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Present Situation of Female Education in Bangladesh: A Comparative Analysis of Last Decade

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to explore the present situation of female education in Bangladesh. It is very important to know the status of female education as female is almost half of our population. This study has been conducted through quantitative method research approach. The data has been collected through document analysis. Through analyses it has been found that the literacy rate of women increased from 41.8% to 55.7% during the year of 2001 to 2011. Therefore, the enrollment rate of female students at secondary level increased from 46.23% to 51.96% during the year of 2001 to 2011. Furthermore, in 2004 the pass rate of female students in SSC was 45.98% and in 2013 it was 88.88%. On the other hand, in 2003 the pass rate of female students was 38.14% and in 2012 it was 79.19% at HSC level. The Government of Bangladesh has taken different initiatives to improve the status of female education. Different projects are running in education sector for the betterment of education. From document analyses it has been found that 57% beneficiaries of SEQAEP are female students. On the other hand, the female students have been getting stipend from HSFSP & SESP.

Background of the Study

Education imparts skills and competencies that are central to human development and enhanced quality of life, bringing wide-ranging benefits to both individuals and societies. Investing in girls' and women's education in particular produces exceptionally high social and economic returns. Educated women invest more in their children and contribute to the welfare of the next generation (United Nations, 2010). Dr. J. E. Kwegyir Aggrey, a visionary Ghanaian educator mentioned that 'The surest way to keep a people down is to educate the men and neglect the women. If you educate a man you simply educate an individual, but if you educate a woman you educate a family (Tembon & Fort, 2008).

Therefore, no nation can make real progress keeping a full half of its population in the dark. Without the support of women, the progress of the nation is not possible. Educated women invest more in their children and contribute to the welfare of the next generation.

Education is essential for empowering women and for closing the gap between women and men in respect of socio-economic opportunities; it can reduce inequalities based on gender and alter the historical legacy of disadvantage faced by women (United Nations, 2010).

Bangladesh has addressed girls' education primarily as a means of preparing girls for enlightened motherhood or to prepare women for entering professions. In 1974, The Qudrat-E-Khuda Education Commission Report asserted that women's education should be such as to be of help to them in their domestic life and stressed that subjects such as 'child-care, the nursing of the sick, preservation of health, food and nutrition' must be included (Raynor, Wesson, & Keynes 2006).

On the global perspective, enrolment of girls is increasing across all over the world. Outstanding gains have been registered in several less developed regions of the world, particularly Africa and South-Central Asia. Gender differences in primary, secondary and tertiary participation are apparent throughout the world, with women in the fields of education (United Nations, 2010). In some Western countries, women have surpassed men at many levels of education. For example, in the United States

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in 2005-06, women earned 62% of Associate's degrees, 58% of Bachelor's degrees, 60% of Master's degrees, and 50% of Doctorates (NCES: Digest of Education Statistics, 2013).

To look back to statistical data, in such developing overpopulated country like ours the literacy rate is not really satisfactory. Roughly, the number of female citizens is almost equal to that of the male citizens, but unfortunately only a very small portion (38%) of female is literate. This gives an intuition towards more degeneration of the society day by day. But we cannot let it happen. That's why we have grown in ourselves the perception that our women should be educated if we want to make better the next generation (Female Education in Bangladesh, n. d.). Consequently, now government has taken necessary initiatives for Female Education which is so far effective. For example, allowances, stipend, and free education facilities have inspired many poor parents to send their daughters for studying. As a result, the number of female students is increasing gradually. Finally, somehow we have to educate our female citizens and building up an educated new generation. To do that, we have to not only create good mothers but also make our women a qualified Human Resource for developing our country.

Rationale

At present about half (49.94%) of the population of Bangladesh is women (BBS, 2011). Hence, equal participation of women in both social and economic development is necessary. But due to social constraints, age-old tradition, illiteracy, lack of appropriate employment opportunities, a large portion of women are unable to integrate in mainstream of national development (Rahman, 1999). Consequently, if we want to include women in the mainstream of national development, we must provide quality education for all women. According to Psacharopoulos & Patrinos (2002), the effect of education on average wages estimates that primary education increases girls' earnings by 5 to 15 percent over their lifetimes, while boys experience a rate of return between 4 and 8 percent. Conversely, the returns of secondary education are 15 to 25 percent higher for women than men in Thailand, Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire (Schultz, 2002 as cited in Chaaban & Cunningham, 2011).

