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ESID Working Paper No. 86

The problem with teachers: the political settlement and education quality reforms in Bangladesh

Naomi Hossain[1], Mirza Hassan[2], Md Ashikur Rahman[3], Khondoker Shakhawat Ali[4] and M. Sajidul Islam[5]

April, 2017

[1] Institute of Development Studies, Brighton, UK
Email correspondence: n.hossain@ids.ac.uk

[2,3] BRAC Institute of Governance and Development (BIGD), BRAC University

[4] Power and Participation Research Centre and BRAC Institute of Governance and Development (BIGD), BRAC University

[5] ADB/Sida supported RBM TA project, Primary Education Development Programme 3, Directorate of Primary Education, Bangladesh

ISBN: 978-1-908749-83-3

Abstract

Why has Bangladesh failed to raise quality in basic education when it successfully expanded school provision? This paper explores this problem through analysis of the influence of the political settlement on the design and delivery of the third Primary Education Development Programme (PEDP3), an US$8bn education reform plan. From document review, key informant interviews and comparative case study analysis of teacher motivations and performance, it concludes that the elite consensus on the need for basic mass education runs out when it comes to raising education standards: teachers are politically important, so reforms are more carrot than stick – in the form of training, increments, new entitlements. The centralised administration and its weak incentives to enforce unpopular reforms ensure discretion at the frontline/school level, so teacher performance depends ultimately on their inherent motivations. But the past generation has seen these motivations decline with the changing sociology of the teaching profession: teachers are less respected, relatively less well-paid and more often women (who have lower social status and more demands on their time), while the average public school pupil is 'harder to reach and harder to teach'. Education quality is improving, but incrementally, in line with a political economy that has generated positive incentives for teachers, without holding them more accountable for their performance.

Keywords: Bangladesh, education reform, education quality, political settlements, teachers, teacher incentives, accountability, effective schools

Hossain, N., Hassan, M., Rahman, M. A., Ali, K. S. and Islam, M. S. (2017) The problem with teachers: The political settlement and education quality reforms in Bangladesh. ESID Working Paper No. 86. Manchester, UK: The University of Manchester. Available at www.effective-states.org

The background research for this paper was funded by the Effective States and Inclusive Development Research Centre (ESID), based at The University of Manchester, UK. This document is an output from a project funded by UK Aid from the UK government for the benefit of developing countries. However, the views expressed and information contained in it are not necessarily those of, or endorsed by the UK government, which can accept no responsibility for such views or information or for any reliance placed on them.

Acronyms and glossary

AL	Awami League, one of the two main political parties, in power since 2009, and the party at the helm of the national liberation struggle. AL and **BNP** alternated in power through the 1990s and much of the 2000s; their substantive policies are very similar, but there are significant ideological differences on national identity and religion that show up in education policy.
AUEO	Assistant Upazila Education Officer; government official with greatest direct contact with schools, responsible for regular monitoring of performance, teacher attendance, student data collection, etc.
BNP	Bangladesh Nationalist Party, the main opposition to the **AL**, originated with the military ruler who came to power after the assassination and overthrow of the AL nationalist leader, Mujib, in 1975.
BRAC	Large, now international NGO that started in Bangladesh, with a large, non-formal education programme in Bangladesh and other interventions. BRAC undertakes the research for the Education Watch Report produced by **CAMPE**.
CAMPE	Campaign for Popular Education, a civil society network organisation that acts as a watchdog on public education performance and policy issues, including producing the Education Watch report.
DPE	Directorate of Primary Education, under **MOPME**
GoB	Government of Bangladesh
MOPME	Ministry of Primary and Mass Education
NNPS	Newly-nationalised primary schools (see **RNGPS**)
NSA	National Student Assessment; biennial test of class 3 and 5 students' Bangla and Mathematics, introduced in 2011.
PECE	Primary Education Completion Examination; *shomapni porikkha* in Bengali.
PEDP3	Third Primary Education Development Programme; donor-supported but predominantly **GoB**-financed sector-wide programme of investment in public primary and pre-primary education, 2011-15; PEDP I and PEDP II ran from 1997 and 2004, respectively.
PTA	Parent Teacher Association
PTI	Primary training institutes. These are the main centres for teacher training, operated at the district level.

RNGPS	Registered non-government primary school. These schools were nominally non-state, but in effect subsidised almost entirely by state financing via basic teacher salary and school infrastructural costs. Since 2014, these have been officially nationalised, and RNGPS teachers are now full government employees, and the schools are now called Newly-Nationalised Primary Schools (**NNPS**).
SMC	School managing committee
SLIP	School-level Improvement Plans; under **PEDP3**, funds are provided to schools that develop their own plans for improvement through a participatory process.
UEO	Upazila Education Officer; government official tasked with overall implementation of primary education policy, including supervision of AUEOs, who directly monitor schools and teachers at the sub-district level.
Upazila	Sub-district, the lowest level of regional government and location of the UEOs and AUEOs, who are responsible for supervising schools and liaising between them and DPE in Dhaka. There are 488 upazilas.

1. Introduction

Background and motivations

Why have reforms to raise the quality of basic education been difficult to achieve in Bangladesh, a country that was feted for rapidly expanding education provision to girls and the poor (Chowdhury, Mushtaque, Nath and Choudhury 2002; 2003; Kabeer and Hossain 2004)? The comparative failure of reforms of quality in education policy has generally been attributed to resource, technical and governance factors. Yet the rapid expansion of basic education, including to girls and the poor, had distinctly political economic drivers, such as the mass popularity of school provision, aid dependence, and the nature of competition between parties, and between the state and NGOs (Hossain, Kabeer and Subrahmanian, 2002). Might a political economy analysis help illuminate pathways to effective quality reforms in basic education? There are good reasons to believe so, and this paper aims to find out.

Why does this matter? Understanding why reforms are slow and halting when it comes to tackling quality, compared to the bold, experimental period of expansion, is a policy matter of rising importance for Bangladesh. In the field of education development more widely, consensus is growing that the quality of education received is a more powerful driver of economic growth than the number of years the population spends in school, and also that high quality basic education enables more inclusive and equitable forms of growth (Hanushek and Wöessmann, 2007; Hanushek, 2009). Globally, there are pressures on the country's flagship garments export industry for higher productivity, implying improved average skills in the working population. With its open, human resource-rich economy, higher quality education could help shift Bangladesh onto a more inclusive development path higher up the global value chain, enabling it to compete in a context of upward wage pressure (CAMPE, 2013; World Bank, 2013). Reforms to raise the quality and standards of basic education are, therefore, critical development priorities for Bangladesh (GoB, 2012: 111).

Education and the political settlement

To date, however, understanding of the challenges facing education quality reforms in Bangladesh has failed to offer a properly political account of the problem. This is so despite growing evidence that politics plays a critical role in the nature and extent of public social provisioning (see discussion in Hickey, 2013). This paper is part of a larger comparative project to examine how politics matters, framing analysis around differences within political settlements and policy domains in low-income countries, analysing education policy and provision against an understanding of the political settlement, or the set of political and economic conditions on which a balance of power between contending elites rests.

The empirical focus of this case study is the design and implementation of the Primary Education Development Programme 3 (PEDP3, 2011-15), a sectoral

development effort which built on two decades of substantial investment and reform in basic education. It concludes that politics is indeed central to explaining why these reforms to improve education quality have been limited in intent and implementation, despite strong elite commitment and state capacity to basic education provision (see, for instance, GoB, 2012: 12). Expansion and reform were most rapid in the democratic, but patronage-based, period after the return to multiparty rule in 1991, signalling, further, that expansionary projects were most possible during periods of high 'competitive clientelism' – that the type of political settlement mattered. With respect to education quality, by contrast, this broad strong political support was less evident.

