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NEWAGE

Quality education, not just access, is what matters

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The logo for 'NEWAGE THE OUTSPOKEN DAILY' is centered on a dark grey background. The word 'NEWAGE' is written in a large, bold, sans-serif font. 'NEW' is in black, and 'AGE' is in white. The entire word 'NEWAGE' is enclosed within a red rounded rectangular border. Below 'NEWAGE', the words 'THE OUTSPOKEN DAILY' are written in a smaller, white, all-caps, sans-serif font.

THE Education Sector Analysis 2026, presented by UNICEF, lays bare a learning crisis that threatens to undermine the country's development ambitions. The findings are particularly alarming because they reveal that increased access to education has not translated into meaningful learning outcomes. Only half of children aged 7–14 possess foundational reading skills, while a mere 39 per cent demonstrate basic numeracy skills. The proportion of out-of-school children has hardly improved over recent years. Children from poor households, ethnic minority communities, urban slums, tea gardens, hill tracts and climate-vulnerable regions remain

disproportionately excluded from educational opportunities. While Bangladesh deserves recognition for expanding enrolment and educational access over the past decades, with public and private educational institutions having multiplied and more families than ever viewing education as the principal pathway to social mobility, access alone cannot guarantee quality. Earlier assessments, including the one by UN Children's Fund, have already shown that many students enter secondary school without mastering primary-level literacy and mathematics. Such persistent deficiencies indicate deep structural weaknesses that have remained largely unresolved despite substantial public expenditure. The consequence is that educational certificates are increasingly losing their value as indicators of actual knowledge and competence, raising serious concerns about the future preparedness of the country's youth.

The roots of the crisis are neither new nor difficult to identify. Education experts have repeatedly pointed to the shortage of qualified teachers, weak teacher training, outdated teaching methods, excessive reliance on memorisation and inadequate institutional accountability. There is a shortage of about 40,000 primary school teachers. Many schools continue to operate without adequate leadership and supervision, while teachers remain burdened with administrative duties that divert attention from classroom instruction. The ESA also highlights declining budget utilisation and rising household expenditure on education, exposing a troubling contradiction. As public investment struggles to ensure quality, families are increasingly compelled to spend more on private tuition, coaching and supplementary learning materials. This growing financial burden undermines educational equity and places poorer households at a particular disadvantage.

Meanwhile, universities continue to produce graduates whose skills often fail to match job market requirements. Unemployment and underemployment among educated youth remain widespread. The warning from educationalists that curricula need to remain relevant to a rapidly evolving economy should therefore be taken seriously. Without stronger links between educational institutions and employers, the gap between academic qualifications and workplace demands is likely to widen further.



The country requires comprehensive reform focused on teacher preparation, curriculum relevance, classroom accountability, equitable financing and effective assessment systems. The authorities must direct investment towards ensuring that every child acquires foundational skills before progressing through the education system. At the same time, educational institutions must equip students with practical, technical and transferable skills that respond to job market realities.

Tags

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[#Education Sector Analysis 2026](#)

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