NON-FORMAL PRIMARY EDUCATION IN BANGLADESH: AN EXAMINATION OF ITS COMPLIANCE WITH THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION

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Thesis
Entitled

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The idea of this research has evolved over a number of years through my working experience with poor people in Bangladesh. My first debt, therefore, is to those poor people with whom I worked, especially to the NFPE students, graduates, and their families, who participated in the interviews during the field study of this thesis.

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ABSTRACT

For more than two decades non-formal primary education (NFPE) has been provided to poor and marginalized children in Bangladesh who have dropped out of or failed to enter formal primary education. Since the declaration of Education for All (EFA) in 1990, NFPE has become an important supplementary approach to providing primary education throughout Bangladesh. Currently 1.4 million children are enrolled in the NFPE system. The purpose of this research is to examine the compliance of NFPE in Bangladesh with the Right to Education. Four criteria associated with governments' responsibilities recognized in the international conventions, that is availability, accessibility, acceptability, and adaptability, are used to examine the issue of compliance.

Documentary research, semi-structured in-depth interviews, and non-participant observation methods were used in this research. Eighty-four persons from 16 families and four NGO officials, all from Noakhali rural area, Chittagong urban slum, and Chittagong urban-sweeper communities participated in the study.

NFPE schools studied were found to be flexible and easily adaptable in all circumstances, but in the rush to meet quantitative targets in primary enrollment as an EFA obligation, the Government of Bangladesh has failed to ensure minimum standards in these schools. The poor quality of NFPE and the unavailability of link programs for continuing primary education results in most of the NFPE graduate studied being functionally illiterate. Thus, this research suggests that since NFPE fails to ensure minimum standards in education and fails to ensure that NFPE graduates can complete compulsory primary education it does not comply with the Right to Education.

KEY WORDS: NON-FORMAL PRIMARY EDUCATION/ RIGHT TO EDUCATION/ BANGLADESH PRIMARY EDUCATION/ BANGLADESH EDUCATION POLICY/ EDUCATION FOR ALL/ QUALITY IN EDUCATION

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LIST OF ABBREVIATION

BRAC	Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
CRC	Convention on Rights of Child
DNFE	Directorate of Non Formal Education
DNFPME	Directorate of Non Formal and Primary Education
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council
EFA	Education For All
GNP	Gross National Product
IMF	International Monitory Fund
NFE	Non Formal Education
NFPE	Non Formal Primary Education
NGO	Non Government Organization
NPA	National Plan of Action
NRDS	Noakhali Rural Development Society
SIDA	Swedish International Development Agency
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNESCO	United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UPE	Universal Primary Education
WCEFA	World Conference on Education For All
YPSA	Young Power in Social Action

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Context of the Research

The People's Republic of Bangladesh, in South Asia, is one of the world's poorest, most densely populated, and least developed nations. The nation of Bangladesh was born out of the devastation of genocide in 1971. The total population of the country is 131 million, making it the world's most densely populated country. A high fertility rate keeps the country's population young with 46% below the age of 14 years or school age (Director of Non-Formal Education, 1997). The country had a GNP per capita in 2001 of US$380, with 35.6% of the population below the poverty line. As per the UNDP Human Development Index 2002, Bangladesh ranked in the 145th position, which is behind all Asian countries with the exception of Cambodia, Bhutan, Nepal, and Afghanistan. Agriculture is the mainstay of the economy of Bangladesh, and 80 percent or around 105 million people live in 68,000 rural villages, which means that two-thirds of the labour force works in the agricultural sector. Since independence a number of development initiatives along with sufficient agricultural production was supposed to take the country forward towards reducing poverty, but almost every year natural disasters such as droughts, floods and cyclones make this difficult to achieve.

Bangladesh is a relatively homogenous Muslim-dominated society. Bangla is the main language. Girls and women have low status. Child labour, necessitated by family poverty is one of the main obstacles to enforcing compulsory primary education. According to the Child Labour Survey, 1996, total child labour in the country was 6.3 million which was predicted to grow in the year 2000 in urban areas to two million (NPA II, 2001). There was no figure predicted for the whole country. Illiteracy is still a curse for the country. According to the DNEPME[1] report for 2002 "overall literacy rate of the country to be around 40%." Thus, 60% of the country's

[1] Directorate of Nonformal Education Primary and Mass Education Department, Bangladesh

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population is still illiterate. Although primary education is compulsory, institutional arrangements are not yet ready to implement this. The education budget has never exceeded 2.17% of GNP, which is far less than what other countries in the region spend. This is the lowest percentage in the region. Both India and Nepal spend 3.2% of GNP on education and Pakistan spends 2.7% (Actionaid Bangladesh 2002). Actionaid Bangladesh has released a report on the state of basic education in Bangladesh one year after the World Conference on Education for All (WCEFA) held in Dakar, Senegal. It says that although there has been some increase in spending, Bangladesh remains among the countries spending the least on education, a mere 2.17% of national income compared to a world average of around 5.5%. Although the domestic budget share for education has been increased by 1% of the country's GNP since 1980, the official donor fund has decreased. In 1992, the official donor fund was US$22 per capita, which came down in 1998 to US$10. Countries like Bangladesh whose social sector budget is highly dependent on external funds are greatly affected by this decrease (NI, 2001). In results, the total number of primary educational institutions in 1997 was 77,686 while in 1998 it came down to 66,235 (Bangladesh, 2002a). Actionaid Bangladesh (2002a) reports that a total number of 2,737 primary-level institutions ceased to exist between 1998 and 2000. A number of private commercial educational institutes came into existence to fill the gap. The number of private kindergarten schools went up by 33% from the previous number of 1,545 (Actionaid 2002). These private schools are inaccessible to the poor and rural communities who are 80% of the total population.

Hence, the large numbers of primary school-age children (8.9 million) are still out of school (NPA II, 2001). Bangladesh is a signatory to the Education for All (EFA) Declaration (1990), and to comply with that declaration the government passed on act on compulsory primary education in the same year and set as well the target of education for all by the year 2006. In contrast, government support in formal primary education has been decreasing since 1985 when the government found that investment in the formal primary education "put an additional burden on the government budget"(Third Five Year Plan of the Government of Bangladesh). In the same policy the government took the decision to enhance community support in the primary education (privatisation of primary education) and extended support to non-formal

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primary education, which was called "cost effective" with the understanding that formal primary education only is not enough to achieve the target of the Education for All goal by 2006. So, besides the formal education, the government,t along with NGOs, have initiated non-formal education (NFPE) as supplementary to the formal primary education. But since the primary education is an important right for the children, which is the main pillar to develop the shape of the future for children as adults, what education is being provided to children, how it fits in with the best interest of children, is a paramount issue to every society.

The growing concern in primary education in Bangladesh is that after the EFA declaration, the Government of Bangladesh became much concerned about increasing the number for literacy and enrolment in primary education but without increasing the public share of financial burden and physical infrastructure of education. Nevertheless, government policy is to increase primary enrolment through non-formal education for children rather than providing formal education where quality of education is the major concern (see section 3.4 in Chapter III).

It is of further concern that the number of children enrolled in NFPE is extremely high. Currently 1.4 million children are enrolled in the non-formal primary education (Wood, J. et.al., 2002), which is more than double the total population of Bhutan[2]. The government's target was much higher than the actual figure, and the current figure will be doubled by 2015.

NFPE was originally intended to provide primary education to those children who could not enroll in formal primary school or who dropped out before completing the primary education cycle. The target age group was 8 to 14 years old. (Latif, 2001). The working children who were 10 years old and above were also part of the target of NFPE. However, the failure of the government's coverage of primary education through formal education, made scope for NGOs to engage in providing NFPE to the children starting from the age of six. These children were supposed to be enrolled in formal education. Since the government found that the engagement of NGOs in NFPE actually helped the government to ensure the EFA target in enrolment, the government

[2] Total population in Bhutan is 667,000

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redefined the NFPE target age in NPA I[3], where it says NFPE will be for the ages of 6 to 14 years old. Another intention of the NFPE was to make the scope for the children who dropped out of school of school to giving them second chance to re-enter formal education. NFPE was intended to provide enrolment for dropped out and un-enrolled children, starting from age six, but this overlapped with formal education and made the NFPE target age confusing. This is one of the most important areas to examine regarding compliance of NFPE with the right to education.

Since Bangladesh was in colonial status for 200 years, in which of its policies also reflect inheritance of the colonial status. The policy of quickly achieving the EFA goal through non-formal education represents these same attitudes as commented by Muller. Muller (1981:35) said, "Quantitative increase on the school system inherited from the colonial powers can not solve the problem unless there is a qualitative reform"

The traditional view on ensuring primary education to all in the primary-aged population is that it could be achieved through both formal and non-formal ways. The logic frequently used by the traditional view is that since Bangladesh is very densely populated country and at the same time poor in terms of financial resources, ensuring formal education to all children is impossible, so Bangladesh needs low-cost education for children specially for children from poor families (Sedere1999, Latif 2001, Muti 1996). Therefore, this also need to be examined as to how the idea of low-cost primary education for children fulfills the need and best interest of the child and at the same time complies with the right to education.

Beginning with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) to the Convention on Rights of the Child (CRC), all these United Nations declarations and conventions recognise the right to education for children. The goal of Education For All (EFA) further strengthened it by asking for an action plan on education for each of the countries, which had ratified the various declarations and conventions. The United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) General Comments 11/1999 and

[3] NPA I is the National Plan of Action I developed in 1991 from the period of 1991 to 2000 as part of the EFA requirement to make National action plan to achieve the EFA target for education in the country

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13/1999 made the right to education more specific and clearer. The United Nations also appointed a Special Rapporteur for the theme of Right to Education to interpret further on right to education issues provided through the UN Declarations and Conventions. The Rapporteur has additional responsibilities to monitor the development of this right in the UN member countries. So, all this information in the hands of concerned with human rights people is as indicators and standards to analyse the education systems for children whether they comply with the right to education or not.

1.1. Significance of the Study:

On the understanding of the above context this research found a useful start to questioning of the NFPE approach on the basis of the rights perspectives. This research will of the first time question the effectiveness of the NFPE system as an education system for the poor and how it complies with the right to education. The NFPE has wide acceptance not only in Bangladesh but also throughout the world. The system is also being replicated and imposed by donors in many countries. There is some research conducted on non-formal primary education. Mostly this research regards the NGOs success in implementing NFPE, focusing on how successfully the particular NGO is in implementing NFPE. These researches are conducted by either the NGO or by these respective donor agencies. There is no academic research on this issue. Moreover, there is no research questioning the NFPE itself as a method of primary education. Hence, the significance of this study is to critically examine the non-formal primary education system in the light of the right to education as defined in international human rights conventions. The main contribution of this research will be to knowledge in the academic domain through analysis of the NFPE through a rights perspective. The research will also contribute to society as well as poor communities who are the subject of NFPE through questioning the quality of NFPE.

1.3 Statement of Research Problem

Primary education is a fundamental right that is widely understood in intellectual domain and by middle-class people. But the poor who struggle daily for survival for food alone, how far they understood the right to education? It could be

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assumed that they do not. Free and compulsory basic primary education is one of the fundamental rights recognized by international laws and the constitution of Bangladesh that it should be equal for all without any discrimination. As poor and vulnerable people do not understand the extent of these rights, it is unexpected that they will clam a quality education from the duty bearer. So, there is every possibility that a sub-standard education system will be designed for the poor through a top-down policy formulation.

To comply with the neo-liberal economic policy from the World Bank and IMF, the government is gradually withdrawing its involvement from the social sector including education (Rahi, 2001). In Bangladesh, where 35% of the people are living under the poverty line and more that 50% are identified as poor, the government cannot fully privatize education. At the same time, providing free basic primary education to all is a constitutional obligation as well as a goal of the Education for All (EFA). Inevitably, different types of education systems have been introduced; some of these are for the poor. Non-formal primary education is a so-called innovative approach, which has been developed as a supplementary system of basic primary education for the poor.

NFPE is part of the government's strategy to achieving the goal of compulsory primary education for all. The policy states;

> Diversity and flexibility in primary education embracing formal and non-formal approaches to meet the variety of learning needs and circumstances of children, specially working and handicapped children and other disadvantaged ones. However, diversity is strength only when the different approaches lead to the achievement of a minimum established standard of learning for all children. (Alam, M. 1999)

But the problem is that a minimum standard for non-formal education is not yet established for the NGOs running NFPE (Alam, M., 1999). There are some NGOs and donor supported research on NFPE where they found NFPE is innovative, cost-effective and ensured the basic learning needs (Ahmed, 1993). But the basic purpose of primary education according to the human rights treaties, which provide the right to primary education, has not yet been examined. There is some criticism from the civil

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society regarding the NFPE approach as basic primary education, but all these criticism are in oral form and not through formal study. This research is aimed at addressing the compliance of NFPE with the right to education.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of the study was to ascertain the compliance of NFPE with the right to education as defined by international treaties and the national law in Bangladesh. As discussed in the context of NFPE becoming the alternative approach to primary education in Bangladesh, so, first specific objective is to describe the details of the current situation of NFPE as primary education in Bangladesh. The second specific objective is to examine the ability of NFPE to ensure equity and equality in education and to ensure access to all people including the poor, the vulnerable and the marginalized. The third objective was to examine the quality aspects of NFPE and to see whether quality suffers any casualties vis. a vis. ensuring the quantitative aspects of education. This issue of quality vis. a vis. quantity came out as an issue of NFPE during the design of this research. The question arose from the document review in the preliminary stage about the growth of NFPE and institutional maturity and adequacy. How far does it match and maintain quality? And the final objective was to examine the outcome of NFPE specially its ability to ensure continuance of further education and improve the quality of life of the children involved and their families.

1.5 Research Questions:

a. What is the existing situation of NFPE in Bangladesh?
b. How does NFPE fulfill the needs and rights of poor students and parents?
c. What extent do parents feel NFPE contributes to improvement the quality of life of its graduates?
d. Does NFPE graduates complete compulsory primary education after their three years of education? If not, why not?

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1.6 Scope of the study:

The study has mainly examined the NFPE and its compliance to the right to education through analysis of the components of right to education as provided in international treaties and national law in Bangladesh. The compliance of NFPE to the right to education has been examined by three dimensions of educational rights, which are right to education, rights in education, and rights through education. Furthermore the right to education has been examined only on the basis of the government responsibilities towards children of primary age. The study was not aiming to examine the whole primary education system but rather limit its scope on examining NFPE as part of NFE. Besides the document search, the study will limit it-self to examine the practical aspects of NFPE, and its effects on the life of poor children.

1.7 Organization of the thesis:

This thesis is divided into six chapters. Chapter II describes the methodological issues of this research. The background of the study areas and the reasons why those areas were select for study is discussed in this chapter along with the tools of the study and details of the process of the fieldwork.

Chapter III provides the theoretical understanding on education and rights. Education in general and its aims and purposes is discussed from the philosophical and theoretical aspects as well as on the basis of international treaties, declarations and national laws in Bangladesh. The chapter also is discuses the theoretical aspects of non-formal education and its links with the basic education and primary education. An overview of primary education of Bangladesh is also discussed in Chapter III followed by discussion on non-formal education and national education policies in Bangladesh. The last part of chapter III provides the theoretical framework of the right to education adapted from the 4A scheme of Tomasevski, the independent expert on right to education for United Nation. This theoretical framework was later used as the basis of analysis of compliance of NFPE with the right to education.

Chapter IV mainly contains the findings from the fieldwork and the document search on the issue of right to education and NFPE. This chapter basically is organized on the basis of right to education frameworks, drawn in Chapter III. What is the outcome of NFPE and how it complies with the right to education components,

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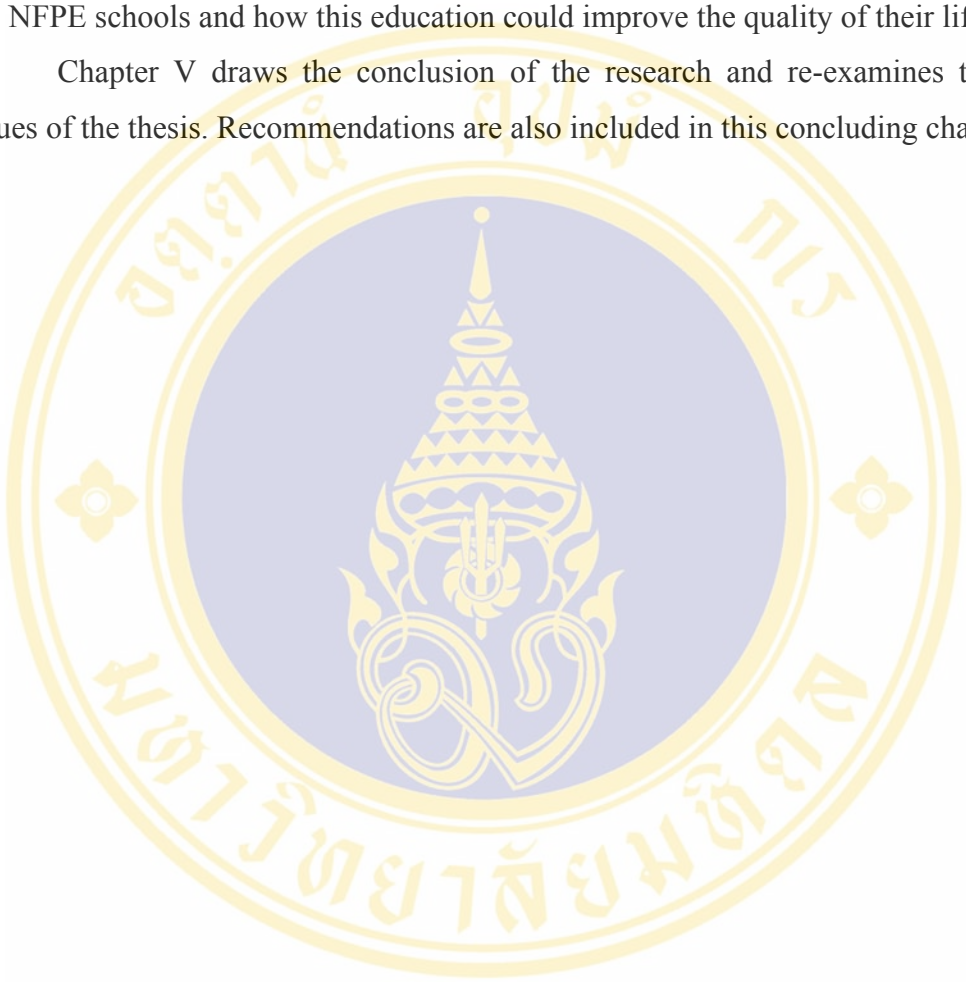
specially government's obligation to ensure to its citizen such as availability, accessibility, acceptability, and adaptability of education, is discussed in this chapter. The outcome of education is discussed under rights through education with the two main issues of the prospects of continue education for children who graduated from the NFPE schools and how this education could improve the quality of their life.

Chapter V draws the conclusion of the research and re-examines the main issues of the thesis. Recommendations are also included in this concluding chapter.



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CHAPTER II
METHODOLOGY

2.1 Selection of Study Areas and Sampling Strategy

NFPE schools mainly exist where poor communities live, such as in urban slums and remote rural areas. To maximize the variation of the sample, a cross-section of communities has been studied, that is urban-rural and mainstream such as the Muslim majority community and minority community such as sweepers who are an occupational minority. In the urban community both mainstream slum dwellers and the vulnerable community of sweepers have been studied. In rural areas, poverty-prone areas, especially due to remoteness and natural disasters were chosen for the study. These areas were chosen because, though education is a right for every section of the people, some communities have different barriers to accessing education because of many factors like remoteness, social exclusion, and income poverty. The study looks at how NFPE has impacted on the most vulnerable community. The other purpose is to find out if there is any positive impact from NFPE on their lives and this will be more visible in an extreme context. The following categories have been chosen to select the study areas:

Agrarian-based rural areas: As Bangladesh is agrarian society and around 80% of the total population lives in villages, so one of the criteria was agrarian-based rural society.

Poverty-prone areas: NFPE mainly exists in poverty-prone areas. Therefore, the criteria for selection was an area where poverty is strongly visualized

Natural disaster-prone areas: Natural disasters are common phenomena in Bangladesh and one of the major causes of poverty and vulnerability, so, one of the criteria was a natural disaster-prone area.

Physical remoteness: Communities living in remote areas are more vulnerable and hard to reach with formal education. Currently, about 10% of the primary school age group never enrolls and these tend to be children of the poor and those in remote areas (USAID, 2002a). As claimed by the NGOs, the NFPE approach is trying to

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reach these areas. So, remote area was one of the criteria for selection of the study areas.

Urban Areas: In urban areas the following two groups were selected for the study:

Urban slum: Urban poverty is very much visualized in slums and NFPE schools are mainly operating in slums areas, so a slum was selected for the study.

Urban minority community: The minority community of *Methor* (Sweepers) is one of the vulnerable groups in accessing education and other services. And they need special attention and, in some cases, adaptation from the regular approaches. To look at the accessibility and adaptability capacity in NFPE, this minority group was included in the selection criteria. It should be noted that this sweeper community is minority in terms of ethnicity, religion, language and profession.

