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## Primary Education in Bangladesh: A Comparative Assessment

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### Abstract

When Bangladesh achieved its long-cherished independence in 1971, the literacy rate was only 17.61%. With the taking of some necessary initiatives, the rate gradually went up as it was 25.8 % in 1974, 29.2% in 1981, 35.3% in 1990 and 52.8% in 2000. The rate has increased by 0.9% per year from 1971 to 2000. In 2010, the literacy rate became 59.82%. However, despite this phenomenal growth, the country's overall condition in terms of education is still falling behind in comparison to the same-age countries like Malaysia. One of the key factors for this is the lack of a comprehensive education policy while the other would be the inadequacy and incoherence within multiple streams in the primary education sector. In order to address this issue, a comprehensive study is required, which is not readily available. Using a triangulation between qualitative and quantitative techniques this study attempts to fill this gap with a particular focus on the comparison within different streams of primary education of which no reliable data is still available for some of the categories.

*Keywords:* Bangladesh, English Medium, Primary Education, Policy, Qaomi Madrasa

### Introduction

Bangladesh is a small delta in South Asia. Although the main economy of Bangladesh has been agro-based for a thousand years, world civilization has entered here back in the earlier phase due to geographical and historical reasons giving the country significance. Socio-cultural scenario of Bangladesh took the country to a unique position in the whole subcontinent (Ahmed 2004). Through forty three years of free Bangladesh, the country has made her place as a promising and developing country in South Asia. The area of this country is 1,47,570 sq km (according to The World Factbook 2016 it is 1,48,460 sq km which makes Bangladesh 95th country based on area) with population of 164,781,014 where 1115.62 people live within per square kilometer area (World Population Review 2017; but according to The World Factbook 2016 it is 156,186,882 with density 1154 making Bangladesh the 9th most overpopulated country). People in Bangladesh are as diverse as their number. Due to the historical mixtures of various communities and civilizations, Bangladesh cannot be solely included in one category (Mallick and Hossain 2004). This diverse population of Bangladesh is responsible for making Bangladeshi education system one of the most mass oriented one in the world. Going through many difficulties, torment and exploitation, Bangladesh has now in 21<sup>st</sup> century been recognized as a middle income country in the world whose per capita income is 1466 US dollar only (BBS 2016). During this century the growth rate of GDP became 7.1% in 2015-16 which was 4.8% in 1990 (The World Bank 2017).

When Bangladesh became free in 1971, the rate of literacy was 17.61%. By taking some initiatives this rate has been raised to 15.3% in 1974 and to 52.8% in 2000. From 1971 to 2000, this growth rate was 0.9% per year. In 2010 literacy rate became 59.82 of which the annual growth rate was 0.7% per year (BBS 2016). Surprisingly, although the literacy rate

has been on the rise, no specific education rules have been set since 1971 until 2010. This research project is running with a view to picturing the current scenario of primary and secondary education in Bangladesh.

There are three stages of Bangladeshi education system: primary, secondary and higher education. Duration of primary education is 5 years, which was proposed to be extended till level eight in National Education Policy 2017. It has been aimed to be done by 2018. Within the range of this study, the structure, type and stages of Bangladeshi education system have been exposed. In the next segment primary education of Bangladesh has been widely discussed. A comparative analysis on various education streams is the key focus of this study.

### Education Structure

Education in Bangladesh is divided into 3 main parts: primary, secondary and higher education. Usually the primary education institutes provide primary education. Education system activities are run under two streams in administrative level. Primary education system runs under the activities of Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (MOPME) and from junior secondary to higher education system runs under Ministry of Education (MOE). Post-primary education system is divided into four categories such as general education, madrasa education, technical education and professional education. Following is a diagram of the structure of Educaion. However, in this figure the Fazil part has been extended to bachelor (hons) and Kamil part to master’s levels.

