to reach and give the vast majority of the people a basic education. But the historical account for this situation and views of the future perspective for UPE, differs in some interesting aspects. The differences do not necessarily contradict each other, but together they may give a fuller picture of the inherent socio-economic and political factors affecting and making up the educational systems.

The official views

The following accounts are taken from the Third Five-Year Plan (TFYP), and a description of the Government plans and programs in a UNESCO evaluation report of the first UPE project, 1980-86 (Håkansson, 1986).

The official review of the character and performance of past plans of education gives a rather straight-forward picture of the inherent problems of education in Bangladesh.

Educational development in the past was not adequately geared to meet this (education) human need in a growing economy; it generally followed the pattern of the existing system as it expanded marginally and continued to remain elitist in character. This has produced serious social imbalance.

Firstly, the issue between the educated and uneducated (about 80% illiteracy in 1981) ... Secondly being elitist, it produced a surplus of people with liberal education having very limited employment prospect against an acute shortage of the skilled manpower ... Thirdly, being elitist again, it has serious urban-rural imbalance.... Fourthly, the elitist nature of the education system has also had discriminatory effect on women's education in a basically patriarchal society (TFYP, Dec. 1985).

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The Second Plan (1980-85) made, for the first time, a commitment for Universal Primary Education (UPE) and mass illiteracy. However, because of resource constraints, shortage of trained teachers, administrative weakness and above all lack of proper attitude, the task proved to be too difficult to be accomplished as envisaged. (ibid).

Under the SFYP, the trend of diverting resources from the primary sub-sector to the higher levels was, however, reversed. Primary education development expenditure reached 46% of the education allocation and reflected the government's commitment and priority. The strategy was built around school construction, decentralization of administration, improved teacher training and supervision, increased supply of text books, and provision of uniforms for girls. Achievements have been better under this plan although a decision was taken to discontinue the supply of free uniforms for girls because of weaknesses in production and distribution (Håkansson, 1986).

The official view may be summed up as giving the impression of commitment and strength in spite of a reluctant elitist system and past failures to reach planned targets. As far as commitment goes it may be pointed out that the reversion of funds for primary education since the SFYP (1980-85) should more appropriately be termed additional funds, for civil works and text books, as much of it has been received from World Bank, UNICEF, UNDP and SIDA. The allocation for other educational sectors has also been increased but not to the same extent as for the primary sectors (see BANBIES 1986). However, re-allocation of funds back to higher education has also been evident during the TFYP (UNESCO 1988).

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Attempts were made under the Pakistan Government (1947-71) and later the Bangladesh Government to reform the education system. Since 1959, government appointed six commissions or committees (two during Pakistan period and the remaining four after liberation of Bangladesh) to propose new education policy appropriate to the needs of the people of an independent country. Apart from other reform measures, all these commission / committees strongly recommended introduction of universal and compulsory primary education. Yet the education system continues to retain the colonial character of the British rule which sought to make only a few educated to serve the administrative needs instead of making the masses of the country educated and capable of effectively contributing to the country. Recently Government appointed another education commission and their report is likely to recommend again the introduction of Universal Primary Education (UPE) within shortest possible time. (Prokaushali, 1988)

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The Government of Bangladesh in 1972 appointed the Qudrat-e-Khuda Commission to propose a new educational policy. The recommendation of the Commission, submitted in 1974, put heavy emphasis on universal primary education and included the following:

- Primary education for five years was to be made compulsory and its implementation was to be completed by 1980, and education for eight years was to be completed by 1983.
- Sufficient facilities in terms of teachers, books, educational materials and school facilities were to be provided in order to implement the new policy.
- Female teachers were to be appointed in primary schools to attract girls to schools and separate girl schools were to be established.
- As most of the Bangladeshis between 5 to 13 years have to take part in some income-generating activities and cannot attend school during regular hours, night schools were to be arranged to cater to their educational needs.
- A new syllabus was to be prepared to suit the conditions and capabilities of the students, to create a good base for personality formation of the students and to orient them towards productive activities appropriate to their individual needs.

Another feature of this Commission is, however, quoted without comment in the Prokaushali report. It is its political and ideological character. One of the principal objectives of the Bangladesh education system was, according to the commission, "to create enthusiasm to establish the cherished socialistic society" (Prokaushali, 1988). This propaganda has likely turned people away from the schools.

The primary schools were thus also to be instruments for political education. This political-ideological struggle over the educational system has continued to be a major political issue in the country. One of the main features of the present report on education reforms is also to make Islamic studies compulsory up to the SSC level, Grade X (The New Nation, 14.4.1988). This proposal will probably create a strong opposition from the political left as the proposal to make Islam the state religion has already encountered.

In fact, some major political movements of the nation since the Pakistani period have focused on educational matters, 1952, 1962, and 1983/84. This is one aspect of the educational system which seems to be too much overlooked in various analyses of the Bangladeshi educational systems. An exemption to this is referred below.

A critical review

A critical perspective on the background and effects to introduce UPE is portrayed in a case study on the implementation of the present UPE project (Qadir, 1986). (Both the research institution, BIDS, and the Government/UNESCO sponsors have in a unique manner expressed their reservations on the views contained in this report). This review suggests that progress towards educational reforms and a literate Bangladesh is not only a socio-economic problem, but also, and maybe in the first place, a political one. It seems that unless the political authorities enjoy the confidence of the educational institution (teacher and students) and local communities, decentralization and implementation of educational plans will hardly be effective.

The Prokaushali (1988) report also testifies to an increasingly unstable and ambiguous situation in Bangladesh, making such an effective educational policy a difficult task to achieve.

More than ever before, Bangladesh is confronted with confusion regarding the nature of man, conflicting value systems, ambiguous ethical, moral and spiritual beliefs and questions about its own role in society. There is a major struggle over the issue of whether man is for government or government is for man. The question is not whether there should be some form of government, but what should be its role, functions, and structure, and what are its controls. Young people now are becoming involved earlier in politics and national life. A democracy can survive only by the participation of its members and education is expected to bring about such participation. (Prokaushli, 1988)

Qadir further illustrates the significance of the political aspects in reforming the educational system. It is also interesting to note in the following quotation from Qadir previous government efforts to emphasize religious instruction, as well as the proposals in 1976 to make primary education compulsory by reaching every village in the country, and by integrating the elitist kindergarten schools into a unitary school system.

UPE and mass literacy programme were launched as a movement, declared to be on a revolutionary footing, at the height of the regime of President Ziaur Rahman. When the present study was carried out nearly five years after the assassination of President Ziaur Rahman, the country, under the martial law regime of President Ershad had been witnessing intense political fervor, at times taking violent forms, facing the imminent national election to parliament and the move to restoration of democracy. Although the universities remained the hot-bed of violent politics through students activism, educational policy especially the situation of literacy did not seem to be a serious concern either at the national or local politics.

Increased corruption in all walks of life including education was much talked about as an admitted fact. While President Ershad occasionally made policy declarations emphasizing eradication of illiteracy and achievement of universal primary education, the progressive element operating principally from the universities raised strong protest against the so-called "education policy" declared immediately after the ushering in President Ershad's regime. The criticism was almost singularly directed against the fear of imposing Arabic script on primary school children in the name of including religious instruction in the primary school syllabus.

The critics considered this fear as an unnecessary additional burden on children who were required to learn two different systems of script, viz, mother tongue (Bangla) and English as an international language (starting in grade 111). Such burden would only scare away children of poor illiterate parents, who constitute the vast majority of the population, from primary schooling. However, pressure from the combined forces of opposition political parties at the advent of the initiation of political dialogue since 1984, forced the Government to leave matters relating to education policy for the forthcoming elected parliament.

As early as the mid-1960's, during the Pakistan days, student forums demanded abolition of the disparity between "Kindergartens, English medium schools and the ordinary school", which the Commission on Student Problems and Welfare 1966 thought to be unjustified. The Commission suggested re-examination of the question. In 1979, in independent Bangladesh, the National Educational Advisory Council, after a nation-wide debate, adopted far reaching yet practical resolutions for UPE, which deserve attention even today. It was resolved that primary education should be made universal, compulsory and free, and that beginning with Class 1 in 1979, it would be implemented gradually upto class V by the year 1983.

It was considered necessary for every village of Bangladesh to have a primary school which amounted to building 30,000 new schools. In this first year it would have only one room accommodating Class 1, and such schools would be constructed through initiative, labor and locally produced materials like wood, bamboo, rope, nails etc. Built side by side with government run full-fledged primary schools, these new schools would build up for the interim period until 1983 a national pool of "educational workers" to be drawn from local educated people, government workers, students from higher classes of secondary education, and, if required, from the armed forces. Such educational workers should be awarded a monthly incentive stipend (say TK. 100). With the completion in 1983 of this interim arrangement, fully trained primary school teachers would be appointed. As a result, in addition to the present strength of 175,000, 150,000 new teachers would be required.

At the rate of 30,000 per year, full recruitment would be completed by 1983.

The Commission observed that non-enrollment or dropping out was caused by extreme poverty of the landless or near landless people. According to the Commission, if there were not additional basic socio-economic reforms including land reforms or provision of capital for small and cottage industry, it would be impossible to realize the goals of UPE. It was recommended that consequent to the introduction of UPE, there should be a uniform set of syllabi from Class 1 to V all over the country. This would also apply to the "Ibtedai" stage of Madrasahs (the primary level of the Islamic education system, SG). Being harmful to the interest of the larger society of the country, the commercially run so-called kindergartens or special schools should be closed down and transformed into primary schools with the uniform syllabus.

The Commission also stressed eradication of illiteracy among adults and out of school youth through informal means as a package with the program of compulsory primary education. The proposed Union Education Committee would undertake to distribute text and educational materials free of cost to the children belonging to the landless, land-poor and other poor families. There would be provision for health care for all primary school students and nutritive food for the poor students. (Qadir, 1986)

The author of this review has not given any specific explanation as to why the 1979 proposals for a compulsory schools were not turned into operative plans instead of adopting the non-compulsory World Bank led UPE programs. But the political contradictions between local and central interests, later on leading to the retreat of the 1984 education policy reform, may have been of significance. The Upazila decentralization reform was launched at this time. The introduction and functioning of this system of local government hardly permitted the grass root mobilization intended by the 1979 commission. The World Bank has till now not either favoured local initiatives and responsibilities (apart from teacher training, see below). Qadir also seems to view this failure of mass mobilization as a loss of money and a possible strengthening of local village competence and responsibility.

He concludes:

The deliberations of the 1979 Commission have been quoted at length to draw the contrast of the IDA (World Bank) assisted, highly expensive, based UPE program almost utterly devoid of self reliance and local participation. (Qadir, 1986)

Håkansson et al (1986) evaluating the first UPE-program stress the negative impact of nationalization of the primary schools on community involvement, enrollment, number of female teachers etc.

The role of the government, the impact of its subsectoral policies and programs, and the attitude of the community to these interventions affect school enrollment. In 1974, the government nationalized all primary schools, and it used the control of schools as one way of spreading its influence in each village, as well as a method of demonstrating its concern with issues of equity and justice. The primary school, however, had always been the domain of the parents and community. While government involvement resulted in additional facilities, to a certain extent its increased activity diminished community participation. Enrollment increased in the Madrasahs and unregistered school. Nationalization also meant that teachers became government employees and had to be qualified. This emphasis on qualifications substantially reduced the number of women who were previously employed by the villages as teachers and ayahs of the small children. The government's use of its financial resources and the focus of its investments are most critical at the primary level. The majority of primary education development expenditures have been concentrated on civil works, while 96% of all recurrent expenditures has gone to teacher and administrative staff salaries. Although books and instructional materials have been financed under the development budget, not much is located to institutional strengthening, training and software development. As this development programs conclude, a dramatic shift in the sharing of the recurrent budget would be required to continue financing inputs other than teacher salaries. (Håkansson 1986)

Since a, or maybe the major problem of making progress towards UPE is a matter of "lack of proper attitude" the argument here for a climatic shift in the allocations in favour of institutional strengthening, training software development, seems indeed appropriate. The donors have proposed a radical change along these lines for the next phase of UPE, 1990-1995 (World Bank, SAR 1989).

We may sum up the three reviews as:
Nationalization of primary schools, has opened up for large scale national aid projects, but this has at the same time alienated the school away from the village people.

2. The Primary Education Sector

World Bank initiatives in the 1970's resulted in the present system of primary education. In order to understand the character and the form of this system we need a background picture.

2.1 Background

There are some 45000 primary schools in Bangladesh with their approximately 170000 teachers have, working their stipulated two shifts (2x50 students), the potentiality of giving most of the country's children their right to a primary education. But they fail to do so to an alarming extent.

Reports and official accounts indicate a complex set of factors constraining the primary school system. There are the general problems like poverty, an elitist educational system, absence of a definite educational policy and its resolute execution, "lack of proper attitudes", weak managerial capacities and the political legitimacy, but also the more specific school issues like non-committed teachers and poor or no facilities at all.

The government has fixed eradication of illiteracy and UPE as one of its four top priorities. (The other three are self-sufficiency in food, population control and industrialization).

There is a system of school management for primary education covering most of the country. The government has professed its will; fresh funds are allocated. Why then has there not been any breakthrough towards UPE ?

We will illustrate this question by contrasting three different reviews of the past government efforts to achieve UPE, one official view, one wider review, and one critical review.

There is among observers and representatives of the educational sector in Bangladesh a general consensus about the shortcomings of the country's educational system. The most salient of these factors is the inequitable character of the system and its inefficiency and inability to reach and give the vast majority of the people a basic education. But the historical account for this situation and views of the future perspective for UPE, differs in some interesting aspects. The differences do not necessarily contradict each other, but together they may give a fuller picture of the inherent socio-economic and political factors affecting and making up the educational systems.

The official views

The following accounts are taken from the Third Five-Year Plan (TFYP), and a description of the Government plans and programs in a UNESCO evaluation report of the first UPE project, 1980-86 (Håkansson, 1986).

The official review of the character and performance of past plans of education gives a rather straight-forward picture of the inherent problems of education in Bangladesh.

Educational development in the past was not adequately geared to meet this (education) human need in a growing economy; it generally followed the pattern of the existing system as it expanded marginally and continued to remain elitist in character. This has produced serious social imbalance.

Firstly, the issue between the educated and uneducated (about 80% illiteracy in 1981) ... Secondly being elitist, it produced a surplus of people with liberal education having very limited employment prospect against an acute shortage of the skilled manpower ... Thirdly, being elitist again, it has serious urban-rural imbalance.... Fourthly, the elitist nature of the education system has also had discriminatory effect on women's education in a basically patriarchal society (TFYP, Dec. 1985).

The proposed strategy and efforts since independence to remedy these imbalances in the education system have, according to this document, been to make it "more effective and taking it closer to people". Or rather back to people after nationalization of the primary schools. The "people" seem not as yet to have been adequately responsive to this attempted reversion:

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We may sum up the three reviews as:

Nationalization of primary schools, has opened up for large scale national aid projects, but this has at the same time alienated the school away from the village people.

2.2 Management

The Institutional Structure:

1. The Ministry of education (MOE) through its Directorates for Primary Education (DPE), Secondary and Higher Education (DSHE) and Technical Education (DTE) is responsible for all levels of education below universities. In addition, there are autonomous bodies or attached departments responsible for specific aspects of the education system: - the Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics (BANBEIS) for the collection, compilation and dissemination of educational data; the National Curriculum and Textbook Boards (NCTB) for the evaluation and improvement of primary, secondary and higher secondary curricula and the development and production of primary school textbooks as well as the approval of secondary school texts, the National Institute of Educational Administration Extension and Research (NIEAER) for in-service training of administration, planners and school supervisors and for conducting educational research; the Bangladesh Educational Equipment Board (BEEP) for designing, testing, evaluating and manufacturing educational equipment; and the Bangladesh Institute of Distance Education (BIDE) for preparing and offering distance education programs. The National Academy for Primary Education (NAPE) is responsible for coordinating pre-service and in-service training of instructors and superintendents of the of Primary Teaching Training Institutes (PTIs) and primary school headteachers and teachers. Faculty are concerned with the development of research into primary education. NAPE also houses "training-the-trainer" courses for District Primary Education Officers (DEPOs) and Upazilla Education Officers (UEOs), as well as courses for senior management in the administration of the primary system. The four Boards of Intermediate and Secondary Education independently conduct the Secondary School Certificate (SSC) and Higher School Certificate (HSC) Examinations in their own regions and the autonomous Bangladesh Madrasah Education Board (BMEB) examines at levels equivalent to SSC, HSC, Bachelors Degree and Masters Degree. (World Bank SAR 1989)

Administration and Management

The government describes the primary school system as follows:

There are 4 teachers per primary school on an average including a Headteacher. Each school has a Management Committee consisting of local educators and community leaders. 20-25 schools of an area constitute a cluster which is placed under the academic and administrative supervision of a field officer, designated as Assistant Upazila Education Officer (AUEO). 6-8 AUEOs work under one Upazila Education Officer (UEO). There are 460 UEOs and 26 TEOs in the country. Each of them is in charge of one Upazila/Thana which is the lowest administrative unit. 64 DEPOs work directly under the Directorate of Primary Education to coordinate SPEP activities at the district level.

At the upazila level the project is mainly administered by the Upazila Parishad. The selection of schools for construction and repair are the responsibility of the parishad. Minor and major repairs are executed under the supervision and control of the Upazila Parishad. The services of the UEOs and AUEOs have been placed at the disposal of the parishad for the management and administration of the primary schools.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and Evaluation is the combined responsibility of the MIS and Evaluation Section of the planning Division, DPE. The Planning Division depends on the cooperation of concerned field officers and upazila and school authorities.

Objectives of monitoring has been to: (a) provide accurate and timely information on project activities for more effective management, (b) document changes in project outputs over time for summative evaluation purposes and (c) document progress and problems in project component deliveries and expenditures for necessary corrective action. Summative evaluation has been conducted annually in order to: (a) assess project efficiency, (b) measure progress in achieving project objectives and (c) recommend corrective action which may be required.

A partially computerized Management Information System (MIS) provides feedback data to DPE, concerned field level officers and upazila authorities. Consolidated progress reports will be prepared at regular intervals. A Summative Evaluation Report has been prepared at the end of each financial year. Appropriate proforma for the collection of component delivery and field indicator data has been utilised for systematic collection at school, upazila and district levels. Primary schools will comprise the basic unit for data collection. (From: An Outline of the Second Primary Education Project, GOB, 1986).

2.3 Government Plans

Under Bangladesh's three first development plans: First Five year Plan (FFYP), Two Year Plan (TYP) (1978-80) and Second Five Year Plan (SFYP) (1980-85) education spending was aimed at (a) improving the quality of education by increasing the number of trained teachers at the primary and secondary (mainly science) levels; and (b) the expansion of facilities to increase enrollment at the primary, vocational and technical levels.