On the problem of education quality, policy and actual provision were found to be shaped by political bargains and interests in two arenas. First, competition between elites: through party political agendas and policies, to less formal structures of patronage, and for reasons of legitimacy, supporters, and policy success, elites generally support improved education quality. But there is no important demand from business for raised skills levels, and teachers' interests are an area of some sensitivity, due to their important role in elections and as a big organised group of public sector workers. Teachers are powerful enough to avoid many visible conflicts over education policy: reforms disciplining or holding teachers accountable for their performance rarely make it to the policy table.

Second, a politics of the state and its human development project provides a stronger and more consistent drive for quality. This builds on an elite consensus that basic education is foundational for national development. Part of the education politics of the state is to increase its 'biopower', or capacity to govern the lives and bodies of the population, rendering them ready for development. Some of the work of schools can be accomplished at a fairly low level of teacher quality. However, the Bangladeshi state has considerable standing in the world of aid and international development because of its innovative inclusionary development, and that drive for education quality is part of the wider incentive to demonstrate results on international human development indicators.

To properly understand the politics of education quality, we also have to notice that power is not the whole story. Sociological matters of social and gender identity and position closely influence whether quality reforms make the classroom a more instructive place. In Bangladesh, the sub-district administration governs the relationships between teachers and the state, but it is teachers who represent, or mediate, the state to citizens. And teachers' identities and position have changed with the rapid expansion: they have seen a relative decline in status, as they are no longer the only educated or influential people in a community; it has also become a more feminised profession, a fact no doubt connected to the profession's decline in prestige in the past few decades. Our research indicates that teachers' commitment and performance were linked to these changing identities and positions, and that

successful schools were ones in which the incentives to perform were sensitive to the incentives of identity and position.

The paper is organised as follows. Section 2 describes and analyses the problem of education quality in Bangladesh, identifying teacher quality as a core concern. Section 3 sets out the approach and methods used. Section 4 defines the influence of the changing political settlement on education policy and provision, concentrating on the current PEDP3 and the politics of education quality. Section 5 takes us into the education administration, and examines how the political settlement shapes reforms as they are rolled out down to the schools. Section 6 brings us into the classroom and the community, comparing two pairs of school study findings to explore how reforms make it to the frontline, and what happens when they do. Section 7 concludes with an analysis of the politics of education quality. It argues that conditions are currently good for a stronger political thrust on raising average standards in public schools, but the growth of private schooling and human development more generally will anyway be playing a role to raise educational attainments. There are reasons to believe teachers' innate motivations should be enhanced by the PEDP3 reforms, but their accountability for how well they perform will remain largely a matter of local discretion. Teachers remain a formidable political force, and having recently strengthened their position as public sector employees, it seems likely that public education reforms will likely continue to tread lightly on teachers' interests.

2. The problem of quality in basic education in Bangladesh

So what is this problem for which reforms are needed? Bangladesh, like many other developing countries with fast-growing basic education systems, faces a host of social, economic, political, and organisational challenges to raising quality. [1] Bangladesh became known as a star performer in basic education when it eliminated gender disparities and raised enrolments at primary and lower secondary in the 1990s, expanding provision rapidly with innovative schemes and non-formal programmes (Hossain, 2007; Chowdhury et al., 2002, 2003; Kabeer and Hossain 2004). Primary education statistics continue to be cited as evidence of its 'surprising' human development achievements (Asadullah, Savoia and Mahmud 2014). But by

[1] Children of poorer parents generally learn less, attend erratically, or drop out earlier (Rose and Dyer, 2008), partly because unschooled parents may be uninterested in (Nelson, 2007) or unable to hold socially superior teachers to account (Kingdon et al., 2014), particularly if: gender and class combine to render downward accountability mechanisms toothless (Goetz, 2008; Rocha Menocal and Sharma, 2008; Westhorp et al., 2014). Politically, the problem of poor quality may become more intractable if expansion makes teachers' unions stronger and more resistant to quality reforms (Nelson, 1999; Corrales, 1999) (Kingdon et al., 2014). The challenges of raising education standards in fast-expanding systems are compounded by the classic principal-agent problem: learning is inherently difficult to observe, so it is difficult to hold teachers accountable for their performance (Bruns, Filmer and Patrinos, 2011). Teachers may find teaching children from poor backgrounds difficult and unrewarding, particularly if they are untrained for the challenges of reaching first generation learners, and if the system is under-resourced, or designed on the assumption that children come from backgrounds where learning is prized and supported.

the early 2000s, concerns about quality were widespread, partly as the rapid expansion appeared to push average standards down (CAMPE, 2005; Ahmed et al., 2007). Table 1 gives an overview of the size of the system.

Table 1. Basic facts about Bangladesh primary education

1	Total enrolment	19.6 million (at gender parity)
	Schools	107,000, in 24 categories/types
2	Ministry of Primary and Mass Education-managed Schools	68,000
		64% of all schools
		80% of all pupils
3	Primary school teachers	467,000
	Of which government system	69%
	Women as % of total	57
4	Students receiving:	
	stipend (conditional cash transfer)	7.7 million
	school feeding	> 3 million
5	Budget	USD8bn (2014)
	Primary ed as % of pub exp	10
	% of GDP	2

Sources: 1 and 2: 2013 school census; 3: DPE (2014b); 4: MOPME (n. d.); 5: DPE (2014b).

Learning outcomes and quality indicators

Learning outcomes have been poor but improving over the period of PEDP3. The second National Student Assessment in 2013 showed 75 percent of Grade 3 students performed at or above grade level in Bangla, up from 68 percent in 2011, but little improvement among grade 5 learners. In mathematics, nearly 43 percent of grade 3 students and 75 percent of grade 5 learners were behind expected grade level learning outcomes in both years. Despite this depressing performance, 2.5 million students, 95 percent of those eligible took the 2013 Primary Education Completion Examination (PECE), and almost 99 percent passed (scored at least 33 percent in all six subjects (DPE, 2014b)).

In terms of completion and repetition, the situation has improved. The primary completion rate rose nearly 20 percentage points between 2010 and 2013, and now stands at 79 percent (DPE, 2014b) – remarkable, given that Education Watch 2008 noted that the primary school survival rate had decreased from 81 to 58 percent between 1998 and 2008 (CAMPE, 2009).[2] The repetition rate has greatly improved, from 50 percent in 2008 to only seven in 2013. For every 100 children who enrol in primary, 78 are likely to make it to the end (DPE, 2014b).

Recent official assessments such as the Annual Sector Performance Report (DPE, 2014b) credit these problems to a weak organisational and institutional framework for delivering primary education; poor physical environment in schools; the shift system,

[2] One reason for this appears to be that students from private schools register for the PECE. One of our school case studies suggests that this 'import' of examinees may improve the average completion rate and distort school priorities, so that those children who attend those institutions throughout may be worse off from this apparent improvement in completion rates.

with its short contact hours; lack of support materials and inadequate number of trained teachers, traditional classroom teaching and learning practices. Teacher capacity is a key concern. In 2008, only one-fifth of teachers were trained in the core curriculum, and 40 percent of women and nearly 60 percent of men teachers had no subject training (CAMPE, 2009). Although subject training makes a difference, experience only affects student learning when teachers have worked more than 20 years; then students tend to do *worse*, suggesting teacher motivations actually decline over time (DPE, 2014c). Lesson observation studies suggest pedagogical skill has been limited and rote-learning from textbooks routine (FMRP, 2006).

Student backgrounds also matter, but school-level factors matter more. CAMPE (2009) argued that performance depended on students' socioeconomic background (including whether they could afford private tuition). However, NSA 2013 found that most variation in educational outcomes in publicly funded schools was due to differences between schools, rather than students; also (World Bank, 2013). This indication of frontline discretion (Lipsky, 1980) gains support from our four-school comparative case analysis, which finds wide variations in the governance regimes at the school level explaining differences in teacher motivation and performance, perceived quality and educational outcomes.

