Quality Education: Is Absence of Accountability and Participation a Villain in the Scene?

4 QUALITY EDUCATION

"Ensure inclusive and equitable education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all"

-- Goal 4 of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

For making SDG 4 a reality, Bangladesh will need to address a number of concerns that have been affecting the education sector in various ways. These include policy development, policy ownership, building consensus on key objectives and strategies and their effective implementation.[1] Bangladesh is quite confident about setting itself as an example of a leading SDG achiever. In order to do so, it needs to prioritise the issue of accountability and participation for delivering on the full SDG 4/Education 2030 Agenda in Bangladesh.

The overarching education goal (SDG 4) of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) comprises seven targets and three means of implementation. The SDG 4 targets cover primary to tertiary education, technical and vocational education, skills development of youth and adults, literacy and numeracy of the population, inclusiveness and equity in education, quality of education and of teachers, as well as provisions, scope and character of education services.

During the era of Education for All (EFA) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), there was a great global improvement in education. We should be inspired by the progresses brought particularly in net enrolment and gender parity in basic education of Bangladesh at that period. However, EFA and MDGs have also left us with some unfinished agendas. Inequality and a low rate in the transition from primary to secondary school still persist; and quality of education remains an issue of concern. So, SDG 4 is an opportunity to address these challenges and more, for the education sector of Bangladesh, by 2030 and beyond.

In contrast to EFA 2015 and MDGs, attention is given to a broader range of education agenda under the SDG 4, including tertiary education and the opportunities for lifelong learning for all in learning societies. Knowledge, skills, attitude and behaviour that contribute to sustainable development are given prominence in this Agenda. Substantial re-thinking is clearly required regarding prioritisation of immediate-, future- and longer-term actions, including for enhanced accountability and citizen's participation to achieve this Goal in Bangladesh.[2]

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[1] CAMPE. (2016) *Education Watch Report – Literacy, Skills, Lifelong Learning: SDG4 in Bangladesh – Where Are We*. Dhaka: Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE).

[2] CAMPE and Citizen's Platform for SDGs, Bangladesh. (2016) *Framework for Action Education 2030 in Bangladesh: A Civil Society Perspective*. Available at: http://www.campebd.org/page/Generic/0/30/47

Accountability and Participation in Education

The concept of accountability involves specifying the rights and responsibilities that exist between the people and the institutions that affect their lives, including the government, institutions and other actors in society.[3] Therefore, three main types of accountability system are categorised in the field of education[4]: (a) compliance with regulations; (b) adherence to professional norms; and (c) results driven. Accountability systems operate according to a set of principles and use a variety of implementation strategies. The differences between current systems and those employed previously are matters of 'for what' and 'to whom'. For ensuring educational accountability, the key concern is to respond to the gap that exists between citizens and institutions. So, there is a need to simultaneously strengthen the accountability and responsiveness of educational institutions and policies through changes in institutional design and a focus on the enabling structures for good governance.

When accountability works, citizens are able to make demands on institutions and ensure that those demands are met. This can enable them to realise their rights, and gain access to resources. So, accountability requires strengthening of citizen's participation processes. If social exclusion and discrimination are to be eliminated, it is important for the government to remain accountable to marginalised and excluded citizens. A range of approaches for citizen's participation can be adopted to ensure accountability including public expenditure-tracking surveys, citizen report cards, score cards, social audits and community monitoring to develop direct accountability relationships between service-users and service-providers. Similarly, participatory budgeting, sector-specific budget monitoring and participatory audits can improve citizen's engagement in the management of public finances.

For the SDG 4, four key principles are crucial for ensuring effective implementation – accountability, transparency, participation and inclusion.[5] These serve as both means and ends for implementing the SDG 4 Agenda. The key issue, however, is to solidify the consensus on how effectively to put the above four concepts into practice in the context of education in Bangladesh. There should be a national accountability mechanism to ensure participation of knowledge community, civil society, private sector, development partners along with government and public representatives.

SDG 4 in Bangladesh

As part of interventions for the SDGs, General Economic Division (GED) of the Planning Commission of Bangladesh has developed a handbook titled "Mapping of Ministries by Targets in the Implementation of SDGs Aligning with 7th Five Year Plan (2016-20).[6]" In this handbook, lead, co-lead and associate ministries were mapped out against each of the targets for all SDGs. According to the mapping, lead and co-lead responsibility of SDG 4 implementation has largely been accorded to the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Primary and Mass Education. Other associated responsible ministries and divisions include Ministry of Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs, Ministry of Cultural Affairs, Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Housing and Public Works, Ministry of Industries, Ministry of Information, Ministry of Labour and Employment, Ministry of Public Administration, Ministry of Religious Affairs, Ministry of Science and Technology, Ministry of Social Welfare, Ministry of Textiles and Jute, Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, Ministry of Youth and Sports, Bangladesh Industrial and Technical Assistance Center, Statistics and Informatics Division, Finance Division, Law and Justice Division, Local Government Division, Information and Communication Technology Division, Economic Relations Division, and Bangladesh Bank of Financial Institutions Division. This mapping exercise is expected to reduce duplication of efforts, enhance synergy and help formulate action plans.

So, SDG 4 implementation will need extensive coordination among different ministries and departments of Bangladesh government which is a real challenge. A leading institution with authority and capacity is also needed to be identified to coordinate the implementation of interventions of these ministries/departments. There should also be strong coordination to contribute to SDG 4 implementation among respective civil society

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[3] Mujeri, M. K. (2017) *Accountability for SDG4 and Citizen's Participation*. A paper presented at a sharing meeting organised by Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE) and Citizen's Platform for SDGs, Bangladesh in April 2017.