The importance of education for the advancement of women had been highlighted in the Beijing Platform for Action, in which it had been identified as one of 12 critical areas of concern and affirmed as central for gender equality and women's empowerment (Chaaban & Cunningham, 2011). Moreover, Bangladesh government has adopted the six EFA goals and the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), where goal 5 of EFA is to Achieve gender parity and goal 3 of MDG is to Promote gender equality and empower women (Maleque, Begum, Islam & Riyad, 2012). This implies the equal opportunities for man and women in every sphere especially in education sector (UNESCO, 2000). Furthermore, the constitution of Bangladesh has ensured the right of women through article-10: "Participation of women in national life" and article-19: "Equity of opportunity" to remove social and economic inequality between man and women (Maleque et al, 2012).

The highest allocations for development budget have always been for education sector. But one of the challenges that faced Bangladesh education system is persistently low enrollment and school attainment among girls (Akter, 2005). According to Statistical Year Book 1995 the number of primary school in Bangladesh is 66,168 having an enrollment of 15.19 million and in secondary school got an enrollment about 4.9 million. In primary education, the number of girls students increased from 5.4 million to 8.2 million while in the secondary level the number increased from 1.05 million to 2.4 million (Fifth Five Year Plan 1996-2001, GOB). But the education of girls is seen as economically and socially costly to parents. Costs come in the forms of direct and indirect fees and opportunity costs (such as lost household or paid labour). These costs have a significant impact on whether and which children are educated (Koul, 2008).

As due to social and economic problem female education faced lots of difficulties in every steps so we should take more initiatives to create awareness for female education. Moreover, to achieve the goal of MDGs, EFAs and to ensure the gender equity and women empowerment we need to know the present

situation of female education. This study will help to know the factors hindering the female education and suggest the way of overcoming the obstacles.

Research Questions

The main aim of this study is to explore the present situation of female education in Bangladesh. Through these research questions we will find out our aim,

1. What is the present situation of female education in Bangladesh?
 - 1.1 To what extent female students are getting access to different level of education?
 - 1.2 How much progress is happening in the result of female students at different level of education?
2. What initiatives have been taken by the government of Bangladesh for female education?

Methodology

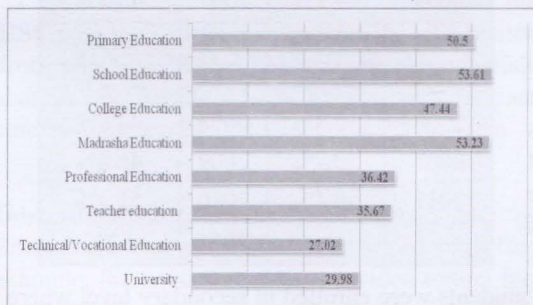
The study has been finalized based on quantitative research method. It is also a desk based research. The secondary data have been collected from different sources such as Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics (BANBEIS), Ministry of Education, Directory of Primary and Mass Education, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), World Bank (WB) and different types of educational programme and projects etc. This study has been conducted based on document analyses. The female education stream has been selected purposively as a sample of the study. Structure observation and document analyses have been used as data collection tools. Finally, the collected data have been analysed through descriptive statistical analyses.

Data Presentation

The major findings of this study have been presented bellow with some major themes like female students and teachers at different level, literacy and enrollment rate of female students, exam result of last decade and government initiatives for female education.

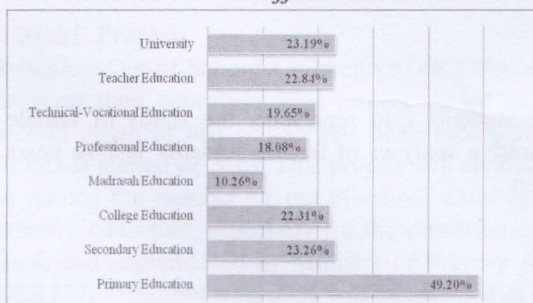
Female students at different levels

The present situation of Female Education in Bangladesh is promising. The ratio of female students in different level in Bangladesh is presented below.



in Technical-Vocational education in Bangladesh.