Time for learning

Discretion with respect to the time devoted to teaching and learning helps explain variation across schools. One study found that only 67 percent of GPS students were present during unannounced visits, and only 45 percent in publicly funded ebtedayee madrassahs (FMRP, 2006). Lesson observation found teachers out of the classroom on average 14 percent and students off-task 12 percent of the time (FMRP, 2006: 177). The need for more time to achieve basic competencies was underlined by a recent study of mathematics competencies across cohorts; this found that children who stayed on into secondary were more likely to attain primary-levelcompetencies with each year. In other words, the average Bangladeshi student has to get through much of secondary school to achieve a primary school education (Asadullah and Chaudhury, 2013). In part, children are simply not getting enough learning time in primary school.

There a number of reasons why time on task is low. Scheduled hours are low, and children in grades 1 and 2 in double-shift schools receive only 520 hours per year on average (DPE, 2014b), compared to an international average of 900-1,000. Unplanned closures mean that schools operate between 42 and 78 percent of planned school days (Tietjen, Rahman and Spaulding, 2004), although that situation may be improving (DPE, 2014b; FMRP, 2006). Teachers are frequently absent (Chaudhury et al., 2004), although rarely on unauthorised leave (FMRP, 2006; CAMPE, 2009). Teachers are often late, end class early, or use classroom time for other activities. So, while pedagogy remains a problem, a critical determinant of education quality is the quantity of instruction time (DPE, 2014c: 62; see also Rose, Lane and Rahman, 2014). In the classroom, students learn little from the many

teachers who have no subject or pedagogical training, or who are demotivated and busy with private income activities. The recent World Bank sectoral review concluded that:

> an important determinant of learning within the school is the quality of the teacher …. Although teachers are one of the principal resources available to the education system, it appears that they are not being utilized in the most effective manner in Bangladesh (World Bank, 2013: xxi).

In line with this diagnosis, the analysis which follows tracks specifically those policies designed to raise the quality of teaching, through more investment in teacher capacities and in better management of teaching, to increase motivation to perform. It also identifies other influences on teacher quality that are not related to programmed reforms.

3. Approach, concepts and methodology

Approach and methods

Following Levy and Walton (2013), the analysis traced the progress of reforms from the political centre out to their implementation in agencies, sub-districts, schools and classrooms. In practice, the implementation of education reforms reaches beyond the state and into society, as school governance reforms depend on involving the community.

The focus of the research was on the vast, wide-ranging recent reform effort (the Primary Education Development Programme 3, or PEDP3 (2011-15), within which it paid most attention to 'results areas' associated with raising education quality. These components included improved teacher training and performance accountability measures, the introduction of a national student assessment system, as well as headteacher leadership and school-based management initiatives. These reforms were unevenly taken up in practice, even when formally part of policy. The analytical approach was to explore how the political settlement established state capacity and elite commitment to education quality, through an examination of 'the substantive orientation and structural features of the political settlement, including the cognitive maps of political elites and sectoral leaders' (Levy and Walton, 2013: 11). The implications of this settlement for the governance and management of basic education services is then analysed, in particular to establish patterns of organisational behaviour that are established and reproduced in the education administration. Finally, the analysis proceeded to the classroom, for a comparative analysis of how quality reforms have influenced how education is actually being provided.

Research activities

The research undertook a small number of purposive key informant interviews with officials, stakeholders and experts, and drew on interviews undertaken for a parallel study of the political economy of education reform in Bangladesh conducted by one of the researchers. The interviews were guided by a set of questions to do with the priorities and goals of education policy reform, perceptions of the main influences, actors and interests involved in setting the reform agenda, constraints, challenges and achievements in the implementation of the PEDP3 programme and its predecessors. The topics were identified on the basis of a review of grey and published programme documents relating to the implementation and operation of the PEDP3, by a review of the secondary literature and data on the education system more broadly, and informed by several of the researchers' collective knowledge of the basic education sector from research, advisory and direct operational experience over the past two decades.

Around 30 interviews took place at different levels through the administrative system, and included officials in the central ministry, directorate and PEDP implementation units, as well as divisional and district officials responsible for teacher training institutions, and upazila or sub-district level officials tasked with monitoring and supporting schools. As many of these individuals may be identifiable through their institutional affiliation, and some of the issues discussed could be considered politically sensitive, direct quotations are only used here where it is possible to anonymise the speaker.

To explore how reforms were being enacted in schools, the study undertook in-depth comparative case study analysis in four schools, two pairs each of relatively 'good' and 'bad' performing institutions, in a rural (Narsingdi) and urban (Mymensingh city) setting with comparable catchment populations. Selection was based on both official 'objective' data about school performance (see Table 4) and the views of local officials and community members. The primary research involved interviews and focus group discussions with education officials at the upazila level, including during the selection of the schools, as well as with headteachers, teachers, members of the school managing committee and the wider community. At the local level, and based on our reading of the policy research and diagnostic work, the analysis focused on identifying determinants of teacher performance, including perceptions of headteacher leadership and management, teacher competencies and behaviours, the governance of private tuition, official supervision and monitoring, community and parental participation, and student performance or learning outcomes. The findings were annotated or transcribed and coded using qualitative research software, and analysed to assess how patterns of different governance arrangements at the school level were influencing teacher performance. Patterns and common elements across rural/urban and 'good'/'bad' performing schools were identified and situated within the political economy analysis of the reforms at the upper levels of the system, to assess how they related to the political settlement. A description of the schools and their areas is provided with a discussion of the findings in Section 6.

4. Elite political settlement and basic education provision

Elite consensus on mass education across political settlements

Open economies governed by competitive polities usually invest in mass basic education (Ansell, 2008; Stasavage, 2005b; Avelino, Brown and Hunter, 2005; Hecock, 2006). This is so, even where democratic institutions are weak or clientelistic or there is no multiparty competition (Stasavage, 2005a), or even when contending parties essentially agree on the policies needed (Hossain, Kabeer and Subrahmanian, 2002). In Bangladesh, an elite consensus on the need to expand basic education provision was inspired by a vision of transforming the country's sole wealth – its human resources – into an income-earning asset in the style of the East Asian 'tiger economies',[3] after its crisis-ridden liberation struggle had seen it labelled a 'test case for development' (Faaland and Parkinson, 1976). Consistency across political regimes on the directions of economic and social development was rooted in aid dependence (Sobhan, 1982), but contending elites shared a belief in mass basic education as the foundation for national development (Hossain, 2010a).

Judged in terms of spending, the political will to educate has plateaued with the achievement of nigh-universal primary education by the 2000s. Public spending on education has lost its share of the total, and remains static at an internationally and even regionally low level of around 2 percent of GDP (see Table 2; and also Islam, 2010). But in real terms, spending rose 30 percent between 2001 and 2005 alone (Al-Samarrai. 2007). Spending remains concentrated on teachers' pay and benefits, and tightly controlled from the centre (see also Rose, Lane and Rahman, 2014). But because poor children attend public schools, recurrent spending on primary education has been broadly pro-poor in terms of its incidence (Steer, Rabbani and Parker 2015).

The thrust of basic education policy has closely tracked the changing political settlement since 1971 (see Figure 1). In the immediate aftermath of the traumatic war of independence from Pakistan, the popular nationalist party, the Awami League, and its left-leaning allies installed a 'socialistic', secular, stateist programme of economic and social development. This meant a systemic change, in which 26,000 community primary schools were nationalised overnight, and education was declared compulsory, secular and modernised – the last a reference to madrassahs/Islamic schools. But, shortly after establishing this new mandate to educate the population, Bangladesh entered into a period of clientelistic military rule that lasted 15 years. The dominant elite coalitions during this period broadly accommodated Islamist political

[3] See Kabeer and Hossain (2004b); Hossain (2010b); Hossain, Kabeer, and Subrahmanian (2002b); Hossain (2007b).