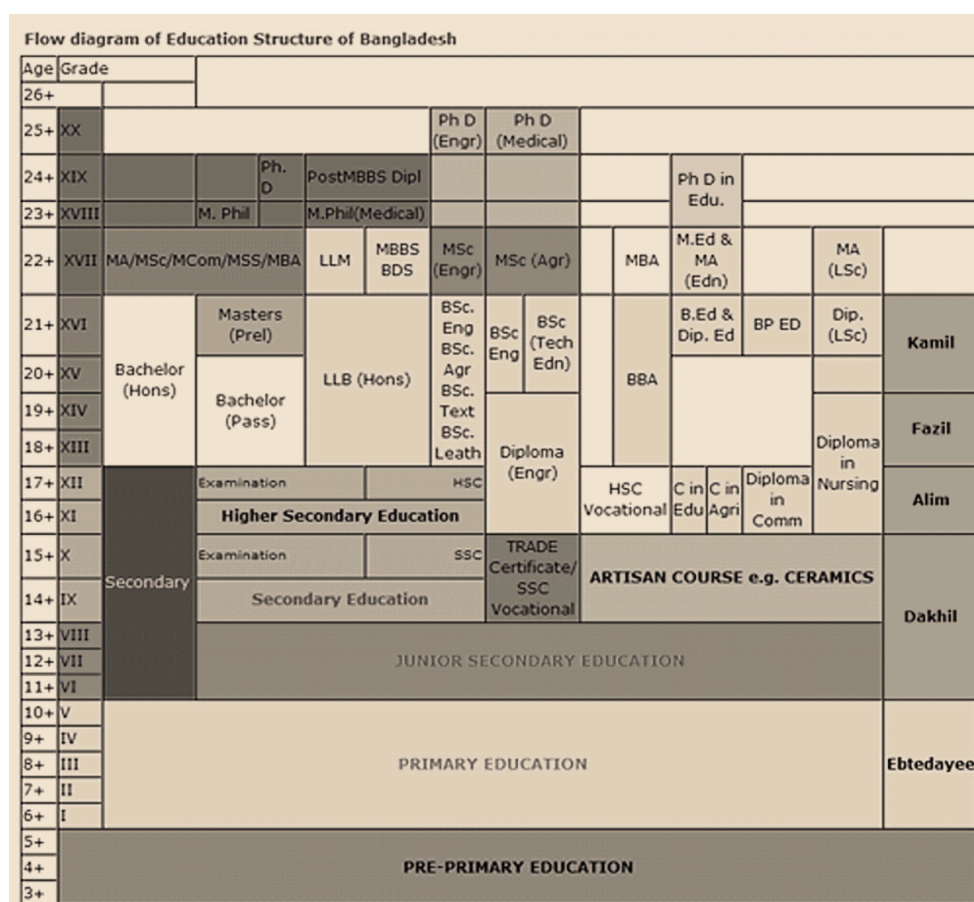


Figure 1. Structure of education in Bangladesh (Bangladesh National Commission for UNESCO 2013)

## Present Condition of Education

### Formal Education

Formal education is hierarchically structured, chronologically graded 'education system', running from primary school through the university including a variety of specialised programmes and institutions for full-time technical and professional training, (BANBEIS, 2016). As per UNESCO, formal education is the full term education provided by primary, secondary and higher level institutions educating people from children of age 6 till adults of age 20-25 according to their stages chronologically. Basic formal education usually means formal primary education which period can even last till level eight. India, Philippine and many more countries have extended primary education till level eight, nine, or even ten.

Formal education in Bangladesh is provided in 4 stages: pre-primary/nursery education, primary education, secondary (junior secondary, secondary, higher secondary) education, and higher education. Madrasa and other religious institutes except for Qaomi madrasa also follow the same structure. Duration of primary education is 5 years (till level 5). In the following chart, the age range has been shown according to various stages of formal education.

Stages of Formal Education	Age
Play Group, Nursery, non-formal	3-5
Primary (till standard 5, 5 years)	6-10
Junior Secondary (standard 6-8, 3 years)	11-13
Secondary (standard 9-10, 2 years) SSC or same level	14-15
Higher Secondary (standard 11-12, 2 years) HSC or same level	16-17
Bachelor degree (general education, 3 years for degree course pass, 4 years for honors)	18-19/20
Master degree (general education, 1 year after honors, 2 years after course pass)	19/20-21
Bachelor degree (professional education - agriculture, engineering, medical, 4-5 years)	18/19-22
MPhil (2 years)	23-24
PhD (3-4 years)	23+

Figure 2. Different stages of formal education and age range of students

According to our Education Policy 2010, duration of primary education will be till level eight, duration of secondary exam will be standard 9-12, and after standard 12 the education will be included in higher education.