Female teachers at different levels



From these figures are expressed the present scenario of female education in Bangladesh. In these figures 53.61% of students in secondary level are female. Furthermore, 53.23% in Madrasah, 50.5% in Primary, 47.44% in College and 36.42% in Professional education are female students. Moreover, 29.98% students are female in University level and few number (27.02%) of students are female

In different education levels, female teachers are working in various educational institutes besides male teachers. The percentage of female teachers has been presented below.

From these figures are expressed the present scenario of female teacher ratio in Bangladesh. In these figures we have seen that the ratio of female teacher in primary level is good. In this level 49.20% of

teachers are female. On the other hand, few female teachers have worked in different educational level in Bangladesh. Therefore, 23.26% in secondary level, 23.19% in University level 22.84% in teacher education level, 22.31% in College education level, 18.05% in Professional education and 10.26% in Madrasah education level are female teachers.

Literacy rate of women

Table 1: Female literacy rate (Source: BBS, 2011)

Year	Total literacy rate (%)	Female literacy rate (%)
2001	46.1	41.8
2002	48.8	44.5
2003	49.1	50.0
2004	49.9	46.2
2005	52.1	48.8
2006	52.5	49.1
2007	56.1	52.7
2008	57.7	54.6
2009	56.7	53.8
2010	56.8	53.9

In general, the literacy rate of education shows the participation of people to education in a particular country. This table shows the total literacy rate and female literacy rate of last decade in Bangladesh.

From this table it has been found that in 2001 the total literacy rate and female literacy rate was respectively 46.15% and 41.8%. But in 2010, it increased gradually in total literacy rate and female literacy rate respectively 56.8% and 53.9%. In last decade the total literacy rate increased by 10.65% and female literacy rate by 12.1%.

Enrolment rate of Female Student

Enrolment rate also represents the present situation of female education in Bangladesh. In this section, researchers explore it according to primary education enrolment rate and secondary education enrolment rate. All these data are presented below. Furthermore, it has been found that in 2001, 17,659,220 students were enrolled in primary level where female enrollment rate was 49.0%. Furthermore in 2011, 18,432,499 students were enrolled in primary level where female enrollment rate was 50.4%. As a result in last decade, female students' enrolment rate increased in primary level of Bangladesh.

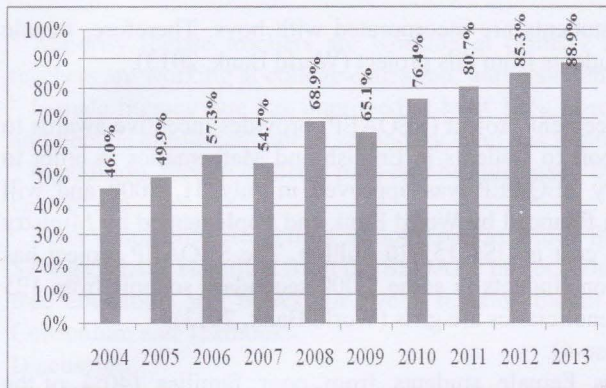
From this table, it has been found that in 2001, 43.06% students were enrolled in secondary level where female enrollment rate was 46.2%. Furthermore in 2011, 47.67% students were enrolled in secondary level where female enrollment rate was 52%. As a result in last decade, female students' enrolment rate increased gradually in secondary level of Bangladesh.

Result SSC of Female Student

Secondary School Certificate (SSC) result of female students also represents the status of female education in Bangladesh. This figure represents comparative analyses of female students' last 10 years result that draws the present situation of female education.

Table 2: Female Enrollment rate (Source: BANBEIS, 2013)

Year	At Primary	Year	At Secondary
2001	49.0%	2001	46.2%
2002	49.7%	2002	48.2%
2003	49.2%	2003	48.5%
2004	49.6%	2004	48.7%
2005	50.1%	2005	47.2%
2006	50.4%	2008	44.8%
2007	50.7%	2009	46.8%
2011	50.4%	2010	51.4%
-	-	2011	52%



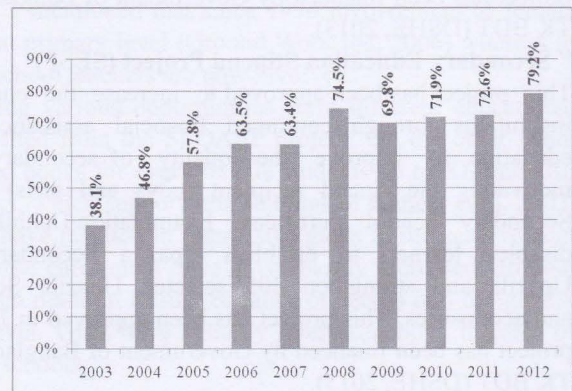
From these figures we see that in 2004, 46% female students completed their SSC level. But after 10 years in 2013, 88.9% female students passed this level successfully. On the other hand, in 2005 to 2009, female students' SSC completion rate is 49.9% to 65.1%. In these years the pass rates of female students have fluctuated from 49.9% to 68.9%.