Table 2. Public spending on education in South Asia

	Country	2000	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Expenditure on primary as % of government expenditure on education (%)	Afghanistan										
	Bangladesh	46.5	42.0	46.3	45.3	44.7					
	India	37.6	35.4			26.7	25.2	26.5	27.2		
	Nepal	55.0			62.4	63.0					50.6
	Sri Lanka					28.3	25.0	24.2	23.9		
	Pakistan									32.7	35.1
Government expenditure on education, total (% of GDP)	Afghanistan						4.5	4.1	3.1	4.6	4.6
	Bangladesh	2.1	2.1	2.2	2.1	1.9			2.0	2.0	
	India	4.3	3.1			3.2	3.3	3.7	3.8		
	Nepal	3.0	3.6	3.5	3.8	4.7	4.7			4.1	4.7
	Sri Lanka					2.1	2.0	2.0	1.7		
	Pakistan	1.8	2.6	2.6	2.7	2.6	2.3	2.2	2.1	2.5	2.5

Source: World Development Indicators, accessed 15 July 2016.

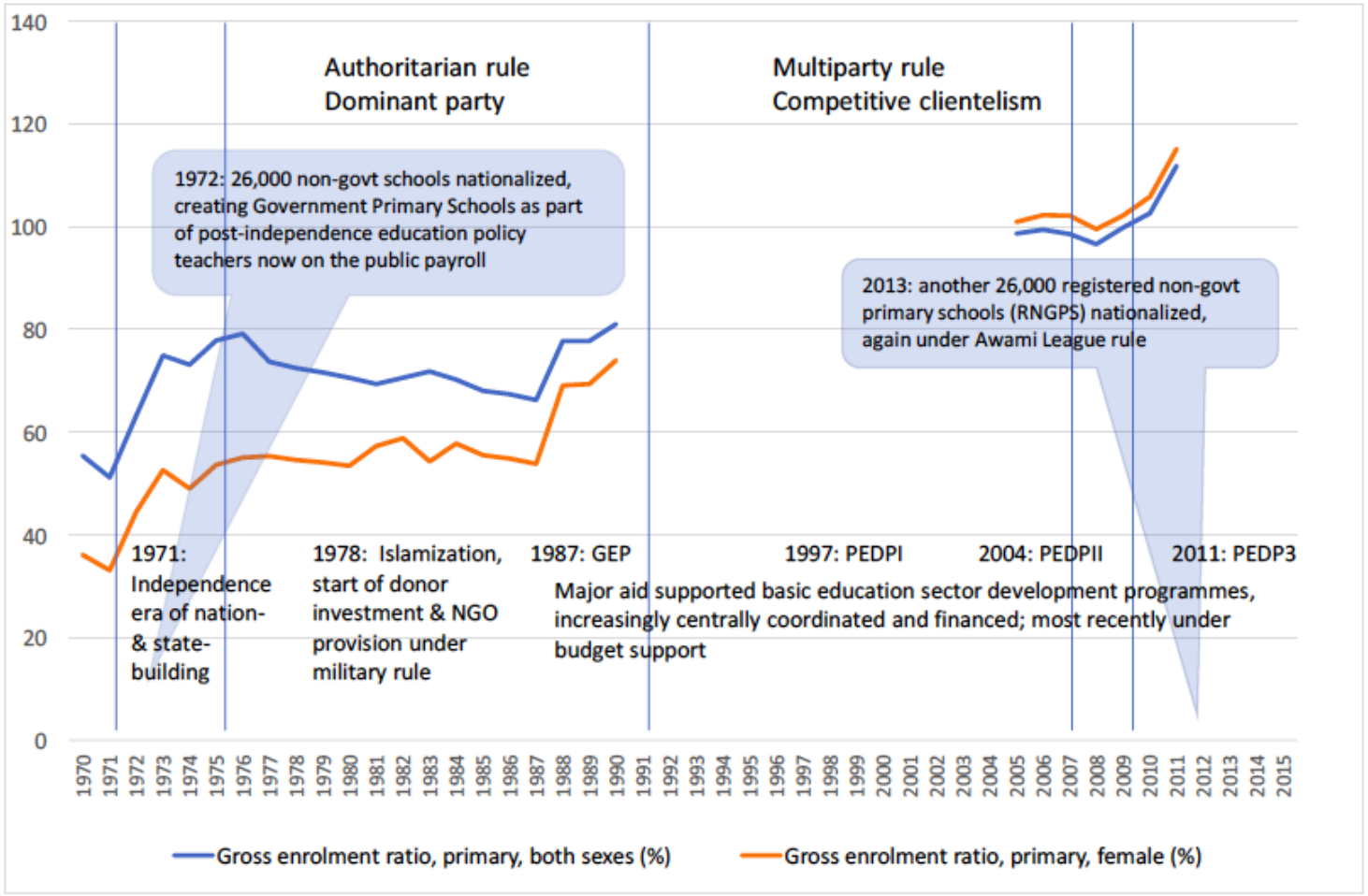
and social elites with latitude and financing for madrassahs, and strong links with teacher unions. To earn the regime external and popular legitimacy, public administration was decentralised and state ideology Islamicised, both of which influenced education policies. Attempts to consolidate power during this period also brought political compromises with powerful social actors such as the 1990 Compulsory Primary Education Act. The Act aimed to appease student groups, but it was too late: student groups led the movement that toppled the regime later that year. However, the Act reversed early education privatisation policies and Islamisation of public education, and established free universal primary education as a goal and policy of state.

Since the return to multiparty democracy in 1991, the political settlement has mainly (excepting the military-backed caretaker period, 2006-08) presented as 'elitist competitive clientelist' (Levy and Walton, 2013) with respect to the balance of power and how it is maintained. Since 1991, the emphasis on nationalisation and Islamic education has swung back and forth. Throughout, however, and across governments of both parties, there has been a growing emphasis on expanding access, through building schools, pro-poor conditional transfers, recruiting teachers, and using the curriculum to instil partisan versions of national identity. All governments have used public finance to expand the formal *ebtedayee* or primary madrassah system, but it remains under-resourced compared to the mainstream government primary schools. Nonetheless, this 'holy alliance' of support to madrassahs and to poor girls' education helped expand the system very rapidly (Asadullah and Chaudhury, 2009). Data are sketchy, but it seems enrolment rates of girls rose sharply on the return to democracy (see Figure 1), as did recruitment of teachers (particularly women) (Figure 2). So the democratic period has been closely associated with the feminisation of public education.

Demand for skills: weak support from business

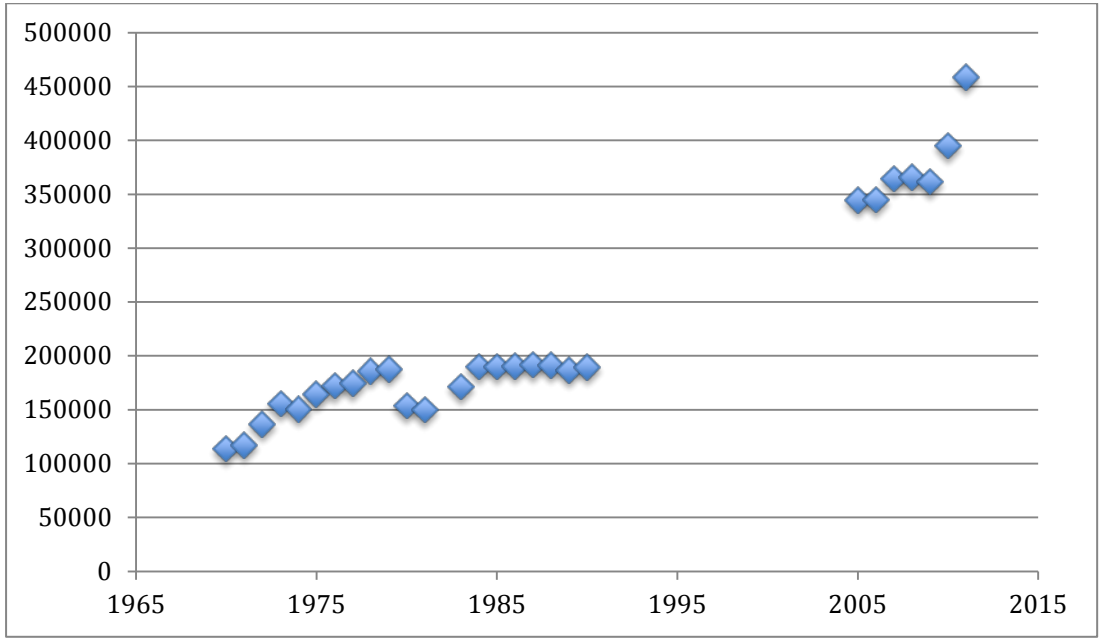
Stephen Kosack (2012) has argued that mass education provision is underpinned by demand for skilled labour from industrial and business elites in an open economy with tightening labour markets. In Bangladesh, the average attainment from basic education is low, as are basic non-cognitive skills, so that public education does not equip graduates for the most ordinary interactions in work and life (World Bank, 2013). Business and industrial elites appear to have at best mixed, or unacknowledged, incentives to coordinate action to raise basic education quality. This may reflect the fact that in the flagship readymade garment (RMG) industry, labour has been transformed into considerable export wealth at, to date, very low overall levels of education (and wages). With nominal RMG wages having trebled in the past decade, and a tightening rural labour market (Zhang et al., 2013), at the industry level, there is less interest in raising average skill levels than in keeping wages low, and major employers view middle management, not assembly line