There are same level religious education (Islamic in almost all the cases) which is provided by the madrasa. Here, ebte dayee is primary level, dakhil is SSC and alim is HSC level, fazil and kamil are honors and masters level education respectively. Through these stages, madrasa follows almost the same curriculum as primary to higher level education including some extra subjects. Other personally or socially run institutes like nizamiya, kharizi, qaomi etc. also provide ebte dayee or primary education. Besides, there are some masjid-based and residential *maktab/hafizia/forkania* or *qaria* madrasas, which mostly provide childhood religious education. Bangladesh Madrasa Education Board under Ministry of Education conducts public examinations till dakhil to kamil and distributes certificates to the passed students. In 1978 Befaql Madarisil Arabia (befaq) got started as a public madrasa education board which edits qaomi madrasa curriculum and syllabus, conducts exams and

distributes certificates. There are opportunities for the Buddhist, Hindu and Christian students to take religious education too. Sanskrit and Pali Board looks after the *tol* (place of learning Sanskrit), chupathi and colleges where SSC passed students get admitted for three years. The Buddhists take religious education in their religious language Pali, which also takes three years. Those who finish Sanskrit education are named Tirtha and those who complete education in Pali are called Bisharad. In case of Christian education SSC passed students go to Intermediate Seminaries, HSC passed students go to Major Seminaries and then Theological colleges. These colleges are run by different churches. They provide Bachelors and Master's degree to the passed students.

### **Non-formal Education**

Education system that is run other than formal education is called non-formal education. This system is run for people of different age to achieve different goals. This system can start from literacy which completes in training for achieving efficiency at any specific subject. Another characteristic of non-formal education is this can be taken at less expense locally. Non-formal education is now significant in Bangladesh. Since non-formal education institutes are not run by the government, there is no specified curriculum. Many NGOs are running non-formal education through their own schools which provide own syllabus and curriculum. This education system focuses on practical life efficiency and growth of social point of view beside gaining knowledge. BRAC, Proshika, Ahsania Mission, Nijera Kori, ASA, Caritas, UCEP etc. NGOs are the light bearers of non-formal education in Bangladesh.

### **Technical Education**

In Bangladesh, technical education is provided under both government and non-government participation. To run these, there is Technical Education Board. Technical Education is provided both in individually technical education based institutes and in normal schools beside general education. According to BANBEIS 2016, there are 245 government (with total 4206 male and 656 female teachers) and 3083 non-government technical education institutes (with 16,974 male and 4486 female teachers). There are 1,45,145 male and 28,279 female students in the government technical education institutes and 2,97,557 male and 1,37,195 female students in the non-government ones.

Also there are technical education institutions run by the NGOs such as UCEP's technical schools which are ten in number spread throughout the country. These schools are situated in Dhaka, Chittagong, Khulna, Rajshahi, Barisal, Sylhet, Rangpur and Gazipur. These schools run their curriculum in 20 trades. There are 5176 students in these schools among whom 3112 are male and 2064 are female (UCEP 2014).

### **Methodology**

Research papers, documentaries and websites have been helpful while making this research paper. Also, we have collected data following various methods during fieldwork. In order to expose the real picture of primary education and the schools in Bangladesh, we have conducted 6 FGDs and 11 KIIs inside and outside Dhaka within the limited range of this research project. Also, 40 schools of different stage and phase have been brought under direct observation. In Dhaka 2 secondary schools (which offer primary education too), 3 English medium schools, 1 alia and 3 qaomi madrasas, outside Dhaka 11 primary schools in Chittagong, 17 primary and secondary schools in Rangpur, Hobiganj, Khulna, Gazipur, Lakshmipur and Barisal, and 3 qaomi madrasas in Natore have been chosen. Besides, 2 inspections have been done for other purposes.

At first, we have chosen 6 districts from 6 divisions with help of lottery. From those districts as per researchers' choice 17 schools from different stages and phases have been picked. Also, researchers got chance to inspect 3 qaomi madrasas in Natore with a government officer. Likewise in Chittagong as per researchers' choice 11 primary schools have been picked for data collection. In Dhaka 2 secondary schools were chosen with help of lottery but 3 English medium schools and 3 qaomi madrasas were picked up to researchers' comfort because it is not very easy and sometimes a little risky to collect data from English medium schools and qaomi madrasas, which is why no such research has been conducted on English medium schools and qaomi madrasas. The one alia madrasa was chosen because of its consistent good result, which is why some information may look biased.

FGDs and KIIs were conducted with the help of lottery choosing among all the research spots. 2 FGDs in Dhaka and Gazipur with students, 2 FGDs in Dhaka and Lakshmirpur with guardians, 2 FGDs in Dhaka and Khulna with teachers have been conducted. Among all the groups only one outside of Dhaka was selected by lottery and one was picked within Dhaka specifically for research suitability. Eleven were selected subjectively during research up to researchers' comfort.

The biggest limitation in this research is it may seem biased since the sample is a lot less compare to the vastness of this issue. The research topic is very wide, which is another limitation. If this topic could be broken down into smaller sectors, every sector could come up with different objective results combining which the overall research work could have been more definite and reliable. But that would be an expensive program which is why this research project has worked with smaller research materials within its narrow range. This can be re-conducted in future with more budgets if possible.

