

**Subvention and Governance Reforms in Secondary Education in Bangladesh:
Actors, Acquiescence and Resistance in the Policy Processes**

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CERTIFICATION

I certify that the substance of this thesis has not already been submitted for any degree and is not currently being submitted for any other degree or qualification.

I certify that any help received in preparing this thesis and all sources used have been acknowledged in this thesis.

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of the author.

Signature

Dedication

To my mother,

Kamala Dhar

**Who struggled hard to keep us alive
And provide us with proper education
Amidst many odds after we had lost our father
To the liberation war**

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This study is the result of my long-cherished desire to look into the issues of secondary education governance in Bangladesh, rather dispassionately from an academic point of view. I simply could not have completed this arduous journey without relentless support from my supervisors, the School of Education and Research Services at the University of New England and many of my friends and colleagues.

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ABSTRACT

The study examines the trajectory of policy processes related to secondary education governance reforms in Bangladesh covering a period from 1993 to 2012. It traces the gradual changes in the school—state relationship, the role of the multilateral institutions (the World Bank and Asia Development Bank), the complex interactions between various national policy actors and these multinational institutions in the process and the responses from various local actors to this change. The study focuses particularly on the shifting policy meaning of subvention. In Bangladesh, nongovernment secondary schools constitute about 98 percent of the secondary education system, and they receive significant subvention from the government in the form of salary support to the teachers. By situating the analysis of subvention in the shifting policy context over the last 20 years where the multinational institutions have come to play an increasingly powerful discursive role, the study illuminates how subvention has gradually become a key policy lever in the emerging mode of governance driven by new managerialism. Then, the study looks at how the managerial governance reform was mediated and negotiated by various national and local policy actors.

Conceptually, this study selectively appropriates the perceptual and analytic tools drawn from critical theories and post structuralism. First, it approaches the analysis of national policy context and its interface with global policy environment enacted through the multinational agencies through the critical conceptualization of policy borrowing and lending from comparative education. Second, the study approaches the powerful discursive roles played by the multinational institutions in legitimizing their preferred policy solutions through the theories of discourse formation and their relations to ‘truth’ and knowledge. Third, it draws upon the Foucauldian notion of Governmentality, the architecture of self-governance, in understanding the changing school-state relationship and the new mode of governance manifested in the newly instituted practices. Fourth, it appropriates Thomas Pedroni’s post-structurally informed Gramscian discussion of re-articulation in order to assess the processes of mediation and negotiation that various local actors engage under the changed relationship.

Data for this qualitative research came from four major sources: (i) review and interpretation of embedded discourses in various documents; (ii) interviews and focus group discussions with various actors both at the school and community level and at the policy making level; (iii) in-depth analysis of two school situations and (iv) observations from various meetings, training and workshops on secondary education.

The findings of the study suggest that while administration of subvention had a number of real problems, the multilateral institutions (MLIs) constructed the problems in a preferred way to gradually advance a managerial self-governance model that would delink subvention from teachers’ salaries and move the system towards financing of the schools through grants

conditional upon meeting a set of performance criteria. The legitimating narratives of the MLIs, buttressed with a plethora of discursive products, an overwhelming ‘referential web’ and resources for education development projects, redefined goals of education in terms of meeting market needs and gave new meanings to the categories like ‘nongovernment schools’ as ‘private schools.’ New identities and roles were assigned to the schools and school communities—all drawn from neoliberal market principles and practices in the private sector enterprises. The linkage between “subvention” and “provision of education” was now to be reconceptualised as a “transaction” under a form of contractualism leading to a significant change in the school-state relationship.

The research found that implementation of this governance model had evoked a range of responses and strategies of resistance/subversion from various local actors. They included, among others, (i) ‘policy double-speak,’ procrastination and deferment of implementation from various parts of the government, (ii) counter-discursive strategies of teachers’ unions dragging the policy debates into the political terrain to deny the MLIs any space in the debate, (iii) non-acceptance of and resistance to the identities on offer from the schools and school communities, and (iv) disentangling the discursive constructs of the multilaterals, identifying the ruptures and weaknesses in them and creatively rearticulating the concerns of the school communities into a different set of political discourses. All these impacted the implementation of the governance model preferred by MLIs.

Table of Contents

Certification	ii
Acknowledgement	iv
Abstract	vi
List of Tables	xi
List of Figures and Graphs.....	xi
List of Abbreviations and Acronyms	xii
CHAPTER ONE: Secondary Education Governance in Bangladesh: The Issues for the Present Research	1
1. Introduction.....	1
1.1 The Context.....	2
1.1.1 Growth of Secondary Education in Bangladesh	2
1.1.2 Recognition of Schools, Subvention, Governance and Policies	4
1.1.3 The Multilateral Institutions in Secondary Education	6
1.2 The School-State Relationship.....	8
1.3 The Conceptual Framework for the Study	9
1.3.1 Objectives and the Key Research Questions	12
1.4 Significance of the Research.....	13
1.5 Scope of the Study	15
1.6 Chapter Organisation	16
1.7 Subject Position of the Research	19
CHAPTER TWO: Literature Review: Interrogating Knowledge.....	20
2.1 Introduction.....	20
2.2 Globalisation: Taking Neoliberalism to Every Frontier	21
2.3 Development Goals of Multilateral Institutions	24
2.3.1 Multilaterals' Search of Local Allies	26
2.4 Critical Perspectives on the Interface Between the Global and the Local.....	29
2.4.1 Borrowed Policy, Borrowed Authority	30
2.4.2 Postcolonial and Post-structuralist Approach to Education Policy Reforms....	32
2.5 Governance as New Managerialism	35
2.6 Resistance and Rearticulation of the Notion of Educational Development.....	42
2.6.1 Complex Interplay with Neoliberalism: Defining Negotiations	45
2.6.2 Eclectic Construction of Knowledge: Does It Help Describe Lived Experience of People on the Ground?	50
2.7 Conclusion	51

CHAPTER THREE: Methodology.....	53
3.1 Introduction.....	53
3.2 Qualitative Research	53
3.2.1 Theory as an Inspiration for Methods	55
3.3 Eclecticism as the Theoretical Stance.....	58
3.4 Research Design for the Present Study	59
3.4.1 Theoretical Framework.....	59
3.4.2 Sample, Data Collection and Analytic Approach	69
3.4.3 The Approach in Analysis	74
3.5 Validity and Credibility	75
3.6 Ethical Consideration.....	76
3.7 Limits and Limitations of the Study	76
CHAPTER FOUR: Policy Making Processes for Education Governance: Interplay among Key Actors.....	78
4.1 Introduction.....	78
4.2 Subvention and Education Governance: A Brief Historical Account	79
4.2.1 Education Policies, Education Commissions and Politics of Subvention	85
4.3 The Policy Processes: The Political vs. the Bureaucratic Spheres	89
4.4 New Policy Community: Entry of Multilateral Institutions in Policy Arena	94
4.4.1 Uni-track System: Locating the Discursive Locus	98
4.5 Civil Societies in Policy Discourse.....	105
4.6 Government’s Policy Bilingualism: Appeasing All Actors.....	109
4.7 Conclusion	112
CHAPTER FIVE: MLI Supported Projects and Texts: Steering Governance Reform Discourse.....	114
5.1 Introduction.....	114
5.2 Designing and Preparing Projects Supported by MLIs.....	115
5.3 MLIs’ Project Support to Secondary Education in Bangladesh	120
5.3.1. The Case of Secondary Education Development Project (SEDP) and Subsequent Interventions from ADB.....	126
5.3.2 Education Sector Credits: Policy Lending from the World Bank.....	131
5.6 Conclusion	140
CHAPTER SIX: Policy Architecture, New and Redefined Categories and Influence on Grand Development Narratives	142
6.1 Introduction.....	142
6.2 Patterns in Policy Introduction.....	142
6.3 Construction of Policy Knowledge: Technical Assistance and the Referential Web.....	143

6.4 Changing Structure of Secondary Education Governance: Categories Born, Categories Redefined	147
6.5 Nexus Between Development and Education Narratives	154
6.5.1 PRSP in the Project Referential Web.....	155
6.6 Conclusion	157
CHAPTER SEVEN: Subvention and Governance reforms on the ground: Reconstituting identities.....	159
7.1 Introduction.....	159
7.2 SMC Composition: A Political Trajectory	159
7.3 Subvention, Nongovernment Schools and the State	166
7.3.1 Rearticulation of Subvention in Multilateral Documents	170
7.3.2 Subvention and Shifting Focus of State Support to Schools	171
7.4 Reconstituting School Management and Identities of School Communities.....	175
7.4.1 Training Manuals for SMCs	180
7.4.2 Studies on SMC Under Projects: Knowledge to Support New Identities.....	185
7.5 Conclusion	188
CHAPTER EIGHT: Dilemmas, Resistance and Re-articulation of Identities.....	191
8.1 Introduction.....	191
8.2 Politicians, Policy Realities and Policy Bilingualism.....	193
8.3 Civil Servants: The Strategies of Deferment	199
8.4 Responses from Teachers' Unions.....	202
8.5 Responses from Schools and School Communities.....	205
8.5.1 School Communities: Rearticulating the 'Political'	207
8.5.2 A Counter-discourse to Depoliticisation.....	210
8.5.3 Resistance Against the SMC training	214
8.5.4 The Discursive Shift: Problematizing Policies to Pose Resistance	218
8.6 The Art of Politics of Exception	223
8.7 Conclusion	225
CHAPTER NINE: Conclusion	227
9.1 Introduction.....	227
9.2 Policy Borrowing and Lending	228
9.3 Production of Policy Knowledge	232
9.4 New Managerialism or a Hybrid Governance?	234
9.5 Resistance, Subversion and Re-articulation.....	237
9.6 Research Needed in Future	243
Reference.....	245

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Policy Scholarship and Policy Science	60
Table 2: List of Interviews/FGDs/Events.....	71
Table 3: Changes in Subvention and Other Benefits for Nongovernment Secondary School Teachers.....	82
Table 4: Trajectory of Some Secondary Education Governance Reforms as Presented in Various Documents	97
Table 5: Issues and Actors in Secondary Education in Bangladesh.....	123
Table 6: Number of Secondary Schools, 1980-2008.....	126
Table 7: Enrolment in Secondary School 1987-2008.....	128

LIST OF FIGURES AND GRAPHS

Figure 1: ADP Preparation Process for the Ministries of Education.....	93
Graph 1: Number of Schools by Category, 1980 to 2008	124
Graph 2: Total Number of Schools and Students, 1980 to 2008.....	124
Graph 3: Number of Students by Gender and Category of School, 1980 to 2008	125

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AAA	Analytical Advisory Activity
ADB	Asian Development Bank
ADP	Annual Development Program
BANBEIS	Bangladesh Bureau of Education Statistics
BDT	Bangladeshi Taka
BISE	Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education
BTEB	Bangladesh Technical Education Board
CAS	Country Assistance Strategy
CBOs	Community Based Organizations
CCT	Conditional Cash Transfer
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CPS	Country Partnership Strategy
DIA	Directorate of Inspection and Audit
DfID	Department for International Development
DPP	Development Project Proposal
DSC	Development Support Credit
DSHE	Directorate of Secondary and Higher Secondary Education
EC	European Commission
ECNEC	Executive Committee of the National Economic Council
EFA	Education for All
ERD	Economic Relations Division
ESDSC	Education Sector Development Support Credit
ESR	Education Sector Review
ESW	Economic and Sector Work
EU	European Union
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FFE	Food for Education Program
FMRP	Financial Management Reform Program
FSS	Female Secondary Stipends
FSSAP	Female Secondary School Assistance Project
FSSAP II	Female Secondary School Assistance Project Phase II
FY	Fiscal Year
GBs	Governing Bodies
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GOB	Government of Bangladesh
HSC	Higher Secondary Certificate
IDA	International Development Agency
IER	Institute of Education and Research (Dhaka University)
IMF	International Monetary Fund
I-PRSP	Interim-Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MEW	Monitoring and Evaluation Wing of DSHE
MTBF	Medium Term Budgetary Framework
MoE	Ministry of Education
MOF	Ministry of Finance
MOPME	Ministry of Primary and Mass Education
MPO	Monthly Pay Order