Furthermore, in 2010 to 2013 the female students pass rates have gradually improved from 76.4% to 88.9%. Finally we conclude that in last ten years 42.9% female students have increased at SSC level in Bangladesh on the basis of pass rate.

Result HSC of Female Student

Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) result of female students in last decade also represents the status of female education in Bangladesh. This figure presents comparative analyses of female students' last 10 years result that represents the present situation of female education.

From this figure it is found that in 2003, 38.1% female students completed their HSC level. But after 10 years in 2012, 79.2% female students passed this level successfully. On the other hand, in 2004 to 2006, female students' HSC completion rate has improved gradually from 46.8% to 63.5%. Furthermore, in 2007 to 2011 years the HSC pass rates of female students have fluctuated from 63.4% to 72.6%. As a result, we conclude that in last decade 41.1% female students pass rate have increased at HSC level in Bangladesh.



Govt. Initiatives for Female Education

The government has taken various initiatives for development of female education in Bangladesh. For example, the government has provided tuition fee free education and book for all female students up to class XII. The government has also developed gender friendly curriculum and textbook up to class XII. The government has also taken some initiatives under the different projects such as-

" ROSC Project

Reaching Out-of-School Children (ROSC) Project, gives disadvantaged children a second chance to continue their education. This project started at June, 2005 and closed at December, 2012. Now the second phase of this project has been approved in October 2, 2012. Actually the main activities of ROSC-II started in 2013. This project will continue December 31, 2017. The objective of this project is to reduce the number of out-of-school children through improved access, quality and efficiency in primary education, especially for the disadvantaged children. This project has been financed by World Bank and implemented by Ministry of Primary And Mass Education, Bangladesh. Total project cost is US\$ 137.50 million where 1% will be invested in the Gender issue. Female students are not an isolated

part of education. All students' means female students are incorporated with boys. Therefore, female students are partially benefited as like as male students from this project (World Bank, 2013).

" SEQAEP Project

Secondary Education Quality and Access Enhancement Project (SEQAEP) provides incentive awards to students, teachers and schools and extends support to students in English and Mathematics in order to improve academic performance. The Secondary SEQAEP was approved in July 31, 2008 and will continue to June 30, 2014. This project has been financed by World Bank and implemented by Ministry of Education, (MOE) Bangladesh. Total project cost is US\$ 155.70 million. The SEQAEP project has provided quality education to more than 1 million students in some 7,000 secondary schools from 125 upazilas in the country and 57 percent of these beneficiaries are girls (World Bank, 2013).

" Higher Secondary Female Stipend Project (Phase-4)

This project has started to encourage SSC pass Female students from poor families (40% of the total enrolled Female students), to continue their study in Higher Secondary Level (Grades 11 and 12) by providing financial incentives in the form of stipend and allowances and thus bringing the rate of net/gross female enrollment from 43 to 50 percent during the project period (July/08-June/11), to encourage the female students to study science in HSC and in the tertiary levels by providing them with stipend, book allowances and examination fees at an enhanced rate, to reduce the rate of dropouts of the female students who come from poor families and to reduce population growth rate by keeping girl students unmarried upto HSC final examination by providing stipend and other allowances. This project has been approved in July 01, 2009 and will continue to June 30, 2014. This project has been financed by Government of Bangladesh (GOB) and total Allocation is 58875.39 Lakh TK BDT (DSHE, 2013).

