

Current Situations of Basic Education in Bangladesh

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Introduction:

Bangladesh is a unitary, independent and sovereign republic known as the People's Republic of Bangladesh. The total population is about 130 million. Out of the total population 86% are Muslims, 9% Hindus, and the remaining 5% are Christian, Buddhist and tribes. The state language is Bangla and the citizens are known as Bangladeshi. State capital is Dhaka. The Currency is known as Taka. The following figure shows the literacy rate in Bangladesh.

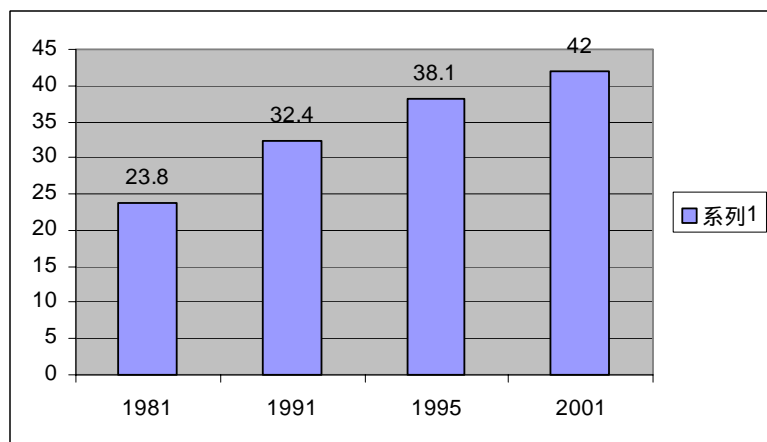


Figure: Literacy rate (%) in Bangladesh

Primary Education:

Primary Education (Grade I ~V) is compulsory in Bangladesh. At the primary level, the average age of all student is between 5~9 years. Following are the institutions at the primary level: Government School, Semi-Government School, Private School, and Religious School.

At this level, all student study Bangla and English literature along with elementary science subject. All schools at the primary education level give more emphasis on observations and how to face daily life situations. In the religious school, mainly they give more emphasis on religious subjects besides Bangla, English literature and some science subjects.

In the primary level student enrollment is increasing but the quality of education is not satisfactory for the country as a whole. Following are the main reason for the poor quality of education at the primary level: lack of qualified teachers, poor school facilities (classroom, library, play ground), very less school compare to the number of student and method of teaching.

Secondary Education:

Secondary education is divided into three categories: Junior level (Grade VI, VII, and VIII), Secondary level (Grade IX and X) and Higher Secondary level (Grade XI and XII). In total secondary education is for seven years. Secondary educational institute are the same as primary educational institute (Government, Semi-government, Private and Religious school).

There are two public examinations at this level: Secondary School Certificate (SSC) after the completion of 10th year schooling education and Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) after the completion of Grade XI and XII.

All the religious school also held the public examination according to their educational board rules.

In the secondary level student enrollment also increased over the years but once again the quality of education was not up to the same standard all over the country. Most of the schools at this level provide very poor educational facilities (library, laboratory, etc.) and the Teacher of those schools has lack of teaching skills.

Higher Education:

There are many government and private colleges and universities for higher education in Bangladesh. Generally a student requires 3 years to obtain the Bachelor degree and another 2 years for Master degree. All the University also offers M.Phil and Ph.D courses. There are many student doing their research over there.

Science Education:

Science education starts from primary school (Grade III) in Bangladesh. In the beginning, student studies basics on natural sciences, such as life of trees, flowers, etc. From Grade III to Junior high school (Grade VIII) student studies the basic composite science subject (Physics, Chemistry, Biology) and general Mathematics. From Grade IX students are divided into the following groups on the basis of their interest: Biological science group, Physical science group, Arts group, and Commerce group. All the religious school also teaches science subjects but in very general. They teach basic Physics, Chemistry, Biology and Mathematics.

There are around 14,069 secondary schools at present in Bangladesh. Those schools are divided into 3 categories on the basis of availability of science facilities. Following table describes the detail of those categories.

