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Learning from previous progs stressed for quality pry edn

Shahin Akhter  16 April, 2026, 00:50



Representational image. | Star Mail photo

The government should assess the impact of the long-term projects taken for the primary education before taking new ones, said educationists and researchers.

The poor quality of primary education remained a big problem for the country due to ineffective components of the previous programmes amid lack of accountability and proper planning, they also said.



Their observations came after prime minister Tarique Rahman told Jatiya Sangsad on Wednesday that the government had planned to implement a five-year Fifth Primary Education Development Programme, beginning on July 1, to provide English language training to 2.47 lakh primary school teachers,.

He also said that 1,30,000 out of 3,76,489 primary school teachers had already received training in English language under the ongoing PEDP-4, while the rest of the teachers would be trained under the PEDP-5.

While training of the teachers is a very important thing, lack of facilities and huge gap in teachers and students ratio are affecting the expected outcomes, educationists and researchers observe.

BRAC University professor emeritus Manzoor Ahmed said that this programme first began in 1997 and later three more phases of programmes were adopted from 2004 to 2024.

Since 1997, nearly \$20 billion or about Tk 1.5 lakh crore has been spent for these four programmes, over 80 per cent cost of which came from Bangladesh's own investment, he continued.

'We provided inputs—some training, built some buildings, printed books and there has been so much investment—but there is no result,' he said, adding, 'The focus on results is missing.'

Manzoor Ahmed said that regarding learning outcomes, students did not benefit much as many of them could not even read or write Bangla after finishing classes.

According to the primary and mass education ministry, the PEDP-4, initially scheduled for implementation between July 2018 and June 2023, was later extended up to June this year.

With an estimated cost Tk 38,397 crore, the project was scheduled to have Tk 12,805 crore assistance from different donors, including the World Bank, and the rest Tk 25,592 crore was payable by the government.

The main objective of the programme is to provide quality primary education for all children from pre-primary up to Class V through an inclusive and equitable education system.

Planned to be implemented in all districts, the Directorate of Primary Education and Socio-Economic Infrastructure Division of the Planning Commission are tasked with its execution.

The PEDP-4 has three components—quality; access and participation and management; and governance and finance, and 21 sub components.

Professor Mohammad Ali Jinnah at the Dhaka University Institute of Education and Research said that assessment of the effectiveness of any project was a must to understand what results were achieved.

Researching these outcomes help play a supportive role in implementing future work plans, he said.

Manzoor Ahmed, also the head of two consultation committees formed for submitting recommendations on quality improvement of the primary and secondary education formed by the previous interim government, said that they wanted to discuss what should or should not be in the PEDP-5 but that discussion never happened.

He said that one of the major recommendations of the committee was to establish decentralised management to operate the schools.

‘The PEDP 5 could be used as a vehicle to implement our recommendations,’ he said, adding that sadly, when a new government came in, they often did not want to take anything from the previous one.

‘Still the old way is continuing,’ said Manzoor, also president of Bangladesh Early Childhood Development Network. Having acknowledged that importance of teachers’ training, Institute of Education and Research professor Mohammad Ali Jinnah also said that teachers must be capable to implement in the class what they had learned in the training.

‘If the quality of training is good and supportive factors exist in the classroom and if the implementation process is feasible, the teacher can transfer the knowledge to the student,’ he said.

He came up with four particular suggestions—fulfilling the vacant teacher posts; making training effective; increasing classroom facilities; and standardising the teacher-student ratio.

As per the Annual Primary School Statistics 2024, the country had total 1,18,607 pre-primary and primary schools with 2,01,85,152 students and 7,07,216 teachers, making the student-teacher ratio stand at 29.

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