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The Sector-wide Approach in Bangladesh Primary Education: A Critical View

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Create

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List of Acronyms

ADB	Asian Development Bank
BANBEIS	Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics
BIDS	Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies
CAMPE	Campaign for Popular Education
CIDA	Canadian international Development Agency
CREATE	Consortium for Research on Educational Access Transitions and Equity
DP	Development Partner
DPE	Directorate of Primary Education
EFA	Education for All
EMIS	Education Monitoring Information System
GNP	Gross National Product
GOB	Government of Bangladesh
GPS	Government Primary School
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
LENPA	Learning Network on Programme Based Approaches
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MoPME	Ministry of Primary and Mass Education
NAPE	National Academy for Primary Education
NCTB	National Curriculum and Textbook Board
NFPE	Non Formal Primary Education
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
NPED	National Primary Education Development
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PBA	Programme Based Approach
PEDP	Primary Education Development Plan
PIU	Project Implementation Unit
PLU	Project Liaison Unit
PMU	Programme Management Unit
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UPE	Universal Primary Education
UPEP	Upazila Primary Education Plan
URC	Upazila Resource Centre
RNGPS	Registered Non Government Primary School
SAPE	Sector assistance Programme Evaluation
SIP	Sector Investment Programme
SLIP	School level Improvement Plan
SMC	School Management Committee
SWAp	Sector Wide Approach

Acknowledgements

Preface

Sector Wide Approaches have been the favoured modality or channelling external assistance to education for over a decade. Where development partners provide substantial flows of finance it has proved attractive to try and integrate sources of funding into common basket arrangements. In principle these kinds of arrangements should reduce transaction costs and harmonise inputs into a single national programme that can be managed efficiently. It should also enhance sustainability since SWAps do not have end dates in the same sense that project aid generally does. This approach is consistent with the Paris accords injunction to avoid duplication across development partners and ease the burden on recipient governments of dealing separately with large numbers of donors. PEDPII, the support programme for primary schooling in Bangladesh, has aspired to SWAp arrangements.

Access to education in Bangladesh has improved considerably over the last decade but remains far from universal. Fewer than half of all children access and complete lower secondary school after the short primary school system finishes at Grade 5. National assessments indicate considerable cause for concern about achievement levels and the wide variation in quality between schools and districts. PEDP II has fallen short of its aspirations. The development of its sequel provides a unique opportunity to learn from the successes and failures of PEDP II and establish new modalities that may have more effect on sustained levels of educational access to basic education. Amongst the opportunities that need exploring in depth are needs to adopt a less rigid and more flexible approach to planning over the lifetime of the next assistance programme, expand the opportunities for stakeholder participation in the SWAp and its implementation, work to ensure that committed resources are actually disbursed on time, decentralise – or at least pilot on scale schemes - down to Upazilla level to plan and manage the mobilisation of resources to enhance access, support multiple providers in delivering educational services within an appropriate regulatory framework. The risk is that development partners and government remain within their existing comfort zones and fail to grasp the opportunity to adopt new and more effective practices.

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Summary

This monograph, in the CREATE Pathways to Access series, is about the modality of cooperation and programme management in primary education in Bangladesh, based specifically on the experience of the Second Primary Education Development Programme (PEDP II). It is not intended to be an assessment of PEDP II accomplishments, but key information and a brief discussion about progress in the substantive programme objectives in primary education development in Bangladesh have been presented in order to understand how the modality of cooperation and management has worked.

Having examined the characteristics of the Sector-Wide Approach (SWAp) as it has been applied in PEDP II and how it has helped or hindered achievement of the programme goals, the on-going discourse on the appropriate scope and features of the next phase of primary education development is reviewed. This is particularly relevant as PEDP II winds up and a new programme for primary education development from mid-2011 begins to be designed. Conclusions are drawn on the basis of CREATE research activities which have illuminated the issues and concerns that have surfaced in implementing PEDP II. Recommendations are made about the modality of cooperation and management that would be congruent with and supportive of future strategies and key actions to advance universal primary education with equity and quality.

The Sector-wide Approach in Bangladesh Primary Education: A Critical View

1. The Search for an Effective Cooperation Modality

Sector-Wide Approaches (SWAps) for programmes in education and health came about as a result of disillusionment, primarily on the part of funding agencies, with the project mode of development assistance. SWAps:

> developed in the second half of the 1990s as one of several means for development agencies to achieve greater coherence in *their* approaches to providing development assistance. (UNESCO, 2007:3)

In a brief for the 2000 Dakar World Education Forum, it was argued that sector-wide approaches were the best alternative to the fragmented project support which characterised international development co-operation. These were seen as a new working relationship among international agencies and between agencies and national governments based on partnership and dialog. These were regarded as a new framework for development assistance enabling consistency in purposes and means among all partners; and a way of devolving greater authority to national governments concerning resource decisions (UNESCO, 2000).

The problem of taking a comprehensive view of educational needs and how external assistance can be made relevant and appropriate in the country context, and can be integrated into the institutional system of the country, has been always a concern in development cooperation. The problem is rooted in the inherent dilemma of development cooperation. External assistance can contribute effectively to sustained results when the recipient country can demonstrate a certain level of capability to analyse and define its problems and manage resources for results, the very capabilities that are expected to be nurtured through development cooperation. Moreover, external assistance is limited in scope and purpose by its very nature, compared to total needs in a developing country; thus the pressure has been always there to look for ways of maximising the impact of assistance. This is reflected in the debate and discourse, leading to Paris Declaration and Accra Agenda, which are accords among international assistance providers and recipients to promote effectiveness of development cooperation (OECD, 2008).

As external agencies continued their assistance "projects" aiming narrowly to address specific problems or deficiencies in the educational system of a country, there also have been efforts to co-ordinate, harmonise and align external assistance to broader needs of developing the educational system. These have been given different labels, such as the sector investment programmes (SIP) and programme-based approaches (PBA). (UNESCO, 2007; Al-Samarrai et al, 2002)

"Sector investment programmes have been used for many years as a means of coordinating different investments in a particular sector." Typically, they would include one or more capital investment projects such as school infrastructure, textbooks and teacher training, within a plan for capital investment to strengthen the sector. The different projects could be supported separately by different donors. SIPs excluded support for recurrent costs (UNESCO, 2007:6-7).

Recognising the limitations of SIPs, Programme Based Approaches (PBAs) were introduced at the behest of donors in the 1980s. The term PBA has been used to denote a variety of arrangements which could be distinguished from stand-alone projects. In fact, SWAps, a label that has gained recently greater currency, can be regarded as variations of PBAs. The Learning Network on Programme Based Approaches (LENPA) defines PBAs as follows:

PBAs are a way of engaging in development cooperation based on the principles of co-ordinated support for a locally owned programme of development, such as a national development strategy, a sector programme, a thematic programme or a programme of a specific organisation. Programme based approaches share the following features:

- leadership by the host country or organisation.

- a single comprehensive programme and budget framework.

- a formalised process for donor co-ordination and harmonisation of donor procedures for reporting, budgeting, financial management and procurement.

- efforts to increase the use of local systems for programme design and implementation, financial management, monitoring and evaluation (CIDA, 2003).

As can be seen, PBAs sought to provide a rationale for a coordinated and relatively comprehensive support for a range of activities which are inter-linked and logically connected to a development objective and an area of development work in a specific national context - with a degree of flexibility in the way the scope of activities for PBA is delimited. It has been suggested that the mention of *leadership by host country or organisation* in the definition of PBA rather than *government* was deliberate:

> … which has enabled development agencies [to] consider support for non-governmental and civil society organisations as requiring equal if not greater attention than government … (UNESCO, 2007:12).

2. Emergence of the Sector-Wide Approach (SWAp)

Sector-wide approaches, which became popular in the latter half of the 1990s, can be described as a part of the continuing effort of development agencies to deal with the intractable problems their projects seemed to face and often showed limited or marginal results even when individual projects were declared to be successful.

> Schools would be built, teachers would be trained, projects would be 'successful', but the system as a whole would limp on, and too small percentages of pupils would become employable, or achieve basic levels of learning achievement or simply complete school, whatever measures one wanted to utilise to assess progress. (UNESCO, 2007:4)

Moreover, the national governments and the donors could no longer ignore the inefficiencies in the demands made of the same staff in the same ministries for the same types of information by several donor agencies, occupying staff with the agencies' business rather than their own. (UNESCO, 2007)

SWAps, therefore, made sense. An early definition of SWAp enumerated the elements it comprised:

- All significant public funding for the sector supports a single sector policy and expenditure programme;

- Under government leadership;

- With common approaches adopted across the sector by all funding parties; and

- A progression towards relying on Government procedures to disburse and account for all public expenditure, however funded. (Brown et al, 2001:7, cited in UNESCO, 2007:4)

This definition emphasised the coordination of the mechanism and procedure for external funding. It also gave prominence to national government leadership, which has been generally taken as the cue for excluding non-governmental organisations and bodies as channels for external assistance and implementation partners.

In reviewing the evolution of British aid in education since 1988, Al-Samarrai et al. (2002) also mentioned key features of SWAp, pointing to a broader role of SWAp rather than mainly as an external funding mechanism:

> *Sector-wide scope*. By focusing sectorally, key constraints at this level can be identified and effectively tackled. Notwithstanding the nomenclature, many SWAPs in the education sector have concentrated entirely on basic education.
>
> *Coherent sector policy framework*. The starting point for most SWAPs is the development of a set of objectives and strategies for the sector through negotiation between the key stakeholders (recipient government, donors and beneficiaries) … A key objective of this process of policy development is to ensure high levels of national ownership and government leadership.

Donor co-ordination. A degree of donor co-ordination is necessary to ensure that donor strategies are consistent with the overall sector approach.

Provision of budgetary support. Although the level of support varies widely across SWAPs, the provision of budgetary support and use of government systems for procurement are their usual features. Importantly, however, SWAPs can still incorporate conventional project support. (Al-Samarrai, et al., 2002:55-56)

In short, SWAp, as a recent version of the development cooperation modality, is intended to: a) align external assistance with national priorities and objectives, b) improve coordination among both national and external actors, c) promote sector- wide thinking and planning, d) help develop national capacities, and e) harmonise efforts of different assistance agencies.

