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Improving Government Primary Schools in Bangladesh Which Policy Changes or Adaptations are Necessary?

Mohammad Rezaul Karim *
Md. Shamim Yusuf **

Abstract : *Education system in Bangladesh is an extended edition of education system in United Kingdom. Bangladesh follows the guidelines and procedures from the primary to higher education. As primary education is the foundation of educated nation and higher education, it requires improved and quality education at the primary level. For the need of time, UK has changed their system in primary level and is changing time to time on the basis of research done on these areas. This article discusses the present primary education system in the UK and shows the comparative study between Bangladesh and the UK. This article aims to discuss the school improvement and quality of primary school especially government primary schools. It is an involved process related to school improvement and school effectiveness. There are so many theoretical perspectives here in this regard. Bangladesh can adapt some issues in policy level to get better result in the primary school system for which there may need to change.*

1.0 Introduction

As the education is the backbone of a nation, without proper education no nation can be developed. It is a critical concern for all developing countries including Bangladesh. The institutions that provide education, such as schools, colleges and universities may be improved in order to provide better quality education. Primary schools should be developed as they provide basic education for all. 'Primary education has two main purposes: to produce a literate and numerate population that can deal with problems encountered at home and at work and to serve as a foundation on which further education is built' (Lockheed et al, 1991:1). Primary education is the foundation of higher education, which may suffer if basic education fails. Developing countries are struggling to develop education as a principal goal, but with a lack of efficiency, proper utilization of resources and poorly implemented educational policies they are still struggling. The ministries of education in developing countries seek to improve primary education in order to meet Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and to provide adequate state provision for the population and for future development.

1.1 Bangladesh: Contextual background

As a developing country, Bangladesh has fought against poverty to

* Assistant Director, Bangladesh Public Administration Training Centre, Savar, Dhaka.

** Material Developer, BRAC Education Programme, BRAC, Head Office, Dhaka and a currently studying MA in International Educational Management at the University of Leeds. UK.

improve its primary education since it became independent in 1971. Before independence its education policies were formulised by the then foreign rulers who were unaware of the needs of Bangladesh. Soon after independence, the government of Bangladesh realised that to develop the country and to eradicate illiteracy, education would have to be prioritised, especially in the primary sector. Government primary schools provide 5 years of compulsory education from grade one to grade five, but enrolment in primary schools has still not reached 100%. Poverty, parental illiteracy and lack of awareness are the major causes of these continuing problems (Education Watch Report, 2003-2004:7-12). Whilst admission has improved and the drop-out rate has decreased, non-completion of compulsory primary education persists due to the distance of the schools, extreme poverty and poor quality of education.

After the Jomtein Conference of Education for All (EFA) in 1990, the government has taken steps to improve primary education during the past decade with the introduction of competency based primary education in 1992. However, little has changed at the local level over the same period. The general opinion of Bangladeshi people is that the quality of primary education remains poor. Several attempts have been taken to initiate primary education policies (eg *Khudrat-E-Khuda Shiksa Commission) but little has materialised. After the signing of the MDGs and the movement for Education for All (EFA), primary education enrolment improved (Education Watch Report, 2003-2004). However, the Government continues to struggle with policy interventions that are unrealistic, unadaptable, politically biased and which consistently fail to be appropriately adapted to the context (Miah, 2001:2).

Developed countries generally provide a universal quality of education to the student. Where education is decentralized, which means that schools are self managed, schools develop their own plans and policies for improvement. The head teachers, teachers and the school's governing bodies play the key role in improvement. However, in Bangladesh the primary schools are under the Ministry of Education and the management of primary education is controlled centrally. No school has the power to take any local initiatives for its improvement. According to Miah (2001:19), the teachers of primary schools only teach their students based on ministerial guidance. They do not have power to initiate any kind of policies or plans to improve the schools. This is the responsibility of the ministry to develop policies and plans to improve primary schools in Bangladesh.

The aims and objectives of this essay are to consider the theories and possible solutions to the problems that undermine improvement policies by asking the following research questions:

- What are the key features of school effectiveness?
- What are the key features of school improvement?
- What is the current condition of Government primary schools in Bangladesh?
- How can the government primary schools be improved in Bangladesh?