Other selection criteria: To get access to the communities, I used the support of NGOs who have NFPE schools in the broadly selected areas. Specific village and NFPE School, were selected on the basis of the presence of respective NGOs.

2.2 Study areas:

Three geographical areas were selected for the study following the above-mentioned criteria. All the criteria could not meet in every study areas but rather I tried to capture all the criteria through the following three areas.

Jagadananda village of Noakhali rural areas:

The Noakhali rural area is a southern coastal part of the country and is frequently exposed to natural disasters such as cyclones, tidal surges, and river erosion, which together make the area vulnerable with the people there in poverty. Jagadananda village is very remote and close to the sea. The people are mostly agrarian-base. The respective NGO has operated NFPE School in this village for five years, so the NGO helped to identify the NFPE graduates and their families.

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Postarpar slum in Chittagong city:

This area is in center of the city and represents a typical slum in the city areas. Chittagong is a port city and the commercial capital of the country, which allows a large number of slums are in the city. Numbers of poor people have migrated from the rural areas to reside here. Postarpar has been selected as a study area because the respective NGO who agreed to provide help for this study has operated NFPE School there for five years and numbers of NFPE graduates are available there.

Madarbari sweeper colony:

Madarbari sweeper colony is in the center of the Chittagong city. This is one of the biggest sweeper colonies in the city with about 250 sweeper families living. The main criteria to select this area is that the minority community called as sweepers live here and the respective NGO has operated the NFPE School for eight years. This community is particularly chosen for study because they are minority in four ways: first, they are *Hindu* which is a religious minority group in the country; second, they are identified as *Methor which* is an occupational minority in the society; third, they are language minority as they speak *Hindi* instead of Bangla; and fourth, they are also and ethnic minority, because they came from the Kanpur state of India.

2.3 Sample Size:

Because the focused NFPE population is large, and in fact, in context of the whole country the families of NFPE graduates were difficult to identify, the sample was selected according to convenience. A total of 16 families of NFPE graduates were interviewed. In the 16 families, there were a total of 16 NFPE graduates, and seven NFPE students who are currently studying were also interviewed. In total 83 people participated in the interview with 16 families including NFPE graduates. Among the total of 16 families, seven were from the Noakhali rural areas, five were from the minority community in Chittagong and four were from the urban mainstream community in Chittagong.

A total of four NGO personnel were interviewed. Two personnel from the NGOs working in the rural area of Noakhali, and the other two personnel were from the NGOs working in urban areas in Chittagong. There was a variation among the

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NGO personnel who were interviewed to understand the different perspectives of the NFPE approaches and for cross-analysis of the data. Two of the NGO personnel were the Chief Executive of the respective NGOs. One is only responsible for the education program and works in a mid level position and the other one is responsible for the integrated program including education and works in a senior position in the NGO.

Age, gender and other selection criteria of ex-NFPE students as subject:

To get reliable information and visualize the impact, NFPE graduates were chosen to be interviewed along with their parents, the graduates were at least 12 years old. Parents were also chosen as subjects because parents are an integral part of the right to education. Moreover, parents were included to get an overall understanding on the impact of NFPE on the children and their families. NFPE students who completed the full three-year cycle at least two years ago, were chosen as participants so that the outcome of NFPE could be easily visualized. Among the total of 16 NFPE graduates who participated in the interviews, eight of them were girls to reflect gender difference on the outcome.

2.4 Tools for data collection

a) Document research:

In the first phase, important and related literatures were reviewed to understand the existing knowledge and theories. This phase critically examined the NFPE approaches and how it complies with the right to basic primary education in a contextual analysis. A literature review was conducted to develop a theoretical framework of the right to education, specifically the right to basic primary education, and to understand the origin of the emerging approach of NFPE and reason behind the promoting and replication by the government and donors. How the right to education (as a constitutional obligation as well as a UN convention on ESCR) is being ensured or violated was examined through the literature review. Wide ranges of discourse were reviewed in this part including the constitutions of Bangladesh, UN conventions, declaration and different committee resolutions or general comments. NGOs, donors, and government evaluation reports and academic discussions on education were also reviewed. Documents, reports,

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journals and books related to these aspects were also reviewed as well. Additionally, websites, academic libraries, NGOs documents, government, NGOs, and donors' review/evaluation documents were collected and analyzed. Quantitative data such as the budget of NFPE programs of NGOs, students and school numbers have also been collected from secondary information.

b) In-depth Interview:

This research is an exploratory study relating to non-formal primary education, i.e. exploring the consequence and outcomes concerning basic right to education, rights in education, and rights through education. To find out the outcomes of NFPE, an in-depth-interviews has been used to get an in-depth understanding of the outcome of NFPE and how it effects students' lives and assists them in achieving quality of life. In-depth-interviews were conducted with two groups of people, one was with a family of NFPE graduates and another was with the NGO Officials whose NGOs are implementing NFPE programs. In the following paragraphs I give the details on how I have conducted the interviews with these two groups.

Interview with the family of NFPE students:

An in-depth interview was conducted with the families of NFPE graduates considering the student's economical, social and cultural context. A semi-structure interview was conducted with 16 NFPE graduates and their families (a list of NFPE graduates whose families have been interviewed is given in Appendix:A) to understand the purpose of their education, quality of NFPE, prospect of continuing their education, status of equity and discrimination in the education system, physical facility in education, socio-economic status of the interviewees and how that status effects getting access to quality education. The detail of the topics of the in-depth interview is provided in Appendix: B.

The in-depth interviews for the field study were conducted during the third week of March to the second week of April 2003. The first ten days I spent in the Noakhali rural areas. Initially I contacted NRDS a local NGO that has a NFPE program in the rural area. A list of NFPE schools with locations map was collected

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from this NGO. The person responsible for education program of NRDS helped me to get to the schools and communities throughout the time I was in the field, as the areas was fully unknown to me. After getting the school list, the first two days I visited the NFPE schools and villages to find NFPE graduates who had graduated at least two years ago and I made an appointment with their family. Since the season (March to April) is the time to work in agriculture fields to prepare them for the next crop[1], most of the male members of the family were in the field in the daytime. So, I got all the appointments in the evening after 5 pm. In that situation I could interviewed maximum of two families in one day.

As I mentioned, the first two days I visited two NFPE schools; I collected a list of NFPE graduates along with address of them from the teacher of those schools. The interviewees were selected from that list on the basis of availability of them for the days I was to visit.

During the interview family members/parents, brothers, sisters and NFPE graduate were present. In some interviews the grandfather, uncles and aunties participated. In most of the cases women members of the family talked from inside the room or from the other side of a curtain, which made it difficult for me to identify who was talking mother or aunt of the graduates. Most of the interviews were conducted inside the house of the students; some interviews were organized in the yard in front of the house. A total of seven families were interviewed from this village and is took four days to conduct interviews.

From the first day of June I started fieldwork in the Chittagong urban area. First I visited Ghashful to get a list of schools with locations and addresses. Mr. Saifuddin Ahmed, Education Coordinator of the Ghashful, agreed to help me get access to the communities and schools. However, I chose the sweeper colony NFPE School as one of the two urban schools because children from this community are significant subjects for my research. I spent three days in the sweeper colony. On the morning of the first day I participated in a classroom observation in the school, which is inside the colony. The remaining time I and the Education Coordinator of Ghashful tried to find the NFPE graduates who live in the colony. This colony is of dormitory

[1] March to April is the time to prepare fields for the next crop. Usually the farmers have few days only before the rainy season, which starts in May, to prepare the field and for rice cultivation. Usually in this period for rural people are busy the whole day working in the agricultural fields.

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type and each of the families live in one room. It was easy to find the graduates, and I interviewed those families who were identified first were subject to the availability of the parents at that time. All the interviews were conducted in the room of the respective family who live there. Like in the rural areas, all the family members as such brothers, sisters, parents, and in some cases relatives were present during the interview. I spent two days conducting interviews with five families in the sweeper community.

To get to the urban slum community, I visited Postarpar slum, which is around two kilometers from the Ghashful office. Like in the previous areas, first the few days I went to NFPE School in the Postarpar slum, which is operated by Ghashful. The first day I collected a list of the graduates with their addresses and I tried to get appointments with the families with the help of the teacher of Postarpar NFPE School. In this community, it was difficult to get the family members together in the daytime as most the family members work outside the community and usually are only back in the late evening. However, I use a one holiday, that is Friday, and the other days I visited the families at the night. It was not difficult for me because in the city areas visiting family in the night is not a problem. Also the area is familiar to me since I used to live there for around six years. In two days I interviewed four families from this slum community.

Interview with the NGO Officials:

I conducted interview with the NGO officials from four different NGOs to get an understanding on NFPE, its operating mechanism, budget, finance, quality of teachers and their training. The NGO officials were selected from the same organization whose NFPE schools I visited for study. Details of selection of NGO officials were already discussed in the section “Sample Size”.

At the end of the interviews with the families in Noakhali, I conducted an interview with the Chief Executive of NRDS in his office. The education coordinator and finance coordinator of that organization were there to help the Chief Executive with information on logistic issues like budget and numerical data. Interviews with two other officials from Ghashful and YPSA were conducted on 10th and 11th of April,

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respectively, after the end of interviews of the NFPE graduates in urban areas. A list of interviewed person is given in Appendix: A. Both the interviews were conducted in the office of the respective officials. A checklist was used during the interviews with the officials to cover the topics I intended to discuss with them. Besides the earlier determined topics for discussion, a few more issues were also discussed which emerged from the field findings. A list of topics discussed with the NGO officials is given in Appendix: B.

c) Observation of classroom:

Four schools were chosen from the list of respective NGOs. Two schools were chosen from the rural areas and the other two from urban areas. Out of the four schools three were chosen randomly from the list but the sweeper colony NFPE school was chosen purposely because children from the sweeper community are one of the specific subjects of my research and all the NFPE graduates in this community were graduate from the sweeper colony NFPE school. The non-participant observance method was used to observe the class. The researcher remained in each classroom for one-day a whole session (two and half hours) in each class. The classroom observation included:

- The physical condition of the school
- Logistics facilities of the school
- Classroom teaching style
- Teacher-student relationship

d) Visit to formal primary schools:

Since the continuation of education after NFPE is a big concern in this study, to examine the scope of continuing education with formal primary education, I visited the nearest government primary schools of each of the NFPE schools and surrounding community. With each of the formal primary schools I visited, I went to classrooms for the fourth and fifth grades and counted the number of students attending that day and asked students to raise their hands who had graduated from NFPE to identify how many students in grades four and five were from the NFPE. I went to four formal

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primary schools, and I used same method to identify the number of students who came from NFPE.

In the Noakhali rural area, I went to Nolua Bhuyan Hat Government Primary School which is about two kilometers from the community where I interviewed the families. In Chittagong urban area, I went to Jamiruddin Government Primary School, which is in the middle of the sweeper colony, and went to Postarpar slum. I followed the same method in these two government primary schools as I did in rural Chittagong. Pouroshava Government Primary School and Panthishila Government Primary School are in Sitakunda, which is 40 kilometers from Chittagong city. I chose these two schools because one of the NGO named YPSA agreed to volunteer in my work. On an average four NFPE schools exists around these two schools.

2.5 Provisions for trustworthiness

The question of trustworthiness asks: can we, the readers, place confidence in the outcome of the study? Can we believe what the researcher has reported? (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994). Two research processes contributed to the trustworthiness in this research these were:

i) Use of multiple method of research: Multiple methods were used in this research, which can be described as the 'triangulation' process. The triangulations were used in selecting subjects and methodologies. Three categories of subjects were selected; a) Families, b) NFPE graduates, and c) NGO officials. On the other hand, three methodologies were selected; a) In-depth interview, Document research, and c) Non-participatory observation. These triangular subjects and methods allowed me to cross checked the outcomes of each method. Any issues that came from NFPE graduates I crosschecked that information with the family members. In the same way, if any issues come from the families I had chance to check these with NGO officials. My field findings also were examined with the literatures and documents I reviewed during my research.

ii) I searched for both positive and negative NFPE outcomes to overcome researcher's bias in criticizing the NFPE system.

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2.6 Date analysis procedure:

Data analysis was systematically involved in the content analysis using the criteria derived from Tomasevski's right-to-education framework. But the research was open to the emergence of other themes even they were not directly connected with the framework.

2.7 Limitations of the study:

a. There are few documents on evaluation of the quality of NFPE. Most of the documents on non-formal education are focused adult education. However, the documents that are available on evaluation on NFPE, conducted by BRAC who is the single biggest promoting agency of NFPE. There was no independent evaluation document found on NFPE. BRAC is receiving large amount of donor funds regarding NFPE. To maintain organizational creditability, it is not unlikely that BRAC would be bias in evaluating the program.
b. There were no measurement tools to measure the quality of the NFPE program. However, I used the educational qualifications of the teacher as one of the tools. The problem is that teachers' quality is not only dependent on how many certificates they have.
c. Evaluation of teaching method and orientation was made only on the basis of classroom observation for a short time, which was only for two hours in each school. This short-time observation may not represent the true view. Moreover, as I was a stranger in the class, the teacher could have been embarrassed and teaching in his/her natural way might have been disrupted.
d. While care was taken to choose NFPE schools, which were representative of the types of NFPE schools available, the schools studied are not statistically representative of the NFPE schools found throughout the country. As such, the findings could not be generalized. Nevertheless, they may be taken as indicative of the wider situation of the NFPE schools in Bangladesh.

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EDUCATION AND RIGHTS

CHAPTER III

This chapter is divided into three sections. In the first section I will discuss the general concepts and aim and purpose of education as defined by the educationists and international covenants. In this section I will also discuss the conceptual understanding of non-formal primary education (NFPE), which is part of the non-formal education. Since the main issue of this thesis on non-formal primary education as a branch of Basic Education, I will briefly discuss Basic Education also. In the section 3.4, I will discuss non-formal primary education in Bangladesh under the broader issue of the overall primary education system to find the relationship and integration of formal and non-formal education since NFPE is, according to the Government of Bangladesh, a supplementary program (in some point its found as an alternative) for formal primary education. Finally in section three, I will discuss the conceptual framework of right to education on the basis of international conventions.

3.1 The General Concepts, Aim, and Purpose of Education:

In this discussion I will introduce first the issue on the general meaning of education and its aim and purpose, and, then, I will discuss the purpose of primay education. My ultimate goal in this discussion is to build an understanding on the purpose of primary education relative to non-formal primary education, since the whole focus of this thesis is on the issue of non-formal primary education in Bangladesh.

Education as a term is fairly broad. There is no single understanding about education or its aim and purpose. Different scholars discuss different philosophical and applied aspects of education. Some scholar find education as a means to satisfying one's soul and mind. Some scholars find education as mean for satisfying one's economic needs. Historical model discuss education are the military need of a country.

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However, most of the scholars agree that the meaning and purpose of education is different for different societies. Hence, a society decides and designs the meaning of education according to their need. White (1973), provides a clear example on the relationship between the goal of society and the goals of education through discussion on different education models from history such as the Confucius model, Athenian model, Spartan model, and the Western liberal-arts model. All these models were developed on the basis of the need of the society then.

Nowak (1995:189) analyses the purpose of the right to education from the historical perspective. He says that a historically education has always been purposive for the technical skills necessary to masters the tasks of daily life as well as the religious, philosophical, cultural, and social values of the respective people and society. He also said that the history education unfolds aims and objectives related to religious and political needs. According to Nowak, Jean J. Rousseau was the first to proclaim the liberation of the child as the major aim of education (Nowak 1995). Rousseau emphasise a liberating children through education rather then giving them power. He believed that the child's experience should be carefully guided to an essential goal (White 1973: 29). Plato's model was primarily concerned with virtue, the good life, and the good man. Plato wrote: "Education produces a good man and good men act nobly." This could be interpreted as the aim of education, to produce good persons on the ground that good persons make a good society. Bertrand Russell's defined education objectives also reflect to producing 'good men', 'good society' and 'good life'. (White 1973:27). Dewey's model of education is very much similar to contemporary education a objectives. White wrote:

> Dewey undertakes four basic definitions of education. First, the aim of education is defined as the continued capacity for educational growth. Second, such a model of education requires a democracy if it is to be for all. Third, the aim of education must come from within the educational process since no aim should be imposed from without. Fourth, to act with an aim is to act intelligently (White 1973:34).

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The evolution of the aim of education is the main issue in Dewey's model. He does not agree on set aims of education for children. To him, the aim must be flexible that is, to be capable to being altered to meet circumstances. He said that aims must stem from the existing conditions and should arise through foresight, acting intelligently, and weighing alternatives. This is his famous model of education called "experimentalism". In contemporary education, we can easily adapt Dewey's model. He said that the aim of education must stem from the existing condition and this is one of the general aims of the contemporary goal of education, which is "need based". When he talked about the evolution of the aim through foresight, acting intelligently, and weighing alternatives that is also a contemporary education model because the aim of education describes "the development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential" so that children can find their own aim in the evolution process throughout his/her life. (White 1973:37).

The most important point of Dewey's definition is the "continued capacity of education growth" which could be interpreted, as the aim of education is to enable children to achieve that capacity so that they can go for further education through the different stages. For example, the elementary level of education should aim to develop the capacity of children to move towards secondary education. The issue of education has two sides, on one side are the children and their parents, and on the other side is the government. So, if the children are to achieve the one aim of the capacity to grow further, the government should have the aim and then the responsibility to ensure the institutional arrangement in fulfilling the aim of the children.

Nowak (1995) cited from the J. Delbruck,

> Education should aim at enabling the human being to freely develop his or her personality and dignity, to actively participate in a free society and to contribute to tolerance and respect for human rights.

J. Delbruck's aims are very much similar to the aims and objectives defined in human rights conventions. Development of personality and dignity and enabling the capacity to participate in all spares of the society is the paramount means of education

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to achieve other rights and enjoy the quality of life, which I will use this in this thesis for examining the NFPE's status.

Some scholars defined the purpose of education is to attain a decent life, to raise their standard of living, and to be useful member of the society.

Although the goal and purpose of education may vary according to the respective historical, cultural, religious or national context, there are some commonalities, which are agreed to by the states parties in different UN conventions and declarations. In the Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR), article 13 (1) States Parties agreed "education shall be directed to the full development of human personality and the sense of its dignity, and shall strengthen the respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms". General Comments 13/1999 of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) elaborates on the articles 13(1) of CESCR in the following way:

> Education is both a human right in itself and an indispensable means of realizing other human rights. As an empowerment right, education has a vital role in empowering women, safeguarding children from exploitative and hazardous labour and sexual exploitation, and promoting human rights and democracy.

Similar statements provided article 26(2) of Universal Declaration on Human Rights (UDHR), article 5(1)(a) of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Convention against Discrimination in Education and article 29(1)(b) of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The most detailed aims and objectives of child education are clearly provided article 29(1) of Convention on the Right of the Child (CRC), which is most the universally accepted standard in the field of right to education for the child. In CRC, States Parties agree that the education of the child shall be directed to:

(a) The development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential;

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(b) The development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and for the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations;

(c) The development of respect for the child's parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, for the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate, and for civilizations different from his or her own;

(d) The preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin;

(e) The development of respect for the natural environment.

From this provision is explained that the purpose of education shall aim at developing the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to the fullest extent. Education shall prepare the child for an active adult life in a free society and foster respect for the child's parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values and for the cultural background and values of others and human rights.

The most comprehensive purpose of primary education provided in article 1 of the World Declaration of Education for All 1990. This says that purpose of education for all is to achieve the required skills to survive, to develop to full capacity, to live and work in dignity, to participate fully in development, to improve the quality of their lives, to make informed decisions, and to continue learning.

If we put all these discussions together, the purpose of primary education for children in poor countries would be, first, to achieve the required skill of literacy and numeracy, which will enable them to continue learning and improve the condition of their lives. Second, to develop to full capacity which means psychological and moral development that helps children to develop their own personality and dignity as well sense of tolerance and responsibility. Third, to make an informed citizen who can be an active participant in the development process.

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At this stage we may need to discuss some understanding of Basic Education and its relationship with education since primary education as is considered part of Basic Education. In the next paragraph I aim to discuss that which helps to move the discussion further on the issue of achieving primay education with the non-formal education approach.

3.2 Concept of Basic Education:

Basic Education is a catchphrase from a decade of development despite its lack of conceptual clarity. Muller (1981) defines Basic Education as "transmission through education of a minimum of knowledge required to allow the individual to led a decent existence in a constantly changing environment and society." The main point of Muller is "minimum of knowledge" to ensure existence in a specific society. The problem of any definition of Basic Education is to make specific the need of 'minimum knowledge', 'decent existence' and 'given environment and society'. So, Basic Education as Muller (1981) proposed is "to be flexible and adaptation to existing conditions are very important characteristics, both in its contents and institutional organization," which is not different from the meaning of education as discussed in previous paragraphs.

There are two components of Basic Education. First, they are reading, writing and arithmetic which provide literacy and numeracy or sustainable literacy the use of which people are able to continue their learning. Second, acquiring life skills such as knowledge, skills, values, attitudes that a learner is able to use in solving problems throughout his/her life in the social and family sphere. This is the foundation of education structure (Latif, 2001:17 -18).