### **Primary Education in Bangladesh**

The first stage of formal education in Bangladesh is primary level, which is also considered as the basic or compulsory education level. The constitution puts emphasis on completing the first level. In section 17 it is mentioned that, in order to establish uniform mass oriented education for all, the State will provide everyone with compulsory and free education until a legally decided stage, (Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs 2008). Besides in many national and international declarations, primary education has been given importance. It is said in the 26th section of UN's declaration of human rights that everyone has the right to get education. Primary and basic education will be served free of cost. Primary education will be compulsory (Malek *et al.* 2012). Taking these suggestions under consideration, Bangladesh has made primary education free and compulsory for all in 1990 which is considered as a milestone for education development in this country, (Ali and Begum 1993). Also the government is bound to take effective steps for establishing a uniform mass oriented education for all. Bangladesh has aimed to bring all the 5-year old children to primary school by 2011 and to make the literacy rate 100% by 2014 results of which can be understood from the statistics of 2015.

### **Primary Education in Bangladesh – Numeric Analysis**

Pre-schools provide the pre-primary education. There are two types of pre-primary schools which are nursery and kindergarten. Nursery is for children aged 2-2.5 years and kindergarten is for children aged 5 years onwards. In nursery schools, teachers play role to develop the children. In these schools, children play sports, music etc. and do activities for entertainment. In the pre-schools children learn how to read, write and do basic math. Here the type and nature of education is decided up to the capability and interest of students,

(Alam *et al* 2003). Recently with every government primary school throughout the country, pre-school level has been attached with extra space and teachers.

In Qaomi madrasa, primary education until standard 5 is limited within nurani, maktab and Quran literacy. Some madrasas include primary level English, Bangla and Mathematics. Only in ebtedayee level (for qaomi madrasa in this case) students are taught 7 specific subjects which are not the same in all madrasas though there are some subjects which are taught everywhere, like Arabic grammar, Fiqh (legal and religious laws), Arabic language, Urdu language etc. It has to be mentioned that qaomi madrasa is not government-approved. Completion of qaomi education without masjid, qaomi madrasa, hifzkhana etc. does not qualify anyone to be recruited in other institutes.

**Primary Education and Types of Primary School.** In Bangladesh children aged 6-10 years receive primary education which is divided into 5 levels and 5 years of education. In the new Education Policy primary education has been proposed to be extended till level 8 which has not been introduced yet. In another case, primary education in Bangladesh has four types. Firstly, government primary school, registered non-government primary school, non-registered non-government primary school, community school, primary school attached with high school, examination school attached to PTI, kindergarten school, and NGO-directed primary school. Secondly, ebtedayee and ebtedayee attached to high-school level madrasa. Thirdly, primary education given by various English medium schools. Fourthly, primary education given by the qaomi madrasa. Mainly these four types of primary education have been available in Bangladesh. Although primary education is for children aged 6-10 years with duration of 5 years, this may vary in the English medium schools and qaomi madrasa. Moreover there are two more types of school named Ananda School and children's welfare school. Ananda School runs under the program Reaching Out of School Children (ROSC) which brings the school dropouts back to school.

This paper will discuss about various information of primary schools, primary education in Bangladesh and comparative analysis on various types of primary education available in Bangladesh.

**Number of Primary Schools.** As per BANBEIS' information for year 2015, there are total 1,22,176 schools among which 38,306 are government primary schools and 83,869 are non-government primary schools. It is to be mentioned that after getting freedom Bangladesh has approved 36,165 schools as government primary schools. Since then there is no such example of taking schools under government ownership has been set. But again in 2013, 23,193 non-government primary schools have been taken under government ownership.

From the following table we see the number of different schools in the country providing primary level education. It should be mentioned that the almost all schools of the first three categories have been brought under government ownership. As per BANBEIS (2016), there are 25 English medium junior schools, which work for educating a number of students and 103 qaomi madrasas. However, this data is not reliable since the field work contradicts by a huge number. It can clearly be seen that a huge number of students go to such institutions. Only in Naogaon, during field observation we found that there are 7 qaomi madrasas among which one offers the facility of secondary education where there are only 3 general schools.