The First Five Year Plan 1973-78

Under the first two plans, implementation was generally unsatisfactory because of financial, political and social constraints.

Under the FFYP and TYP only 18,8% was allocated to primary education, but less than one-half of these amounts were actually utilized. Funds were diverted to the higher levels, a partial reflection of the limited absorptive capacity of the primary sub-sector. Physical targets were not achieved. Only 50% (10,000) of the primary schools to be constructed were completed by the end of the TYP period; dropout rates were not reduced, and the PTI output of new, especially female, teachers never approached plan targets.

The Second Five Year Plan (1980-85)

The SFYP marked the beginning of the Perspective Plan (1980-2000). Universal Primary Education (UPE) with a goal of enrolling 91% of the primary age group (6-10) by 2000 without compulsion is a general objective of this long term plan. The target of UPE by 2000 would have required that about 75% of the primary school age population would be enrolled by 1990, increasing to 91% by 2000. These targets imply that, by 1990, an additional 49,000 teachers would have been hired, 128,000 classrooms constructed and about 45 million text books produced and distributed. The estimated annual cost of this size of investment would be about TK. 2,845 million or about 190 million US dollar in current prices. This would represent about twice the total development outlays for primary education under the Second Five Year Plan and was clearly not feasible. The government, therefore, scaled down this ambitious program to fit more closely with resource availability and absorptive capacity. By the end of the TFYP in FY 90, about 60% of the age group would be enrolled and by the year 2000 close to 78% of the age group would be in primary schools (Håkansson et al 1985)

The SFYP also launched a Mass Education Programme, which was to have covered 40 million illiterates in the 10-45 age group. By 1982, the programme as such was disbanded in recognition that it was too ambitious and, significantly, that the intended beneficiaries found little connection between the skills it imparted and their practical needs. It was found to have reached some 700,000 people, a far cry from the original target, but nonetheless a large number in a relatively short time.

From that point onward, the Government has de-emphasized adult literacy concentrating instead on formal primary education as the strategy for eliminating illiteracy in the long run. The decision to narrow the primary target was a prudent one: reaching all of the illiterate in Bangladesh would have required resources and administrative facilities beyond the country's immediate reach, and children are far easier to attract to schools than adults. (UNICEF 1987)

The Third Five Year Plan 1985-90

The TFYP continues to emphasize Universal Primary Education, but also aims to reach 2.4 million adult illiterates (primarily in the 10-30 age group) through Upazila-based program. It aims to enroll 70 per cent of the primary school-age children for the full primary school cycle by 1990, and to achieve 90 per cent enrollment by the end of the century. To this end, it stresses teacher training, including in-service training; construction and renovation of physical facilities and special efforts to increase enrollment in those areas where it was weakest: the rural areas and female enrollment. The Plan also proposes to encourage community participation in the management of schools. (UNICEF 1987)

The Fourth Five Year Plan 1990-95

The proposed GEP within the FFYP represents a radical qualitative and financial shift compared to earlier UPE programs. Although the name of the project has been altered from UPE project to GEP to reflect the ambitions of the World Bank to successively put more emphasis on secondary and tertiary education, about 95 per cent of the development aid is still designated for primary education. GEP is costed to US million 326 for the plan period (World Bank, SAR 1989), compared to around US \$40 million in the TFYP UPE II project.

The program profile regarding the strategies for UPE demonstrates significant new trends. The balance between hardware, such as school construction, and software inputs such as training, curriculum reform etc is dramatically revised, from a few percentage points of software in the earlier UPE programs to about parity with hardware in GEP. (If text books are considered as software, the soft or quality components will be the largest among the four main areas of project inputs: access, quality, management, and studies.)

The balance between central and local responsibilities appears to be more viable as the local perspective has become somewhat more tangible; decentralization of school construction (with the grave exception of local financing), low cost alternatives partly based on local participation, and out-reach schemes such as satellite schools and innovative NFPE projects.

Finally, the GEP emphasizes the need for rectifying the sex imbalances of the system. Recruitment of female teachers, 60 to 40 compared to men, will be financed on a declining basis by the World Bank.

The counterpart of GEP, the Bangladesh government, is however still reluctant to increase its financial commitment to the project. Its share of the project costs remain low, around 15 to 17 per cent, inter alia due to the mentioned subsidies to secondary school teachers, but probably more importantly because of the financial demands of the "hard state", the army and the police (see World Bank 1989).

2.4 Donor Assistance

Among the aid agencies, the World Bank and UNICEF have provided significant support for primary education. UNESCO has provided important technical support at the primary and other levels. Of those other donors who have shown an interest in education, most have preferred to support secondary or vocational education and training or, to some extent, the nonformal education efforts of NGOs.

In recent years, both the Government of Bangladesh and some of the outside donors have become more interested in international support for this sector. The World Bank, the Swedish International Development Authority (SIDA), and several UN agencies are now participating in a co-ordinated program of support for the national UPE program for the period 1985-90, which includes improvement of facilities in primary schools, curriculum renewal, development of instructional materials, improved supervision and management, teacher training and important policy reforms. The government school system will continue to have the predominant role in the provision of primary education in Bangladesh. (UNICEF 1987)

2.5 SIDA's Role

SIDA joined the World Bank as a co-financer of the UPE-project in 1986. SIDA's financial contribution has been about 7 per cent of the total project costs. This part will decrease to about 5 percent in the GEP, as the increase by the other donors substantially rises while SIDA maintains a more modest increase (from about US million 2,3 to 2,9 per annum).

As a newcomer SIDA has worked to gain knowledge about the sector, and at the same time argued for strengthening components aiming at increasing the educational opportunities for the poor children, especially the girls. An important issue here has been the efforts for eliminating the push-out system of frequent examinations through introduction of a system of liberal/automatic promotion and curriculum reforms (see below).

In order to improve the chances of reaching the goals of GEP (increased access and quality, and better management) SIDA has during the preparations of the GEP argued for better balances within strategic parts of the projects (between hard- and soft-ware, between central and local responsibilities, between external and national financing, and between the sexes). SIDA's proposals have in many respects been adopted in the project.

But, it is at the same time obvious, judging the views of the present government, that a long way remains before real local responsibility will be given (i.e. access to a budget of its own), before bold innovations are encouraged, before decent female conditions are secured, before the government will give not only verbal, but also, in order to sustain the project, financial priority to primary education.

2.6 The Priority of Primary Education

The task of educating Bangladesh's children is an enormous one. Bangladesh still faces a number of vital challenges in trying to "go universal" in the long run: How can its formal educational system reach more of the children? How should it be supplemented by non-formal efforts? Where do post-primary school activities fit into the picture? And how can entities outside the education sector support this vital process? But the most urgent one, which addresses the heart of the government's primary school-oriented strategy: how to make primary education more valuable in its own right to all students- those who stop after primary school as well those who continue (UNICEF 1987). A necessary requirement for this is continued priority to primary education. But this seems uncertain.

The education sector became during the 1980's another donor financed sector in Bangladesh. The inflow of aid to this sector (primary) tripled during this period, and will be doubled again over the coming plan period 1990-95.

The second UPE-project (1989-90) and coming GEP-project are financed to some 85-86 per cent through donor assistance, mainly World Bank credits. This heavy external aid to the primary school sector changed the financial focus of the sector. Nearly half of the development budget for the whole education sector was allocated to primary education, compared to only some 25 per cent before donor assistance became available.

However, this priority status of primary education is, as said, under attack, as the government gives in to pressure from the relatively strong private secondary schools demanding increased government subsidies covering up to 100 per cent of their teacher salaries.

The radical program of 1974 for compulsory primary education was, as shown, never initiated. The goal of UPE has been put forward to year 2000. The recent (1990) introduction of a law on compulsory primary education will hardly change the present conditions and modes for achieving UPE. The government's financial commitment is hardly increasing. Weak popular support and legitimacy of the government may explain its shift from just repeating old radical educational programs to a possibly more realistic approach of incremental changes of the primary school system (Verspoor 1988).

3. MAJOR ISSUES

3.1 Financial Imbalances

Three factors play a major role in influencing the government's commitment and expenditure on primary education; the elitist legacy; the growth of the system (due to nationalization, population growth, and to possibly higher rates of enrollment and retention), and lastly the inherent constraints of poor absorptive capacity and efficiency, and the extremely low rate of cost recovery in higher education.

Sattar (1982) views the commitment of the government to bring education to the people as a response to the imbalances between different levels of the system, the elitist legacy:

Differences in expenditure between educational levels show distortion between them and the real commitment of the Government to the people. Throughout the Pakistan era primary education has received least money and the colleges and universities have taken the major allocation of funds. This continued in the Bangladesh First Five Year Plan period 1973-78 and the Two Year Plan period 1978-80. Additionally elite secondary boarding schools, the Cadet Colleges, receive massive infusions of money which benefit the professional classes and a marginal section of male poor scholars.

Only during the last two years has a new trend been observable, a desire to give priority to the majority of the children through universal primary education. Along with this a massive adult literacy programme was launched in February 1980 with the aim of turning 10 million illiterate adults into literate persons. For the first time a sizeable foreign aid component is written into the primary education sector for the Second Five Year Plan period 1980-1985. This is the 40 Thana project funded by IDA. for the first time also the allocation of funds during a Five Year Plan period to the primary education sector exceeds that to the colleges and universities. Thus the 1980s mark a new trend in education.

Sattar considers the SFYP (1980-85) a new trend in education. It is true that primary education during this period increased its share of the education budget substantially. But it is to be remembered that this shift of allocations was as referred earlier due to major donor interventions and contributions (WB, SIDA and UN organizations).

NORAD (1986) observes rather contrary to Sattar that the development expenditure (which is outside the rising recurrent costs for the increasing number of primary teachers) actually has declined since independence, from 5 per cent during the FFYP to 4.3 per cent in the TFYP. This negative trend stands out even more given the fact that donors contribute with 86 per cent of the project costs for UPE in the TFYP.

Donor assistance and priorities may have tripled the share for primary education within the education budget, but this positive trend seems as said to be broken. The increasing government subsidies to the mostly private secondary schools have reversed the trend with some five percentage points to 43 percent in 1989. It appears that the sudden vast donor assistance has facilitated the government in meeting the aggressive demands from the secondary school teachers (who may otherwise not have received more than 70 per cent subsidy of their salaries).

Although both the development and recurrent costs in education have risen dramatically since Independence due to the nationalizations and increasing subsidies, the total government expenditure on education still remains among the lowest in the region, and the world.

In spite of considerable official rhetoric about the importance of education and particularly primary education, this sector is still, financially, a low priority and neglected.

Education cost, wastage, unit cost

The neglect of government primary school appears to be possible because the educational needs of the better off classes are covered through private tuition and private schools. They have no immediate interest to press for higher education budgets for improving the government primary schools, and the poor classes have, as discussed above, no bargaining power to press for any changes. This elitist bias is clearly reflected in the unit cost at various levels of the education system. The World Bank estimates (1989) student costs to be between 54 to 65 times (17,289 to 21,047 taka) higher for universities and specialized colleges than for primary education (323 taka per student and year).

Wastage

The same picture is also evident in the high dropout and repeater rates among the poor (see below), which add to the over all costs. World Bank (1989) finds that only 14 per cent of students entering school reach the fifth grade in five years as compared to an average of 55 per cent for countries with an equally low per capita GNP as Bangladesh (under US \$400). As a result, it takes about nine years of educational inputs (mainly of teacher's time) instead of a theoretical five years to get a student through the primary school. According to World Bank (1989) only one fourth of the entering students will eventually complete their primary education (the real dropout may be even higher, see below). The wastage at the secondary level is reportedly (same source) still higher. Accounting for wastage, the unit cost per successful primary student (five years in primary school) will raise dramatically, at least some eight times, i.e. up to some 2,600 taka.

Matching Fund

The Matching fund, is the government's financial contribution compared with the donors' to the development budget. It is a measure of self-reliance, of the government's ability and commitment to reach set targets. The government's share during the TFYP for the UPE program has been about 14 per cent. Donors have funded the remaining part. The government seems unwilling to raise its low proportion due to "other educational obligations" like increased subsidies, as mentioned above, and to general budget constraints. For the coming UPE within the General Education Project, there is a slight increase to about 17 per cent government funding (US 54 million out of 320 million). A higher rate of matching would require increased allocations to the education budget. This in turn demands a political decision which may be opposed by representatives of "hard" sectors, especially the army and the police (according to informed observers). The government appears not to be in the position to take such a confrontation.

Hardware

Keeping in mind the extremely poor performance of the primary teachers and the low efficiency of the school management system, especially at the local level, see below it is striking how imbalanced the UPE programs have been regarding the proportions between hard- and soft-ware inputs, generally speaking between improving the human resources and brick-and-mortar components. During the UPE II, some 60 per cent of the project costs went to civil works, whereas only a few per cent were set aside for training of teachers and management staff.

This project design (UPE II) has been a failure not only because it has lessened the importance of human development and quality, and has resulted in poor construction (World Bank has found that about 28 per cent of the new school buildings are practically in a non-usable state), but also because the erection of fully fledged brick buildings out in the rural areas, usually devoid of such status houses, likely will undermine the willingness of the rural people to contribute anything for the primary schools.

The teachers on the other hand seem to feel prestigious in an expensive government structure. But they are not getting closer to the people. When teachers have been asked (by the author) if they could accept to get their brick school building extended by a cheaper traditional bamboo or mud structure to accommodate more future students, the poor, they have replied they would rather work more shifts than having to work in a simple "Katcha house".

The earlier emphasis on civil works is a sign of negligence of rural conditions and culture. The forthcoming GEP is in this respect an improvement. The balance between hard- and soft-ware has been reversed. (SAR 1989)

Primary education is not free

During the SFYP primary education was officially declared free for all five primary grades. But it is common knowledge that in practice, schools and teachers continue to extract various fees from the students' parents. No study or investigation seem to have been undertaken on this matter. Students also still seem to have to pay for their books in spite of the stamp on the back of books prohibiting sale.

During the admissions of students at one new project primary school, this author witnessed how parents and students were paying 20 taka per student to get admitted for the coming academic year. 20 taka is (1989) about half a day salary for an unskilled worker in the Dhaka area. The headteacher admitted that the children of the poor families would think twice and consider alternative expenses before they paid this sum. He said some poor student were admitted free of charge.

Other common fees are examination fees, sport fees, and transfer fees if the student moves to another school. And on top of that the parents often will have to pay expensive tuition fees if their girl or boy will stand a chance in the recurrent examinations. Paid tutoring or coaching is a general feature in the educational system of Bangladesh. The fees for primary school students in the more expensive Dhaka area are said to vary between 300 - 1500 taka per month, an insurmountable expense for a poor family. The practice of tutoring and recurrent examinations seem to be an effective mechanism for keeping the school system a prerogative of the privileged classes.

The private tutoring is though often said to be sessions of cramming knowledge. The tutored student is taught to memorize the answers for the coming examinations. The answers are crammed from unofficial "notebooks" which can be bought on the market. The poor quality of textbooks is also reported to increase the sale of these notebooks.

If the poor households finds it possible to spare the opportunity cost of their children's labor, or if they as the growing numbers of day laborers with no land or small household, find it difficult to engage their children in work and therefore might as well send them to school, the poor parents may anyway refrain from doing so due to the costs of purchasing acceptable school clothes.

The poor people's perception of school is likely a reflection of the inequitable enrollment of children, a school for the higher classes. The norm for a proper school dress is then set by these dominating classes and it will probably require unusual courage to deviate from this norm, especially on the examination days. This author met, for example, a rural day laborer family who said that they could not send their primary school girl to the examination because they could not dress her properly for that day.

The required dress was said to cost at the second hand market some 50 taka which was more than the father could earn in a day. The parents said their girl could not appear in the examination and had to repeat her class.

Primary education is not free. It seems rather to be an expensive institution, making it unreachable for the poor, or pushing them out from the school when the costs add up too much. Examinations, tutoring and fees appear to be deep rooted practices in the educational system of Bangladesh. They uphold the elitist character of the schools.

3.2 Management Central Level

Garvey (1988) gives some general explanations to the inefficiency of the management system. He views in spite of the decentralization efforts the system as centralized to Dhaka but fragmented between various responsible central agencies. This is due to:

- a The physical and organisational separation of the Ministry of Education from the three line Directorates (of Primary Education, of Secondary and Higher Education and of Technical Education).
- b The sharing of implementation responsibilities between the directorates and fourteen attached or "autonomous" bodies;
- c The recent partial decentralization of the administration of primary schooling to the 460 rural subdistricts (Upazilas) and 12 urban districts (thanas).

Effectiveness of the education sector

The ADB Sector Study (1986) published various comparative indicators which show the relatively poor performance of Bangladesh in educational expenditure and educational output, matching the performance of such countries as Afghanistan and Nepal. Inside the country, dissatisfaction with the education system is frequently voiced by officials, politicians, journalists and the general public. There is criticism of policy, of backward curricula, of poor teacher commitment, of badly monitored examinations and as a result of this a low level of reliance on the standards of those who graduate with even the prestige certificates of M.A. or M.Sc. Such criticisms are no doubt based on serious evidence, but the poor quality of educational output in Bangladesh has to be seen in the context of the recovery from a liberation war, of considerable political instability and of an impatience for improvement which has led to greatly enlarged targets for expansion and considerable structural change (Garvey 1988).

The Culture of Educational Management

As Garvey indicates much of the inertia in the education sector hindering reform programs may also be explained by the traditional forms of bureaucracy in Bangladesh, and by the perception of education as an elevated activity of social life. Garvey (1988) writes:

There is a distinct air of the "ivory tower" about teaching and its purposes. Curriculum is not regarded by educationalists as being dynamic; change by accretion is accepted but not change by a dialectical growth within disciplines. There is a devotion to autonomy and an independence which accords well with a system which is relatively independent of the public purse, but not with a national development programme for educational renewal. There is a built-in system of distrust between senior and junior officers, dating no doubt from the days when the distinction between ranks was fortified by differences of race, status and loyalty, which results in top managers still performing comparatively menial tasks because delegation is not part of the local organisational culture. And there is a reliance on administration with a concentration on fiscal accountability and minute attention to written regulation at the expense of active "management" which includes the roles of planning, organising, directing and controlling the national education enterprise.

Academic freedom

The tradition of academic freedom and autonomy which has percolated from the universities to other educational institutions is increasingly (Garvey) getting in conflict with rising demand of systemized direction and control regarding policy development and project implementation. The sentiments and privileges attached to the autonomy traditions have, as Garvey points out, become more and more difficult to uphold as the sector at all levels has gradually been nationalized, and subsequently publically funded.

Accountability

The build up of education during the 1980's at all levels of the system has created a more than sufficient infrastructure for project development, implementation and training. What appears to be lacking are mechanisms for efficient direction and control, e.g. a system of accountability. Garvey analyses this problem back to the bifurcation between the Ministry (and its senior generalist officers), and the professional Directorates (with lower seniority but higher professional competence).