Therefore, according to the above discussion, the scope of Basic Education is: a) mastering of the basic ability in reading, writing and arithmetic; b) a basic knowledge of fundamental scientific concepts for a basic understanding of hygiene, health care, nutrition, cultivation, livestock breeding and economics; c) practical knowledge and skill in order to be able to earn a living, keep a family and run a household; d) the ability to take part in public life and to have some understanding on

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the nature of society, that is its history and its self-concept, the duties and functions of government and administration, taxation, social security, cooperative system and self-help movements; e) the development of self awareness in individuals, thereby helping them to think critically and encouraging them to shape their world and to participate actively in the development process (Muller 1981). There is some difference between universal primary education (UPE) and Basic Education. As Muller states;

> Basic Education should not be seen as a fundamental alternative to primary education although theoretically it differs from universal primary education (UPE) in three important ways; 1) the aims and content of Basic Education are defined functionally in terms of the learning need of a certain target group and not as the lowest rung on the educational hierarchy ladder; 2) the target group is not only children of school age, but young people and adults as well. More important than age is the homogeneity of interests; 3) Basic Education should be provided in a form which meets the needs of the target group and echoes the conditions existing in the country or region concerned (Muller 1981).

The above discussion will help us to understand the non-formal education and its relation to Basic Education. In the following discussion I am aim to discuss the non-formal education followed by a discussion on non-formal primary education.

3.3 Concepts of Non-Formal Education (NFE) and Non-Formal Primary Education (NFPE)

Before discussing non-formal primary education, we need to be clear about the scope for non-formal education, because non-formal primary education is part of non-formal education. Non-formal education is defined as "any organized, systematic, educational activity carried on outside the framework of the formal (schooling) system to provide selected types of learning to particular sub-groups of the population..." (Coombs and Ahmed 1974:8). The World Bank's Education Sector Policy Paper (1996) stated:

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> Non-formal education - organized and systematic learning activity carried on outside the formal system - is neither an alternative education system nor a shortcut to the rapid education of a population. Rather, non-formal education and training provides a second chance for learning to those who missed formal schooling; it enables the rural or urban poor, within programs of "integrated development," to acquire useful knowledge, attitudes, and skills; and affords a wide array of learning activities directly associated with work (World Bank 1996:16).

There are no differences in definition of NFE by Coombs and Ahmed and the World Bank policy. The common concepts in both definitions are that NFE is organized and systematic learning activity and it is outside of the formal education program. An additional issue in the World Bank definition is, it that, NFPE is for rural and urban poor to have a second chance of education directly linked with their work. In this definition, NFE for primary-age children is absent; especially when the Bank says that it is directly related with work and ideally, children are not part of work.

Some scholars identified non-formal education as a second branch of education (Latif 2001 p.1). Non-formal education could be defined as an organized but out of the formal institutional education program for specific groups of learners with specific objectives. NFPE could operate separately or integrate with the educational program. The concept of non-formal education is not new, but as the scope of NFE gradually became wider a new definition of NFPE is emerging.

Most of the children in developing countries could not go to the school in primary-age or dropped out before completing the primary education cycle. In this process the number of the illiterate population is gradually increasing (Latif 2001). It's for this condition that NFE is being provided as Latif (2001) defines it:

> Second chance of education to those illiterate who are disadvantaged children and could not attend the school in their primary-age, to adolescents and poor adults with objectives to free the country from the curse of illiteracy.

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In addition to this, in a poor and densely populated society, education, skill, awareness, income-generating activities, environmental awareness, gender equality, development, and nutrition are all the demands that could not be met only with formal education. The reality is that many people in poor countries stop their education even before completing the full course of primary education. In this context NFE has an important role, because NFE is supplementary and complementary to formal education.

From the above discussion some characteristics of NFE can be drawn. The first characteristic is that 'NFE is an organized program'. This concept of NFE is also supported by Muller, which I will discuss later. NFE is organized in the sense that it is an organized and collective effort. For example, group of people participate as learners and there also is a teacher or facilitator with an objective to learning something. There also should be some form of a management of the process.

The second characteristic is: 'Out of formal institutional education' – in that sense, although it is organized but there are no rigid rules of learning. There could be any form of a school[1] but a uniform curriculum is not necessarily imposed. The NFE center is not necessarily a permanent establishment; there is no time-bound course rather different NFE, have their own course model.

The third characteristic is: 'NFE is for a specific group of learners'. That is the group should be homogenous in interest or age. However, Muller's suggestion is that since NFPE is mainly Basic Education in third-world countries, an NFE participant group should have homogeneity more in regards to 'interest' rather than 'age group'

The fourth and last characteristic is 'specific objectives'. Each NFE program has specific objectives. For children, an NFE program could be to provide Basic Education for those who could not for any reason attend formal education. For the adolescent, basic education could provide for the special educational needs for the adolescent age. For youth and adult, an NFE program could provide basic education

[1] UNESCO specially believes that school or no school in NFE is not the issue of debate, NFPE could be any form organized as school or out of school UNESCO (1982).

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including literacy and at the same time provide other need-based training such as skill training for different professions or provide social and political education.

Tight (1996: 68) suggests that whereas the latter concepts have to do with the extension of education and learning throughout life, non-formal education is about 'acknowledging the importance of education, learning and training which takes place outside recognized educational institutions'. Fordham (1993) suggests that the four characteristics that came to be associated with non-formal education are:

- Relevance to the needs of disadvantaged groups.
- Concern with specific categories of person.
- A focus on clearly defined purposes.
- Flexibility in organization and methods.

However, nowhere in the world NFE is recognized to be alternative education system with formal education (Latif 2001 p.3). Muller agrees with this statement. He stated, " Nevertheless, non-formal education should not be looked upon as an alternative to formal education." He finds non-formal education as an educational approach for the youth and adult. Muller says that "non-formal education sector compromises all organized approaches to education outside the formal education system, which are directed at both people and adults." As for Latif and Muller, neither of them suggests that NFE is for the children who are eligible for the formal primary education. Latif (2001) clearly stated that NFE could be provided to those children who dropped out from the primary school for any reason, for those who could not attend formal primary school when they reached the age for primary schooling[2], for working children and for the children from the those communities whose language is different from the formal school such as tribal-community children. The World Bank as I referred to earlier, has same position as Muller and Latif, stating that NFE "is neither an alternative education system nor a shortcut to the rapid education of a population." This statement makes the World Bank's position stronger against the idea of providing non-formal education to any section of people in the society including children. My interpretation of the World Bank's statement is that children should be

2 In Bangladesh primary schooling starts from the age six.

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provided formal education, they should not be sent to a non-formal school. This statement also discourages the idea of using non-formal education as tools for quick achievement of the national education rate. Non-formal education was found by the World Bank as a supplementary system to formal education, which should be provided only in special circumstances such as to ensure the re-entry of drop-out children or working children.

In many countries NFE is highly appreciated and encouraged for tribal communities not as alternative to the formal primary education but rather as an approach of pre-primary education to prepare the children of tribal communities for the mainstream formal education. In Thailand and India many NGOs and the Government are providing this type of pre-primary education to their tribal community children (Mellor, 2002).

Since the inflexibility and lack of adaptability within the different contexts of age, and language are the shortcoming of formal education, NFE is a choice for a supplementary and complementary education approach to formal education. Muller proposes NFE as a supplementary program "to compensate for the shortcomings of formal education." However, he stated later, " despite its [formal education's] inadequacy no substitute has yet been found for the formal school system." He further wrote:

> The question as to whether priority should be given to formal or non-formal education in future educational planning in developing countries is one requiring further discussion. Whatever the outcome, the question cannot be solved against the formal education. (Muller 1981)

Muller's position further strengthens the view of the World Bank where it state that non-formal education is "neither an alternative education system nor a shortcut to the rapid education of a population." (World Bank 1980:16)

Although I mentioned earlier in part of this discussion that NFPE is the branch of NFE, there is no clear definition of NFPE. However, the general understanding is

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that, the branch of NFE is to provide primary education for children and adolescents who missed out from the formal primary education for different causes. Although there is no theoretical evidence of NFPE, some educationists attempted a practical or working definition of NFPE. Latif (2001:33) said that since the implementation of universal primary education is difficult in the context of developing countries and it needs time to cover the very high number of primary school age children not yet enrolled in formal primary education, children who dropped out and failed to complete primary education including working children, NFPE emerged to cover those children. Sedere et al. (1999:20) said the main purpose of NFPE is to act as feeder schools for formal primary education. That NFPE is for children who dropped out from the formal primary school or could not enroll at a certain age, or working children. NFPE aims to provide them with primary education so that they can continue their education further. (Muti 1996:85). Although NFPE is a supplementary approach to primary education, there is no defined or generally agreed age of children for NFPE. Muti (1996) defines the age of NFPE children from six to ten. Latif (2001) defines the age (from the analysis of the practical age of currently enrolled children of NFPE) as eight to fourteen. Government NFPE programs define the age of NFPE children from the age of eight to fourteen. Muti's definition of age for enrollment in NFPE is contradictory with formal primary school-age children. Since the compulsory primary education in Bangladesh is from the age of six to ten, starting NFPE children from the same age that is six, is confusing. Because Muti's definition of age allows government or NGOs to enroll children at the age of six when they should go to formal school according to the law of compulsory primary education (compulsory primary education law will be discussed in a later part of this section). And according to the general understanding as I discussed earlier with reference to Educationists and the World Bank, NFE is not meant to be the alternative to formal education. However, in practice many children in primary-age in Bangladesh are going to NFPE for different reasons. I will discuss the education system in Bangladesh in the following section.

3.4 Overview of the Primary Education in Bangladesh:

In this section I will discuss the education system in Bangladesh with a focus on primary education. Initially, I will provide an overview of education with a brief

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historical background, and then I will discuss the different approaches of education with regard to formal and non-formal primary education.

Historically, Bangladesh is a country with a low education rate. Being a fertile agricultural base country, most of the people did not bother to look for a job outside the community; therefore, education was not an immediate demand. During the colonial period, only Hindu families, who used to work with the British colonizers and who controlled the economy, businesses, and services, pursued education. After independence from colonial status in 1947 on the basis of religious identity, most of the Hindu families migrated to neighboring India. That made a huge gap in the literacy rate of the country. The overall literacy rate in 1972 was only 17% and in 1995 it was 44.3%. (Bangladesh Development Gateway (2001). The first constitution was developed in 1972 just after independence from Pakistan in December 1971. In that constitution Bangladesh made its vision on education for all. It says "the states shall adopt effective measures for the purpose of relating education to the needs of society and producing properly trained and motivated citizen to serve those needs." The constitution describes the purposes of education in Bangladesh:

- To enable the child to live a full life as a child and to realise his or her potential as a unique individual.
- To enable the child to develop as a social being through living and co-operating with others and so contribute to the good of society.
- To prepare the child for further education and lifelong learning.

The scenario of access to primay education has changed slowly over the last 20 years. Since Bangladesh signed the Jomtien Declaration in 1990 on Education For All, soon after that the government initiate proactive role to introduced compulsory primary education act. The government created the act in 1990 to ensure primary education as compulsory for children from the age of six to ten. The act was reflected in the Fourth Five-Year Plan and onwards. According to the compulsory primary education act:

a. The Government can make primary education compulsory from any date in the area of the country through the notification in the government gazette.

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b. In areas where primary education will be made compulsory, the guardians of all children will, unless excused for the valid reason, enroll their children in primary schools nearest to their residence for primary education.
c. "If the guardian fails to follow the directives [they] will be fined."

Although the government enacted this law in 1990, compulsory education was introduced for first time in 1992 in 68 Thanas' [3] out of 460 Thanas' in the country. Full implementation of this act all over the country was started in 1993. Although the government claims that compulsory primary education was started in 1993, there are wide differences between the rhetoric and the reality. In the year 2000 around 49% of children from the age of 7 onwards were still out of school (Actionaid Bangladesh 2002a). To ensure that the entire population of primary-age children are in school, the Government of Bangladesh encouraged non-formal education along with formal education for primary-age children. So, the primary educational system in Bangladesh is now characterised by the co-existence of two separate streams, one is formal and the other is non-formal. To make a distinction between formal primary education and NFPE, in the following discussion I will use two separate headings for these two streams of primary education system.

Formal Primary Education

Formal education is again divided into three separate systems. The mainstream system is a vernacular-based secular education system carried over from the colonial past. There also exists a separate religious system of education. Finally, a system based on the use of English as the medium of instruction, modelled after the British educational system, using the same curriculum, has rapidly grown in the metropolitan cities of Bangladesh. Therefore, English medium- Bengali medium, Religious-Secular, all together the three types of formal primary level of education institutions are exist in Bangladesh total 76,809 institutions catering to 17.67 million students (Actionaid Bangladesh, 2002a). The formal primary education system, is compulsory for five-years for the 6-10 year age group, imparted mainly in government and non-

[3] Lowest administrative unit

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government primary schools. Both government and private authorities operate formal educational institutes. The different types of formal and informal institutions are:

Government Primary School

Ebtedayee Madrasha (Primary-level institutions, mainly focusing on religious education)

Kindergarten (Instruction in Bengali)

Kindergarten (Instruction in English)

Currently there are 37,709 primary institutions run by the government. (Shomy and Rahman 2002) Besides the government primary education institutions, there are 7,147 of madrashas (religious education institutions), 2,296 kindergarten (Anupam Ahuja 2001) also exist. Kindergartens are using both English and Bengali as the teaching medium. Students from lower-middle class and poor families usually go to government primary institutions and Madrashas. Students belonging to the middle class and rich families go to Bengali medium Kindergarten and English medium schools, respectively. Government run primary schools are free but quality of education is very poor. According to a World Bank study by Greaney, Kandaker and Alam (1998): "a majority of those surveyed in 1992 who had just completed primary school failed to attain a minimal level of basic learning skills needed to function in Bangladeshi society." A USAID study (2002) said:

> Attendance rates, however, are estimated at 60% in government schools with actual attendance likely to be considerably lower. Quality indicators reveal poor retention and low achievement. Standardized tests show that less than 2% of fifth grade students acquired all 27 competencies taught as part of the primary school curriculum. On average, students achieved 16 of the 27 competencies (60%) and tended to do better in subjects requiring recall rather than thinking and reasoning [It should be noted here that the government set total of 53-competency needed to be achieved in primary education]. Corruption is a significant factor that thwarts advancement of the education sector. Parents must frequently pay for textbooks that are supposed to be

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provided by the government at no charge, and many teachers receive payments for extra tutoring to compensate for the low teacher-student contact time.

On the other hand, the quality of private institutions is quite satisfactory, especially, the English medium schools. But access to those institutions is impossible for the poor and for many of even the lower-middle class people because of lack of financial capability. Although 80% of people in the country are living in the villages, there are few private institutions available there. These so-called "good" institutions exist mainly in metropolitan areas.

Madrasa are mostly community supported but in some cases the government subsidizes them. Most of the students in rural areas and from poor families go to these institutions. Quality of education also is very poor in Madrasa, in fact, according to the education watch report 2001, it ranks worst among all the branch of education.

Non-formal primary education in Bangladesh:

In recent years, starting in the mid 1980s, NFPE has been introduced as a second branch of primary education. NFPE gradually became popular among the donor community as an education system for poor. The idea of NFPE comes from non-formal education, which existed in Bangladesh since 1882 as night school for adults according to the report of Sir William Hunter. It was the means of adult education until the 1980s. In the 1980s a number of NGOs began initiating non-formal education programs as an approach to primay education in support of their poverty-alleviation activities. According to Latif (2001), BRAC, a national NGO in Bangladesh, first started NFPE School program in 1985 with 22 schools as a supplementary program to support universal primary education. As a result of the World Conference on Education for All (WCEFA), held in Jomtien, Thailand, several NGOs have identified education as a priority sector for their areas of operation. Many of them have significantly expanded their non-formal education programs over the last few years with assistance from governments and donors who both find the program "cost effective" and suitable for the poor as being an effective tool for quick

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achievement of Education For All (EFA) goals.[4] According to the EFA principle of action to meet the basic learning needs of the society including children, youth and adults, any form of education can be used, either formal or non-formal. EFA states:

> The first step consists in identifying, preferably through an active participatory process involving groups and the community, the traditional learning systems which exist in the society, and the actual demand for Basic Education services, whether expressed in terms of formal schooling or non-formal education programs. Addressing the basic learning needs of all means: early childhood care and development opportunities; relevant, quality primary schooling or equivalent out-of-school education for children; and literacy, basic knowledge and life skills training for youth and adults.

However, though in general EFA allowed both formal and non-formal education to meet basic learning needs, EFA make it clear in other detailed discussions that non-formal education should be used carefully and it is not for all groups of learners. It is only to be used in special circumstances and for special groups of learners. EFA further made it clear:

> Expanding access to Basic Education of satisfactory quality is an effective way to improve equity. Efficiency in Basic Education does not mean providing education at the lowest cost, but rather the most effective use of all resources (human, organizational, and financial) to produce the desired levels of access and of necessary learning achievement.

(Details of EFA have been provided in Appendix C.)

But after the EFA declaration, NFPE became a popular tools ensuring primary education. NGOs and donors claim that the NFPE program is innovative, low-cost and accessible to the poor. It is worth while to mention that NFPE was basically developed for the children "who never went to school or dropped out before completing primary education cycle. Thus this can be an option for children who are too old to enter or go

[4] Achieving EFA goal by 2000, which has now expanded to 2015 is continuing to pressure both governments and donor countries.

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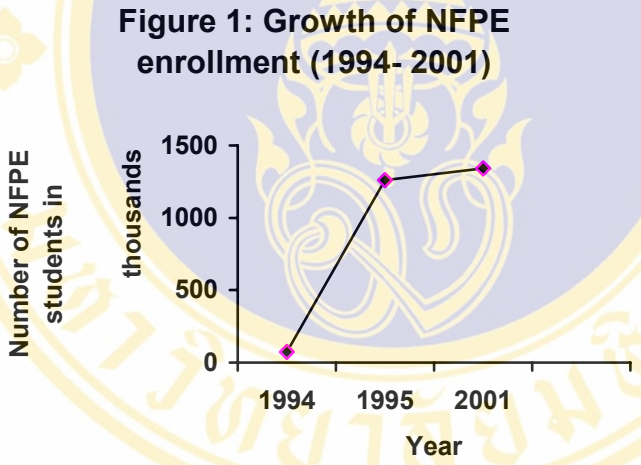
back to primary school" (Sharafuddin A. M. 1998). Although the program was developed as a special case for special needs, in Bangladesh it is becoming one of the dominant approaches for providing primary education for the children even for the primary school-age children who should go to the formal primary school. In 1994 the total number of NFPE schools in Bangladesh was only 2,465 and the number of students enrolled 73,950, within a year this increased to 35,641 centers and 1,259,487 students which means that within one year the NFPE growth was 94%. Currently, more than 400 NGOs are involved in non-formal education programs in Bangladesh where around 1.42 million or 8.5% of primary school age children are enrolled in about 38,288 centers. (Wood, J. et.al. 2002). A graph on NFPE growth is given below:



Source: Sedere, U. and Sabur, Zia. 1999

The NFPE system is innovative because the school does not need chairs or tables, as students sit on the floor, teachers are paid low wages (only US$ 8 – 10 monthly), and teaching time is only two hours per day. The NFPE instructional program is presented in three-year cycles. The school is in session for 2 to 3 hours a day, six days per week at a time of day selected by the parents. The group of 33 pupils is enrolled at the beginning of the program and advances together through the program. At the end of the program, the school begins another three-year cycle if there are enough eligible children in the community. The classroom is provided in one-room

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premises rented for just three hours per day. These rooms generally have bamboo and mud walls, an earthen floor, a tin roof, and a blackboard. The children sit on the floor on bamboo mats, holding their slate boards on their knees. The teacher has a stool and a metal trunk that serves as a desk as well as a supply cabinet (Sharafuddin 1998). Profile of two NFPE schools, one from Rural and other from Urban is given in Appendix D.

The schools (called NFPE centers) are run by NGOs on a contract basis. Usually an NGO gets contract of implementing non-formal education from the government or from the donor for three years, since the NFPE is three-year cycle. BRAC is the biggest implementor of NFPE in Bangladesh and is currently implementing 34,000 NFPE schools by its own and another 3,000 school through sub-contracting (partnerships with other smaller NGOs).[5]

Government Policies on non-formal primary education in Bangladesh

In this section I am going to discuss government policies and plan for implementing universal primary education and its relations with Non-formal primary education. My discussion will mainly focus on government five-year plans, and the recently developed National Plan of Action for Education for All (2001-2020) which is the driving documents of governments to implement educational programs. In the later part I will also briefly discuss the law for compulsory primary education in Bangladesh.

