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THE VALUE OF EDUCATION
Bangladesh's Policy Stands and
People's Perspective on Primary Education



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Section One

Introduction

Education has over the years dominantly been characterized as means to efficient production of human capital. The governments around the world including Bangladesh, and plethora of international organizations have not been exception to that. The dominant value of education has been based on the mainstream literature that premises the value as “the supply of qualified people over a long period of time to make it more in line with economic demands” (Psacharopoulos, and Woodhall 1985, Meier 1995, and Mingat 1998). This originates from the restricted, yet purposeful objective of education, which is to build human capital to maintain the economic system operational. This characterization of people as human capital obviously differs from defining people as subjects of rights, liberty, freedom and creativity.

The human capital centric approach directs education solely towards economically relevant knowledge, skills and competences to the detriment of values and rights of humankind. The education is not conceived to unleash creativity, enhance social cohesion and tolerance. This mainstream reasoning is based on a narrow productivist portrayal of education which often depletes much of the purpose and substance of education. It confuses, more than anything, that all human beings have rights. This orthodox way of thinking obviously confronts the very assumption of human rights, namely the equal worth of all human beings.

Is the “human capital” approach adequate for understanding the significance and substance of education or the broader purpose of the capability of people to do the things they have reason to value and choose? A commonsense understanding would delineate a crucial difference on the purpose of education: the mainstream limits education as *means* in direct opposition to its universal purpose *as end in itself*. Human beings are not only the most important means of social achievement; they are also its profoundest end. Being a fine piece of capital is not the most exalted state that can happen to a human being (Sen 1998). Thus, the restrictive approach to education precludes defining education in terms of the full development of human personality, frustrating the very foundations for human rights - education is sharing knowledge rather than a trade, and a co-operating rather than competing instrument.

This brings to the fore the linkages between the mainstream purpose of the education and the economic system, which is circumspectly kept in hide, even to the so-called ‘knowledge’ holders. It is observed that the capitalist state has a ‘Business Plan’ for education and a ‘Business Plan’ in education. The former centres on socially producing labour-power (people's capacity to labour) for capitalist enterprises, the latter focuses on setting business ‘free’ in education for profit making. Thus, firstly *education fit for business* is to make schooling subordinate to the personality, ideological and economic requirements of capital. Secondly, it wants to make profits from education and other privatised public services. This is why a mushrooming growth of private schools in Bangladesh escalates through the direct and indirect patronage of state apparatuses, despite the constitutional provision of ‘establishing a uniform, mass-oriented and universal system of education.’

This human capital theory constructed the ground for the neoliberal education policy that has been dominating the education area. It has been taken for granted that only human capital theory of education can formulate education policy that could provide education for all around the globe which includes another uncritical assumption that this theory can reflect the perception of people. But what is happening in the real world raises serious question that does the human capital approach of education actually match with the people's perception or is there no alternative education theory that can reflect the people's perception and serve the agenda of people? Indeed, the maze on education value and subsequent spiraling disillusionment about the core contents and utilities of education is slowly making people aware that the right to education can only be realized if education is adapted to each child rather than the children be forced to adapt to whatever schooling has been designed for them. Given the backdrop, it is now time to 'educate the educators', by listening to the voice of the poor and overhauling the primary education system that is overwhelmingly biased in favour of the affluent. This can be done through a deconstruction of the dominant value of education in comparison with peoples' perception for a people oriented quality education system.

In the above context, the overall objective of the study is to deconstruct the value of education from the perspectives of the diverse theoretical and policy stands and people's' perceptions. The study deconstructs the differential values of education prevalent in both theoretical and policy stands and then juxtaposes in two ways: first with the values inbuilt in Bangladesh's current education system and second with the perceptions of wider primary school stakeholders (e.g. students, teachers, parents) on the value of education they ascribe. The specific objectives of the study was to: (a) unearth the differential values of education that both the Bangladesh's education system and people at large attribute to education; (b) analyse the implications of the people's perceptions based on the realisation of right to education; (c) Recommend possible means that needs to be taken at both grassroots and national level to further strengthen and enhance the quality of education at the primary level.

This study was initiated with the conceptualization and issue identification brainstorming session where the research strategy including methodologies and an initial list of issues as well as diverse theoretical and policy stands to be covered under this study was finalized. The research outline is presented in Annex 1.3.

The research report is prepared based on data and literature from both secondary and primary sources. The secondary literature review primarily is used for the intended deconstruction of the differential values of education prevalent in both theoretical and policy stands, and also to juxtapose with the values inbuilt in the current education system. A number of key interviews, focus group discussions was carried out to extrapolate the perceptions of wider primary school stakeholders (e.g. students, teachers, parents, Parent Teachers Association, School management committees) on the value of education. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) were conducted following a checklist prepared through the brainstorming session and was documented either on paper or through voice recording device.

The study was conducted in four different geographical areas of Bangladesh which covered three separate administrative divisions of the country. The details locations of the study area and schools covered are provided in Annex 1.1. In each study area, 3 teachers (one Headmaster and two general teachers), 4 parents and community people (two male, two female), 12 students (two boys and two girls from each class III to V) were interviewed and one FGD with parents and SMC members and one FGD with students were conducted. Parents and SMC members participated in FGD were aged within 25 to 50, and students participated in FGD were aged within 9 to 12. 10 to 12 participants contributed in each FGD. Annex 1.2 describes the details of the FGD participants.

