

RCEE & RHed 2010
Kuching, Sarawak
7-9 June 2010

Prospects and Challenges towards the Sustainable Education in Bangladesh and Malaysia: An Approach for Environmental Sustainability

Dr. Noor Mohammad¹

¹Visiting Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Law, University of Malaya 50603, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Tel: 603-7967-6520, Fax: 7957-3235, Email: noormu2007@gmail.com

Abstract

Bangladesh and Malaysia inherited the education systems from the British colonial administration. In fact, the education systems in both countries are quite old and they are gradually developing new education systems. The sustainable education is very critical to every nation of the world. There is weakness in this education, but in terms of sustainable education, it may be a matter of debates. In the meantime, around 80 public and 40 private universities are working towards sustainable education in the countries respectively. Education agenda is one of the main agenda for every political party in Bangladesh and Malaysia along with many other countries around the world. Many commissions and committees have been established to develop quality education. Various media reported that since the independence of Bangladesh, successive governments have formed at least eight education commissions including *Dr. Quadrat-e-Khuda Education Commission 1972*. In the meantime, a new National Education Policy 2009 Formulation Committee handed over the final draft of a new education policy to the Education Ministry of Bangladesh as an initiative. In Malaysia, with a view to achieving this, the Government passed several laws such as the National Council on Higher Education Bill 1996, the Private Higher Education Institutions Bill 1996 and the National Accreditation Board Bill 1996. Moreover, in order to deliver quality education, the Government has adopted some strategies for ensuring quality with world class education. We are aware that Bangladesh and Malaysian Education sectors have been going through problems such as quality education policy, quantity of education contents, relevance of curriculum, quality of teachers, lack of quality teacher's training and teaching methods, school buildings and safety, accountability, effective local and national assessment tools, inadequate research funds and institutions, lack of quality educational leaders, and lack of partnership with stakeholders etc. But it is still promising that these problems may be overcome. These problems need to be resolved immediately. Through case study, it hopes to examine the education policies in the two countries along with the constraints and possibilities towards the sustainability.

Keywords: Sustainable Education; Environmental Sustainability

1. Introduction

Sustainable development (Wikipedia, 2010) almost depends on the sustainable education (Jeanette Colby, 2000) system of a country. Sustainable education is also treated as one of the fundamental rights as recognized by the respective constitution of the world countries. Sustainable education is critical means to poverty reduction, economic development and major indicator for social progress, human and human resources, improving the life and the quality of living people, functions of living, culture of society, behavioral aspects, wisdom, equitable and sustainable economic development. One of the objectives of the sustainable education is to build knowledge, life skills, attitudes and values of the students to transform the society into more productive. It attempts to uphold and convey the ideals of a sustainable world. It is locally relevant and culturally appropriate. It teaches us to be moral, humanitarian,

religious, cultural and social values in personal as well as national and international life. It develops leadership qualities in the different professional and competes and succeeds in the globally competitive educational environment. It is different forms and shapes. The education systems in Bangladesh are based on the British colonial period and some idea is also found in the ancient and medieval age (Mohammad, 2009). In the ancient period, it is hardy difficult to get any information about the education system and in the medieval period, the Muslim sultans of Bengal encouraged the spread of education, scholastic or elementary, to fulfill their religious obligations. The education system was closely associated with religious rules. In the British period, the British Government consider education but did not seriously consider the promoting the education among Indians as a part of its duty or obligation. In the end of the 19th century, the elementary education was starved and undernourished while the secondary education suffered from want of proper supervision. The University control of them was negligible, as the government had adopted a laissez policy. It is observed that Lord Curzon took some measures for the development of the academic environment in India. He instituted the Indian Universities Commission of 1902 with a view to improving the state of higher education in the country. The Higher Education during the period (1916-17 to 1946-47) achieved outstanding developments. The Fourteen New Universities were established in India. As a part of expansion, the University of Dhaka was established in 1921 (Mahmood, 1997.). After the independence of Bangladesh (Karim, 1987), the government passed the colonial based education system in 1972 through the presidential order. The basis of education in Bangladesh is constitution.(Bangladesh, 1972) The government may take necessary measures for the educational development under the article 17 of the constitution based on the needs of the society. The constitution reads as ‘the State shall adopt effective measures for the purpose of establishing a uniform, mass-oriented and universal system of education and extending free and compulsory education to all children to such stage as may be determined by law relating education to the needs of society and producing properly trained and motivated citizens to serve those needs; removing illiteracy within such time as may be determined by law.’ Under this provision, the government of Bangladesh may tale any appropriate measures for sustainable education for the people of Bangladesh. The Government is fully aware about the education for all based on the Millennium Development Goals (Organization, 2006) and international commitments and binding. In order to develop the education sector in Bangladesh, several National Education Commissions have been formed. The National Qudrat-i-Khuda Education Commission 1972 is one of them which are known as Qudrat-i-Khuda Education Commission. The commissions recommended that education structure consisting of a formal sub-system and non-formal sub system. Both the sub-systems also have parallel religious streams. The Ministry of Primary and Mass Education is responsible for formal primary and non-formal basic education. The Ministry of Education is responsible for Secondary and Higher Education along with related and NGOs non formal education.