NAEM	National Academy of Education Management
NEC	National Education Commission
NCTB	National Curriculum and Textbook Board
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
NORAD	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
NTRCA	Nongovernment Teachers Registration and Certification Authority
ODA	Overseas Development Assistance
PEDP I	Primary Education Development Program I
PEDPII	Primary Education Development Program II
PER	Public Expenditure Review
PMT	Proxy Means Testing
PPF	Project Preparation Fund
PPT	Project Preparation Team
PPTA	Project Preparatory Technical Assistance
PRGF	Poverty Reduction Growth Facility
PROMOTE	Program for Motivation, Training and Employment of Female Teachers
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
PRSC	Poverty Reduction Support Credit
SBA	School Based Assessment
SEDP	Secondary Education Development Programme
SEQAEP	Secondary Education Quality and Access Enhancement Project
SESIP	Secondary Education Sector Improvement Project
SESDP	Secondary Education Sector Development Programme
SES-DP	Secondary Education Sector Development Plan
SMCs	School Management Committees
SOEs	Statement of Expenditures
SPBMS	School Performance Based Management System
SSC	Secondary School Certificate
TQISEP	Teachers Quality Improvement in Secondary Education Project
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Education Fund
WB	World Bank
WDR	World Development Report

CHAPTER ONE: SECONDARY EDUCATION GOVERNANCE IN BANGLADESH: THE ISSUES FOR THE PRESENT RESEARCH

1. INTRODUCTION

This study is an investigation into the policy processes related to secondary education governance in Bangladesh covering a period from early 1990s to until 2012. The choice of this period is not inspired by any particular milestone in the history of secondary education in Bangladesh. Indeed, if tracing the history were the main impetus, there were other periods of remarkable milestones that could have been chosen for entry and exit into this dissertation. Rather some interesting trends and dynamics in the governance policy processes, as they became visible around this time, provided me with the incentive. The most important trend that inspired me is the gradual and yet fundamental transformation in the institutional assumptions underpinning the governance of the Bangladesh secondary education system and the complex interplay of global, national, and local actors in this ‘reform’ processes. The present study stems from this interest. The key research questions this study attempts to specifically address are (i) how the multilateral institutions advanced governance reforms of their choice in secondary education in Bangladesh since early 1990s; and (ii) how this has changed the school-state relationship and evoked a range of responses from the school communities and other actors.

This introductory chapter begins with a brief historical context of governance policy processes and reforms in secondary education in Bangladesh, and then describes the elements of policy discourses that are the key focuses of this dissertation. These include government subvention¹ to secondary education—the primary entry point for the government’s role in governance of secondary education, entry of various actors in the policy arena and interplay among these actors. Then the chapter lays out the question if this interplay has any role in constructing the knowledge of governance, changing the policy environment and gradually changing the very nature of school-state relations. A changed relation would also entail a change in the identities and the expected roles of different actors such as the Government and the school communities. The chapter opens the discussion if the introduction and gradual reconstitution of the notion of subvention eventually reconstituted the identities of the schools and school communities in the name of streamlining governance and development of secondary education. The discussion then

¹The government subvention to the nongovernment secondary schools in Bangladesh is provided as salary support to the teachers. This is popularly known as Monthly Pay Order (MPO).

leads to the key research issues, the scope of the research setting the limits as to what to expect out of the present study and the issues discussed in various chapters.

1.1 THE CONTEXT

Bangladesh has made significant progress in primary and secondary education in the last two decades, especially in increasing access and gender parity. According to the Household Income and Expenditure Survey 2010, the primary enrolment rate was 100.1 per cent and the secondary enrollment rate was 63.0 per cent (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2010). At the secondary level, overall enrollment rose from 4 million in 1991 to over 9 million in 2006. Girls' enrollment during the same period increased from 1.1 million to more than 4 million (World Bank, 2008b, p. 1). These achievements were synchronous with a substantial increase in subvention from the government that catalysed the expansion of non-government provision of secondary education. Demand side interventions and gender-targeted programs since the early 1990s, mostly supported by the international development agencies, were also a visible phenomenon around this time. A brief historical account of the growth of secondary education in Bangladesh, the context of subvention and governance reforms, the role of different actors, e.g., the state, the communities, the international development agencies and various other actors in shaping governance discourses would be helpful in understanding the research problem this study intends to address.

1.1.1 Growth of Secondary Education in Bangladesh

Some 98 percent of the secondary schools² in Bangladesh are non-government schools. Before partition of India in 1947, most of the secondary schools were established through philanthropic support from the landed gentry, mostly the Hindu *zamindars*—a trend dating back to 1882.³ Once established, the philanthropists largely left management of these schools to the local communities. After the partition, there was an initial vacuum in philanthropic support to establishing new schools with the abolition of the *zamindari* system and exodus of this class of Hindus to India. This was felt acutely as the

² The present study focuses only on secondary education covering Grade 6 to Grade 10 culminating in national Secondary School Certificate (SSC) examinations at the end of Grade 10.

³ Such initiatives date back to nineteenth century since encouragement from the Hunter Education Commission of 1882. See http://www.indianetzone.com/23/hunter_education_commission.htm (Accessed on May 17, 2010)

communities needed more schools with the increase in school-going population. However, emerging Muslim landed gentry soon began to fill the vacuum. Many of them wanted to combine their philanthropic urge with an opportunity to fulfill their political aspiration found anew in the new state of Pakistan. This also gave rise to a new trend. The political developments in post-partition Pakistan have always been murky, more so in the early years, the first national elections being held in 1954, seven years after creation of the state and the first constitution being formulated in 1956, nine years after the state's existence. Still, the principles upheld in the new state, at least pronouncedly, were democratic, which also had their impact on community level political formations. The new leaders at the community level, because of their political aspiration, involved communities in establishment and management of secondary schools and thus community engagement in school affairs entered a new phase demanding more democratisation of the school governing bodies, known as School Management Committees (SMCs).

After independence of Bangladesh in 1971, rebuilding the war-ravaged country's educational system amidst many competing priorities took time. On January 1, 1980, the Government, in its effort to play its own role in expansion of secondary education, decided to support community initiatives by providing salary support to the teachers of the non-government secondary schools, equivalent to 50 per cent of the basic salary of the teachers of government schools (Rahman, 2009, p. 390). The subvention thus provided to schoolteachers, and for that matter to the schools, has since been popularly known as "Monthly Pay Order" (MPO). The rest of the teachers' salaries were expected to come from tuition and other earnings of schools. This sparked a huge enthusiasm among the communities, otherwise starved of funds, to open much needed new schools. Since the early 1990s, subvention rose to 95 percent of teachers' salaries, which was eventually increased to 100 percent in 2006 under the political pressure of the teachers' unions (The Daily Star, 2006).

The increase in the number of secondary schools around this time shows a significant trend. In 1975, the total number of secondary schools was 9031. This gradually came down to 6476 in 1980. Noticing this ominous trend, and unable to expand public provision of secondary education, the Government introduced the subvention in the form of MPO for nongovernment schools in 1980. With the introduction of MPO, the number of secondary schools kept increasing consistently. By 1990, the number was 10448, which increased to 19070 in 2011 (BANBEIS). All these increases were in nongovernment schools. The number of public schools remained constant at 317 since

1993. Obviously, increase in nongovernment secondary schools directly correlates to introduction of and increase in subvention.

1.1.2 Recognition of Schools, Subvention, Governance and Policies

Until 1980, the most important meeting point for a secondary school and the government was on the issue of recognition of the school, which allowed the students of a secondary school to sit for the national examinations at the end of Grade 10. Recognition of schools, administration of the national examinations and certification of students on successful completion of secondary education were the primary responsibilities of the education boards, one in each administrative divisions of the country.⁴ What mattered most to these nongovernment secondary schools, otherwise run by the communities, rather autonomously, was their interface with the education boards, the visible extension of government. This begins with the process for recognition based on certain criteria (discussed in details in Chapter 4). In addition to looking into the physical facilities, number of students, qualifications of teachers, performance of the school, an inspection for recognition from the board also probes into the ways the school is governed—the management committee, community’s voice in formation of the committee, and mechanisms and processes in place to run the school.⁵ Under the power conferred on the boards by the ordinance of 1961, (East Pakistan Order No. XXXIII, 1961) the education boards issued several regulations, the major ones being the regulations of 1977 (Government of Bangladesh, 1977) and that of 2009 (Government of Bangladesh, 2009), on the composition, authority and functions of the school management committees. An educational system so overwhelmingly dependent on examinations certainly gave enormous clout to the education boards. Still, the boards had limited role in governance of schools, except through examinations and anticipated adherence to the SMC regulations, which, however, was not buttressed by adequate monitoring, either.

⁴ In post-independence Bangladesh (after 1971), there were four divisions in the country and therefore four education boards called Boards of Intermediate and Secondary Education (BISE). With the increase of administrative divisions, now there are eight general education boards. In addition, there is one technical education board and one *madrassah* education board, meant for Islamic religious education, all under the Ministry of Education.

⁵ For the purpose of this study, a synoptic definition of “governance” has been constructed rather eclectically from the rich literature on governance. This focuses on rules, institutional mechanisms and processes followed in exercising or devolving authority to ensure voice, accountability, transparency and perceived efficiency of public expenditure and to stem corruption in managing educational institutions.

The second interface between the government and the secondary schools came from the introduction of subvention in 1980. Initially piggybacked on the criteria for recognition, provision of subvention, as it appears from government documents and circulars, had a limited objective only to support the community initiatives in running secondary schools, which otherwise would have been the responsibility of the government. The national education policy documents produced by different governments have been conspicuously silent about subvention as a separate category in the policy discourse since introduction of subvention, although more resources for education in general have always been sought for. Subvention was taken almost as a “given” as if deserving no separate discussion, although various circulars and orders were issued on subvention from time to time.

There was a difference between recognition and subvention albeit initially premised upon the same set of criteria. Recognition allowed schools, and for that matters the students of the schools, to participate in the national examinations for a fee paid to the education boards. On the other hand, subvention or MPO was the monetary support going from the government to the nongovernment schools and the schools were getting increasingly dependent on subvention, particularly the new ones established after introduction of subvention. Potentially, this was a more potent instrument to effect governance of schools, not quite realised by the government for about a decade since its introduction, largely due to the government’s attitude to support what was perceived to be a noble initiative of the rural school communities. During this time, age-old relationship between the government and nongovernment secondary remained unchanged. A school continued to be judged primarily on the basis of the results in the terminal national examinations after Grade 10. School governance was an autonomous affair of the school community.

Since early 1990s, however, the school-state relations began to change affecting the ways the schools were to be governed. By 2012, there was a significant transformation in this relationship. How and why it happened and with what effect on the schools, the school communities and even on the government vis-à-vis the schools and how this transformation has been reacted to are the issues this research attempts to examine.

