

Management And Control Of Primary Education

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On the eve of the partition of British India in 1947, the management and control of Primary Education in rural areas was vested in the District School Board, created under the provision of the Bengal (Rural) Primary Education Act 1930, the Bengal (Rural) Primary Education (Amendment Act), 1943. In the urban areas the municipalities were responsible for the administration of Primary Education. East Bengal which became a province of Pakistan inherited this system of management and control of primary education by local bodies. A change in the system was effected for the first time by the Bengal (Rural) Primary Education (East Bengal Amendment) Act, 1951, which provided for the taking over of the administration of primary education by the provincial government in phases from the hands of the District School Boards and Local Boards (in case of Sylhet which was amalgamated with East Bengal at the time of partition of British India). This system of management and control of primary education in rural areas partly by District School Board and partly by provincial government was in vogue till 1957. In the year 1957, the erstwhile East Pakistan (Rural) Primary Education (Supplementary Provisions) Act, 1957 and in the year 1958, the Sylhet Rural Primary Education (Supplementary Provisions) Act, 1958 were enacted to provide for direct administration of primary education in the rural areas by Provincial Government. These Acts abolished the District School Boards and Local Boards and vested the power of the District School Boards in the District Magistrates and the power of the Local Boards in the Deputy Commissioner of Sylhet. This system continued till 1974 in which year the Government of Bangladesh by an Act: Act No. VIII of 1974 took over all primary schools under public management in both rural and urban areas to administer the affairs of those schools in such manner as it might deem fit.

In the first part of this paper, the main provisions of the successive Acts will be stated so as to indicate the changes that were brought about in the system of management and control of primary education from time to time. In the second part, the rationale for the changes in the system as are evident from the reports of various committees and commissions will be narrated. Finally, conclusions will be drawn.

Constitution of the District School Board. The Bengal (Rural) Primary Education Act, 1930, provided for the establishment of a District School Board in each district comprising: (a) ex-officio members, as: the District Magistrate, the Dis-

trict Inspector of Schools, the Chairman of the Local Board, the Chairman and the Vice-Chairman, of the District Board (b) a minimum of two members to be elected by the members of the District Board, (c) a minimum of three members to be elected by the members of the Union Boards, Union Committees and Panchyats, (d) a minimum of two members to be appointed by the government; (e) two members belonging to the Scheduled Castes to be appointed by the government; (f) one teacher of a primary school to be appointed by the government for the first term of four years after the establishment of the Board and thereafter to be elected by the primary school teachers.

President and Vice-President of the Board. The Act provided for a President and Vice-President of the Board. Until the expiration of first two terms of four years each after the establishment of the Board, the President would be an appointed member of the Board and thereafter he would be an elected member of the Board. The District Magistrate was the President of the Board during the first two terms. The Board would also elect one of its members as Vice-President.

Powers and functions of President and Vice-President. The executive authority of the Board were vested in the President. He was responsible for carrying into effect all orders of the Board. The Vice-President would perform such functions of the President as were delegated to him by the President. When the office of the President was vacant, the Vice-President would exercise the function of the President until a new President was appointed.

Responsibilities of the Board. The responsibilities of the Board included: (a) preparation and maintenance of a register showing all primary schools within the district, together with the teachers thereof and their qualifications and the accommodation available therein; (b) tabulation of such further information and preparation of such plans or maps as might be necessary to enable the Board to frame an estimate of the existing provision for primary education and of the further provision necessary to place primary education within the reach of all children; (c) preparation of schemes for the extension of primary education within the area under the authority of each Union Board; (d) Committee or Panchayat; (e) arrangement for the opening of additional primary schools and the expansion of existing primary schools; (f) maintenance of all primary schools under public management in the district; (g) construction, repair and management of all primary schools under public management in the district; (h) ap-