Due to the autonomous status of the Directorates they may not listen or delay orders from the Ministry. The top level may on the other hand react by neglecting consultation with lower organs before issuing new government orders, as in the case of introducing English from Grade One. The outcome of this accountability and communication gap between policy responsibilities at the ministerial level and the implementation agencies is, states Garvey, weak sectoral control and consequently reduced managerial effectiveness.

The Education Cadre

Another reason for weak management is the constant and large shortfall in filled posts in the education system, creating delays in the implementation process. Garvey (1988) gives two reasons to this; slow process of appointing people, and poor quality of the jobseeking candidates. The slowness is also affected by the fact that application and testing for entering the civil service only takes place once a year.

Alienation

The fragmented Character of the management - the separation of powers within the education sector precludes accountability, a system of direction and control, as said. But it also alienates the DPE from its real responsibilities. It seems to be squeezed out by the MOE on one hand and by the autonomous bodies on the other hand. Garvey (1988) points out that the DG of DPE neither has access to policy making at highest level, nor has any proper responsibility for management functions as planning, organizing, directing, controlling and running the primary sector. These responsibilities cannot be exercised by the DG due to its lack of influence over central matters as curriculum development and management training.

The insulate character of DPE is further compounded by the weak linkages between the DPE and the local administrators, the DPEO, UEO, and the AUEO. Garvey (1988) finds at the DPE no officers to direct, supervise and evaluate inspectorial reports on the performance of the local school administrators. The same holds true for the teachers.

The absence of some independent mechanism for control and accountability of the local school administrators is likely one of the factors accounting for the poor success of decentralizing major parts of school management to the Upazila level (other factors will be dealt with later).

It seems to be some way to go before an integrated and efficient management system can be achieved. For example, in the case of NAPE, there is a feeling with the staff for greater autonomy visavi DPE. (Garvey 1988) The responsibility for teacher training has been retained within the DPE. NAPE and the PTIs are the implementing agencies of teacher training. But traditional feelings of autonomy, and the geographical distance

between the two agencies, have created two separate ivory towers (Garvey 1988) with poor communication. Planning, directing, organizing and controlling the critical issue of teacher training suffer. The efficiency of the DPE and the NAPE is further lessened by the prevalent experience and orientation among the staff towards the secondary school sector. (Qadir 1986 and Garvey 1988)

The Morale

The alienated situation of the DPE also leaves the local school administrators and teachers without needed supportive network and media for exchanging and discussing common matters. The Teachers' Union does not fulfill this professional need. The fragmented character of the primary system is reflected in the anarchy and loneliness of the local management and primary teachers. There are few means for maintaining professional standards and values. Low teacher morale is a major issue.

Statistics

The flow of information - integration and communication - in the primary system is also hindered by the vested bureaucratic interests among the various ivory towers. There are three separate government agencies responsible for primary school statistics, the MIS unit of DPE, the Planning Cell of MOE, and BANBEIS. All three produce educational statistical data. Core data as enrollment and retention from the three bodies do not tally. The information at hand is inaccurate and dubious, seriously affecting the system's capability of planning, directing, organizing and controlling the UPE programs (Gustavsson 1990 b).

Research, Development and Evaluation

The problem with inaccurate base line data and analyses is also evident in the field of research and evaluation. There is little or no collaboration between various research agencies or constituencies, no cumulation of researching findings, and no consistency in building of methods and theories. (Gustavsson 1990 a) Research, development and evaluation in education is still in need for external assistance.

Civil works

The major share of the primary education programs (over 60 %) has, as noted, been going to civil works for construction and repair of class rooms and school buildings. These large sums of money have been part of the dispute and rivalry between the central authorities, the FD, given the responsibility for primary school construction since 1986, and the MOE/DPE, but also between central agencies and local government agencies, the Upazilas. Primary education is, since 1982, a "transferred subject", i.e. decentralized to the Upazilas. (see below)

These contentions for power have likely been a major reason for the poor quality of implementing the civil works components. To some extent there will be less ground for conflicting roles if the present proposal for the next phase of UPE 1990-95 (within GEP) is realized. The FD will in that case retain only responsibility for the urban primary schools, and the Upazilas will get a fuller responsibility for planning and implementing construction of new school buildings. However, the MOE will keep the major influence of this component through its control over the finances and the monitoring role of LGEB.

The Turn over

The problem of weak integration between various primary education government agencies is aggravated by the slowness and the poor capability of the management to take decisions, and to retain trained man power. Mercer (1988) refers to a typical case where twelve people were to be sent on a four-month overseas study fellowship. Two years later the nominations of half of the number of fellows had been approved. Eventually...nine people were sent to London for three months study. Meanwhile, several of them had been transferred to posts that were unrelated to their proposed training.

Planning

In its ideal form planning is a rational activity consisting of

- formulating educational policy;
- carrying out research and gathering data in order to diagnose the problems of the current education system;
- setting targets and preparing objectives;
- assessing the capability of the existing system by identifying resources and institutional constraints;
- devising alternative strategies to meet the targets set;
- scheduling programmes and projects for implementation;
- monitoring process, output and quality;
- evaluating programmes and projects;
- carrying out research in order to redefine policy options, and so continuing the whole process.
(Mercer 1988)

This rational formula for educational planning ignores, as Mercer points out, the wider cultural context, institutional change, multiple objectives, informal networks, vested interests, and the nature of client participation. The influence of these factors on the planning process can only be a matter of conjecture. No research has been done about these

aspects of the management. But the balance between these aspects, and the influence of the contextual factors is a reflection of the political commitment to set targets. Political will and leadership have not been very salient factors, so far, in the educational reform work. Unpredictable contextual factors will, therefore, still likely play a dominant role in the planning activities.

Despite three five year plans, one two year plan, a re-established National Education Commission to define a national policy on education, a number of educational projects, collection of educational statistics, national workshops on education etc, there is as Mercer (1988) and ADB (1986) state a lack of coherent educational policy based on identification of the problems in the educational sector. There is no lack of researches, but "very little research has taken place in order to alert decision makers to issues, and provide them with clear and feasible alternative ways to reform education". (Mercer 1988, see also Gustavsson 1990).

One reason to this lack of competence and clear policy is the obvious disinterest among the elite groups who run the various government agencies to "identify and remedy problems" of the educational system. "People that matter" send their children to private schools, hire private tutors, and later on enroll them in educational institutions abroad.

Duplication of activities

There is, as mentioned, a sufficient infrastructure of educational management. But due to nationalization of primary schools, to autonomy sentiments and vested interests, the management system has expanded rapidly and un-coordinated. Mercer (1988) finds for example a confusing number of institutions for educational planning. These include:

- Educational Wing, Socio-Economic Infrastructure Division, Planning Commission, Ministry of Planning (EWPC)
- Social and Educational Sector, Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation Division, Ministry of Planning (IMED);
- Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, Ministry of Planning (BBS);
- Planning Cell, Ministry of Education (MOPEC);
- Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics (BANBEIS);
- Planning, Implementation and Evaluation Division, Directorate of Primary Education (DPE)
- Planning and Development Section, Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education (DSHE);

- Project Implementation Unit, for the implementation of the UPE Project and the Secondary Schools Science Education Project amongst others (PIU);
- Facilities Department, Ministry of Education (FD);
- Directorate of Inspection and Audit (DIA);
- National Institute of Educational Administration, Extension and Research (NIEAER);
- National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB);
- four Boards of Intermediate and Secondary Education
- Bangladesh Institute of Distance Education (BIDE);
- Planning and Development Division, University Grants Commission (UGC);
- Bangladesh Council for Mass Education (BCOME, a discontinued literacy organization, see below).

The section responsible for coordinating these disparate planning activities is the Planning Cell within the MOE. In spite of the strengthening of the PC, and the relative stability of its staff, the PC has not been capable to hinder continuous overlapping of activities. The Ministry of Planning (IMED) monitors, for example, the same projects as the PC. (Mercer 1988)

The relatively weak coordinating power of the PC is, according to Mercer, *inter alia* due to the fact that PC is only concerned with development programs approved by the Planning Commission. (What other development programs are there?) Still, the PC is monitoring a large number of educational projects (41 in 1988, Mercer), from national programs as UPE projects down to minor projects as the Music College in Dhaka.

The present National Education Commission, and the commissions initiated by the President to review and "streamline" the whole state bureaucracy will likely suggest some rationalizations of the fragmented planning structure. This reform may possibly include better communications between the PC and the Planning Division of the DPE. A more rational set up for processing educational statistics has also been proposed in the GEP (World Bank, SAR 1989).

3.3 Regional and Local Levels

Decentralization, district level

The problem of meeting the educational needs in terms of improved access to school, quality of the teaching process, and the management system, the whole system has to be responsive and capable to re-allocate resources according to changing educational demands. This presupposes a relatively smooth and accurate flow of information within the system. But, as discussed about the relations between the central authorities, there are also severe gaps between central and local agencies.

At the Divisional and District levels, Mercer (1988) finds that planning at the central level appears to have little connection with problems at lower levels. He refers this failing communication to lack of real delegation of decision-making powers from DPE to the lower tiers of the system, the Division and the District.

In each of the 64 districts there is one DPEO and one ADPEO. The introduction of the Upazila reform with some major primary education mandates transferred to the Upazilas stripped the districts of their real responsibilities. The districts have fallen inbetween the central DPE and the local Upazilas.

Government management at the Upazila and school levels

The government agencies directly responsible for primary education at the local level are the Upazila (UZ) Parishad and at the school level, the School Management Committee (SMC). The government is also encouraging each school to establish a Parent Teacher Association (PTA). (The English names for the SMC and the PTA have been retained, still underlining the perception among the poor that education is not really meant for them, but for the higher educated classes.)

In 1983, in line with the general UZ reform, and at an early stage of the reform, GOB passed a law about decentralization of primary school management to the UZ Parishads. The law states that "management of primary education, both academic and developmental, undoubtedly is a gigantic task, and it requires the cooperation and involvement of concerned people at the local level".

Centrally retained subjects were only, those seen as having national bearing as; policy matters, curriculum and textbook development; standardization of school facilities; teacher training; nationalization of primary schools; creation of posts for teachers and staff; provision of salary and various allowances to primary teachers; and inter-UZ transfers of primary teachers.

The subjects transferred to the UZ parishad were quite exhaustive, namely; appointment, promotion and transfer of teachers and other employees of primary schools (this subject has been recentralized due to allegations of corruption); disciplinary actions against these government servants; supervision of government schools; preparation of annual budgets for GOB approval; establishing new primary schools; maintenance and provision of necessary school facilities; regulating the teacher work load; ensuring proper teacher training; conducting the primary school final examination and annual certificates and scholarships to primary students; ensure proper supply and distribution of textbooks and other teaching materials; and finally to act as the Registering Authority for private primary schools.

In order to assist the UZ parishad in fulfilling all its new assignments, an Upazila Primary Education Committee (PEC) has been established in each UZ. This committee is chaired by the UZ Chairman. The UNO is the Vice-Chairman and the UZ Education Officer its member Secretary. Six other members is to be nominated. But only two of these are representatives of primary schools, and there is no assurance of any female representation in this management committee for primary education.

In accordance with these changes, GOB issued detailed ordinances of the responsibilities and duties for all the concerned local management staff (DPEOs, UEOs, AUEOs and Head teachers).

Performance of local management of the primary school

After soon six years of existence there are, however, few, or no signs of any realisation of the intention of decentralizing primary education. The PECs are reported to be inactive (or to be mal-functioning (Educational Census, BANBEIS, 1986). Hardly any meetings are held. The intent of decentralization seems to have been defeated; practically no one of all the planning and developmental related functions transferred to the UZ are said to have been put into operation. Decentralization has, in main, been reduced to rather personal petty businesses about teacher postings, transfers etc. Decentralization of primary education has not so far furthered the cause of UPE. Management at upazila level and below is dead. (interview 1989, Mr. A. Islam).

According to Mr. A. Islam, Program coordinator of UPE, there are two major reasons for the poor success of the PECs. First, there is no binding commitment given to the PECs in regard to their supposed task in assisting the UZ parishad. The law only vaguely suggests an assisting function. Second, the UZ Chairman is chairing both the meetings of the Parishad and the PEC. Being a busy man, he tends to neglect the PEC, and regard it sufficient to handle the primary school matters only at the Parishad meetings. But these meetings are dominated by

other matters, for example by the allocation of funds in-between the Unions, for infrastructure schemes (some 90% of the GOB central block grants are absorbed by such schemes, See report on local resource mobilization, Blair et al 1989).

Primary education and UPE have in this way been deprived of any local champion. (There are exceptions, see Qadir 1986). In addition to these local reasons, there are also factors related to local power politics which tend to reinforce the personal or more private teacher aspects like sanctioning of salaries, allowances, and questions of transfers. There can always be put a political price on such matters, (See working paper on The Teacher Role, Gustavsson 1989). Furthermore, the influence of the Teachers' Union in decisions, at central as well as local levels, about implementing reforms of the primary education system, is probably significant, but little is known. Finally, and likely the most crucial aspects in explaining the non-activity of the PES, is the fact that neither the PEC, nor the SMC have any real administrative or financial mandate regarding construction and repair of primary schools.

The poor performance of the PECs may also be explained by the fact that the UEO is the only 2nd class government officer at the UZ administration. This means that primary education has been given a lower status at the UZ. (This may for example be reflected in the standard of the offices of the various line UZ officers. This author found for example, in one UZ, the UEO to be located far outside the UZ headquarter in a simple and dilapidated Katcha building).

The development of the government primary system through the UPE programs has according to one of the chief architects (Dr Farner World Bank, interview 1989) of the first UPE-project (1980-85) been rather slow, but it has brought some innovations and improvements to the system as the model of local supervision and in-service training of primary teachers, the construction of new school buildings, and the free supply of textbooks. But as the SAR (1989) points out regarding the critical aspect of supervising and realizing the competence and the morale of the teachers, there still exist major obstacles to an efficient system.

Supervision of primary schools has been decentralized to the District Primary Education Officers (DEPOs), the Upazila Officers (UEOs) and Assistant Upazila Education Officers (AUEOs). Insufficient training in supervisory and managerial functions is a major problem, which is only slowly being addressed by NIEAER, NAPE and the PTIs. Many AUEOs are ineffective because they are inadequately supervised and trained and undermotivated. Cluster training pamphlets are now out-of-date and are unrelated either to the teacher guide books or the revised curriculum. AUEOs maintain they lack the transport to be able to visit their schools more regularly. They are, in any case, scheduled to spend only an hour or so in each school each month and little attention is given, therefore, to observing and assisting the teacher in improving his or her pedagogical skills. Cluster training has thus become ineffective, even when delivered as frequently as required.

3.4 Community Involvement

The low level of local involvement (upto Upazila level) is generally considered to constitute one of the major constraints in making a breakthrough towards UPE. This opinion is reflected in the TFYP as well as in four illustrated UPE studies (referred to below).

To achieve the two main objectives of the UPE program of increased enrolment and higher rate of retention the TFYP outline highest priority to measures aimed at raising the level of community engagement through involvement of the community in management and administration..., particularly by forming Parent Teacher Associations at the school level (TFYP). The existence of PTAs is reportedly very low or play a secondary role in relation to the more common School Managing committees.

The usurpation of local influence on primary school matters

Before most of the primary schools were nationalized, in the 1970's, the locality took, as mentioned earlier, the main responsibility for establishing and running the primary schools. They were likely not at that time schools for the poor more than the present schools (the slow development of enrolment rates indicate this). The local interest in and competence on educational matters seem, however, to have been lost due to the transfer of responsibility for the primary schools to the Government.

Mercer (1988) argues that the creation of several discreet administrative units and concomitant rules for management practices at the local level explains the decline in community involvement.

For it is these very rules and regulations, laid down with the good intention of strengthening the national education system, which are one of the root causes of the decline in community support for schooling (but not necessarily for education) which has taken place in Bangladesh over the last fifteen years. With the nationalisation of primary schools in 1973, both parents and the local community as a whole felt that they had been forced to relinquish their responsibility for overseeing the quality of the teachers, the schools and the education received by their children. The same thing is likely to happen in the secondary education sub-sector if the government increases the subvention to the payment of teachers in non-government secondary schools, and thereby in effect nationalizes secondary education.

Projects are initiated without assurance of local responsibilities and commitments.

Further examples of the decline in community support for schools can be found in evaluations of Project IMPACT (an experiment with peer group teaching, SG), the Community Learning Centres projects and the Community Schools project. For when projects are not formulated properly, they are unlikely to reflect people's aspirations and local needs. In the last named project it was found that the main objective of linking training programmes to rural production processes had not been achieved; that most teachers, trainees and local people did not understand the aims of the project; and that no interest in the project had been created in the community. When government ventures into the realm of NGOs and attempts to set up education programmes outside the mainstream curriculum and examination process, it has to be very sure that the clientele are intrinsically motivated, in other words that they really want these programmes, if there is to be any hope of success. Clearly rural education and development programmes can elicit participation only if they respond to the felt needs of the community as articulated by the people themselves. (Mercer 1988)

However, in order to achieve a retransfer of power, and initiatives to the local level, the Government has vested some of the responsibility for administration and management of primary education in the Upazila Parishad, the ten member Upazila Primary Education Committee.

While decentralizing minor matters, however, the Government has strengthened its central power over the major financial part of the primary education sector. This balance between central and local institution has been needed to meet the new and rapidly growing managerial demands due to the launching and implementation of the nationwide UPE programs. But the effect at the local level has been negative.

Community involvement in practice - some school pictures

In a case study (Qadir 1986) on local efforts and drives to increase enrollment, the performed role of various functionaries in this matter is illustrated rather in detail. The schools visited were part of the UPE construction programmes and considered as average by the research team.

As it is one of the main points of strategy for achieving UPE to reactivate the local responsibility for the primary schools, it may be appropriate to give some pictures of the school situation, and potentialities for "community involvement and future micro level planning". (Names of people and places have been deleted from the quotations below).

School case 1

The school has been established a long time ago. The present DG of Primary Education had been reportedly a student of this school. The school had an earlier reputation for imparting good education. Villagers took interest in the up-keep of the school, the school managing committee also worked well. After nationalization of the school, people's interest in the school gradually receded. Villagers now think the school belongs to the Government and all responsibilities are vested in the Government. In 1984, the school physically collapsed due to nor'western, and for a long time it remained non-operative. Later, villagers collected subscription and erected a 30 x 14 (feet) ordinary semi-permanent structure. There is no partition for classrooms. The school has been included under the UPE program for new construction.

Classes are held in two shifts - the first shift is attended by the Baby, 1 and 11 classes. Baby classes are held under the tree. Even children belonging to classes 1 and 11 do not get proper seat accomodation.

