

Examining BNP's education manifesto



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WHEN a political party assumes office, its election manifesto commitments cease to be mere pledges. They become a test of governance. Before the national elections, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party unveiled a broad and ambitious framework for education. By placing education at the centre of human capital development, social justice and economic growth, the political party promised to allocate 5 per cent of gross domestic product for the sector, reform the curriculum, expand technical and vocational education, introduce a third language, ensure the inclusion of students with special needs and strengthen digital infrastructure.

The pledge allocate 5 per cent of gross domestic product allocation for education is, undoubtedly, bold and positive. Yet, achieving this target will require a stronger revenue base, a reprioritisation of public expenditure and greater transparency. Simply increasing the budget is not enough; how the funds are used and how accountability is ensured are equally important. A phased rise in allocation, coupled with results-based budgeting, could give this commitment real substance.

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Curriculum reform is equally timely. For years, educationists have called for a shift away from rote-based learning towards a system grounded in skills, understanding and experience. Emphasising joyful learning, critical thinking, ethics and civic values is a constructive step. Yet such reform cannot be implemented overnight. Teacher training, changes in assessment systems, students' readiness and careful mapping of curricula with textbooks and learning materials are essential. Without coherent alignment, reforms risk becoming fragmented and confusing for both teachers and learners. A step-by-step transformation, supported by well-mapped curricula and teaching materials, is more likely to succeed than a sudden overhaul.

The plan to integrate technology and vocational education at the secondary level is similarly pragmatic. By combining technical and general education, students can acquire job-oriented skills and remain employable even if they cannot continue beyond Secondary School Certificate or Higher Secondary Certificate. Yet success will depend on effective links with industry. Without genuine coordination, vocational training risks remaining confined to the classroom, with little real-world impact. Similarly, introducing a third language may open global opportunities, but unless the gap between urban and rural access is addressed, its benefits will remain unevenly distributed.

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The commitment to inclusive education for students with special needs is ethically significant. It humanises the education system and reinforces a rights-based approach. Yet it requires sustained

investment in trained teachers, assistive technologies and appropriate infrastructure. If access is not firmly established as a right, marginalisation may persist. Here, continuity of political will is crucial.

The emphasis on digital infrastructure is also highly relevant. Technology can make learning more dynamic and accessible, particularly when combined with initiatives such as providing tablets for students. Yet, the mere distribution of devices matters less than their effective use. Teachers' digital competence, the cost of maintenance and reliable electricity and internet services are practical challenges that must be addressed. Without proper training, content alignment and ongoing support, tablet-based learning risks remaining symbolic, failing to narrow the digital divide or improve learning outcomes.

Overall, the education manifesto of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party is ambitious but not unrealistic. It contains many of the key ingredients for meaningful reform. However, transformation cannot be achieved through policy statements alone; it depends on financial capacity, administrative efficiency, professional engagement and long-term continuity. Education reform is a slow, profound process, where haste can be as damaging as stagnation.

Ultimately, progress in the education sector should be measured not as a political achievement but as a collective investment in the nation's future. The manifesto's promises will gain real meaning only when they are reflected in classrooms, in teachers' preparedness and in the confidence of society at large.

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