Since the independence of Bangladesh in 1971, the government has produced a total of six educational plans, and each of the plans was for a five-year term except the second one, which was for only a two-year term. In addition, numbers of educational policy reform commissions and primary education laws were formed. Those are mainly:

- Primary Education Laws (repeal) Ordinance, 1973
- The Primary School (Taking Over) Act 1974
- The Primary Education Act 1981

Interview, Ms. Iram, Sr. Executive of BRAC on May 05, 2003

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- The Compulsory Primary Education Act, 1990
- The Qudat-e-khuda Education Commission, 1974
- The Mofizuddin Ahmed Education Commission, 1988
- Task force on Primary and Mass education, 1993

The first five-year plan (1973-78) emphasized the increase in enrollment through increasing government primary education schools. The second plan was for only two years, 1978-80. This plan also continued emphasis on increasing enrollment. In this period, large number of private primary schools were taken over by the government. In the third plan which is known as the Second Five-Year Plan (1980-85) introduced universal primary education with particular emphasis on development of cognitive skills. This was the first time non-formal education was introduced in this policy. In the planning document the government said that "Primary Education will be supplemented by a country-wide program of mass education" which includes non-formal primary education and non-formal adult and youth literacy program.

The Third Five-Year Plan (1985 –90) said that the top-most priority would be given to the introduction of universal primary education by 1985. One of the major policy issues was that "there is an increasing demand for nationalization of non-government educational institutions. This put an additional burden on the government budget. It ran counter to the government policy of increasing community participation and helped to widen the gap in educational expenditures between governmental and non-governmental institutions. As such, consideration will be given as to whether the policy of Nationalization should be continued."(The Third Five -Year Plan 1985- 90)

In the Fourth Five-Year Plan (1990-95) non-formal education was heavily emphasized. It states, "Non-formal education program has to be an important component of the Fourth Five-Year plan." The plan also said that non-formal primary education will be introduced for the "primary-age group children who could not participate in the formal primary education or dropped out"

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During this period (in 1993), a Task force on Primary and Mass Education was set up by the Bangladesh Planning Commission. The commission strongly recommended:

- No further primary schools be nationalized
- Local community should take the responsibility of primary and mass education institutions as historically these types of institutions were set up and run by the local community.
- Enlarge the non-formal education sector. The task force said, "A considerable larger program has to be taken for catering to the need for non-formal primary education".

Education policy under the Fifth Five-Year Plan (1997 –2002) mainly described the implementation on non-formal primary education. The Fifth Five-Year Plan refers to the expansion of non-formal education and the involvement of other agencies, NGOs and private organizations. It said:

> There will be a multi-directional approach to combat illiteracy. Non-formal education will be expanded along with strengthening the Government Mass Literacy Centers, mobilizing NGOs and utilizing the skill development/income generating efforts of the agencies outside of the Ministry of Education. NGO and private organizations will be involved in a bigger way for the improvement of primary education.

In this plan the government further stated "Bangladesh has a strong national commitment to education with the state having "a Constitutional obligation of providing basic Education to all its citizens by removing illiteracy within a given timeframe". The Government has further committed itself to attaining total literacy by the year 2006. This commitment has been strengthened through the Government of Bangladesh's engagement in a number of international declarations. The World Conference on Education for All (Jomtien, 1990) commits the Government to the overall objectives of achieving the goal of 'Education for All' (EFA).

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In this plan (Fifth Five-Year Plan) the government recognizes non-formal education as a parallel system of primary education. The plan says:

> Primary education is delivered through two parallel systems, the formal and the non-formal. Because of the high level of national commitment, the government has recorded outstanding progress in education especially in primary and non-formal education. The government of Bangladesh is running 5 NFE projects through the Directorate of Non-Formal Education.

To the Government of Bangladesh basic education means five years primary education (National Plan of Action 2001 –2002). The government clearly distinguishes between basic education and literacy programs, literacy programs through the non-formal approach is for a limited timeframe, generally nine to twelve months. Whereas basic education is for five years primary education. However, theoretically there is a difference between primary education and basic education as Muller (1981) defined. But the Bangladesh Government uses 'basic' in two different ways. When it says basic literacy, it means the short-term literacy course for youth and adults. But when it says basic education it means primary education which is generally for five years (NPA II). So in this policy discussion we will read basic education as primary education whatever it is formal or non-formal.

From the third to the fifth five-year plans the government gradually encouraged non-formal primary education as a means of achieving primary education. In the third five-year plan the government discouraged further investment in building government schools but encouraged non-government institutions to participate in the education program. In the Forth Five-Year Plan the government clearly declared NFPE important component for primary education and in the Fifth Five-Year Plan this position of government strengthened by allowing NGOs to be more involved in NFPE. The results of that are as I showed in the figures provided in the earlier discussion that in 1994 where only 110 NGOs operated only 2,465 NFPE schools in 2001 the figure increased significantly which is 418 NGOs operating 38,288 NFPE schools where 1.4 million student are studying which is about 8.5% of the total primary school enrollment (Sedere 1999, Wood, J. et.al., 2002). Although the current enrollment in

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NFPE is 8.5% of total primary enrollment, the government's target was much higher than the actual figure. According to the NPA II, the non-formal primary education target population (age 6-14) for the year 2000 was 12.83 millions. The NPA II target is that by 2005, 15% of total primary enrollment will be covered by NFPE which will be increased to 20% in 2010. (NPA II, 2001). However, the concern is that if NFPE fails to provide quality education or children could not continue further education and dropped from the education in absence of a proper design of the link with formal education, it would be an unrecoverable loss to the country and to human resources in the global world.

Although the Government of Bangladesh introduced a compulsory primary education law in 1990, the above five-year plans seem contradictory to the concept of compulsory education with the policy of encouraging NFPE, because according to the compulsory primary education act all the primary-age children should be in the formal primary education and any deviation from this is a punishable offence. But when the government encourages NFPE, which is theoretically developed for un-enrolled children, this seems contradictory.

3.5 Right to Education

Primary education is a right not an opportunity or privilege. The right to primary education is fundamental in nature. This makes it an end in itself - in addition to being instrumental in achieving other goals. The concept of education as a human right antedates considerably that of education as economically or socially useful. The right to education straddles the division of human rights into the civil and the political, on one hand, and the economic, social and cultural on the other hand, thereby affirming the conceptual universality of human rights. Both the right to education and rights in education thus ought to be recognized and protected. Education has been acknowledged as a right since the first human rights declaration, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the most universally accepted human rights treaty in history, affirms it. This is evident in the tenor of the provisions in which the right to education is found in human rights treaties. According to those treaties the right to education is thus stated:

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> a) Primary education shall be free and compulsory for all; b) Secondary education shall be available and accessible to all; in addition, free education and financial assistance in case of need shall be introduced progressively; c) Higher education shall be accessible to all on the basis of capacity; free education shall be introduced progressively; d) Fundamental [basic] education shall be intensified for those not having completed primary education; e) Programs of special education should be established for the handicapped; and f) Elimination of ignorance and literacy. (Nowak 1995 p.256)

There are four principle international legal instruments elaborating the right to education: a) The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), article 26. b) The UNESCO Convention Against Discrimination in Education (1960), articles 4 and 5. c) The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966), article 13. d) The Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), articles 28 and 29. In addition, the UN Declaration on the Right to Development (1986) affirms in its article 8, an emphasis on access to education with equal opportunity.

The provisions in these documents consistently affirm the right of everyone to receive an education - free in its elementary and fundamental stages and compulsory for children. Article 28 (1) of Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) recognizes the right of the child to education with a view to achieving this right progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity. They shall, in particular, make primary education compulsory and available free to all; Article 26 of UDHR ensures right to education free, at least, in the elementary and fundamental stage and it should be compulsory. Article 13(2) of the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights recognize that primary education shall be compulsory and available free to all.

Besides the international obligation, the Constitution of Bangladesh also ensures free, uniform, compulsory, and universal system of education. Article 17 of the constitution says:

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The State shall adopt effective measures for the purpose of:

(a) 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;

(b) Relating education to the needs of society and producing properly trained and motivated citizens to serve those needs;

(c) Removing illiteracy within such time as may be determined by law.

To analyze the right to education I aim to develop a theoretical frame in the following section.

Theoretical framework for right to education

Katarina Tomasevski, the independent expert for the theme "right to education" explains the right to education with respect to the responsibly to the duty holders. She writes, "A consequence of the symmetry of law is that there could be no right to education without corresponding obligations for governments". (Tomasevski, 2001p17) She explains education, as a right which is claimable from the duty holders primarily in three aspects; *right to education*, *right in education* and *right through education*. Tomasevski puts these three dimensions of rights to education in a "4-A scheme" which is **A**vailability, **A**ccessibility, **A**cceptability and **A**daptability. She finds that these all are individual components and at the same time interrelated with each other. In the following discussion I aim to provide a framework on the right to education by adapting the Tomasevski's 4A's scheme. I adapt the framework I including one major component, which is the outcome of education. Outcome includes in this discourse, mainly two parts, prospects to continuing education and improvement of the quality of life.

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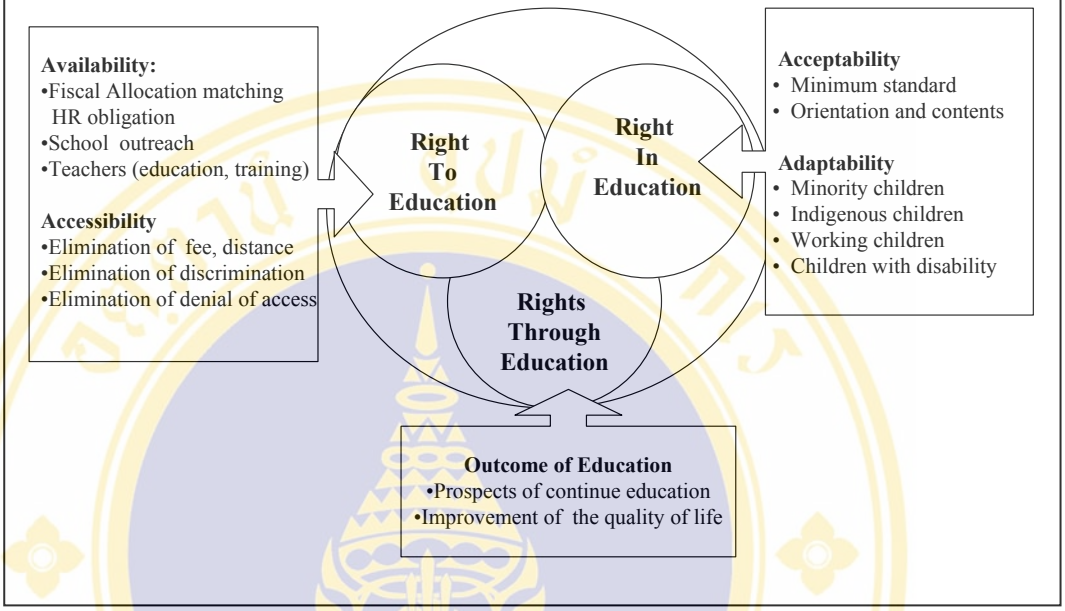
Figure 2: Components of the of the Right to Education and the Responsibilities of Governments with Respect to Primary Education



Source: Adapted from the 4As scheme of Tomaseveski (2001)

The above framework illustrates three dimensions of education right, Right to Education, Rights in Education and Rights through Education. In the following discussion I will provide the details of each of these dimensions of education rights.

Right to Education

Right to Education means as Tomasevski and ECOSOC general comments 13/1999 describes, the preconditions of accessing education for all, which are the obligations of the state to ensure. Both sources describe these preconditions under two broad headings: availability and accessibility. Both components are fundamental to ensure education for all. Details on these are as follows;

a) **Availability**

Availability is in respect of a government's duty to make education available to children. According to the Tomasevski, availability will be in terms of number of schools, quality of education, necessary funding to maintain both quality and quantity.

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Availability of schools:

Government's first obligation is to provide education by making school available for all school-age children. In Bangladesh, primary education for children (age 6 to 11) is compulsory. That means the government has a corresponding duty to make school available to the children. According to the General Comments 11/1999 of ECOSOC on article 14 of CESCR, the meaning of compulsory stresses the elements of compulsion that serve to highlight the fact that neither parents, nor guardians, nor the State are entitled to treat as optional the decision as to whether the child should have access to primary education. However, when we talk about the availability of schools it is the full responsibility of the state to make them available to children. Making school available is not only making available schools but some how, "it should be emphasized, however, that the education offered must be adequate in quality, relevant to the child and must promote the realization of the child's other rights" (Circle of Rights 2000, p 313). General comments by ECOSOC on article 13(2) of CESCR clarify the availability issue:

> "[Availability of education means] functioning education institutions and programs have to be available in sufficient quantity within the jurisdiction of the State party. What they require to functions depends upon numerous factors, including the development context within which they operate; for example, all institutions and programs are likely to require buildings or other protections from the elements, sanitation facilities for both sexes, safe drinking water, trained teachers on domestically competitive salaries, teaching materials, and so on…"

I will discuss about other aspects of availability in the paragraphs that follow.

Fiscal allocation matching human rights obligation:

Availability of education includes elimination of all obstacles ensuring free and compulsory primary education to all such as ensuring the necessary budget allocation. Tomasevski pointed out this issue as "fiscal allocation matching human rights

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obligation". This also includes the equitable distribution of resources for primary education. There is one general tendency of government in that lesser amounts of resources have usually been allocated for the education of the poor. If we look at the data in Bangladesh, only 20% of the poorest strata where availed of the complete benefits from public primary education spending (Actionaid Bangladesh 2002a). At the same time, it should be examined as to where government is concentrating spending most. According to the human rights obligation public spending should ensure first that primary education is free and compulsory in nature. In Bangladesh, 43.4 million or 31% of the total population is primary-school age. Twenty percent of the total population is in other stages of education (Sedere, 1999). This means that primary-age children are 61% of the total people of education age in the country. But only 41.43% of the total education budget is spent for primary and mass education together (USAID 2002a). The remaining amount is spent for higher education. However, higher education is inevitably costly, but government spending in primary education should be given first priority as free primary education is the right and the government's obligation is to make it accessible to all without discrimination.

Therefore the budget per primary-age child is only Tk.511 or US$8 annually.[6] Inevitably, many children are not covered with this poor fiscal allocation. At the same time to cover the maximum children different types of educational systems exist - for the rich, for the middleclass, and for poor, which creates disparity in educational system.

Availability of qualified teachers and training for teachers

The availability of qualified teachers with adequate educational backgrounds is one of the important human rights obligations of the government. The quality of teachers is an essential element to maintain quality in teaching. The government obligation is to provide qualified teachers with adequate training in primary education. In-service training for teachers also should be available.

[6] Calculation made on the basis of total primary school age children and total amount annually spending for primary education.

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b) Accessibility

The second obligation relates to accessibility. According to the ECOSOC General Comments 13/1999 on article 13(2) of CESCR, accessibility has three overlapping dimensions: non-discrimination, physical accessibility and economic accessibility. According to these comments, at a minimum the government is obligated to ensure the enjoyment of the right to education through guaranteeing access to existing educational institution by all on the basis of equality and non-discrimination. Also accessibility determines the government's obligation to eliminate all forms of obstacles through affirmative actions. The elimination of obstacles in the form of making education free and compulsory for primary school-age children, elimination of all forms of institutional and social barriers for girls in access to education, creating preferential access to those (communities) who were deprived from education for a long time and left behind. Following are the issues addressed in human rights obligation to make access to primary education:

Elimination of fee and distance:

According to the CESCR article 13, primary education should be compulsory and free for all. Article 26.1 of UDHR said that education should be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Article 17 of the Constitution of Bangladesh also ensures free and compulsory education for primary-age students. In the context of Bangladesh, 'private expenditure'[7] is one of the obstacles for the poor to access government primary school. Although there is no fee for primary education, there are other kinds of expenses such as school uniforms, tiffin, occasional fees etc. need to be paid by the parents which makes school inaccessible to poor children. (Education Watch Report, 2001). In these circumstances the only option for poor children is an NGO- run NFPE. (For details, please see paragraph 4.2.1 of Chapter IV). Distance to school is also an important element for making education accessible to children. If there is a great distance to school then it is inaccessible to children. Unavailability of schools is a contributing factor for the distance of schools. According to the Bangladesh National Education Plan of 2001, primary school should be within two

[7] Details on "private expenditure" were discussed in section 4.2.1 in Chapter IV.

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kilometers of the locality. In rural Bangladesh where there is no or poor transport facilities, it is difficult for the children to reach a school that is two-kilometer away from their home.

Elimination of discrimination and denial of access:

Tomasevski writes:

"Access to schools should be guided by non-discrimination, the overriding principle of international human rights law, which applies to civil and political, economic, social and cultural rights, as well as to the rights of the child. Non-discrimination is not subject to progressive realization but has to be secured immediately and fully" (Tomasevski 2001 p.27).

Discrimination can occur in terms of gender, rural-urban, mainstream-minority or poor and rich. To ensure non-discrimination the state needs affirmative action to achieve equal access to educational institution. Equal access encompasses both physical and constructive access (Circle Of Rights 2000 p. 306). As provided in article 10 of CEDAW, governments are obliged to take all appropriate steps towards the "elimination of any stereotyped concepts of the roles of men and women at all levels and in all forms of education." Under this provision, woman, men, girls, and boys have rights to equal access to specific educational institution. Human rights require education to adapt to minorities in a more fundamental way than simply the removal of highly offensive stereotypes from textbooks. Issues such as the language of instruction, inclusion, and the equalization of opportunities require human rights responses. (Wison, Duncan 2002 p.7) Non-discrimination in education requires both choices for separate schools and inclusive education for minorities. Inclusive education needs more care about the equal access and equal treatment to the all student in the school.

Tomasevski emphasizes about the affirmative action of the state for girls education. She states that parents may be unwilling to send their daughters to school because of not finding an economic rationale to invest in their daughters. Tomasevski

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proposes parents' incentives for the education of their daughters, so that parents are inspired to send their daughters to school.

The right to education has affirmed necessity of integrated education for disabled persons. Rule 6 of the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for the Person With Disabilities provides that "State should recognize the principle of equal primary, secondary and tertiary educational opportunities for children, youth and adult with disabilities in integrate settings"[8]

Access in Education with Equity:

In the human rights treaties non-discrimination is a paramount issue. Tomasevski (1995) identified non-discrimination as the overriding human rights principle is the obvious starting point in operationalising the right to education. In a general sense, equity refers to the distribution of income, wealth, position and power in society. Equity in education is particularly important because it has spillover effects on access to schooling and subsequently to jobs and income. It is important because as Nowak (1995:202) points out:

> If governments wish to prevent certain groups from equally participating in the political, social, economic or cultural life in their countries, one of the most efficient methods is to deny them equal access to education or to maintain segregated educational facilities with different educational standards.

There are three determining factors to assessing equity in education; 1) evaluate differences in access to specific level or types of education; 2) compare the distribution of benefits among people with different education; and 3) assess who pays for and who benefits from education (Tan and Mingat 1992). In this thesis, the first two determining factors will be analyzed in Chapter IV to find the equity issues in NFPE. Equity is specially important to analyze the rights issue in education because

[8] Standard Rules On The Equalization Of Opportunities For The Person With Disabilities, Appendixed to 48/96 of 20 December 1993, rule 6 UN Doc.A/48/96 (1993)

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what as Lois Weis says “education plays a crucial role in both offering opportunities for individual social mobility and at the same time legitimating large-scale structural inequalities” (Weis, L., 1992)

So according to Weis it is worthy to scrutinize the education system to determine whether it supports discrimination or is eliminating discrimination.

In article 2 of both UN covenants (CCPR and CESCR) states parties undertake to guarantee all the rights enunciated therein without discrimination of any kind as to race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other social status. In addition, Article 26 of CCPR guarantees a general, that is, non-accessory right to equality before law, equal protection of the law, prohibition of discrimination and protection against discrimination by means of affirmative actions. According to this article, if there is any distinction based on race, sex, social origin, income or any other criteria mentioned above relating to the law and/ or practicing of education (access to education, dismissal, tuition fees, contents and quality of education etc.) it constitutes a violation of article 26 of CCPR. Nowak (1995) point out that government policy for a different system of education for the rich and poor because of lack of resources is a violation of the right to education. He says that the lack of economic resources alone cannot be invoked as a justification of denying equal access to or maintaining a core minimum standard in an education system. The ECOSOC General Comments 13/1999 on the articles 13 of CESCR explains in details the issue of non-discrimination in education in its paragraphs 31 to 37. These General Comments state:

> The prohibition against discrimination enshrined in article 2(2) of the covenant is subject to neither progressive realization nor the availability of resources; it applies fully and immediately to all aspects of education and encompasses all internationally prohibited grounds of discrimination

This General Comment further says in paragraph 35 that sharp disparities in spending policies that result in deferring qualities in education for different groups of

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people residing in different geographical locations, or of different economic and social status may constitute discrimination under the covenant

Rights in Education

This is the second stage of education rights. Once children get into education then education should be acceptable to the children and their parents. Acceptable means that the education should qualify to the minimum standard and that the contents and orientation of education should be acceptable. Furthermore, the rights in education also need to be adaptable to children in any circumstance to ensure the best interest of children. This issue is discussed in detail as follows:

a) Acceptability:

Acceptability is mainly determined by the quality of education. Tomasevski says "the state is obliged to ensure that all schools conform to the minimal criteria which it has developed, thus enduring one component of making education acceptable" (Tomasevski, 2001 p29). This quality must be in terms of as Tomasevski describes "the minimal standards of health and safety, or professional requirements for teachers" (Tomasevski, 2001). One of the government's obligations is setting standards for primary education without any disparities along with supervision and control to ensure that standard. Acceptability also ensures that the orientation and contents of education should attain the requirements of the needs of particular societies and should provide the prospect of continuing education and improving the quality of life. CESCR article 13 (1) states "Education shall be directed to the full development of human personality and the sense of its dignity, and shall strengthen the respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms". This means that the quality of education should ensure the full development of the human personality, sense of dignity and fundamental freedom. Article of 13(3) of CESCR says that State parties should confirm "minimum educational standards as may be laid down or approved by the state". The World Declaration of Education for All (1990) clearly states the quality of primary education. According to this declaration the quality of primary education should ensure the enhancement of survival and development capacity and also should

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enable improvement in the quality of lives. Article 3 of this declaration states, “Basic Education services of quality should be expanded and consistent.” Article 5 says, “Primary education must be universal and ensure that the basic learning needs of all children are satisfied”. Details of the different contents of acceptability are discussed below:

Tomasevski says the orientation and content of education should be “making education responsive to the immediate-need reality facing children in their own community and to the rapidly changing global realities is the challenge of new millennium” (Tomasevski, 2001a p.17). This statement also provides the indication of a minimum standard of primary education. According to this statement primary education not only introduced pupils with the alphabet but rather prepare them for facing reality in the context of globalization. Hence, the human rights obligation is to design curriculum in such a way so that students can prepare themselves to face the reality of daily life.