There is no provision for 4 sanctioned teachers in the school. Currently there are 3 teachers - two females, one male. The head teacher retired a long time ago. Replacement has not yet been given. The male teacher is holding charge. The male and a female teacher belong to the local village. The other female teacher (Hindu) belongs to a neighbouring Upazila. Her husband is also a teacher in the adjoining village. In the opinion of the villagers the last named female teacher is regular in her attendance, is affectionate to the students and teaches sincerely. The other two are irregular in attendance; even if they attend, they leave home shortly. They do not take classes properly. The local female teacher leaves for home three or four times while classes are going on. She comes late. The head teacher-in-charge is the son of the local village leader and is related to the SMC chairman. He cares less to attend school regularly. It is alleged that presently proper education is not being imparted in this school. Conscious guardians are sending their children to distant schools.

The economic condition of the village is more or less good. Most households have weaving looms. Many believe there is no gain in sending children to school. For, on the one hand, expenses have to be incurred for schooling, on the other hand no "service" (i.e. Govt. salaried job) will be available. If a boy of 10 or 12 is engaged in the weaving industry he would earn a minimum of one thousand taka a month, In practice this is what is being done.

The people of this village are religious minded. They stop schooling of their girls after two or three classes. People are interested in the learning of Arabic (mostly memorizing Quran). With the initiative of the people, a semi-pucca Ibtidai Madrasah has been established in the village. The Madrasah is only 50 yards apart from the govt. primary school. The Madrasah has a good number of students, both male and female. It receives government grant. The Madrasah teachers are reported to take better care of the students and perform better teaching. Villagers say if government commits to make the Madrasah building pucca, they will contribute to buy land for the play ground. There appears to be much interest among villagers, who are religious minded, to provide donations.

On the new construction of the primary school, members of the SMC and other respectable persons of the village expressed that work should not be done through the "tender", since that will allow the contractor and the engineer to enter into "unholy alliance". In a year's time bricks will start coming out of the building. The request of the villagers is that such school work should be left to the UEO and SMC. If so, work will be better and there will be no wastage of fund.

The villagers of this community is apparently not much involved in running or improving their primary school, "conscious parents" send their children to other schools. Educational costs, irregular teachers and poor prospects after school is finished deter the poor to send their children to school. The Madrasah school seems to be more attractive to the villagers than the primary school.

The SMC of this school thus does not seem to give much attention to the quality of education of the school. But the suggestion that the SMC should get the responsibility for construction works together with the UEO is in line with the idea of real community involvement, but not quite in accordance with the UPE-program and the creation of the centrally operated Facility Department for deciding and funding construction works (Hopefully the GEP for 1990-95 will give the SMCs responsibilities for construction at least through the satellite school and NGO components).

School, case no 2

The village is prosperous and historically reputed. Some of the remnants of the civilization of Zamindary days (feudal times, SG) are still visible in the village. However, according to the villagers, although the village bears the mark of old civilization it is dead today. Rather, what is happening is the reverse of civilized behavior and activities.

The Govt. Primary School adjoining the village was established at the wake of Liberation (1972). The school came under government management some time after the Education Enactment of 1973/74. In the initial years after establishment, the school ran very well. Standard of education was good. Every year 3 or 4 students recieved primary scholarships. Today the school has lost this fame. Previously the school produced ideal students. Now the teachers of the school consider themselves as government servants and show no concern for their duties.

There are 5 teachers in the school - two men and three women. The husband of one of the female teachers is an Accountant-cum-Head Clerk in the Education Office. She is irregular in her attendance and the head teacher is unable to control her. Gradually other teachers have followed suit. The academic atmosphere has fast deteriorated. In the same premises, there is an Ibtedai-cum Hafizia Madrasah, which runs on people's donation. Number of students in the Madrasah is negligible. The teachers and students of the Madrasah are unhappy about the presence of female teachers.

The village community has no confidence in the local and female teachers. The other two female teachers are also related to the local elites, and the head teacher has very little control on those teachers. The female teachers, however, teach well. With good training, they are expected to become better teachers. It is advisable to transfer both male and female teachers away from their local villages.

Gossip among teachers in the school has become a common feature these days. Teachers say they are victims of corruption, social and political exploitation. The Upazila Chairman is all the time busy spreading his political influence. He is appointing teachers according to his sweet wishes unilaterally. Local teachers come to school and leave as they please. This the head teacher reported in vain to the UEO. The latter is unable to take action for fear of the Upazila Parishad. The SMC chairman is in a fix as to what do. The teachers belong to the local community. SMC cannot be hard on them. If it wants to be, its decision is ignored. At the minimum teachers should be transferred to Upazilas other than their own. Only then can hope for recouping and sustaining educational standard. Otherwise educational standard will go down further.

After nationalization of the school, teachers do not feel obliged to the SMC. Teachers draw salary without the requirement of the SMC chairman's signature/clearance. Such requirment might have improved the situation. It is further aggravated because allegedly the Upazila chairman did not keep an eye on primary education. He did not care for education of others. According to the UEO and AUEO education will continue to suffer like this if the power of the education department remains with Upazila Council (Parishad). Specially it would be better not to empower the Upazila for the appointment of teachers (now recentralized,

SG). According to villagers, the local teachers spend their time looking after household work. What will they teach? The female teachers do not come in time to the school. They take classes hurriedly for a short while and leave for home well before time.

One class of people of the village is very rich, the other is poor. The children of the latter class look for earning the moment they start growing up. They work in various industrial establishments. Poverty is held to be the main reason for not going to school. The view of the UEO, AEUO, teachers, members of SMC and PTA is that with the provision of nominal school lunch (tiffin) and dress, more students would be attracted and remain in school. They also view that it would be better to do construction work in cooperation and consultation with the local people. Work through tender will result in low quality as a result of collusion between the engineers and the contractors.

This review gives another instance of a school in decline. (Quadir (1986) gives more similar cases) And the villagers do not seem to do much to stop and reverse this trend. They have little confidence in the teachers, who are reported to be irregular and non-committed. They are apparently also not appointed on sound professional grounds. There also seems to exist an anti-female-teacher attitude in the village.

The SMC is also here said to have lost its influence and role after nationalization. It has no more any power to question posting of teachers at their school nor any responsibility for the teachers' salaries. The teachers no longer "feel obliged to the SMC". However, local involvement in construction works is suggested to avoid present low quality constructions of schools.

The prestige of the decision making body of the UZ, the Council (Parishad) seems low among the primary education officers, illustrating the lack of an accountability structure.

Summary

To sum up; the standards of primary education is reported to have been deteriorating for long. Teachers and the SMC and PTA are not taking their responsibilities seriously. Students do not learn properly. Most of them dropout. This seems to be the general picture. But there are, as Quadir 1986 refers, important exceptions. One or a few committed and competent key persons in a locality can - if the general conditions are not too unfavourable - bring about changes.

These good exceptions are of strategic importance. They show that the main problem of achieving UPE is hardly the "poor facilities" but rather the "lack of proper attitude" (TFYP) and of real local responsibilities for the primary schools. (The noted importance of short distance to school underlines the need for a satellite school system).

The present strategy for UPE is, however, not designed or implemented according to "human development and management" priorities. In spite of steps towards more local responsibilities in the GEP (NGO involvement and satellite-schools), it still relies heavily on central physical interventions. The dependency of government supplies seems to make any commitment by local functionaries conditional, giving another illustration to the "lack of proper attitudes" and limits of community involvement. These government oriented attitudes among local educational leaders are likely the major obstacle towards local mobilization for UPE in Bangladesh. It may therefore deserve a further comment:

When asked about the prospect of enrolment of all school age children (i.e. to be universal), especially of their retention, none seemed very hopeful. When pressed further for a categorical reply, all the functionaries, viz. the UZ chairman, UEOS, AUEOs, and teachers gave patent reply --- yes, if the government desires it strongly and provides all possible help and facilities. These include adequate seat accomodation, toilet facilities, filling the vacant posts of education office staff at the Upazila level and below and teachers, teaching aids, timely availability of text books (free in the real sense), other school supplies such as exercise books, papers, pencils etc, and some sort of compensatory measures for poor children who have to assist parents at home or field, or work for livelihood. None thought of meeting these needs at least partially by mobilizing local resources. Teachers consider themselves as government servants, entitled to draw salary at the end of the month in lieu of their nominal attendance. Although to a visitor they tend to idealize by saying that they make effort with the guardians to admit their children to school and ensure their regular attendance, in practice they have the attitude of the desk bound petty officers. They put the blame on the guardians either being apathetic or too poor to send their children for schooling. The parent-teacher association (PTA) appeared to be still an idea, and it may take time before becoming a vocabulary of primary education in Bangladesh (Qadir 1986)

Involvement of Upazila Authorities

The above pictures of the status and potentials of local mobilization for UPE is confirmed by other studies. A FREPD (1986) study on the involvement of Upazila authorities in the UPE program 1985-86 illustrates a system of implementation seriously lacking in supply of information, understanding of objectives, local commitment, and substantial responsibilities (financial) at the Upazila level.

The report concludes:

1. Experience gained from the 4 sample upazilas show that the UPE project remains to many a rather unknown program. As of now, it is understood as the continuation of first UPE Project (ended June 1985).
2. Out of 5 components of ISD* only civil works has made some headway since July '85. Furniture and community orientation appear as incidentals to it. Rest two components remain totally out of picture of the Upazila Authorities.
3. Efforts at activising Upazila Education Committee, SMC and PTA have yet to gain momentum.
4. A common observation by the interviewer is that there are communication gaps between National and Upazila level Authorities regarding powers and responsibilities (including financial powers) vested in different levels of the set up.
5. Duality in management and administration particularly in Civil Works Program has generated in the Upazila Education Committee/Parishad much irritation and may in due course create undesirable consequence hindering smooth implementation of ISD program.
6. Without financial powers being delegated substantially to Upazila Authorities, it may remain an impossibility to realize the program targets.
7. In the absence of annual work schedule for each ISD component and target assignment given to involved persons/institutions, the accountability has been missing.
8. Ways of understanding, consultation and unified action between the people's representatives and the government officials could be found, so that local level institutions may contribute without clash of interest and authority.

* ISD, Integrated School Development, was a phased outline for implementing the UPE-program. ISD has been replaced by a more general approach. The 5 components were : civil works, site development, training, orientation text books and learning.

3.5 The Students

Issues - Teaching/learning at the school level

How a failing system of local school administration, supervision and teachers training affect the work at the school level - the teaching learning process - is illustrated by the following picture of a school day in a Bangladeshi rural government primary school.

"We are a little bit delayed today", the headmaster tells us as we enter the teachers's room. He had no notice about our visit. There is some nervousness in the air first. We assure him we are not inspectors and that we have come to see his school to learn more about this village and its educational activities. He then invites us to sit down,

The two other teachers are not present and the few handfuls of children present are carelessly running and screaming about. The school is not presenting its most favorable side this morning.

At 10:45, forty-five minutes late, the remaining two teachers have arrived and the school can start to function. Some of the children are not either very punctual. They are dropping in during this first hour of the school day. Today these late comers will have only ninety minutes of learning. Some of these pupils probably have some three quarters to an hour's walk to and from the school. (Distance to school is surely, as discussed earlier, an important factor deciding enrollment and punctuality of the children. If a child only gets around two hours teaching at the most in exchange for one hour of walking, especially during the rainy season, one can image that the parents of the child might not think it worthwhile sending their daughter or son to school. This problem of varying access to the school could be lessened by building separate schools for the small ones in Grade I and II so they at least would not have more than about one kilometer to walk to school.)

When the little six, seven or eight years old child reaches school and gets seated under a hurricane of noise (one partition wall is not completed) there arises another difficulty; she or he will have to try to concentrate, to follow the instructions of the teacher for a continuous two hours' time. I discuss this with the headmaster. "Why don't you take any breaks?" He agrees that it could be tiresome for the children to sit for two hours, and to manage not to be disturbing, and above all to be susceptible to what is meant to be learnt. But he says that in all schools there is a first two hour shift in the morning for Grades I and II. And they have no breaks. If this actually is in accordance with the government instructions the headmaster will not confirm. He tells me anyhow that the government syllabus for Grades I and II consists of four thirty minutes lessons in the morning.

He does not know if the government instruction says anything about breaks in-between these four lessons. (Grades III-V have to sit for four hours with one "tiffin break", at this school, between two and two thirty p.m.).

Referring to the new syllabus from 1986 the headmaster tells what they are supposed to finish of every morning shift; first lesson in Bengali, second Mathematics, third Environmental studies (replaced by Dictation on Wednesdays and Reciting and Story-telling on Thursdays) and finally the fourth lesson is about religion on Saturdays and Sundays. Arts and Crafts on Mondays, and Sports on Wednesdays, and Thursdays they end their school week with Health and Sanitation. After going through this the headmaster still maintains that they shift between these subjects without breaks.

It is not easy to be an observer in a Bangladeshi School. It will take time until your presence stops influencing to an acceptable degree the behavior of the teacher and the students. That time was not available during my visits. But having in mind what have been noticed at different schools and at this one about regularity, punctuality, class room noise and one continuous long lesson it could very well be stated: the conditions for learning are just not there. If the parents want their child to pass primary school one can easily understand why they engage private tutors doing the job of imparting the subject content asked for at the examinations.

The new syllabus for grades III-V starts at 12.00 - 12.15 with the National Anthem. The headmaster says they sing it every day. After that they have three lessons up to two o'clock. Bengali, Math and English. Then there is thirty minutes "tiffin break". The remaining two hours consist of three more lessons in a row with differing subjects from day to day; fourth lesson is Social Studies on Saturdays and Mondays and Science on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, fifth lesson is Religion (now with separate books for Hindus and Muslims). Recitation on Mondays, Essay-writing on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, and last lesson Saturday is an exercise in Dictation. Arts and Crafts on Sundays and Mondays, Sports on Tuesdays, and last item of the week is prescribed for Health and Sanitation.

A reflection to what extent this curriculum is followed and to what degree relevant knowledge actually is imparted was given by tests among the students (mainly in grade IV and V). My results confirm other observations (see Poor level of Teaching) that only a few students will acquire the basic skills of literacy and numeracy. It seems that the first three years are wasted time from a learning point of view.

The losers of this non-congenial atmosphere for learning are particularly the poor. They are in the majority in class 1 but in class V they have turned into the minor part. The legacy of an elitist school is maintained (Gustavsson 1987).

The present elitist and overly theory-based primary school is still geared to be a stepping stone for the academic career) and is in this way not a school for the under classes, i.e. the social stratas to make the primary education universal.

Accordingly, within the TFYP, provisions have been taken to revise the primary school curriculum to better suit "the national needs". Concepts such as "feeder schools" and "Earn while you learn" were also reported to be considered as part of new primary school system (interview Chief Planning Cell, 1988).

Such a revision would have implied an almost total reform of the primary school system. A reform that would require not only a revision of the curriculum and the teacher training programs, but also the cooperation of a presently rather non-committed and disinterested community of teachers. Thus, only minor but strategically important innovative programs as satellite schools and NGO schemes have been proposed in the GEP for 1990-95.

Socio-economic constraints

Notwithstanding the varying qualities of the reviewed reports on socio-economic constraints, they give an unambiguous picture of an elitist primary school system.

The 50-60% of the children who actually get registered at the schools attend and complete their primary education depending to a significant extent on their parents' economic and educational status.

Firstly, the duality of high and low literacy villages seems to reflect two rural worlds, one dynamic and advancing, and another static and even regressive, characterized by poverty and illiteracy, comprising some 80% of the villages in Bangladesh. The family in a low literacy village on average, has a level of education three times less, and sends half as many of its children to the primary school than the corresponding family in the high literacy village.

Secondly, significant differences exist between children's, especially girls' school attendance in these two different rural communities. The extremely poor girl in the high literacy village was found to attend school three times more than in the low literacy village. (Still only 28% compared to 9%) For boys the corresponding difference was not as pronounced; half as many more boys were attending in the high than in the low literacy villages.

Thirdly, the phenomenon of cultural poverty (Prokaushali 1988) also seems to influence the richer families in the backward low literacy villages. The rich in high literacy villages were found to send 95% of their boys and 90% of their girls to school, while in low literacy villages the matching figures were recorded as only 84% and 61% respectively. The extremely poor are also sending their children almost three times more often in high literacy villages than in the low literacy ones.

Fourthly, there is still a wide gap in school attendance between rich and poor irrespective of village type. Some gross figures recorded for rural areas shows that 80% of all households have no member with a complete primary education and that the extremely poor families, making up about one-third of the population, hardly send any of their children to school. The better off classes make up some 20-25% of the population, Their children constitute the minority in Class 1, but in Class 5 they turn into a majority. The poor repeat and drop out.

Fifthly, participation in school is shown to be highly related to parents education and income. Education breeds education. Not only the difference between the high and low literacy show this, but also all causal and correlational analyses in the reviewed reports. For example, the well educated families (SSC and above) send, on average, nearly all their girls to school, but among the illiterate families not more than one out of ten girls were found to attend school.

There is, as yet, no analysis undertaken of all relevant factors having a causal effect on children's school participation. Available analyses do, in spite of this, support the observation that education breeds education. Educational level of household members is shown to be the best predictor of children's school participation. But this is only recorded if one important and obvious condition is met: a sufficient level of income. The causal chain (excluding school factors) seems to be: Income (diversified) => Education => Income => Education. Land holding loses in importance over time for school participation as the economy becomes more diversified. Families making their earning mainly from service occupations send three times as many children to school as the corresponding day laborer's family. There seems, in fact, to be a geometric relation between income and school participation. Campaigns for literacy and UPE should thus be integrated with schemes for economic uplift.

Sixthly, the strategic implications for UPE is that special and prior attention needs to be given not only to the low literacy villages but also to the poorer houses within both low and high literacy villages. But the Indian UPE-experience shows that top-down designed programs do not affect the very poor 30% of the population. To get them to school local mobilization is necessary.

But it is also reported that the heads of the households do not seem willing to participate in improving the performance of the school, even though they are interested in sending their children to school. There is no significant difference in this respect between the two types of rural communities. The sense of self-reliance does not seem to be concomitant with the social context of a high literacy community. The attitude is, as pointed out earlier, that primary education is a government matter.

(Sources: Ahmed, Hassan 1984, Ahmedullah 1984, Akter 1986, FREPD 1983, 1985, Kamrunessa Begun et al 1987, Qadir 1980, 1985, 1986)

Age distribution of Enrolled Students

There is no birth registration in Bangladesh. Parents do not in general know the age of their children, And when asked, they often prefer to give their child an age with an even number, 8, 10, 12, etc. (Qadir, 1985). Age data is therefore particularly difficult to collect and assess. But information on age, collected through a couple of surveys (for example Qadir 1985, Ahmed, Hassan 1984 and Kamrunessa et al 1987), reveals that the age of primary school students range between 5-14. This range is even found in one single grade, namely Class 1. The official age is 6-10 years. See table next page.