The report is divided into four major sections. The following section (section 2) discusses different education theory including the dominant human capital theory, education theory of Paulo Freire and Antonio Gramsci's theory of education and draws indicators against the values of education ascribes by each theory. This section also examines the neoliberal education policy that has been implementing around the globe sine 1960s and shows that this new liberal education policy was constructed on the ground of human capital theory. Our analysis also explains that Bangladesh education polices, projects and programs were shaped and controlled by the neoliberal policy that creates a discriminatory primary education system in the country. In section 3, we explore the people's perception on value of education. Our findings illustrate that people's perception on value of education is opposite to the value of human capital theory and is very close to the theory of Paulo Freire and Antonio Gramsci. It suggests that in terms of making people's oriented education policy, these theories can be a better alternative to the human capital theory. In section 4, we summaries our findings and provide some pointers for policy advocacy for enhancing the quality of primary education and for establishing a people oriented quality primary education system.

Section Two

Theoretical Stands and Policy Landscape

An outcome of the decades of restructuring throughout 1980s and 1990s put neo-liberal policies and programs into place. This neo-liberal reform has been operating with the prominent pressure of a range of multilateral and supranational organizations, the World Bank, IMF, WTO as well as international nongovernmental agencies. The neo-liberal reforms were directed from the notions of open markets, free trade, reduction of the public sector, decrease of state intervention and deregulation of markets. Bangladesh like other national economies had to adjust to this new "structural" reality. Education policies and programs have been designed, shaped and reshaped in this neo-liberal framework particularly in low income countries.

This neoliberal policy was formulated on the theoretical ground of Human Capital Theory which was developed in the 1960s. Since then, in allthrough Western developed countries, education has been re-theorized under Human Capital Theory as mostly an economic tool. This human capital approach was reflected immediately in the global education policy prescribed by the World Bank.

“Education, like other forms of investment in human capital, can contribute to economic development and raises the incomes of the poor just as much as investment in physical capital, such as transport, communications, power, or irrigation. The World Bank, which provides financial and technical help for the development of the poor countries, has long recognized the importance of investment in education and has been active in this field since 1962”.

Education as Investment and Human as Capital

According to human capital theory education creates skills and helps to acquire knowledge that serve as an investment in the productivity of the human being as an economic production factor, which is, as a worker and thus it allows workers to be more productive, thereby being able to earn a higher wage. Thus human capital model of education narrows down the purpose of education into an economic goal which essentialized human being as an economic subject and ignores the philosophical, historical, cultural, social and political identity and function of human. At the same time it denies the non-economic and non-instrumental value of education. An instrumental and economic model of education doesn't acknowledge once interest in learning to read and understand poems, or studying some ancient culture that has no investment value.

On the other side, it generalizes the notion of increasing income through education which has been criticized by group of critics arguing that there is a growing gap between people's increasing learning efforts and knowledge base and the diminishing number of commensurate jobs to apply their increasing knowledge investment, especially in developing nations. They further include that raising the level of education in a society can under certain instances increase the inequalities in income distribution.

Problem in investment approach: Contradiction with the approach of right to education

Human capital education assumes education as an investment and thus denies education as rights to all regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, class, geography, as investment approach measures education in terms of its efficiency to make the maximum rate of return. If education is measured in the extent of rate of return of investment, it would definitely exclude those individual and communities who are for their internal and external restriction, are not in the position of make the best return of the education investment such as people with disabilities, girls, woman, people living in extreme poverty, in disaster risk and in conflicting areas. Thus this approach leads to reproduce discriminations in an unequal society. Investment approach denies any national or international obligation to provide education free of cost and makes it open for private investment and finally turns education into a commodity. This is evident from the drastic development of privatization and commercialization of education in the last 50 years throughout the world. Bangladesh, like other countries, has the similar experience of such commercialization of education sector.

Education for Freedom

While human capital theory was dominating in education policy making in the most developed countries, on the other side of the globe during 1960s and 1970s, Paulo Freire developed a radical theory of education which challenges the basic assumptions of the human capital theory. Freire in his life time tried to give his theory a practical form and developed some models which was practiced in Brazil and also spread out from Latin America to the other parts of the globe. Since its origin, Freire's educational theory has been attracting political and theoretical attention from both education theorist and activist around the world. Freire's education theory offers theoretical and practical alternatives to both the (neo)conservative and (neo)liberal discourses and practices.

According to Freire a certain type of education creates the material and physical conditions that make oppression. In Freire's language, the interests of the oppressors lie in "changing the consciousness of the oppressed, not the situation which oppresses them"; for the more the oppressed can be led to adapt to that situation; the more easily they can be dominated. To achieve this end, the oppressors use the banking concept of education" (Freire 1996).

He terms this education as Banking Concept of Education. In '*Pedagogy of the Oppressed*', Freire (1996: 64-65) illustrates the idea of this education- "Banking education begins with a false understanding of men and women as object ...(for obvious reasons) attempts, by mythicizing reality, to conceal certain facts which explain the way human beings exist in the world...resists dialogue... treats students as objects of assistance... inhibits creativity and domesticates (although it cannot completely destroy) the *intentionality* of consciousness by isolating consciousness from the world, thereby denying people their ontological and historical vocation of becoming more fully human....In sum: banking theory and practice, as immobilizing and fixating forces, fail to acknowledge men and women as historical beings..." In contrast to the dominant model of education, he forwards an idea of education which assume human being as

an active subject and aims to make human being free from the oppressed condition. This kind of education as opposite to Banking concept of Education is termed as problem posing education.