Table 1  
*Number of Different Types of School*

Type	Number of Schools
Government primary schools	38,306
Registered non-government primary schools	112
Non-registered non-government primary schools	1,926
Experimental schools	55
Ebtedayee madrasas	2,877
Kindergartens	18,318
NGO schools	2,680
Community schools	106
Ebtedayee madrasas attached to higher madrasas	5,599
Primary schools attached to high schools	1,554
BRAC centers	13,522
Ananda schools	6,258
Child Welfare primary schools	152
Others	783
Total	122,176
English medium schools (junior)	25
Qaomi madrasas	103

**Number of Students in Primary Schools.** Most of the students are under primary education program. Almost 2 crores of children go to primary schools, as per information. Table 2 says that most of the students (1,07,56,766) in the country go to government primary schools. Second highest number of students (41,03,980) go to registered non-government primary schools. But recently these schools have been brought under government ownership, so these students are now considered as government primary school going students.

Table 2  
*Number of Students in Different Types of Schools*

Type	Number of Students		
	Male	Female	Total
Government primary schools	4607712	4970976	9578688
Registered non-government primary schools	2037172	2066808	4103980
Non-registered non-government primary schools	136523	135574	272097
Experimental schools	5530	5259	10789
Ebtedayee madrasas	200878	190070	390948
Kindergartens	1225445	1054427	2279872
NGO schools	105285	114683	219968
Community schools	7137	7705	14842
Ebtedayee madrasas attached to higher madrasas	429952	400781	830733
Primary schools attached to high schools	268801	291720	560521
BRAC centers	143110	189585	332695
Ananda schools	92744	91419	184163
Child Welfare primary schools	7175	8130	15305
Others	14446	13578	28024
English medium schools (junior)	2920	2655	5578
Qaomi madrasas	6155	2773	8928
Total	9369079	9698682	19067761

BANBEIS, 2016

BANBEIS' information about English medium schools does not expose the main picture. BANBEIS says there are only 5,578 students who go to English medium schools whereas we assume from our fieldwork that this number is significantly lower than the real number. Except for the English medium schools, we can see observing all other kinds of schools that number of boys is less than number of girls which goes with the ratio of the country's total gender ratio but opposite to the gender ratio of people of this specific age. Number of girls counts 1.5% more in government primary schools than non-government primary schools. According to The World Factbook, the country's total gender ratio is 0.97 (there will be 1000 female when there are 966 male) and in case of citizens aged 0-14 years, the ratio is 1.03 (there will be 1000 female children when there are 1030 male children) (2016). We can assume that almost all the primary level students are aged in between 0-14. In that case if the gender ratio is 1.03, number of girls could be 9,392,986, which is 23,907 more than the present statistics. From another point of view, as per the same gender ratio, number of male children could be 9,674,775, which is 23,907 less than the present statistics. From this discussion it can be said that government and non-government steps taken for improving the female children's primary education have been proven active. Nevertheless male children should be given same importance in order to avoid social crisis. But this information by The World Factbook can be seen in a different way because while birth the gender ratio is 1.04 which is 0.88 in case of people aged 15-24 (0.16 less). In that case, gender ratio for people aged 6-11 could be less than 1.03. Except for some English medium schools where number of boys and number of girls are the same, we have found from fieldwork that number of boys is more than that of girls. In qaomi madrasas number of boys is a lot more than that of girls because qaomi madrasas are separated for boys and girls, and madrasas for girls are less in number.

**Number of Teachers in Primary Schools.** According to Table 3, number of teachers in primary schools is 4,49,799 among which 2,14,658 work for the government primary schools. In 2013, jobs of 1,03,845 teachers from non-government primary schools have been governmentalized.

Table 3  
*Number of Teachers in Different Types of Schools*

Type	Number of Teachers		
	Male	Female	Total
Government primary schools	75724	149935	225659
Registered non-government primary schools	41600	44936	86536
Non-registered non-government primary schools	2090	5050	7140
Experimental schools	35	244	279
Ebtedayee madrasas	8975	2323	11298
Kindergartens	48552	69614	118166
NGO schools	1698	4259	5957
Community schools	124	257	381
Ebtedayee madrasas attached to higher madrasas	19350	3313	22663
Primary schools attached to high schools	4892	6209	11101
BRAC centers	504	13382	13886
Ananda schools	1140	5187	6327
Child Welfare primary schools	135	302	437
Others	359	531	890
English medium schools (junior)	168	257	425
Qaomi madrasas	379	54	433

BANBEIS, 2016



Here we can see that the number of teachers is highest in government primary schools. There are more female teachers than male teachers in all the primary level schools except for ebtedayee and high-madrassa attached ebtedayee madrasas. Among 11,298 teachers in ebtedayee madrasas, there are only 2,323 female teachers. Among 22,663 teachers in high-madrassa attached ebtedayee madrasas, there are only 3,313 female teachers. Like earlier, the number of teachers working for English medium schools has seemed less this time. This matter needs more detailed field observation. On the other hand we do not know any real number of teachers working for qaomi madrasas. But male and female teachers are not generally allowed to work together here.