Table

The Age Distribution of Enrolled Primary School Students

Age	Total Boys	Per cent	Total girls	Per cent	Total students	Per cent
4	2	0,5	2	0,8	5	0,6
5	28	6,5	39	10,8	67	8,5
6	38	9,0	41	11,4	79	10,0
7	91	21,1	66	18,3	157	19,8
8	88	20,4	60	16,7	148	18,7
9	57	13,2	54	15,0	111	14,0
10	52	12,0	48	13,3	100	12,6
11	36	8,3	17	4,7	53	6,7
12	24	5,6	18	5,0	42	5,3
13	12	2,8	10	2,8	22	2,8
14	4	1,0	4	1,1	8	1,0
Total	432	100,0	360	100,0	792	100,0

Source: Ahmed, Hassan 1984

From the table it can be seen that some 25% of all enrolled student fall outside the 6 - 10 year bracket. The girls are more under-age while the boys are more numerous over 10 years of age.

The classwise age distribution shows the extreme heterogeneity of age in the various grades. No baby class is reported. The most extreme age variation is recorded for student boys in Grade 1. They vary between 4 - 14 years of age. Girls seem, however, in general to start school at an earlier age than boys. 96% of the students in Grade 2 were between 6 and 10. In Grade 3, 96% were recorded to be between 7 and 13 years. The age distribution in Grade 4 varied between 8 and 14 years. In the last grade the ages varied from 8 to 15 years with 93% in the 10 - 13 age bracket. The median ages were calculated to 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11 for the grades respectively. However, the age of students successfully completing the primary school was found to be 12.

The grades thus do not only show a heterogeneous distribution of age but also generally a higher age level (1 - 2 years) than the official one.

In another study (Kamrunessa et al 1987) it is shown that the older the student, the higher is the rate of enrollment. The enrollment rate of the 6-year-old-age group was found to be some 35% while the corresponding rate for the 9-year-olds is recorded to be almost twice as high; 65%. This difference has not been analyzed in the report, but it may be assumed that the parents regard the ages between 7 - 9 as fit for school-going. Above 9 years of age the rate starts to fall again. No explanation is given for this decline but it is possibly related to the fact that the older the child gets, the more helpful can she/he be as a helping hand at home, or, in earning some money.

Another possible effect of age heterogeneous grades could be increased drop-out. This has not been looked into in any of the reports. But it may be assumed that the more the student deviates from the median age of a class, the higher the chances for him/her to leave school. This assumption is supported by findings in just mentioned reports which show that a nine-year-old student in Grade II attends school half as much as a seven-year-old. It has also been observed that the age distribution is wider in lower than in higher grades. A fourteen-year-old student in class 1 will hardly continue school all through the five primary years.

Access to School

There are some 85,000 villages in Bangladesh with an average population of 1000 inhabitants and a total approximate primary school-age population of 16,5 million (5 - 9 years age groups makes up about 16,5%, BBS, 1986).

The government's standard specifies one primary school for every 2000 population, two villages on average, or some 330 primary age children. The approximately 85,000 classrooms (1987) could in theory, with the common shifts of about 50 children in each, accommodate some 8,5 million children. This is not more than 50% of the total school-age population of 16,5 million. The enrollment rate would thus stop at some 50%.

In spite of this theoretical classroom shortage, the school facilities are often underutilized, mainly due to student drop-out, especially in higher grades. If the TFYP target of increased retention would have been achieved, the existing facilities would be more efficiently used. But if UPE is to be realized, then the existing number of classrooms is far too inadequate. The number of classrooms needs to be more than doubled to accommodate the growing school-age population (unless the teacher-student ratio is to be revised, see below).

The insufficient number of classrooms is not the only problem to meet a hopefully growing demand for primary education. The existing 44,000 primary schools are also far from evenly distributed. It has been found that the number of villages served by one school may vary between 1 to 16. (Qadir, 1985). There can be several kilometers between villages. The distance to school is thus too far for many children. Access to school is a severe constraint in increasing enrollment and retaining students in school.

The enrollment figure has also been found in one survey (Ahmedullah and other 1984) to increase sharply along with shorter distance to school for the children. 60% of the students had less than half a mile to school. Only a few boys and girls had to walk more than a mile. No significant difference between girls and boys was registered in this survey. Parents are reported to be reluctant to send their children to school if they have to cross waterways and highways.

The ideal plan for a school construction program would, as Qadir pointed out earlier be to have a primary school organized in every village, at least, for the two first grades.

However, the UPE program has not been designed to expand facilities to cover most of the villages. It may be that the local power structures and the systems of corruption make it difficult to establish a new school outside the existing one in a village without a school. This author has noticed cases where teachers and villagers with schools in very poor condition or no school house at all maintain that they have to pay (and have paid) bribes to get their school repaired or erected.

The effect of the present programs, which does not seem to challenge the local power elites, is also that the existing schools are either repaired, expanded or replaced. This way the school system only expands marginally, if any, adding, possibly, classrooms to existing schools but not reaching out to disfavoured villages, especially the low literacy ones.

These backward villages could possibly be favoured if the Upazila Education Committee would get the economical and political mandat to assign the SMC to have a low-cost bamboo school house produced and erected like for example the BRAC primary schemes, see below. This requires, however, a systematic approach, towards local resource mobilization.

There are also nearly 200,000 Mosques and Maqtabas (Islamic Primary Schools) in the country. They cover practically every village. If these facilities could be used or "borrowed" for a secular education, there would be little need for an expensive construction program. There are many potential avenues to reach the goal of UPE.

3.6 School Facilities

Non-project schools

The attraction of the primary school is on one hand an objective matter depending on its accessibility, physical standard, supply of learning materials and relevance of curriculum as well as flexibility of school hours adjusted to daily and seasonal work for poor working children. But it has naturally also a subjective aspect related to the quality of teachers' commitment for their work and the interest and involvement of the parents and local officials.

These two sides of participation are interrelated and it is the task of the generals of the UPE programs to strike the right balance between the two in designing the UPE-strategy for the 1990s. The subjective side is of course the most important. It is in fact a sufficient condition for organizing and executing education. However, it has also been the most neglected part of the UPE-programs. But before discussing the teacher aspects, the question of school facilities and student participation will be referred and commented upon.

The following description (Hague and others 1983) of the primary school situation of some non-project schools is given from two Upazilas, termed as being above the average level of development.

All the Schools of the surveyed unions were said to "suffer from acute shortage of land for outdoor activities". Out of 51 school buildings only 29 had partition walls. Only half of the schools had a functioning tubewell. Only 12% of the schools had latrines in a usable state.

Every school studied was in need of repair. The responsibility for taking measures against this neglect rests not only with the government but also with the community. The government was in the beginning of 1980's responsible for 22-25% of the schools, the communities for 8-12%, and a shared care for 62-70% of the schools. But little or nothing was done. This observation (Hague et al 1983) shows that there has after all been some local responsibility for maintenance, also after nationalization.

In only 1 out of 76 schools did children have textbooks. The free distribution of textbooks has since then started with the UPE programs.

A similar deplorable picture is given by Haque and Håkansson (1985):

Only about 30% of the schools are generally well constructed (brick walls, cement roofs and floors) and have the required classrooms and furniture. The majority are constructed with bamboo walls, CI sheet roofs and earth floors, and are usually in need of constant repair in order to withstand the rigours of the tropical climate. The majority of these do not have separate classrooms, and the bamboo screens which are used as partitions are usually insufficient to keep out the noise and facilitate an atmosphere conducive to educational activity. About 70% of these schools have no latrines, 25% have no blackboards and further 10% have no water supply (tubewell). The lack of benches and desks is also critical, and only half of all students can be properly seated. Crowded, uncomfortable and unsanitary facilities not only deter the child and make teaching and learning difficult, but also convince parents that the child would be better off at home or in the field.

Project schools

In order to increase retention and enrollment of school children, "creation of physical facilities" has been one of the major, and the most cost-consuming measure under the UPE projects since 1980. About half the number of government primary schools (16,257) were to get necessary repairs and renovations by the end of TFYP in 1990. (TFYP, Dec, 1985).

During the first partial UPE project, implementation of physical facilities was slow. As noted earlier, less than half the planned number of classrooms were constructed (TFYP, Dec, 1985). The present rate of implementation has, however, said to be satisfactory. Set targets were expected to be achieved as planned (abstract April 1987 from UPE-project office).

However, during the appraisal missions (1989) of donors in preparing for next UPE-phase it became clear that implementation was far from satisfactory due to alleged "lack of matching funds" by the Government of Bangladesh.

These efforts will, however, to some extent, raise the physical standard of the country's primary schools. But the questions relating to quality of implementation and maintenance (Kamrunnessa Begum and others, 1984) has still not been properly addressed and result in continuous losses of invested work and material.

Project Effects

In one project study (Abdullah and others, 1984), parents were asked to give their opinion on the effects of the intended project interventions. The effects were ranked as below:

1. increased physical facilities in school;
2. provision of school uniforms (discontinued in 1983)
3. provision of textbooks;
4. additional training of teachers leading to improved classroom teaching;
5. expanding supervision leading to regular attendance of teachers; and
6. increased contact between parents and teachers

In spite of these intended inputs, the research team found the physical condition of the school buildings, furniture and other equipment to be "extremely unsatisfactory." Later on confirmed by the mentioned World Bank findings that near 30% of the constructed school buildings are in an unusable state after completion (WB, Working Papers, Appraisal Mission 1989) They also found that "very little physical facilities had been supplied by the UPE/IDA project". The following inputs were found to have had some effect upon high attendance of students in school : supervision and training of teachers, provision of textbooks and increased contacts between parents and teachers.

There were in 1987 estimated to be approximately 129,000 classrooms in the primary system. School construction has, as said, been concentrated on the replacement of existing accommodation units with the result that few additional places have been created to meet the increase in enrollment. Latrine and washing facilities for girls are either non-existent or inappropriate and this must act as a deterrent to their attendance. Classroom furniture is insufficient in both quality and quantity, particularly in the old community-build schools. The problems are compounded by the adverse effects of natural calamities, such as the recent floods.

The idea that adequate supplies of buildings, furniture etc will encourage children and teachers to attend school is though questioned in another case study (Kamrunnessa and others, 1984).

No uniform pattern of school enrollment has been observed among the three schools under consideration. For Darishava, the enrolment was the highest in 1981 and declined since then, coming to its lowest in 1984. For Barimura, the enrolment was the highest in 1980 and declined since then, coming to its lowest in 1984. Unlike these two, Laudia had

its highest enrolment in 1983, whereas in the previous years this village had consistently low enrollment. In 1984, this village too has had a decline in enrolment. The provision of new physical facilities in the schools, particularly the school building and some additional benches for the students took place in 1982-83. These new facilities were accompanied by the provision of supply of clothes, books and school stationery free of cost to a proportion of students. The decline in enrollment in 1984 which is noted for all the three schools suggests that enrollment was hardly associated with the new physical facilities. Especially notable is the sharp fall in the number of students in the second grade. The situation gives rise to the question of how far these facilities by themselves can lend to universal enrollment in the near future and retention of the students beyond the first year and second year and so on.

The physical facilities (despite the new facilities created) have been too inadequate to encourage children to attend school. With the limited floor space of the school building, few benches, lack of separate rooms for each class, unsufficient ventilation, lack of veranda and adequate number of door. etc., the building does not provide for a good physical environment for effective teaching learning activities. Under these circumstances, the teachers will hardly be stimulated to devote themselves to teaching their shifts. The teachers will instead rather attend to their own household affairs and leave the children without teaching.

The children do not find the school to be an interesting and enjoyable place also because of lack of playground or any facilities for their recreation. In the classrooms, children get involved in fights while competing for the limited space on the benches (Qadir 1985). Those who fail to get a bench seat are said to often leave school for good.

Kamrunessa et al (1984) further reports that the school committee members in general do not assume any responsibility for supervising the activities of the teachers, nor do the teachers feel that the villagers have any legitimate authority to oversee their activities. The villagers were not involved in the construction of the school buildings.

These survey schools might have been located in very low literacy localities (the general outlook of the survey areas is not given in the study) characterized by cultural poverty with no climate for education. However, if one visits a number of primary schools one will find many examples of unsatisfactory quality of implementation, and with no or little interest in improvement or maintenance of school facilities. There are good, average and bad examples of primary schools. The good seem to be exceptional cases. Usually school facilities and teaching materials are in bad condition or soon run down after they have been supplied. Teachers and SMCs seem in general to give little or no care for maintenance. Studies, articles (see

for example New Nation 10-5-1988) and this author's observation give proof to this prevailing lack of local interest in maintaining a good primary school. The result is a huge waste of money of which no study has been made.

Summary

No independent survey has been undertaken to evaluate the implementation and maintenance (I & M) of the physical project inputs of new constructions, tubewells, latrines, teaching aids, etc.

Available and more detailed reports (eg. Qadir, 1986) as well as, this author's observations do, however, suggest that I & M in general are far below an acceptable standard. In addition to that there are also allegations of serious corruption in the primary education sector (Bengali Daily "Sangbad", October 1988). There are so far no provision in the UPE program for properly checking implemetation and keeping up for maintenance. School buildings start to dilapidate only after some years of completion.

TFYP included nearly half (some 16000 schools) of all schools in its civil work programs. If 30% of all schools had been generally well-constructed and if Plan Objectives had been met, this would still mean that some 10,000 schools would have been in need of renovations or new constructions.

The standard of school facilities is very low indeed. The question is, however, if the standard is improving at all. The generally extremely poor care and maintenance of new school buildings seem to make these improvements only temporary.

Many statements (for example Haque and Håkansson, 1985) about lack of benches and desks and crowded classrooms gives the impression of children coming to school but pushed out of school, due to poor accomodation. This may occur in some schools, particularly in more urban areas, but hardly in general.

Rather, most schools are found to be half empty and in many schools, furniture is piled up in corners of classrooms for lack of students. (The superfluous furniture could of course also be due to inflated figures of enrollment or to failures, or corrupt practices in the system of distribution.)

It is obviously difficult to ascertain the number of students demanding accomodation in a school. Teachers seem to overreport the number of enrolled students by 20 - 25%. Superfluous textbooks, maybe also benches, are sold at the market. Books are sold as waste paper. The teachers get in this way an extra income, some taka per kilo of books sold.

According to observations, also tubewells, latrines, teaching materials etc. very ofter become unusable soon after supply. It has also been noticed that the instant increase of enrollment due to physical project inputs is almost gone after a couple of

years. The buildings are further more not suitably designed, neither from a technical nor from a pedagogical point of view. The construction is for example too gross and too costly. There is also often a lack of partition walls between different class rooms. Findings indicate that retention of children is related to the quality of maintenance of school facilities (Ahmedullah et al 1989).

3.7 The Teachers

The Role of the Teachers: the weak link in the primary school chain

The importance of the material and financial aspects of any primary education cannot be overemphasized, but the heart of the matter are the teachers and their commitment. There need not be lack of teachers. The requirement for 1990 (based on 70% student enrollment) is a projected teacher increase of about 20%. But this is in turn based on a moderate teacher-student ratio of some 1:50, which is hardly acceptable in a two-shift system.

Teachers have (1985-86) recieved substantial salary increase, like all other government employees. Teachers do in general express satisfaction with their official remunerations and working conditions.

The teacher is the main actor in the school system. He or she is the prime bearer and reproducer, and to some extent the generator of the prevailing structures and norms of this system. In Bangladesh, the elitist system defines the role of the teacher, partly an outcome of corrupt practices. The teacher has to pay large sums of bribes to get posted (up to TK. 30,000, New Nation February 12, 1988). To compansate for this, he extracts fees out of his (her) subordinate students. Fees that will sort out the poor. The power to fail of promote the students is another source of extra earnings.

Poor level of teaching

"No amount of the educational inputs can replace teachers or compensate their failures" (Ahkter, 1986) The reported disinterest of many parents in school matters, is, as noted above, usually reported to be the effect of nationalization. But parents may also lose interest in the primary schools bcause of the poor levels of teaching and learning. Actual tests given show an extremely poor learning by students. The following report from a school may serve as an illustration.

Most of the students of Class 3 cannot read their text books ; students of Class 2 cannot pronounce the Bengali Words ; those of Class 1 do not even know Bengali letters. Teachers reportedly take much care only to read the text. They do not teach how to read, how to speak, how to pronounce, etc. In arithmetic, students are very poor.

Students of Class 3 cannot write the numbers involving digits; students of Class 2 cannot do subtraction; students of Class 5 cannot do divisions. In English, students of Class 5 cannot even construct a sentence involving a simple translation from mother tongue and as "I go home". (Qadir, 1985)

This extremely poor level of learning has been confirmed by this author's own tests and observations. This deprivation of the student's right to learn could hardly be attributed only to incompetence of teachers or to irrelevant curriculum or text books. It is indeed a sign of non-committed teachers. This is further stressed by other findings that the "four students who were found to have scored well in school either had private tutors or received care and assistance at home" (Qadir, Kundu, 1985).

The need and difficulties for in-service training, supervision, and motivational work with non-committed teachers is further illustrated by the observations that the majority of villagers are in favor of appointing non-local teachers instead of local ones. The local teachers are criticized for being too busy with their domestic business and neglecting their school work. However, the people and the elite, when they take interest in the school, they can get the teachers to perform their work properly according to this report. The support of the elite seems to be especially important *ibid*.

An extensive survey of the primary teachers was carried out during 1986-87. Three documentary studies, four illustrative studies, one seminar and a final report with recommendations were produced. The purpose of the whole study was to propose, in accordance with the directives of the TFYP, a "Reform of Primary Teacher Training Program in Bangladesh".

The role of the teachers for the functioning of the primary schools has not, however, been integrated in the analysis of these empirical studies. This failure to survey the teacher's role is noteworthy, especially in light of all the public statements made on the crucial role of the teacher.

The Teachers Situation and Existing Training Program

The question is whether and to what extent the teacher can and are fulfilling their teaching role. Do the teacher studies support the common view and our earlier observation that they are in general not doing so? And that this possible failure will account for much of the poor performances of the primary school? Since there are no analyses of the gamut of factors influencing the work performance of the teachers, we will have to try to get the answers on these questions by looking at the findings.

Teacher training: a general view

During the SFYP about 6% of the total utilized sum for primary education was set aside for teacher training. (TFYP Oct. 85) The components for teacher and supervisor training exceeded, however, its targets by nearly 300% while there was a substantial shortfall in the creation of physical facilities for UPE. This indicates that the training of the teachers has been a dynamic part of the program. But it requires qualitative improvement: "Result of field try out of the cluster training (monthly in-service training of teachers by a AUEO) in the 40 Thana UPE/IDA project are encouraging but its operation ... needs to be further systematized and its effectiveness improved" (S. Haque, 1986).