Figure 1. Basic education and the political settlement in Bangladesh



Source: World Development Indicators (accessed 12 April 2017).

Figure 2. Teacher numbers, 1970-2015



Source: Unesco Institute of Statistics: http://data.uis.unesco.org/# (accessed 9 July 2015).

workers, as their key skills deficit.[4] This situation may change as Bangladesh's main export industries are forced to raise productivity gains to stay competitive with rising domestic wages, political troubles at home, and new competitors (Saxena and Salze-Lozac'h, 2010; Kathuria and Malouche, 2015). But for now, any push for higher average skills for competitiveness is not coming from the direction of the manufacturers and exporters' association.

Teachers and schools in the political settlement

Despite the ebb and flow of secularism and stateism, the emphasis on expansion has remained steady. This has brought growth in teacher numbers, and their associations now unite the interests of half a million organised middle class voters, giving them considerable clout in the national policy space. Much like teachers elsewhere, teachers' interests in Bangladesh are prominent on the education agenda, and substantially protected against performance accountability (see Kingdon et al., 2014). Some 90 percent of education spending goes on teachers, and education accounted for 29 percent of all directly employed government employees (400,000) in 2010. The strongest sign of their political significance is that a further 344,000 teachers employed in the nominally independent registered non-government primary schools (RNGPS) (BBS, 2011) have been made fully fledged government employees, their schools now renamed 'newly-nationalised primary schools' (NNPS).

This nationalisation took place quite apart from the ongoing PEDP3 reform programme, and in response to ongoing campaigns by teachers in the RNGPS system protesting their inferior pay and conditions (compared to government primary school (GPS) teachers). State policy officially acknowledges the sensitivities of teachers' social position, as a section on the 'status, rights and responsibilities of teachers' in the 2010 National Education Policy illustrated (GoB, 2010). Certainly, the image of the customary village schoolteacher as a pillar of local society mediating disputes and the outside world has dissolved in the face of rapid social and economic development. Teachers are comparatively poorly paid (Asadullah, 2006), and have 'low levels of teacher job satisfaction and motivation' (Haq and Islam, 2005: 21; also Rahman, Shahriar and Anam, 2014; and World Bank, 2013). They are much more likely to be women, which brings its own status issues. Among the goals of the nationalisation was to reduce the significant pay differentials that had for historical and organisational reasons persisted between teachers in primary government and those in RNGPS schools.

Teachers and schools continue to be central to the vital business of the state, providing 500,000 polling officers during general elections (IRI, 2008), and staffing public health campaigns and other services on the frontline of the state (Mahmud, 2002). Over and above its role in imparting the 'three Rs', the school develops basic citizenship skills, e.g., communicating with officialdom, knowledge of basic rights and

[4] A review of the website and newsletter of the garments manufacturers and exporters association (BGMEA) found little evidence that employers were concerned about average skill levels.

responsibilities (Hossain, 2010c). But, as noted above, even levels of basic non-cognitive skills, such as communication and initiative, are deemed low by employers (World Bank, 2013).

Party political competition connects the public school system to the political settlement in two ways. First, through the use of the curriculum to transmit competing visions of nationhood and identity, the main point of principle on which the two main parties differ. Despite some variations, the policy recommendations of successive education commissions have typically been secondary to issues of national identity, which is the one issue the main political parties compete over (Chowdhury and Kabir, 2014: 3). Competition over the content of national history teaching is politically contentious, with each incoming regime rewriting textbooks to reach a larger cohort of youth with their claims on the glorious liberation struggle (Rosser, 2003: 144). Second, school patronage creates opportunities for local elites to earn political capital. School governance is an obvious means of demonstrating benevolence, raising social status and profile, or getting in with the local administration, particularly in rural areas. School managing committee membership is an established perk/responsibility of local councillors, and even MPs can consider it important enough to have 'my man' on the committee. Some forms of local political competition can have a positive influence on school management and teacher performance (FMRP, 2007).

5. Reforms on the route from policy to operational frontline

Current reform efforts: PEDP3

PEDP3 is a vast and complex five-year (2011-15) sector-wide programme, covering six years of basic education (one year of pre-primary through five of primary) that aims to establish 'an efficient, inclusive, and equitable primary education system delivering effective and relevant child-friendly learning to all Bangladesh's children', via six results areas: i) learning outcomes, ii) participation, iii) reducing disparities, iv) decentralisation, v) effective use of budget allocations, and vi) programme planning and management through activities in 29 sub-components (Table 3). The total cost is US$8.3 billion, with donors providing US$1 bn, mostly through the government's financial management systems, in an effort to improve aid coordination and accountability (DPE, 2011b). In theory, this signals agreement over the core policy and programme, as well as national ownership, capacity and partnership. PEDP3 is the second of such agreements, suggesting this is a mature programme. In practice, significant challenges of coordination and implementation remain (Ahmed, 2011), and ownership is uneven. A major system reform, the effective nationalisation of 26,000 RNGPS schools, was undertaken as a political action, without coordination with the PEDP programme.

PEDP3 is an ambitious programme with systemic and strategic long-term effects in its sights, most of which impact directly on education quality and learning outcomes. Rather than being an entirely new reform agenda, however, PEDP3 is a juggernaut

built on ongoing projects and incorporating lessons of previous sectoral programmes. Learning from PEDP I, it aims to avoid problematic projectised earlier reform efforts in its financial and organisational management approach, to enable government to retain continuity and control. But PEDP3 is in key respects a continuation of the focus on institutional changes and quality reforms started under PEDP II (2004-11), so that the policies focused on here have been undergoing reform efforts for over a decade. There is a relatively strong emphasis on teacher training investments, including increasing the professional certification of teachers. It continues, too, the project of widening access and increasing equity, as the poorest, the disabled, urban slum populations, minority and other marginalised groups remain stubbornly hard-to-reach (Cameron, 2010; Hossain and Zeitlyn, 2010).

The two 'results areas' of the reforms that most directly address the issue of quality are those addressing learning outcomes, and those addressing decentralisation and effectiveness. Recognising the central need for effective teachers, these activities were designed to combine in a bid to improve the classroom experience by equipping teachers with better knowledge and skills, and increasing their motivation and accountability for teaching. The continuing push for expansion was also likely to influence quality, as efforts targeted reducing student-teacher ratios. One way of achieving this, to introduce double-shifting, improves ratios but may not necessarily improve motivation. But unfilled posts and legitimate classroom absences suggest an overall shortage of teachers, so that more classrooms and teacher recruitment should contribute to raising quality. Under PEDP3, more and more of these teachers are set to be properly trained in subjects and pedagogy on recruitment, and then provided with regular in-work and refresher training. Professional certification now comes with the Diploma-in-Education qualification, gradually to be extended to all qualified teachers. The professionalisation of the teaching corps is also to be enhanced through the development of teacher support networks and demand-based training programmes. These efforts to build teacher capacity were to be matched by new school and student assessment systems and gathering other performance data, such as school censuses; these would enable monitoring and provide the database for accountability with respect to learning outcomes.