The language of instruction is another area that needs to be acceptable to every child. Tomasevski writes, “The language of instruction is a frequent bone of contention because it can preclude from attending school or learning.” Especially the minority and tribal children need careful attention to language in orientation in the school. Another important element of acceptability relates to the child-friendly nature of the schools. Convention on the Rights of the Child states, “It is imperative that the education respect the rights of the child to be curious, to ask questions and receive answers, to argue and disagree, to test and make mistakes, to know, to create and be spontaneous.”

b) Adaptability

Adaptability confers the special needs in education or through education. Vulnerable children like children with disabilities, working children, children from minority communities may need special attention and care more than other children. Education may need to be designed differently as per the need of these particular groups of children.

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Generally, what the child learns in school should be determined by his or her future needs as an adult. The Convention on the Rights of the Child states that the best interest of the child be given prominence. Thus the education system should remain adaptable, taking into account the best interest of the child. Tomasevski writes:

"The challenge is immense – the system of education is required to adapt to each individual child against the historical heritage of excluding all the children who were deemed not to be able to adapt to the system of education as it was."

The issue of disability needs special attention for adaptation in the education system. Tomasevski continues, "Children with a disability are often segregated into separate schools or denied education altogether, and also absent from school books". The concept of inclusive education is to be highly prioritized to ensure education for children with a disability. In this context, both the physical and nonphysical structure of the school needs to be adapted.

Education needs to be adapted also for working children. In the countries with high rates of poverty, child labor is obvious. Many children cannot go to school because of their involvement in the work of agriculture or factories. But, at the same time, they have full rights to education. So education should be provided to them through adaptation. Tomasevski states:

"For children who are deprived of their liberty, education ought to be provided where they are and this is unlikely to happen unless children have the right to education. Similarly, many working children cannot attend school and so education has to be provided where they are." (Tomasevski 2001 p. 33)

However, to ensure education for working children adaptation needs to apply to the timing of school, the curriculum, and the contents of education.

Rights Through Education:

This is the third stage of education rights. Once the children get into education and that is acceptable, now the question is what is the outcome of that education to the

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learners. Education in this globalisation era should prepare children to fit in as they battle for life. Hence, outcome is a main issue in education. There should be at least two major outcomes through NFPE; first, prospects to continue primary education and second, improvements in the quality of life.

a) Continue of Education

Primary education is basic and elementary-level education, and compulsory between age 6 to 10 as I discussed in the earlier sections of this chapter, depends on the continuation of further education because the results and outcome of education cannot only be achieved from primary education. As suggested by Dewey, the aims of education are an evolutionary process, so, it is difficult for primary-level children to find his or her aim and way of life unless they continue further education and reach a certain age to decide their path in life. So, one role of primary education is to develop a bridge with the next step of education. One of the goals of primary education in Bangladesh is to prepare the child for further education and lifelong learning. International human rights conventions ensure that the full course of primary education should be compulsory (article 13 of CESCR). NFPE is not a full primary course, because it is for only three years, and hence, an opportunity for continuing education is an important outcome is rarely realized.

b) Improve the quality of Life

Finally, the education should ultimately be able to improve the student's quality of life. Quality of life indicates the adequate food, housing, dignity in life, capacity to equally participate, make children confident to participate. It is necessary to educate children to be confident to participate in all spheres of social and political life. Their poor conditions should be changed, and they should able to break the vicious cycle of poverty. In the human rights treaties the outcomes of education are described specifically. Article 13(1) describes the level of development of children as an outcome of education. It says, "[outcome of education should be] enabling the human being to freely develop his or her personality and dignity, to actively participate in a free society". To freely develop and gain personal dignity some other

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relevant needs to be ensured through the education processes, which are the means of dignity and the quality of life. The quality of life is ensured through adequate food, housing, entertainment opportunities, and quality of participation. Therefore, these components should be achieved through education.

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CHAPTER IV
COMPLIANCE – NFPE AND RIGHT TO EDUCATION

This chapter mainly contains the field findings of the research along with the analysis and discussion of the findings. I have also from time to time referred to my document research in this chapter. The field findings and analysis along with my document research are organized here according to the component of right to education as discussed in Chapter III. The discussion is organized in this chapter chronologically according to the rights to education, rights in education and rights through education. However, at the end of the discussion on these three dimensions of education rights, I brought some additional issues on discrimination among the formal and non-formal primary education.

4.1 Right to Education

Right to education, as I discussed in Chapter III is about government responsibilities to ensure that education is available and accessible to primary-age children without any discrimination. In the following sections, I discuss the state of NFPE with regard to these two important components of the right to education, and I analyze these to understand what the compliance of NFPE is with them.

4.1.1 Availability

Availability is in respect of the government's responsibility to make education available to children. According to the international conventions, as I discussed in Chapter III availability is in terms of numbers of schools, quality of education, and necessary funding to maintain both quality and quantity (Tomasevski 2001). To maintain quality, providing qualified teachers and providing necessary training for teachers are also included in the government's obligations. Availability of education includes elimination of all obstacles to ensure free and compulsory primary education

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to all. Although NFPE is mostly provided for by the NGOs, it is recognized by the government as a supplementary system of primary education, and the government considers the NFPE enrollment adding to the gross enrollment in primary education (National Action Plan 2001). Since the Government recognizes NFPE as primary education, the same rights framework is applicable to analyze the compatibility of right to education with NFPE. The following indicators were used to analyze the availability of the right to education.

Teachers in NFPE

a) Education of teacher:

Education and teacher, these two words are interdependent. Without a teacher education is impossible. So, good education needs good teachers. Teaching ability is not fully spontaneous nor does it develop automatically. Education in this highly competitive era demands of scientific method of teaching. Therefore, teachers need proper education and training. According to the right to education norms, "teachers have to be educated and trained to teach" (Tomasevski, 2001 p.23). The Education Watch Report 2000 found a significant positive relation of the educational qualification of teachers with the learning achievement of the students. The Bangladesh education sector reviewed by USAID includes a comment about the NFPE in Bangladesh. This review report said:

> The most critical weakness of the instructional system in NFPE is teaching. Many teachers have not mastered the subject matter they are teaching, and most have not been well-trained in how to teach. (USAID 2002a)

During the field study, it was found that most of the teachers in rural areas are educated up to the tenth grade (junior school)[1] only. Out of ten teachers surveyed in the rural areas, seven of them studied up to junior school and the remaining three had only a secondary school certificate. In urban areas, out of ten teachers who were surveyed, eight had secondary school certificates and two had higher secondary school certificates. As the quality of the overall educational system in Bangladesh is very

[1] In Bangladesh tenth grade of education is five years of education after primary education.

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poor, study up to junior school or secondary school education is not enough to master the skill of teaching children. According to a study by Greaney, Kandaker and Alam (1998), the vast majority of those who completed 10 years of education had achieved the minimum competency level of primary education. Since the teacher themselves had not achieved the basic competency of primary level, how will they teach the primary level students? So, it has a significant negative impact on the quality of education (This will be further elaborated in the section "quality of education.")

b) Training of teachers:

Professional training of teachers is another important aspect of quality education and education rights. The field study reveals that education in the NFPE approaches limits the availability of training for teachers, since there is no combined effort in training from the government or any private agencies. Most of the NGOs are small in their scope of work and have only 10 to 20 NFPE schools; moreover, NFPE is basically a short-term project for three years or with extension of the project of few more years, it is inevitable that they do not have an adequate setup to train their teachers in NFPE. Most of the teachers in both the rural and urban areas have only 15 days of training. However, this training is also not provided by a professional trainer. In rural areas, the supervisor of the respective NGO provides training to their newly recruited teachers, but the supervisor him/her self is not trained properly. The concerned supervisor also has only 12 days training on NFPE education. In urban areas, the respective NGO when it first started an NFPE program in 1997, they trained their teachers from the BRAC training center. However, this training is also for only twelve days. After that if any new teacher is recruited, the old teachers provide training for the new teachers.[2] Besides formal training in the NFPE program, there is a provision of monthly one-day refresher courses. Although the idea for the refreshers course is that they will discuss the pedagogical issues of NFPE such as teaching method, contextual issues of education, individual needs of children, in reality, they discuss the logistical issues of the program which is basically management issues of

[2] Interview with Saifuddin Ahmed, Coordinator for Education program, Ghashful, Chittagong.

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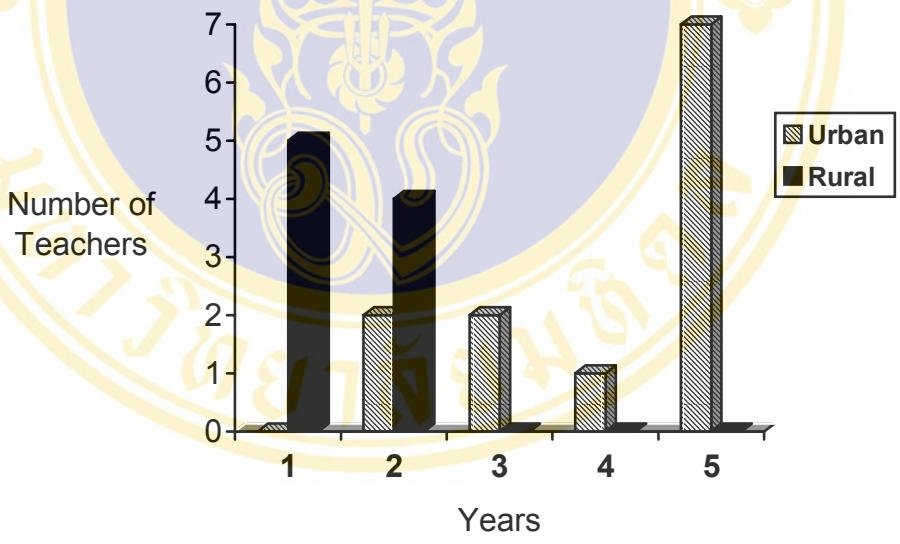
NFPE School, school materials, problems/conflicts with the community.[3] Hence the scope of development of teachers capacity and to strengthen the NFPE is not in place.

c) Length of experience of teachers:

A long length of experience of teachers in any education program has positive effects on the quality of education. (Education Watch Report, 2000). Since the NFPE is usually a short-term project of the NGOs, teachers are not experienced that much. The following graph shows the years of experience of the teachers in urban and rural NFPE.

Figure 3: Length of experience of teachers in urban and rural NFPE schools survayed



The graph shows that, in surveyed areas, most of the teachers in rural areas have 1 to 2 years experience and in urban areas, most of the teachers have five years experience. The average teaching experience of the teachers combined, both in rural and urban areas, is 2.2 years. In rural areas the highest length of experience found was two years and lowest was one year. In urban areas, the highest experience found was

[3] Interview with NGO Officialss

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five years and the lowest two years. Although it was found in this study that urban-area teachers' experience is significantly high, this is exceptional because of the project nature of the particular NGO surveyed in the urban area. This NGO has a unique facility in terms of a donor who is committed to work with them for twelve years and provides a good salary to the staff including NFPE teachers and that helps to sustain the teachers in the NFPE for a longer time. But according to the NGO officials Arifur Rahman, most of the teachers in urban settings are sustained with an NFPE program for a maximum of three years.[4]

As I discussed earlier, that lack of experience in teaching has a negative effect on the quality of education. Since the NFPE is ideally a flexible education program, rather strictly following textbooks, it needs qualified teachers with experience so that they can make NFPE meaningful to the student.

In response to the cause of unavailability of experienced teacher, the NGO officials who were interviewed said that as an NFPE is a short-term project to the NGOs, only for three years and the salary of the teacher is very poor, it is difficult to find experienced teacher for the NFPE School. Because of the poor salary no one wants to develop his or her career in NFPE teaching. In most of the cases young girls work as NFPE teacher; they have some level of education, which is mostly up to the eighth or tenth grades. After their marriage, they leave the job and become fulltime housewives. The NGO officials find the length of experience as one of the obstacles for NFPE in providing quality education.

d) Gender issues in appointing NFPE teachers:

Most of the teachers in both rural and urban NFPE program are female. Out of 20 teachers who were surveyed during the field study, only one was male. Although the general idea is that female teachers are well-suited to teach young children, in this case the reason for recruiting females is that females in both cases are available for this low paid career. Tomasevski (2001) noted with a reference to the United Nations study that "women forming majority of the teachers in primary school as the idea that women are well-suited to teach young children, the fact that teaching offers an outlet to women to whom many other careers remain closed, and the fact that men are

[4] Interview of Mr. Arifur Rahman, Chief Executive of YPSA on 7th April in Chittagong.

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attracted towards better-paid profession[5].” However, this is a strength of the NFPE program having a majority of female teachers but at the same time it is weakness in that the female teachers are not coming to this profession out of their interest in the teaching profession and with intention to develop their career in the teaching field but rather, as I discussed previously, that they have limited scope to choose a profession. This factor is an obstacle for the development of professionalism, and lack of professionalism among teachers affects the quality of NFPE.

e) Salary of the teacher:

The salary of the NFPE teachers is very low. Average salary in both rural and urban areas surveyed is Tk.700 only. In rural areas the teacher’s salary is Tk.600 whereas in urban areas it is only Tk.800. Compare this to the government monthly minimum wage, i.e. Tk.2,150, an NFPE teacher’s salary is very low. Low salary affects the quality of teaching in many ways. According to the interviews with NGO officials, who said that because of low salary, recruitment and retention of qualified teacher is impossible. Teacher’s dropout rate is very high in the NFPE program. In rural areas where I surveyed, 100% the teachers in first phase of NFPE project (1998 to 2000) dropped out. All these factors impede the quality of education.

Availability is an important indicator to qualify the right to education. But according to the above discussion, the NFPE schools that I studied did not comply with this indicator of the right to education.

4.1.2 Accessibility

Accessibility determines the government’s obligation to eliminate all forms of obstacles through affirmative actions. The elimination of obstacles includes the making of education free and compulsory for primary school-age children, the elimination of all forms of institutional and social barriers for girls in access to education, and giving preferential access to those (communities) who were deprived from of education for a long time and left behind. In the context of Bangladesh one of

[5] United Nations- study of Discrimination in Education by Charles Ammoun, Special Rapporteur of the Sub-commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, U.N. doc. E/CN.4?Sub.2/181/rev. 1, sales No. 1957.XIV.3, New York, August 1957, p.43.

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the obstacles for the poor in access in government primary school is money. Although there is no fee for primary education, there are other kinds of expenses such as school uniforms, tiffeen, occasional fees etc. that are need to be paid from the parents which makes it inaccessible to poor children. The following discussion is on the specific indicators of accessibility:

Elimination of fee and distance:

One of the important elements of education rights in making accessibility in education for children is the eliminating of fee and distance. According to the ICESCR article 13, primary education should be compulsory and free for all. Article 26.1 of UDHR said that education should be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Article 17 of the Constitution of Bangladesh also ensures free and compulsory education for primary-age students. As claimed by the NGOs, non-formal primary education is fully free; there is no tuition fee or any other charges. But Education Watch Report 2001 said that, on an average, Tk.290 had to be spent by the guardians per student per year in NFPE. However, compare this to the other school types such as government primary schools or private school, and private expenditure for NFPE is still low. Per student per year private expenditure in government primary school and private schools are Tk.614 and Tk.484 respectively. These private expenditures include stationeries, private tutors, school uniforms and transportation cost. (Education Watch Report 2001 p.38).

According to the field study, although guardians had to spend some money for their children, they are still happy with NFPE schools in terms of expenditure. They said that, in NFPE school, the tuition fee is free and along with that books and stationeries are also free of cost.

Distance to schools is one of the elements, which makes school inaccessible for children. According to the approach of NFPE, the NGOs first target in the community is to provide education and then establish a school close to that community. (M. Sharafuddin 1998 p. 3): The field survey reveals that most of the NFPE schools are established within a half kilometer of the residence of the students. This is one of the positive aspects of NFPE.

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Elimination of discrimination and denial of access:

Tomasevski wrote:

> Access to schools should be guided by non-discrimination, the overriding principle of international human rights law, which applies to civil and political, economic, social and cultural rights, as well as to the rights of the child. Non-discrimination is not subject to progressive realization but has to be secured immediately and fully" (Tomasevski 2001 p.27)

Discrimination in access education was looked at this study in terms of gender, minority, rural-urban division and socio-economic classes. Different types of discrimination are discussed below:

NFPE and gender:

The field study found that NFPE schools in rural areas 52% were girls and 48% were boys while NFPE schools in urban areas 60% were girls and 40% were boys. According to BRAC[6] 70% of its NFPE students are girls (Jalaluddin et.al. 1997). Since the boys share in overall primary enrollment in the country is still higher than girls, NGOs strategically decided to enrolled more girls in the NFPE to create gender balance in the primary enrollment. So, apparently there is no gender discrimination in accessing to the NFPE.

NFPE and minorities:

The survey in the urban minority community found that NFPE is the only school where they have access. Most of the parents of the NFPE students expressed the opinion that if the NFPE School was not available, their children might never have had access to education, though it is only for three years[7]. As discussed in section 4.1 the minority community in the Chittagong urban area is stigmatized as they are from an untouchable community called *methor* (sweeper). Although there is no official policy that children of sweepers will not be allowed in to formal education at institutions, nevertheless, this is a long-term cultural practice that schools do not

[6] BRAC is the single largest NFPE provider in the country covering 6.5% of total primary education student through its NFPE.

[7] Interview with family members of the NFPE graduates in the Sweeper colony in Chittagong City.

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accept these children[8]. Interviews with the family members of the NFPE graduates from the minority community reveals that they tried to gain admission to formal school but the school authorities refused to accept them. The guardians of the minority children said that school authorities did not directly refuse them by giving the cause that they are but sweepers rather with the cause of unavailability of sits in the class. But those guardians believe that they have been refused because of their sweeper status. Ramesh Das, father of Munna, the NFPE graduate in the sweeper colony said:

> I went the nearby government primary school for admission of Munna after his graduation from NFPE. But the Headmaster told me that sits are not available in class four. I asked him to take my son even in the junior class, but he refused to take my son in any class. He did not say that we are sweepers and that is why he is refusing, but we know that is why he refused. We have experiences throughout our whole life is to be refused from spheres of everything society offers.

It is true that formal schools have a lack of sits to accommodate at NFPE graduate in the middle of the course. However, it also true that, as I discussed in section 4.3.1, some NFPE graduates who are from the rural society or urban slums get admission but none of the children from the sweeper community get admission in formal schools. The NGO officials Saifuddin said that they also tried on behalf of sweeper community to gain them access to the formal primary education, but they failed. School authorities unofficially informed them that since it is not socially accepted that children of the sweepers and children from the majority Muslim community will sit together, they do not want make any chaos in the society on this issue.

However, in the above discussion it observed that NFPE graduates from minority community could not continue their primary education through enrolling in formal primary school but they have easy access to the NFPE School, in fact NFPE is the only options for them. Other areas of this indicator (accessibility), NFPE found complies with the right to education.

[8] Interview with NGO Officials of Ghashful.

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4.2 Rights in Education

4.2.1 Acceptability

Tomasevski wrote, “One important facet of the acceptabiliy of education thus urging governments to ensure that education which is available and accessible is of good quality.” (Tomasevski 2001 p.13). In this section I aim to provide my field findings on acceptability of NFPE, which I will examine through the indicators, that I discussed in Chapter III.

Minimum standard

The minimum standard of primary education will be discussed in respect to physical facilities. As Tomasevaki (2001) describes quality should be maintained in terms of, “the minimal standards of health and safety, or professional requirements for teachers.”