The essay begins with an introduction to the essay topic and structure and a description of the context. It is followed by a review of the literature germane on both school effectiveness and school improvement and their key features. This is followed by an analysis of primary sector education in Bangladesh. The conclusion summarises the findings of the research and makes recommendations for improvement.

1.2 Methodology

The essay has been written on the basis of literature review and journal articles related to improvement and development issues in primary education making theoretical framework. There were group discussions for a comparative analysis on primary schools of the UK and Bangladesh as well in order to find out some ways to improve primary education.

1.3 Limitations

The article is based on theoretical framework and did not put into practical situation because of time constraints and could not able to take any remarks of current students, teachers or officers related to the topic. However, we have an intension to do research in future.

2.0 Literature review

2.1 School Effectiveness

Macbeath and Motimore (2001:1) describe school effectiveness as an issue that has occupied researchers and policy makers for three decades. In general all countries of the world are concerned to make their schools more effective, to enhance the quality of teaching and to raise standards of achievement for pupils. As a research paradigm, school effectiveness is premised upon the measurement of the outcomes and quantifying differences between schools (Harris, 2005:8). Beare et al (1989) and Halsall (1998:4) comment on school effectiveness as a concerted attempt in several countries to rediscover ways of creating excellent schools. This concern is related to professional orientation, commitment and the political climate that has influenced school development over decades. This needs external demands to strive for excellent quality and hints at standards in school management (Carter, 1988:4). Levine and Lezotte (1990), Halsall (1998:5) state the definition of effectiveness as 'the

production of desired outcomes.' Levine and Lezotte's definition of school effectiveness also emphasizes the outcomes of the schools. There is no one specific definition of school effectiveness. According to Carter (1998:5) 'the multiplicity of the meaning of school effectiveness is possible to identify, but different stakeholders define school effectiveness differently'. Creemers (2000:110-123) argues that school effectiveness research is criticised because it takes into account only a restricted set of outcomes, such as basic skills and knowledge. Therefore multiple outcomes are proposed as criteria for effectiveness. He suggests the examples of multiple outcomes are basic skills and knowledge (such as reading, mathematics and language), social skills and attitudes, higher order skills (such as problem solving), meta-cognitive knowledge and skills, technology, creativity and moral behaviour.

Several models for school effectiveness have been developed. The basic idea behind all models for school effectiveness is to distinguish between levels in education. All models include at least the individual student level, the classroom level, the school level and the context level (Creemers, 2000:110-123). School effectiveness is a condensed effort at each level to enhance student outcomes and helps in creating excellent schools.

Mortimore (1998:61) suggests that the twelve key factors of school effectiveness are:

1. Purposeful leadership,
2. The involvement of the deputy head,
3. The involvement of teachers,
4. Consistency amongst teachers,
5. Structured sessions,
6. Intellectually challenging teaching,
7. Work-centred environment,
8. Limited focus within sessions,
9. Maximum communication between teachers and pupils,
10. Record keeping,
11. Parental involvement,
12. Positive climate.

2.2 School Improvement

School improvement is a process that enhances the whole approach of the school. According to Carter (1998:7) the definition of school improvement has not suffered from the problem of multiplicity of meaning in the way in which school effectiveness has. The widely quoted definition given by Van Velzen et al (1985) is of 'a systematic, structured effort aimed at change in learning conditions and other related internal conditions in one or more schools with the ultimate aim of accomplishing

educational goals more effectively'. Hopkins et al (1996:1) state that school improvement is an approach to educational change that focuses on student achievement. They also suggest School Improvement Research (SIR) strengthens the schools' capacity for managing improvement initiatives. In this sense school improvement is about raising student outcomes through the teaching-learning process.

Gray et al (1999:5) note that an improving school therefore may be defined as one, which increases in its effectiveness over time, where effectiveness is judged in value added terms. They relate school improvement with school effectiveness. If a school becomes more effective and adds value, the school may improve. Stoll and Fink (1996), Halsall (1998:7) emphasize several dimensions: the necessity for careful planning, management and continuity even in the face of difficulties and the need for a focus on the teaching and learning as well as upon supporting organizational conditions. Additionally, the intricate relationship between school and improvement and change is signalled, and while improvement occurs within schools their location within a larger educational system is indicated. The range of school improvement goals include those related to pupils, teachers and school organization. However, the ultimate aim of school improvement is to enhance pupils' progress, development and achievement.