A number of things happened between 1993 and 2012 that can potentially contribute to the understanding of this transformation. First, the presence of multilateral institutions (MLIs) in the secondary education scenario increased significantly. Secondly,

synchronous with the advent of MLIs in the picture, a re-conceptualisation of the role of subvention as an instrument to affect change in the governance architecture of these schools and a mechanism to implement them began to take shape in the policy discourses. Thirdly, a visibly large-scale flow of discursive products, such as circulars, orders, directives, operations manuals, as opposed to the grand education policies, entered the discursive domain of governance policies and most of them had links, in one way or other, with the development interventions supported by MLIs. Besides, the MLIs themselves spun out an enormous amount of educational development documents, which created what Vavrus calls a 'referential web' (Vavrus, 2004, pp. 141-153) for any discussion on educational development in Bangladesh. Thirdly, MLIs occupied a significant place in the policy discourses amidst a nervous balance between the endogenous and exogenous policy actors. Given this synchrony, one can legitimately ask if these discursive products and active engagement of the exogenous policy actors had any impact on reconfiguration of the field of policy discourses on secondary education governance in Bangladesh and if these had an effect on the school-state relationship that appears to have substantially changed since. The change in the school-state relationship is manifest in the way the school and state relate to each other and what they perceive to be their respective roles. If these roles have changed, so have their identities. An understanding of the transformation of the school-state relationship can be approached from an analysis of all these synchronous developments.

1.1.3 The Multilateral Institutions in Secondary Education

The international development agencies like the Asian Development Bank and the World Bank became actively involved in secondary education in Bangladesh since the early 1990s. While the need for external resources to develop the secondary education sub-sector was a compelling factor for gradually increased role of MLIs in Bangladesh's educational development, early successes with girls' education based on a conditional cash transfer (CCT) model introduced by these development agencies was also a significant catalyst in giving a role and credence to these agencies in knowledge transfer. A rich literature exists on the issues of policy transfer, the mechanisms of policy borrowing and policy lending, institutionalization of certain governance practices, deterritorialisation of policy prescriptions and reterritorialisation of them through adapting to the local context (discussed in details in Chapter 2). The multilateral institutions deterritorialise certain policy options to validate them with borrowed authority

of experiences of the global institutions elsewhere, which again are structured in a preferred way, and then reterritorialise and indigenise them. What is advanced as a policy option is often a hybrid of a global model reshaped within local realities, but not far removed from their neoliberal policy preferences (Steiner-Khamsi, 2001, pp. 69-86).

The literature, particularly in the tradition of critical theories,⁶ suggests that the multilateral institutions follow a particular development paradigm, true to their development philosophy of private sector led growth with limited intervention from the government. The market, characterised by consumer choice and competition, is given a privileged role to determine the course of development. The critics of multilaterals maintain that such a construal of educational development is part of a global scheme of the multilaterals, in keeping with their preferences for a particular kind of globalisation. This globalisation is believed to lead to a global homogenisation within the ambit of neoliberalism affecting an irreversible change in the development policy landscapes.

With such policies in place, as the critical theorists observe, market is expected to gradually displace the state from many areas and from many of its traditional roles, including in education. Such changes effectively give control of these areas to others who can control market from distance. In the process, the state also metamorphoses into an entity serving the market. These changes have impact on education policies, their production processes, and the practices in education (Rizvi & Lingard, 2000, p. 422). Carnoy identifies globalisation in the education sector as an “ideological horse,” and its effects on education largely as a product of a “financially-driven, free-market ideology, not of a clear conception for improving education” (Carnoy, 1999, p. 59). This paradigm of educational development needs a governance system in place that promotes, sustains and reinforces the market principles and values (discussed in details in Chapter 2). The probable connection between the increased presence of MLIs in Bangladesh’s secondary education and the notable changes in secondary education governance system since their advent is what this study explores.

In a country like Bangladesh, there is considerable room for improvement in secondary education and there are numerous problems that the country needs to grapple

⁶ “Critical Theory” with its root in the Western European Marxist tradition known as the Frankfurt School initially meant to be a theory for human emancipation, “to liberate human beings from the circumstances that enslave them” (Horkheimer 1982, 244). This has now broadened to mean a broad spectrum of theoretical positions that provide “the descriptive and normative bases for social inquiry aimed at decreasing domination and increasing freedom in all their forms.” Drawn from StanfordEncyclopedia of Philosophy at <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/critical-theory/#4> (Accessed on May 14, 2011)

with. State failure to ensure accountability in a system can be addressed both in terms of strengthening the state's engagement with appropriate tools or through its removal from certain spaces for market to fix it. What ideological pursuits work behind framing those problems would have a near-unmistakable indication as to what solutions would be sought and how. Therefore, it is important to track different policy processes, the ideological underpinnings of these policies, the interplay among them and how one cancels out the other or one converges with the other in the given policy milieu and in the constantly changing discursive structure. This dissertation attempts to look into these policy issues and, in doing so, probes into the tools and concepts used in constructing the emerging governance architecture in secondary education.

1.2 THE SCHOOL-STATE RELATIONSHIP

Even a casual observer of Bangladesh education system, who has seen the system long enough, would notice the fundamental change in the school-state relationship in secondary education from what it was in the 1970s and the 1980s. Whether this change was a usual evolution or a change with a purpose is worth investigating. One also cannot fail to notice that this change began to take place when various forms of subvention, e.g., MPO, and stipend or various forms grants/rewards began to reach the schools some of which happened through various development interventions supported by MLIs.

The subvention, notwithstanding its earlier objective of supporting the community initiatives, was the most important instrument to instate 'discipline' and governance in secondary schools. It was the responsibility of the government to ensure good governance in the institutions receiving public resources. The government needed to ensure communities' voices in functioning of schools, transparency and efficiency in resource utilisation, fair-play in decision making on various issues, and performance of the schools. A closer scrutiny of the set of criteria for subvention, replicated from the set of criteria for school recognition would reveal that all these elements of governance were addressed (Ministry of Education, 1989b). Still, these criteria were not uniformly applied and adequate measures were not in place to ensure their strict adherence. For example, an institution cannot be established, recognised and given subvention if it is within one kilometer of another already established institution in municipal and industrial areas and within four kilometers in rural areas (Ministry of Education, 1997c). A school mapping completed by the Bangladesh Bureau of National Educational Statistics (BANBEIS)

reveals that this criterion was not followed by the schools in 115 upazilas⁷ (sub-districts) (BANBEIS, 2006, p. 15). Still the institutions received subvention, thus clearly showing the presence of governance problems and hence the need for governance reforms.

These problems were brought to the foreground of educational development discourse and reforms were pursued more strenuously after the multilateral institutions had come into the picture. Real problems can be subjected to different discursive constructions leading to different solutions. Solutions emanating from governance reforms can also change the relationship between the two important actors—the school and the state. As discussed in this dissertation, the multilaterals played an important role in instituting governance reforms in secondary education through various interventions. How the problems were constructed and solutions sought with what end and what effect the solutions had on the school-state relationship form an important aspect of the present research. Also of particular importance is the role of the MLIs in structuring the legitimating discourse for the governance model advanced.

Let me insert a word of caution at the very outset with regard to reading this thesis. The first four substantive chapters (Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7) provide a narrative of the construction of this MLI dominance, particularly in policy discourse at the national level which is a major focus of this thesis. However, policies are as good they are implemented. As we will notice, despite this discursive dominance of MLIs at the national policy level, which often appears to be invincible because of its association with knowledge and resources, the policies face considerable resistance of various forms buttressed by counter-discourses emanating both from actors at central level of government and from the ground. This is discussed in Chapter 8. In a nut shell, the MLI dominance, despite its apparent victory at national level as discussed in the first four substantive chapters, has never been conclusive.

1.3 THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE STUDY

This qualitative research is based upon critical analysis of secondary education governance policies in Bangladesh, which uses a mix of theoretical tools. As mentioned earlier, it attempts to understand the changing school-state relationship in Bangladesh's secondary education as a result of governance reforms of nongovernment secondary schools. In doing so, it probes into the policy processes, examines the roles of various

⁷ This is the administrative unit just below the district.

actors—political and bureaucratic parts of government, education commissions, multilateral institutions, civil society groups active in education and the school communities—and analyse the discursive trends and elements that construct knowledge of governance and shape the structure of secondary education governance (the theoretical framework for the study is discussed in more details in Chapter 3). While there are many actors, this study examines the relative positions of these actors in the policy discourses, importance of different actors in the policy terrain, both subtle and apparent, distribution of discursive power among these actors within the discursive trends.

There are antecedents to such governance reforms, which can be drawn selectively from ‘global experience’ by some of these policy actors. Hence, the central focus of this study is on the roles of the multilateral institutions and their interventions, both discursive and “developmental”, in reshaping the understanding of what the non-government secondary schools are and how they should be governed. The increasing importance of multilateral institutions in setting the policy directions and steering reforms of their choice is too conspicuous. These choices and the discursive strategies to deploy and make these choices legitimate demand investigation. The governance reforms they attempt to deploy in Bangladesh have unmistakable semblance to the neoliberal global agenda of MLIs.

In order to stick to their development philosophy of neoliberalism, the multilateral institutions need to reconstruct the problems of governance in terms of failure of the state in ensuring ‘accountability’ (literature in this regard is discussed in details in Chapter 2). They redefine problems in market parlance in the policy discourses seeking solution through market mechanisms. This construal would also have significant implication for framing the governance discourse to meet the demands of what Dale calls a “Globally Structured Agenda for Education” (Dale, 2000) in keeping with the neoliberal notion of educational development. A new form of governance thus emerges, which Peters and others name as “managerialism” (M. Peters, Marshall, & Fitzsimon, 2000, pp. 109-132) where targets are set, quality parameters are predetermined, monitoring mechanisms are in place, identities are assigned, rewards and punishment are pre-designed and the whole education system is likened to a production line catering to the demands of the market and is governed from a distance based on a set of parameters. This study investigates in the context of Bangladesh how the whole realm of education is rediscovered in terms akin to market principles, which are presented as inviolable *raison d’etre* for any educational development. At a deeper level, this brings about a fundamental shift, perhaps

irreversible, in the very relations between the government and the communities running the schools. While what has happened is well-known, how it happened in Bangladesh is an interesting case that demands research.

The study also examines various forms of counter-discourses that emerge in the process from various locations and the nature of resistance to governance reforms imposed from above. The interface between the model of governance steered by multilateral institutions and the resistance from the communities and the on-going negotiation between the two with the state as the “dubious” interlocutor would constitute an interesting area for research. Given the preponderance of subvention and much-avowed role of communities in secondary education, and very visible discursive dominance of the multilateral institutions in the policy arena one would naturally expect that this would be thoroughly studied. Unfortunately, there has been no study so far in this area in Bangladesh.

The study, rather eclectically, makes use of different conceptual-theoretical trends like education in post-colonial situations (e.g., those of Fazal Rizvi, Cameron McCarthy, Peter Ninnes, Leon Tikly), theories related to policy borrowing and policy lending (from Gita Steiner-Khamsi, Jurgen Schriewer and others), critical studies of education (from Michael Apple, Henry Giroux et al) and post-structuralist analyses of education reforms (Stephen Ball, Henry Giroux, Stanley Aronowitz, Michael Peters and others). The idea is to examine the policy processes and governance reforms initiatives in secondary education in Bangladesh through the lenses of these theoretical-conceptual constructs, first, to see if they help in understanding the Bangladesh situation and then talk back to the on-going theoretical debates in the field of educational governance with specific experiences in Bangladesh (see also, Anderson-Levitt, 2003; Connell, 2007).

In conducting this study, I make no pretense of reaching any conclusion inductively from a zero theoretical ground. I examine the process of governance reforms in secondary education in Bangladesh from the perspective of a mix of theoretical constructs. The neoliberal agenda of the multilateral institutions is all too well-known making any investigation from a neutral ground redundant. I presume this knowledge as given and move on to explain that agenda and the form of governance configured gradually to change the school-state relationship citing concrete examples of this discursive formation from the specific context of Bangladesh. While deployment of a particular governance reform is a political move, responses to such a move are also

political. What governance reforms are discursively validated, how they are advanced and how they are responded to form the crux of the present research.