**Student-Teacher Ratio: Type and Size of Classroom.** The overall ratio of teachers and students in the primary level in Bangladesh is 1:42. But according to national Education Policy 2010, the teacher-student ratio has to be 1:30 which has to be achieved by 2018 (Ministry of Education 2010).

The classroom size in primary schools is good enough. In government primary schools classroom size is suitable for children. Here 50-80 students can be accommodated. In most of the cases these classrooms are well-ventilated. There are long benches where 3-4 students, in some cases even 5 students can sit together. In the kindergartens we have observed that there are air conditioners and separate seats for everyone. But the scenario is not so well in ebtedayee madrasas. Most of the times students are being taught under the sky or at the madrasa balcony or even at the masjid adjacent to the madrasa. On the other hand the English medium schools' classrooms are more decorated and child-friendly. These classrooms have air conditioners like kindergartens sometimes. Most of the English medium schools have separate table-chair sets with other usable utensils for everyone in the classroom. On the other hand the classroom situation of qaomi madrasas is not very well except for the ones situated in urban areas. In most of the cases, classes are taken at the masjid adjacent to the madrasas. All the classes run sitting on the ground which they believe help the students not brag. Also, due to lack of space most of the classes are taken at the place where the students stay at night. It is to be mentioned that all the qaomi madrasas are residential though few students take madrasa education residing at their own places. Beside economic reason another belief in this case exists that, residing at home hinders the earning of education.

According to our field observation, we found even 1 teacher for 85 students in some schools. From Dhaka city out of 5 schools we found the ratio as 1:41 and from Chittagong city as 1:69 as per our fieldwork.

**Special Education.** There are government and non-government schools for special children. But special children are supposed to get chance to study in the general schools. The number of schools that are offering this has to be inspected. We have noticed no such special facility in most of the English medium schools and qaomi madrasas. There are total 7 special schools under Ministry of Social Welfare throughout the country. These are situated in Dhaka, Chittagong, Rajshahi, Khulna, Chandpur, Faridpur and Sylhet. As per government provided information there are 700 seats where 180 are residential, (Ahsan 2013).

Besides there are some more special schools situated in Dhaka and some other places under non-government effort of which twelve are for hearing-impaired, three for blind and 47 are for intellectually disabled and autistic children (BANBEIS 2016).

To develop special education, all the primary schools have facilities to educate uniformly. Still there are some schools which educate only the special children. They have 20,810 students in level one, 18,343 in level two, 17,312 in level three, 16,582 in level four

and 12,556 in level five, which makes a total of 85,204 students. In 2015, 27,837 physically challenged, 12,084 blind, 4,343 hearing-impaired, 18,570 verbally disabled, 19,068 intellectually disabled, 2,097 autistic, and 1,205 other types of special children got admission in these schools (BANBEIS 2016).

**Rate of School Admission.** Government put emphasis on pre-primary education to ensure primary education for all due to increasing primary school-going children. Even in national Education Policy this matter has got importance. Below in Table 4 as per BANBEIS' latest information, 1691,616 children took admission in all kinds of pre-primary schools in 2015. Among them, 846,339 are females and 845,277 are males.

Table 4  
*Information of Admission in Pre-School in 2015*

Type of school	Male	Female	Total
Government primary school	555174	553136	1108310
New Nationalized primary school	253831	259106	51 2937
Registered non-government primary school	1540	1550	3 090
Non-registered non-government primary school	16204	16207	32411
Experimental Schools	136	140	276
Ebtedayee Madrasahs	17495	15257	32752
Community Schools	897	943	1 840
Total	845277	846339	1691616

BANBEIS, 2016

In 2015, 3,778,589 children got admitted in level one among whom there are 1,853,131 female and 1,925,458 male students. Some of them took admission in level one after completing pre-school, rest of them got directly admitted. A total of 3,159,687 6-year-olds got admitted in level one in 2015. Among them there are 1,605,003 male and 1,554,684 female students. This means among the total admitted students (3778589 - 3159687) 618,902 are aged more or less than 6 years (BANBEIS 2016).

In 2015 the number of total newly admitted students in primary schools is 3,503,891. Among them there are 1,786,986 male and 1,716,905 female students. Number of students admitted in pre-primary and primary schools cannot be found specifically. In 2015, number of newly admitted 6-year-olds is 3,138,850. Among them there are 1,593,451 male and 1,545,399 female students.