Hopkins et al (1996:1) have highlighted several principles of School Improvement as:

- School improvement is a process that focuses on enhancing the quality of the students.
- The vision of the school should be one that embraces all members of the school community as both learners and contributors.
- The school will see in external pressure for change important opportunities to secure its internal priorities.
- The school will seek to develop structures and create conditions, which encourage collaboration and lead to the empowerment of individuals and the group.
- The school will seek to promote the view that enquiry, monitoring and evaluation quality is a responsibility, which all members of staff share.

The Institute of Education at London University suggests the following key features of an improved school that is cited in Atwood (2003:10)

- Professional leadership from the head teacher.
- A shared vision particularly among the senior managers or staff and governors.

- A learning environment with an orderly atmosphere.
- Teaching and learning are considered the principal activities of the school.
- There is purposeful teaching - that is staff know what they are doing and why.
- High expectations of pupils' success.
- Positive reinforcement is widely used, negative reinforcement rarely used.
- Progress is monitored very thoroughly indeed.
- Pupils' rights and responsibilities are taken seriously and continuous efforts are made to enhance them.
- There is a continuous effort to develop the home-school relationship and to involve parents in the work of the school.
- The school is a learning organization, which includes making staff development a significant priority.

2.3 Key Issues for School Improvement

School improvement is regarded as a process of change that impacts on school culture. To improve a school there needs to be a change in its culture, development plan, effective teaching learning, professional development, partnership and evaluation. To improve a school the following features need to be considered.

2.3.1 Changing School Culture and Managing Change : Culture is the set of assumptions, beliefs and values that predominate in any organization, which operates in an unconscious and semi-unconscious way (Halsall, 1998:29). If school culture does not support the change effort, schools would not improve. According to Hopkins et al (1994) and Halsall (1998:29) unless we address the issue of school culture there is little change that can be achieved in the school. Changing the culture is necessary to improve school. Different groups may have different ideologies, so in schools with a strong culture there may be counter-culture. Dean (1999:17) states that within a large school there may be different groups who have different values and norms. This difference may conflict. Here the head teacher should create a culture of collaboration. Every head teacher needs to consider what s/he wants the school culture to be, and then take into account how best it can be developed. Without changing the culture, the school improvement effort will not work. Hargreaves and Hopkins (1993) cited in Dean (1999:20) point out that school improvement attempts may fail if they do not take account of school culture. Change does not happen directly. Halsall (1998:33) argues one needs to work on changing organizational structure

in order to begin shifting the culture. A head teacher needs to organize all staff together, persuading them to make efforts to change in a planned way. Change is related to structure and culture. Different structures may be needed for different purposes. The most successful schools are deliberately creating contrasting but mutually supportive structural arrangements to cope with the twin pressures of development and maintenance (Hopkins, 1996; Halsall, 1998:34). On the other hand the head teacher needs to organise all staff together in agreeing their values, and provide them with sufficient freedom so people can work creatively (Dean, 1999:50). Change is difficult to manage. If change can be managed successfully the school may be improved. According to Fullen (1991) cited in Dean (1999:100) successful school improvement depends on an understanding of the problem of change at the level of practice and the development of corresponding strategies for bringing about beneficial reforms. Change is difficult because it requires rethinking of values and beliefs. Change may also generate conflict between those teachers who are agreeing and those who are disagreeing. It is the head teacher's responsibility to play the key role in leading the change.

2.3.2 Organization and Structure

Change does not happen automatically. Halsall (1998:33) argues one needs to work on changing organizational structure in order to begin shifting the culture. A head teacher needs to organize all staff together, persuading them to make efforts to change in a planned way. Change is related to structure and culture. Different structures may be needed for different purposes. According to Hopkins (1996:38) ,the most successful schools are deliberately creating contrasting but mutually supportive structural arrangements to cope with the twin pressures of development and maintenance'. On the other hand head teacher need to organise all the staff together in agreeing their values and providing them the situation where with the sufficient freedom people can work creatively (Dean, 1999:50)

2.3.3 School Development Plan

Dean (1999:26) claims that the school development lan is an important way of implementing the vision for a school. Without the development plan, change seems to be impossible. Any kind of change or action needs proper planning. Planning brings people together. It helps to speculate the future, to invent possible action and to find the way to carry out the plan (Cockett, 1998:69-70). MacGilchrist et al (1995) cited in Dean (1999:27) classify four types of plan:

a) The rhetorical plan: This plan has no ownership, neither by the head teacher nor the staff.

b) The singular plan: This plan is owned by the head teacher and used as a management tool.

c) The cooperative plan: This plan is partially owned by the staff.

d) The collaborative plan: This involves shared ownership by all the staff and some others. The collaborative plan impacts more on school development and teaching-learning.