1.3.1 Objectives and the Key Research Questions

This qualitative research addresses the following two questions, as mentioned earlier, (i) how the multilateral institutions, using subvention as a tool, advanced governance reforms of their choice in secondary education in Bangladesh since early 1990s; and (ii) how this has changed the school-state relationship and evoked a range of responses from the school communities and other actors. To answer the first question, the study traces the trajectory of the global neoliberal agenda of the multilateral institutions for educational development, the discursive and referential web they create within which they want the policy discourse and policy decisions to take place and the local agenda to be framed to steer a particular kind of governance in Bangladesh's secondary education system. It then answers the second question by looking at how this governance, in keeping with market principles and private sector model of development, assigns new roles and identities to the state, the school communities and the School Management Committees (SMCs) and in the process, changes the school-state relationship gradually moving the system towards a new form of managerialism.

The study also examines the complex interplay among the actors like the Government (or for that matter, the state), the international development agencies, the communities and other actors in the given discursive environment and the acts of resistance to governance reforms in various forms from various actors. In other words, the key research issues are:

- i. The policy processes and discourses on secondary education governance and the roles of various actors, particularly, the international development agencies;
- ii. The discursive itinerary of construction and legitimation of knowledge, both from global and local sources, that buttresses a particular kind of governance, a new form of managerialism following market principles and a private sector model;
- iii. The processes of creation and reconstitution of various categories and identities to conform to the new notion of governance;
- iv. The changing school-state relationship in keeping with the neoliberal agenda for educational governance reforms;
- v. The acts of resistance, subversion and creative articulation from various actors to some governance reforms.

There is an attempt to build a logical itinerary of the present research. First, this study examines the complex interaction of 'global' and 'national' in the production of policy discourse around subvention. It also examines if the 'global' in this discourse is presented

as global or camouflaged as ‘local’ for political reasons. To this end, I pay particular attention to the encroaching influence of MLIs and the role of various national policy actors that interact with them on the shifting articulation of subvention since the 1990s. Second, having identified the larger discursive context in which subvention is increasingly articulated into the discourse of managerialism, I then bring the focus ‘down’ to the ‘ground’ level, attempting to illuminate how the policy discourse produced at the global-national level is ‘taken up’ on the ground. In doing so, I focus on the way local policy actors negotiate with identity positions offered by the dominant policy discourse of managerialism.

1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH

The multilateral institutions advance new managerialism as a model of education governance that attempts to fundamentally change the relationship between the state and the school communities. This model of education governance attempts to reconstitute the identities of the SMCs, teachers and students mostly in economic terms and very differently within a mode of new contractualism, which among other things, creates uncertainty about continued state support. The normative edifice is so forcefully constructed with elements like ‘performance standards,’ ‘quality of education,’ ‘competitiveness,’ and ‘cost efficiency’ that the policy makers often perceive this to be “politically incorrect” to contradict with these reform measures.⁸ However, implementation of some of these reforms meets with considerable resistance. The disconnect between political rhetoric at the national level and resistance on the ground, sometimes by the same actors, is baffling. This research, for the first time in Bangladesh, looks into secondary education governance and its role in changing the school-state relationship tracing the discursive trajectory of this change.

While there are general discussions about policy processes and some research on targeted policy interventions in Bangladesh, there has been no comprehensive investigation into the policy processes, various streams of such processes, what actually counts as implementable policy at the end and how certain influences in the policy processes create an inviolable referential web to reinforce their own legitimacy. This research attempts to examine the referential web created by the multilateral institutions in

⁸ Sometimes these results in what Bakhtin would have called ‘polyvocality’ of the political actors.

construction of knowledge of educational development, particularly in the area of secondary education governance.

The discursive dominance of the multilateral institutions in the policy processes of secondary education reforms has never been thoroughly examined. The dominant tendency in education reforms in Bangladesh is to find a technical-technocratic solution to education problems where the global knowledge of the multilateral institutions is generally perceived to be superior to that emanating from the local context. The passing reference to such dominance in popular writings of left-of-center NGO activists and academics have never enjoyed enough credence unless from similar ideologues. This research attempts to fill this void.

Education reforms informed by different political agenda of different actors, is an intensely contested ideological terrain. They need to be understood in the larger perspective of relations of power as they emerge in the social, political, cultural, and technical domains and their interplay. Although subvention to non-government secondary schools is the single-most important leverage used by the Government and the “development partners” to institute governance reforms, the causal relationship between them and the rich texture of varied interests around subvention and reforms have never been adequately studied in Bangladesh.

‘Politicisation’ of the school communities is a multi-dimensional issue. However, understanding of politics in school governance has been pervasively negative and uni-dimensional. Much of this understanding flows from the documents authored by the multilateral institutions. Lack of comprehensive understanding of the political role of the school communities has resulted in a riddle that governance reform initiatives have failed to grapple with. A better understanding of the political agency of the school communities, manifest in their political voice, particularly in resisting some reforms contrary to their interest, will help policy makers take better pro-school decisions in future. This was never done in Bangladesh and this study attempts to fill this important knowledge gap.

This study will hopefully lead to a better understanding of the past failures and successes, the present trends and the alternative ways to construct the discursive processes with more significant role for the local actors. The study also attempts to contribute to the general understanding of the role of MLIs in education reform work in aid-dependent, developing nations from the experience in Bangladesh. In addition to the theoretical edifice this study attempts to build, hopefully, this will also provide the policy

makers with the tools to understand the larger perspectives and help them make better choices from the emerging policy options.

1.5 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

While secondary education reform initiatives in Bangladesh cover a wide range of issues, I essentially limit the focus of this study on the policy processes for governance reforms in secondary education, the use of subvention to institute specific governance reforms related to schools and the discursive trajectory of this governance reform process. The study exclusively focuses on nongovernment secondary schools, which constitute more than 98 percent of the secondary schools in Bangladesh. Although I occasionally retrieve historical data, the study basically focuses on the period from the early 1990s to 2012. This longer time frame has been taken in order to capture the temporal dimension of policy changes, albeit on selected governance issues.

As mentioned earlier, a major emphasis of the study is on examining the role of different actors in the policy processes, particularly the multilateral institutions, discursive distribution of power within which the reforms are initiated and responses from various actors, particularly the school communities, are made. Based on the experience from Bangladesh, the study also attempts to contribute to the on-going theoretical debates on governance reforms in education, particularly in relation to the role of MLIs, discursive proclivities, varied country context and strategies in responding to policy advances. As regards the multilateral institutions, the exclusive focus of this study is on the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank because of their direct and significant involvement in secondary education in Bangladesh.

While tracing the discursive locus of policies, role of various actors, changing policy discourses around subvention, governance reforms, and reconstitution of various identities, the study examines a number of discursive products, e.g. the national education policies, circulars, memoranda, regulations from the government, sector reviews, sector development plans, important project documents, and training manuals from the multilateral institutions and the projects supported by them, elements of public discourse as gleaned from the media and texts from interviews and focus group discussions. However, this study in no way pretends to be exhaustive. I do not make any claim that iterations in all discursive products and from all actors have always been consistent conforming to the tenor of interpretation presented in this study. However, I endeavor to

make the study internally consistent in analysing what stand out to be the dominant discursive trends and the consequences of the governance reforms.

This study is not about a wholesale criticism of the multilateral institutions. It does not stem from any xenophobia about anything coming from the West through the conduits of the multilateral institutions. Bangladesh needs support from the international community for its educational development. Much of this support over the past decades has yielded positive results for the country, for example, in the areas of enhancing access to secondary education, bringing rural girls to schools, slow but steady improvement in quality of education, improving education management information system at least partially, improving teacher quality, streamlining examination system etc. The achievements in these areas are significant and MLIs supported many of these developments. However, this study critically examines only one aspect of secondary education and that is governance and the role of the multilateral institutions in changing the governance structure, the ideological underpinnings and the organizing principles behind this change. This study is not meant to be a wholesale criticism of globalisation either, but a critical investigation into a particular global model of educational development being deployed in Bangladesh and the social-political reactions to this model, which puts the effectiveness of the model under interrogation.

1.6 CHAPTER ORGANISATION

The dissertation is organised thematically. After Introduction in Chapter One, Chapter Two deals with literature in the relevant field. The chapter examines critically the literature on globalizing processes of neoliberalism and its impact on education policies in developing countries and various forms of resistance. The discussion brings in the concepts of educational borrowing and lending and various critical perspectives to discuss the globalizing process of neoliberalism and the role of multilateral agencies in this regard. Eventually, it delves into the literature on Foucault's notion of Governmentality and construction of education governance in the form of a new managerialism and contractualism following market principles. The Chapter covers literature on six areas relevant to this study: (a) globalisation, neoliberalism and educational policy making and their impact; (b) influence of global agencies/players in educational policy making processes; (c) experience of global-local nexus in educational policy making in different countries; (d) critical perspectives on understanding globalizing processes; (e) notion of

new managerialism and governance architecture in education and (f) resistance to neoliberal agenda of educational development and governance.

Chapter Three deals with the issues of methodology. This study follows a qualitative research methodology embarking on a critical analysis of governance policies with the aid of various texts, interviews and focus group discussion with school communities. The texts include the policy documents of the Government of Bangladesh relevant to secondary education, five-year-plans, poverty reduction strategy papers, various regulations, ordinances, circulars, orders, memoranda, court orders, project and program documents of the multilateral institutions, operations manuals of various projects, consultants' reports and studies, education sector reviews, country assistance strategies, sector development plans, documents prepared by NGOs and academics, texts of round-table discussions on education policies, proceedings and minutes of various meetings on education, etc. A considerable portion of information was collected from interviews with policy makers, politicians, present and former bureaucrats, former ministers, school teachers, SMC chairs and members from school communities. Information was also collected from three focus group discussions with groups of head teachers, SMC members and community members and school teachers. All these, taken as various forms of texts, constitute the policy discourses. The study critically examines these texts to trace the itinerary of the policy discourses on secondary education governance.

Chapter Four examines the policy processes on which the governance reforms are premised with a focus on various actors and their roles. It attempts to provide perspectives on (a) interplay among various actors in the policy processes; (b) processes of constructing knowledge of governance policies; (c) creation and deployment of a policy regime that fits the multilaterals' agenda for secondary education development in Bangladesh; and (d) the role of the state in managing conflicting views on policies. While on the surface, there are many actors, the chapter discusses how only a few, e.g., the multilateral institutions and bureaucrats, define the policy regime for implementation for the most part.

Chapter Five analyses the texts relating to secondary education projects implemented by government and supported by multilateral development organisations in order to understand various policy preferences and governance practices brought into play by these projects. Projects are solid interventions and key instruments for multilateral institutions to affect change, which gradually help create a policy regime by often

bypassing any national dialogue. The projects also help multilaterals construct knowledge of educational development and education governance both by making use of global experiences and by selectively structuring experience from implementation of projects in the country. The chapter discusses: (i) the processes of preparation of projects and project related texts and the roles of MLIs and governments in the process; and (ii) some important projects and associated texts prepared by MLIs in secondary education and concomitant policy actions taken by the government.

Extrapolating from the discursive formations under the multilateral assisted projects, in Chapter Six, I dig further into the ideas, elements of governance discourse and categories floated or reconfigured by the multilaterals leading both to construction of a governance architecture of their choice and aiding to the legitimation of this governance architecture. The chapter attempts to show how the MLIs, through their various interventions, attempt to bring the whole policy architecture into the fold of their own discursive web. In keeping with this objective, the present chapter investigates (a) how the multilateral institutions attempt to construct the knowledge of governance policies using its discursive tools; (b) how the MLIs create and deploy a regime of concepts and categories creating a discursive web through which they interpret education policies and remold them to fit their agenda of secondary education development in Bangladesh and (c) how this discursive web influences the country's "own" grand policy narratives giving rise to a policy architecture preferred by the MLIs.