A Category (900~1000)	B Category (7800~8200)	C category (4500-5000)
Schools: generally in Big cities	Schools: in the developing cities and some rural areas	Schools: mostly in the rural areas
Laboratory Equipment and chemicals 5~7 Science Teacher per school Good library	One multi-purpose room (laboratory, recreation, etc) Few equipment and chemicals 2~4 Science Teacher per school Small library	Very small laboratory Almost no equipment and chemicals 1~2 Science Teacher per school Very few books available

Table: Different categories of Secondary schools

Although there are laboratories in some of the secondary schools, but there is no laboratory assistant, which is very necessary. Laboratory assistant could help the students by showing the technique of using the equipments of the laboratory. Therefore, in spite of having equipment and chemicals, there is no use of scientific experiment. Generally the Science teacher takes the laboratory classes. In general, a Science teacher takes 5~6 classes per day, which effects their ability to teach efficiently. That's why all the science courses are being taught only in the class room at this level.

However, after completion of the SSC examination, there is a compulsory practical class (one per week) at the laboratory for all the science subjects. Although it is compulsory, but there is still very little use of all the scientific equipment and chemicals due to lack of skilled laboratory assistant. In this way, most of the equipment and chemicals are wasted.

To have better knowledge on science subjects, it is understood that laboratory assistant is necessary in all the schools. And academic supervision is also required to get better result from the teachers.

As we see that in the B and C category secondary schools there is almost no scientific equipment and chemicals are available. Therefore, it is suggested that equipment and chemicals need to be supplied to those school to have better scientific education.

Pre-service and In-service:

There are 54 Primary Training Institute (P.T courses) and 12 Teachers Training College (B.Ed and M.Ed courses) all over the Bangladesh. Pre-service and In-service courses are held in those training institute. The duration of each course is 10 months. There is an Open University in Bangladesh, which also offers the same courses through the long distance education.

All the courses at these training institutes are taught only in the class room. There is no course on practical, such as on how to use the equipment and chemicals effectively at the laboratory. Class room courses really does not improve the quality of the Teachers. Therefore, it is suggested that courses at those institute should be redesigned in such a way that there is scope of class room lecture as well as laboratory class.

On top of the above institutions, there are another 9 Secondary Education and Science Development Center (SESDC) and 5 Higher Secondary Teachers Training Institute (HSTTI), who offers In-service training courses only.

SESDC: In this institute the In-service courses are designed for secondary school Teachers. Bangla, English, Mathematics, Physical science and Biological science courses are there in this institute. The duration of this course is normally for 2~3 weeks. The courses at this institute offers class room lecture as well as laboratory class with scientific experiment.

However, these courses at this institute stopped operation due to shortage of fund since 1998. Therefore, it has directly affected the quality of the education at the secondary level. It is suggested that these courses should be restarted for the benefit of the student.

HSTTI: At this institute the In-service courses are designed for the higher secondary school and college Teachers. There are different types of courses offered at this institute. The duration of each courses is between 2~3 months. Most of the courses follow the class room lecture method only. There is almost no laboratory class for these courses. Academic supervision is fully absent for this program. Therefore, we don't get the feedback on the benefit of such courses. These courses are also facing the problem due to shortage of fund.

Conclusion

We have seen that student enrollment has increased over the years, however, the quality of education did not improve. Although there are some schools where good library facilities are there, but there was very little use of it due to lack of interest among the student. Some schools also have good laboratory facilities, but without the presence of laboratory assistant those equipment and chemicals are being wasted. Academic supervision, which is necessary to improve the quality of education, is fully absent in all the secondary schools and training institute. Recently, government is expanding its budget on education and trying to provide more facilities like computer, books, laboratory equipment but still they are not enough to fulfill the requirement.

Recommendations:

- To improve the quality of education at the primary level, we need financial and technical assistance to build good school facilities such as class room environment, play ground and teacher's training.

- To improve the quality of education at the secondary level, we need financial and technical assistance to build good library and laboratory facilities and teacher's training.
- To attract student to the libraries, we need to provide books written in the local language (Bangla) rather than written in English.
- We need to recruit laboratory assistant in all the secondary schools to use fully the available laboratory facilities.
- We need to provide technical assistance to improve the quality of Pre-service and In-service training courses. We also need technical assistance at the vocational, poly-technique institutes and technical teacher training center.
- JICA volunteer works at different level for two years in Bangladesh. They spend the first year for learning the local language and then in the second year they carry some training. This is a very short time for training. Therefore, it is suggested that their stay period should be longer to provide better result.

Reference:

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