2.3.4 Effective Teaching - Learning and Professional Development

Stoll and Fink (1996:48) remark classroom action accounts for more of the variation in school effect on pupils' outcomes than does school level activity. This means effective teaching and learning at the classroom level is important to improve the outcomes of the student. Effective teaching-learning is required to achieve positive outcomes for the students. Pupils' learning and achievement is strongly linked with the amount of interaction between themselves and the teachers (Dean, 1999:61). Effective teaching learning depends on teachers' development. Halsall (1998:36) emphasises that if effective teaching is an important factor in the enhancement of student outcomes, then teacher development must be central to school improvement efforts. The development of the individual teacher leads to the development of the school as a whole (Dean, 1999:112).

2.3.5 Leadership and Management

Leadership and management are two key elements of school improvement and school effectiveness. Leadership is a process concerned with vision, culture and partnership. Management is about maintaining the day-to-day activities, co-ordination and organizational actions. An Infant School Deputy cited in Day (2003:167) suggests leadership is about having vision, articulating, ordering priorities, gathering others to go with you, reviewing what you are doing and holding on to your values. Management is about the function, procedures and systems by which you realise the vision. Through the effective day-to-day management of activities, the vision of the leadership may be realised. School improvement depends on leadership. Harris (2003:1) describes deep and sustained school improvement as depending upon the leadership of the many rather than the few. There are different models of leadership but the question may often arise as to which model of leadership is effective, Riley (2000) and in Harris (2003:10) states that there is no one package for school leadership, no one model to be learnt and applied regardless of culture or context. A leadership model depends on the local context and could be applied in accordance with the individual school culture. Education development has been framed by a socio-political context, knowledge and revolution, globalization and competition, so leadership styles are changing with the significant changes in context. According to

Harris (2003:16) the debate between transactional leadership and transformational leadership has dominated both policy and practice in different countries. Transactional leadership is actually more about management than leadership (Halsall, 1998:43). This style is concerned with structure and emphasises on organizational purposes. The role of the transactional leader is to focus on organizational work in order to reach the desired outcomes. Transformational leadership not only focuses on management but purposefully impacts upon culture in order to bring about change. Leithwood et al (1999) cited in Harris (2003:18) identify a number of key activities in transformational leadership. These are setting direction, developing people, organizing and building relationships. Transactional leadership is therefore, more concerned with organization and management, whilst transformational leadership is concerned with vision, culture and change. Both are purposively required to improve schools. Day (2003:167) suggests a balancing act is required for the success of both leadership and management.

2.3.6 Professional Development

Effective teaching learning is very much concerned with school improvement. Effective teaching learning depends on teacher's development. Halsall (1998, p36) emphasises if effective teaching is the factor in the enhancement of the student's outcomes then teacher development must be central to school improvement efforts. The development of individual teacher leads to the development of the school as a whole (Dean 1999:112).

2.3.7 Inquiry and Reflection

Halsall (1998:38) points out successful school improvement is associated with enquiry and reflection at both individual and institutional levels. Inquiry includes the activities of monitoring, evaluation and research. Findings from research and monitoring can be helpful for taking any initiative for improvement. Monitoring is about the routine collection of data, while evaluation is about making judgement on specific problems. This helps schools find and evaluate their problems and generate new plans for improvement. To help them to understand and refine themselves, research should first be undertaken by the teachers themselves, and then to emphasise the research studies of others on solving their problem (Halsall 1998:39).

2.3.8 Partnership

If the school can create a positive relationship with their students, parents, governor and local community it helps to improve the school. To show the importance of different levels, Halsall (1998:45) notes that a school leader needs to share ownership and responsibilities with:

Students: Encouraging them to take greater control over their own work, listening and responding to the student's views, and giving students responsibility in the life of the school.