Two matters of direct relevance to teacher performance and accountability – headteacher training and community mobilisation (including school managing committee training) – were dropped from PEDP3 priorities. The current core feature of decentralisation programming, the School-Level Improvement Plans (SLIPs) were being rolled out after a shaky start. By 2013, these funds were still only reaching two-thirds of schools (DPE, 2014b). However, minimum quality standards under PEDP3 show recent progress, including timely delivery of textbooks, a rising proportion of teachers meeting the minimum professional qualification and in-service subject and sub-cluster training, and in student-teacher ratios (DPE, 2014b).

Table 3. PEDP3 components and key reforms

Component	Key reforms
Learning outcomes	• fresh pedagogies • [holding] teachers accountable for each child's learning • revised curriculum and textbooks • classroom and school-based assessment • teacher pre-induction training upgraded to Diploma in Education
Participation and disparities	• one year pre-primary education through GPS • equivalency of formal and NFE • broadening the concept and mainstreaming inclusive education • providing education in emergencies and disasters • improving communications • reducing overcrowded classrooms through needs-based infrastructure development • providing sanitation and water to schools on a needs basis • providing school health and school feeding programmes • providing stipends to the poorest children
Decentralisation and effectiveness	• school-level leadership development • field offices strengthened • increased decentralisation of school management • mainstreaming school and upazila grants initiative • strengthening capacity at central-level institutions • strengthening Grade V examination, annual school census and national student assessment systems • strengthening systems for teacher recruitment, deployment and promotion
Planning and management	• strengthening results-based management • formalising public-private partnerships • assuring adequate sector finance

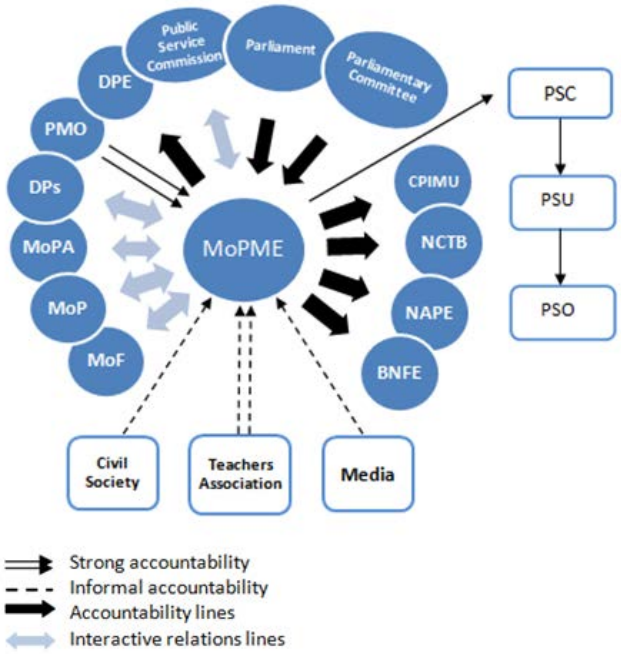
Source: DPE (2011b).

National level

The primary education sector is multi-stakeholder, with a few formal actors supporting MOPME, and pressure groups (teachers' associations) and advocacy groups (NGOs and CSOs, the media) playing an informal role.

The three PEDP3 committees – PSC (PEDP3 steering committee), PSU (PEDP3 surveillance unit) and PSO (programme support office) – are inter-ministerial policy deliberation forums, in theory powerful, but in practice, defunct. One reason is that inter-ministerial coordination and other policy deliberations take place during (internal government) meetings, and government officials see no need to replicate these discussions in the PSC. Some commentators interpret the inactivity of these committees as a 'lack of ownership' among ministers and senior officials over the content of PEDP3, perhaps because its focus on systemic improvements in quality attracts weak political support.

Figure 3. Roles and functions in PEDP3



Political governance is dominated by the Prime Minister's Office, so accountability relations between parliament and MOPME are weak. Parliamentary debates on governance and quality of education have no visible effect, and MPs have little incentive to act, since these issues carry little weight in electoral politics. Despite efforts by civil society groups to articulate demand for higher education standards (for instance, the *Halkhata* monitoring report by the Participation and Power Research Centre and the Campaign for Popular Education's ongoing Education Watch), parent concerns about school quality appear to be chiefly expressed in exit from the system; hence the recent growth of the private sector.[5]

Over a dozen national teachers' associations provide formidable organisation behind teachers' collective demands. Recent successful claims have included nationalising RNGPS schools, so that all public school teachers' salaries, rank and status are now part of the government system; this has been achieved during the lifetime of PEDP3, but was not planned as part of it.

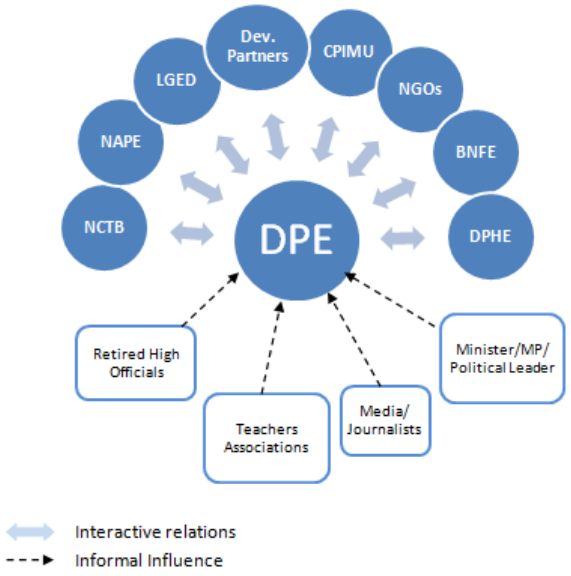
Field administration

Informal relations influence systemic accountability failures from DPE down to the Upazila Education Office. District primary education officers (DPEOs) face informal pressures from political elites (mainly MPs) and senior officials (including from other

[5] While numbers of government primary schools and students stayed static between 2010 and 2013 (remaining at just under 38,000 schools and increasing from 9.9 to 10.5 million students), 'kindergarten' schools, which provide the main competition from the private sector, increased from 4,418 to 14,100 over the same period, while student numbers almost doubled, from 535,000 to 981,000 (DPE, 2011a, 2014a).

ministries) over transfer, deployment and management of teachers. At the upazila level, resource constraints, insufficient staff, excessive workloads and lack of motivation of upazila education officers (UEOs) and assistant officers (AEUOs) weaken school monitoring. AUEOs are supposed to mentor primary school teachers on pedagogy but mostly lack the training and knowledge, spend too little time in schools, and are under-motivated because of a lack of career development prospects.

Figure 4. Implementing actors



Primary Training Institutes (PTI)

Teacher training reforms are supposed to be delivered via the Primary Training Institute (PTI). Interviews and observations indicate that these generally lack organisational skill, teaching proficiency and capacity, as well as adequate physical infrastructure. Group rivalries and litigation over recruitment ensure recruitment is neither meritocratic nor quality-focused. Instructors receive little on-the-job training, pedagogical knowledge is particularly weak, and specialised subject trainers are not recruited.[6] Provision in the training curriculum for trainee teachers to spend time teaching in schools with supervision from PTI instructors rarely happens. Not only do trainee teachers receive little pedagogical, subject-based or practical training, but cheating in examinations is also rife. Overall, PTIs are in no way accountable for producing trained teachers.

[6] The recruitment policy dictates that all candidates must have Bachelors- or Masters-in-Education degrees; this prevents recruitment of candidates with advanced degrees as specialised subject instructors.