In Chapter Seven, I examine how the identities of schools and school communities have been reconstituted discursively and through successive reform measures gradually changing the school-state relationship and the implication of this change for school governance. The chapter looks at the following issues: (i) changing School Management Committees (SMCs) and their leadership through various regulations; (ii) gradual transformation of the notion of subvention and its implication for the relations between the state and schools, and for that matter, the objective of education and the role of schools, now remolded under market principles; and (iii) the knowledge products, supported by the multilateral institutions, and their role in instituting a new management of nongovernment schools reconfiguring roles, responsibilities and identities of various actors on the ground. In conclusion, the notion of new managerialism is revisited drawing upon these developments.

Chapter Eight locates the dilemmas and challenges faced by different actors leading to various forms of resistance. The chapter also examines the strategies of

resistance from different levels and from various actors. The chapter revisits the roles of the endogenous policy actors: (i) the Government, both bureaucrats and politicians within the given political environment; (ii) teachers' unions; and (iii) schools and school communities and their strategies in mounting resistance against some governance reforms advanced by multilateral institutions. A major issue this chapter attempts to examine is the responses from the school communities to the governance reforms and identities on offer that come along with these reforms and how these communities rearticulate their identities in the face of the reforms.

In Chapter Nine, the conclusion of this dissertation, I summarise the major findings of the study and relate them to the theoretical debates on the neoliberal global agenda on governance reform and the issue of political agency in dealing with reforms in a developing country context. In doing so, I examine the theoretical and ideological underpinnings of policy lending and policy borrowing, construction of identities of reform recipients and the discursive trends around the policy processes to see if they conform to the existing knowledge or if the specificity of Bangladesh situation gives rise to new understanding. Similarly, I also investigate if the counter-discursive trends, resistance to governance reforms and re-articulation of identities in Bangladesh brings any new insight into the present understanding of these issues. It also explores the possibility of alternative configuration of governance policy reform discourses with possible redistribution of discursive power still at disposal of the state.

1.7 SUBJECT POSITION OF THE RESEARCHER

It needs to be clarified at the very outset that I have worked with a multilateral institution for about 17 years in Bangladesh mostly in the education sector. During this period, I have had direct experience of developing education projects, participating in policy dialogues and on many occasions, leading policy dialogue with government and other stakeholders on reform issues. I participated in many meetings with Education Ministers. This allowed me to see how the multilaterals work in the field of education, relate to other actors in the policy arena, construct policy discourses and advance policy reforms. Therefore, during discussion in this thesis, sometimes I will interject as a key informant from the subject position of my lived and professional experience.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW: INTERROGATING KNOWLEDGE

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter critically examines the literature on the process of globalisation of a neoliberal agenda for development, its impact on policies for governance of education in developing countries and various forms of resistance to such imaginings and implementation of such policies in developing countries. In keeping with the primary objective of the study to examine the policy processes for adoption of an educational governance model in Bangladesh and the trajectory of these policies from global to local, this chapter draws upon the literature from critical perspectives on educational borrowing and lending, country experiences of the globalizing process of neoliberalism and the role of multilateral agencies in this regard. Starting from the global perspective on education policies, the chapter narrows down to the issue of governance as conceived of under neoliberalism. In doing so, the discussion draws upon Foucault's notion of Governmentality, and construction of education governance in the form of a new managerialism and contractualism following market principles. The chapter examines six areas: (a) globalisation, neoliberalism and educational policy making and their impact; (b) influence of global agencies/players in educational policy making processes; (c) critical perspectives on understanding globalizing processes; (d) notion of new managerialism and governance architecture in education and (e) resistance to neoliberal agenda of educational development in the face of the global-local nexus in educational policy making in different countries.

Given the centrality of 'governance' in this study, a working definition of this term is in order. The choice of the expression "working definition" is a cautious one not to be ensnared into a preordained telos and also not to limit the investigation to the reductive sphere of a definition imposed on as elusive a term as governance is. This caution comes from the fact that much of the literature on governance comes from sources that this study intends to critique.

Kjaer defines governance on the basis of some key concepts like legitimacy, efficiency, democracy and accountability (Kjaer, 2004). Kaufmann and others from the World Bank define governance as 'the traditions and institutions by which authority in a country is exercised.' They have a set of six aggregate indicators to measure governance and these are voice and accountability, political instability and violence, government

effectiveness, regulatory burden rule of law, and graft (Kaufman, 1999).

To Bevir, much of the present-day importance of governance is derived from the neoliberal pursuit in the United States and the United Kingdom and then acceptance of the notion by institutions like OECD and the World Bank. Here, governance is understood in terms of the ‘increased efficiency in the public sector allegedly ensured by measures such as marketisation, contracting out, new management techniques, staff cuts, and stricter budgeting’ (Bevir, 2003, pp. 200-01). Germane to this study is the concept of governance as understood from neoliberal point of view. Neoliberalism looks upon the issue from the point of view of ‘less government’ and ‘more governance’ as Bevir puts it. ‘For neoliberals, the hidden hand of globalisation explains and guarantees the spread of governance—the minimal state, marketisation and New Public Management’ (Bevir, 2003, p. 201). Gradual withdrawal of the state from many of the public spheres, leaving decisions to the perceived ‘rational choice’ of people and moving towards a model of governance where governance comes to be understood more as self-governance is the trajectory of development under neoliberalism. This then leads to a kind of governance which Jessop puts as “reflexive self-organization of independent actors involved in complex relations of reciprocal interdependence, with such self-organization being based on continuing dialogue and resource-sharing to develop mutually beneficial joint projects and to manage the contradictions and dilemmas inevitably involved in such situations” (Jessop, 2003, p. 101).

Governance certainly encourages ‘reflexive self-organisation’ but questions are there about autonomous choices of the individual actors and whether the outcomes are always ‘mutually beneficial.’ For the purpose of this study, a synoptic understanding of ‘governance’ has been adopted to critically look into the policies, rules, institutional mechanisms and processes that in the present secondary education system in Bangladesh prod stakeholders and actors toward this self-organisation and to examine, in the process, what happens to the issues of voice, accountability, transparency, perceived efficiency of public expenditure and stemming of corruption in managing educational institutions.

2.2 GLOBALISATION: TAKING NEOLIBERALISM TO EVERY FRONTIER

Globalisation is the most-talked-about issue in the development arena, or that has been the case at least for the last fifteen years. If it is to be perceived as ‘humanity’s increased interconnected across time and space,’ movement of people, money and information, or creating opportunities for access to markets, cultural practices products, and employment

in a way never seen before (Rizvi & Lingard, 2000), clearly there would be a much greater acceptance of globalisation. This indeed is the case with many who are dispensing the opportunities and making use of these opportunities. To them globalisation is innocuous, something to stand by and pave the way for it to advance. But there are others who raise questions. Many of them gathered in Washington DC and Seattle in 1999-2000 and almost paralysed these two cities. Increased resistance against the multilateral institutions promoting economic globalisation during the last few years of the 20th century is a testimony to the fact that globalisation is not an uncontested phenomenon (O'Brien, Goetz, Scholte, & Williams, 2000, p. 1).

The concerns are multifaceted. To many of the critics, globalisation is simply to be understood as a process that instills neoliberal policies in order to affect global homogenisation in economic and social governance. For both modernisation and dependency theorists, who received better attention until the 1970s, the role of the state was considered central, 'and a means to ensure that market inefficiencies could be overcome through state intervention' (S. Robertson et al., 2007, p. 13). By the 1980s, a critique of the role of the state in development emerged which, with its powerful instruments in hand, began to change the development policy landscapes all over the world rather irreversibly.

Such policies, now widely known as neoliberal policies, have a pronounced preference for market over the state and gradual displacement of the state by the market in many areas. It is much easier to control the market from a distance than to control the state. In the process, the state also undergoes considerable change, both in terms of form and substance of what it is and what it does. This change has considerable implications for education policies and practices. 'The new state forms within nations, combined with the priority granted to the market over the state, affect and inflect education policy, its production processes, and the practices of education' (Rizvi & Lingard, 2000, p. 422). Capital, roving as it is, defines as to what skills a nation should concentrate on and what kind of education is needed to serve the global market. Globalisation, if accepted in the form preferred by the globalizing agencies, redefines the role of the nation-state as a manager leaving much of its traditional role to the market. According to Carnoy, "...globalization enters the education sector on an ideological horse, and its effects on education and the production of knowledge are largely a product of that financially-driven, free-market ideology, not of a clear conception for improving education" (Carnoy, 1999, p. 59).

Neoliberalism as the dominant ideology behind globalisation has been subject to enormous scrutiny. One major criticism, from the critical theorists, is about its insistence on reducing everything to economic terms, reducing all social and political relations to market relations and yet failing to deliver what it promised to many developing countries. In the process, sovereignty of many of these countries and their freedom to choose has been substantially compromised.

After debates over many years, perhaps now there is an emerging consensus that globalisation of neoliberal agenda has affected governance reforms in education with varied intensity in different countries under different circumstances. Despite its apparent homogenizing tendency, the processes and effects of globalisation are not congruent (Dale, 1998, 1999). At the entry point of globalisation, there is a neoliberal model of education governance embodying an ‘orthodox response to the problems posed to rich countries’ but then the nature of encounter and the effects are ‘mediated, in both directions, and in complex ways, by existing national patterns and structures’ (Dale, 1999, p. 3) in different countries.

First and foremost, the goal of education in neoliberal model is development of human capital (Apple, 2000, p. 60) where an individual is conceived as an ‘autonomous entrepreneur’ (Harsh, 2008, p. 35) operating in a market and education is seen as a commodity to be purchased through autonomous choice⁹ just like any other commodity. The market of education is also ideally characterised by choice and competition. Economic rationality is the supreme arbiter. Efficiency and an ‘ethic’ of cost-benefit analysis, modeled after private sector practices, are the dominant norms (Apple, 2000, p. 59). The discursive dominance of this neoliberalism is so embedded in the globalised concept of development that it hardly needs to be invoked as a rationale (Harsh, 2008, p. 35).

The state’s response to the advance of neoliberal development of education varies. Two important points are to be remembered vis-à-vis the interface between the nation-state and the neoliberal model of education governance. First, the model itself has not been uniform and policies are polyvalent. Depending on the stage of development of the state, its relation to market, the extent and possibility of private provision of education, judgment about the possibility of resistance and political repercussion to withdrawal/reduction of public resources for education, the model is customised.

⁹ Of course, autonomy of choice is a highly problematic concept, discussed later.

Secondly, the responses of the nation-states to the global model have also been varied depending on the level of ideological acceptance of neoliberalism, its capacity to assert itself against the dictates of the multilateral instruments of neoliberalism and the apprehension of internal resistance. Ball sees globalisation of neoliberal ideas as ‘reducing the autonomy and specificity of the national and the local,’ but at the same time, he opines, ‘policy ideas are received and interpreted differently within different political architectures, national infrastructures, national ideologies and business cultures’ (Ball, 2008, p. 30).

2.3 DEVELOPMENT GOALS OF MULTILATERAL INSTITUTIONS

As discussed in the following pages, it is widely believed that multilateral institutions like the World Bank and Asian Development Bank are instrumental in globalisation of neoliberal models of education governance. The preponderate presence of these institutions in the education sector of the developing countries comes with enormous influence. The World Bank alone invested \$59 billion in education since its first project in Tunisia in 1962. So far, they have supported more than 1500 projects in developing countries (World Bank, 2011, p. 1). Likewise, the Asian Development Bank invested over \$3 billion in education between 2000 and 2009 (Asian Development Bank, 2010, p. 9). Much of these investments, both from the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank, have gone into primary education. During the last two decades, however, the multilateral institutions increased their involvement significantly in secondary, vocational and tertiary education. From 2000 to 2005, the World Bank changed its strategic emphasis. The Bank’s strategy paper says, ‘It also replaced the emphasis on basic education with a focus on developing holistic education systems, thus increasing attention to post-basic education’ (World Bank, 2011, p. 46). The instruments for their engagement include, among others, projects, programs under sector-wide approach, policy lending interventions etc. One of the primary objectives of multilateral investments in education is to reform the governance system. For the World Bank, this means “aligning their governance, management of schools and teachers, financing rules, and incentive mechanism with the goal of learning for all. This also entails ‘reforming relationship of accountability among the various actors and participants in an education system’ (World Bank, 2011, pp. 5-6).