2. Results and Discussion

History supports that the government of Bangladesh is conscious about the sustainable education for the people of Bangladesh, although there are many limitations in this regard. The progress and development of education is made from the last two decades and has been developing gradually in terms of expansion (Aminuzzaman). But the quality of education has been declined which is agreed by most of the academia, researchers and concerned stakeholders in the country. There are some areas with regard to improving the quality of education and indicated the goals and actions to achieve them. The areas include as content and quality of education (relevance of curriculum), Gender Equity, instructional materials, teacher-student ration, contact hours, school calendar, school environment and physical facilities, teacher training and motivation, management and accountability, community participation and NGO involvement. These quality management tools need to be revised and compared with the developed country’s parameters. Still, it is not quite satisfactorily done compared to modern education systems.

2.1 Primary and Secondary Education in Bangladesh

At this stage, the learners healthy, peaceful, child psychological elements, safe environment, and well nourished learners environment etc; are the prerequisites for child sustainable education management. It is supported by their families and communities also. Well qualified and professionally trained teachers are also important also important phenomenon that approaches in well managed classroom and schools and skillful assessment to facilitate learning and reduce disparities that must be ensured by the authorities. With the discourse, the outcomes of the students that encompass knowledge, skills and attitudes and are linked to national goals for education such as establishing a learning society and positive participation in society tasks and national development and efficient management of schools, community resources and relations that is quite relevant and the technology oriented education systems key components of the sustainable education administration and management environment. The above mentioned policy needs to be revised for ensuring this education in Bangladesh.

2.3 Public Universities in Bangladesh

Around 30 public universities are working in Bangladesh. It is identified that the most of the public universities are could not expand due to fund constraints, campus violence, session jam, misdirected student's politics, delayed academic programme teachers politics etc. These universities are directed by the dirty politics, session jams and financial mismanagement. The lack of proper monitoring system and corruption are eating up the vitals of higher education systems in public universities. It is certainly a barrier to the sustainable education in Bangladesh. The selection procedures of the teachers are made based on political affiliation and consideration although it is supposed to be made on the basis of merit. In terms of research, the research tends in the public universities show a less than satisfactory track record in research works. It also recommends that it performs poorly in research that will not able to get into the knowledge society of today. In some universities, the research funds are less than 1%. Some teachers think that we do not need research work due to the fact that jobs are protected. We do not need to hard work or any research work. The culture for knowledge creation is almost absent. Moreover, there is no incentive for research work. Public universities annual report reveals that the universities often have no clear vision, objectives or mission, governance, administration or leadership.