6. In the classroom

We now turn to an analysis of our four school case studies, to examine how quality reforms through efforts to raise teacher quality and hold them accountable for performance reach the classroom. The schools provide a simple comparative standpoint from which to view the matter: why have some schools been able to improve the quality of their teaching, while others have not? To what extent have quality reforms – teacher capacity and performance accountability efforts – worked? They represent a pair of rural and one of urban schools in similar geographical and socioeconomic settings, selected as contrasting in terms of quality, as judged by official indicators and local reputation. Given the importance of school-level factors in learning outcomes, why are reforms implemented in some schools quite effectively, but in others not, or not with the intended quality improvement?

Table 4. Official indicators of quality in the selected schools

	Rural (Narsingdi)	**Urban** (Mymensingh city)
Good	SCHOOL B Total enrolment 671 PECE pass rate 79% Class 5 enrolment 93 Repetition rate 5% Student-teacher ratio 84 Attendance rate 89%	SCHOOL PK Total enrolment 277 PECE pass rate 97% Class 5 enrolment 61 Repetition rate 1% Student-teacher ratio 35 Attendance rate 84%
Bad	SCHOOL M Total enrolment 471 PECE pass rate 54% Class 5 enrolment 61 Repetition rate 5% Student-teacher ratio 94 Attendance rate 90%	SCHOOL P Total enrolment 220 PECE pass rate 89% Class 5 enrolment 37 Repetition rate 15% Student-teacher ratio 37 Attendance rate 90%

Note: Categorisation takes into account official and community views, as well as official statistics.

To get at this question, we compared the cases along findings about the factors most likely to motivate teacher performance. Following Bruns and Luque (2014), these factors were grouped into: i) professional rewards, ii) financial incentives, and iii) accountability pressure.

Professional rewards

Teacher capacities in terms of subject knowledge and pedagogical skill varied, even though teacher training is widely available and compulsory. In the good schools, training was a regular matter, valued by the more capable teachers, but in the bad schools, Pk and M, the situation was ad hoc. Teachers were criticised and mocked in the (bad rural) School M for not knowing their subjects. By contrast there was praise in the (good rural) School B, where teachers explained and demonstrated things kindly, sometimes using pictures and interactive tools and learner-centred activities. Peer learning was encouraged, and teaching challenges discussed in weekly staff

meetings. Children were enrolling in School B from nearby areas because of its good reputation, and student numbers reached 80 in some classes. In (good urban) School P, teachers were strict about homework and memorising lessons, even though some were kind and affectionate. But pressure to perform to the indicator was strong: efforts were concentrated on class 5 students, and results taken so seriously that children who failed to attend regular classes or extra coaching were fined. In (bad urban) School Pk, teachers were regularly present, but some were preoccupied with private tuition, including of outside students. Students who passed generally paid for extra tuition.

The role of the headteacher in setting a good example and motivating good teaching performance emerged clearly.[7] Effective headteachers led by setting clear goals and good personal example, monitoring classroom performance, through support and advice, and credible sanctions against failure. In (good rural) School B, the head-teacher crept along corridors, listening secretly to lessons to provide feedback later. She personally collected textbooks to ensure her students got them on time. She kept teacher attendance records and marked them absent if they were 15 minutes late. The records had no real power (another list would go to the monthly payroll office rom which salary bills are made), but checked tendencies to tardiness.

In three of the schools, the headteacher revealed a vision and plan for achieving it, at least some of which was consistent with public policy. In (bad urban) School Pk, teachers were deployed and targets were reached, but public policy played little role. In (bad rural) School M, the headteacher had no discernible agenda and his demotivation infected teachers, pupils and the community. He arrived after 10 a.m., if at all, fell asleep, and outsourced his mathematics lessons (which he was unable to teach) in return for rights to recruit private tutees from the school. Some of the teachers were reportedly educators, but they lacked direction or supervision.

Among teachers and the education administration, parents' (lack of) education and commitment to education was seen as an obstacle to professional rewards. Many teachers found it dispiriting to see children drop out. One teacher in School P described his efforts to encourage dropouts to return to school. The head had told him a story about a mother whose child was taking a maths exam, who had told her to 'write the Bangla well. Write the poem properly': parental illiteracy meant parents cannot support children's learning. In School M, the local elite noted the high dropout rate and the appeal of car workshops and driver jobs – 'it's a poor area'. Yet a kilometre down the road, with the support of the dynamic headteacher in School B, the equally poor weaver community had come to realise that education could be worth investing in, and they were involved in their children's school lives, despite their own lack of education.

[7] See FMRP, 2007; and Hossain and Tavakoli, 2008.

Financial incentives and time pressures

While teacher salaries are relatively low in Bangladesh (Asadullah, 2006; World Bank, 2013), teaching is a stable job with the status of public service. Yet teaching has few career prospects or pathways. Most teachers spend their careers as assistants, with no chances for salary enhancement beyond the statutory increments. On each of the four schools, private tuition was a factor in teacher performance because it 'reduces the effort teachers put in in class', as one SMC member explained. School Pk had been taken over by teachers for private teaching, backed by the SMC chair, a relative of the school's donor and local politico. Student motivation was low, because passing examinations depended more on private tuition from the right teacher than on hard work. In School M, children did not seek private tuition from their 'sirs' because their quality was too low. Private tuition was controlled in School P, where extra coaching was provided to boost class 5 examination performance. In School B, tuition was officially banned, but coaching was provided by deducting a small amount from the school stipend, and regular catch-up sessions were held, with headteacher support. The view of the SMC on private tuition appeared to be important, and while it is a widespread practice, all link it to inadequate classroom instruction, with teachers absent, tired or focused on private pupils.

As 65 percent of GPS teachers are women, reproductive work is likely to compete with professional responsibilities. Adult women perform an average of six hours of unpaid care work daily across Bangladesh (Huq, 2015). That women teachers have particularly intractable pressures on their time from their domestic responsibilities is commonly noted. Students note women teachers are often absent because someone is sick or late because they have to do housework before school. The pressure on women teachers to meet societal standards as a good daughter-in-law, mother or wife may exceed that of being a good teacher on any particular day. A teacher in School Pk said:

> After my baby, my husband talked of me quitting, but I didn't want to … women have disabilities. You have to be ready to follow your in-laws' desires. You have to get up very early and finish your work before you go to school. And you have to swallow a lot of whispering.

Women teachers make difficult personal choices in the trade-off between their public and private roles. In School B, students commented that women teachers were often off doing family work, but this did not affect the quality of instruction because they spent the required time on teaching in that well-managed school. By contrast, in other schools, SMC and community members spoke forgivingly of women teachers' competing pressures. It seems that a patriarchal benevolence to protect women's gender roles helps justify poor teaching performance.

Accountability pressure

Accountability with respect to teacher performance, specifically the minimal expectation that a trained teacher will show up on time and deliver full lessons to plan, requires that teacher performance can be examined and that they can be disciplined. In practice, formal requirements to check on teacher attendance are delinked from teacher salaries; nobody expects pay will be docked for broken rules, but they are there on paper. Teachers could in theory be disciplined, and lose salary or jobs if they are late or erratic. But from the four cases, it seemed that if teachers are to be held accountable, it will be because they are being watched by actors in a position to observe and authorised to act, in particular SMC members working with headteachers. When the SMC and head share a commitment to getting teachers to teach, they can create a rule regime that raises teacher motivation and increases time on task, within the limits of the resources available. Their regime will have greater authority if backed by visiting upazila officials.

Under the best circumstances, when schools have their basics organised and some teaching is going on in an orderly classroom, AUEO visits can be a constructive, mutually satisfying professional exchange. All schools are visited, but badly run schools in remote areas, where interest in education is low, receive token checks without discernible impact. All ranks of officials had recently visited the four schools: AUEO, UEO, UNO, even district officials. In School P, the good school in the town centre, upazila visits are regular and serious. In Schools Pk and M, officers come every few months, but they conduct a basic level of inspection. A boy in School Pk described his encounter with the AUEO thus:

> Every now and then a sir comes from the upazila, comes and asks lots of questions. They ask your name, what class you are in and if you can speak English. They want to know your father's name. If you can't talk English they ask in Bangla.