Classroom situation:

NFPE schools consist of one room in both rural and urban areas. “One-room education center” is a model for NFPE. Usually NGOs rent a one-room house on a yearly basis. According to the field observation, most of the NFPE centers’ size is around 200 sq.ft. but it depends on whether it is rural or urban. In urban areas NFPE centers are comparatively smaller than in rural areas. Thirty students have to sit in this one room. The children usually sit in a U shape, shoulder to shoulder and with their backs against the wall. In rural areas schools are mostly contracted of tin roof with thatch walls and a mud floor. They have one door and one or two windows. Students have to sit on the floor covered by a jute mat. There is no chair or table in the classroom. There is no separate seating arrangement for the teachers. Since there is no fan and poor ventilation, classrooms usually become suffocating for the students especially in the summer. A few schools have an open space in front of it, and the children can play there, but most of schools do not have that. No schools have their own toilet or drinking facility. In rural areas the children use the open place to defecate and use a near by neighbor’s tube-well for drinking water, if available. But there is no place for girls to defecate.

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In urban areas, classrooms are more congested. There is no open space in front of schools where children can play. Most of the schools have tin roof with a brick or tin wall with poor ventilation, which makes heat and suffocating for the students. Most of the urban schools have a fan but it not sufficient enough to bring comfort to the students.

My field study reveals that students are not happy with the classroom conditions. The seating arrangement causes the most discomfort for them. Most of the students complain that sometimes their blood circulation is disrupted as they sit on floor for two and half hours. They expect that as formal schools they should have a table and chair for sitting on. Urban students are unhappy because of the lack of a playing ground and suffocating atmosphere in the classroom. This has to affect the learning environment since the children are not happy and comfortable in the classroom.

The blackboard, chalk and blackboard eraser are the main teaching equipments for teachers. Each of the teachers gets one diary for each year to prepare lessons plans.

Many evaluation reports mentioned that the uniqueness of NFPE is its low cost; children sit on the floor nicely in a U shape, and they do need table and chair. But my field findings reveal that this arrangement is not beneficial to them at all. Rather the NFPE student feels humiliated to sit on the floor without a table and chair. Their NFPE school has a poor hut for a building and poor equipment. When they compare it with formal schools arrangement where the school is a building, student have has chair and table, and there is an electric fan for cooling the room. Zakir, a NFPE graduate in the Chittagong urban area despairs that “our school was so poor whereas the government school has everything”. Other Graduates of NFPE in both rural and urban also have the same feelings as found during the field study. Tomasevski said:

> The emergence of children themselves as actors vindicating their right to education and rights in education promises to endow the notion of acceptability with their vision of how their rights should be interpreted and applied. (Tomasevski 2001 p. 15)

The children of the NFPE schools are from poor families and they do not have any other option for education except NFPE. From the interview it is vividly that

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although they do not such as the poor arrangements of their school, they are compelled to accept it, as there is no other choice for them. However, the poor facilities in the school and classroom ultimately affected their interest in learning as well as the quality of education overall.

Orientation and content:

NFPE source materials are developed in accordance with the aim and vision of national education programs (Education Watch Report 2000). This says that the contents of the books developed are based on age, physical capability, and mental maturity of the children, changing conditions in the society, the demands for the future, the existing physical facilities in schools, and the preparation of the teachers for the school level. Source material has been developed to orient student in the following areas:

- To develop morally
- To know and love the country
- To show respect to all, irrespective of their sex, financial status, occupation and lifestyle
- To be aware of one's own duty and responsibility to the family and society
- To realize the importance of building up a healthy body for living a healthy life
- To know and realize the importance of nutritious food and to develop the habit of eating such food.
- To develop reading and writing ability in Bangla and English.
- To apply the simple methods of computing/calculating in solving day-to-day problems.
- To think independently and to develop the ability to express ones own opinions.
- To know and understand through observation and inquire about the immediate natural and social environment.
- To be responsible to protect nature
- To know about the people in the country as well as those in neighboring countries.

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The above lists are the main contents of the NFPE source materials.[9] There are four major books to orient the above-mentioned competencies - Bengali, English, Mathematics and Environmental Studies.

Most of the books covered health and gender issues fairly well. All the issues discussed in the books fully focused on the rural context. The context of urban and other minority areas such as hill areas where nature and peoples life differently is fully absent in the source materials. The mainstream rural environment is unknown to the urban slum children and the hill tribes. Moreover, in Bangladesh where different religious communities such as *Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist and Christian* stay together, maintaining religious harmony in the society is important, and this is also absent from the NFPE books.

As discussed in the section 4.1.3 and in Chapter II the urban minority community is identified as minority in four different ways - religious minority, occupational minority, ethnic minority, and language minority. These four dimensions of social exclusion relate to their oppressed being and why they loose their freedoms. Their most evident lack in of freedom is freedom to choose their occupation and freedom to participate. This community is not allowed to participate in any sphere of the economic, social or cultural arena within mainstream society, and lack of these two freedoms it creates a cycle of oppression. To break the cycle of this oppression this community needs systematic efforts and that should start with the education of their children. But, the way this community is provided NFPE is the same as to the mainstream community whether it is urban or rural. Paulo Freire identified this type of education as a guideline or prescription of the oppressor. He said:

> One of the basic relationships between oppressor and oppressed is prescription. Every prescription presents the imposition of one man's choice upon another, transferring the consciousness of the man prescribed behavior, following as it does the guidelines of the oppressed. Thus, the behavior of the oppressed is a prescribed behavior, following as it does the guidelines of the oppressor. (Freire, Paulo 1974 p.31)

[9] There is no agreed competency list for the NFPE model. The competency list cited has been drawn of by the researcher with the help of NGO officials who were interviewed during the field study. These competencies were developed through analysis of the NFPE source materials developed by BRAC.

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The common orientation and contents of source materials of NFPE makes education irrelevant and purposeless to the children of the minority community. According to the interview with the NGO officials of Ghashful provides education to children of this sweeper community said that they are following the BRAC guidelines and materials or government primary education materials for teaching and orientating the children which the common to everyone. Except that this approach does not provide any orientation helps student to understand their deprivation and find way out of deprivation.

The other problem in NFPE is the curriculum and its equivalence with formal education. It is expected that after graduating from NFPE, children will able to enroll in the formal school, hence the equivalence of its curriculum is important in both recognition and also to allow the children to cope in formal school. But the NFPE curriculum is not developed in line with the curriculum of formal education. The National Plan of Action 2001, states:

> The curriculum/syllabus and learning materials of NFPE have not been standardized. DNFE and large NGOs have their respective curriculum/syllabus and materials, providing a number of variations. Since no recognized authority has validated the different versions of NFPE syllabus and materials the questions of their quality and comparability remains unresolved. Hence it prevents establishing an acceptable equivalence in the level of competency achieved by the learners of different NGOs with formal primary education. Their respective values in the market place remain uncertain. With some distinct exceptions the quality of NFPE has suffered.

In the National Plan of Action For Education (2001 to 2020) documents there seems to be a realization of the reality of problems that exist in NFPE. In section 4.3.1 of this chapter, I discuss details, on the basis of field findings, how the lack of equivalence in the curriculum of NFPE with formal primary education results the sufferings of children who graduated from NFPE in regards to recognition and lack of opportunity to enroll in or to cope with formal education.

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Teaching method:

Although NFPE source book is fairly rich in terms of its contents and orientation, the method of teaching still forces students to memorize all the contents of the books. An Actionaid study found that:

> As the teachers learn the traditional memorization and reading teaching method through her/his training, she/he imparts the same methods onto the students by making them repeat the same lessons again and again (Actionaid Bangladesh 2003).

Paulo Freire (1974) defines this education as the *Banking approach* of education. The teacher-student relationship is fundamentally a *narrative* form or character of education. He said:

> The outstanding characteristic of this narrative education, then, is the sonority of words, not their transforming power. Four times four is sixteen; the capital of *Para* is *Belem*. The student records, memorizes, and repeats these phrases without perceiving what four times four really means.

During the field observations of this research the same thing was found in the NFPE classes. Teachers even do not have any idea what he/she is teaching. During observation in a NFPE class it was found that the teacher talked about the *Maldives* from the textbooks. When the students wanted to know more about the *Maldives*. The teacher asked them to memorize only what he was saying.

The NGO officials discussed that as the teachers are not that much qualified and do not have adequate training, creating a discussion on the source book with the students is sometimes difficult for them. So, what the teachers do, is that they just read out from the book and ask students to memorize the text sometime without understanding the meaning of the text. These are the results. During the discussion with NFPE graduates who graduated two or three years before, I asked the students about the contents of their study. They could only remember the subject broadly, not the details of the contents. This teaching methodology is neither helping students to become confident on about their knowledge nor does their analyzing capacity set developed.

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Quality of education:

Education Watch Report (2000) claims that Bangladesh has made commendable progress in recent years on various indicators of primary education such as an increase in enrollment rates, attendance rate, gender gap reduction etc., but it also said that "mere improvements in the quantitative goal of EFA assumes a minimum level of quality in education." This report also said that 6% of the students in NFPE achieved the 27 competencies out of 53 competencies needed to achieve, according to the primary education standards set by the government. It also noted that students did better in those competencies, which depends on recall and did not involve much thinking or reasoning (Education Watch Report 2000). Wood, J. et.al. wrote:

> "for most of the children, the opportunities to continue their education, once they have completed the available non-formal schooling, are extremely limited, because they still lack the necessary qualification [to get admission in to grade four in formal primary school]".

This is same view of the SIDA study in 1999 and the view of the NGO officials as I provided in section 4.3.1 in this chapter.

The quality of education is the result an integrated effort. This effort is dependent on the quality of teachers, quality in the teaching methodology, quality in the contents and orientation. According to the previous discussion on these issues it vividly clear that these are lacking in the areas of NFPE studied. Moreover, since NGOs are implementing NFPE through a contact or sub-contract basis (I discuss this issue in detail in Chapter III), a good quality of education in most of the cases may not be attained because all these contracts are short-term. The NGO officials who were interviewed during the study explained that for most of the cases, before development of expertise in NFPE and development of the infrastructure, projects closed so that maintaining the quality in NFPE was not always possible.

Equivalence of NFPE with formal education:

Equivalence issues were found to be one of the most important factors for acceptability of NFPE. Though the government tends to use the enrollment in NFPE as

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enrollment figures for primary school, but in a practical sense NFPE is not equivalent to the formal primary school. There are difference in curriculum, teaching and learning materials, school hours, and length of course. There is no national-level coordination or systemizations of materials developed of by the programs run by various agencies. NPA II of the Government of Bangladesh agreed that the lack of equivalence of NFPE with formal education is a problem. It that:

> Since no recognized authority has validated the different versions of NFPE materials, the question of their quality and compatibility remains unresolved. Hence, it prevents establishing an acceptable equivalence in the level of competency achieved by the learner of the different NGOs programs with formal education.

The government also agreed in the NPA II that these lacks of equivalence in the NFPE and formal primary education ultimately affect the quality of education. The NPA II further said that "with some distinct exceptions, the quality of NFPE suffered." it also said that "the absence of an agreed minimum level of quality and requirements leaves the NFPE sub-sector vulnerable, especially the performance of their graduates when they join the formal schools."

Furthermore, a key condition for the success of non-formal education is to ensure equivalency with the formal primary schools. Otherwise, what Chowdhury (1999) found "they tend to be perceived as second-class and rejected by students and parents." This happened with the Rural Education Centers in Burkino Faso where the program had to be abandoned due to its unpopularity with the villagers (Lockheed and Verspoor 1991). This also started happening in Bangladesh. As I discussed in section 4.3.1 in referring to the case of BRAC that around 571,200 NFPE graduates dropped out from formal education between the years 1996 to 1999. This result must have an effect on the parents to choose NFPE for their children. The study of Sederee (1999) said that NFPE graduates are now advising their younger brothers and sisters to go to formal schools rather than go to NFPE. This seems to be a failure of NFPE and therefore the displacement of objectives of NFPE So, the NFPE schools studied, grossly failed in the area of acceptability to comply with the right to education.

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4.2.2 Adaptability:

Adaptability is critical for minority children, indigenous children, working children, and children with disability. One of the challenges for primary education is making school a best-fit environment for children. This environment includes the learning process, the contents of the books, and the physical facility for each individual child even for those who need special arrangements such as the physical impaired. Tomasevski stated:

> The challenge is immense – the system of education is required to adapt to each individual child, against the historical heritage of excluding all the children who were deemed not to be able to adapt to the system of education as it was. (Tomasevski 2001, p.31)

Children's best interest would be the overriding principal for any intervention for the children especially in education. Article 21 of the Convention of the Rights of the Children says, "States Parties that recognize and/or permit the system of adoption shall ensure that the best interests of the child shall be the paramount consideration."

Article 3 of the Convention of the Rights of the Children says, "the best interest of the child shall be a primary consideration in all actions concerning child, whether under taken by public or private social welfare institutions, court of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies."

Taking into account the concept of best interest, education needs to be adapted according to the need of the individual child. Indigenous children need to learn in their own mother tongue; physically handicapped children need special care but are within the mainstream system together with other student not separated, working children need education in their workplace. In this concept, children are not to be adapted to the system rather the system adapts according to the need and interest of the child.

The main principle of non-formal education is flexibility. Latif said, "non-formal education is not confined within the structure like formal education. Although it is operating through principle and laws, its uniqueness is flexibility" (Latif 2001). In the field study it was found that the level of flexibility and

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adaptation capacity was, not used properly. The interviews with the urban minority community, mainstream urban community, and the rural areas reveals that though the context specific to education was needed, there is no difference in curriculum, in school timing and orientation in these three contexts. The curriculum and orientation for the urban minority community identified, as the sweeper community needs a different curriculum and orientation then their counterpart in the rural or the urban mainstream community. Children from this community speak Hindi as their mother tongue where is the school uses Bangla as the teaching medium. Moreover, this community had history of deprivation and humiliation for over hundreds years but there is nothing in their educational process to inspire them to find a way out of their long deprivation. Interview with the families of NFPE graduates reveal that they are without hope that their situation would change in any way. Chameli, the mother of Ravi does not believe that education will change their life. She said:

> What is the need of much education? Ability to read and write is enough for our children. Being a member of the sweeper community our children will not get any job outside their community profession.

All the schools surveyed in the urban areas, started from 8.30 am which also is the time to start for working children to go to the workplace. So automatically the working children are left out of NFPE.

No disabled children were found in the NFPE Schools, which were surveyed in the study. According to the interviews with the NGO officials, they never proactively tried to find disabled children to admit to their school. According to the government statistics in the surveyed areas 10% of the total populations are disabled (Bangladesh population census 2001). But this percentage of disabled is not represented in the NFPE school.

The NGO officials who were interviewed during the field study said that to maintain the standard of education in NFPE, they follow the same system for each school; they do not have the organizational strength or resources to use a variety of approaches for adapting NFPE to the specific needs of children from different circumstances. But they believe that there is no hard and fast rule to implement

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NFPE and flexibility is possible in NFPE. However, for practical reasons flexibility is not in place. Referring to the discussion in earlier paragraphs of this section, the principle of "best interest" of the child is not practically followed in the NFPE. In the name of maintaining "standard" NGOs are not adapting NFPE according to the needs of the children. Although the principle is that the system adapts with the needs of children, yet in the NFPE children are adapting with the system.

Although adaptation capacity could be the strength of NFPE, the NFPE schools studied in this research, found do not use that strength and this because of the NGOs indifference on this issue. Therefore, the NFPE schools do not complies with the indicator "adaptability".

4.3 Rights through education

Without regard to the right through education I aim to discuss here about the outcome of primary education which presumably should be achieved through NFPE.

4.3.1 Outcome of NFPE in Bangladesh

According to the theory of John Dewey the outcome of education is both end and the means of education. Dewey said "every means is a temporary end until we have attained it. Every end becomes a means of carrying activity further as soon as it is achieved" (White 1973:35). If we take into consideration the two outcomes of primary education as prospects for further education and improvement in the quality of life, both are means and ends as well. Primary education's end is basic literacy but at the same time it is a means for further education whereby children would be able to develop their goal of education and quality of life. Quality of life also is an end of education as an outcome but at the same time it is a means to achieving the enjoyment of life. So, these two are important outcomes of education. In the following discussion I aim to discuss my field findings on children as NFPE graduates and how they achieve these two outcomes through their schooling in NFPE.

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Prospects of continuing primary education

Reality of continuing primary education for NFPE graduates:

Since NFPE is a three-year education cycle, therefore, it is mandatory that graduates from NFPE should have access to some other institutions to complete the full five-year primary education cycle as part of their right to free primary education. It is the government's objective to eradicate illiteracy through NFPE, so NFPE should have ability to ensure and complete literacy course. Because literacy does not mean only to know the alphabets rather by the ideas of Paulo Friere, literacy is a process of "conscientization" which involves "reading the world" rather than just reading the "word" (Friere and Macedo 1987). To attain literacy, it is not only important for a child to enroll in school, but it is also necessary to complete a full cycle of primary schooling (Chowdhury 1993). Most of the NGOs in Bangladesh set their objective to mainstreaming NFPE graduates through helping students to gain admission to formal primary school so that they can continue their education[10]. But the field study reveals that this objective was not fulfilled.

Table 1: NFPE graduates status of continuing education by location

Location	Number of NFPE graduates interviewed	Number of NFPE graduates who got access to formal primary schools
Rural	7	2
Urban community	4	0
Urban minority community	5	0
Total	16	2

Table 1 represents the number of NFPE graduates who were interviewed that got access to further education. According to the field study, in the rural areas two students out of seven who were interviewed during the study got access to further education. None from the urban community who were interviewed got a chance for continue education. These findings agree with those of Wood, J. et.al (2002:49) was wrote:

[10] Interviews with NGO officials of NRDS in Noakhali, Ghashful, and YPSA in Chittagong

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> "Most children in the non-formal sector [NFPE] only receive 2-3 years of basic education. Some children do transfer into government schools from BRAC schools. However, for most children, the opportunity to continue their education, once they have completed the available non-formal schooling, are extremely limited."

My field studies found the following causes for why the NFPE graduates could not continue their primary education;

Unavailability of institutions for continuing education:

During interviews with the families of ex-NFPE students, nine out of sixteen said that after graduation from NFPE, they tried for admission of their children in to government primary schools, but they were refused because space in grade 4 or grade 5 for new students was not available. NFPE for children who are out of school and who dropped out from the formal school for various reasons became very popular among the NGO community in 1980s, and the NGOs found that it went well. Some students got a chance to continue their education in formal school. The NFPE sub-system helps to promote universal primary education in the country by playing a role as feeder schools. But now this does not work due to the unavailability of formal education institutions. SIDA's study on "non-formal primary education in Bangladesh" confirms that in the 1980's this worked out well because primary schools were not crowded. However, since compulsory primary education was introduced and implemented in 1992, the primary-school enrollment has increased significantly and schools are crowded. Hence, primary schools have found that it is almost impossible to absorb another class of students at grade three or four (Sedere, U. and Sabur, Zia 1999, p22). The same view is expressed in a government document:

> NFPE has been viewed more as a temporary measure with the idea of preparing and transferring children to formal school to give them a second chance to get into the mainstream of primary education. These ideas have worked well initially, but as enrollment increased in primary schools lateral transfers have become difficult (National Plan of Action for Education 2001-2020)

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Continuing education of NFPE students – a shattered dream:

"I had a dream that my children will be educated and enjoy a dignified life but my dreams got shattered". Nur Banu, a mother of an NFPE graduate in the Chittagong urban slum was describing her dream about her children and the consequence of NFPE education. The tone was found in all the parents of NFPE graduates, irrespective of whether urban and rural. The field interviews revealed that all of the NFPE students and their guardians had a dream that children would be able to get admission to the formal primary school after graduating from NFPE and be able to continue their education. But at the end of the NFPE course when they applied to formal schools for admission, they found that the primary schools are already in overcapacity. The situation was the same in both rural and urban areas. After rejection from the formal primary school, a few students managed to get admission at class 6 in a private secondary school, not for their talents but rather the secondary schools started from class 6 and these private schools needed students. These schools do not maintain the good quality of education. A few students got admission in a Madrasa (religious education institution) at class 1, because Madrasa never allows admission from the middle of the courses. These situations are found in the rural areas only. Although in the rural areas NFPE students can go to the private secondary school directly, many guardians could not send their children to private secondary because of the education cost which is out of their capacity (for details of educational expenses see the paragraph on Incapability of parents to meet educational expenses). This opportunity is almost absent in the urban areas. Although in the urban areas there are a number of private secondary schools, since they try to maintain a minimum level of quality, they will not allow NFPE graduates in class 6 where NFPE graduates only completed up to class 3.

A recent study in the same study area done by Actionaid Bangladesh[11] also corroborated the above stated situation. According to the study the cumulative graduates from the urban-based NFPE program of that NGO to 1999 were 630; among the total only 50 graduates or 8% had the chance to enroll in government primary

[11] Actionaid Bangladesh recently launched a mid-term review report on Ghashful, a local NGO working on NFPE

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schools and continue their education. Among these 50 graduates, none was from the minority community. The Actionaid study reported:

> Ghashful education program has the major objective of transferring its graduates to government schools. In this working area, however, the number of government primary schools is highly inadequate. Initially, Ghashful planned to transfer its students to government schools once they completed the third grade but quickly realized that this was not possible, as there are hardly any sits available for new students to enroll.