2.4 Private Universities Education in Bangladesh

Under the Private Universities Act 1992, around 52 private universities are also serving the country. Courses offered in the most of the universities are present and future market oriented not in the socio economy cultural based. Students in the private universities are not allowed to engage in student's politics. The universities are not facing this situation. Most of the private universities are facing shortage of infrastructure and resources, classrooms, spacious libraries, sufficient rooms for teachers and administrators, space for indoor and outdoor games, student's common rooms, canteen facilities, transport facilities and auditoriums. Generally, these factors influence the sustainable education. It is noted here that most of the universities are established via rental and the classroom space is alarmingly inadequate. Crowded classroom compromise the quality of teaching and learning. The universities are spending most of their funds on renting buildings. No age limitations are getting admission in the universities. Admission of students also depends on the monetary consideration. In terms of sustainable education, the commitment on the part of the provider is essential. But it regrets that majority of them is doing nothing but business and their usual trends are to operate it as a commercial motive. But the motives of the universities should be non-profit oriented manner. Most of the universities are facing with the shortage of qualified senior full time teachers. Adequate and highly qualified staffs are essential for sustainable education. Due to that, the universities have to depend on the part time teachers. These part time teachers are working in more than three private universities at a time which is seriously affecting their efficiency. They do it as their extra sources of income. Sometimes, teachers of one subject are teaching another subject. The private universities authorities hardly take initiatives for faculty development. They do not offer the bright teachers a well defined career path. They do not have any scholarships for teacher's higher studies. The pay scales for the teachers are not properly maintained as per the rules of the University Grants Commission of Bangladesh. They have a little provision for research and fund is hardly found. It is very difficult for the teachers to engage themselves in research activities due to the fact that there is no incentive mechanism to encourage them to stay in the area. Only four or five journals are passed among the universities in Bangladesh. They do not have sufficient reference materials in the libraries. The teacher's performances evaluated by the students are not properly done. It is used as a weapon to dominate or embarrass teachers who are dedicated to maintain academic discipline and are unwilling to allow student's adopting unfair means in examination halls. Some of the universities failed to create corporate governance. Most of the relatives of the owner try to regulate the universities authorities such as Head, Dean and even VC etc. It is true that they must work under the Board of Governance of the private universities in Bangladesh as per the existing laws of Bangladesh. A reformation may be made in it due to the fact that the academic staffs have been facing a lot of problems with it. Some academic positions may be specified in the governance issue. It is said that one man show the university. Nobody can do anything. Most of the universities try to follow the American examination system which is based on the one examiner based. A study finds that most of the departments of the universities do not have a long term national vision, but that such a vision is crucial to quality education. In terms of accreditation, it regrets that the accreditation committee or council has not yet been made in the private universities in Bangladesh. It determines the strengths and deficiencies of programmes. Most of the universities in the global family have been working with the accreditation. In curriculum review and design procedure may be audited high powered committee of the government. This work is generally done by the departmental committee and course teachers. The appropriate powers may be given by the Head and Dean of the faculty which is not specifically mentioned in the current private university ordinance. The external quality audit team may involve in the review process. The higher education institution should be audited by