In keeping with this objective, projects and programs supported by the World Bank would generally have components for governance reforms, in one way or other.¹⁰ Built into these interventions are various kinds of conditionalities to steer development in a particular direction, not surprisingly, preferred by these institutions. As Jones put it, ‘The bank’s preconditions for education can only be understood as an ideological stance, in promoting an integrated world system along market lines’ (Jones, 1998, p. 152). Ball expands this by saying that the Bank establishes “a discursive framework within which and limited by which solutions are ‘thought’” (Ball, 1998, p. 124). Interestingly, while theoretically these multilateral institutions are abstracted conglomerates of the nations-states, which are their members, they go far beyond their expected role based on ‘expertise, legitimacy and authority of their own’ (Jones, 2007) underpinned by their ideological adherence to the global market architecture. The global experience that these institutions tap into reproduces the discursive framework over and over again with slight tinkering here and there as necessary to legitimise the same architecture. The policy making processes in the developing countries often operate within such discursive framework with necessary adjustments keeping the core organizing principles more or less intact.

While the nations have ‘varying capacities to mediate and ameliorate the effects of global pressures and globalised education policy discourses produced by agencies such as the World Bank’ (Ozga & Lingard, 2007, p. 68), these organisations themselves have adjusted their discourses to stay on business in the face of ever-increasing doubt about their legitimacy. For instance, Jones recounts the strenuous efforts made by the World Bank to accommodate and adjust to the global situation since 1990. Yet, he argues, ‘the World Bank requires analysis first and foremost as a bank’ and that ‘the Bank continues to provide a window on what global capital has to say about economic and social policy’ and “see itself as setting the pace by asking the right questions about education’s links with economic and social policy, and providing the most robust answers and prescriptions about educational reform” (Jones, 2004, pp. 188-200). The Bank purposefully meandered into projecting itself as ‘Knowledge Bank’, particularly since 1996, and created other narcissistic self-images such as ‘listening,’ ‘responsive to its client,’ and ‘humble,’ but the basic role of the Bank, Jones argues, has not changed. To him, “The World Bank has combined the necessities of neo-liberal reform of education (and of governance more

¹⁰ These various interventions and components of governance in the context of Bangladesh are discussed in details in Chapter 5.

generally) with public relations efforts of a major kind to convey imagery of a responsive and inclusive organisation embracing a wide range of social viewpoints in its construction of development and education future” (Jones, 2007, pp. 325-337).

However, the nature of encounter between these multilateral institutions and the nation-states has changed significantly over the years. Protests in the late 1990s against globalisation, alliances of international civil societies, desperate search for local partners by the multilateral institutions, internal crisis of legitimacy in these institutions – all have contributed to a changed chemistry in their relationship to the nation-states and the responses of the nation-states to the demands, which themselves have gone through a metamorphosis, of these institutions. In the process, the tactics for introduction of neoliberal reforms in education have also undergone significant change. Governance discourses have been remolded with new elements sprinkled all over. Some of them are normative and almost universalised, e.g. ‘global competitiveness,’ ‘participation in knowledge economy,’ some are process-oriented, such as ‘community engagement,’ ‘local ownership,’ ‘parental choice,’ ‘partnership’ etc. Legitimation of the reforms to be introduced also entails different strategies befitting the situations encountered (discussed in details in Chapters 4, 5 and 6 in the context of Bangladesh).

2.3.1 Multilaterals’ Search of Local Allies

A significant part of the strategies of multilateral institutions for local legitimacy is to build local alliance and try to reach out to local and international NGOs. NGOs, particularly the local NGOs, are considered to be local actors working at the grassroots level from which they claim to borrow their legitimacy to have a say on the policy issues. The NGO-government relationship in itself is an interesting case and would be different in different country contexts. An elected government being the representative of the people would not often consider the claim of the NGOs legitimate who mostly work with funds from external donors and whose interventions, policies and actions are allegedly dictated by the funding preferences of these donors. However, inclusion of the multilateral institution in the scenario would form an interesting triad, often changing the chemistry of interaction completely. In development arena, the changing roles of NGO in relation to the government and donors/multilateral institutions are of enormous research interest (Mayhew, 2005). Authors in a book “NGOs, States and Donors: Too Close for Comfort” recount the mixed experiences of this triangular relations crisscrossed by funds,

policy preferences and imperatives of technologies in different countries (Hulme & Edwards, 1997).

NGOs' relationship with the multilateral institutions is quite complex and it varies from country to country. Their role in development has undergone considerable metamorphosis since the 'NGO decade' of the 1980s. NGOs, the 'new actors' of that decade, drew considerable applause for their alternative approaches to development. However, they were eventually criticised by many for succumbing to the hegemonic outreach of the 'mainstream,' which "undermined their 'comparative advantage' as agents of alternative development" (Mitlin, Hickey, & Bebbington, 2007, p. 1700). There is also a strong criticism that 'international support for NGOs has been fuelled, at least in part, simply by disillusionment at governments' failure to meet donor objectives' (Mayhew, 2005, p. 728). Mostly, the bilateral donors support the NGOs. The development objectives of these donors are often not too different from what multilateral institutions try to promote. This proximity to mainstream development, on the one hand, has given the NGOs 'unprecedented levels of access to at least a part of the policy process' but on the other, has subjected them to enormous amount of public scrutiny. Some NGOs, "keen to secure their seat at the new range of tables open to them within 'inclusive' policy processes, have been perhaps too keen to grasp and extend these channels" (Mitlin et al., 2007, pp. 1708-9). Multilateral institutions played an important role in bringing the NGOs to the policy table otherwise denied by the governments. This has given two-fold dividends to the multilateral institutions. First, this has accorded them the opportunity to forge alliance with the NGOs. Secondly, by providing resources to NGOs and bringing them into the fold of their own development agenda, the MLIs also have availed an opportunity to gradually 'depoliticise the range of strategies open to NGOs' (Mitlin et al., 2007, p. 1709).

The MLIs' strategy to neutralise the voices of their potential adversaries, particularly the advocacy NGOs evolved in the face of a roaring global social movement against them. The important NGOs were either members of or well-connected with the international networks of NGOs. Since the mid-1990s, these networks were forging global social movements, and some of their energies were being directed against the multilateral institutions. "Fifty Years is Enough," a strong statement against fifty years of existence of the Bretton Woods institutions from a large global activist group, is an example (Danaher, 1994). The brouhaha was quite deafening in the mid-1990s. Therefore, MLIs needed a strategy to deal with them. NGO response to this strategy

ranged from being confrontational (or perhaps pseudo-confrontational) to being dubious or even symbiotic. Jones observes,

...there is a highly complex interplay in NGO strategies to influence global, national and local agendas: multilateral agencies, for the NGOs, are both objects of change and partners in change. Many NGOs now overtly position themselves to be influential components of international civil society, part of a new pattern of global power relations that they would argue is more inclusive and democratic. But whether NGO engagement effectively influences multilateral policies, or whether the matter is more of one of the agencies co-opting NGOs for their own purposes (including dampening their criticisms), is a real issue (Jones, 2007).

Rappleye portrays this symbiosis between donors and NGOs in the policy arena rather vividly in the context of developments in Nepal. He strenuously charts the incubation and birth of some important Nepalese NGOs ‘midwived’ by powerful exogenous agencies, which eventually took seat on the policy tables, again with support from these agencies. Rappleye recognised various approaches taken by different international actors in nurturing these NGOs and paving the way for their growth and their coming of age at surprisingly short period of time. He describes this approach as “incubating powerful advocacy organisations and ensuring their place at the policy-making table; ...supporting the work of favoured NGOs and reserving a privileged place in monitoring key policy issues; and ... generating knowledge via NGOs that support favoured policy trends” (Rappleye, 2011, p. 28). The objective is the same—finding strongly resonating local voices for the policy preferences of these exogenous agencies. The referential web the civil society organisations like the Nepal Foundation for Advanced Studies (NEFAS) and the Institute for Integrated Development Studies (IIDS) creates is posited as local ‘development knowledge,’ although most of their studies are funded by the exogenous agencies who have their own development agenda. Curiously, the titles of the studies produced by these civil society think-tanks have a striking similarity with the agenda of those exogenous agencies (Rappleye, 2011, pp. 27-49). With regard to NEFAS publications, Rappleye observes, “What makes the perpetuation of these subjectivity-formation processes all the more explicit is that a substantial number of NEFAS publications are also a part of the university curriculum of Nepal’s elite universities; further evidence of *institutionalization* of external influence” (Rappleye, 2011; see also, Vavrus, 2004, pp. 141-53). In Bangladesh context, it would be worth exploring the discursive dominance of the referential web created by the multilateral institutions.

The World Bank's strategic involvement with prominent NGOs, both national and international, began during James Wolfensohn's presidency (1995-2005). As O'Brien observes since the beginning of Wolfensohn's presidency, "there has been a shift, at least in rhetoric, to promoting 'participatory development'" (O'Brien et al., 2000, p. 26). The multilateral institutions themselves, however, are not bound by any obligation to open up their own internal policy discussions to dialogue with these NGOs. Therefore, when they come to the policy table for discussions with national governments, they come with a 'decision,' more or less inflexible, and they look upon the NGOs as their allies in the discussions with national governments. How much support the NGOs would provide to the multilateral institutions is a complex function of how effectively a dominant discourse has been molded aligning different policy actors and whether the NGOs find a resonance of their own development parlance, which again in a circuitous way is borrowed from global development rhetoric. To say the least, this interplay is quite complex (Jones, 2007, pp. 325-337). However, the agency of NGOs is not bereft of all potentials to stage a resistance to policies not quite beneficial to policy recipients, but still advanced by multilateral institutions. They can creatively make use of their place in the policy table and rearticulate the policy options if endowed with the necessary power.

2.4 CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON THE INTERFACE BETWEEN THE GLOBAL AND THE LOCAL

Educational policy transfer has drawn significant attention in comparative education research over the past decades. In the post-colonial era, increasingly this transfer is taking a shape, which cannot be described purely as an innocuous transfer of policies from one location to another. The transfer is purposive, mediated, negotiated and sometimes even resisted. The policy models, when transferred, are often deterritorialised, hybridised or indigenised. The processes of policy transfer thus constitute a realm of knowledge that demands a political reading. It is important to see, during the process, what remains in the models, accepted and borrowed, of the original content of the model—both in terms of practices and ideas—and how they function in the recipient societies and with what effect. Educational governance models in different countries, despite these processes of negotiations and indigenisation, are still recognisable as drawn from a particular model constructed on the edifice of market principles of neoliberalism. There are a number of theoretical positions that have tried to grapple with this phenomenon.

2.4.1 Borrowed Policy, Borrowed Authority

Steiner-Khamsi (2001) highlights the political process of obscuring the source of educational borrowing while she talks about educational reform processes in two countries – Latvia and Switzerland—from which similes can be drawn, perhaps more appropriately, for the countries in the global South. Education reforms begin with externalisation, drawing legitimacy and authority from the experiences in other countries, mostly in the global North. In the face of a political challenge, real or potential, the champions of reforms make a ‘discursive shift from externalization to internalization, as well as from internalization to indigenization, and highlights the move away from *lessons learned from abroad* to *lessons learned at home*’ (Steiner-Khamsi, 2001, pp. 69-86).