As noted above, SWAp can be seen as a form of PBA, and as such, should not be regarded primarily as a financing mechanism. It:

indeed can include projects, earmarked and separately tracked funds, as well as pooled or basket finance specifically for the sector, as well as general budget support that may be nominally tagged for education. (UNESCO, 2007:12)

In practice, SWAps have often emphasised, generally at the urging of major lending agencies, the financing modality of pooled funding, have ruled out *projects* within a common programme framework, and have regarded government agencies as the legitimate recipient of external support, excluding NGOs and other non-government bodies. Also in reality, SWAp has been a *sub-sector* approach. A total sector approach in education has not been developed or applied anywhere, because of the wide diversity and multiplicity of components and objectives and complexity of organisational structures that comprise a national educational system.

The complexity of the structure and characteristics of a national education system and the range of objectives and clienteles served by it make it impossible to put the whole education "sector" into one confining template of external assistance. Even in a sub-sector approach, it has been difficult to bring all components of primary education in the country under a primary education SWAp, as illustrated by the Second Primary Education Development Programme (PEDP II) of Bangladesh,

The critical questions at this time in Bangladesh, as PEDP II winds down and the next phase of primary education development in the country up to 2015 and beyond is shaped, are: How are the government and the development partners positioned to deal with the problems of implementing a relatively comprehensive sub-sector programme and cooperation between governments and external donors for this purpose? What lessons have been learned in this respect? How ready and willing are the government and the development partners to apply the lessons, especially, in conceptualising and designing a comprehensive, coordinated, pragmatic and practical sub-sector primary education programme for the coming years serving all children?

3. Second Primary Education Development Programme (PEDP II) as a SWAp

3.1 Goals and Focus

The Second Primary Education Development Programme (PEDP II) was designed and has been under implementation as a SWAp for primary education in Bangladesh. It was launched in 2004 as a sequel to PEDP I with the aim of expanding access to quality primary education for all eligible children in Bangladesh. More than two dozen separate projects carried out under the umbrella of PEDP I had been regarded as suffering from weak coordination and duplication. To overcome these identified weaknesses, a macro plan for PEDP II was prepared with the involvement of the concerned ministries, directorates and development partners (DPs). It was planned for the period July 2004 to June, 2009, but the implementation was delayed and its duration was extended to mid-2011.

PEDP II was financed by the Government of Bangladesh and 11 external development partners, with the Asian Development Bank (ADB) serving as the lead agency. Although, labelled a sector-wide approach, PEDP II dealt only with government primary schools (GPS) and registered non-government primary schools (RNGPS), excluding from its remit about 15 percent of primary age children, generally the more disadvantaged ones in social and economic terms, served by the madrasas and non-formal primary education offered by NGOs (Ahmed et al, 2007).

Recognising the fact that Bangladesh has made significant progress in increasing enrolment in the decade of the 1990s without tangible improvement in quality of education, the emphasis of PEDP II was on goals that combined access and quality. The programme has four major components: (1) Quality improvement through organisational development and capacity building at the central and field levels, (2) Quality improvement in schools and classrooms, (3) Quality improvement through infrastructure development, and (4) Improving and supporting equitable access to quality schooling, paying attention to children with special needs and others chronically neglected or left out by the public system. The last component appears to be anomalous, in view of exclusion from the programme of madrasas and non-formal primary education, and little detailed consideration of the needs and modalities relevant to those who never enrol or drop out.

The PEDP II programme characteristics, as enumerated in the macro plan, includes:

- A focus on both quality and access to primary schooling.

- A guarantee of essential primary school quality levels to safeguard the rights of all children to a basic level of inputs in the primary school.

- A child-centred approach, defining key interventions in terms of the requirements for the child to access, persist and achieve in school.

- School-level and school-focused interventions concentrating on improving both the quality and quantity of resources.

- Development of the upazila education office and the upazila resource centre (URC) as key outreach and support mechanisms.

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- Systemic reform, capacity building and organisational reform at all levels in order to ensure the most effective and efficient delivery of primary education nationwide.

- Integration of the PEDP II programme within the organisational and operational systems of the Ministry and DPE to ensure that policy, procedures, processes and resources are harmonised to support project activities and to ensure institutionalisation and sustainability.

- Coordination and integration of the activities and practices of the activities and projects of development partners within PEDP II (MoPME, 2003:45)

3.2 The Primary Education System

A brief description of the primary education system - characterised by multiple state, quasi-state and non-state providers – is given below before looking at progress achieved by PEDP II.

By 2010, the number of primary level institutions had increased to over 80,000 government and other formal institutions, serving over 16 million children. This represents around 90 percent enrolment on a net basis of children in the 6-10 year age-group, the designated age for primary education.

The government schools (GPS), comprising less than half of the total number of schools (about 37,000), served 58 percent of students. Registered non-government schools (RNGPS), which received government funds for teachers' salary and comprised about a quarter of primary schools (approximately 20,000), enrolled 26 percent of the students. GPS and RNGPS, together, served around 84 percent of children enrolled in primary education in 2008. Madrasas, both independent primary institutions (*ebtedayee*) and those attached to higher level madrasas, served 11 percent of primary level students. (There is another category of madrasas, known as the *quomi* or indigenous madrsasa, which remain outside the scope of government regulations, do not receive any government support, and reliable information about enrolments in them is not available) (Sabur and Ahmed, 2010).

Community schools, non-registered non-government schools, and formal schools run by NGOs together enrolled around 4 percent of primary students. All of these follow the government curriculum. In addition, there are privately run kindergartens, which are attracting increasing numbers of students (Sabur and Ahmed, 2010).

The above statistical information about primary education provisions, based on government statistics, significantly, does not take into account non-formal primary education (NFPE) services provided by NGOs (as well as *quomi* madrasas, as noted). On average, over 1 million children annually have been attending NGO operated non-formal primary education programmes through over 30,000 one-room one-teacher centres (Ahmed et al., 2007; Sabur and Ahmed, 2010).

Enrolment numbers and proportions served by different types of institutions change somewhat when NFPE figures are included (see Table 1). Education Watch (CAMPE, 2009) provides data based on a nationwide cluster sample survey of 440 primary level institutions of six principal types, including NFPE. The survey shows that almost 10 percent of the primary level students are enrolled in NFPE, which is not included in government statistics. It

also indicates a higher proportion of enrolment in kindergartens compared to official estimates.

Figure 1: Percentage Distribution of Primary School Students by School Type, 2008 (including non-formal primary education programmes)
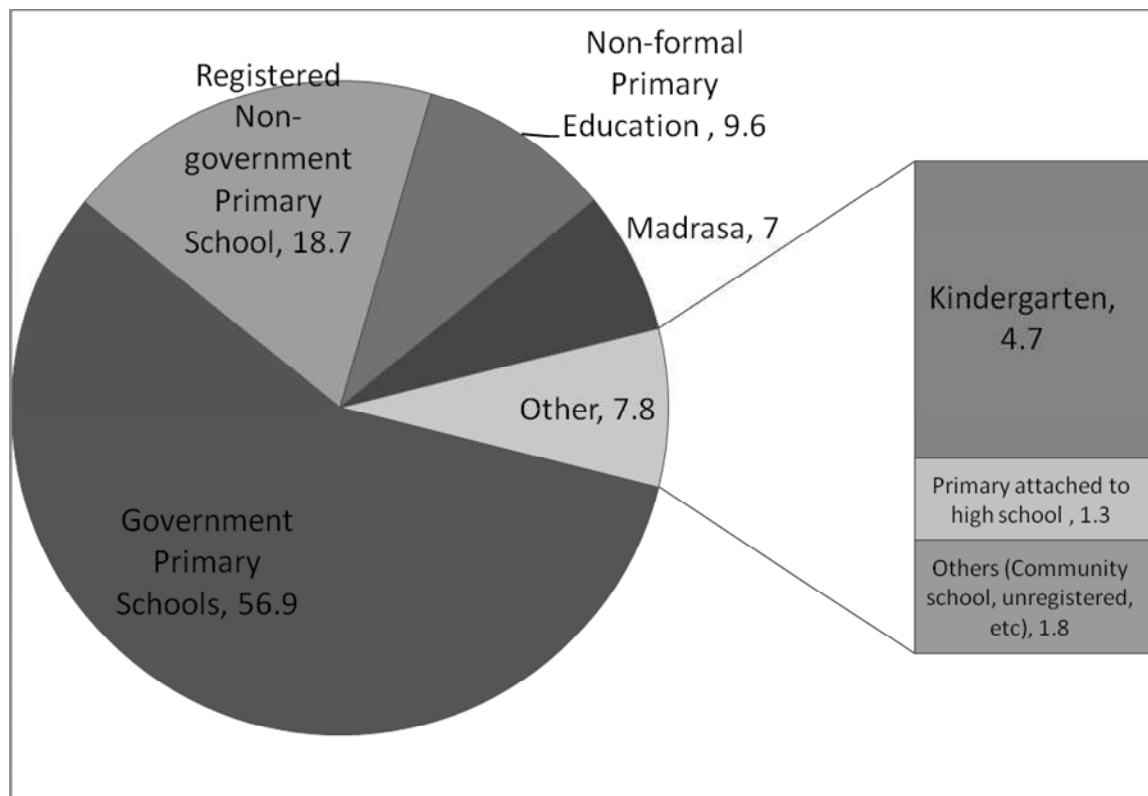
(Campaign for Popular Education, 2009:63)

3.3 Progress in Access and Learning Outcomes

Having made remarkable progress in terms of initial enrolment in primary education as well as gender equality (Ahmed et al., 2007), Bangladesh still faces enormous challenges in ensuring completion of primary education and enabling acceptable learning achievement.

Available data show (see Tables 1 and 3 below) good progress in enrolment in primary education for both girls and boys; but there has been only small improvement in completion of the five-year primary cycle and only limited progress in learning outcome – two main indicators of efficiency and effectiveness of the system. These recent data from independent studies are consistent with earlier data for 2005 presented in the CREATE Country Analytical Report, based on official statistics, which showed a completion rate of around 50 percent (Ahmed et al., 2007).

Table 1: Completion Rates in Different Types of Primary Schools, 2008 (percentages based on reconstructed cohort analysis)

Type of school	Rural	Urban
Government schools (GPS)	50.6	67.4
Regd. Non-govt. schools (RNGPS)	39.4	41.1
Ebtedayee madrasa	31.4	30.6
Primary classes in high schools	72.0	85.5
Primary classes in high madrasa	65.3	66.3
Total completion rate for formal schools (urban and rural)	50.1%*	
Non-formal primary (NFPE) rural	>95 %	

Source: CAMPE, 2009:87
*This number based on Education Watch survey is 2 percent lower than the government statistics shown in Table 3.