Gross Enrollment Rate (GER) is the rate of students taking admission in a certain stage (for example level one) of education throughout the country. Net Enrollment Rate (NER) is the rate of perfectly aged students (for example, 6-year-olds for level one) taking admission in the specific stage of education throughout the country. In 2005, NER was 87.5% which became 97.7% in 2015. Among them, admission rate of male children is 97.1% and admission rate of female children is 98.8%.

Table 5  
*Rate of Admission in All Schools (2005-2015)*

Year	GER (%)			NER (%)		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
2005	91.2	96.2	93.7	84.6	90.1	87.2
2006	92.9	103	97.7	87.6	94.5	90.9
2007	93.4	104.6	98.8	87.8	94.7	91.1

	GER (%)		NER (%)			
2008	92.8	102.9	97.6	87.9	90.4	90.8
2009	100.1	107.1	103.5	89.1	99.1	93.9
2010	103.2	112.4	107.7	92.2	97.6	94.8
2011	97.5	105.6	101.5	92.7	97.3	94.9
2012	101.3	107.6	104.4	95.4	98.1	96.7
2013	106.8	110.5	108.6	96.2	98.4	97.3
2014	104.6	112.3	104.4	96.6	98.8	97.7
2015	105	113.4	109.2	97.1	98.8	97.7

BANBEIS, 2016

It has to be mentioned that, in the table above, any information about qaomi madrasa has not been added. But we have observed during our fieldwork that students take admission in qaomi madrasa not only due to religious reasons but also for free food and accommodation.

**Rate of Primary Education Dropouts**

Students who fall out before finishing primary education are the dropouts. Presently this big number of dropouts is hindering the development of education in Bangladesh. As per BANBEIS, in 2015, 20.1% students dropped out before completing their primary education.

Table 6  
*Dropout Rate of Primary Education*

Year	Dropout rate (%)
2005	47.2
2006	50.5
2007	50.5
2008	49.3
2009	45.1
2010	39.8
2011	29.7
2012	26.2
2013	21.4
2014	20.9
2015	20.4

BANBEIS, 2016

In many books and researches many reasons behind students dropping out have been exposed. As per *Malek et al.* (2012) flawed Education Policy, not implicating objectives, mainstream syllabus and curriculum, not valuating students' demands, overpopulation and poverty, lack of family consciousness, damage

of social values, income tendency since early age, lack of entertainment and extra-curricular activities, lack of employment etc. are responsible for students' dropping out. On the other hand, main reasons behind students dropping out in underdeveloped and developing countries

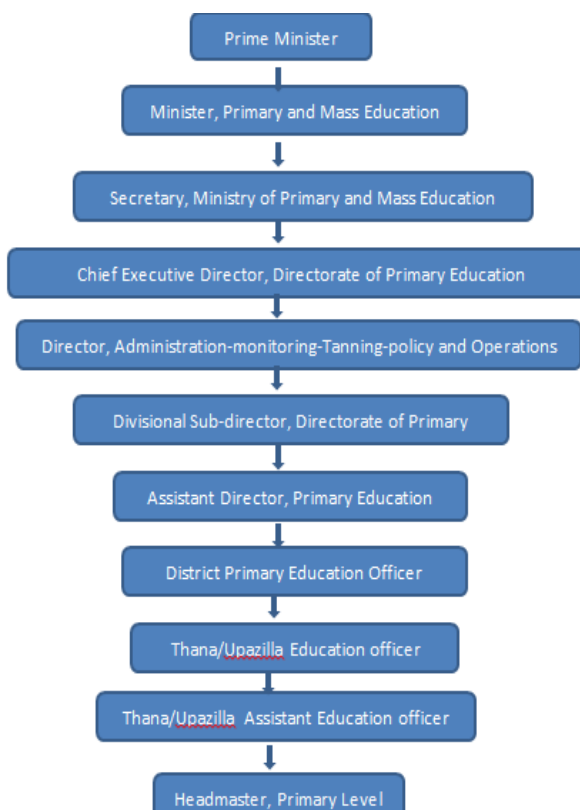


Figure 3. Structure of primary school

that Ali and Begum (1993) mentioned are: unfavorable home environment, unattractive education system, economic conditions, classroom with less teachers for excessive students, social superstitions, weak examination system, uninterested teachers, lack of trained teachers and education utensils, children's participation in family income, trouble in transportation, family's indifference, extreme poverty, incomplete syllabus, lack of preparatory education in pre-school and failure of parents in controlling children. On the other hand, the rate of dropout is close to zero in English medium schools. Students in these schools usually have strong economic background and the whole environment of school also helps them stick to the education. We could not find the real picture of dropout in qaomi madrasas but since in most of the cases students do not have to pay for food and accommodation in these madrasas, students do not drop out that much.