The PTI's are reported to be understaffed, only 57% of the posts were filled in 1986. At the same time they are underutilized to 66% of their full capacity. 20% of all primary teachers are on the other hand reported to be still untrained. (S. Haque, 1987), while only around 14% of the PTI graduates during 1981 - 85 who had not worked as teachers before found primary teaching jobs. Outsiders make up nearly three-fourths of the total annual PTI intake (Jabbar, 1986). The PTI training does not, under present circumstances, offer incumbent teachers any good prospects for getting a teaching job. This will of course affect the attitude towards, and the working morale at, the PTI's.

Weaknesses in the Teacher Situation

A review of 18 different national documents and reports published during 1973 to 1986 revealed the following major "weaknesses" in the teacher situation:

1. Appointment of PTI staff is not made on the basis of the subjects they teach, and their chance of promotion is limited.
2. PTIs are under-staffed and under-utilized.
3. The one-year PTI program is costly, outdated, theory-based and does not develop specific skills of instruction.
4. Training focuses on theoretical curriculum and not on the needs of induction of new teachers.
5. There is hardly any linkage between pre-service and in-service training programs.

About the primary teachers especially, it is reported that:

6. Teachers take up part-time jobs, including tutoring due to poor chances of promotions.
7. Primary teachers often lack motivation for their profession.
8. Attendance of teachers seems to be on the decline, from about 22 to 18 working days per month (Mid-term Evaluation, UPE/IDA, 1983).
9. Only 5% of the teachers have an acceptable command of English. Upazilla educational officers are also poor in English. Math teachers do not possess basic knowledge of their subject due to improper training and low salaries (Khatun, 1986).

Improper training forces many teachers to resort to the memorization/rote learning technique of teaching supplemented by large doses of corporal punishment. These techniques are also ways of maintaining some semblance of order in overcrowded classrooms where teacher:student ratios may range from as high as 1:100 in Grade 1. Inadequate training also limits the career development of potential teachers. This factor, coupled with inadequate compensation, has a negative impact on the attitude of teachers, many of whom take part-time jobs to supplement their incomes, often leading to frequent absences from school. (Håkansson, 1986)

Posting of teachers

An analysis of the government policies towards the primary teachers suggests that "selection and promotion of teachers by a committee formed at the Upazila can hardly be maintained in an impartial way. Malpractices and irregularities are commonly heard of ... and problems likely to arise about the quality of teachers." It was furthermore noted that "the scope for promotion of primary teachers is very limited ... the majority of the teachers have (therefore) little commitment of their work ... 35% of the head teachers are recruited from untrained graduates ... they can hardly enjoy respect and confidence of a trained staff."

The insecure position of the teacher is further illustrated by the fact that : "The distribution of responsibilities between the head teacher, AUEO, UEO, Upazila Chairman and the DPEO for sanctioning the teachers benefits ... is not clear" (Obaidullah, 1986).

The allegations of corrupt practices in recruiting teachers have made the government to recentralize these procedures.

Profile of Teachers

Rahman (1986) attempted to establish a profile of the primary school teacher by interviewing some 500 teachers.

This study gives a harmonious and even rosy picture of the teachers and their work. For example, "the typical rural male primary teacher involves himself in co-curricular activities; gardening, co-operation with parents, checking children's health. Cleaning the school by the children." This and similar descriptions of teachers hardly reflect the life of the common primary school which can be easily verified by visiting a few of them. The survey seems on this point to have been conducted too uncritically. However, some interesting observations related to professional competence and female teachers are also presented.

Most teachers have only the SSC/HSC examination in the third division. This poor quality of teachers' academic competence results in ineffective teaching. Pedagogical training fails with teachers with poor academic background. Such teachers cannot teach children with confidence. ... Lower entry requirement for females (SSC) than males (HSC) results in appointing of poorer quality of teachers although better qualified males are available. This will likely create dissatisfaction between the sexes (Rahman, 1986).

This gender issue is tied with another problematic feature: The females come mostly from a higher social position (middle class) than the male teachers (lower middle class). In other words female primary school teachers are socially higher but academically lower than their male colleagues.

Teacher Effectiveness

While Rahman gave a rosy picture of the primary school teacher, Haque's (1986) study takes for granted the non-committed teacher.

One stated reason for his research on teacher effectiveness was "to identify the causes of their lack of motivation and commitment to the profession." (Haque, 1986). Haque's assumption of the non-committed teacher, belies Rahman's picture of the typical male teacher caring for the children and involving himself in co-curricular activities.

There is actually not much of analysis on this study of the assumed causes of non-commitment, besides obvious "causes" as "irregular attendance and not so good performance of male teachers." The major findings do however give some indirect insight or hypothesis about these causes:

1. Difference in sex or in marital status of primary teachers do not generally have any effect upon high or low enrollment or attendance of pupils.
2. Female teachers seem to be more strict than their male counterparts in promoting pupils to higher classes.
3. Female teachers appear to be more irregular in their attendance than male ones.
4. Females seem to perform substantially better compared to their colleagues.
5. Younger teachers appear to perform better than older ones. (Females are usually younger than males.)
6. Less experienced teachers tend to perform slightly better than those with long time experience.
7. Teachers with higher general education tend to teach better.
8. Teachers with professional training do not appear to teach better than the untrained teachers.
9. Teaching performance does not seem to depend upon high or low salary of the teacher or his/her family total income.
10. It seems that the more allowances you get the poorer is the quality of your teaching.
11. The larger the family of the teacher the poorer his/her performance seems to be.
12. It appears that the higher the qualification of the teacher's father the lower is his/her performance.
13. The higher educated the teacher's wife is the better is his performance in school.
14. Socio-economic and/or cultural status of a teacher does not appear to effect the quality of his/her teaching. (Partly to finding 11 above.)
15. A community's favorable attitude towards a teacher is not necessarily based on the teaching performance and such an attitude does not affect his school performance.
16. The economically poor teacher seems to adjust better with his (her) school environment.
17. Better performing teachers do not seem to be interested in the community activities. (SMC, PTA etc.)
18. Poorer teachers appear to show a more favorable attitude to others.

19. Successful teachers show more positive interest for teaching than the unsuccessful ones.

The report concludes with the following recommendations.

1. Appoint more female teachers.
2. Seek measures to remedy the irregular attendance and not-so-good performance of male teachers.
3. Reform teacher training program to account for the facts that pre- and in-service training does not change teacher's general performance in desired direction.

Some of these observations, if true, are surely not in accordance with popular belief, like, for example, less experienced teachers tend to work better than more experienced teachers.

Factors accounting for poor commitment could tentatively be derived from the findings above. The disinterested and ineffective teacher is an older male. He has a longer teaching experience, is PTI trained, has a lower general education and is probably richer than his better performing colleagues. He has a larger family and his father has a higher (!) education, but his wife has a lower one in comparison to the more efficient teacher, who is often a female.

Teacher unemployment

Many of the PTI graduates do not, as said, take up, or get, a teaching job. This "wastage" is illustrated by the following major findings:

- Only around 14% of the PTI graduates (outsiders) during 1981-85 found primary teaching jobs.

(Outsiders = a PTI graduate who has not worked as a teacher before)

- Outsiders make up nearly three-fourths of the total annual PTI intake

- Around 80% of the respondents relatives/friends/acquaintances having completed PTI training are unemployed.

- About 87% of the outsiders are females.

- Only 11% of the females have been employed against 21% males.

- Nearly 50% of the target outsiders will be too old for government jobs in about 2-3 years.

Principal causes of lower female employment rate appear to be:

- a) females are valued less as teachers as males.
- b) three times as many females get married after their PTI qualifications.
- c) many females lose interest in getting appointed if not posted in their localities.

Educational attainment does not appear to have a direct bearing on employment status. PTI trained outsiders report facing unequal competition with those not similarly trained but having higher academic qualifications.

- 48% of the respondents alleged irregularities (in recruiting etc.) due to influence of higher officials/influential persons.
- 23% alleged bribing to be the reason for pushing them out of competition.

PTI graduates suggest the following improvement of the teacher training :

- 29% thought that the duration of the course should be extended to two years.
- 25% emphasized the need to improve teaching techniques.
- 22% suggested the need to change the curriculum .
- 36% favored more frequent "Refresher Training".
- 13% expressed the need to combine "theory and practices" during and after training.
- Another 13% expressed the need for renewal of learning aids and teaching manuals from time to time.

Teacher union opinions

From the above reports it appears that the PTIs are inefficient, even corrupt in some cases. It is likely that these facts will make the serious teacher candidate lose his or her interest in the profession and try to find another job. The undecided or disinterested candidate will instead opt for the teaching profession. Improvement of the PTI's is therefore a must. Many of the recommendations from these teacher studies also center around suggestions to enhance the quality of the PTI's (for example Akther 1986a & S. Haque 1987).

Other recommendations suggest that the morale of the teachers may be enhanced by initiatives of "upward and horizontal mobility". This goes hand-in-hand with the present opinions of the Teacher Unions.

Akther and Haque maintain that all surveyed categories (administrators, educationists, etc.) except for the representatives of the teachers' unions, emphasized the motivational role of the unions in inspiring, helping and encouraging teachers to be more efficient, hardworking and ideal. The need of the unions for professional development of teachers (arranging seminars, workshops, publishing journals, setting up resource centres for teachers, recognizing best teachers and rewarding them, motivating teachers to be hardworking and efficient) was much emphasized by these categories of respondents.

The representatives of the teachers' unions were, on the other hand, found to emphasize their career development more than their professional development. Making teachers aware about their rights and privileges, bargaining for higher teacher salary and promotion, keeping teachers free from external pressures and harassment were found to be very important to them. (Akhter 1986 and S. Haque 1987).

No study or survey has been made on the collective efforts of teachers. The statements here on this matter are therefore only tentative. But the fact that the majority (about 85%) of the primary teachers are government employees, puts them in an awkward position. On one hand there is the expected loyalty to the state. (President Ershad, is the president of one of the primary teachers unions). On the other hand, there are economic and political demands on the teachers by the Dhaka based Union and their connections with the various political elites. According to the chairman of the major primary teachers' union, this union has accumulated some Taka 200 million worth in property through examination fees from the primary school children (Interview Feb. 1989). This situation gives little scope for traditional local union activities and for consolidating teachers' demands towards educational reforms.

Summary

The ten different reports (nearly 700 pages) on the teacher question carried out under the UPE-program reveal a vast number of problems. The role of the teacher stands out as the critical factor in the primary education system. The low working morale of the teachers does not seem to have improved during the UPE programs. There are even allegations of a deterioration since the time of nationalization. Teachers turn away from their teaching work. Instead of being the prime mover for UPE, the teachers are rather an obstacle and a conservator of an elitist school.

Teachers have in general a poor academic background (lower divisions of HSC or even SCC). They do not know their teaching subject sufficiently well. Only 5% of the teachers have, for example, been found to have a proper command of English, a compulsory subject from Grade 3. The methods of teaching are mainly based on memorization, a reflection of the old pass-and-fail examination system. The outcome of this is a very low standard of teaching and learning. This affects in turn the working morale of the teachers. They lose interest and turn instead to their domestic business. Teachers are said to even take leave by rotation.

This vicious circle of low competence and non-commitment of the teachers is seen as a major cause to the over 80% drop-out rate among the students. The teachers have only rarely been found to care for retaining their students in school. Rather they favor the children of the elite from whom the teachers may earn some tuition money. The elitist system is thus preserved.

Female teachers are observed to care more for the children but they are on the other hand reported to be more strict in promoting students, and they often give up their teaching after a few years due to marriage, or inability/reluctance to teach outside their own locality.

The one year pre-service training is costly, outdated, over-theoretical and mostly irrelevant to the skills required by a teacher. In addition to this it is also stated that the PTIs are affected by "widespread use of unfair means in the examination halls". The pre-service and the new system of in-service training are not coordinated. The in-service is also reported to be inefficient. (This author has also found that the work of AUEO to be more of inspection than supervision. The inspection part should preferably rest with some other agent.)

The employment situation for the teachers is unsatisfactory for at least two reasons. Firstly, only about one out of every seven PTI graduates gets a teaching job. The majority of them remain unemployed. (In a country with tens of millions of illiterate people!) Secondly, every third graduate maintains bribing to be the reason for pushing them out of jobs. (Upto one year of a teacher's salary is said to be paid in "commission".) These corrupt practice are perhaps a side effect of the nationalization of the schools. Earlier the schools were a local matter, and, though often the scene for hegemonic factional struggles, there was probably a more limited scope for corruption than today.

Within the UPE project, the role of the teacher has been considered essential for the success of the program. The teacher studies have also contributed materials for acquiring an awareness of the teacher situation. Recommendations have been submitted by the study team for remedying the problems, i.e. an improvement of pre-service training, integration of pre- and in-service training programs and a system for career development of primary teachers including a well-defined and impartial system of transfer and posting of teachers.

The primary teachers' unions do not appear to work actively for UPE. One of the teacher studies supports the general view that the Dhaka based teachers' organizations do not work for the improvement of the schools. The unions think their mandate is only to improve the economic benefits of the teachers. The main primary unions seem to be rather tied up with the government. The President of the country is also the patronizing president of one of the main unions. The character of these teachers' organizations was also demonstrated when the President at a government-sponsored meeting, (spring, 1988) addressed one of the teachers' organizations, His speech was mainly an attack on the political opposition. But the teachers' demands were not given any comment. Their problems were said to be discussed and solved with political leaders. But the President assured the teachers that they would not have to fear any arbitrary transfers. "You can work at your home villages". (Ekota. weekly Bengali, 17.4.88). "The Prime Minister and hundreds of thousands of primary teachers attended the function" (New Nation, 15.2.88.)

The political acceptance of the teacher community is of course important to the rulers. They are after all an educated and influential group in the rural areas. But the teacher studies make it clear that the question, whether the primary teachers will remain an obstacle or will turn into the prime mover for UPE, still is very open.

3.8 The Curriculum and Textbooks

As stated earlier, non-committed teachers and poor level of teaching are major obstacles to raising the standard of the primary schools.

Under such teaching-learning conditions as referred, it's obvious that only a few students will acquire the basic skills of literacy and numeracy. It seems that the first three years are wasted time from a learning point of view.

The fact is, present curriculum, relevant or not, has no practical meaning since it is hardly ever practiced. Instead, it prepares students for examinations, possible advancement to the secondary school level and social mobility. This lack of relevance is compounded by the absence of a tradition in Bangladesh of systematic evaluation and testing of existing and new curricula to establish their feasibility. Teachers are given little support and advice in reducing content overload and making the curriculum more attractive and relevant to students.

Student Assessment

In November of each year, primary school students are tested. However, these tests are not designed to evaluate the students progress but rather as an instrument to determine grade promotion. This encourages rote-memorization and stunts

creativity at an early age. For those who fail, it has a devastating effect on self-image and enthusiasm for school. Because of the inherent weakness of the texts/examinations and the low proficiencies of the teachers, failure is high and repeaters and dropouts increase. (Håkansson, 1986)

The loser of this non-relevance of curriculum and non-congenial atmosphere for learning are particularly the poor. They are, as said, in the majority in Grade 1 but in Grade 5 they have turned into a minority. The legacy of an elitist school is maintained. The irrelevance of the school system for the poor is stated in the TFYP in the following way:

With its (educational system) forms of liberal education it has not only produced a paradox of surplus of so called educated people in an (environment of) abjectly low level of literacy, it has also produced among the educated ones a feeling of frustration instead of a sense of enlightenment because the system, encourages students to cram knowledge rather than crave for knowledge. (TFYP Dec, 1985)

Notwithstanding this awareness at the central level, the present elitist and overly theory-based primary school is still geared to be a stepping-stone for an academic career (Qadir and Ahmed 1980, UNICEF 1987) and in this way not a school for the under classes, which still remain outside or are pushed out of the system due to its irrelevant or alien character. The present examination system constitutes a major hinder in this context.

Accordingly, within the TFYP, provisions were taken to revise the primary school curriculum to better suit "the national needs".

Until this educational need is met, through major reforms, the ongoing work on improving and simplifying the subject content, standard of teaching, and student assessment in the basic subjects will be important. After all, under the present circumstances this may prove to be the essential reform for making primary education relevant for the poor. But to enroll and retain the poor in school, the system of examinations (with possible non-promotion) and ensuing need of private tutoring will have to be eliminated altogether.

Curriculum development has now been introduced as a concept and practice in Bangladesh. The philosophy of the proposed curriculum is to make it more child and every day life oriented and to give the student "essential learning". The present work aims at major revisions of the old curriculum. Ten experimental schools have been started in connection with this work.

Textbooks

Textbooks are (1988) reported to be distributed to all primary schools. The supply of free text books to all primary school children make up about a fifth of the total project outlays 1985-90.

The decision and achievement to give all primary school students free text books is a significant step towards UPE, as it allegedly eliminates a prerogative of the elite, the capacity to buy books.

The new colossal and costly undertaking (some 20 million books by 1990, (Haque, Håkansson, 1985) is naturally affected by several problems. Studies and other observations point to the following; The books are erratic and still lacking relevance for the life and need of the common student. In some places students still have to pay for the books. The books are further not reusable due to continuous revision and poor quality, in paper and binding. This enormous waste of money, is aggravated by the fact that most schools get, as noted above, too many books, due to inflated enrollment figures. The quality of instructional materials (maps, charts, globes etc) supplied also requires improvement (Haque, Håkansson, 1985). If they are ever used, they do not withstand the climate.

The Textbook Wing of the NCTB is central to the textbook production and distribution process. Its approval is required for all textbooks used in schools, and it is the publisher of all books at the primary level. The Board is financially and administratively weak. A government decision that books should only be sold at the cost of production has meant losses. The staff of the Board is mainly deputed from schools and colleges, and none have commercial or publishing experience. There are weaknesses in the reporting and decision-making, and little responsibility is delegated. The editorial department provides little input to the books it handles, and too little time is given to essential activities like testing, evaluation and production control. Finally, the near monopoly of the NCTB has provided little opportunity for private publishers to develop the capacity to put additional texts on the market (ibid).

The problem of poor quality of the textbooks (misprint, irrelevance and yearly revisions to make old books reusable) is reported to remain unabated. However the distribution seems to have improved. Most students receive their textbooks. But according to newspaper articles (e.g. New Nation 11.12.89) they still do not get the books in time and they also have to pay for them. In 1986, some 500,000 books (about 5%) were actually distributed to private book sellers. (World Bank, Text Book Policy, 1987).

It will take time before the managerial shortcomings of the NCTB will be addressed and possibly eliminated. Considering this, the task to produce and distribute some 11 million (1987) textbooks per year is indeed a "gigantic one in size and nature", which an ineffective centralized system hardly will be able to cope with.

The revision of curriculum, teacher training and textbooks is an integrated and continuous process. The challenge of the present reforms is to design a teaching-learning program which would in the first place give primary education as such a value and status that it would serve the great majority of the students, who never go beyond that stage.