Regarding learning outcomes, the ultimate measure of success or lack of success of PEDP II, a comparison of the situation in 2000 and 2008 is available from Education Watch (Table 2). The test designed for the Education Watch Survey covered basic competencies based on the curricular objectives in languages (Bangla and English), mathematics, and life skills (environment, health, nutrition, and safety). The test items were designed at a simple level of difficulty and a passing grade was expected to be scored by students in 27 prescribed competencies in the four subject areas to indicate that the required primary education curricular objectives were being achieved. There was progress in the "number of competencies achieved by Grade 5 students" in all types of institutions. Significantly, on average, two-thirds of the basic competencies were achieved, and one-third not achieved. This must be interpreted keeping in mind that the tests were designed with the assumption that a student completing primary education was expected to score passing marks in the full list of tested competencies. The Education Watch results are consistent with DPE's own recent assessment (see Table 3 below).

Table 2: Mean Numbers of Competencies Achieved by Grade 5 Students, 2008 (out of 27 tested competencies)

Type of school	2000	2008
Government school (GPS)	16.1	19.0
Regd. non-govt. pry. school (RNGPS)	15.2	18.0
Ebtedayee madrasas	n/a	15.2
Non-formal (NFPE)	17.2	20.0
Pry. classes in high schools	n/a	20.8
Primary classes in high madrasas	n/a	17.0
Total for all types	16.1	18.7

Source: CAMPE, 2008:98

3.4 DPE Assessment

DPE's own recent assessment is summarised in a background paper for formulating the post-PEDPII primary education development plan known as "Prog3 Concept Paper" (DPE, 2009) which provides basic information regarding progress on key indicators in PEDP II (Table 3). It can be seen that the targets set for efficiency of the system (dropout and completion rates) were modest, and even if the 2009 targets were reached during the extended period of PEDP

II implementation up to 2011, there will still be much more to be done to achieve an acceptable standard.

In respect of learning outcomes, the key quality criterion, the targets for basic competencies in literacy and numeracy cannot be regarded as ambitious. Even if the targets were reached, a quarter of primary education completers would still be without acceptable literacy skills and one-third of the students would be without essential numeracy skills. For student-teacher ratio, an important determinant of the quality of the teaching-learning process and classroom activities, again the target has been modest. This is especially significant because of the comparatively low classroom time (contact hours) in Bangladesh, with 90 percent of the primary schools run in two daily shifts. On average, the specified learning time is around 500 hours, about half of the international standard.

Table 3: PEDP II Progress on Selected Indicators

Indicators	2005 Baseline	2009 Target	Latest Year
Gross Enrolment Rate	93.7	98.0	97.9 (2008)
Net Enrolment Rate	87.2	90.0	90.8 (2008)
Repetition Rates	No significant improvement reported over the 2005 baseline rates.		
Dropout Rates	Target was reduction by 2% every year since 2005 in all grades. No significant improvement reported.		
Student Completion rate to Grade 5 (% of Grade 1 entrants)	52	55	52 (2008)
Expenditure on education as % of GNP	1.93	2.80	2.28 (2007)
Expenditure on primary as % of total education	37.1	45	41.0 (2008)
Pupil-Teacher ratio	54:1	48:1	50:1 (2008)
% of students achieving literacy/numeracy in Grade 5*	44/66 (2006)	65/75	63/69 (208)

Source: DPE 2009. Table prepared by author.
* DPE (2009) cautions that these numbers on achievement may not be fully reliable and "should be handled with care".

The high student-teacher ratio and low contact hours can be explained by the low overall public sector allocation for education and low allocation for primary education, which has remained less than 1 percent of GDP, one of the lowest in the world. The PEDP II target again projects a modest increase. External contribution is not expected to be a significant source for financing recurrent expenditure. However, a national sub-sector development programme is expected to address the questions of financing pattern and a threshold level of necessary resources, especially when these are key constraints. The rationale of SWAp demands that the question of matching resources with the key objectives is taken seriously.

Apart from those for initial enrolment targets, **other targets that are "likely" to be reached** in PEDP II by the end of its extended time-period, as reported by DPE, are:

- Continuation and some enhancement of stipend recipients in primary education.

- Targeted recruitment of 35,000 teachers (tied to modest student-teacher ratio and learning time objectives); 28 percent of primary schools are expected to be run on single-shift with a longer school day.

- Addition to classrooms (including replacement and repair), but a target of reducing class-size to 46 students in average will not be met.

- Production and distribution of textbooks for primary students aiming to provide new books (rather than recycle old books) for all students.

- Bringing SLIP (School-level Improvement Plan) to all schools to provide a small conditional financial grant to implement improvements planned by the school itself.

- Quantitative training targets (for teachers, head teachers, and SMC members), though "the outcomes have not yet been systematically documented."

- The number of children with special needs in school to increase by 5 percent annually, from a very low (undetermined) base, but the likely achievement of this target "might give too optimistic an indication of progress," i.e., the problem has been under-estimated and calls for a larger and more comprehensive approach.

- In the area of organisational and management capacity, a comprehensive organisational analysis has been undertaken and "some of the recommendations" are under implementation. EMIS to support monitoring, evaluation and planning functions enhanced "with positive practical consequences." (DPE, 2009:3-4).

DPE (2009) also noted key "targets unlikely to be achieved fully," some of which have been already indicated above:

- Completion rate to Grade 5, though it is noted that sorting out children who may be going to institutions other than GPS/RNGPS would be necessary to get at the true picture.

- Reducing average class size to 48 (with its implications for student-teacher ratio), but even this relatively large class size was seen as "unrealistically optimistic."

- Public expenditure on education as a percentage of GNP and for public expenditure on primary education as a proportion of total education expenditure.

- Progress made in the revision of the C-in-Ed programme for primary teacher training, but nationwide coverage will not be achieved by the target date.

- Teachers' revised job descriptions, with well-defined incentives, career paths and recruitment rules; establishment of a Primary Teacher Registration Board with the aim of establishing and enforcing quality standards for teachers; and establishment of a primary education cadre, that would permit career ladder and professional development of primary education management personnel – because "government's policy decisions (beyond MoPME) are involved in some of these intended developments."

- The decentralisation of planning and management functions beyond small grants to schools – it can progress only "to the extent allowable by the pace of decision-making beyond DPE and MOPME." Guidelines have been approved for the Upazila Primary Education Plans, further progress over some time will show "the practical consequences" of this effort. (DPE, 2009:5-6)

4. SWAp, Multiple Provisions and Assistance Modality

The accomplishments of PEDP II have been mainly in expanding enrolment and providing certain process inputs, the results of which are yet to be evident in greater efficiency of the system, making the system more inclusive and in demonstrating better learning outcomes. The discussion above, including the assessment of the primary education authorities themselves of the challenges and constraints, brings up three important issues. These are the need for:

a) articulating the scope and objectives of the next phase of primary education development,
b) deciding on the government's own organisational structure and mechanisms for planning and managing the development programme, and
c) working out and agreeing on the appropriate modality for external assistance to support the national mechanisms.

These issues indeed have been the subjects for on-going discourse and debates, especially after the extension of the PEDP II duration by two years to mid-2011.

4.1 Premises, Assumptions and Ambivalence

Premises and assumptions, of the government authorities, the development partners and other stakeholders such as teachers, parents and NGOs involved in education are not always explicit or have not been articulated. Nor are the individual stakeholder groups monolithic entities each with its own common position. The sense of urgency and priority about fulfilling the right to education and the dismay at the present state of affairs shared by them are not the same. There are differences in perspectives regarding what is realistic and what risks are worth-taking. It is necessary to build a substantial common ground to move forward effectively with the next phase. As Little argued in respect of India, the political economy of improving participation in education is a necessary complement to planners' analysis and decisions about actions and inputs required (Little, 2010).

The government's ambivalence about multiple providers of education constrained the design of PEDP II, limiting it to GPS and RNGPS, although it was called a sector-wide approach for national primary education development. As PEDP II winds down, policy questions around the diversity of provision and government/donor roles in this regard have surfaced again. It is necessary to recognise the significance and potential role of multiple providers in the context of a sector-wide approach for primary education development, and the need for adapting the sector-wide approach pragmatically, recognising the role and contribution of various providers. Such recognition will influence the government's own modality for planning and managing the programme and the modality for mobilising and using external assistance.

It is obvious that in Bangladesh, non-government and quasi-government schools have flourished, despite a general acceptance and support for the notion of a common single government-run model of primary education. A "statist" bias is reflected in the reluctance of government to recognise and articulate the role and place of non-government providers. Without announcing an official policy decision, the long-standing *de facto* position adopted by the government in Bangladesh is not to increase significantly the number of direct government-run schools, but to allow the quasi-government institutions to carry much of the burden of expanding primary education services to achieve UPE (Sabur and Ahmed, 2010).

An important consideration may be limitations of centralised financing and personnel management structures (with all primary teachers becoming central government employees) established under the 1974 Nationalisation of Primary Education Law. Successive regimes have been reluctant to move away from the highly centralised structure that exists. At the same time, there has been a reluctance to take on the additional burden of direct financial and personnel management that the expansion of a fully government managed school system would impose on the government. Apparently, an acceptable compromise was to support the expansion of registered non-government schools and madrasas.

The overall messages from the status of multiple providers and their role in primary education in Bangladesh are that:

- Multiple providers (including state, quasi-state and non-state ones) have contributed to raising initial enrolments and improving gender balance. However, diversity by itself does not provide a solution to the problem of quality; nonetheless, diversity allows interventions which are appropriate for the diverse circumstances of learners.

- The diverse categories of provision are not necessarily substitutable; it may not be possible to attract and retain children in GPS or RNGPS, who are served by NFPE or madrasas. Quality constraints for each category have to be assessed and solutions found within each category. However, a coordinated approach to provide services through multiple providers, and the willingness to learn and apply lessons from their distinct characteristics and varying outcomes, can help improve the performance of the total system.

- With about 50 percent completion rates and relatively low mean achievement rates in respect to 27 quantifiable and testable competencies for students in all types of schools, learning outcomes remain the principal concern in primary education for all types of provision. The policy challenge is to assess and identify relative strengths of each type and its potential for contributing to improved outcomes by children in specific circumstances and making best use of these strengths and potentials. (Sabur and Ahmed, 2010)

It is also the case that issues related to equity, and the regressive nature of some state financing of education have been largely overlooked (Hossain and Zeitlyn, 2010).