It is hard to assess what learning could be gauged from this minimal examination.

Informal accountability pressures appear to be important. It is clear that schools have discretion over performance management policies and governance, within limits, and the relation with the community makes a difference. For Schools B and P, teacher attendance matters because overall results depend on it. In both areas, the headteacher and the community want results, and as teachers and teaching are key, they keep a close eye on what is happening. Shaming and public humiliation are common sanctions against teacher transgressions: SMC members may issue a public reprimand. One irate parent in dysfunctional School M said that after their abysmal showing in the scholarship exam he told teachers that 'with madams like these, we should break their teeth'.[8] The daily nature of schooling means the public

[8] It is not unusual for extremely poor performance by heads and teachers to be punished using 'unruly' means such as public protests, threats of or actual violence (Hossain, 2010a).

sees teachers all the time, and basic indicators of their performance – whether they show up, on time – are public knowledge. Mothers of children in School P waited at the school throughout the short day, and complained of teacher lateness or slow starts, and of excessive 'official work' taking up teachers' time, observing and commenting on classroom practices. The headteacher asked mothers to report latecomer teachers to her. Parental scrutiny kept the head monitoring the teachers and the teachers alert. But whether the desire to earn the respect of the wider community actually motivates teachers to turn up and teach depends on other factors. The teacher might be looking to transfer, or have a private tuition practice in town: if so there may be no point in the effort involved to sustain a good local reputation. For established local teachers, reputation matters because of status, and is useful branding for those with the time, energy and market for private tuition. Informal accountability relations have resulted in a robust regime of time use in School B. In School P, the social distance between teachers and parents meant mothers were willing to assist the headteacher in holding them to account. Neither 'bad' school had systematic means of monitoring teachers, but even there, SMC members and headteachers spoke informally to teachers about their attendance.

Regardless of the quality of their leadership, headteachers in all four schools were focused on the indicator of the class V scholarship or completion examination (*shomapni porikkha*). Schools with good scores enjoy a high local reputation, but the orientation to class 5 students undercuts the time and effort available to younger classes. That the surest guarantee of performance in class 5 is the previous five years of schooling provides too uncertain a route to indicator glory. All schools, good, bad and indifferent, apply special measures to increase the time available to class 5 students. These extra resources may be applied particularly to promising or 'meritorious' candidates. Attention, money, teacher time, head teacher leadership, and SMC initiative are all brought together in the pursuit of gains in the class 5 performance rankings. How those scores are achieved varies across the range of what is permissible into behaviour that is strongly proscribed. School Pk, for instance, was notorious for nominally enrolling 'good students' who stood a chance of topping the list there, but who were educated elsewhere, often in a private tuition arrangement with a teacher in School Pk itself. (This explains their good indicators on examination performance.)

Like all realms of public life, teacher motivation can be influenced by party politics. Local and even national political actors are interested in the performance of local schools because many are genuinely interested in education; SMC chairmanship or membership yields social capital; education projects create opportunities to distribute contracts or other advantages; and schools can be sites of local democratic competition over performance, with different parties competing to show their rule is superior by getting teachers to teach. Local parties influenced each of the schools' governance. In School Pk, local powerholders controlled the school for personal interests and excluded the opposition from school management. People there were scared to speak up, despite the school's declining fortunes. In School M, political

conflict between different parties had paralysed governance, as the SMC chairmanship was unresolved. In School P, perhaps because other matters are more interesting in Mymensingh town than in a government school, the politics intervened less in school governance. But in School B, a local political settlement meant the SMC chair was from the ruling party and the secretary from the opposition, a settlement that harnessed the benefits of political competition for the performance of a local public service.

7. Discussion and conclusion

So can political settlement analysis help explain the quality of education being provided in schools like 'good' B and P compared to 'weak' M and Pk? While the quality of education does feature on political and policy agendas, teachers' collective political significance means that reforms targeting their performance favour positive incentives, and do little to hold them accountable for what they do in the classroom. Some reforms targeting quality do get through and into the big development programme, particularly if they mean more training or support to teachers. These are making a net difference overall, despite challenges in implementing reforms throughout the system.

But it is only in some types of 'good' schools that the reforms are harnessed to improve learning to any significant degree. So what are the characteristics of those 'good' schools and, again, how does the political settlement matter? The findings and analysis are consistent with the sectoral diagnosis that policy is weakly transmitted from the centre, so that inter-school differences explain most variations in student performance. The findings here suggest considerable school-level managerial control over the primary resource in education provision, namely, teacher time. But for a good school to exercise this core managerial function depends on cooperation between its headteacher and the community, and on an alignment of goals and visions for the school. So Bangladesh features an education system which, while formally highly centralised, is in practice fairly decentralised and discretionary in whether and how it implements reforms. And because SMC membership is among the spoils of local politics, there are competitive pressures on schools to adopt – and adapt – reforms. Local political competition can induce raised standards and overall improved schools where the oversight is generally benign. But in some instances, political competition involving party affiliations also destroyed, and distracted from, efforts to improve learning. Overall, effective teacher management is likely to arise in situations where the institutional fit between the school and the community enables a disciplinary regime focused around the management of time, the primary resource in the system. In this regime, students and teachers are driven to make the most of the resources available, with the clear aim of learning more and doing better. Community and school need to coordinate to achieve this disciplinary regime, and it helps if supported by the external administration. But they have little external support for this effort to govern teachers, and no functioning system of formal accountability to enforce it.

This is partly because of the importance of teacher interests. In the larger political background, the strength of teachers has been recently assured, if not actually increased, with the nationalisation that almost doubled the number of teachers with full public employment status. This took place in the period of the PEDP3, but without connection to it; it appears to reflect much longer-lasting agendas. Teachers' position and relative status in society is acknowledged to have declined and in need of raising. And there are few reasons to believe other domestic actors will see education quality as an issue on which to expend political capital. For instance, the RMG and other labour-intensive growth industries, from which strong pressures to raise teacher performance might have been expected, have not to date generated demands for more skilled workers or improved basic education. If they had perceived a need for higher average skills as critical to the industry's success, that might have encouraged tougher thinking on the problem with teachers. But industry concerns are focused elsewhere.

And so the drive for improved learning remains concentrated within the central state's development project, from which its education ministries and agencies, in sectoral partnerships with aid agencies and projects, aim to deliver results. It is here, in the results-focused space of international aid and human development, that Bangladesh has been successful in the past and seeks to demonstrate now the 'Bangladesh model' of development (GED, 2015). To the extent that this matters to a core developmental elite that comprises politicians, bureaucrats, aid and civil society actors, there is some urgency around education quality. This is why important and costly new innovations, such as student assessments, have been adopted, with strong potential for improving performance accountability at different levels of the system. But reforms go 'with the grain' of local interests, if at all.

A likely source of imminent change will be social and economic development itself. A richer and more educated population will demand better education – but may not look for it in public schools. Private tuition is so common as to already constitute a partial privatisation of the system, and is estimated to make an important contribution to learning outcomes. The rapid recent growth in primary enrolment in private schools may have the potential to raise standards and encourage public schools to improve in competition with the private sector. But shifts of effective teaching to the private sector are unequalising, and may not raise standards further. And as middle class groups at present benefit disproportionately from their ability to pay for private learning, gaining credentials and exam passes that ease them into good professional jobs, they lack any strong incentive to support reforms targeting teacher performance in public schools.[9] Among those who do remain in the public school system, socioeconomic change should also affect how schools are governed and managed, towards raising standards. More educated parents will be better able in theory to monitor schools and teachers, and to support children's schoolwork and non-cognitive learning. This should lead to further improvements in the institutional fit

[9] Many thanks to an anonymous reviewer for this point.

between schools and communities, and more effective teacher management regimes using informal accountability across more schools.

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email: esid@manchester.ac.uk
Effective States and Inclusive Development Research Centre (ESID)
School of Environment, Education and Development, The University of Manchester, Oxford Road, Manchester M13 9PL, UK
www.effective-states.org