Parents: Ensuring that there is a free flow of information to and from the parents, and obtaining parental assistance in the school.

Governing Bodies: Barber et al (1995) and in Halsall (1998:47) identify three major roles of the governing body: to provide a strategic view, to act as a critical friend and to ensure accountability.

2.3.9 Evaluation

Describing the purpose of evaluation, Stoll and Fink (1996:168-169) suggest evaluation: promotes school self accountability, provides useful indicators of what works well and what needs to be improved, guarantees equal opportunity, determines trends in school effectiveness and school improvement and leads to further development. All these findings are concerned with school improvement. As a result evaluation is an important element to improve schools.

From school improvement research it can be argued that a school has to consider all the above issues in order to improve.

2.4 School Improvement Propositions

According to Hopkins et al (2000:261-269) there are six propositions foudn for school improvement. They explain that through our engagement with schools, we have begun to develop a series of propositions that attempt to unravel the complexities of school improvement.

Proposition 1: Without an equal focus on the development capacity, or internal conditions of the school, innovative work will quickly become marginalized. Within this proposition the key management arrangement includes: commitment to staff development; involving staff, students and the community in decision-making; developing a transformational leadership approach within the head teacher, co-ordination and collaborative planning.

Proposition 2: School improvement will not occur unless clear decisions are made about development and maintenance. Hargreaves and Hopkins (1991) cited in Hopkins et al (2000) make distinction between maintenance and development. Maintenance refers to the school carrying out its day-to-day activities and the fulfilment of its statuary obligation. Development means the amount of resources, time and energy that a school reserves for carrying forward those aims, aspirations and activities to add value. Through development activities a school will gradually make progress.

Proposition 3: Successful school improvement involves adapting external change for internal purposes. Proposition three suggests that development planning is important to school improvement. When a school works through planning it generates a number of priorities for action that should include the overall needs of the whole school community. Hopkins (1991) cited in Hopkins et al (2000) suggest that the key principles of the selection of priorities should be manageability (i.e. how much can we realistically hope to achieve?) and coherence (i.e. is there a sequence that will ease implementation?).

Proposition 4: School improvement will remain a marginal activity unless it impacts across all levels of the school. Change will not be successful if it does not impact all levels of the organization. It should be maintained in the senior management level, as they are responsible for overall change and policy formulation; the department or working group level, who are responsible for the curriculum, teaching and learning; and finally the entire individual teacher levels, who are responsible for developing classroom practice through professional growth.

Proposition 5: Data about school performance creates the energy for development. Ainscow et al (1994) cited in Hopkins et al (2000) argue that development tools can be most effective when they: involve the systematic collection, interpretation and use of school-generated data in decision making; provide an effective strategy for reviewing the progress and impact of school policies and initiatives; involve widespread staff in the process of data collection and analysis; and establish clear ground rules for the collection, control and use of the data.

Proposition 6: Successful school improvement efforts engender a language about teaching and change. Joyce et al (1993) cited in Hopkins et al (2000) analyse the characteristics of school improvement: it focuses on specific outcomes which can be related to student learning rather than exam results; in formulating strategies it draws on theory and research into practice, as well as the teachers own experience; it emphasizes staff development; and monitors the impact of the policy on practice early and regularly rather than relying on post-hoc evaluation.

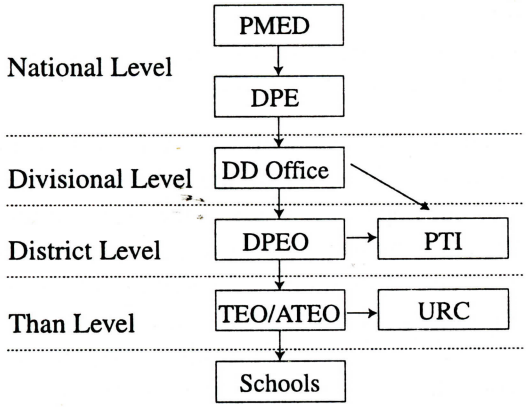
3.0 Bangladesh: What Policy Changes or Adaptations are Necessary to Improve Government Primary Schools?