" Secondary Education Stipend Project (SESP)

This project has been approved to increase the enrollment of boys' and girls' in Secondary level institutions through continued financial assistance with the aim of expanding boys' and girls' education, to improve the quality of secondary education, to reduce population growth by motivating the stipend recipient (boys and girls) to refrain from marriage till the completion of Secondary School Certificate Examination/Dakhil Examination, to render special assistances for disabled learners, to establish Upazila Secondary Education offices for three newly included Upazila and strengthen 305 selected Upazila Secondary Education offices with official equipment and accessories. This project has been approved in July 01, 2009 and continued to June 30, 2012. This project has been financed by Government of Bangladesh (GOB) and total Allocation is 68793. 00 Lakh TK BDT (DSHE, 2013).

" Female Secondary School Assistance Project- I and II

The Second Female Secondary School Assistance Project aims to improve the quality of secondary education, and girls' access to, secondary education in rural areas of Bangladesh. This project started in March 11, 1993 and closed at June 30, 2001. This project was financed by World Bank and implemented by Directorate of Secondary & Higher Education of the MOE, Bangladesh. Total project cost was US\$ 88.40 million where 29% was invested in the Gender issue. The second phase of this project approved in March 12, 2002 and continued to JUNE, 2008. Total project cost was US\$ 144.62 million where 25% was invested in the Gender issue (World Bank Report, 2013).

Major findings

The major findings throughout the study have been presented below:

" More than half students are female; they are studying in primary, secondary and madrasha education in Bangladesh.

" Majority female teachers are working at primary level. Furthermore, more than one-fifth female teachers are working at college education, university and teacher education.

" Female literacy rate has improved at least 12%, enrollment rate at primary level has improved 1.4% and Female enrollment rate at secondary level has improved by 5.73% in last decade.

" In addition, female students pass rate has increased by 42.9% at SSC level and 41.1% at HSC level in last decade.

" Female students are getting various opportunities from different educational projects. For example, 57% girls have benefited from the SEQAEP project. On the other hand, Government provides tuition fee free education and books for every female student up to XII and also prepared gender friendly Curriculum and Textbooks.

Discussion

According to the report on Primary Education in Bangladesh, the girls' enrollments for girls have been seen higher at primary level but lower in Secondary level (BANBEIS and MWCA, 2005), but this study found that more than half of the students are female who are studying in Primary, Secondary and Madrasha Education. In an UNESCO report (2012) it has been showed that much of the gain at the secondary level was due to a seven-fold increase in girls' enrolment since 1980. Besides in 1970, only 6 public universities with 26,390 students (out of which 16.8% were women) existed in Bangladesh. Both number of universities and number of teachers and students has grown exponentially in 2008; there were 31 public and 51 private universities, with 387,433 students (24.2% female). This study also found one-third participation of female students in tertiary Education.

The Bangladesh Education Sector Review Report 2 mentioned that since 1990 involvement of female school teachers have increased from 16% to 40% at primary level (Ground Work Inc, 2006) whereas in this study we could found that nearly 50% female school teachers are now involved.

This study showed that female students are getting various opportunities from different educational projects. For example, 57% girls have been benefited from the SEQAEP project. On the other hand, Government provides tuition fee free education and books for every female students up to XII and also prepared gender friendly Curriculum and Textbooks, which supports the findings of Kabeer et al, 2003. They explained that, the measures of government have resulted in impressive gains in the achievement of Bangladesh's primary education goals. Nationwide enrollment rates have sharply increased, dropout rates have gone down, significant progress has been made in raising equality of access and the gender gap has literally been removed at the primary level. Girls have actually overtaken boys in rates of enrollment, completion, and attendance in primary schools.

Recommendation

On the basis of these research findings some steps are recommended for development of female education in Bangladesh. Such as-

" Participation of female teachers should be increased at secondary, college, madrasha and university level.

" The government might take various steps for improving the literacy rate.

" Female students might be encouraged for achieving higher degree.

" The government could take some new programme/project to achieve the vision 2021 specially 100% female enrollment rate.

" Quality teaching might be insured at primary, secondary and tertiary for achieving better learning outcome.

" To ensure maximum output from government projects, monitoring and supervision could be conducted as routine work.

" The projects should be restarted which are already stopped recently.

Conclusion

Napoleon Bonaparte says, 'Give me a good mother; I will give you a good nation'. Therefore, No nation can prosper without ensuring female education at all level. In last decade various initiatives have been taken by the government for developing female education in Bangladesh. In last decade, female education has gradually improved at all level from the first part of last decade to the present. To continue this improvement all stakeholder should be aware and give emphasize on this development of female education.

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