4.2 Contradictions in PEDP II SWAp

An evaluation was undertaken by ADB, called a sector assistance programme evaluation (SAPE) in 2008 of ADB and other key DPs' assistance in the Bangladesh education sector during 1989–2007, including the DPs' combined performance in SWAp applied in the Second Primary Education Development Programme (ADB, 2008).

The ADB evaluation enumerated the following strengths of the PEDP II SWAp:

- A single Programme Management Unit (PMU), rather than separate Project Implementation Units (PIUs) of the past; the activities of this unit are integrated into the government's normal operations to ensure government ownership and sustainable capacity after completion;

- It *enables* the DPs to have stronger coordination during implementation (compared with the modalities used in the first two investment cycles) through DPs' consortium meetings, with the project liaison unit (PLU) set up by DPs playing an active role in facilitating the process;

- It *allows for* regular joint reviews and monitoring by DPs; and

- It has enhanced GOB leadership and ownership and opened up many new priorities (e.g., inclusive education and decentralisation) that have remained the country's big challenges to improving quality, institutional capacity. (ADB, 2008:23)

The weaknesses noted were:

- The programme size is too large to manage, with as many as 11 DPs and a wide extent of activities involved ;

- An institutional analysis was not undertaken at the design stage to diagnose the capacities that should have been developed prior to SWAp implementation;

- Technical assistance was not available up front at the design stage to build the necessary capacity to implement the complex SWAp;

- DPs' and the GOB's procedures could not be fully harmonised;

- Blurring of roles, responsibilities, expectations, and mutual accountability of the lead DP (ADB), the DPs consortium chair, and other DPs. (ADB, 2008:24)

The strengths noted in the ADB evaluation are more the normative characteristics of SWAp, rather than what actually happened. At least in one instance, what is listed as a strength, is not an essential characteristic of SWAp. A single Programme Management Unit was especially established because it satisfied the bureaucratic inclinations and centralising tendencies of both the government and the DPs. It is debatable to what extent it was a strength and whether it actually undermined some key purposes of SWAp. A single PMU, with its one central decision-making point for the diverse and complex operations of the programme, combined with the entrenched behaviour pattern of non-delegation, led to great delays and inefficiencies in management decisions and actions.

It has been noted earlier that the programme targets of PEDP II are expected to be only partially fulfilled, mostly in respect of quantitative indicators; in respect of quality, it would be difficult to ascertain whether or what progress has been made, because of the weaknesses in establishing baselines, developing assessment indicators and methods, and in the capacity to carry out adequate assessment. In respect of the *modality* of programme management and capacity building in this area, it appears that most of the presumed advantages of SWAp could not be realised or the conditions did not exist for their realisation. Contradictions or the absence of an agreed understanding characterised the SWAp and hampered its effectiveness in various ways.

It is said that the programme size was too large to be manageable. A SWAp, by definition, is supposed to handle large programmes embracing all aspects and components of a sub-sector. As it happened, key components of the primary education sub-sector were left out of PEDP

II. What would constitute a manageable primary education SWAp and could it still be considered a SWAp since it would be less than comprehensive?

It is mentioned that the necessary preparation for the SWAp in the form of institutional analyses (or a sector analysis) was not undertaken and appropriate technical assistance was lacking. The government, it appears, was doubtful about the modality of SWAp and was not enthusiastic about embarking on an uncharted course (see below). On the DP's part, there was lack of clarity and agreement on the most relevant technical assistance needed and identifying the appropriately qualified people for technical assistance.

"Blurring of roles, responsibilities, expectations, and mutual accountability" among DP partners was identified as a weakness in a cooperation modality predicated on harmonisation and alignment among DPs and between them and the government.

The contradiction has been noted above of a highly centralised implementation mechanism, with little scope for distributed or delegated responsibility and decision-making, in a programme that aimed to break away from the customary over-centralised structure of governance and management of primary education.

A major contradiction and irony is that a modality that is intended to promote government leadership and ownership is driven by the procedures for financial requirements and procurement rules of donors, rather than transforming and improving management of the programme itself, even though less than a third of the total programme cost is contributed by donors.

The conclusion of the ADB evaluation also stands out as an example of self-contradictory logic. The evaluation concluded that SWAp:

> can be considered as the right modality for the PEDP-II despite its weak implementation efficiency … due to its large program size and complicated implementation arrangements … hence high transaction costs among the DPs. (ADB, 2008:24)

Notwithstanding the positive conclusion about the efficacy of SWAp as it was applied in PEDP II, the evaluation summarised the achievement of PEDP in the following words:

> While access and gender targets have been largely achieved, the quality and institutional capacity aspects, together with the equity in access by the poorest groups, have not improved much, with the following issues remaining: (a) lack of a common framework for curriculum, teacher development, financing, and management; (b) lack of practical partnership arrangements to engage nongovernment organizations in the provision of PE and NFE to meet the EFA targets and to increase more equity in access; (c) weak decentralization as reflected in weak capacities at the district, upazila, and school levels, and lack of direct financing to schools; (d) weak capacities of the two education ministries in results-based management, performance-based financing, monitoring, and reporting; (e) lack of professional cadre and a career path, with high vacancies; and (f) fragmentation of EMIS functions between PE and SE and within PE. These issues should be addressed in the design of future projects/programs. (ADB, 2008:26)

The evaluation also noted that:

> it was clear from its reluctance to accept a SWAp for the second investment cycle in the PE subsector that the GOB had doubts about the workability of the SWAp for Bangladesh (ADB, 2008:18).

The evaluation admitted that PEDP II experience showed these concerns to be valid. For example, the differences in procurement arrangements and procedures for disbursement of funds involving the lead DP, some other DPs and the government proved difficult to reconcile. Inadequate DPE capacity to implement the SWAp as an integral part of its operations persisted. Slow reactions to problems and issues continued since they required a consensus of all DPs and the government and were tackled only during the annual reviews. The DPs complained about high transaction costs. (ADB, 2008:18).

The evaluation mentioned, contradictorily once again, that experience in the secondary education subsector was better, where ADB worked in concert with other DPs within the framework of a coordinated subsector development programme, "not necessarily packaging all investments into one super-intervention." (ADB, 2008:18) The evaluation report concluded that the *sub-sector development programme modality* proved particularly effective in this context. (ADB, 2008:18)

The evaluation drew "generic lessons not related to the SWAp", as it put it, on deciding modalities of cooperation and programme management when future programmes/projects are designed. The choice among different modalities, it concluded, should depend on a) the government executing agencies' institutional and staff capacities, b) DPs' availability of staff and resources, c) the complexity and the extent of project/programme activities, and d) the key situations or issues within the particular subsector which must be addressed (e.g., if the subsector was in need of many policy and institutional reforms, then a policy-based assistance in combination with a project-type modality might be an appropriate choice.) (ADB, 2008:25)

The rationale of the PEDP II SWAp, embedded in its description as: "… a systematic approach allowing DPs to work together in partnership with a government by pooling resources to support sector/subsector-wide development in an integrated manner under the government's common policy framework", (ADB, 2008:23) was unassailable.

PEDP II experience points towards a coordinated sub-sectoral programme with pragmatic and flexible implementation arrangements for diverse components, rather than a template of a SWAp, if its rationale and spirit is to be put into practice.

4.3 Civil Society Stakeholder's Perspective

There is a general agreement among the NGOs and the civil society that the spirit and principles of SWAp should guide the planning of the next phase of UPE development. A position paper prepared by CAMPE, at the invitation of the government to present the civil society stakeholders' views on primary education development, outlined a 'set of propositions about the status, situation, and an envisioned future of universal primary education in Bangladesh' (CAMPE, 2008:4).

CAMPE underscored the point that the most critical feature of a sectoral approach is *sectoral thinking*, not a rigid administrative modality. It stressed that sectoral thinking should permeate planning and coordinating, and may include multiple components or projects and multiple implementation mechanisms within an overall programme plan. Indeed, such flexibility is needed, it argued, to make the scope of the programme as much sectoral as possible and to implement effectively the multiplicity of tasks an education programme is expected to incorporate within itself (CAMPE, 2008:4).

The basic premise of the CAMPE paper, it was stated, was a vision for Bangladesh as a middle-income country, democratic, progressive, and pluralistic, with a stake for all citizens in it. The education system had to play a critical role in establishing this stake for all in an environment of the globalised economy. This vision required universal access to a unified and equitable primary school system of high quality, substantially expanded opportunities for secondary and tertiary education, and numerous opportunities for acquisition of skills for a globally competitive labour market.

The goals for primary education in the context of human resource and national development priorities required creation of a knowledge-based economy and combating poverty based on equity, transparency and accountability in provision of education and other human resource services. The values of community cohesion, democratic practices and norms, human rights, and gender equity had to be reflected in the provisions and plans for primary and complementary basic education that would expand the opportunity for lifelong learning. Conditions had to be created for the government, NGOs, broader civil society, the community and other stakeholders to share the responsibility for achieving these goals. (CAMPE, 2008:13)

The position paper emphasised that fulfilling a vision for universal primary education consistent with human resource and national development priorities required:

> … that the system move beyond current incrementalism, and the structural constraints that prevent thinking and acting "out-of-the-box," re-examining the framework of 1973 Primary Education Nationalisation Act, confining in some ways, in the light of current challenges. (CAMPE, 2008:7)

CAMPE asserts that implicit in the vision for UPE are key principles, which should guide action:

- Basic education, including primary education for all children, is a human right. No child should be excluded from quality education because of poverty, gender, or disability; and low quality should not become a cause for virtual exclusion, when children are enrolled in school without being engaged in learning.

- Basic education refers not just to enrolment in primary school or a similar institution, but to the acquisition of competencies necessary for participation in the social and economic life of family, community, nation, and world, as well as in further educational opportunities, formal or non-formal.

- Basic education is a national obligation; government has the key responsibility to ensure that this national obligation is fulfilled and that all children receive basic education of good quality.

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- In ensuring that all children receive a basic education, government need not be the sole provider; government, by determining priorities, setting standards, coordinating efforts and mobilising resources, has to support and encourage all who can contribute to fulfilling the national obligation.