4. NON FORMAL PRIMARY EDUCATION (NFPE) AND LITERACY

The need for a complementary system of non-formal primary education (NFPE) is foremost depending on which strategy for UPE the government is to opt for in the 1990's. The government has no comprehensive policy or plan yet for a combined government and non-government effort to achieve UPE. There are two major options for a combined strategy, one down-up and one top-down. The choice or balance between these two strategies will affect the need for NFPE in different ways.

If the government chooses to fully utilize the capacity of the teachers and manages to get the cooperation of local communities in order to supply temporary low cost classrooms then there is no need for any "institutionalized" systems of NFPE.

But if the government schools in the years to come are to perform like today with no or little progress in the capacity to retain the children in school, and the present top-down UPE program is just to be more or less extended, then there will be an enormous need for some institutionalized form or parallel system of NFPE. In a special report, on this matter (Prokaushali, 1988), such a parallel system has been suggested. 14,700 non-formal education centres are proposed to be built to accommodate some 60 million (!) unschooled children and drop outs by the year 2000.

The Prokaushali scenario seems, however, to be too pessimistic as far as the performance and potentialities of the government schools are concerned. (Nor are the Prokaushali's proposals really based on non-formal concepts.) Stated rates of a low 50% enrollment and a high 85% drop-out are not expected to change upto year 2000. Consequently, the strategy for UPE must/should include a parallel NFPE system according to this report.

But even if the down-up scenario above were realized there would be a need for some non-formal education. The size of this need would of course depend on the success of local mobilization. The form of this is in turn dependent on the outcome of possible and proposed curriculum reforms of the government schools. If they are made flexible in the sense of permitting "multi-entry" points, night schools etc, then the appropriate strategy for NFPE would likely be to encourage expansion of feeder schools (like Grameen Bank, BRAC etc.) for enhancing enrollment and giving the dropout, primary-age children a second chance. (The older children (11 +) should be given a training in literacy and acces to vocational training centers -maybe in line with the Prokaushali's proposals.)

What are the actual character, size and potentials of the present NFPE schemes against which these two main strategies could be tested. The existing secular non-government primary schools make up a marginal set of institutions. But some of them, indicate features of strategic interest for the development of the primary education system.

There are, firstly, the some 5000 old non-government schools. These "put an additional burden on the Government and run contrary to the policy of increasing community participation" (TFYP). In the meantime these schools which already often are in a sub-standard state will be uncared for and deteriorate further.

The slow progress or even decline in the standard of many primary schools has, secondly, given rise to a boom of new "kindergartens" i.e. private primaries by and for the elite. Their appearance is significant for what is happening within the primary school system. They confirm the new common, and even unofficial, view at the MOE, that the elite has lost its confidence in the government schools: "People that matter" send their children to private schools and later on abroad". The number of this kind of school is not known, may be between 1-2000 institutions.

Finally there are the poverty or people oriented schemes, by BRAC, Grameen Bank, UCEP, FIVDB and other NGO's. They manage to reach maybe some 175,000 children with primary education or feeder school schemes. However, the size of these efforts is still small compared to the perhaps 10 million primary-age children who are non-enrolled or drop outs. As indicated above, it would be reasonable, natural, and possible for the government schools to reach at least half of this number, the approximate 5 million non-enrolled. Even so, there would be a great need for NFPE for some 5 million drop-outs.

The strategy implication of these various trends within the whole primary system is that the need for NFPE is there, and should be expanded, especially with feeder school programs. But the size of such an expansion should not be over-emphasized. The main strategy for UPE has to be operated through the government schools (after all they make up some 85% of all schools and are underutilized). But in order to save money and to get the communities involved, these schools have to be fully utilized and complemented with low-cost satellite schools. Such a policy would also keep the need for non-formal primary schools at a low level.

The answer to the question of a top-down or a bottom-up strategy for UPE is thus a combination of the two. The government may on one hand create the conditions for local resource mobilization for enlarging and maintaining the government school facilities, and, on the other hand, it may give scope for NFPE, especially feeder-school programs. The innovative aspects of the people-oriented projects should be integrated in the ongoing reforms of primary education.

The earlier mentioned religion-based Madrasah system for primary education should finally be noted in this context. It has an enormous potentiality for giving all children a basic education.

A strong correlation has been shown to exist between the level

of education of parents and the rate of participation of their children in school. This has been particularly clear in the case of high and low literacy villages. Therefore, it is evident that a successful movement towards UPE should or rather must include mass literacy programs of the nearly 50 million illiterates over 10 years of age.

The need for basic education is also increasing as the population pressure and poverty push more and more people out of agricultural work and on to a job market requiring literacy and numeracy skills. Feeder school, schemes by BRAC and Grameen Bank, FIVDB and other NGOs have shown that they can reach the poor with education. Still their work is on a limited scale.

In addition to this labor market argument there is also the fact of high correlation between female basic education and enhancement in the status and well-being of women as well as in better child care. The observed 1-4 years child death rate has, for example, been shown to be nearly twice as high in families with an uneducated mother as in families where the mother had one to six years of schooling. The rate of stunted, children also falls sharply with the level of their mothers' education (UNICEF, 1987).

The government initiated under the TFYP a literacy program through the Upazila to cover some future 3 million adults. A consortium of NGO's (LEMA) worked to launch a national program for elimination of illiteracy by the year 2000. Cooperation with the government and donors was tried but failed.

The need for a renewed strategy of literacy and primary education - Education for all- has not been accounted for in any government policy documents or plans, nor in the donor assisted GEP.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The government of Bangladesh has given top priority to eradication of illiteracy and achievement of Universal Primary Education (UPE) by the year 2000.

The government's two programs since 1980 have put the question of primary education into focus. Financial assistance from lending/donor agencies has accentuated this. Foreign funding makes up over 80% of the project costs. The investment costs in primary education has accordingly multiplied some three times since 1980; around US \$40 million per year 1985-90 which will increase to some US \$65 million for the GEP 1990-95.

Nearly half of the development expenditures for education has been allocated for primary education. As part of the strategy for UPE, new school facilities are being created, training of teacher's emphasized and a management system -- adjusted for the decentralization of primary school matters -- is being institutionalized. There also seems to be a growing public concern for the cause of UPE. The press is giving continuous reports of the situation at the primary schools.

In assessing the potentialities for giving all children a basic education, it is also important to note the few cases where headteachers of primary schools or local educational officers have taken action and managed to create a good school with relatively high rates of enrollment and retention. National non-government organizations (NGOs) like Grameen Bank and Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) are also, at low field cost, reported to be achieving considerable success. These schemes are still on a very small scale.

The strategy in the Third Five-Year Plan (TFYP) for UPE has in brief been:

"to increase enrollment by retaining the enrolled students." The goal is to enroll 70% by 1990, and 90% of the eligible children by the year 2000. The following measures are intended to achieve these objectives:

1. involvement of the community
2. improvement of supervisors and administration of the schools through the Assistant Upazilla Education Officer (AUEO)*
3. development of a management information system
4. supply of free text books and learning materials
5. creation of physical facilities

* AUEO is a new kind of local primary school officer responsible for in-service training and supervising of primary school teachers.

Planning, monitoring, supervising training and financing of these interventions are initiated centrally and carried out from the top.

However, this strategic approach does not, as yet, appear to have made much positive impact on the performance of the primary schools. There are no reliable statistics on educational institutions in Bangladesh. But still, only one out of four children actually seems to attend school, and no more than one out of ten completes primary education. Maybe one out of five students, the "high attenders" become literate at the primary schools. In fact, there seems to be at the school level no progress towards UPE. One official source - Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Informations and Statistics (BANBIES) is even claiming a negative trend in the enrollment rate during the 1980's. The stated 60% rate of enrollment is today about the same as at the time of independence. The system is still extremely inefficient.

Out of a total of some 16 million 6 to 10-year-old children presently some 4 million children, actually attend school. Due to population growth, this figure of participation by the end of the century will have to be increased to about 20 million if UPE is to be achieved. To accomplish this, the efficiency of the schools, as far as children completing primary education is concerned, has to improve some five times. Such a quantitative and qualitative improvement will hardly be possible without a revision of strategy for UPE and an all-out national effort.

Such a revision is also demanded for major financial reasons. The official projections to achieve UPE by year 2000 indicate, inter alia, almost doubling of the present classroom capacity, amounting to an annual cost of about the whole educational revenue budget (US \$240 million). The Ministry of Education (MOE) cannot foresee how such an expansion will be possible without levying special taxes. On the other hand, the educational expenditures in Bangladesh are only about 1,5% of the Gross Domestic Product, the lowest share in the region, about half as much as India. Furthermore, the MOE has not yet come forward with any substantial low cost alternative for this expansion. Another reason for revision the present strategy is the failure to revive the old community involvement in primary school matters. The general attitude is that government should supply teachers and facilities.

Moreover, despite some improvements of school facilities, teacher training and decentralization, there seem to be a number of more important changes taking place. The primary school education seems to be facing an aggravated and dual polarization. The government characterization of the school system as elitist is increasingly accentuated. The government primary schools are not, as reported, increasing their power to retain the students in school. Poor teaching and learning still sort out the underprivileged students who cannot afford to compensate with private tuition.

Poor children make up the majority of the students in Grade 1, but are reduced to nil or to a small minority in Grade 5. This attrition is particularly true for the poor girls. Nearly all girls from rich households go to school, whereas less than one out of ten participate from the poor households. The rich and educated classes, 15 - 20% of the population, get their children through the system by resorting more and more to private options, not only tuition. "People that matter" transfer their children to the few good government schools or opt for private schools (e.g. kindergartens), and, later on, for schools abroad.

There is thus within the rich and educated classes a growing loss of interest and confidence in the public schools. The rich are getting richer, the poor are hardly improving their standard. The proportion of "hard core poor" is even increasing. There is consequently in the near future no social class in sight to defend and uphold the standard of the government primary schools. There are no major political parties or organizations (including the teachers' trade unions) actively working for the cause of primary education. (Grameen Bank, BRAC and a few others stand out as inspiring, but still small, exceptions). This neglect threatens the government primary schools with further decline. A parallel school system is apparently underway at the expense of the poor.

The poor 80% of the school-age population will, if the trend is not reversed, continue to be deprived of a basic education. Half of these 80% poor, the "hard core poor" will in general not send their children "no matter how many schools or teachers are placed in front of their feet" (Qadir). For these children special school programs like BRACs, are needed. These programs have been very successful in reaching the poor, especially girls.

If there is no progress in enrolling and retaining the students the number of children deprived of a basic education will, by the turn of the century, increase beyond the reach of the present strategy. With a "medium fertility decline" in population growth, there will then be some 50 million illiterate young people (below 30 years of age).

The so far top-down government strategy seems to have had little success in making the primary schools more attractive.

A. Access to schools has in general not increased. New construction is usually a matter of replacement of the old school or adding of more classrooms to the same school house. Most of the villages in Bangladesh are therefore still not covered by a primary school. Parents seem to be reluctant to send off their children, especially girls, to other villages.

Access to schools is also a question of a place to sit for the student. The common shortage of benches for the first grades in non-project schools (the majority of schools) creates a competition between students, which may push the non-favored students out of school. Furniture is reported to be either non-existent or left in a broken state. There seems, on the other hand, often to be a surplus of benches at project schools due to overreporting by 20 - 25% of enrolled students.

B. The school facilities are of poor quality and rarely maintained. World Bank even maintain that nearly one third of the new project school constructions is in an unusable stage after completion. Tube wells and latrines (especially for girls) are usually out of order. Students do not seem to be trained in keeping their school neat and clean. They are not encouraged to be proud of their school.

C. School hours and semesters are not adjusted to working hours and peak agricultural work. During the peak seasons (August, September, December and May) school attendance may go down 50%. Poor parents often can not forego the labor of their children.

D. Studies and observations of classroom performances give an alarmingly negative picture of the learning situation at the schools. Many teachers and students are not punctual. Teachers are rarely committed to their teaching work, in this way creating a need for their private tuition. Teaching and learning are mechanical, and unstructured. Classes are generally extremely age-heterogeneous, making age-relevant teaching difficult. Students in the first two grades usually sit their sessions and change between subjects without any break. The general lack of order and school spirit is often worsened by a deafening noise, due to the common lack of partition walls between classes. Teaching aids, even new ones, are neglected and left uncared for. Playgrounds are often missing and there are rarely any extra-curricular activities. School is generally poor and boring. The outcome of this extremely deficient learning situation is not only frustrating the raising of the very low literacy level (females about 15% and males about 30%) but also causing an enormous wastage of educational resources, almost doubling the time required to get one student through the primary stage (9 years instead of the stipulated 5 years). The losers are those who cannot afford to compensate with private tuition.

E. The teacher-situation is alarming. There is in fact no lack of teachers, if they would work, their two stipulated shifts and if the teachers would take up to 50 students each shift. Teachers have, in general, a poor academic background (2nd or 3rd division in the HSC examinations). Teacher training, both at the old Primary Teacher Institute (PTI) and the new in-service training, is not functioning satisfactorily. The in-service training by ambulating AUEOs still seems to be more of inspection (teacher and student attendance) than of motivational work for the cause of UPE.

Further more, training is neither coordinated nor adjusted to the cause of UPE. The one-year PTI cause is outdated and over-theoretical. Cheating is allegedly common among the incumbent teachers and future educational leaders making it difficult to raise the low working morale of the teacher community.

Primary teaching has a low academic status. Unemployment is high among the examined teachers. To get a teaching job may cost Taka 30,000, about one year of a teacher's salary. Primary teaching is however a government job with secure salaries and benefits. It still therefore attracts those who want to get into the civil service. The teachers often seem to recover what they spent by extracting fees from the students and keeping up some private business. Teachers in this way often get involved in local power struggles.

Finally, the primary teacher's unions are tied up with the government, but even so are still not committed to the quality of education or to the cause of Primary Education. They accumulate huge sums of money from extracting examination fees from the primary school children. The unions are presently a major obstacle to progress in primary education.

In sum, there is still after ten years of UPE programs a severe lack of professional and social/political pressure to make the teacher community the obvious chief agent for UPE. Presently the average primary teacher is not getting more than 3-5 students out of some 50 beginners successfully through Class 5.

F. The liberal examination-oriented primary curriculum is career-oriented, and thus irrelevant for the majority of the students who do not go beyond the primary stage.

G. Government Primary Education is nominally free. In practice, however, teachers charge fees for admission, examination, sports and cultural events; transfer to other schools, etc. Pencils and writing books have to be bought.

A proper school dress also demands an extra cost. All these fees and costs may amount to hundreds of Taka per year which is too much for a poor family. Students are also reported to pay for their "free text books". The cost of education adds up and pushes the underprivileged student eventually out of the system. The elite secures the success of their children by paying these fees and investing in tutors and "illegal" note books (for the examinations).

Externally the causes of this current non-attractive status of these schools are to be found not only in the disinterest of the elite for the government schools, and the lack of the community involvement after nationalization of the schools, but also in the ineffective organizational and institutional frameworks and in the inadequate management capacity. This is clearly seen, inter alia, in the poor status of educational statistics, which is too inaccurate to really serve as a basis for planning and management.

But more important, the decentralization of primary education matters is still restricted and has allegedly not resulted in any improved management.

The new Upazila Primary Education Committee (PEC), Upazila Education officer (UEO), and the local school managing Committee (SMC) have no real say or power in financing or allocation for primary education. The major financial matters have up til now been vested within the especially created Facility Department. The responsibility for construction of rural schools will be given to the Upazilas in 1990, but financing and supervising of these school will remain a central matter (World Bank, SAR 1989).

The PEC has, under ministerial guidelines, been given the mandate to be the local authority for the primary schools and the teachers. It is also responsible for distributing books and managing selected programs involving community participation.

The PEC is however reported to face problems like:

- lack of consciousness and clarity amongst members about assigned responsibilities
- lack of co-operation amongst members
- lack of implementation of decisions due to interference from outside
- lack of adequate financial and administrative powers and,
- political intrigues and favoritism in the decision making process. (BANBIES)

Crucial local support to achieve UPE seems consequently only to be manifest in exceptional cases when the elite has taken an interest in a particular school.

The administrative weakness (TFYP) is further underlined by the fact that the 64 district Primary Education Offices (DPEO) over the country have become more or less redundant between the central authorities and the local Upazilas in the new management system of primary education.

The efforts to improve management and to create a more favorable educational environment at the schools through the UPE programs do not appear to be adequate to change the obvious fact that the major cause of the non-attractive schools is an outcome of poorly trained and non-committed teachers.

The final analysis of the primary school situation may be found in the present TFYP : Educational development has (in the past) produced serious social imbalances. Firstly, the issue between the educated and the non-educated. Secondly, being elitist, it produced a surplus of people with liberal education having very limited employment prospect against an acute shortage of

skilled manpower. Thirdly, being elitist again, it has created serious urban-rural imbalance. Fourthly, the elitist nature of the education system has also had discriminatory effect on women's education in a basically patriarchal society. But, above all, there is, according to the TFYP, a general "lack of proper attitude" which has made earlier commitments too difficult to be accomplished.

But the government's low financial commitment to education and to the UPE projects in particular stands as a contrast to this clear statement and to its stated priorities. The financial share of the government for the next UPE project 1990-95 (GEP) will remain low around 15-17% of the total costs (US\$ 326 million, SAR 1989). There are further no known government plans to raise domestic resources for primary education, or to revise the enormous differences in per capita cost between a primary student (about Taka 350) and a university student (over Taka 17000).

The government has not either been able to withstand the pressure from the secondary school lobbyists. The share for primary education in the budget has gone down from nearly 50% to some 43%. This will likely go down further after the government again, late 1989, raised its subventions to the secondary schools from 70% to 80% of their costs.

Recommendations

The situation of the government schools found through reviewing reports and observing schools is alarming. There are even signs of a school in decline, the increasing amount of government physical inputs notwithstanding.

The government primary schools are still neither really intended, nor able, to reach and retain poor children in school. However, over 80% of some 44,000 primary schools are government schools. The rest are run by local communities or organizations. Most of these non-government schools are of sub-standard and waiting for nationalization. Only a few progressive organizations offer schooling for poor children. This is however, only a matter of 1-2% of all school-age children.

1. This vast difference in number between the government and non-government schools, makes it clear that the strategy for the UPE must, in the first place, be a program to improve the standard of the government primary schools.

2. The present strategy for UPE should be directed towards the economically disadvantaged. This implies a shift of emphasis in the central policy document and demands a clear stand on who is to be the main agent - the teacher - in the primary school system for reaching the poor.

3. To achieve UPE in practice to counteract the elitist system and to get the poor children to school.

The proposed anti-elitist stand in the strategy formulation in the TFYP has, however, not been given any operative meaning. The challenge of the primary system is to create a school which is not just a stepping stone for future liberal academic career but a school which imparts the basics for the majority of the children who never go beyond the primary stage. Further, although creation of physical facilities is mentioned as the last measure in the strategy, it has so far made up the major part of the funds for the program. Construction works are now costly, poorly implemented and maintained, and have been shown to have only a temporary effect on children's school participation.