Social exclusion in accessing primary education:

However, in urban areas some students got admission in primary schools at class 4 or 5 because of sometimes a natural dropout creates space, but NFPE graduates from the minority community such as sweepers who are recognized as untouchable, never got opportunity to get admission. The field survey reveals that out of total of five families interviewed, four of them reported that their children could not get access to primary education after graduating from NFPE, because they are the members of an untouchable community. These groups are an urban-based lower caste[12] and their main profession is cleaning the city including toilets. This finding can be corroborated with a recent study done by Actionaid Bangladesh[13]. The study says:

In this period, a significant number of students, especially from the sweeper colony, who were not able to enroll themselves in government schools, dropped out of school and are now learning the same professions in which their parents have been employed for decades.

The physical security of the girls from the sweepers community is another reason for them not to continue primary education. Since the sweepers community is minority in number in the respective area, and they have little voice and access to the police and judicial authority, their girls are often physically harassed when they go outside the community. Three of the families who live in the urban-based minority

[12] Although in Bangladesh there is no caste system, sweepers because they clean human excrement manually the treated as an untouchable community. These groups are not allowed to reside or go in to the mainstream community.
[13] Ibid 6

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community reported that they could not send their girls to government primary school because of the lack of physical security.

NFPE to formal primary school – the reality:

I mentioned in Chapter III that one of the objectives of NFPE is to act as a feeder school for formal schools. NGOs claim that a good number of NFPE graduates are continuing their education with the formal primary school in class 4 or class 5. (Jalauddin, 1997) but my field study found the opposite picture. To corroborate this statement, I went to four formal primary schools in three areas during my field study in March 2003. There were on an average four NFPE schools around those formal primary schools. So, in those primary schools a good number of NFPE graduates should presumably be found. But I could only find 29 NFPE students altogether from the total of 812 students in class 4 and 5 which is only 3.57%. See details in the following table.

Table 2: By location NFPE graduates the number and percentage in government primary schools in class 4 and 5 in the year 2003, by location

District	Rural/ Urban	Name of School	Class	Total Students	Students from NFPE School	
					#	%
Chittagong	Rural	Pourashava Govt. Primary School	4	60	0	0
			5	75	0	0
		Panthishila Govt. Primary School	4	55	0	0
			5	52	8	15
Noakhali	Rural	Nolua Bhuyan Hat Primary School	4	155	6	4
			5	135	1	1
Chittagong	Urban	Jamir Uddin Govt. Primary School	4	148	9	6
			5	132	5	4
Total				812	29	4

Table 2 represents the result of crosschecking the graduates family statements with the reality of formal education institutions in the nearest primary schools in the study areas. There is total of 812 students found in class 4 and Class 5 in the formal primary education school. But out of that total only 29 students, 4%, were found who graduated from NFPE. However, in these areas there are a number of NGOs operating NFPE schools. From these findings it became clear that though a number of NFPE

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schools are available around the formal primary schools very few of them have the capacity to offer a continuance for a primary education.

Length of NFPE course is a problem for accessing a formal school:

All respondents of the NGO officials believe that designing NFPE up to class 3 only is the main problem for graduates not being able to continue their education. Because they noted that formal primary education starts from class 1 and ends at class 5, it is difficult to absorb new students in the middle of the course, because the accommodation in the school is limited. However, some times dropouts from the government primary schools creates space but that is not enough to create the capacity scopes for NFPE graduates to access the formal primary schools. Mr. Awal, an NGO official, said that in the1980s dropouts were one of the biggest problems in formal primary schools especially in classes 3 to 5. At that time NGOs were encouraged to operate NFPE and children could feed into class 4 in the formal school. But now the formal primary school is overcrowded and no need to feeding student from NFPE. But if the NFPE course deigned for full five years, these student can go to the secondary school.

Incompatibility in NFPE curriculum with formal education:

Most of the NGO officials noted that the difference in curriculum and the teaching and learning method were also a problem for mainstreaming NFPE graduates. The same issues were also identified by the SIDA study in 1999. It found that “lack of curriculum equivalence in the two systems [formal and informal]” is one major constrained to mainstreaming NFPE graduates. Hussain (1997:96) wrote from a reference of a government-sponsored study that NFPE faces equivalence and achievement challenges. NGOs follow a variety of curriculum and these are mostly confined to reading, writing and numeracy, and some elements of environmental studies but do not make any provision for religious education, arts and crafts, music and physical education. The main difference in curriculum as Hussain (1997) found was that the government used competency-based curriculum whereas NGOs used a subjects-based curriculum. Finally, he expressed his concern: “This dichotomy in the curricula may create problems when the NFPE pupils are admitted in the mainstream.”

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What Hussain assumed in 1997 are practically the same things found during my field study which I mentioned with reference to the NGO officials who are similarly facing this problem.

The NGO official Mr. Saifuddin identified three major differences in curriculum and teaching/learning methodology. One is that in NFPE schools, children learn words with the W*hole Word method* whereas children in formal schools learn the *Phonetic method*. After three years NFPE children have a good number of stock of word, but they could not work out how to pronounce new words in the texts.

A Second difference is that the *Oral method* is frequently used in NFPE as a teaching method while in the formal school, *reading from the text method* is used to teach the learners. When an NFPE student goes to the formal school, they could not read the text properly. The main goals to teach in the O*ral method* are to provide awareness in different social issues and prepare students to enter in the practical world soon after graduation from NFPE. This goal was set with the understanding that NFPE children would be older than the primary-age student, and in some cases they had already entered into the workforce. However, the practical situation is that most of the NFPE students are the same age as the primary students.

The third difference is that, written examinations in the formal schools show a different teaching method. In the NFPE approach, there is no written examination. When NFPE students go for admission in the formal school, they face the first obstacle to sit in a written exam. Mr. Saifuddin said, "Our children know all the answers but they can not understand the written questions well and they can not write those answers in the answer-sheet. But if someone asks them the same question orally, they will be able to answer orally. Through this examination process most of the NFPE children finally dropped out of the education process.

Incapability of parents to meet educational expenses:

Out of a total of 16 families who were interviewed, 4 of those families said that they do not have enough money to continue their children's education even in the government primary school. Although the government primary school is tuition-free, there are many unofficial charges they have to pay. According to the Education Watch Report 2001, 90% of the students spent on an average per student per year

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Tk.787[14] in the rural private schools in class 5, but it was Tk.3,150 for students of the same class in the urban schools. These expenditure include admission fees, monthly tuition fees, buying/collecting textbooks, supplementary books, stationary, school uniforms, miscellaneous fees, private tutors cost, etc. In rural areas where the monthly family income is Tk.2,457 only (for details see Table: 3) there is, on an average, four children in each family. Spending Tk.787 per children per year is a real burden for them. Kulsum, a NFPE graduate in rural Noakhali said that she had a dream to be a teacher but could not continue her education, because when she asked to buy books from the market her father was not in a position to spend money for books. With a prolonged breath she said "if only I could finish my education…"

The continuation of further education is a challenge for NFPE. Sedere 1999 identifies three major lacks in the NFPE approach which are obstacles for ensuring the continuance of education. These are:

- Lack of space and teachers at primary school
- Lack of curriculum equivalence in the two systems and
- Lack of adequate follow-up to the transferred students subsequently causing a higher number of dropouts. (Sedere et.al. 1999:22-23).

These are the same problems in NFPE I found in my field study and discussed here. Mr. Awal, Chief Executive of NRDS said, "NFPE is a 'project' for the NGOs. It is a scattered program of the NGOs rather than one integrated with formal education". Some NGOs implement 10 NFPE schools, while others implement 20 NFPE schools and then that is the end of it. NGOs are happy that they are providing a minimum education to poor children. But they forgot that education is not some thing that is a privilege but rather primary education is a fundamental right of the children. The government also encourages NGOs to implement NFPE for poor children without an integration plan with the formal system. Unless NFPE becomes an integral part of the formal system where path of NFPE children will be defined clearly, it is difficult for NFPE graduates to continue and further their education"[15]

[14] Tk.59 = USD 1

[15] Interview with Mr. Awal, Chief Officials of NRDS, on March 30, 2003 in Noakhali.

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Among the graduates who got access to a formal school, a significant number among them dropped out:

From the field study of this research and from the documents I reviewed as well, I found that though some of the NFPE graduates could get admission to the formal primary school they dropped out subsequently. This situation was found in both the rural and urban areas but more prominent in the rural areas. According to the study by Nath, S. (1999) "although 90% of the BRAC[16] NFPE graduates enrolled in formal primary schools at the beginning of 1995, only 39.6% of them survived [continued with formal primary education] up to October 1999." The interpretation of Nath's finding is that only 56% of NFPE graduate from BRAC were not able to continue their primary education. This is a significantly large amount. In 1995, BRAC was operating 34,000[17] schools where more than one million[18] students graduated from at that time. If 56% of them finally dropped out within three years that means around 571,200[19] NFPE graduates could not achieve the full-five year primary education cycle. The study by Nath (1999) further found that NFPE students who graduated in 1995, in the year 1999, 68.4% of the graduates satisfied all the four criteria of basic education i.e, reading, writing, numeracy, and life-skills knowledge. Nath also reported that 30% [or 306,000] of these graduates possessed partial basic education and 1.6% [or 16,320] of the graduates could pass none of the criteria. Again, for the interpretation of the figures Nath commented, "Overall performance of the programme decreased significantly." (Nath, S., 1999). Taking this study into account, it could be said that for the millions of poor children who went to an NFPE school with the objective to be educated, more than half of them could not finish their full five-year primary education cycle which is their fundamental right. One third of them achieved only partial basic literacy and many thousands of them could not achieve anything of literacy. Ellen Sattar wrote in the book Universal primary education in

[16] BRAC is an NGO that is the single biggest implementor of NFPE in Bangladesh. Currently they are operating 34,000 NFPE schools in Bangladesh.
[17] Nath, S. 1999
[18] This figure is estimated on basis that each NFPE School has around 30 students, so from 34,000 schools there will be total 1,020,000 graduates.
[19] This figure is estimated on the basis that, if 56% of total 1,020,000 NFPE graduate dropped out from formal school, then 571,200 NFPE graduate dropped out from the formal school.

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Bangladesh, “It is not uncommon to come across children who have been to school but remain functionally illiterate” (Ellen, S. 1982). Although she made this comment twenty years ago, the situation does not improved much in Bangladesh.

According to the Saifuddin and Arifur Rahman, NGO officials of Ghashful and YPSA respectively, there are three reasons NFPE graduate dropped out from the formal primary school. First, there is incompatibility of curriculum and method of orientation of NFPE with the formal primary education. Second, private expenditure of formal education is beyond the capacity of poor families. Third, there is a problem distance to the formal school and a lack of accommodation in the school. Details on these will be discussed in the preceding paragraphs.

4.3.2 Improvements in the quality of life

Understanding of Quality of life:

One of the main purposes of education is to improve the quality of life. According to the World Declaration of Education for All 1990, the purpose of education for all is to achieve the required skills to survive, to develop to full capacity, to live and work in dignity, to participate fully in development, to improve the quality of one’s life, to make informed decisions, and to continue learning. Improving quality of life includes dignity in life, access to quality and adequate food, to an adequate living standard, dignity in work, ability to participate fully in development and continuous development in life. Understanding on the quality of life is not too different for the urban and rural poor who were interviewed during the field research. Most of the parents of the NFPE graduates who were interviewed during the field visits, commonly understand the quality of life as adequate housing *matha gojar jaiga*, adequate food *pet vore khawa*, dignity *manusher kasue shaman pawa*, dignity in work *shamman janak kaj*. Rural people expected that they would own a house and land for cultivation. Some of them realized that for the quality of life, education is an important component.

In urban areas, parents of the subjects do not expect that they will have their own house but they expect that they should have at least an adequate housing facility with easy access to water and a toilet facility, a good job or business with a good income, adequate savings, enough money for education of their children, access to a

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health facility and some level of free time for entertainment. In the urban minority community (sweeper community) people believe that quality of life means dignity in life. The meaning of dignity to them meant that people would not neglect them, and they would be treated as human beings.[20] Ms.Mantini, mother NFPE graduates Malati said,

> What dignity are you talking about? Since we are cleaning human excrement, our value to the people is such as human excrement. Society does not allow us to sit with them, they do not drink water from us. If we stand beside any person they immediately put a handkerchief on their nose, it seems that we are carrying the stink of human excrement with us. We do not need much food or much clothes; we just want that people will not hate us, that will ensure our dignity.

This was a common voice of all the members of the sweeper community. They understand that if they have money and education that will enable them to improve their quality of life. But they also believe that their identity as sweeper is a factor not that does allow them access to quality in life. Dilabar Das, father of NFPE graduate Pinki, from sweeper community expressed the following view:

> Our profession is the main source of the stigma as *methor* [sweeper]. Unless we able to change our profession, they will not able to get rid off this identity and as long as we will be identified as *methor*, our quality of life will not be improved.

Dilabor Das identified this problem as a vicious cycle in their life. Identity is the main problem to come out from this vicious cycle. He also said:

> Since this stigmatization as *methor* is mainly because of our profession, the changing of our profession could help us to get rid off this stigmatization. In that case, if our children get a proper education they could find some other profession, though it is not easy.

[20] Sweepers are treated as an untouchable community, and they are not allowed to live with the mainstream community, their children are not allowed to play with the mainstream children or study in the same school with them. Mainstream people also do not take any food from them.

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Can NFPE improve the quality of life?

None of the interviewees found that NFPE was able to improve the quality of their life. In rural areas, because of long deprivation, they are not sure whether their quality of life could be improved in any way. Nur Mohammed, father of NFPE graduate Ali Ahmed, expressed the view:

> As we are poor and we do not have land or money, how we will improve our life? I have only two sons and four daughters. I do not even know how I will survive with this big family. My father was illiterate and poor. I am also illiterate and inherited the poverty from my father. Although I do not know what to expect, but the reality is my children will inherit my poverty, because they also could not get an education. Though Ali Ahmed had NFPE, I am not sure what he learned there or what could be done with this little education.

Most of the families in rural the community who were interviewed, found that, in reality, poverty is the fate for them, and their children will also continue with this curse of poverty. The only way to get rid of the poverty could be the education but as they are poor, they do not have the financial capability to spend money for the education of their children, NFPE is the only choice for them. But they understand that with NFPE, children will able to write their name only; it will not help them to find any job. Unless they have access to good job or good income, there is no possibility to improve the quality of life. Korban Ali, father of Kulsum said:

> We need money to continue the education of our children. After graduation from NFPE, Kulsum wanted to continue her education, but I could not manage the money for the admission fee and books. Although my daughter got NFPE she already has forgotten all the learning. As I do not have money I am sending my son also to NFPE. I do not know what he will do after that. Our life is full of the dark. I am not seeing any light in the near future.

From the above understanding of the interviewees, it is clear that they are very much concerned about the quality of life through education of their children, but the

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institutional arrangements are not adequate. With the experience of their long deprivation throughout their life, as well as current situation of their children, they presume that poverty is the fate for them, and it is too difficult to break the cycle of poverty.

Parents of girls do not expect any contribution of their daughter, rather they expect the ultimate goal of their daughter is domestic work in their husband's house. The only way of improving the quality of life for girls is, if they are able to hand over their daughter as a bride to a comparatively better-off family.

Although in the urban community boys and girls who graduated from NFPE have access to the job market. But none of them are satisfied with their job. They do not believe that their current job will be able to improve the quality of their life. Access to adequate housing, adequate water, toilet facility, and entertainment is still a far-reaching dream for them. Mamun's[21] father commented, "I never want to see my son becoming a rickshaw puller such as me, but the reality is rickshaw pulling would be the only work he will get…" Sumi's sister Parveen used to work in a garment factory. She worked there for five years, but now she is sick. Her mother believes that as Parveen used to work in a garment factory where she had to work next to equipments requiring high voltage, the current (electricity) sucked her blood so now she is sick and can not work (this is an explanation of sumi's mother). Sumi is going to the garment factory now; Sumi will face the same problem, she believes. Sumi's mother does not see any positive change in their family in near future.[22] However, Sumi's mother also believes that if her daughter and son could continue their study, they certainly got good job which might help them to change their life. But that part is already closed to them due to the unavailability of educational institutions, which would provide them with free education.

Pinki's father believes that "there will be no use for NFPE unless education is better then this…" This statement corroborated the recent impact assessment study by BRAC. The study found that illiterates have more chance for a job than BRAC NFPE graduates. This study found that 38% of NFPE graduates involved in wage-earning had been graduates in 1995 while 60% of the same age young boys involved in wage

[21] Interview with Mamun's family in Chittagong City
[22] Interview with Sumi's mother in Chittagong City

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earning (BRAC 2002). They find the reason for that was because as NFPE graduates have some level of education, they hesitate to take any type of job like a porter, or a day labor while non-literates do not hesitate to take any kind of work. The study also found that the semi-literacy sometimes becomes obstacle for gaining livelihood.

The sweeper community in the Chittagong urban area is the most marginalized and vulnerable group among the groups that were interviewed throughout the study. This group has a history of long deprivation from all the basic services. As discussed earlier they are not treated as human beings and the dignity of life is a far-reaching dream to them, being treated, as human being is the sole indicator to them to improve their quality of life. The sweeper community members believe that lack of dignity in their work is the main obstacle to enjoying the quality of life. It needs much effort to solve this problem. NFPE for three years alone, cannot solve this problem, unless they are able to continue the full course of education and get access to more dignified work. As they do not have access to any other education institution except the NFPE. They are fully dependent on NFPE for the education of their children.

The last five years, around 180 children from this community graduated from the NFPE School. None of them were able to continue their education further or got any job yet. Around half of the total graduates exceeded the age of 14[23]. Parents of the NFPE graduates said that within next four years these children (boys) would go to work, but they will have only option to go for the same cleaning work as their parents. So there is no scope for occupation mobility or social mobility.

Since primary school is fundamental and compulsory in nature and primary education should be the pillar of developing future of achieving quality life, in both of the issues NFPE found grossly failed to provide. Thus I would argue that NFPE could not comply with the two indicators of the Right through Education discussed above.

4.4 NFPE and formal primary education- issues of discriminations:

Although I discuss the issue of discrimination within NFPE under the section accessibility, from the field study and document research there are other types of discrimination that emerged which was not within the NFPE but rather outside the NFPE, however it affects NFPE. Apparently, there is no discrimination found within

[23] Interview with Mr.Saifuddin, NGO officials of Ghashful, Chittagong

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the NFPE program as shown in my discussion in the section "accessibility", but if we look at the primary education holistically, other types of discrimination exist and NFPE itself is facing discrimination. This discrimination mostly arises from the differential treatment of the government formal primary education with NFPE. In the following discussions I show the discrimination under different sub-headings.

Discrimination on the basis of socio economic condition:

One basis of discrimination is the socio-economic condition of the NFPE student. The field study found that most of the students in the NFPE are from poor families. The average income of the families living in the rural areas is Tk.2,443 and in urban areas is Tk.6,333. Most of the head of households of the NFPE graduates in rural areas are agricultural laborers while in the urban areas the head of households are either manual laborers or petty business people such as street vendor, etc. According to the NGO officials, they prefer children from poor families for the NFPE schools because poor children have a limited capacity to go to the formal school as they require more private costs than the NFPE. According to the Education Watch Report 2001, the private cost per year in government primary schools is Tk.614, in private schools Tk.484, in kindergarten Tk.4,899 and in secondary attached schools 5,711. So, NFPE is the obvious choice for the children of the poor families. My arguments are that since the primary education is free and compulsory, the government is legaly bound to provide primary education to all, but as NFPE is absorbing poor children, they are actually alleviating the government's responsibility and makes government free from obligation. Nevertheless, as NFPE could not provide a full primary education with quality, it ultimately deprived the poor.

Discriminations in school facilities:

Another form of discrimination among the different primary education institutions is school logistics and school expenditure. All other schools are well-furnished included chair and table for the teacher and a bench for the students, a fan and other facilities such as toilet and drinking water. But NFPE students have to sit on the floor, no drinking water or toilet facilities. During the interviews with students

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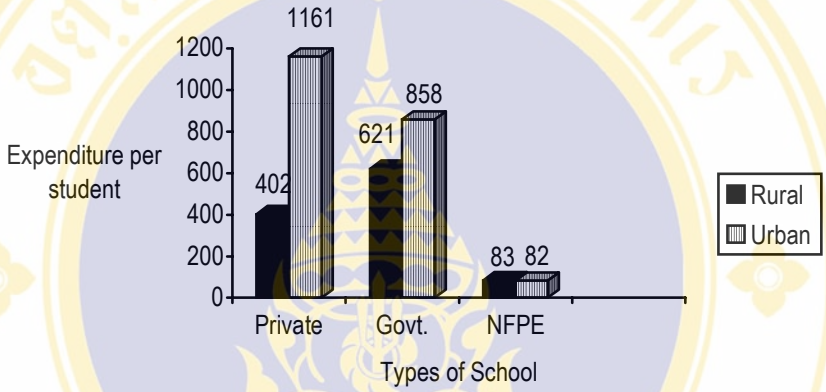
they expressed their feeling of being discriminate a especially on the issue of the seating arrangements.