3.1 Present Operational Management of Government Primary Schools

As the aim of this essay is to discuss the policy of improving government primary education in Bangladesh, it is necessary to discuss the current operational management of primary education, which is under the Ministry of Education. According to its primary education website.

(see_website:URL:http://scs.une.edu.au/StudentFiles/HomePages/312_1_04/ROY_ web/toppage.htm) the operational management of primary education sector is as follows.

Fig:1, Management Structure of Primary Education in Bangladesh.



Adapted from Website (Appendix1)

(URL:(http://scs.une.edu.au/StudentFiles/HomePages/312_1_04/ROY_web/toppage.htm)

Primary & Mass Education Division (PMED): The PMED is headed by the secretary of the government. Policy formulation, planning, implementation, evaluation, and initiating legislative measures relating to primary education are major responsibilities of this division.

Directorate of Primary Education: The directorate of primary education is under the PMED. This directorate is headed by a Director General (DG) and mainly this directorate is responsible for the operation of primary schools all over the country.

There are some divisions under this directorate and their responsibilities are: Administrative division: The Administrative division is responsible for general administration and co-ordination among field and central management. Planning & Development Division: Initiating new plans is the main responsibility of this division. Generating the new project, preparing the budget, fund disbursement and allocation are also done in this division. Training Division: This division is responsible for assessing the need of the teachers as well as the staff concerned. Monitoring and Evaluation Division: Collecting and analysing data are the main responsibilities of this division. Policy and Operation Division: This division is responsible for creating new policies and for their implementation. Management Information System Cell (MIS): This division is responsible for computerised data collection and analysis.

Office of the Divisional Deputy Director: The Directorate of Primary Education is divided into six divisions. Each division is headed by a Deputy Director (DD). The divisional offices carry out supervision and control of the primary schools, clusters, District and Thana education offices under the jurisdiction of the respective division. District Primary Education Office: There are 64 districts in Bangladesh and each and every division has a district education office that is headed by a District Primary Education Officer (DPEO). The responsibility of the district education office is to take decisions related to administration and supervision of all primary schools under its jurisdiction. Thana Education Offices: There are 481 Thana education offices in Bangladesh. A Thana Education Officer (TEO) is the head of the Thana education office. The main responsibilities of TEO are: supervision and monitoring of primary schools, preparing and sending proposals for the transfer of teachers, their pension gratuity and benefits, monitoring and updating of the service books of the teachers. To assist the TEO there are some Assistant Thana Education Officer (ATEO). Their major responsibility is to supervise the schools in their respective areas.

Schools: There are 37,671 Government primary schools in Bangladesh, which provide five years of primary education. These five years consist of five grades (classes), which covers children in the age group of 6 years and over (Rahman and Aziz, 1997:76). The government establishes schools, and supplies all kinds of physical facilities.

3.2 Head Teachers and Their Role

Head teachers are recruited in two ways: promotion and direct recruitment. The major responsibilities of the head teachers are maintaining daily management to run schools. According to Education Watch report (2003-2004:12) the key role of the head teacher is to ensure effective functioning of the school in accordance with the government directions. Rahman and Aziz (1997:83) find some of the roles of head teachers:

Preparation of class routine.

Assigning the subjects taught by other teachers.

Overseeing teaching-learning activities in the classroom.

Reporting to the Thana education office.

Taking initiative to invite the community leader.

Ensuring the daily cleanliness of the school.

Actually the head teacher follows the prescribed rules and regulation of the ministry of education of government.

3.3 Key Areas that Need to be Improved

Bangladesh is about to achieve 100 percent of enrolment in primary education but it still fights with the quality of primary education. Philanthropists remark that the quality of the primary education is not yet satisfactory. It requires an overall improvement of primary education in Bangladesh. Several Philanthropists and researchers argue about some areas that are needed to improve:

3.3.1 Teaching Learning

Teaching-learning is important to improve the quality of education. Mollah (2004:27) opines the teaching method in Bangladesh has been mostly teacher-centred. Psychologists and modern educationists think the most effective method of teaching-learning should be student centred.