### **School Management**

There are two faces of primary school management: administrative and local. The administrative face totally depends on government officers. The local face depends on the local people. We will discuss the administrative face here. Since English medium schools and qaomi madrasas are out of government authority, government administration is inactive in these institutes. Since English medium schools are government approved, these are accepted in the mainstream education through some rules. But qaomi madrasas are totally out of the circle. So students who get educated from qaomi madrasas cannot go out of a limited range of work possibilities. In figure 3, the structure has been shown.

School Management Committee (SMC) or Parent Teacher Association (PTA) are working at the local level management. Its objective is to develop communication between school and local people for improving education quality. In English medium schools, teachers manage the school under the headmaster. In this case they follow the USA, UK etc. But at local level the indoor committee takes all decisions.

On the other hand the qaomi madrasas follow the direction of Deoband madrasa situated in India. There are two types of councils in any qaomi madrasa: the first one works on the whole management system and the second one is directly involved with running the madrasa. For the whole monitoring, a majlis-e-shura consisting of famous Alems (the word Alem in Arabic means knowledgeable person; in this case, the highest madrasa-educated person) from inside and outside of the institution works. Also, the representatives from Befaql Madarisil Arabia (considered as national education board of qaomi madrasas) and local knowledgeable and believer people take part. A whole council works behind running madrasa where seven assistants work under seven specific higher departments which are: adab, ifta, haadith, qirat, mantiq, ulumul haadith, and ulumul quran. Below there is a flowchart showing the chronology of the council.

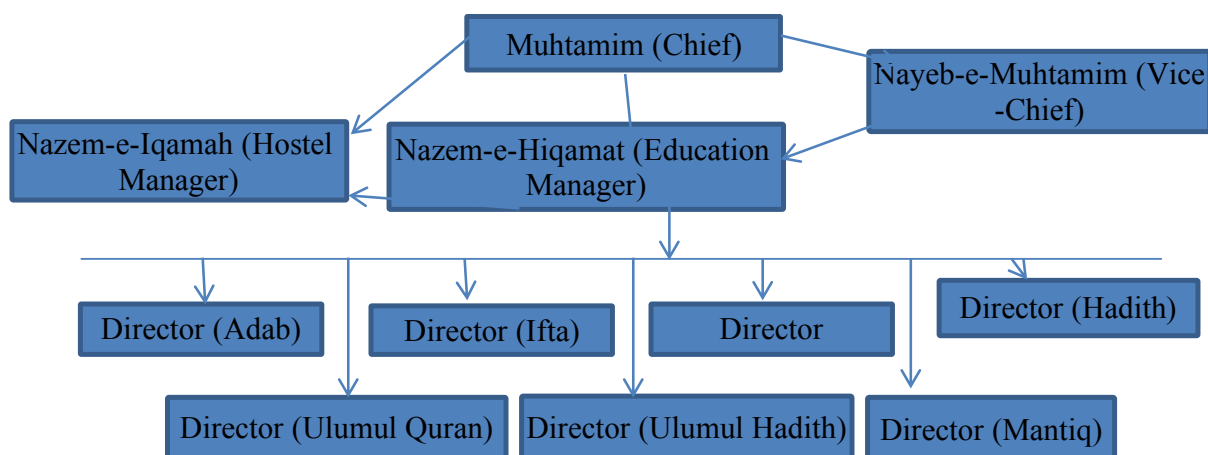


Figure 4. Total Qaomi Madrasa Management

### Conclusion

In the above discussion, we have presented an overall description of the primary education in Bangladesh focusing on the comparative perspective between the major streams; conventional, English medium and qaomi madrasah. There is a number of other aspects that we could not incorporate in the short length of this paper, such as recruitment of teachers, teachers' training, teaching methods, role of Primary Training Institutes (PTI), textbook and curriculum, physical facilities, scholarship and financial support, co-curricular activities, learning outcome, assessment, details of management, language issues, education commissions and their recommendations, etc. This is mere an explorative attempt to draw an outline of how the primary education in Bangladesh operates, functions and meets the challenges in order to initiate critical analyses for further development. Our principal focus was to see the number or the structure of three major streams of primary education with an assumption that no such approach exists in the currently available literature. For a long time, there was no collaborative and inclusive action from the governmental side or any stream specific guideline for developing a national growth until very recently few initiatives have been launched. Since 2010, the new Education Policy has paved the way and more inclusive and collaborative approaches are coming down the line, hence, more in-depth study is required. This article is the part of a broad project which is still ongoing. More data with critical analyses may be produced by using different lenses in future.

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