pointment, fixation and payment of the salaries of teachers in the primary schools; (i) Granting of recognition to schools or withdrawal of recognition therefrom; (j) making of grants for scholarships and stipends for primary schools; (k) consideration and passing of orders on all applications for grants to primary schools under private management; (l) preparation and transmission to the Director of Public Instruction proposals for the supply of trained and certificated teachers; (m) advice upon all matters relating to primary education referred to the Board by the Director of Public Instruction; (n) to grant pensions and gratuities to the establishment of the Board and teachers of primary schools; (o) to form and manage a provident or annuity fund for the establishment of the Board and teachers in primary schools; (p) to compel contributions to such fund from the establishment of the Board and teachers in primary schools; (q) to supplement the contributions to such fund of the establishment of the Board and teachers in primary schools.

Control of the Government. Through various provisions of the Act Government retained control over the Board: (a) the Government could remove the President, Vice-President and members of the Board; (b) the Government could supersede a Board; (c) the Government could have a duty done by a defaulting Board within a specified period; (d) The Commissioner could suspend the execution of any resolution or order of a Board situated within his jurisdiction and prohibit the doing or completion of any act if in his opinion the resolution, order or act was in excess of the powers conferred by law; (e) the Board was required to submit to the Director of Public Instructions such reports as were prescribed by him; (f) the Government was empowered to approve the budget as prepared and submitted by the Board, or approve of it after such alterations as it might think fit or cause the budget to be returned to the Board for such modifications as the Government might think necessary; (g) the accounts of the Board were required to be audited once in every year by such auditor as might be appointed by the Government; (h) the Government could make rules for carrying out the purposes of the Act.

Primary Schools (Taking Over) Act 1974: The Act empowered the Government to take over by notification in the official gazette any primary school on such date as might be specified in the notification. The primary school (thus taken over) and all its assets and property, including lands, buildings and funds and all other rights and interests in,

or arising out of such property and all records and other documents of whatever nature relating thereto would stand transferred to, and vested in the Government.

All teachers of the primary schools would become employees of the Government and would hold their service under the Government on such terms and conditions as the Government might determine.

All Committees or authorities managing and administering the affairs of the primary schools would cease to function.

After a primary school was taken over, the Government would manage and administer the affairs of that school in such manner as it might deem fit.

Conclusions On the basis of the facts presented the following conclusions on the evolution of the management and control of primary education in Bangladesh may be drawn:

One, the history of evolution of the management and control of primary education in Bangladesh is the history of gradual reduction of authority of the Local Bodies responsible for the administration of primary education and ultimate take-over of control by the central authority.

Two, the first phase of this process of reduction commencing in 1951 ended with the abolition of District School Boards in 1957 and Local Boards in 1958 vesting all powers of the District School Boards and Local Boards to the District Magistrates and Deputy Commissioner respectively. With the abolition of District School Boards and Local Boards the power of management and control of primary education in rural areas was shifted to the provincial government but the system retained its local character. The administrative tasks continued to be performed at the district headquarters by the District Administration. Three, The second phase of the process of reduction concluded with the passing of the Primary Schools Taking Over Act of 1974 empowering the government to take over any primary school of Bangladesh in both rural and urban areas with all their assets and liabilities and with the declaration that the teachers of primary schools thus taken over would be government employees. With this, also ended the local control of primary education in Bangladesh vesting all powers of management and control in the central authority.

Four, the District School Board which was predominantly responsible for the management and control of primary education during the decade since 1947 was a representative body consisting of ex-officio members, appointed members and elected members. The Government too retained adequate control over its activities in various ways, as, through its power of supersession, audit, annual budget, supervision of schools by the inspectorate and above all, through its rule making power.

Five, the local bodies in charge of the management and control of primary education in general and the District School Boards in particular received adverse criticisms as being inefficient, corrupt and non-educational body and the government was urged to take over the control of primary education in its own hands in the interest of efficient management and control.

Six, the adverse official views against the local bodies responsible for the management