Freirean theory of education for freedom is formulated on the ontological and epistemological value of both human and education. Freire's educational value suggests the historic, cultural, social, moral existence and function of man and denies a narrow economic value of human that assumes man/woman as consumer, product or mere labor and creates a discriminatory and injustice society.

Education for counter hegemony and revolution

Italian theorist Antonio Gramsci developed an idea of education that denies the popular apolitical idea of education and school, and relates it with the modern power structure. Gramsci interprets modern schooling as an important part of modern society. According to Gramscian analysis, school and education fit into both categories of super structure- parts of school life are quite clearly coercive (compulsory education, the national curriculum, national standards and qualifications) whilst others are not (the hidden curriculum). Thus education, in Gramscian analysis, is assumed as both part of Political and Civil Society.

Gramscian analysis of education shows that education creates hegemony among the mass as well as intellectuals, both traditional and organic, has a distinct role in creating hegemony that justifies the domination of the ruling class. Gramsci develops a counter idea of education that can create counter hegemony among the masses to challenge the domination of the ruling class and finally lead them to be free from all discriminations and dominations. In this regard Gramscian education proposes a counter role of intellectual in creating counter hegemony against the ruling class hegemony. He proposes for active involvement of individual's everyday life experiences and justification of curriculum through the masses' work and reflection. This idea is widely known as praxis. Gramsci through his political practice, worked within working class people to create organic intellectual of its own which could lead to create a counter hegemony.

Deconstruction of Values of Education from Theoretical Stands

In sum we find that the human capital theory deconstructs the neoliberal values and role of education which creates domination and inequality in society as well as maintains and naturalizes it. In contrast, the alternative theoretical stands particularly the Gramscian and Freirean approaches, call for a counter education which can make people truly conscious about themselves and the hegemonic world in which they live and involve them in the process of transforming it. Differential values of education as ascribed by two stands of thoughts are juxtaposed below based on the summarized version of value attribution to education by both the theory of human capital and alternative stands by Freire and Gramsci.

Comparison of value indicators in theoretical stands

Human Capital theory	Theory of Freire and Grmasci
Skilled labor	Critically Conscious man and woman
Wage and earning	Consciousness and learning
Domination	Freedom
Enriching Market	Transformation of Society
Competition	Cooperation
Discrimination	Equality
Commodity	Right
Individualism	Collectivism
Only economic value of human	Historic, cultural, social and philosophical value of human

Policy Landscape and Needed Deconstruction from Peoples' Perspectives

Over the past two decades, primary education system of Bangladesh has undergone significant changes in order to adjust to the neo-liberal economic reforms. As a result an economic agenda was prioritized in education policy and it began to construct only an economic value of education. This view soon was reflected in policy initiatives taken by the government in response to the global move to education. National Plan of Action, PEDP-II and all other scattered education programs were built on this philosophy. As a result our primary education experiences the following trends:

Liberalization of primary education:

In response to Jomtein direction of EFA and millennium development goal on education assured by Dakar action framework, national primary education was liberalized imposing such logic that government alone is not enough to ensure education for all. This made liberalisation of primary education and created scope for rapid development of different private enterprise in this sector. Ultimate result of this process was reduction of state intervention in education, development privatization and commercialization.

Reduction of state intervention in primary education:

Government schools did not increase in number in compare to the private sector. Number of the government school was 37665 in 1990 and has been increased in 37672 in 2005

Privatization and commercialization of primary education:

There has been a drastic development of private and commercial primary school sine 1990. Number of private school was 9586 in 1990 and has been increased to 42725 in 2005. This rapid expansion was limited in developed urban area and people living in the marginalized region were out of coverage. Moreover of this private primary education is not reachable for the poor people as the cost of education in this school is very high.

Development of non-formal primary education as parallel force:

Since 1990, education aid started to flow for primary education, be it formal or non-formal and a NFE task force was set as a swift comeback of it in 1993. This guided to a mushrooming growth of the NGO sector in Bangladesh which became primary beneficiary of aid in this regard, and it constantly led to NFPE (nonformal primary education) became a booming business. Number of NGOs involved with primary education was 39 in 1991 and increased to 525 in 2004. Poor children are the ultimate receiver/customer of a very different NGO dependent primary where education is assumed as a service provided by NGOs instead of government providing a standard five years primary education as a right of all children obliged by the constitution. Tanvir (2008) argues that *this may help achieve the development goals focusing on access to education, but it violates the right of a child to a quality state education, thereby reducing his or her chances of becoming a useful member in an inclusive society.*

Discriminatory systems of different streams of primary education:

The whole process of liberalizing primary education made primary education a discriminatory system of 11 different streams where quality education is a high price commodity and poor children is either out of reach or have to receive a low quality education. See Annex 2.1 for an overview of the discrimination among different streams of primary education.

Top-down government-donor elite partnership:

Primary education continued to be prioritized from the 1990s and Universal Primary Education was presented as an international issue. Later in the Dakar action framework primary education was linked with the millennium development goals which made international agencies more dominant in the field of national education policy making and implementation.

In terms of policy making and implementation, there has been a shift in the power relation which reduces state's control and ownership in the one side and denies people and its various joint effort to participate in the process on the other side. The donor dominated educational programme is guided by the external thoughts and 'Zero level' acceptance of people's opinion results in barriers to respond along the lines of social invention, history of culture and indigenous norms and practices. Top-down approach and government-donor elite partnership makes 'Primary education sub-sector' a good customer for receiving loan opposed to user (Shahjahan and Sharif, 2008).