the university Grants Commission of Bangladesh and these reports must be published in the daily newspapers for public understandings and knowledge. The study also thinks that the sustainable education or “the quality education in universities will be achieved through changing the method of teaching and learning as well as assessment methods, reviewing the curriculum continually, updating and upgrading professional knowledge and skills and improving the boarder education, administrative and resource environment.” The sustainable education also depends on the management and culture of the university. Another study also finds that the sustainable education depends on some independent variables such as faculty credentials, classroom facilities, academic calendar, campus facilities, research facilities and the cost of education related to human resources and organization behavior. *Regarding the Role of University Grants Commission*; it is noted that this commission is not properly empowered to ensure sustainable education in Bangladesh. It may draw some recommendations to the government but of no effect. All the members are appointed by the Government on term basis. It has no actual power to do so. In the meantime, it has prepared a Higher education Twenty Years Strategy Plan decided by the Ministry of Higher Education for ensuring sustainable education. Some projects such as the Higher Education Quality Enhancement Project, Environment Management Framework etc; has been working in this regard. *Regarding the Role of Private University Act 199*; some studies find that there are some limitations in the Private Universities Act in Bangladesh. It is not a comprehensive and well defined act in Bangladesh. In 1998 and 2008, some amendments have been made in this regard. Even, the powers, functions and qualifications of the Vice-Chancellors are not clearly defined. The appointment of the Vice Chancellor is often made from the non academic persons with no experience of tertiary level teaching. The powers and functions and limitations of the Board of Governance/Trustee/ Regency etc; are also not properly mentioned in the Act. It is very transparent compared to the public universities Act in Bangladesh. It is of course a barrier to the sustainable education and development in Bangladesh. As to the Role of the Public Universities Act 1973, at present, there are many issues involved in the public universities laws in Bangladesh. The absolute powers are given to each teacher and therefore, absolute power corrupts absolutely which is happening in Bangladesh. Teachers are beyond the accountability, transparency and control. The term good governance in the academic administration is rarely done in Bangladesh. Some initiatives on the amendments issue on this Act are still under active consideration of the government As research universities: the universities of Bangladesh are not treated as the research universities as those of other countries of the world. Our universities are teaching based. But of course, the teachers need to engage in research and development. That may be either departmental interest or the personal interest. The universities are not very sincere to the research and development as the other universities in the world. The Role of Government: the government is very healthy in terms of sustainable education in Bangladesh compared to Malaysia. Several commissions such as successive commissions included the Commission on National Education (CNE), also known as Sharif Commission (1959); Commission on Student Problems and Welfare (CSPW, 1964-66), also known as Hamoodur Rahman Commission; the New Education Policy (NEP, 1970); Bangladesh Education Commission (BEC, 1974) widely known as Quadrat-e-Khuda Commission; Universities Enquiry Commission (UEC, 1977-78); Interim Education Policy (IEP, 1978); Bangladesh National Education Commission (BNEC, 1978); Bangladesh National Education (BNEC, 1988); Commission for National Education Policy (1997) and National Education Commission (NEC 2003) etc; have been made but of no effect. In fact, the reports of these commissions need to be revised. Some measures in the policy levels have been made to train up the teachers, particularly the teachers of English, Mathematics and Sciences with a view to improving the quality of education for the purpose of sustainable education. In order to ensure the sustainable education, the government has been implementing the national policy on information technology with regard to the meeting of the global education policy. Teachers Politics: Most of the university teachers engage in national level politics directly or indirectly for their personal, family, collective etc; levels interest. Students and teachers Politics: Students and teachers politics go together. It is a proverb that Birds of the same feature flock together. Most of the cases, the teachers are dealing with the students in a mollified way. They engage themselves in malpractice. International co-operation: the international collaboration and collaborative efforts is essential for developing the private universities in Bangladesh. The international philanthropic may come forward to assist the academic development in Bangladesh. In order to attain the sustainable education, the international funding is expected to meet the demands of the present education systems. In this regard, the international intergovernmental organizations and Attachment with the Government: It is observed in Malaysia that the universities including the faculty members are sincerely attached with the governmental activities. On the other hand, the government is also taking care enough about the teacher’s engagement and faculty development as well. It is very unique for sustainable education purposes. It is quite absent in Bangladesh. Most of the teachers engage in dirty politics with the Government.

3. Malaysian Perspectives

It is observed and identified that there is no serious harmful external students and teacher's politics is not observed. They are very quiet and healthy in education matters. The above mentioned problems and constraints are only applicable in Bangladesh context. The above criteria are of course essential for the sustainable education in Malaysia. The above things are to be evaluated again and again for the nation building. At present, the Malaysian Government is very sincere and healthy for sustainable education and policy. Under the policy and strategies, they are rapidly implementing their policies in this regard. They are searching for sustainable education for their nation where as the Government of Bangladesh involves in dirty national politics. The vision and mission of the Malaysian universities are clear and straightforward for attaining sustainable education. The sustainable education including the healthy growth and competitiveness of higher education institutions, a number of legislations were passed in 1996 and a new Higher Education Ministry was set up in early 2004 and significant changes were made with the establishment of the Malaysian Qualifications Agency and a Malaysian Qualifications Framework in Malaysia. Most of the public universities are governed by the Universities and Universities Colleges Act 1971 and technical education is provided by the Education Act 1996 and funded by the government. The quality regime began with the establishment of the National Accreditation Board in July 1997 for the purpose of ensuring quality of education provided by the private higher education institutions. In 2002, the government decided that public universities must also be subjected to quality assurance and ordered the establishment of the Quality Assurance Division established in 2001 for private Higher Education Institutions under the Ministry of Education. The basic standards and quality criteria are developed based on international and national best practices in consultation with stakeholders. The Lembaga Akreditasi Negara (LAN) is responsible for immediate updates on the website and publications for sustainable education in the Higher Education Institutions in Malaysia established in 1996. LAN is committed to uphold the highest academic standards and plays a vital role in the establishment of minimum standards and accreditation of courses. The educational institutions are constantly under the scrutiny of the National Accreditation Board for attaining the sustainable education and management. The quality audit system is also done by the Quality Assurance division of the Ministry. The Malaysian Qualifications Framework and its Credit System has been benchmarked with international standards and best practices. Under the Ninth Malaysian Plan 2006-2010, some serious measures such as equity, governance, relevance etc; are stated for ensuring quality education in Malaysia. At this moment, the rules and regulations for quality assurance on the education systems and management in Malaysia need to be done properly.