Shriewer and Martinez (2004) link this externalisation and the related processes to ‘selective description and evaluative interpretation of international phenomena’ based on choosing and interpreting ‘reference societies’, development trends, or ‘world class models’ that fit the desired pursuit (p. 32). Much of the incentive for such selection comes from within the societies borrowing policies or the societies made to borrow policies. However, this selective construction and interpretation of desired educational models is not to be understood as a static phenomenon. It is susceptible to change based on the need for a legitimating ‘supplementary meaning’ which might vary from context to context, nation to nation or even between different political eras within the same nation.

Clearly, ‘the processes of the construction of the international reference horizons, of world views and interpretation of history, exemplary reform models, or glorified figures from the educational tradition’ are anything but objective and much of it is to be understood in terms of the policy recipient country’s internal legitimation project. “Externalizations ‘filter’ the reception and description of an international environment according to the changing problem configurations and reflection situations internal to the given system.” (Shriewer & Martinez, 2004, p. 32). Externalisation thus refers to experiential construction of ‘multiple worlds’ (p. 33) by different nations based on their search for supplementary meaning and yearning for legitimation. While the policy borrowing societies enjoy a ‘high degree of autonomy’ in the selection of reference societies or world class models, Shriewer and Martinez are mindful of the fact that ‘such references and models are not fully detached from the dominant structures of the international system’ (p. 32).

Subjectivity and autonomy of the borrowing nations, particularly if they are ‘developing nations’ are subject to scrutiny and the discussion of policy transfer remains incomplete without discussing policy transfer also from the perspective of ‘policy lending.’ Policy transfer takes place also under the initiative of the transferring countries or the institutions that represent them in one way or other and the dichotomy of ‘borrowing’ and ‘lending’ often gets blurred in the process. The impetus from the lending nations or the institutions could be ideological leading to a centripetal tendency, like in a solar system, towards a structure of global dominance. Steiner-Khamsi describes this dominance as compulsion in simple terms as follows:

Policy borrowing in poor countries is to the education sector what structural adjustment, poverty alleviation, and good governance, are to the public sector at large; a condition of receiving aid. As a requirement for receiving grants and loans at the programmatic level, policy borrowing in developing countries is coercive, and unidirectional. Reforms are transferred from the global North/West to the global South/East (Steiner-Khamsi, 2012b, p. 5).

The global power-relations in policy transfer, therefore, makes it germane to focus research energy also on to the mechanisms of ‘policy lending’ which would shift the attention away from international convergence of educational policies and practices as posited by the neo-institutionalist theorists and toward, ‘other, more coercive, forms of policy transfer.’ This coercion or compulsion can take the form of direct use of power in its various manifestation or of indirect discursive influence¹¹ in setting agenda and defining the parameters for policy response. Policy reforms often come in pre-existing global packages and ‘local problems are sometimes *created* in line with packaged global solutions’ (Steiner-Khamsi, 2012b, p. 6). The strategies to lend global packages, however, vary from situation to situation.

While there are varied strategies in policy lending, the strategies in reception of policies, i.e., policy borrowing, are also varied. These variances in strategies, both of lending and borrowing, are too complex and often too recalcitrant to be captured in any single theoretical construct. Most often they go beyond the realm of education and reside in the larger field of politics of education, both internal and external. As Dale put it:

...the more we confine ourselves to the level of education politics - that is, to policies and practices that are clearly of direct and

¹¹ Here, I am taking the liberty to position ‘discursive influence’ as a compulsion, albeit considerably nuanced.

immediate relevance to education policy or practice - the greater the risk that we will neglect the level at which the agenda for education politics is set, that of the politics of education (Dale, 1999, p. 8).

In analysing a situation of policy lending and borrowing, it might be also misleading to take a nation or a society as a unit of analysis. There are often multiple voices within a nation or society in response to policy lending and policy borrowing, some of which are subdued or suppressed at certain levels for reasons of internal hegemony, the nature of interplay with external policy actors or for reasons of legitimacy sought by regimes in power. However, there are cases, when such dissenting voices remain or reappear as distinct and unmerged. Let me postpone this discussion for now and I will come back to this in Chapter 8 with concrete examples in the context of Bangladesh.

2.4.2 Postcolonial and Post-structuralist Approach to Education Policy Reforms

Educational reforms in developing countries have also been examined from postcolonial perspectives. The developing societies, most of which are also post-colonial societies, respond to the advances of neoliberal models of educational policies in a way mediated by their historical development as post-colonial societies and the nature of policy and political actors. This makes an enquiry into the phenomenon from the theoretical precinct of post-coloniality valid. However, such a discussion should begin with a caution that post colonialism is not a homogenous perspective. Shohat criticises 'post-colonial' for 'its theoretical and political ambiguities' and 'dizzying multiplicity of positionalities' which still does not address the politics of location (Shohat, 1992, pp. 99-113). And a binary construct of the 'coloniser' and the 'colonised' or the later day 'third world' and the 'West' while discussing educational policies and reforms is highly problematic (McCarthy, 1998; Tikly, 1999, pp. 603-621). The pervasive fluidity of knowledge and emergence of many theoretical positions informing the approaches to understanding postcolonial education and vying for a space of its own warrant sufficient caution about who speaks for what with what intent. The self-identification of the speaking subject – either from the 'center' or from the 'margin,' 'resistance to or complicity with colonial practices,' and authority of the speaking voices are all subject to interrogation (Ninnes & Burnett, 2004, pp. 181-200). Sometimes, as McLaren cautioned,

... these emergent discourses of post-Enlightenment and post-colonial thinking have been unable to subvert their host discourses of logo centrism, Euro centrism and patriarchy. Even leftist critics have found their own work held captive in the discursive grip of a

neocolonialist politics. Regrettably, many of their attempts to sustain an adversarial politics have only unwittingly rearticulated the non-synchronous experiences of marginalized groups into a unilinear narrative of Enlightenment politics (McLaren, 1995, p. 172).

Nevertheless, post colonialism is a useful theoretical paradigm that marks decisively, as Hall puts it, ‘how radically and unalterably *different*—that is to say, how incontrovertibly *post-colonial*—is the world and the relations being described.’ To Hall, post-coloniality represents a response in the present global situation where the old categories cannot account for the world (Hall, 1996, pp. 242-260).

Some authors decode the effect of globalisation on postcolonial societies as a new form of imperialism (Tikly, 2004, pp. 173-198). In the field of education, it is like reappearance of what is understood in the Indian subcontinent as a Macaulayan apparition.¹² The ordering of the knowledge of human experience and the tools for decoding that experience are extremely important in constituting human subjectivity. Education is the site where this ordering of knowledge and decoding of that knowledge takes place. Therefore, education becomes an important site to be captured. Given this, it is also a site to be examined and interrogated. Through education, social realities are organised, interpreted and made use of. Postcolonial education not only disciplined postcolonial subjectivity, it also largely ordained a modernist imperative, designed after free market principles that eventually gave prominence and created legitimacy for a particular global view and a form of governance, which would also be a governance model in education.¹³ Postcoloniality thus informs the understanding of the phenomenon of education governance advanced by neoliberalism. However, such perspectives often blend with other theoretical perspectives in making sense of the neoliberal global agenda.

If we look at postcoloniality as a continuity of coloniality, albeit often in a different form, the picture becomes clearer. Coloniality presupposes power of the coloniser over the subjugated nations—power that allows the coloniser to use the colonised for its own end. However, the working of power is much more subtle and nuanced in postcolonial epoch. This is where the concept of an overpowering discourse is of particular importance. This discourse, for it to maintain its currency and legitimacy,

¹² Robert Macaulay said with regard to education in colonial India in 1835, “We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect.” <http://www.english.ucsb.edu/faculty/rraley/research/english/macaulay.html> accessed on 27/05/2011

¹³ The notion of governmentality and the concept of educational governance in the form of a new management will be discussed in details later in the chapter.

undergoes many twists and turns. Leon Tikly discusses the strategies of neoliberal institutions, for example, in removing the ‘untrammled market’ as the panacea to poverty in the post-Washington consensus era yielding place to “a belief in the importance of ‘social capital’ as a necessary corollary of ‘human capital’.” Tikly argues that a ‘plurality of rationalities’ is being brought into play to underpin the new imperialism to adapt to the changing environment of postcolonial states and their interface with the global market architecture (Tikly, 2004, p. 180). Blending of social capital with human capital, as Tikly points out in the literatures of the multilateral institutions more prominently in the past decade, has led to discursive adjustment with inclusion of expressions (and to be fair, ideas) like popular participation, empowerment etc. What often goes unnoticed, and therefore uninterrogated, is the larger (often imperceptible) processes of cooption of the ideas into the neoliberal principles.

Drawing upon Hall’s idea, Hickling-Hudson asserts that the emerging features of globalisation reshape our understanding of post colonialism as an interpretive tool (Hickling-Hudson, 1998, pp. 327-339). It helps us understand the legacies of colonialism as they resurface through globalisation. Hall looks upon the ‘post-colonial’ as the ‘retrospective re-phrasing of Modernity within the framework of globalisation’ and describes the role of post-colonial theoretical paradigm as follows:

This narrativisation displaces the ‘story’ of capitalist modernity from its European centering to its dispersed global ‘peripheries’; from peaceful evolution to imposed violence; from the transition from feudalism to capitalism...to the formation of the world market, to use shorthand terms for a moment; or rather to new ways of conceptualizing the relationship between these different ‘events’—the permeable inside/outside borders of emergent ‘global’ capitalist modernity (Hall, 1996, p. 250).

Thus the post-colonial theoretical paradigm, often interlaced with other theoretical positions, attempts to capture the nuances in discursive adjustments, pushes the frontiers of knowledge to elucidate ‘violence’ in its many different forms and shifts our focus from broad-stroke linear epochal theories to more recent developments (e.g., formation of world market) relating back to the historical developments in colonial/postcolonial societies. It enables a story to be told from the perspective of the periphery. Development, and in the case of the present study educational development, would be better understood not as a process of evolution, rather as imposition it entails and meanings it attempts to create. Whether the people in the periphery can come up with a different story or different

imaginings of what they want as development constitute an interesting field to be investigated.

Investigation into developments in postcolonial societies can be informed by and benefitted from other theoretical pursuits of knowledge. One such pursuit is post-structuralism. To Leon Tikly, contemporary postcolonial studies have broadened its field and benefitted from incorporation of postmodern and post-structuralist perspectives (Tikly, 1999, pp. 603-621). Hickling-Hudson also finds that the “Postcolonial theory absorbs a poststructuralist orientation in its rejection of modernist metanarratives that assume the ability to explain all and apply to all people in a unitary way, its deconstruction of texts, its focus on multilayered cultural meanings” (Hickling-Hudson, 1998, p. 328). To McLaren, postmodernism “has ushered in a whole new range of nascent paradigmatic articulations for rethinking the knowledge industry outside of a framework which reduces it to a homogenous totality, and for prying open semantic spaces for a subversive and redemptive cultural politics” (McLaren, 1995, p. 187). Critical theories, after the advent of postmodernism, has more effectively questioned the ‘old narratives endemic to highly Eurocentric, linear, homogenous model of culture and progress (Giroux, 2005, p. 204) and caused its decline in acceptance to a large extent.

This study attempts to make use of a blend of various critical theoretical perspectives discussed above to interrogate the knowledge that is passed on as universal effacing the traces of its origin and that ordains the teleology of educational governance as inevitable. It attempts to unmask the ideological underpinnings of that knowledge and its discursive nature in advancing a particular model of educational governance attuned to the politico-economic culture that neoliberalism advances and upholds.