- The effectiveness of an education system must be gauged by the learners' learning outcomes. (CAMPE 2008:14)

While PEDP II goals can be regarded as supportive of these principles, and these are partially reflected in the objectives and activities, it cannot be said to be fully consistent with these principles in its programme design, implementation and outcomes. Based on the principles to guide action, six important strategic considerations were identified by CAMPE, which were to be kept in view in preparing a national primary education development programme, which focused on results reflecting quality-with-equity:

- All children, regardless of the school/institution in which they enrol, must be served by the new programme.

- The primary education system must be unified and universal, with a common core of competencies and skills to be acquired by learners, with all providers included in the framework of the programme.

- Effectiveness of the programme is to be gauged in terms of children's learning; the critical locus of educational activities is classroom teaching and learning and the school creating the conditions for learning. The function of the education system is to support these teaching-learning processes.

- Government's role shifts from that of sole provider, decider, and controller, to also that of facilitator, setter of standards, insurer of quality access to all, and supporter of instructional efforts of other service providers at the upazila, school, and classroom level. Teachers and head teachers' roles shift from faithful implementers of central decisions to those of active instructional agents, taking initiatives and exercising leadership.

- Appropriate authority and resources should be placed in the hands of the school and its managing committee, along with leadership role and commensurate status of the head teacher; community support and accountability of the school to the community should be promoted; and the local government should be involved in planning and achieving the primary and basic education goals.

- Implementing the agenda for primary education requires the efforts, commitment, and insight of all national and local actors. Thus the roles of parents, NGOs, and larger civil society shift from peripheral supporters to core partners in the educational programme. (CAMPE, 2008:14-15)

The CAMPE (2008) paper pointed out several critical areas of concern which needed to be addressed in a comprehensive programme for primary education development. It argued that a sector-wide approach has to justify its relevance and value by being effective in addressing key concerns. These concerns are summarised below:

- *Low quality* characterises much of the system, along with large variations in quality, which has resulted in *serious inequity*. The need is for an inclusive and responsive system, with special efforts to serve the highly deprived and poor groups and areas - these efforts linked with poverty reduction, e.g. the Challenging the Frontiers of Poverty Reduction project, perhaps through a challenge fund to support the work of NGOs.

- The diversity of the delivery mechanisms, with up to 11 different types of primary schools, calls for a *unified national system* (not necessarily uniform) with common core curriculum and core standards for provisions that allows a common educational experience to all children. Such a system would include government schools, non-government schools, madrasas, non-formal primary education, English medium schools, etc.

- With five grades of primary education seen as insufficient preparation for citizens of an aspiring middle-income country, there is a strong case for *extending the basic education stage to Grade 8* with a pragmatic and time-bound plan to move toward this goal.

- The system cannot achieve its goals with the current numbers of teachers, methods of preparation and professional development and the level of salary and incentives. New ways of thinking about *teachers and pedagogy* are needed, e.g., enabling selected and properly equipped degree colleges to train primary teachers as part of a four-year degree, turning PTIs into in-service training centres, and commensurate salaries and status for highly qualified teachers.

- Similarly, the quality goals in primary education require major changes in *curriculum, teaching-learning materials and assessment.* These necessary changes underscore the need for higher quality textbooks, other learning support materials, teachers' guides and supplementary materials, and the importance of learning assessment in support of instruction. Greater professionalism is needed in preparation of curriculum and learning materials, and a restructuring of the NCTB, separating responsibilities for textbook preparation and distribution from curriculum development. ICT resources must be widely and creatively used for improving the quality of teaching-learning as well as to support teacher development and enhance accountability at all levels.

- *Physical infrastructure* will require major further investments to meet the minimum acceptable criteria for appropriate learning environment for achieving the quality with equity goals.

- *Preschool education* has to be a key component of the unified system, especially to ensure school readiness for first generation learners and children subject to other disadvantages. A systematic area-based planning and provisions will be needed for *children with special needs.*

- Substantially greater *resources* are needed to assure minimum necessary levels of quality with equity. Equally important is the effective use of resources, through, for example, upazila-based capitation formulas, decentralised management of resources, and assessing optimal use of scarce resources, a case in point being the spending on stipends. More resources are needed at the school level along with greater discretion

with accountability in their use. The question of affordability must be turned around to ask – can we afford not to make the necessary investment in education with quality and equity.

- Moving beyond incremental change requires the system to build *learning and capacity-development* mechanisms, through which information, monitoring and evaluation, and targeted research are used, involving academic and research institutions and NGOs, to better reach system goals and to learn and use the lessons from experience.

- *Effective governance and management* are essential, at both central and school levels. A result focused system requires meaningful decentralisation in planning and resource management, recognising the need for professionalism and capacity building, especially at school, upazila and district levels. *Decentralisation will involve decentralising implementation of the new programme itself.* Structural and legal changes for this purpose will require national political decisions at the top, including recommendations to establish *a permanent statutory education commission* and *a single ministry of education and human resources* to ensure coordination and unified guidance.

- As a national responsibility, primary education should involve *participation* and consultation by all major stakeholders—parents, NGOs, academic institutions, and other institutions of civil society—in developing the programme, maintaining an oversight over its implementation, and contributing to the provision of primary education. It is the obligation of the government to ensure that this multi-faceted participation of stakeholders happens.
(CAMPE, 2008:7-8)

CAMPE emphasises that the subsector programme being designed now needs to learn from PEDP II experience and recognise explicitly the role and relevance of diversity of providers and provisions to address the critical deficiencies of the primary education system.

4.4 A Government Perspective

4.4.1 DPE Concept Paper (Prog3)

As the discussion and negotiation continue regarding the lessons from PEDP II experience and objectives, scope, and programme design for the next phase of primary education development, it cannot be said that a definitive position of the government has emerged. This is also related to approval and adoption of the new education policy of the government, still under consideration, and the sixth five-year national development plan (2011-2015), under preparation at present.

Prog3 concept paper, prepared by DPE (2009), is based on ideas and thoughts of people involved in making policy and operational decisions in respect of primary education. It can be regarded as a reflection of recent thinking of concerned officials on major aspects of the new primary education programme.

Prog3, in section IX, under the heading, 'Strategic Approaches to Prog3', proposes a broad outline of the proposed new programme. This outline appears to be largely consistent with

the CAMPE position paper. The key items regarding the scope and design of the new programme as suggested in Prog3 are summarised below.

- Prog3 will be developed and implemented following the **Sector-wide Approach (SWAp)**, building upon PEDP II experience. However, the structure of Prog3 should be **more flexible** than that of PEDP II.

- Procedures that allow for "participatively-determined, reality-based programme modifications" should be built into the Prog3 management and financial arrangements.

- The major components of the new programme should include:

  - A major infrastructure element to make UPE by 2015 "physically feasible"; including new schools in villages with 2000 or more people lacking a school.
  - A wholehearted emphasis on "quality learning";
  - Pre-primary mainstreamed into primary education;
  - Second Chance Education for the non-enrolled and drop-outs;
  - Provision of mid-day meal for the pre-primary and primary students.
  - Development of a national unified curriculum with a core (compulsory for all) portion and an elective portion for all categories of schools and madrasas.
  - Adult education for the illiterate adults; and continuing education for the new literates.

- The main indicators should be predicated on the MDG and EFA goals; focusing on outputs and verifiable quality-related targets, which are realistic but challenging; "the programme should be geared towards achieving UPE by 2015".

- Inclusive education as an area of focus, recognising that it is about children with special educational needs as well as "all our children."

- UPE pilots in selected geographical areas should be initiated to determine effective strategies and practices and to learn lessons for primary cycle completion by all children, which will lead to nationwide replication of the lessons.

- Prog3 should be set in a longer-term perspective within which primary educational policies and plans are grounded in the context of overall national realities and aspirations.

- Creative responses must be made to the issues of quality and equity extending to lifelong teacher upgrading, international standards in learning materials, and a creative but realistic appraisal of ICT's potential in relation to educational delivery.

- Prog3 will take full cognisance of the implications of the new education policy, such as, raising primary education to Grade 8 or linkages with a Secondary Education SWAp, should it emerge. Taking into account sufficient post-primary opportunities becomes crucial as the entire cohort of primary students begin to complete the cycle.

- Genuine decentralisation should be pursued, with the understanding and support of all relevant GoB agencies, extending by 2015-16 to localised educational planning and resource management, based upon the equitable and efficient application of sufficient resources, within a framework of national policy-making and quality assurance. Community mobilisation is vital and "community-based self-inspection" should be developed.

- It is necessary and feasible to have "widely-participative" educational decision-making and planning from national to school community levels. (DPE, 2009:11-14)

In addition to the above "strategic approaches," the Prog3 concept paper includes separate sections in order to underscore specific aspects or features of the anticipated programme. These relate to adopting and applying inclusive education that embraces "all our children;" ensuring quality and number of teachers; information-based and research-guided policy-making; quality improvement actions related to curriculum and learning materials renewal, use of ICT, implementing a new teacher training curriculum, and making National Academy for Primary Education (NAPE) and National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) more effective institutions. (DPE, 2009)

It can be seen that there is a large common ground between the thinking of the government personnel concerned with policy and programme development and the position expressed by CAMPE on behalf of civil society stakeholders. This is obviously a positive beginning for a national enterprise that would require common and shared understanding and collaboration among all major stakeholders. However, the formulation in broad terms of the principles, strategies and objectives leave the job still to be carried out of working out the details of the programme scope and design, organisational and management structure and responsibilities, financing envelope and mechanism, and role and mode of external assistance.

4.4.2 Government Policy Framework – The New Education Policy

As the discussion and negotiation regarding the next phase of UPE continue, an elaboration of the Prog3 concept paper has been prepared by DPE titled "Programme Document: Third Primary Education Development (Prog3)." This has been shared with DPs as "a draft for appraisal."

The new education policy 2010, endorsed by the Cabinet of Ministers in June 2010, and to be considered by the National Parliament in its 2010 winter (December) session, is stated to be the "basis of the Prog3 development plans (DPE, 2010). The DPE draft programme document provides a list of provisions in the policy statement considered relevant for Prog 3. These are:

- **Free and compulsory primary education up to Grade 8:** Proposed changes include a year of pre-primary and the extension of free, mandatory primary school education to a total of eight years.

- **Pre-Primary education:** Preschool education for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children, using both formal and non-formal channels, with emphasis on family and community-based programmes.