[4] Anderson, J. A. (2005) *Accountability in Education*. Available at: www.iaoed.org/downloads/Edpol1.pdf

[5] Carothers. T. and Brechenmacher. S. (2014) *Accountability, Transparency, Participation and Inclusion: A New Development Consensus?* Available at: carnegieendowment.org/files/development_consensus_brief.pdf

[6] Planning Commission. (2016) *A Handbook – Mapping of Ministries by Targets in the Implementation of SDGs Aligning with 7th Five Year Plan (2016-20)*. Dhaka: Planning Commission, Government of Bangladesh.

[7] Mujeri, M. K. (2017) *Accountability for SDG4 and Citizen's Participation*. A paper presented at a sharing meeting organised by Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE) and Citizen's Platform for SDGs, Bangladesh in April 2017.

organisation, development partners and private sector as well.

Following set of issues should be focused for further progress in the accountability and citizen's participation process of SDG 4 in Bangladesh.[7]

- *Aligning SDG 4 with 7th FYP education agenda*: The 15-year time horizon of SDG 4 and the 5-year time horizon of the 7th FYP need integration covering both short- and long-term perspectives.

- *Integrating governance issues in education*: In the present context, three aspects of governance are important: (i) decision-making process covering transparency, accountability and rule of law; (ii) institutional capacity to implement good governance decisions; and (iii) equitable governance to ensure pro-poor outcomes.

- *Structural aspects of education sector*: Several structural issues need attention including better education finance and resource availability; decentralised and effective governance; adequate number of quality teachers and capability of attracting and retaining capable qualified persons in teaching profession; effective skills and apprenticeship development; quality higher education; professional capacity development in education; comprehensive legal framework for education and possibility of bringing education under one ministerial jurisdiction; and partnership building with education civil society and non-state and private sector.

- *Operational issues in education*: A number of operational issues may be identified including functional and well-conceived learning assessment; curriculum assessment and reform; coverage of disadvantages groups; quality control in private institutions and universities; use of full potential of digital technology; and quality of physical standards and facilities of educational institutions.

The government intends to adopt 'whole of society' approach to ensure wider participation of non-government organisations (NGOs), development partners, private sector, media and civil society organisations in the process of formulating action plan for SDGs implementation. The government will also develop a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework to track SDG implementation. Effective participation of the citizens under a strong transparency and accountability framework in the context of involvement, collaboration and joint ownership between the government and education civil society agenda will be critical in Bangladesh for implementing SDG 4. In order to develop such an effective framework, citizens should not be considered as passive recipients of information only; rather they should be enabled to raise questions, pass opinions, apply outcomes and to engage in setting the agenda in order to ensure effectiveness and responsiveness of SDG 4 to the citizens.

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[7] Mujeri, M. K. (2017) *Accountability for SDG4 and Citizen's Participation*. A paper presented at a sharing meeting organised by Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE) and Citizen's Platform for SDGs, Bangladesh in April 2017.

About the Event

Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE) and the Citizen's Platform for SDGs, Bangladesh jointly organised a dialogue on "Accountability for SDG-4 and Citizen Participation," on 29 April 2017, at the BRAC Centre Inn Auditorium, Dhaka. Advocate Md Mostafizur Rahman, MP, Hon'ble Minister for Primary and Mass Education, Government of Bangladesh attended the dialogue as the Chief Guest. Dr Shamsul Alam, Member (Senior Secretary), General Economics Division, Planning Commission was present as the Special Guest. The keynote paper was presented by Dr Mustafa K Mujeri, Executive Director, Institute for Inclusive Finance and Development (InM). The Panel Discussants of the session included Ms Shaheen Anam, Executive Director, Manusher Jonno Foundation and Dr Tofail Ahmed, Local Governance Specialist. Ms Rasheda K Choudhury, Executive Director, CAMPE and Core Group Member of the Platform put on the welcome remarks. The event was chaired by Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya, Convenor, Citizen's Platform for SDGs, Bangladesh.

This Brief has been prepared by the Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE), a Partner Organisation of the Citizen's Platform for SDGs, Bangladesh.

Citizen's Platform
Briefs

Citizen's Platform Brief 1

টেকসই উন্নয়ন অভীষ্ট অর্জনে সুশাসন ও গণতন্ত্র মূল চাবিকাঠি

Citizen's Platform Brief 2

টেকসই উন্নয়নে বেসরকারি খাতের অংশগ্রহণ জরুরি

Citizen's Platform Brief 3

SDG Priorities for Bangladesh

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CSOs in SDG Implementation in Bangladesh

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Aligning SDG 4 and 7th Five Year Plan in Bangladesh: Prospects and Challenges

Citizen's Platform Brief 6

Bridging Climate Action and Sustainable Development Goals in Bangladesh

About the Citizen's Platform for SDGs, Bangladesh

The **Citizen's Platform for SDGs, Bangladesh** is a civil society initiative, taken at the national front, to contribute to the implementation of globally adopted 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Platform was formally launched in June 2016, at the initiative of a group of individuals; the objective has been to track the delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Bangladesh and enhance accountability in its implementation process. The concept of the Platform was inspired by the participatory and multi-stakeholder approach promoted as a vital element for success in the attainment of all the SDGs. The Platform currently includes 63 Partner Organisations working on SDG issues across the country.

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