The Inbuilt Question of Value in Current Education Policy

In the recent education policy of 2009, though making an unequal society and inclusive development of the citizen is set as a goal of education, but no specific programmatic guidelines are there to decrease ever increasing discrimination in and by education. Drastic development of privatization and commercialization in primary education which made primary education a commodity for the middle class and upper class population is not addressed as a problem. No specific program is taken to stop commoditization of primary education. This contradicts with

the aim of the policy itself and it violates the constitutional right of freeing primary education for the entire citizen. On the other side, in the recent policy there is significant shift to mainstreaming technical education in the upper stage of primary education. It would lead to supply a huge number of primary graduates to be skilled to serve the labour market, rather to send them to the upper level of education to finish their educational courses. It would serve the neoliberal agenda of making skilled labour and enhancing labor market instead of achieving the goal of making equal society and inclusive development of the citizen.

It raises a question that what should be the value of education. The values prescribe by human capital theory and the dominant neoliberal policy fails to reach the masses and serve their purpose. It means that these values contradict with people's perception. A people centered quality education system must assign the value of education through an understanding of their perception of value they ascribe.

Section Three People's Perception on Value of Education

People, living in different social, economical, political and historical culture, have their "own" views of living. Though the dominant ideologies have a strong influence on constructing and shaping people's perceptions, marginalized people maintain a different perception which does not always match with the master's perception. This section of this study tries to understand marginalized people's perception on value of education, and finds quite different values of education they perceived in comparison with the values that are prescribed by the dominant education theory and policy.

Perceived and Realized Value of Education

What is education? Capital versus dream of deprived life

People relate education with different interrelated matters of their life. In the FGD and KIIs only a few advanced respondents, like Headmaster or teacher, tried to make definition of education. But most of the respondents related conditions of their life with education while expressing what assume education to them. It was understood from interview that certainly they know that there is a primary school in their village and other higher educational institutes in the districts and students, including their children get education from the school and other educational institutions, but the term education is quite unknown and abstract to them.

What is Education?

"We are poor because we don't have any education...If we had any education we would live a better life like some rich people of our village. But I send my son to school. If Allah wants, he would be educated and change our life... Yes education can change our bad condition in future..."

Parents in FGD

We wish education would change all of our life... We would have dignity, ability (financial) to live a solvent life...

One parent in interview

Indeed, their understanding of education is different and complexly related with their life experiences. In the FGD and KII most of the people related education with two things, one is about the cause of their marginalization and deprivation, and another is about a dream which could bring changes in their life. Most of the respondent told that they are deprived because they don't have any formal education. They told that those people of their community are rich who have formal education. This answer indicates their perception of an underlying relationship between education and deprivation and better life. At the same time they assume that only education can help them to overcome deprivation. In the in-depth interview it became clear that deprivation in their views does not mean only the financial crisis rather it focus on

social dignity and equality. A very few respondent focused on financial deprivation. In the FGD and interview most of them told that getting education for the child makes a dream in them that they would be able to change their situation through education. This view was supported by the teachers. Most the teachers told that education should help people to live a better life.

Most of the respondents also told that education can bring change in their life. Getting education for children includes a dream to change the conditions of life. In the in-depth interview with parents, it became clear that this change does not mean a mechanical or financial process of making individual's bright future rather it indicates an equal, collective social and family life in which individual has a life with social dignity and financial solvency. This social value of living indicates a collective and equal form of social culture which stands against the individualistic corporate discourse of life. Respondent mostly emphasized changes in the social level. They wish an equal, collective and peaceful society where each family has its own certain living with dignity, financial solvency and peace. This sense of education cross the boundary of school and represent deprived peoples' political will to overcome discriminations.

Beyond enrollment: people's reasons for sending children to school

In the FGDs and KIIs, respondents told three specific reasons for sending children to school. Firstly respondent expressed their concern to make their children an educated person with all human values. Second reason is that they want to enhance social dignity. According to the respondents, the third reason is that they want to reduce their poverty. These responses reveal that people's perception of value of education is that education would/should make person with human values, enhance dignity of the family and reduce poverty of the family. This finding is very important point in the discussion of people's perception on value of education and it requires elaborating respondent's position against each of the three reasons.

Make child an educated person with all human values

In the FGDs parents focused on the point that they send their children to school mainly because they want their child would be an educated person. It raised another important question in the FGDs that what is the definition of educated person. The entire respondents expressed that educated persons are those who have the sense of honesty, collectivity, cooperation, patriotism, equality and who are contributing to family, society and country. No respondent answered that educated persons would have a certificate of a good job. It doesn't mean that they are against certificate or job. Rather it indicates their different perception of education and ideal person.

Making children a person with all human values

We want our children would be educatedThey would be honest, helpful to family and others....they would have the sense of collectivism, equality....

Parents in FGD

I wish he would get a good job but at first I want him to be a “good” man...

One father in interview

What would I do with money or his job if he didn’t become an ideal man...

One mother in interview

In the in-depth interviews it became clear that children are the most sensitive member of the family which includes a dream to change the identity of the family. That’s why people are more concern of making the children an ideal person. They also assume that children would achieve all the human values through education. Respondent however could not give any clear interpretation why they think that education is supposed to make person with human values. But all of them expressed that they prefer human values rather than number, certificate or job. Reason for this answer is that marginalized people inherit some social values that have not yet been changed by the dominant neoliberal educational ideology of making skilled labor.

Enhancing social dignity

We poor people are illiterate and can’t stand against people with dignity...We hope our children would be educated and would be able to speak in the society with dignity...

Parents in FGD

We wish our children will increase our dignity in the society...

Parents in FGD

I feel happy and pride to send my children to school...