- **Multiple delivery modes in basic education with common core curriculum and standards**: The policy recommends mandatory core subjects for primary-level

education: Bangla, English, mathematics, Bangladesh studies, social environment and climate change, science and information technology.

- **Establishing a core of equivalency:** Between public and NGO and private programs, formal and non-formal basic education, and between general schools and madrasa, to ensure comparable quality standards and transferability.

- **Literacy and non-formal education:** The policy recommends a literacy campaign to end adult illiteracy by 2014 and non-formal education as a means of providing a second chance to those who drop out of formal schools. Adult literacy is expected to be raised from 56 percent in 2000 to 90 percent by 2015.

- **Quality improvement in tertiary education:** Tertiary education institutions, both public and private, are to establish and maintain quality standards within an agreed framework.

- **Student assessment to discourage rote learning:** Assessment of learners' achievement should be based on public examinations and continuous evaluation by teachers, which should aim at assessing cognitive, affective and skills domains.

- **Teachers' status, incentives and training to improve quality:** Teacher development and performance through recruitment, training, professional support and remuneration are the centerpiece of the strategy for improving quality in education. A Teacher Recruitment and Development Commission will be established to recruit teachers in government assisted institutions and support their professional development.

- **Improving the quality of basic education:** Achievement of recognised and measurable learning outcomes by all will be ensured, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.

- **Governance and management**: A consolidated education law will provide a framework for fulfilling the constitutional obligations and policy objectives in education. Management of primary education will be decentralised with greater involvement of community and parents and greater authority for schools.

- **Enhanced education resources:** The policy calls for public expenditure for education to increase significantly from the present 2.27 percent of GDP.

- **The madrasa system**: Madrasas will be reformed to put emphasis on science and information technology, in addition to introduction of the core common curriculum.

- **Inclusive education:** Enabling all primary school-age children to complete good quality primary education. Access will focus on reaching the excluded, especially girls, children with special needs, working children, children in difficult circumstances, and children belonging to ethnic minorities or living in remote areas. (DPE, 2010:13)

The policy priorities noted in the DPE programme proposal draft, albeit in general terms, echo a broad common ground in the views expressed from the civil society and in Prog3

concept paper of DPE. It is expected that the sixth five year plan will also reflect these priorities and appropriate strategies and indicate resource allocation and budgetary framework for this purpose (BIDS, 2010).

4.4.3 DPE's Preliminary Programme Document

The recent draft programme document by DPE (2010) presented to donors as "draft for appraisal" enumerates the key results to be achieved from a proposed "results matrix" of the new programme:

1. To increase the participation of all children in pre- and primary education in all types of schools (formal, non-formal, madrasa).

2. To improve learning outcomes as measured at school level, in terminal examinations, and national assessments.

3. To reduce regional and other disparities in participation, completion and learning outcomes.

4. To decentralise more planning functions to the Upazila and school levels.

5. To increase the effectiveness of budget allocation for primary education. (DPE, 2010:27)

These key results are expected to be achieved through major programme components proposed for the new programme. These components, expected to tie together the complex and wide range of objectives, priorities, actors and sets of activities related to the key results to be aimed for under each component, are:

Component I -   Quality: All children acquire grade-wise and subject-wise expected learning outcomes or competencies in primary education.

Component II -   Universal access and participation: All children enrol and complete the primary cycle.

Component III -   Organisational development and institutional strengthening: Core functions at central, sub-national, local and school levels are performed satisfactorily.

Component IV -   Sector and programme planning and management: Resources and budget allocations are utilised effectively. (DPE, 2010:28)

These are broad thematic areas, and are reminiscent of the four components of PEDP II. (see section 3 above.) The results aimed for are unexceptionable and again reflect the general consensus regarding UPE goals and strategies. How the structure of the proposed components will be reconciled with and translated into a workable operational plan for the complex and wide range of objectives, organisational entities (many beyond the jurisdiction of DPE or even MoPME), activities, and actors involved in UPE will determine the feasibility and success of the new programme. Out-of-the box thinking and daring to take some risks in facing the high-stake challenges, going beyond safe and known modalities which will not

deliver the results, are called for. Ideas and specific suggestions, based on experience and lessons in general about SWAps and from PEDPII have surfaced, which have been proposed in the civil society position conveyed by CAMPE (see the next section).

One important question is the decision-making process and participation in the process regarding the issues just mentioned; as well as, the continuing oversight of the programme once it begins to be implemented. CAMPE paper has raised this question and has offered ideas about appropriate process and mechanism that would make it more participatory, transparent and institutionalised, and thus more effective.

The detailing out of the programme and effective decision-making during this process and in subsequent implementation phase are highly germane to shape and character of the SWAp or a similar programme for UPE development in the run-up to 2015 and beyond. How effective the programme will be, how close the new programme will bring Bangladesh to the MDG and EFA goals of 2015, and what contribution the programme will make to fulfilling the right to education of children will be affected positively and significantly by a programme design that works.

5. Elements of a Pragmatic Programme Approach for Primary Education in Bangladesh

The CAMPE position paper proposed the elements and features of what is called a 'pragmatic programme approach' rather than a SWAp (CAMPE, 2008). The proposed model is discussed below informed by recent on-going discourse on what is needed and what is workable in Bangladesh.

CAMPE offered propositions on consensus-building regarding the decision-making process and key decisions, the nature of involvement and contribution of NGOs in achieving UPE, and a number of broad policy issues that required decisions from the political level of the government. With this contextual backdrop largely in place, a workable programme approach could be developed and made to work. An indicative schematic of this pragmatic programme approach is also proposed, as included in the Annex.

5.1 Consensus Building on Process and Content

CAMPE (2008) asserted that consideration of process is a critical, often neglected, dimension in the development of national education programming. It argued that educational policy decisions and priorities should be decided transparently with ample public dialogue and the opportunity for review by stakeholders.

Promoting consensus and building commitment have been identified in academic discourse as essential ingredients for the success of any long-term planning (Lewin, 2007b). In order to achieve the kinds of major changes in basic and primary education needed in Bangladesh, CAMPE stressed the importance of a broad consensus with a longer-term perspective.

CAMPE (2008) proposed a national consultative process for the planning of the new programme. This consultative process should be guided by a steering body including government, academics, NGOs and other key stakeholders, who would assist in decision-making about goals, targets and strategies for the new primary education programme within a longer term perspective, foster political support, provide guidance for programme formulation and approval, and help mobilise national and international technical capacity and support.

It is suggested by CAMPE that a steering body or a working group appointed by the government, but consisting of government and other stakeholders, need to work on the following issues, for which at least tentative answers should be formulated, which can be refined progressively, to guide the process of preparation for the next phase of primary education development (CAMPE, 2008:33-34):

- Initiating a government-led process to develop the programme with systematic participation of practitioners, academics, NGOs, and other key stakeholders.

- Building a consensus on the longer-term vision and perspective of UPE, a version of which has been outlined by CAMPE.

- Agreement on the financial envelope including a major enhancement of government allocations, the principles of partnership mechanisms and strategies for finance, implementation, and monitoring.

5.2 Roles and Contribution of NGOs

CAMPE envisioned a diverse set of roles for non-governmental organisations and civil society bodies extending substantially beyond, for example, working on contract with government in implementing certain activities. At least eleven roles are envisaged for civil society in helping the nation reach its targets of education for all:

- Helping foster a national dialogue on goals and strategies in the upcoming education programme.

- Reviewing and dialoguing about progress in education.

- Providing a reality check from stakeholders' points of view.

- Mobilising technical assistance and capacity building support through institutional partnership; especially with academic and research institutions in sample surveys, action research, analysis and interpretation.

- Technical assistance from and among NGOs in planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of programme activities and national and local levels.

- Development of innovative models to address complex problems the system is facing—models of effective school-level decentralisation in Bangladesh, effective strategies for reaching and retaining the children of the ultra-poor, etc.

- Helping to scale-up school level improvement plans (SLIPs) upazila primary education plans (UPEPs), through partnership in different forms at the field level.

- Expansion of pre-schools, already begun on a sizeable scale by NGOs, especially for first-generation learners from disadvantaged families.

- Liaison between public education officials and communities; development of SMCs.

- Design and implementation of interventions to reach particular populations-ethnic groups, young children, children with disabilities, dropouts, child labourers, the ultra poor; linking education, poverty reduction and other development activities, where appropriate.

- Creation and management, perhaps in collaboration with the private sector, of community learning centres, ICT centres and education programmes for youth and adults. CAMPE, 2008:34-35)

In short, the roles for non-governmental organisations are seen in helping to guide education activities in several key areas including provision, experimentation, scaling up, mediating among public officials and stakeholders, reaching particular populations, an monitoring implementation – all contributing to the achievement of goals at national and local levels.

5.3 Broad Policy Issues and Political Decisions

CAMPE advocated for the establishment of a single Ministry of Education and Human Resources, which is in line with the new education policy proposal (draft) for one ministry that combines responsibility for all pre-tertiary school education and basic education. Many issues of coordination, mutual linkages, human resource management in the education sector, and articulation of curriculum, which surfaced as complex problems in PEDP II, could be more effectively handled through one school and basic education ministry. The transition to eight-year primary/elementary education, another recommendation of the education policy, also would be more smoothly addressed under one responsible ministry.

The recommendation of the education policy to set up a permanent national education commission to guide and monitor the implementation of the policy is echoed by CAMPE in its proposal for an independent statutory commission on pre-tertiary education. CAMPE suggest that the commission should have research, data gathering and analytical capacity, which could be provided by an enhanced Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics (BANBEIS).

To bring about the necessary changes in primary education and fulfil the goals of a new programme, it is argued, political decisions at the highest level of government, sustained by broad political support, are needed on a number of questions (CAMPE, 2008:35):

- The value of one education and human resource development ministry.

- A permanent statutory education commission for pre-tertiary education, ideally with research and information processing capabilities (with an enhanced BANBEIS as the secretariat).

- Meaningful decentralisation, with elimination of the current legal constraints to decentralisation.

- Unified primary/basic education system with its extension up to Grade 8.

- Substantial increase in resources to primary education.

- Restructuring of the curriculum board.

- New strategies for teachers—selection, training and ongoing development, deployment, career ladder and compensation.

The civil society constituency of CAMPE would like to see that issues of national interest must be resolved through the political process. CAMPE and other civil society institutions can help in sensitisation of the public, political parties and civil society at large on these issues. CAMPE's message is that a supportive and enabling political environment backed up by appropriate political decisions and guidance creates the conditions for effective implementation of a pragmatic programme approach or SWAp. Another part of the message is that with appropriate involvement, civil society could help create the supportive environment.