Discriminations in school spending:

There is discrimination in school spending for students. Graph 2 shows the discrimination in spending money for the students of different types of school:

Figure 4: Difference in per Student expenditure in diffrent types of school



Source: Education Watch Report 2001

According to the above graph, school spending per student per month in NFPE were Tk.82 to 83 while in government primary school per student per month government spending was Tk.621 to 858 and in private schools per student spending was Tk.402 to 1,161. This huge difference in school spending leads to a difference in the quality of education, quality of logistics, and facilities in schools. Hence, NFPE students are discriminated against in those areas. The NFPE school funds are mainly provided by different donors while the government primary school funds come fully from the government and the private school funds comes from schools fees and the government as well.

NFPE students are not part of the food for education program and stipend program:

To ensure the enrollment in government schools and decrease the dropout rate the government introduced food for education program, which covers almost every

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part of the country. According to the policy, each child from poor families is given 15 kg of wheat and 12 Kg of rice per month (USAID2002a p.56). Although the hard core poor attend the NFPE schools, they are not getting this aid. This aid is only given to the children who are the students of the government primary schools. During the field interview parents of the NFPE graduates especially in rural areas, expressed their feeling of being discriminated against in this particular aspects.

To encourage girls enrollment in education, the government is a providing stipend to the female students in government primary schools. NFPE student are deprived of this stipend. (USAID2002a p.57). Although children from hard core poor families study in NFPE, they do not benefit from the food for education program or the stipend program. On the other hand the government primary school students are getting all these aids where only 20% of the poorest children are students (Actionaid Bangladesh, 2002a).

Although the government treats both government primary schools and NFPE as institutions for primary education, the differential treatments with these two streams of primary education actually hampers the quality of education in the NFPE program.

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CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusions

In conclusion, this thesis argues that though NFPE in the school studied has some positive aspects and complies with the right to education in some components, notably accessibility and adaptability, in certain components such as accessibility and acceptability, it does not comply with the right to education.

Flexibility is one of the most significant strengths found in NFPE in the school studies. This strength of flexibility provides NFPE with many positive aspects such as accessibility for all children through eliminating fees, travel distance, and discrimination. The strength of flexibility of the NFPE also increases its capacity of adaptability, which provides space for all types of children such as the poor, marginalized, minority, children with disability, working children and girls. Hence, the children who are not able to enroll in formal schools can easily find a place in NFPE. So, NFPE is found to easily comply with the indicators of accessibly and adaptability, which are the two important components of the right to education.

However, according to the field findings, though NFPE has the potential and strength to ensure accessibility for all groups of children, and it also has the capacity to adapt, these strengths could not fully be used by the implementing organizations because of other limitations such as lack of financial resources, short length of projects, and lack of institutional capacity and experience.

The most negative aspect of the NFPE schools studied is that it has serious weaknesses in terms of acceptability and availability. It fails to meet minimum standards of educational logistics, teaching standards and quality of teachers, which

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are very important factors for maintaining quality in education. Without quality in education it is impossible to achieve the aim and objectives of education as stated in the international conventions and the national constitution. One important issue that has emerged (as I argued in Chapter III and Chapter IV) is that the main objectives of promoting NFPE are to quickly achieve the target of the EFA goal, which dilutes the purpose of primary education in the country. To ensure quantitative targets in education the quality has been compromised. In the rush to achieve its quantitative targets in primary education enrollment, the government has shifted its responsibility to NGOs, but these do not have strong institutional support to ensure the minimum standard of education. These factors cause millions of people in the country to remain functionally illiterate. Therefore, with regards to this aspect of acceptability, NFPE does comply with the right to education

Furthermore, NFPE lacks the ability to ensure the continuation of education for its graduates. The most important factors that are lacking are its quality of teaching, incompatibility of curriculum, and duration of course. These factors, create obstacles for the millions of children wishing to continue their primary education. The Government of Bangladesh considers enrolment in the NFPE as enrollment in primary education without maintaining minimum criteria for primary education and without creating a linkage program to complete the primary education cycle. According to the human rights values, the deprivation of any single human person should be considered as a serious human rights issue. In the context of Bangladesh millions of NFPE graduates ultimately dropped out from education and returned to the same poverty cycle for the remainder of their lives.

The targeting of NFPE eligible children is another negative aspect of NFPE schools studied. I have strongly argued that NFE is not for children who have all the eligibility requirements to attend the formal school. All the doctrines and international legal instruments such as conventions make it clear who should be provided non-formal education, and who should not. I have elaborated on this discussion in Chapter III. I have also argued that though there are some suggestions from different scholars that NFPE should be provided to working children, with the understanding that this is due to the cause of poverty, international legal instrument do not agree with this view.

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According to the ECOSOC General Comments 13/1999 “States parties have an obligation to ensure that communities and families are not dependent on child labour. The committee especially affirms the importance of education in eliminating child labour.” So state parties should ensure that families have a suffcient minimum income so they do not need to send their children to work, rather than to school. This is legally binding for the state. If this is followed, there would be no question of child labor nor of sending them to NFPE as well. Thus, the only potential group of children remaining is those who are too old to go to formal primary school i.e. those over ten years old. The Government of Bangladesh already introduced free and compulsory primary education in 1990. Theoretically, there should not be any 10-years old children in the country without education in the year 2003. Nevertheless, as I detailed in the first chapter, the government is counting NFPE enrollment as enrollment in primary education, and the government is planning to continue this strategy in future. According to the NPA II, the government plans to increase NFPE coverage of children to 20% of the total primary-age population by the year 2010. Now it is only 8.5%. (NPA II, 2001- 2015) So, the whole targeting issue in NFPE, as an alternative to primary education is for children of primary school age is confusing. It also encourages the government to feel relaxed about ensuring formal education for all, specially for the poor with the understanding that if the poor miss the opportunity for formal education, NFPE is there as a safety net. But this leads to a violation of the right to education as detailed in this thesis.

There is no monitoring of the government on curriculum or other components of NFPE. Different agencies are implementing NFPE differently with regards to the curriculum, enrollment age, and length of course. Without any central monitoring, the national objectives of NFPE will obviously become displaced. Furthermore, NFPE is poorly financed compared to the formal primary education. Per capita NFPE cost is US$13.67 whereas the per capita formal primary education cost US$19.54 (Actionaid 2000). So, my argument is that since the government can not ensure formal education for poor children it is trying an alternative way to ensure primary enrolment through NFPE. This is not maintaining quality according to human rights standards and neglecting the school system in favor of other “low cost” approaches like NFPE

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reduces further the equality of opportunity and does not meet the interest and expectations, of the parents or of the pupils, and, this is a violation of the right to education.

5.2 Recommendations

a. Further independent study is needed to examine the issue of quality in NFPE and how far it achieves the national vision and goals for education. That study should covered the NFPE program nationwide.

b. NFPE could still exist but it should be used only for selected purposes such for working children and for those who missed the formal education and already to old to attend the formal primary school.

c. NGOs should carefully select students for an NFPE School. They should not enroll any general student who is eligible for attending the formal school. NGOs should strictly follow the generally agreed principle on age for enrolling students in NFPE, the age requirement is no younger than eight years old rather than of any child of primary school age.

d. The NFPE curriculum and teaching style need to be more commensurate with formal primary education so that NFPE graduate can easily move vertically after graduation.

e. NFPE needs to be better funded. So that quality can be maintained in every aspect of NFPE.

f. Curriculum needs to be more flexible and cover human rights education especially for the minority community like the Sweepers.

g. Link program should be developed to ensure continue primary education of NFPE graduates

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APPENDIX A

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List of Interviews

1. **List of NFPE Graduates whose family have been interviewed according to Name, age, Name of NFPE schools they studies and their home address:**

Name of NFPEGraduates	Age	Academic Year	Name of NFPE school	Home Address
Jarna Akter	12	1998 -2000	Jagadanda NFPE school	Jagadananda, Noakhli
Ali Ahmed	13	1998 –2000	Jagadanda NFPE school	Jagadananda, Noakhli
Kulsum	14	1998 –2000	Jagadanda NFPE school	Jagadananda, Noakhli
Abdul Mannan	12	1998 –2000	Jagadanda NFPE school	Jagadananda, Noakhli
Belal Hossain	12	1998 –2000	Jagadanda NFPE school	Jagadananda, Noakhli
Mozammel Hossain	12	1998 –2000	Jagadanda NFPE school	Jagadananda, Noakhli
Marium Nesa	13	1998 - 2000	Jagadanda NFPE school	Jagadananda, Noakhli
Zakir hossain	13	1997 - 1999	Postapar NFPE School	Postarpar , Chittagong
Hasan Murad	12	1997 – 1999	Postapar NFPE School	Postarpar , Chittagong
Sumi	13	1997 – 1999	Postapar NFPE School	Postarpar , Chittagong
Mamun	12	1997 – 1999	Postapar NFPE School	Postarpar , Chittagong
Munna	14	1997 – 1999	Sweeper Colony NFPE School	Madarbari , Chittagong
Chaina	14	1997 – 1999	Sweeper Colony NFPE School	Madarbari , Chittagong
Malati	16	1997 – 1999	Sweeper Colony NFPE School	Madarbari , Chittagong
Ravi	12	1997 – 1999	Sweeper Colony NFPE School	Madarbari , Chittagong
Pinki	14	1997 - 1999	Sweeper Colony NFPE School	Madarbari , Chittagong

2. **Name, age and designation of NGO Executive interviewed:**

Name	Age	Designation	Name of NGO	Place and date of Interview
Arifur Rahman	35	Chief Executive	YPSA	Chandgoan, Chittagong April 11, 2003
M A Awal	47	Chief Executive	NRDS	Noakhali March 30, 2003
Raha Naba Kumar	45	Project Coordinator	Ghandi Ashram Trust	Begumgonj, Noakhali March 30, 2003
Md. Saifuddin Ahmed	29	Education Coordinator	Ghashful	Madarbari,Chittagong April 10, 2003

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APPENDIX B

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Interview Topics

Topics for Interviewing Family:

1. Why the parents sent their children to NFPE School? Is it for unavailability of formal school or any other purpose?
2. How the parents find NFPE as system for basic primary education
3. Further issue has discussed on how parents find the educational prospect of their students? Whether they tried for further education of their children? If they failed, why?
4. Further discussion may continue on their feeling about the future of their family, whether they feel that their children will able to change or improve their quality life?
5. How NFPE graduate satisfied with the NFPE School compare formal primary education?

Discussion topics for NGO executives involved with NFPE:

To get an in-depth information regarding NFPE, some NGO staff and NFPE teachers will be interviewed. Four Executives were interviewed from the three separate NGO. Following topics were discussed with NGO Executives

1. What are the purpose of NGOs running NFPE
2. Minimum standard of teacher's qualification and method of setting that standard. In service training opportunities for teachers.
3. What is the government role in NFPE, what is the supervision mechanism from government? How the curriculum being standardized and by whom?
4. Teaching method and orientation process
5. Education and livelihood prospects students after graduation from NFPE according their experience

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6. Other NFPE operational strategy like, school time, school condition, monitoring, source of budget, expenditure etc. will also be discussed

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APPENDIX C

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Education for All Goals:

The World declaration on Education For All (EFA) launched in Jomtien, Thailand from 5 to 9 March 199 to established the international communities commitment on education for all. Since, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child declared that all children, young people and adults have the human right to benefit from an education that will meet their basic learning needs in the best and fullest sense of the term; an education that includes learning to know, to do, to live together and to be, EFA declaration was aimed to reaffirm of these international vision through a detail strategy, setting target and time frame and through ongoing assessment of the progress towards those target/goals. The general comments 13/1999 of ECOSOC on article 13(1) of CESCR recognize EFA as further elaboration of the article 13(1) of CESCR. It says;

> The committee takes the view that the State parties are required to ensures that education confirms to the aims and objectives identified in article 13(1), as interpreted in the light of the world Declaration on Education For All (Jomtien 1990)(article 1).

In the EFA declaration, the world community adopted an expanded vision of what basic education. It says, the vision of Basic education, is

> Calling for a learning environment in which everyone would have the chance to acquire the basic elements, which serve as a foundation for further learning and enable full participation in society. This vision implied both access to education for everybody, and meeting the diverse learning needs of children, youth and adults. It focused on learning societies, and saw broader and deeper partnerships at every level as the way forward (UNESCO 2002)

The Jomtien World Declaration on Education for All and Framework for Action to Meet Basic Learning Needs covered six target dimensions:

1. Early childhood care and development,

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2. Access to and completion of primary education,
3. Significant reduction in levels of illiteracy, particularly among women,
4. Improved learning achievement,
5. Provision of basic non-formal education and skills training for youth and adults and acquisition by families and individuals of the knowledge,
6. Skills and attitudes needed to enhance the quality of their lives.

Article I of the declaration said about the purpose of EFA. The main purpose of EFA is “meeting basic learning needs.” In details, “Every person - child, youth and adult - shall be able to benefit from educational opportunities designed to meet their basic learning needs.”

In the Article II of EFA declaration says about the Vision of EFA and renewed commitment of International community. The article II says

> To serve the basic learning needs of all requires more than a recommitment to basic education, as it now exists. What is needed is an "expanded vision" that surpasses present resource levels, institutional structures, curricula, and conventional delivery systems while building on the best in current practices.

Article III to VII are the elaboration of the vision and commitment. These encompass;

- Universalizing access and promoting equity;
- Focusing on learning;
- Broadening the means and scope of basic education;
- Enhancing the environment for learning;
- Strengthening partnerships.

The requirements to implement the goal has described in articles VIII to X. The requirements are;

- Developing a supporting policy context

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- Mobilizing resources
- Strengthening international solidarity

This commitment and resolve were reinforced in the recommendations made by all subsequent United Nations conferences of the 1990s, particularly the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 1992; the International Conference on Population and Development, Cairo, 1994; the World Summit for Social Development, Copenhagen, 1995; and the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 1995. Member States and non-governmental organizations were urged to promote the right to education for all and to create conditions for all for learning throughout life.

The principles of action of EFA declaration said that,

> The first step consists in identifying, preferably through an active participatory process involving groups and the community, the traditional learning systems which exist in the society, and the actual demand for basic education services, whether expressed in terms of formal schooling or non-formal education programmes. Addressing the basic learning needs of all means: early childhood care and development opportunities; relevant, quality primary schooling or equivalent out-of-school education for children; and literacy, basic knowledge and life skills training for youth and adults.

The EFA declaration is also asking to design the policies to improve the basic education. Its says that

> Expanding access to basic education of satisfactory quality is an effective way to improve equity. Efficiency in basic education does not mean providing education at the lowest cost, but rather the most effective use of all resources (human, organizational, and financial) to produce the desired levels of access and of necessary learning achievement. The foregoing considerations of relevance, quality, and equity are not alternatives to efficiency but represent the specific conditions within which efficiency should be attained. For some

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programme, efficiency will require more, not fewer, resources. However, if more learners can use existing resources or if the same learning targets can be reached at a lower cost per learner, then the capacity of basic education to meet the targets of access and achievement for presently underserved groups can be increased.

Two important issues coming out from the above first, it suggested to meet the basic learning needs of society through any forms of education that is through school or out of school. Second, it suggest for efficiency in cost of education to cover more learner with minimum expenditure. However, it also says "Efficiency in basic education does not mean providing education at the lowest cost, but rather the most effective use of all resources." It further says that ensuring quality in education is the way of ensuring equity. But the earlier two issues can make whole quality and equity in education in risk. Because encouraging non-formal education to the children at the same time encouraging educated more learners with minimum resources, may otherwise encourage to the governments to provide less quality of education to quickly meet the target of education goal. However, in the chapter four I will deal this quality and equity issue with government finance against rights framework of education. In the next section I am rather going to discuss the rights framework of education, which will be the main issue of argument to examine the compliance of NFPE with right to education.

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APPENDIX D

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Profile of an Urban NFPE school:

Name of the School: Postarpar NFPE school, Chittagong

Location:

Postarpar NFPE School is located in the heart of Chittagong city. The place Postarpar is highly densely populated area and surrounded by the slums and households for the poor. Chittagong is the port city and commercial capital of the country. It is the second biggest city in the country.

Infrastructure:

The school is a tin roofed, bricked wall and muddy floor. This is a one room school as usual. The room size is 200 sft**..** In the particular area of the survey, house owners increase the number of rooms available by keeping the individual room size particularly small to earn more money from rent. As a result, the schools' facilities are extremely small and are not adequate to accommodate 30 six to ten year old children. Students seat on the floor with thin jute mat. The children have to sit in a circle, shoulder to shoulder, and with their backs against the wall. Any movement by one student is bound to affect the student besides him or her and is likely to affect their concentration. The teacher can move only in the middle of the circle while there is no space for combined study, group work, or any play activities. In the worst cases, some of the students even have to sit in front of the door. Without moving them, no one is able to enter through the door. As the rooms only have one door and two windows, neither sufficient daylight nor fresh air can enter the room. The teacher keeps one glass and a large container of water for her students when they are thirsty. The schools do not have any bathrooms, which creates an additional problem for them. While school is in session, the students usually have to use toilets at neighbouring houses, and having to defecate is particularly a problem with these facilities.

Classroom logistic and teaching aid:

There is a black board in the class and teacher has one small tool for seat. There is no table and chair in the classroom. Teacher has enough chalk to write in the blackboard. All the books and copybook supplied by the NGO.

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The teacher:

The teacher in this school is female and it should be noted that all the NFPE teachers in this NGO are female. Her age is 23 and he is teaching as NFPE teacher for five years. The teacher is studies up to 12 classes. He got twelve days training on NFPE teaching from the NGO. Besides, every year she got annual refreshers training for 2 days and every month they have one full day meeting, which also treated as one kind of refreshers course.

The Management:

The respective NGO have 21 NFPE schools. This NGO is operating NFPE school for last five years. One supervisor and one education officer are responsible to looks after these 21 schools. Their responsibilities are to manage the teacher, provide monthly training to the teacher, visit school, prepare report etc. The supervisor is an art graduate. She started her career as NFPE teacher and she promoted as NFPE supervisor. The education Officer has postgraduate degree on English literature. However, he does not have any training in education. The education officer has also some other responsibilities to look after the fundraising issue of the organization and documentation work for all other activities. He has few times to monitor the NFPE School as reported by him.

Fund and the Budget of the School:

This particular NGO is getting fund from its donor annually basis. Year 2003 is the sixth year of NFPE fund from this donor. NFPE fund is the part of integrating development approach of the NGO. Each year the NGO get Tk.892,840 for 27 number of NFPE schools. Out of the total program cost, 5% use for Teacher Training which in Tk45,040 only, 48.45% use for Teacher Salary and 18% or Tk162,000 use for books and stationary for the student. Per students annual program expenditure is Tk.1293 or US$21.57 only. The budget of this NGO especially on teacher's salary and School rent is comparatively higher than any other NGO. Because This NFPE program is supported by Actionaid and this donor allowed reasonable salary to the program staff including teacher, that makes the budget double than any other NGO.

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APPENDIX E

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Table: 3

List NFPE graduates interviewed: With location, age, Family size and Family Income

Urban/rural	Name	Age	Family Size	Family Income
Rural	Jarna Akter	12	6	2000
	Ali Ahmed	13	9	2200
	Kulsum	14	7	2200
	Abdul Mannan	12	5	2000
	Belal Hossain	12	6	2200
	Mozammel Hossain	12	6	2500
	Marium Nesa	13	7	4000
	Average monthly income in rural areas			**2457**
Urban	Zakir hossain	13	9	6000
	Hasan Murad	12	9	6000
	Sumi	13	9	6000
	Mamun	12	7	6000
Urban (minority)	Munna	14	5	5000
	Chaina	14	6	5000
	Malati	16	6	5000
	Ravi	12	6	6000
	Pinki	14	5	12000
Total	16 Interviewee	Average age 13 years	Average Family size 6.7	Average family Income Tk.**4,631**

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Table: 4

NFPE Graduates currents status according Location and age:

Urban /rural	Name	Age	Current status of NFPE graduates		
			Continue education	Doing work	
				Types of Work	Income
Rural	Jarna Akter	12	No	Helping mother	0
	Ali Ahmed	13	No	Helping father in agri field	0
	Kulsum	14	No	Helping mother	0
	Abdul Mannan	12	No	Cow rearing	0
	Belal Hossain	12	No	Cow rearing	0
	Mozammel Hossain	12	Madrasa II	0	0
	Marium Nesa	13	VI in Private Scool		0
Urban	Zakir hossain	13	No	0	0
	Hasan Murad	12	No	Factory Helper	1000
	Sumi	13	No	Garment worker	1200
	Mamun	12	No	Rickshaw garage	500
Urban (minority)	Munna	14	No	Helping mother	0
	Chaina	14	No	Helping mother	0
	Malati	16	No	Helping mother	0
	Ravi	12	No	Helping mother	0
	Pinki	14	No	Helping mother	0

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BIOGRAPHY

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