One father in Interview

In the in-depth interview respondent expressed that they send their children to school with the desire to enhance their social dignity. According to most the respondents, primary education signifies social dignity in the rural areas. Sending children to school symbolizes family’s mentality and consciousness. They told that a poor person who sends his/her children to school feels pride to do it and it is also acknowledged by the community. On the other side, as the respondent expressed, sending children to school also indicate the possibility to have a dignified future in case of children’s completing education. So, poor people are agreed to pay their best to continue their children’s education. They include that even an educated girl brings dignity for the family when being married.

Reducing Poverty

In the KIIs, all the respondents expressed the hope that their poverty would be reduced if their children could complete education. They assumed that their children would get a job after finishing education and that would increase their earning and therefore reduce poverty. However, some people were not confident enough about their capability to finish the children's education and that's why they were not so optimistic about the assumption of reducing poverty through children's education. But they wished so. However, they assumption of reducing poverty through children's education does not mean that they are investing in children's education to make him get a better job and so get a high return of it. Rather it is a kind of collective effort of the family to change their deprived condition. People do not perceive education as a way to build children's carrier, because the corporate sense of carrier and education has yet not constructed in their mindset.

Gender parity: An equal dream

In the FGD and interview both boys and girls told their aim in life is to be a doctor, engineer, justice, and teacher. 80% of the children wanted to a doctor, 10% of them wanted to be an engineer while and rest 5 % wished to be a teacher and others wished for different jobs in the future. In the interviews, parents those have a better financial and social condition, expressed the same dreams for both boy and girl child. In this sense, it can be said that, gender parity is achieved not only in the so called enrollment level, but also in people's perception level of future gender role in the society. In the interviews most of the girl children told that their parents wish to make them a doctor or engineer, or whatever the like to be. Though in the interview some people told that early marriage is quite common in their areas and poor people have to go through it, but they want to continue their girl's education and fulfill their aim in life.

Understanding the evolution of the differential values people attribute

Neoliberal education policy implementation has little influence on constructing dominant values of education in marginalized people's perception. People perceive different values of life that has been originated through their 'own' social, historical and cultural learning. This learning flows generation to generation through informal social learning. That's why people still belong to a collective rural social life. In this view of social life, education is assumed as a social wealth of the community that mainly serves the social needs, and this education largely reflects the norms of the society. Though this value has been transformed little, people still perceive the social values of education.

Present Education System

In the interviews, teachers expressed dissatisfaction with present education system. Most of the head teachers told that present education system failed to make people learn human values. They assume that in the primary level students generally learn human senses but in the upper level of education learning do not get priority in the curriculum or teaching agenda. Similar responses were evident from the parent's side. In the interviews, some respondents

from the parents told that in the primary level children can easily learn what their teacher told about humanity and morality, but in the upper stage, it become difficult to continue the learning. Both teachers and some parents told that in the earlier generation, the value of education was much ideal than that of now. According to the respondents, students in the early generation, were more dedicated to learn the human values; also teachers focused on it. But at present, this value turned into establishment and making money. However, no respondent was able to interpret the reason. One SMC member told that implementing foreign education system could be one of the reasons. However, no similar view was observed during interviews from other respondents.

People's expectation to the textbook: Development or human values

We are illiterate, we don't know what is written in the textbook, but we assume it should be of learning, learning of ideal values, different knowledge about this country and the world.

Parents in FGD

We wish that textbook should focus lessons on human values, so that student can be ideal man. Also it should include lessons and technique so that they (student) can learn to read and write Bangla and English , understand writing, do math.

One teacher in interview

In the FGDs and interviews, it revealed that most of the people don't know what is written in the textbook that their children read. But they assume and expect that it should mainly be related with human values and social norms which will help the children to be a person with all human values. In specific, they wished that their children would learn sense of honesty, humanity, cooperation, collectivity, patriotism, equality. In the FGD most of the respondents also told that textbook would provide different knowledge about society, country and the world. However, most of them don't have any understanding about what kind of knowledge it should be. But they want their children should learn about nature, society, country and the whole world.

Parent's views were supported by the teachers. In the interviews teachers told that most importantly the textbooks should include lessons on human values. They also told that in the textbook, they wanted reflection of basic things to make student competent to read, write, understand reading and do mathematics. They also wanted reflection of national competencies on text book more clearly and specifically. Some teachers were of the view that the present textbook is not good enough to learn all the national competencies. Again some of the teachers told that present textbook is not written so reader-friendly way that children can learn human values from it.

Disowning farming and migration to the metropolitan

I hate farming and farmer .They (farmers) are poor and dirty...

One student in interview

We people are poor farmers; we don't want our children to be farmer.

Parents in FGD

In the interviews, respondent expressed their interest to send their children to the district city or to the capital to provide them a better education to fulfill their desire to be doctor or engineer. Students also wanted to migrate to the capital to fulfill their aim in life. Most of the respondents (parents) wanted to continue their rural life. It means that education is creating new conditions for migration from rural area to the capital city which in future could affect to decline the agricultural life. In the interviews, no students wanted to be a farmer.

In contrast, some students told that they hate agricultural life while answering why they don't want to be a farmer. But why they dislike agricultural life? In the interviews student expressed that farmers are poor and wear dirty cloths while a doctor or engineer lives a better life. Respondents told that reading the text book they assume that a farmer is a poor and disrespected man, but a doctor or an engineer has a better life style and also people respect them. This view was strongly supported by the parents while discussing their future plan for the children. In the FGDs and interviews, most of them told that they want to make their children a doctor or an engineer or teacher. No one told that they want their children to be a farmer. It means that education is changing the perception of people about agricultural life. It also prescribes such a development where developed life is supposed to exist at city based. Agricultural life in this discourse is constructed as a non modern life. Also our textbook idealizes city based middle class life where agriculture is at best a myth or history.