The future character of the primary school as a school for giving all children a basic relevant education should be more emphasized in order to encourage targeted efforts towards the poor.

4. The major problem of the primary education system appears to be the low commitment of the teachers. But only some 1% of the project funds has been allocated for teacher training. The teacher is now far from being an educational leader of the locality or champion of UPE. The teacher is not even mentioned in the final strategy measures (TFYP). The critical question of raising the low quality of schools has instead been reduced to the new bureaucratic role of the AUEOs. The role of this new officer is limited to inspection and supervision. (In practice mostly inspection.)

A strategy in favour of the poor should in writing and in practice take its starting point from the local community, e.g. the school and from the main actor in the school system, the teacher, and from the possible local financial and management support. The main object of such a strategy should be "human development" which in the first place means training for a competent and motivated community of teachers.

5. Teacher training has since the Second Five-Year Plan become a central authority matter (Directorate of Primary Education). This should be reflected and accentuated in the national program as below:

- Improve thoroughly the 51 PTI's. Give them a dual role; not only as institutes for professional training but also as centers for motivating and organizing their role as chief agents for reaching UPE, i.e. to get the poor children to the teacher as community worker.

- Co-ordinate consequently the enrollment and retention work of the teachers and the AUEO's.

- Explore the feasibility of rewarding teachers (and AUEO's) for the number of students they successfully get through the primary years (in accordance with possible compulsory steps towards UPE stipulated by the Government)

- Co-ordinate pre-service and in-service training (PTI and

AUEO).

- Improve the training of the AUEO for better supervision and motivational work with the teachers.
- Co-ordinate the reform works on teacher training and curriculum.
- Do away with the tuition system (inter alia through automatic promotion up to Grade 5) and corporal punishment of student by a combination of motivating teachers and prohibitions.
- Develop a career system for teachers.
- Upgrade (including salary) the headteacher and make her or him the principal figure for getting all children to school.
- Create an impartial system for posting of teachers, including an institute for appeal.
- Encourage recruitment of female teachers by giving stipends or scholarship, and by facilitating posting in their home localities.
- Some of these issues are under consideration. But their solution requires a much closer co-operation, possibly through a special "teacher group" constituted of representatives from relevant agencies and organizations like the Ministry of Education, Directorate of Primary Education, National Curriculum and text Book Board, National Academy for Primary Education, National Institute of Educational Administration, Extension and Research, Primary Teachers Training Institutes, District Primary Education Officers, Upazilla Education Officers, Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics, Teachers' unions, researches, etc. (The unions may play a vital role in this context.)
- Such a co-ordinating group should also be given the very important task of creating propaganda for changing and overcoming the inhibitory "lack of proper attitudes" (publishing of a news letter about school activities for example).

6. To achieve community involvement is not just creation of School Managing Committees (SMC) and Parent Teacher Association (PTA), keeping their English terms and leaving them without a real mandate, it is basically a material matter. The schools should be constructed, financed, run and maintained on a shared basis between central and local authorities. There will otherwise hardly evolve any community involvement or responsibility (for example maintenance) for the primary schools. A sound local social pressure on the teachers is likely also conditioned by a material responsibility. The question of teacher's accountability to the community should be resolved by giving the SMC the authority to sign the attendance book of the teachers before salaries could be paid.

Local financing responsibility and accountability will also reduce the influence of alleged non-regular interventions from higher administrative tiers.

These six major measures would provide the basic conditions for creating a more attractive and less elitist school. Other measures to consider would be to remedy the problems and shortcomings listed above.

Make the primary school accessible to every village child:

7. Create a satellite or feeder school system extending to practically all villages, in the first hand to so-called low literacy villages (some 80% of all villages). To this end a reliable School Mapping is required.

8. Introduce a flexible system with multi-shifts, adjustable school hours or days for working children (particularly during the peak agricultural seasons), complementary evening lessons, and finally multiple entry points and linkages between government and "non-formal" schools.

9. Supply enough seat accomodation so that every school child has an equally good place, bench or mat, to sit on in school.

In order to give, in particular the poor student, an effective literacy, numeracy and basic general education without having to look for private costly tuition, create conditions for a stimulating learning atmosphere by:

10. introducing a flexible and poverty-relevant curriculum which is also child and age relevant and encourages to adopt, for example, schemes like "earn while you learn".

11. greater reliance on self-instructional materials (desirable to decrease the present dependence on an over-centralized system of producing and distributing text books).

12. minimizing the number of books per grade, subject and student. Clear them of misprints. Save also huge amounts of money by making some or all of the books re-usable, and by introducing the practice of permanent set-ups of books at the schools, for example in Bengali literature.

13. practicing stipulated time for lessons and breaks; extending automatic ("liberal") promotion up to Grade 5 (to get rid of the systems of tuition and of passing or failing students through examinations).

14. training the students to keep their school neat, clean and maintained and by imparting basic knowledge in health and nutrition.

15. creating age homogeneous classes (requires birth registration)

Special efforts are demanded for the poor and very poor; Without targeted efforts and special attention government programs tend to benefit primarily the better-off rural-dwellers and usually fail to reach the very poor (World Bank).

16. It is essential for enrollment and retention of the poor children to make primary education really free of cost. Prohibit by government notification all extraction of fees.

17. 30 - 40% of the primary age children (the "hard core poor") do not get a square meal a day. They will not enroll or remain for long in school unless they can satisfy their hunger, Neither will they attend school if they cannot be dressed in acceptable clothes. A system of free or subsidized school meals and preferably also uniforms should be introduced. The local SMC, (with a majority of the poor through democratic election) and maybe the Union Parishad are the appropriate bodies to organize this. Plan of action and a time-table for a step-by-step implementation could be decided upon at the Upazila Parishad.

18. Poor girls should receive special attention like

- supply of free school dresses
- latrines must be installed and kept in order
- pre-school classes should be annexed to the regular school where mothers/ayahs (literate) could take over the girl student's usual role of caring for their younger brothers and sisters. (a similar system of pre-schools existed before the nationalization of primary schools.)

Increase community involvement by 1) partly engaging the schools in self-sustaining production and activities, by 2) giving local authorities substantial mandates, and by 3) utilizing local construction techniques.

19. The promising experience gained from school projects practicing ideas like "earn-while-you-learn" (allegedly mentioned in the pending proposal for a new Education Policy) and "schools providing its own sustenance" should be integrated in the coming curriculum or strategy for expanding the school system, feeder schools (not only for avoiding "vested interests" and breaking the said antagonism and apathy with the teachers and schools labeled government but also for a real community involvement.) In this way schools would be closer to the people (TYFP), and confidence in the public schools would be regained.

20. In line with this, the newly created PEC should get, in co-operation with the Union Parishads, the SMC and all the local headteachers, the competence to facilitate a low-cost local school system, for example, satellite or feeder schools where various initiatives like school work programs were stimulated (building of semi-pucca classrooms, manufacturing of mats or

benches, learning materials, etc.) To this end, co-operation with local NGO's seems appropriate. In this context special attention should be given to villages without a primary school and to low literacy villages.

A potentially dynamic role, of the present PEC is particularly latent in the civil works part of the UPE program. The present brick and mortar program is centralized, costly, inappropriate (bad in-door climate) and prone to corruption. This part of the program should be replaced by locally run programs. The PEC, Union Parishad and the SMC should be instructed to use - and partly finance, through local taxes- the co-called Earth-Stabilizing-Construction technique for enlarging school facilities, in a future system of satellite/feeder schools. This is a low-cost (nearly half price) well-tried environmentally adjusted technique (no burning of wood), gives a better in-door-climate and can easily be produced locally (mud, cement and a simple cutter). The technique seems specially appropriate for getting community, the teachers and the students involved in erecting their own school houses.

Two factors do, however, obstruct such a shift of technique and responsibilities; brick or pucca houses have a higher status than semi-pucca buildings (government teachers seem to prefer to teach more shifts rather than to have to work in a low status katcha or mud house), and there is attractive top-money involved in the brick-and-mortar program. However, with the same amount of money (approximately US\$ 50 million on construction 1985-88) but with low-cost technique, maybe twice as many class rooms could have been produced in 1985-90, than the targetted number (some 40,000 classrooms instead of 20,000).

Again, to achieve UPE means to get poor children to and through the school. Studies indicate a strong relationship (geometrical) between household income and children's school participation. Programs for UPE and literacy should thus, if possible be integrated with schemes for economic improvement, for example, as indicated above.

Enhance the efficiency of the primary management system by decentralizing and making distribution of mandates clear, by strengthening the institutions for educational statistics and research. Considerable amount of Local Resource Mobilization (LRM) in terms of endowments, taxes, rates is required together with political support to fulfill the quantitative and qualitative goals of Universal Primary Education.

21. General Educational policies, curriculum developement, text-book policies, teacher training and salaries and to some extent posting of teachers are some of the issues that should be left with the regional and central authorities. (Directorate of Primary Education). But financing, management and expansion of primary school facilities should mainly be the mandate of the lower tiers, the Upazilas, as prescribed by the 1982 Upazila reform. That means in partictular the decentralization of the Facility Department.

22. In order to carry out and manage local tasks like these detailed above, the PEC's and SMC's need to be particularly strengthened. The roles of the Union Parishads and especially the higher tiers - District Primary Education Officer and Directorate of Primary education - should at the same time be properly defined to avoid alleged interferences. The Union Parishad should regain its old and lost role in primary education. Micro-planning for satellite/feeder schools could, for example, be one of its essential roles.

23. A pre-requisite for a soundly based educational policy and an efficient management system is also to create good and rational conditions for collections, processing, and dissemination of accurate educational statistics. It is enough with one agency for this. BANBIEIS needs to be strengthened and upgraded.

To that end it is necessary to register all children at birth. Birth registration should also be a pre-requisite to keep track of all school children and to form age homogeneous classes, to check pre-mature marriages of girls, as well as to implement compulsory primary education - a constitutional obligation.

24. Strengthening of research facilities in basic education is also necessary in order to establish realistic plans of operation. Present studies and evaluations of the UPE projects lack in comprehensiveness and precision. There is no general strategy or theory for the research. Definitions and methods used are arbitrary, making comparisons and aggregation of data difficult. Creation of an Department of Basic Education at the University seems appropriate. (This would possibly require re-organization of the National Academy for Primary Education, National Institute of Educational Administration Extension and Research, and Institute for Educational Research, University of Dhaka).

As a supplement to government primary schools, non-formal primary education schemes, particularly the so-called feeder school schemes up to Grade 3, should be stimulated and supported.

25. Poverty-oriented primary schemes by various NGO's (BRAC, Grameen Bank, FIVDB, UCEP, etc) should receive continued encouragement. The linkages between government and non-government schools should be facilitated. These should be made fully compatible in order to avoid emergence of any second-class education. Doors should be kept open to drop-out children who need a second chance.

26. The potentialities for expansion of primary school facilities through usage of Madrasah School buildings and by introduction of a secularized primary education in the widespread Islamic school system is worth considering. If realized this would save the major cost of the program, the construction part.

The overall need for a complementary system of non-formal primary education (NFPE) depends mainly on the extent to which the general standard of the present government schools can be raised. The pre-condition for progress is the teacher's commitment. In fact, if the teachers Unions permitted/supported all the teachers to take their two shifts a day with fifty students in each class (which many already do), then the present number of some 165,000 teachers would be sufficient to give every primary school-age child (about 16 million) its basic education!

But it is unlikely that the ongoing UPE program will in the near future succeed in achieving a community of full-time working teachers, actively enrolling and retaining poor children in the schools. There will thus remain a need for non-formal primary education. With an optimistic 70% enrollment and 70% retention, in, say five years' time, there will still be some 5 million non-enrolled children including the drop-outs.

Encourage integration of literacy programs and local efforts towards UPE.

27. Education breeds education. Furthermore, the government's commitment to "Education-For-ALL" gives strong arguments for a dual strategy for basic education : all-out national programs for both primary education and adult literacy.

The literacy rate has hardly increased since independence. Bangladesh has one of the lowest rates of literacy in the world. Centrally initiated literacy programs have earlier failed. Therefore a joint effort between government and NGO's is highly desirable.

The government and national NGO's have tried separate literacy programs. The government with a relatively small sum of Taka 25 crore, and with a relatively modest objective of 60% literacy by the year 2000, has given the Upazilas the task of organizing literacy schemes. But the Upazilas are already insufficiently staffed and trained to manage the present UPE programs. It will take time before another literacy program can begin to function. However, the government is considering new literacy programs intended to reach out to illiterates above 11 years.

28. The close relationship between parents' education and their propensity to send their children to school also suggests enlargement and replication of integrated rural programs, as for example, SIDAS own RESP.

Inspite of negative statistical trends, there are a few signs of a slowly improving situation in the rural areas : labor wages are increasing, patron-client relationships are disintegrating to some extent, decentralization efforts are making progress, the economy is becoming more diversified.

There are also signs of an intensified desire among the villagers to see their children educated. If these trends are true, and continue, the bondage of "cultural poverty" is also likely to erode. But the instable political situation of the country seems to hold further progress back.

The poor will, on the other hand, expect and demand change and participation in public life, also in the educational institutions. The following statement by the World Bank (1987) may then not only be considered by the policy makers and reformers in Dhaka but also given a reply by the illiterate masses : "The primary education situation remains very serious. Initial reform in primary education must be expanded, developed, otherwise the system will absolutely fail to provide basic literacy and numeracy".

The major risk with such a needed expansion and reform appears, as experience shows, to be how to avoid strengthening the existing elitist system through more top-money. The solution to this seems to lie in raising local financial resources and in intensifying the training and motivational work with the local actors as the teachers, the AUEO's, the members of the SMC's and the UEC's. They must be entrusted with appropriate financial and administrative powers to create local low-cost alternatives to centrally financed and administrated interventions.

A radical change back to a school by and for the local community, especially its poor section as outlined, is not easily accomplished in the present political and administrative context of Bangladesh. But the possibility for local resource mobilization for supplying and maintaining a low-cost feeder school system through some local school programs, especially in villages without schools, should be facilitated. In this way local and regional entrepreneurship also will be encouraged.

But decentralization and local-level participation should not be equated with, for example, "localism", locally based teacher recruitment and placement (except for females), which is counter-developmental. Organizing for UPE in Bangladesh must guard against such tendencies, for example, hardening of the vested interest groups of teachers, educational bureaucrats and political elites. Such a situation will continue to make the education system ineffective and expensive (like unusable new school buildings), causing the poor - the vast majority of the people - to remain outside the ambit of education. Local school programs should therefor be integrated within the national strategy for UPE.

Notwithstanding trends and risks. it is again essential to remember the enormous potential the community of techers has. The following perspective may, as a concluding remark, illustrate this.

Compulsory primary education is possible in the future provided all the teachers with possible assistance from students and unemployed graduates could get mobilized (partly through a system of rewards) for two shifts of 50 students each per day; provided the communities would contribute with additional low-cost classrooms and programs for school meals and free/subsidized dresses; provided supplementary non-formal primary education would be encouraged.

Such a scenario for compulsory education may sound utopian, but it is not. The present demand for additional classrooms would be some 70,000 for 7 million students. This would require, on average, less than one classroom per each of the some 84,000 villages in the country. It is then to remember that practically every village, by its own means, has had its own mosque or madrasah school erected.

The above 29 recommendations may serve as a set of propositions for making up the strategy for the 1990's. Many of these propositions have been considered in the donors' appraisal reports for the next UPE-phase, GEP 1990-95, like better balance between hard and software inputs, and more but not sufficient emphasis on local participation. By 1990 the government should, after a decade of programs, be able to begin to realize its constitutional obligation of universal primary education.

Accordingly, every Upazila/Thana would as a preparation and mobilization of local resources, be required to design a phase-wise plan of how and when it will achieve compulsory primary education in ten year's time.

30. Education for all by year 2000 (UNESCO). To achieve UPE in ten years' time, there is, as the past ten years of UPE programs show, a need for more authoritative political decisions and actions than continued government approvals of similar UPE programs.

New funds for the third UPE program for the 1990's should therefore be coupled with a higher level of planning and political manifestations than so far:

- A well-defined master plan would have to be prepared for a 10-year phase-wise introduction of compulsory primary education. This plan would be based on submitted local Upazila plans (as mentioned above) stating their needs and possible resource mobilizations for UPE.

- Necessary financial means and political actions will have to be taken for the resolute execution of such a plan. The government has after all fixed eradication of illiteracy as one of its top priorities. This would imply a substantial raising of the present very low 1,5% of GDP for education, and to get local financial mobilization initiated.

Unless the government manages to get the country to take an increasing responsibility for primary education it seems difficult to believe that a law on compulsory primary education (drafted in Parliament late 1989) will be more than a piece of paper.

APPENDIX 1

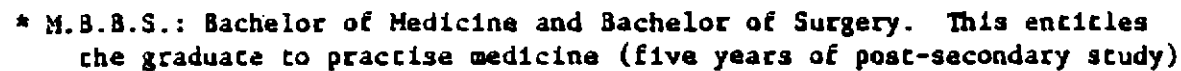
Some official Statistics on Primary Education

1. Number of Government Primary Schools (1986)	36 722
2. Number of non-Government Primary Schools (1986)	7 502
3. Total Government and non-Government Primary Schools	44 224
4. Number of teachers in Government Primary Schools (1986)	157 575
5. Number of teachers per Government Primary School (1986)	4.29
6. Average number of students per Government Primary School (1986)	278
7. Teacher-student ratio in Government Primary Schools (with vacancies filled) (1986)	1:52
8. Teacher-student ratio in Government Primary Schools (if total age group were in school)	1:92
9. Total teachers in Government and non-Government Primary Schools at the ratio of 4.32 per school	190 557
10. Total student in Government and non-Government Primary schools at the ratio of 278.52 per school	9 115 554
11. Population of 6-10 age group (1986)	14 966 000
12. Enrolled students in Government Primary Schools (1986)	10 147 624
13. Enrollment as % age cohort (1986)	67 %
14. Projected enrollment in 1990	12 701 729
15. Projected enrollment in 2000	20 600 000
16. No. of Primary Schools having more than 600 pupils (1986)	6 191
17. No. of Primary Schools having more than 400 pupils (1986)	8 846
18. No. of Assistant Upazila/Thana Education Officer, AUEO (Visits 20-25 schools)	1 834
19. Number of Upazila/Thana Education Officers UEO	481

20. Number of District Primary Education Officers (DPEO)	64
21. No. of Assistant District Primary Education Officers (ADPEO)	64
22. No. of Deputy Directors (Divisional) (one in each division)	4

Source: (No 1 - 17 BANBEIS)
(No 18 - 22 Directorate of Primary Education)

Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.)



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Swedish International Development Authority (SIDA)
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S-105 25 STOCKHOLM