3.3.2 Teacher Development

To provide effective teaching, the teacher has to be developed. There is a 10-month training course for the teacher of primary schools, which is called the Certificate in Education (C in Ed). Miah (2001:21) argues that the course is taught only in the classroom context. There is no provision for the practical aspects. Without the practical issues this course helps a little to improve the ability of the teacher to provide better teaching.

3.3.3 Curriculum

The National Curriculum and Text Book Board (NCTB) are responsible for preparing the necessary curricula, syllabi and learning-teaching materials. NCTB prepares a competency-based curriculum. Hossain and Jahan (2000:7) find some deficiencies in curriculum development that include: lack of professional expertise in development of a modern curriculum; lack of solid research to provide information about the previous curriculum and the area needing revision; insufficient balance of understanding, comprehension and application.

3.3.4 Method of Assessment in the School

Importance is given on the terminal and annual assessment of the schools. Mollah (2004:16) argues that the process of assessment is actually intertwined with the teaching-learning method. If teachers assess students' work throughout the year, the lengthy terminal and annual testing of the student's achievement would not be so important.

3.3.5 Academic Supervision

The TEOs and ATEOs are responsible for supervision and providing academic help for schools. But their qualification, experience and workload make this questionable. Mollah (2004:56) states that the

efficiency of their practice is reduced, as these official are busier with collecting information and other managerial activities. So they can provide a little effort to help improve the schools.

3.3.6 School Management Committee (SMC) and Community's involvement

Community's participation is an important factor to improve schools. There are School Managing Committees (SMC) in each and every school in Bangladesh. But they are politically biased (Miah, 2001:12). Sometimes they do not have any idea about management. So they contribute little to improve schools.

Understanding from the school effectiveness and school improvement policies it is clear that a decentralised mechanism is required to implement the policies for school improvement. Showing the rationale of educational decentralization, Govinda (1997:13) advocates school effectiveness and school improvement have been mentioned as a justification of decentralisation. Through the decentralised approach of education management, policies for school effectiveness and school improvement can be implemented. Discussing the school improvement proposition, Hopkins et al (2000:261-269) argue that the six propositions will not implemented in a more effective way in the centralised reform. Moreover to improve school, it has to have its own development plan, and it should change its own culture. In the school the head teachers have to play the vital role to take initiatives to improve school. In Bangladesh the head teachers only follow the prescribed policies of the government. They do not hold the power to develop any revolutionary plan for school improvement. According to Education Watch Report (2003-2004) their (the head teachers) training and degree of freedom do not support or encourage a leadership role. On the other hand the primary education in Bangladesh is 'highly centralised' (Rahman and Aziz, 1997:86). As a result the whole school improvement policies like those in the UK and other developed countries may not be applicable to improve government primary schools in Bangladesh.

3.4 What Bangladesh can Adapt from School Effectiveness and School Improvement

Although the all the policies may not be applicable in Bangladesh, there are some issues that Bangladesh can adapt to improve primary schools. Bangladesh should give emphasises to effective teaching learning which is the key to improving the quality of education. Teachers in Bangladesh emphasise basic outcomes such as language, and mathematic skills. They could take initiative to teach multiple outcomes that include social skills, problem solving skill and higher order skills, behavioural skills and meta-

cognitive skill. As far as it is understood from the school improvement propositions, the entire proposition may not be applicable to Bangladesh, because, decentralised mechanism is required to maintain all the propositions. However propositions five and six may be adaptable, as proposition five is more about systematic data collection, analysing the data and using the data to generate new plans. Respectively proposition six recommends creating a better environment by developing a teacher to provide effective teaching. Proposition six also focuses on improving student outcomes rather than on examination results alone. Government primary schools in Bangladesh emphasise student formative and summative assessment. The ultimate aim of this process is to enhance exam results. Through this process multiple student outcomes are neglected. So, proposition six may be applicable to Bangladeshi government primary schools to increase students' multiple outcomes.

Leadership is one of the key factors to improve schools. Researchers emphasise transactional and transformational leadership for school improvement. Transactional leadership is more about management than leadership. On the other hand transformational leadership focus not only on management but it also focuses on change and culture. From understanding of leadership and management, to improve schools it can be argued that transformational leadership may not be suitable for Bangladesh as its primary education is centralised. Policy formulation and development plans are taken centrally. Transformational leadership style requires a decentralised policy. From the role of the head teachers in Bangladesh it is clear that they abide by the prescribed formula throughout their day-to-day management. As transactional leadership is more about management than leadership, this style will help head teachers to do their work effectively. Moreover they become leaders, which helps them to initiate plans for change in the future. Applying the transactional leadership style in schools will enhance the efficiency of the head teachers so that they can contribute more to school improvement.