Purpose of education

Both parents and teachers were asked about what should be the purpose of education. Both teachers and parents emphasized some common purposes that serve the interest of individual, family, society and the county. This answer reflected the same response of why parents send children to school.

Making person with human values

Main purpose of education should make "ideal" man/woman...In the class room we try to teach them (student) sense of humanity, morality.....

One teacher in interview

WE wish that education would make our children a good (man/woman with human values) man/woman...

Parents in FGD

In the interview most of the teachers told that they want to teach students human values. In the class room while discussing a rhyme or story, teachers try to give the moral sense of the lesson. Besides, teachers told them different stories which can help them to learn human values. Also teachers told different proverbs that hold values of humanity. On the other side, parents told that they wish that their children would learn human values from school and teachers. However, they don't know actually what the teachers teach in school and what students study at home as most of them are illiterate. In the interviews parents expressed that they would like to measure the quality of education in terms of student's learning of human values. Most of the respondent told that they would not appreciate if the children stood first in the class but don't achieve learning of human values. While dominant education policy aim to teach student skill to fit into the market, teachers in the primary class room mainly want to teach human values and parents also wish the same for their children.

Bring a better future for children and its family

We wish education would change our life and bring a bright future for us...

One mother in interview

In the FGD and interviews all of the parents told that a parallel purpose of education should be assure a better future for the student and its family. According to the respondent answer, education should ensure a descent earning source for the students at the same time students should achieve the attitude of taking responsibility of the family. Parents assume that getting a descent source of income after finishing education would lead the children to maintain a better life for himself/herself as well as his/her family. This betterment means achieving social dignity and financial solvency.

Developed and Equal society

In the interviews, most of the people (parents and teachers) expressed their concern about role of education on the society. However, they actually don't understand the critical impact of education on the society. The respondent told that they are not satisfied with their present social life. They wish that the educated new generation would take a positive role to enrich the social culture. Also they would help to develop the society. According to the respondent the educated doctor, engineer, teacher, judge and other professional would lead the future society and make it more develop. This form of future society is not discriminatory to any member of the society. In their views an ideal society is equal and education should neither make any discrimination in the society nor increase it. That's why they argued for more primary school in the community and primary education for all the children of the community so that all the people can be benefited.

Development of the country

There are many problems in our village....Many people are poor....We want that education help to solve our problem and we would be able to live an equal life.

One parent in interview

We wish our children would be educated and contribute to develop our village.

Parents in FGD

We want our student would love the country and do contribute to develop it.

One teacher in interview

In the interviews, teachers told that their students would contribute in the process of developing the country. They generally believe all people should have sense of patriotism. They enthusiastically teach the history of the independence war of 1971 and want to teach students the value of it. Teachers in key informant interviews told that they want more lessons related to nationalism and patriotism. In the same way most of the parents want that their children would contribute to the country's development.

Right to education: People's understanding and the Policy Agenda

In the FGDs and interviews, it was observed that most of the parents are not aware about constitutional right of education and most of them are not informed that compulsory free primary education is a law. They however are informed about free primary education, but most of them perceive it as a free of cost service offered by the government. It was however revealed that teachers are well informed about compulsory free primary education. They perceive free primary education as a rule of the government, but not as individual's right assured by the constitution. This indicates a significant gap between people's perception on right to education and the mainstreaming understanding on the approach. Though, people's perception on the right to education is partial, both parents and teachers assume that government should assure free primary education for all the children. In this context both of teachers and parents are against any form of privatization or commercialization of education. This view propose to rethink the neoliberal agenda of liberalizing primary education that leads to reduce state intervention and increase private and commercial interference in primary education. Because, people perception of "Free primary education" does not mean education as a commodity, in contrast, it gives the essence of right to get education free of cost.

Quality of Education: People's Perception and Policy gap

Interviews revel that parents differently define quality education. In the interviews most of the parents told that quality education is that which can make children achieve human values. They added that it could be measured by measuring its impact on the improvement of the conditions of the children's and its family. Some respondent also told that quality education should have positive impact on society and country. They however, do not measure quality of education through pass rate or survival rate. This view more or less was supported by the teachers. They

also believe true quality of education is measured by the indicator of achieving human values by the students. They also assume that quality education should contribute bring better future for the children and its family. Teachers were more advanced to link quality of education with its impacts on developing society and building country. At the same time, teachers are also concern about high attendance, pass rate, and drop out, survival rate or achieving national competency. They assume that quality education depends on high attendance, pass and survival rate and low droop out and repetition. Some teachers told that teachers are the main actor to ensure quality education. But the teachers are neglected regarding their low salary, other benefits and social status. They assume that without improving the teacher's quality and condition it is not possible to make quality education in the class room. Some teachers added that teachers have to do a lot of job beyond his/her teaching and it interrupts teaching.

Indicators that are now used to measure the quality of education are quantitative in nature and linked with the so called perception of development (enrollment rate, completion rate etc.). But people are more concern about qualitative indicators of the outcome of education like what type of man/woman and society are being produced through education. So, it requires setting the qualitative values of human being, society and nature as the indicator of measuring the educational outcome.