5.4 A Schematic For a Pragmatic Programme Approach

The position is taken by CAMPE, on behalf of its civil society constituency, was that decisions needed to be made about the scope, goals, targets, and strategies for the 2011-15 programme; and the appropriate design of the programme or sector-wide approach in the specific context and experience of Bangladesh. It argued that mobilising political support and garnering technical guidance for programme formulation and its approval should be through a steering body which would include government, NGOs, academics, and other key stakeholders.

CAMPE points out that SWAp remains an evolving and experimental modality. It has to be contextualised and adapted to the capacities in particular national circumstances. It has to be seen as an approach, not a single or particular financial or implementation modality. It:

> can encompass different financial and implementation modalities, including projects, but are unified by agreed-upon goals/objectives and priorities, coordination of all education initiatives, and government leadership. (Williams, 2008, in CAMPE, 2008)

The proposed schematic for an appropriate programme approach for primary education development included in the CAMPE position paper (See Annex) adheres to the principle of a comprehensive programme that includes all forms and modes of primary education, including second chance or non-formal provisions, and all children including those with various kinds of special needs, who can claim the right of access to primary education. The related components of teachers, curricula, infrastructure, learning materials and assessment of learning which also have to be transformed to achieve the quality-with-equity goal in UPE are included in the programme as projects with their own implementation mechanism within a common programme framework.

The proposed programme would have a larger number of distinct components than in PEDP II. The structure of the programme and the structure of implementation responsibility including the financing mechanism therefore are given special attention from the perspective of efficient management. The presumption is that a single implementation body based in DPE, modelled after PEDP II, need to be modified to have more distributed and delegated decision-making.

The reality of organisational mechanisms and processes, which exist and which have to be mobilised effectively for bringing about the essential change and the capacity building, is recognised in the schematic. This recognition led to the proposal of multiple implementing entities in line with existing distribution of implementing responsibilities. For instance, it is not conceivable that an administrative authority based in DPE will be able to deal effectively with the madrasas, which are under the authority of the Madrasa Education Board and tied to a different Ministry (Ministry of Education, rather than Ministry of Primary and Mass Education). Problems in interacting effectively in respect of curriculum and teacher development, as well as the issues of coordination, if universal education is extended to Grade 8, have been already noted.

Programme components are proposed to be defined as vertically integrated sub-components for specific organisational entities that exist, such as the madrasas (and the Madrasa Education Board), the curriculum board, the second chance primary education run by NGOs, and so on. This is different from horizontally defined programme components, such as

access, organisational capacity, infrastructure, and inclusive education, as in PEDP II, which cut across the jurisdictions of different exiting organisational entities. As long as these entities were all under the umbrella of DPE, one central implementation body could deal with these (not without difficulties, as we have seen), but there is a consensus that the new programme should cover components beyond the remit of DPE and MoPME.

In CAMPE's view, if the proposed components look like conventional "projects," so be it; since a programme approach or even a SWAp can have projects within its fold. What is important is that these are designed and implemented within a clearly articulated programme framework and guided by an active coordination mechanism, even if these are carried out by multiple implementing bodies.

An outline of components and implementation structure for a pragmatic programme approach is contained in the proposed schematic of the "National Primary Education Development (NPED) Programme" for 2011-15 (See Annex). The Programme Framework for NPED will have multiple components (projects), and multiple delivery mechanisms with core common standards for physical provisions, curriculum and learning objectives. The proposed components or projects are:

1. Govt. Primary School Development
2. RNGPS Development
3. Ebtedayee Madrasa Development
4. Curriculum, Learning Materials and Learning Assessment
5. Teacher Development and Support
6. Basic Education Extension to Grade 8
7. Basic Education Infrastructure Development
8. Preschool Development
9. Educational Information and Statistics Capacity
10. Second Chance Basic Education (NFPE) (See Annex)

A National Steering Committee, with technical sub-committees for one or more components, to help examine policy decisions, guide programme design and implementation and ensure resources, is proposed as the overarching implementation mechanism. A budget framework and financing principles established for the total programme, with flexible mechanisms for each project, overseen by the Steering Committee is proposed.

The steering body is expected to guide national level management and implementation support units that will facilitate and support the work of district level technical teams and upazila education plans. The goal will be to empower schools to assume and exercise greater authority and responsibility with accountability to the community.

One Ministry of Education for school education will bring all the projects under one sectoral planning and budget framework (including the activities for extending basic education to Grade 8, curriculum development and teacher development, which will go beyond the purview of present MoPME), but a single ministry is not an absolute pre-requisite.

District technical teams will have to be formed to guide and assist coordinated planning including financial planning of the upazila-wise primary/basic education development. This will help transform the present highly top-down budget planning and management process. The different projects under the programme will depend on the district technical teams and

the upazila planning process to ensure that their inputs serve the coordinated upazila plans and plans of individual schools.

As discussed above, the success of the pragmatic programme approach as proposed is predicated on political and government level (beyond MoPME) decisions to undertake some of the far-reaching reforms that are needed in the system and are also called for by the new education policy and the government's political pledges. For example:

- Major decentralisation of primary and secondary education to district, upazila, and institution levels and greater involvement of local government and communities which are announced objectives of the government. (Should there be a phased implementation with research and experimentation in a few upazilas in each division in the next five years?)

- Is the goal to make RNGPS more like GPS? The former, in fact, offer an opportunity to involve communities and the local government in creative ways to achieve the quality and inclusion objectives; and, therefore, can be a distinct programme component by itself.

- The need for second chance will be there for the foreseeable future. How can this be recognised as a key component of the unified system without destroying the strengths of the effective second chance primary education programme run by BRAC/NGOs and yet making it a part of the decentralised local system?

- How can the madrasa system be reformed and significantly improved? It is a massive task. Should it not be a project involving the Madrasas Education Board, the curriculum authorities and the local government?

- The extension of universal primary education to Grade 8 over the next decade with its many ramifications deserves to be a specific programme component (project) by itself. There are many implications for curriculum, teachers, facilities etc which will be easier with one Ministry for School Education proposed in the draft education policy; alternately, a robust coordination and collaboration mechanism will be needed.

- New forward-looking and longer term vision of teacher development and changing the society's perception about teaching as a profession have been pledged in the political manifesto of the government and is suggested in the new education policy. Some possibilities have been indicated in the CAMPE paper and other forums. Action on this will require a government-wide decision and working together of MoPME, MOE, National University etc.

- Will there be a major enhancement of public education financing that will present a new resource scenario for quality improvement? Will the sixth five-year plan provide a resource and budgetary framework and will actively guide financial implementation and management of major development programs including primary education?

- Funding modality is a critical issue. There is really no feasible alternative but to adopt a "treasury" model (of budget support by donors by paying into the central fund of the government under agreed conditions), for the complex and ambitious programme that is envisaged. Something like this is proposed in the CAMPE paper. DPs who want to

participate and the government have to recognise this reality and agree on the conditions The financing approach also has to fit into the government's five year plan finance management mechanism.

Clear decisions on all major issues requiring political choices and the inevitable bargaining cannot be expected all at once. MoPME needs to present the issue to the political decision-makers and try to get as much clarity regarding policy and strategic directions as possible. But the programme design itself need to anticipate the most likely scenario and have contingency plans or options that may be adopted as the political directions emerge.

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

This monograph is about the modality of cooperation, rather than an assessment of PEDP II accomplishments. Key information and a brief discussion about progress in the substantive programme objectives in primary education development have been necessary to understand how the modality of cooperation and management has worked.

The conclusions relate to how the SWAp modalities applied in PEDP II helped or hindered the programme. The recommendations relate to the modality of cooperation and management of strategies and key actions that would advance universal primary education with equity and quality.

6.1 Conclusions: Modality of Cooperation and Programme Management

SWAp, as a recent version of the development cooperation modality, arose from the need to move away from isolated "projects" to a more comprehensive "programme-based approach" (PBA) in development cooperation. It is intended to: a) align external assistance with national priorities and objectives, b) improve coordination among both national and external actors, c) promote sector-wide thinking and planning, d) help develop national capacities, and e) harmonise efforts of different assistance agencies.

As a form of PBA, SWAp has to be seen as more than primarily a financing mechanism. It "indeed can include projects, earmarked and separately tracked funds, as well as pooled or basket finance specifically for the sector, as well as general budget support that may be nominally tagged for education." (UNESCO 2007:12.)

In practice, SWAps have often emphasised, generally at the urging of major lenders and donors, the financing modality of pooled funding, have ruled out *projects* within a common programme framework, and have regarded government agencies as the legitimate recipient of external support, excluding NGOs and other non-government bodies. Also in reality, SWAp has been a *sub-sector* approach. A total sector approach in education has not been developed or applied anywhere, because of the wide diversity and multiplicity of components and objectives and complexity of organisational structures that comprise a national educational system. Key points of the SWAp experience in PEDP II are listed below:

1. PEDP II experience shows that the inherent dilemmas of development cooperation persisted under SWAp arrangements. The capacity constraints of governments in setting directions and priorities and managing resources for results and the external agencies' limitations in compensating for these constraints or helping overcome these have combined to pose high obstacles. This is so despite the SWAp rhetoric of national capacity building, and harmonisation and alignment among external agencies themselves and with the national priorities.

2. Progress has stalled in respect of issues critical to the PEDP mission of quality with equity and inclusion, which required policy decisions and commitment of the government, beyond the Directorate and the Ministry. Three of these critical areas are: a) significant enhancement of public resources for primary education commensurate with equity-with-quality objectives, b) human resource policy and management regarding teachers and administrative personnel in primary education, and c) genuine decentralisation with increased authority and accountability for planning and

management at local and school level. The SWAp modality as it was applied in PEDP II could not effectively address these issues, and in turn, these impinged negatively on how the modality worked.

3. Arguably, when many substantive policy issues have to be resolved and basic institutional and organisational reforms are needed to be undertaken based on agreed understanding of and commitment to these reforms, a SWAp that concentrated on modalities and coordination of managing external financial assistance is not necessarily the right approach.

