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Financing Of Education In Bangladesh: Key Issues And Policy Options.-II

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SECONDARY education is the preparatory stage both for access to higher education and for transition from school to the world of work. This level of education also feeds the technical and vocational education of the country. The secondary education of Bangladesh is seven years of duration. In 1988 the gross enrolment ratio is 18%: male 24% and Female 11%. The repetition rate is negligible which can be ignored for all practical purpose. The dropout rate increases steadily and it is particularly alarming in Grade-8 (21.8%) and Grade-10 (50.2%). In Grade-8 the dropout rate is high because of comparatively stricter selectivity in promoting students and partly because of leaving the school system for vocational education. In Grade-10 high dropout rate is actually high rate of failure in the first nation-wide examination (SSC). Students are to sit for another nation-wide public examination (HSC) which is also marked by high rate of failure.

The quality of secondary education also is very low. The contents are not life-oriented, mode of teaching and evaluation system are defective. Courses are so designed as to feed the higher education only. Lower secondary and secondary school leavers could hardly find any job. The physical facilities available in a sizeable number of privately managed institutions are not satisfactory. In term of facilities available there is a growing disparity between government and non-government institutions. The pupil-teacher ratio is 27: Female teachers constitute 10% of the total teachers.

One of the important features of this level of education is that 96% of the secondary schools are private (privately managed but not motivated by profit) and the rests are

government schools. Private schools receive 70% of the salary support for the teaching and non-teaching staff from the government. Government also provides grant-in-aid to these institutions. 10 government-run Teacher's Training Colleges offer B.Ed and in some cases M.Ed courses for teachers of both private and government institutions.

Another peculiar characteristic of secondary education is the provision of education from grade-7 to grade-12 through Cadet Colleges with abnormally high grants or subsidies. Per student expenditure in Cadet Colleges is Tk 30000 whereas in government schools it is only Tk. 1884.

Another notable feature is that religious education is competing with the general education and public funds are being diverted to religious education.

Private tuition by a large number of teachers i.e. increasing dependence of students on private tutors is another weakness of our education system. This raises the fundamental question of teacher's morality and effectiveness of class-room teaching. Parents and students are more concerned to secure marks rather than learning because of keen competition for the limited seats of the higher education institutions specially of medical and engineering institutions.

Last but not the least is the issue of large scale adoption of unfair means by the students in the SSS and HSC examinations conducted by Education Boards. This tendency is increasing and posing questions about the effectiveness of our examination and evaluation system.

Higher education

Higher education or 3rd level of education in Bangladesh is four years

of duration and is provided by colleges and universities. The number of students per 100000 inhabitants is 392. The gross enrolment ratio is 4.2 (male 6.6 and female 1.7).

The assessment of the situation reveals that quality of education at college level has gone down considerably and the performance of the universities is also far from satisfactory. (Report of the Committee on financial administration and management to higher education, Dhaka, Page 14).

The results of Degree Pass examination shows enormous wastage of resources and those of Honours subjects also indicate wastage varying from 20% to 30%.

Graduate unemployment is one of the major problems confronting the nation.

The major issues in college education may be listed as follows:

a) Nationalisation of private colleges: Government has been pursuing a policy of nationalising private colleges. But the way colleges are selected for nationalisation and the process of nationalisation resulted in undesirable and adverse effects on our education system. Nationalisation failed to ensure equal opportunity and quality of education. Community participation has become virtually zero in nationalised colleges.

b) Wide gap between college and university regarding facilities available for Honour's and Master's courses: The development of non-university sector is an important feature in the higher education of Bangladesh. Colleges will have to go a long way to achieve the same standard as that of universities.

c) Private tuition: Increasing dependence of the students even at Degree level on private tutors is one of the serious weakness of our educa-

tion system.

d) Research and publication: Research and Publication are part and parcel of higher education but these are so to speak non-existence in colleges.

e) Proper supervision and effective management of the colleges: Colleges are not properly supervised and efficiently managed. There is no community participation in the management and administration of Government Colleges.

In university education the main issues are as follows:

a) Session jam: Universities are subjected to long unscheduled closure leading to what is popularly known as session jam. This session jam entails enormous wastage of resources.

b) Campus violence: Political rivalry and campus violence have been vitiating the academic atmosphere of the universities for a long time.

c) Research potentiality and unutilised research capabilities: Our universities have enough research potentialities and capabilities which are not properly tapped and utilised.

d) Autonomy versus accountability: A serious debate is going on regarding autonomy on the one hand and accountability on the other hand. To foster independent thinking, new ideas and creativity autonomy of the universities should be guaranteed. As the universities are run by public money it is also necessary to inculcate accountability culture and universities should be liable to the society and the people.

e) Efficient management of universities: Our universities are not efficiently and properly managed.

(To be continued)