Section Four Conclusion and Pointers for Policy Advocacy

The preceding sections explored the perspectives of the diverse theoretical and policy stands and people's perceptions on value of education. The two core section of this report deconstructed the differential values of education prevalent in both theoretical and policy stands and then juxtaposed in two ways: first with the values inbuilt in Bangladesh's current education system and second with the perceptions of wider primary school stakeholders (e.g. students, teachers, parents) on the value of education they ascribe. This section summaries discussions of the previous sections in order to draw conclusion, and also provides pointers for policy advocacy contributing to enhancing the quality of primary education and establishing a people oriented primary education system.

Matching people's perception with theoretical and policy stands

People's perceptions on value of education are quite opposite to human capital theory and neoliberal policy of education, but are very close to some alternative theories of education. The dominant human capital theory assumes education as an investment to generate human capital. In this discourse human is assumed as a skilled labor that can increase production. It narrows down the essence of human and education as well. In contrast, poor people don't

perceive education as a means to make human a skilled labor that can increase production. This is because their perception of human being is much wider than the approach of human capital theory. They assume human as a social being with some ideal values. These values in their senses are honesty, equality, collectivism, cooperation, social responsibility, patriotism. So, they want education to make a man/woman with those values not just a skilled labor. They oppose an individualistic view of making educator's carrier throughout education. In contrast, they perceive a collective value of life which relates individual with families and societies as well. Their sense of education cross the human capital discourse of individualism and includes educational responsibility to the extent of family and society.

Box 4.1 Contrasting values of Education	
Value indicator of Human capital education	People's indicator on value of education
Skilled labor	Person with human values
Wage	Social dignity
Only earning	Learning and earning
Market	Society
Competition	Cooperation
Discrimination	Equality
Commodity	Right
Individualism	Collectivism
Economic value of human	Social, cultural, historical value of human
Only economic values and development of Nation	Nation's social, historical, cultural and philosophical values and development

Peoples' perceptions in this regard are truly reflected in the Freirian theory of education as freedom and Gramscian theory of counter education for revolution. The contrasting values of the dominant model of education and peoples' perspective are provided in the Box 4.1. The Box shows that in the human capital theory, individual is supposed to compete rationally with each other in an unequal conditions to make them fit for an inequitable system and thus to prove his or her rationality to survive. In contrast, people's perception offers cooperation among students for a collective welfare. This view proposes an equal system for all and insists individual's responsibility in building the system. So, according to this view education is to make cooperation not competition that is valued in the theory of Paulo Freire and Antonio Gramsci.

Human capital education is conceptualized to reduce poverty through making skilled labor who can earn more. Though people want to reduce poverty, but they do not wish to reduce it through turning their child simply into a labor. Their expectation is wider for their children and to education as well. They assume that purpose of education should not be narrowed to produce labor. Rather they presume that education should make ideal man and woman who would certainly have the capacity of a decent earning. On the other side people is more concern about social dignity rather than poverty.

While human capital education is designed to enrich the market, people's preference is to enrich the society. Their sense of society is equal and collective in nature. So, they wish an education which can contribute to make the society equal and collective. This same view is reflected in Freirian theory of education as freedom and Gramscian theory of counter education for revolution.

Human capital discourse is built on the economic principal that measures any kind of development in the parameter of economical development. That's why human capital theory targets only for the economic development of society and country. Historical, cultural or philosophical values of society or country are not measured in this parameter. In contrast, people wish that education should contribute to an inclusive development of society and nation. This idea indicates cultural, historical and philosophical development of the society and country. Along with the economic value they also acknowledge society and nation's historical, cultural and philosophical values that are ignored in human capital theory. So, education is not an investment choice to the people to be a skilled labor rather it is assumed as a right for all man and woman through which they can develop all of their potentials and make a collective, equal and enrich society and country which is the fundamentals of alternative education stands available.

Pointers for Policy Advocacy

On the basis of the exploration of the perspectives of the diverse theoretical and policy stands and people's' perceptions on value of education, the following recommendations can be drawn as a pointers for policy advocacy for enriching quality of education and making a people oriented primary education system.

Rejection of human capital theory and in search of alternatives

Firstly, as the values of human capital education contradict with the wider primary school stakeholders (e.g. students, teachers, parents, SMCs) perceptions on the value of education, it requires rejection of human capital theory as the basis of policy formation. At the same, it suggests to find alternative theories which are more close to people's' perception regarding the value of education. On the basis of our theoretical discussion it is to say that peoples' perception of education values matches much with the alternative education theories. Thus, education policy and planning should take active note on the peoples' perception of the values they ascribe and their rejection of the dominant models of value understanding.

Rethinking neoliberal policy assumptions

Liberalization of primary education has led to the drastic development of private and commercial primary education which doesn't cover the marginalized people. In contrast it has turned education into a commodity, and accordingly reproduces discriminations in the society. This is against people's' perception on society and education. People do not want any private/commercial intervention in the field of primary education. They want government to take the whole responsibility of primary education. Thus, it is important to rethink the neoliberal agenda of reducing state intervention and promoting private and commercial enterprises in the field of primary education. In the stage of primary education, state should lead the role by all means to provide quality education to its people that have been obliged by the Constitution of the country as well as by national and international covenants.

Focusing on people's values

People's' perception on value of education is far different from the dominant policy perception on education. People's values on education truly reflect the essence of "humanity". In contrast present values of education that are assumed by our education policy is opposite to the sense of human welfare. So, education policy should focus on the people's value of education instead of focusing the neoliberal values. We have to rethink the policy formation process that ignores people's participation. We have to include people in the centre of policy making in a way that people's perception can play a vital role to set the values of education.