4. As it turned out, the application of SWAp in PEDP II was fraught with contradictions which hampered its effectiveness. Instead of following through the logic of a programme approach with diverse components, it was managed as one mega-project with one centralised, specially established implementation unit. Contrary to the rationale of SWAp, "blurring of roles, responsibilities, expectations, and mutual accountability" among DP partners was identified as a problem. A modality that is intended to promote government leadership and ownership is driven by the procedures for financial requirements and procurement rules of donors, which diverted attention and energy from transforming and improving management of the programme itself, even though less than a third of the total programme cost is contributed by donors.

5. Important stakeholders, including CAMPE, representing active education NGOs and civil society groups, and the technical personnel of the government who have been involved in PEDP II, appear to have drawn the lesson that a policy-based coordination of external assistance and programme implementation activities, rather than a SWAp template, would be the right approach..

6. Some key stakeholders are in agreement that the policy-based coordination among both national actors and donors, and between the two, combined with multiple "projects" with a degree of autonomy and accountability for multiple executing agencies for the projects may be more workable. The latter deviates from the SWAP as commonly seen, but may turn out to be not only more appropriate, but also truer to the essence of SWAP as a systematic, integrated and sustainable approach to the development of a sector/sub-sector. It may also better reflect what Ministries and agencies actually do, i.e., run a system and have budget lines related to specific activities some of which are "projects." Whether this will be followed through by appropriate political decisions and commonly agreed choices, which involve some risk-taking, by the government, main international lenders, and the main bilateral donors is now the important question.

6.2 Recommendations

Based on the analysis and conclusions above, recommendations for strategic actions are made. These relate to the modality of mobilising resources, managing the programme and building management capacity. These set of action is expected to help accelerate progress towards the 2015 goals and lay the foundation for further rapid advance towards UPE with quality and equity.

- *A pragmatic and flexible programme approach.* The proposed schematic for an appropriate programme approach for primary education development presented by CAMPE on behalf of civil society stakeholders (as shown in Annex) should be looked at seriously and given due consideration as the basis for developing the new programme and a workable modality of cooperation. This schematic adheres to the principle of a comprehensive programme that includes all forms and modes of primary education, including second chance or non-formal provisions, and all children including those with various kinds of special needs, who have the right of access to primary education. The related components of teachers, curricula, infrastructure, learning materials and assessment of learning which also have to be transformed to achieve the quality-with-equity goal in UPE are brought into the programme as projects with their own implementation mechanism within a common programme framework.

- *A participatory mechanism for key decisions and oversight.* The propositions presented regarding necessary steps towards consensus-building for the decision-making process and key decisions, the nature of involvement and contribution of NGOs in achieving UPE, and a number of broad policy issues that required decisions from the political level of the government should be given serious consideration by the government and the development partners. The suggested steps and mechanisms are necessary, taking into account the contextual backdrop, for developing a workable programme approach that can be made to work.

There are three conditions for making the programme management and cooperation model work. The modalities of cooperation and management cannot help advance the goals of the programme unless a supportive policy environment can be created. Three critical areas need attention in this respect, as indicated below:

- *A major increase in public resources.* Substantially greater public resources should be committed within the framework of the sixth five-year plan and the new education policy in order to assure minimum necessary levels of quality with equity. Equally important is the effective use of resources, through, for example, upazila-based capitation formulas, decentralised management of resources, and assessing optimal use of scarce resources, a case in point being the spending on stipends. More resources are needed at the school level along with greater discretion with accountability in their use. The question of affordability must be turned around to ask – can we afford not to make the necessary investment in education with quality and equity.

- *Development and trial of upazila-based universal primary education planning and management.* A rigorous trial should be designed as a key feature of the new UPE programme. It should involve local government and all service providers in selected upazilas as of government educational development strategy in order to rationalise provisions for quality basic education for all children with greater authority and accountability of schools and local authorities. School and community-based actions to support the poor, the virtually excluded, and overcoming mis-perception and resistance to the role of non-governmental and community organisations in education should be a part of the development and trial.

- *Regulatory framework for multiple providers.* A regulatory framework needs to be developed and applied to universal primary education that reconciles the state's obligation to guarantee basic education of acceptable quality for all children with the reality of multiple providers who are able to reach certain groups of the population more effectively. The regulatory framework should articulate the principles of multiple providers, recognising the reality of state, quasi-state and non-state providers; their strengths and potentials and the need for common curricular and provisions standards. It should set criteria and principles for determining relative size and role of different providers within a common national primary education system.

As Ward et al. (2006) reminded us in their reflection on policy, strategy, partnership and implementation in respect of education reform in Uganda, that change in education is not a technocratic process. It involves political and value choices. Education systems are not machines but arenas of conflict, consensus and compliance; education systems do reflect how people construct their roles within these arenas.

> Education policy-making reflects tradition, it is a political and cultural settlement based on various legacies and imperatives, opportunities, pressures and power, which ranges across all levels from commitment to compliance to resistance. … Policies, principles and practices are fragile instruments that require commitment and attention to detail for the intended outcomes to be achieved. (Ward et al, 2006:1)

These are the challenges in constructing the modalities of partnerships and mechanisms for management that will work.

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Appendix 1

Suggested Schematic of the National Primary Education Development (NPED) Programme (2010-15)

Outline of Components and Implementation Structure for a Pragmatic Programme Approach

NPED Programme and Components	Implementation mechanisms	Financial mechanisms
<u>Programme Framework</u>: National Primary education development Programme (2010-15) with Multiple Components (Projects), and Multiple Delivery Mechanisms and Core Common Standards for Provisions, Curriculum and Learning Objectives	A National Steering Committee with Technical Sub-Committees for one or more components to adopt policy decisions, guide programme design and implementation and ensure resources.	A budget framework and financing principles established for total programme (taking account of NPA and PRS), with flexible mechanisms for each project, overseen by the Steering Committee.
<u>Project 1</u> Govt. Primary School Development (Ensuring all project inputs brought together to serve government schools with the programme framework and based on upazila-based primary education plan	DPE Directorates (with redesigned functions and capacity to serve Upazila-based planning and management)	Government budget allocations within a medium term budget framework (MTBF) with deficits made up by external assistance as sector support.
<u>Project 2</u> RNGPS Development – same objective as Project 1	DPE Directorates (with similar change in function and capacity as Project 1)	Same as above
<u>Project 3</u> Ibtidayi Madrasa Development	Madrasa Education Board (with major professional capacity enhancement)	Same as above
<u>Project 4</u> Curriculum, Learning Materials and Learning Assessment	Redesigned National Curriculum Board (with enhanced professional capacity and divesting from it textbook production/distribution) working closely with academic and research institutions	Same as above
<u>Project 5</u> Teacher Development and Support	Project management support unit designed and established at DPE (in close collaboration with Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education for work with degree colleges)	Same as above
<u>Project 6</u> Basic Education Extension to Grade 8	Grade 8 basic education extension project designed and project management support unit set up at DPE (with Directorate of Secondary & higher education collaboration.	Same as above
<u>Project 7</u> Basic Education Infrastructure Development	Project Management support unit designed and set up at LGED.	Same as above
<u>Project 8</u> Preschool Development	Project Mngmnt Support Unit designed and set up at DPE (implemented through NGOs).	Same as above
<u>Project 9</u> Educational Information and Statistics Capacity	A redesigned BANBEIS with independent statistics and data collection analysis and reporting capacity for all levels of education.	Same as above

<u>Project 10</u> Second Chance Basic Education (NFPE), primary/basic education for extremely vulnerable, hard-to-reach groups (linked with poverty reduction projects, e.g. CFPR)	NGOs and/or NGO Consortia working with local government.	External funding by Donor Consortium/ individual donor to NGOs –recorded and included within the national programme and subject to guidance /oversight of National Steering Committee .

Notes:

The Steering body will guide National level management and implementation support units which will facilitate and support the work of district level technical teams and upazila education plans with the goal of empowering schools to assume and exercise greater authority and responsibility with accountability to the community.

The projects for GPS, RNGPS and Madrasa development will essentially ensure that all activities are carried out within the framework of upazila-based planning for overall primary education development, bringing the inputs from different projects, such as curriculum development, infrastructure and teacher development together to support the upazilas and individual school development plan. A district level technical, capacity will be needed to support upazila primary education planning and to carry out the activities in a responsive and accountable manner with the goal of moving towards genuine decentralisation of primary education planning and management.

It is expected that the project support unit at LGED will coordinate planning with different projects and upazila plans, provide technical support and set standards, but progressively the maintenance, repair and new school infrastructure building will be handed over to school managing committees.

An independent national capacity for educational statistics and information collection, analysis and reporting was the original rationale for BANBEIS. This need has been underscored repeatedly. In addition to the role of the independent statistics agency of BANBEIS, each project will still need its own monitoring mechanism. In the context of decentralisation, statistical capacities will be needed at the upazila and district levels. Development of these capacities and promoting their use in planning and management will also be tasks of BANBEIS, for which its own capacity has to be developed. A professionally enhanced BANBEIS can be the secretarial of a permanent statutory national education commission – an idea being advocated by education stakeholders.

One Ministry of Education for the education sector will bring all the projects under one sectoral MTBF (including the activities for extending basic education to Grade 8, curriculum development and teacher development, which will go beyond the purview of present MOPME), but this is not an absolute pre-requisite.

District technical teams will have to be formed to guide and assist coordinated planning including financial planning of the upazila-wise primary /basic education development. This will help transform the present highly top-down budget planning and management process. The different projects under the programme will depend on the district technical teams and the upazila planning process to ensure that their inputs serve the coordinated upazila plans and plans of individual schools.
(CAMPE,2008)

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Report summary:
This monograph, in the CREATE Pathways to Access series, is about the modality of cooperation and programme management in primary education in Bangladesh, based specifically on the experience of the Second Primary Education Development Programme (PEDP II). It is not intended to be an assessment of PEDP II accomplishments, but key information and a brief discussion about progress in the substantive programme objectives in primary education development in Bangladesh have been presented in order to understand how the modality of cooperation and management has worked. Having examined the characteristics of the Sector-Wide Approach (SWAp) as it has been applied in PEDP II and how it has helped or hindered achievement of the programme goals, the on-going discourse on the appropriate scope and features of the next phase of primary education development is reviewed. This is particularly relevant as PEDP II winds up and a new programme for primary education development from mid-2011 begins to be designed. Conclusions are drawn on the basis of CREATE research activities which have illuminated the issues and concerns that have surfaced in implementing PEDP II. Recommendations are made about the modality of cooperation and management that would be congruent with and supportive of future strategies and key actions to advance universal primary education with equity and quality.

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