4. Some Case Studies

Some case studies reveal that the above mentioned criteria should urgently be implemented at large in Bangladesh without making any delay for the purposes of ensuring sustainable education to the generation of Bangladesh. The study also identifies a lot of problems towards the sustainable education in higher studies in Bangladesh and Malaysia as mentioned in this study. These problems should urgently be considered as mentioned in the recommendations.

5. Recommendations

From the above study and personal experiences, the following recommendations may be made for the interest of the sustainable education in Bangladesh:

- To empower the University Grants Commission of Bangladesh
- To implement the existing research findings on the quality education or the sustainable education papers published by the home and abroad journals
- To compare the education systems and management in Bangladesh with our country's education systems including the Singapore, Hong Kong, USA, UK etc. A case study may be done by a high powered inspection and visiting team in Bangladesh immediately.
- To give funding to the universities
- To collaborate with the universities in the world.
- To recognize as research based universities and bring them ranking universities in the world.
- To keep the education institutions free from the students and teachers politics.
- An adequate infrastructures and facilities are to be ensured by the government compared to other countries.
- The khas land may be used for the private universities in Bangladesh.

- Penal provisions for the dirty politics should be given high priorities and necessary amendments should be made immediately.
- To enhance the healthy education environment in the country
- To introduce Academic Ombudsman
- The Government of Bangladesh should work together as Malaysian along with other Governments in the world with the teachers at levels of education etc.

6. Conclusion

Bangladesh and Malaysia are rich in quality education. But with the change of time and social needs, some initiatives have been made in the education administration and management and therefore, some fundamental changes with some new problems are observed in the quality assurance and management which have become very weak and ineffective to education administration due to political decisions and introducing the new private universities laws and policies. The education system in Bangladesh is being managed and administered by two Ministries, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Primary and Mass Education Division in association with the attached Departments and Directorates as well as a number of autonomous bodies. A good coordination is to be ensured. The study finds that the regulatory bodies like the University Grants Commission of Bangladesh and Malaysia, as a guardian of education excellence is very weakly made and politically used and the members of the commissions are also politically appointed and motivated. The laws should be revised immediately due to its defective provisions and this body should be kept quite neat and clean for our generations in order to sustain sustainable education in both the two countries. It is in fact, the University Grants Commissions can not able to do anything independently due to political influence and pressure and also involves in corruption. Consequently, the higher education has become commodities now a day and handed over to the business class people of both the countries. Ultimately, the nations will have to pay the compensation for facing the global challenges. This truth shall be understood and necessary mechanism should be developed with out any fail and never be late for updating our academic administration for the greater sake of the nations as well as the globe for our own sake and existence. In order to implement the sustainable quality education, some case studies with the developed countries' education systems may also be considered and the necessary steps may also be taken for the purpose of attaining sustainable educational development and environment in the country. Moreover, research findings in education and development should be implemented and reviewed immediately for sustainable future but it often ignored and never be done which should be realized. The stakeholders have been suffering with its impacts due to the absence of the environmental governance in education administration. The impacts of these educations are very alarming and have become a threat to the nations building. Moreover, lot of irregularities in the qualification frameworks are also observed in the developing and the least developed countries compared to the developed countries of the world which needs to be considered for this purpose. A common standard qualification framework is to be made immediate due to ensuring the quality education and management in the academic administration in the globe. In the quest of academic scholarship and intellectual capabilities, the higher education teaching and learning environment should be a motto in all fields of human understanding and human resources of a country. It is the core functions of the higher education system. Higher education and research is an essential component of individuals, communities and nations. The sustainable development and environment of a country depends on the sustainable education systems and management of a country. The University Grants Commission of Bangladesh may be a pioneer in this regard. Many findings focused on the research papers and home and abroad, the Government of Bangladesh may consider their findings in this regard. Moreover, in order to face the modern world, all discrimination and disparities in the global education systems to be identified and the uniform global education needs to be introduced to sustainable education for our all generation on the earth, our home and the specialized education research based education along with the technical educations also needed in this regard. And all initiatives are to be considered immediately based on global studies. Finally, the results and recommendations of this research work may be taken into consideration immediately for the sake of the nation's sustainable education and development with some new universities Act such as the Denmark University Act 2003 etc; may be considered.

References