Grassroots campaigning on right to education

Though people are quite informed about free primary education, the term “free primary education” does not fully translate to the people the meaning of right to education. People understand it as a government service, not as individual’s right. More advocacy work and awareness campaign among the mass is required in this regard. The privatization and commercialization of primary education contradicts with the right based approach of education.

Reviewing textbook

The study findings show that textbook can not fully reflect the expectations of people. While people are more concern about human values, textbook don’t include it to that extent. In this regard textbook requires a review so that it can reflect human values more prominently.

Constructing positive value of farming

Present study finds that education is constructing negative senses about agriculture and rural life in students and parents perception. Elitist approach of education makes no dream in a student to be a farmer; in contrast, students learn to dislike farmer and farming in the process of being educated. On the other side, top-down system of education is creating ideological and material conditions for migration to the capital city. This also constructs a sense to disown farming and rural life. Rural people feel alienated to their own life and culture. The value of agriculture should positively be constructed in education. We have to rethink the sense of development and modernization that are being translated in the textbook and learning which construct a “non-modern” value of agriculture and rural life to the students and people as well. In this regard textbook should be revised briefly to construct the true values of agriculture and rural life to the recipient student. It also requires establishing a decentralized education and employment generation system that would not lead students to disown their own life and vicinity and would not force them for migration.

Re-setting the indicators of quality of education

Our findings show that people are not fully satisfied with the indicators that are now used to measure the quality of education. These indicators are quantitative in nature and linked with the so-called perception of development. In contrast people are more concern about qualitative indicators of the outcome of education like what type of man/woman and society are being produced through education. So, education policy should set the qualitative values of human being, society and nature as the indicator to measure the educational outcome.

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ANNEXES

Annex 1.1 Study Area

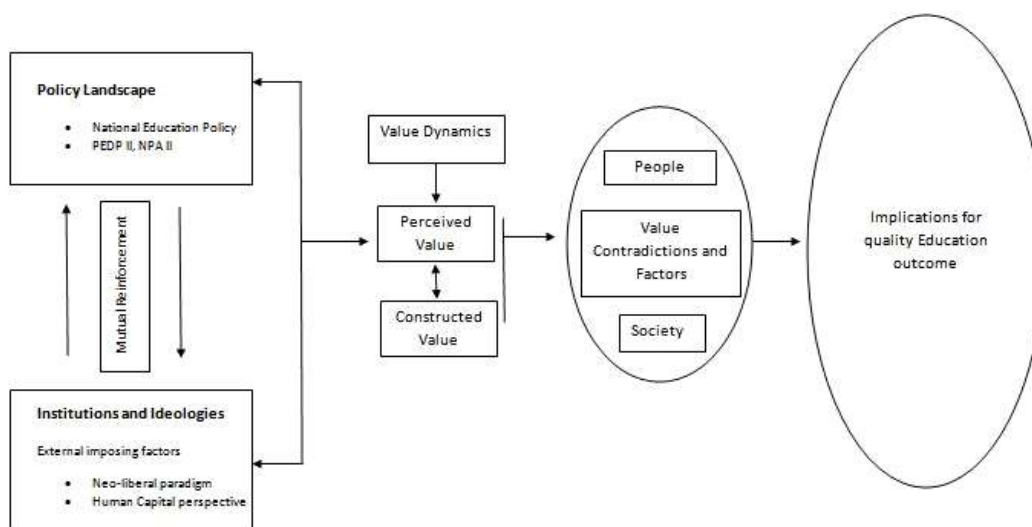
Administrative division	Locality	School
Dhaka	Village-Kalmirchar, Upazila- Jajira, District-Shariatpur	Kalmirchar Registered Prathomic Biddalay (Registered Nongovernment Primary School)
Rajshahi	Village-Banbaria(Purbapara) Upazial-Shirajganj Sadar, District-Shirajgonj	Baropiari Purbapar Registered Nongovernment Prathomic Biddalay(Registered Nongovernment)
Dhaka	Village- Gobindhal, Upazial-Singair, District- Manikganj	Gobindhal Government school (Government school)
Sylhet	Village- Daloipara, Upazial- Sylhet sadar, District- Sylhet	Profullopattra Prathomic Biddalay (NGO Primary School)

Annex 1.2 Study tools and population

Method	Participant	Number	Number of Participant	Age
FGD	Parents and SMC members	4	10-12	25 to 50
	Students	3	12	9 to 12
KII	Teachers	10	10	Different age
	Students	36	36	9 to 12
	Parents and community people	14	14	Different age

Annex 1.3

Research Outline of “Value of Education”



Source: Asgar Ali Sabri (2010) developed through discussion with Development Synergy Institute research team and ActionAid Bangladesh, Education Theme members.

Annex-2.1 - Discrimination among different streams of primary education

Stream	Expenditure per student (Monthly)	Facilities of teacher's training	Educational qualification of the teacher
Public Primary School	60	Yes	Graduate 25%, H.S.C. 75%
Registered Primary School	26	Yes	Post-Graduate 20%, Graduate 30% H.S.C. 50%
Unregistered Private Primary School	0	No	Post-Graduate 25%, Graduate 25% H.S.C. 50%
Ebatedaye Madrasa	10	No	Fazil 25%, Alim 25% , H.S.C. 50%
Kintergarden	531	Yes	Post-Graduate 20%, Graduate 80%
NGO Operated School	80	Yes	H.S.C. 100%

Source: Primary Education in Bangladesh: Streams, Disparities and Pathways for Unified System 2008