It is mentioned earlier that the teachers in Bangladesh teach the students in a 'teacher-centred' way. From the perspective of the UK and other developed countries, Bangladesh may adapt the progressive or 'child-centred' teaching method to provide better quality of education to students. After visiting UK primary school (Holy Name Primary school) we have learnt they (the teachers in UK schools) teach students using a child-centred approach. They emphasise group activities of the children. Children participate in group-work and they learn by doing. Bangladesh can also initiate this, adapting the child centred teaching method to improve government primary schools.

4.0 Conclusion

School improvement is to change and change is a slow process. School culture, the development plan, effective teaching, and teachers themselves are all involved in this process. Hargreaves (1999) cited in Macbeth and Mortimore (2001:17), uses the horticultural metaphor of showing, germination, thinning, shaping and pruning. So the process of school improvement requires time and each and every tier of the process requires necessary action as Hargreaves shows. Bangladesh also requires time to improve its government primary schools.

Future Recommendations

As primary education in Bangladesh is centralised, it is the responsibility of the policy makers to take the necessary steps to improve primary schools. The following measures may be helpful for Bangladesh:

1. **Teacher recruitment and development:** A sound recruitment policy is necessary to recruit skilled teachers. Before going to the classroom each and every teacher has to be well trained in teaching skills. Teachers may also be trained on leadership and management.
2. **Development of Training Process:** In primary education there is a provision for 10-month of C in ED training for teachers. Teachers are not developed effectively due to lack of practical aspects in the training curriculum. The whole training curriculum has to be revised.
3. **Leadership and management training for the head teachers:** Leadership of the head teacher and the supervisory level staff is important to improve schools. Head teachers, and right up-to district level supervisors, could be provided training in leadership and management to enhance their capacity.
4. **SMC's participation:** Members of the managing committee sometimes do not know their duties and responsibilities or they ignore them. Initiatives are necessary for SMC to take active participation. They may be trained on management so that they can work together with the teachers and local government authority to improve primary schools.
5. On a trial basis, the government could adapt a policy to give some degree of autonomy at the district level. Then the district could make its own plans for improvement.

It can be argued that greater decentralisation and local school autonomy are the long-term aim. So the policy makers can take medium term measures to train the head teachers and the local administrative body in

leadership and management by which they can contribute more to improve government primary schools.

A wide range of research is required to find out the hidden barriers to improving the quality of primary schools in Bangladesh. A best-suited policy may then be applied to improve the government primary schools.

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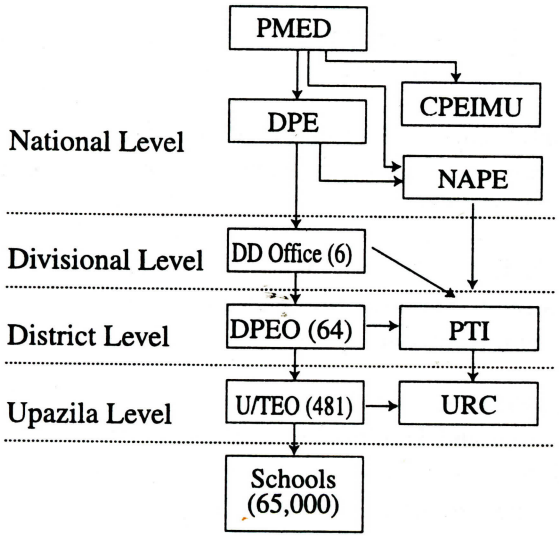
Appendix: 1



Key:

- PMED- Primary and Mass Education
- DPE- Directorate of Primary Education
- CPEIMU- Compulsory Primary Education Implementation and Monitoring Unit
- NAPE - National Academy of Primary Education
- DD Offices- Deputy Directors Offies
- DPEO- District Primary Education Officer
- PTI- Primary Training Institute
- TEO- Upazila/Thana Education Officer
- URC- Upazila/ Thana Resource Center.

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