2.5 GOVERNANCE AS NEW MANAGERIALISM

Under the aura of neoliberalism a celebration of an ‘enterprise culture comes to prominence,’ having very deep implication for education. Acceptance of enterprise culture entails ‘remodeling of institutions along commercial lines and encouraging the acquisition and use of enterprising qualities’ (Peters, 2001, p. 63-64). Acceptance of enterprise culture also immediately legitimises the notions of ‘developing human capital’, ‘education for economic growth’, ‘increasing global competitiveness’, ‘knowledge economy’, ‘knowledge capitalism’ etc. Instantly, a metanarrative comes into place with irrefutable prominence and totalizing effect that drives globalisation only in a particular direction, neoliberalist at its core. Embedded in this culture is a relation of power, so

reticulate and so labyrinthine that the distant sources of this power may not be immediately visible, but would have significant effect on reconstituting the individual subjects at the other end and deliver them to this enterprise culture to meet its own goals. In understanding this process, Foucault's notion of 'Governmentality' would be particularly useful.

Foucault describes Governmentality as 'the art of government' (Foucault, 1991, pp. 87-104) whereby practices, modes of thought, rationalities, and techniques are organised in a way that are self-promoting and through which subjects are governed. Here, Foucault provides us with a new understanding of power in the neoliberal state, beyond its hierarchical nature, that includes social control through various disciplinary institutions. Governmentality refers to 'The ensemble formed by the institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, the calculations and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific albeit complex form of power' (Foucault, 1991, p. 102). Power comes into play through acceptance of produced knowledge and discourses that normalise certain behaviors of self-government and induce internalisation of certain practices as standard. While discussing Foucault's concept of Governmentality, Lemke says "It plays a decisive role in his analytics of power in several regards: it offers a view on power beyond a perspective that centers either on consensus or on violence; it links technologies of the self with technologies of domination, the constitution of the subject to the formation of the state; finally, it helps to differentiate between power and domination" (Lemke, 2000 #275`, p. 3). Governmentality brings the notion of self-regulation in the relations between the individual and the state, which is more powerful than overt domination or coercion, through acceptance of principles and practices. The principles and practices, drawn from neoliberalism, earn a perennial legitimacy and reproduce themselves over and over again.

Peters, drawing upon Foucauldian concept of Governmentality, traces six distinct and interrelated features of neoliberalism that promote an enterprise culture and an enterprising self that have significant implications for education governance (2001, pp. 68-69). First, it emphasises a contrived form of market that focuses on 'the judicio-legal rules governing the framework within the game of enterprise.' Second, it institutes processes of voluntary agreement as an extended version of public choice theory importing economic models to explain non-market behavior. Third, it promotes 'a close relation between government and self-government.' Government is re-positated as 'the community of free, autonomous, self-regulating individuals.'

Fourth, it promotes ‘a new relation between government and management’ giving rise to a ‘new managerialism’ with ‘a shift from policy and administration to management’ following the management style of the private sector. This management approach upholds promotion of self-management of individuals and institutions with the onus of ‘risk management’ and prudentialism bestowed upon individuals and institutions now in charge of their own destiny.

Fifth, enterprise culture promotes what Peters calls ‘degovernmentalisation of the state.’ The market takes the role of the government, in its own terms, which promotes ‘consumer-driven forms of social provision’ in education. What has long been in public domain is now out-sourced to private entities in the name of efficiency. With the rise of enterprise culture, one observes development of quasi-markets everywhere and privatisation of one form or another and market acquires a new meaning, now considered as a form of Governmentality (Gordon, 1991, pp. 1-52). Finally, enterprise culture promotes a new relationship between government and knowledge. The government is now to be endowed with new forms of expertise, which will enable it to be ‘a government at a distance.’ This gives rise to a whole new system of social accountability (Peters, 2001, pp. 58-71). The seemingly withdrawal of the state through ‘degovernmentalization’ or putting ‘government at a distance’ however, does not renounce its regulatory authority which comes back in the form of new managerialism to better serve the purpose of the market.

These postulates of enterprise culture brought into play in education by neoliberalism are extremely useful tools to analyse the education governance scenarios in many countries. However, they need further exploration. First of all, market under neoliberalism is no longer considered a natural institution. Although it is made to be seen as evolving naturally, market is consciously constructed and protected with institutional and juridical framework and the government is expected to support this development. Extension of market principles on to areas traditionally known as public domain, like education, does not occur naturally. For the logic of market to be the ordering force of knowledge, a discursive dominance of that logic has to be brought into play. This explains neoliberalism’s deployment of so many actors, its allies from donor community, NGOs and civil society groups of their choice, influential as they are, in the discursive field. They, in dialogue with the government, and for that matter with the state, institute the political, legal and institutional conditions for market or enterprise culture to be the organizing principles for various institutions.

Once the enterprise culture is accepted as the ordering principle, participation in the schema of market is voluntary. All behaviors are then ordained and explained by the common parlance of market. Some common explanatory codes, in this case, are ‘choice’, ‘competition’, ‘audit’, ‘performance’, ‘risk assessment and management’ and so on. Also, what is crucial here is the emergence of a new form of governance in the form of new managerialism. Peters, Marshall and Fitzsimons, drawing upon the Foucauldian concept of governance, explain this new managerialism as ‘an expression or technology of neoliberalism.’ Under new managerialism, the old political process of shared social contract disappears and a new contractualism takes its place, which disaggregates and individualises relationship to governance in the form of self-governance that promotes certain behaviors and limits others (Peters et al., 2000, pp. 109-132). Obviously, the notion of ‘autonomous chooser,’ the underlying principle of neoliberalism, is at stake here as forms of rationality imposed on the chooser or the dictated subjectivity that emerges under this contractual model depletes the subject of his/her autonomy.

Ball, McCarthy, Dimitriadis, Peters, Marshall and others from post-structuralist approach have shown how this new managerialism in education governance has been put in place with a shift from government to governance gradually institutionalizing a mode of governance from a distance through a new contractualism, setting of standards and targets, monitoring performance, and forging new identities under what is now to be known as self-management. The new managerialism inserts the theories and techniques of business management and the ‘cult of excellence’ into educational institutions. The new managerialism also involves new form of employee engagement through the cultivation of a ‘corporate culture’ even if it is in a miniature form (see also Ball, 1998, pp. 119-130). This form of management sets standards for conducts of persons in order to achieve desired outcomes. In the process, new identities are formed. At the surface level, the person in question is trusted, apparently more responsibilities are given, initiatives are lauded and valued, and problem solving authorities are delegated. But at a deeper level, s/he is brought under new forms of surveillance, signifying mistrust, through meticulous appraisal systems, target setting and output comparisons. Amidst overarching surveillance, there are a number of mechanisms put in place also for self-monitoring and self-regulation. Du Gay (1996) names this paradox ‘controlled de-control’ (Du Gay, 1996; Muller, 1998, pp. 177-193).

While mechanisms of surveillance are being put in place, effectively the state, under neoliberalism, is writing itself out of many traditional responsibilities. Peters

observes that this is done through twin strategies of greater individualisation of society and delegation of more responsibilities to individuals, families and communities. 'Both are often simultaneously achieved through a greater contractualisation of society, and particularly by contracting-out state services' (Peters, 2001, p. 59).

Peters identifies a paradox in the neoliberal state (or by extension, the states that succumb to the pressure of the global neoliberal ideology) where the state, albeit supposed to be self-limiting, is more powerful under neoliberal market policies (Apple, 2000, pp. 57-78; Peters, 1996). He attempts to explain this paradox again with Foucault's notion of Governmentality where power is approached 'in its widest sense as the structuring of the possible field of action of others' (Burchell, Gordon, & Miller, 1991; Peters, 1996, p. 81). Ball describes the phenomenon as the emergence of a 'polycentric state' and a shift from government to governance where a new architecture of regulations is put in place through, for example, the use of contracts, targets and performance monitoring. Governance, in this case, is steered from a distance (Ball, 2008, p. 41). Along the same line McCarthy and Dimitriadis argue that neoliberal developments 'do not displace the state... Instead, they help to re-constitute the state as a de-centered system of networks' which put in place the practices of self-management, and 'shift accountability and responsibility for the welfare of the poor and disadvantaged, for example, from a centripetal state to its capillary systems extended in the body politic' (McCarthy & Dimitriadis, 2006, p. 201). This means, while the state writes off its traditional role, it re-emerges with a new identity under neoliberalism with a supportive role to market.

The concept of governance 'steered from a distance' as visualised by Ball corroborates a new policy technology now with a new set of values and practices at its core reorienting, *inter alia*, the 'relationship' among the actors, 'procedures of motivation,' 'mechanisms of change', 'loyalties and responsibilities,' 'sense of purpose,' 'notions of excellence' and what constitutes 'good practice' (Ball, 2008, p. 42). Regarding the policy technologies that bring about this new management into existence, Ball says,

They provide a new language, a new set of incentives and disciplines and a new set of roles, positions, and identities within which what it means to be a teacher, student/learner, parent and so on are all changed. Targets, accountability, competition and choice, leadership, entrepreneurship, performance-related pay and privatization articulate new ways of thinking about what we do, what we value and what our purposes are. They work together to render education as like a 'commodity' rather than a public good.

It's a whole new architecture changing the mindset of the actors/stakeholders and in the process constituting new identities and new subjectivities for them. Under this kind of education architecture, actors in the distant locations are handed down a set of targets with their accountability defined anew, they are expected to compete with each other. This also gives 'choice' to the purchasers of education. The salary of those who 'sell' educational 'services' will be performance-based, and they will be monitored and governed from distance under a given set of parameters. In essence, it is a market architecture super-imposed on education. It engenders a new way of thinking about the self and the relationship among the actors. Education is produced and sold as commodities. Peers in different schools are competitors. Teachers are contractors working on the basis of completion rates or enrollment as targets. Also, everything is done under an inviolable consideration of what is cost-effective. Government stays far-off and market rules reign supreme.

The question is -- what creates the imperatives for acceptance of this market architecture of governance in education, particularly, by the state actors in developing countries? Is it the urge of the state for self-actualisation, which finds no other way but to succumb to the demands of global economy and of neoliberalism? Or, is it the insistence of the global agents of neoliberalism, coming with largesse to install this model, which the developing countries cannot resist? If so, what would be the story for the countries not dependent on these neoliberal agencies, but still following the same model? Perhaps, one has to look at the construction of this knowledge, its pervasiveness and its link to globalisation, global economy and multilateral institutions, and above all, how this knowledge galvanises power and power itself feeds back to constitution and reinforcement of the same knowledge or a preferred variant of it as deemed necessary with change of time.

However, there is one lacuna, a significant one, in this theoretical approach with regard to the question of agency. This conceptual tool would have limited use in explaining the subversion and resistance the governance reforms face in developing countries unless the 'subject,' as perceived, is bereft of its autonomy – completely. In a way, this would herald in an end of politics of educational reforms, which is certainly not the case. Although post-structuralism does pry open the semantic spaces for a subversive and redemptive cultural politics, as McLaren claims, the approach is wanting in explaining political activism of resistance and subversion due to its reluctance to accord enough autonomy to the subject, whose subjectivity, it claims, emerges in the given

discursive relations of power. It would be difficult to explain the resistance and subversion – sometimes carnivalesque, to use a Bakhtinian term—to new modes of school governance favored by multilateral institutions. Of course, choices are largely contained, still political actions are not altogether impossible.

The Foucauldian tradition of critical theory, however, is not without a defense against this criticism, some of it coming directly from Foucault. Foucault looks upon critique of Enlightenment (for that matter, all the knowledge traditions that spring from Enlightenment) as ‘the historical analysis of the limits imposed on us and an experiment with the possibility of going beyond them’ (Foucault, 1984b, p. 50). Does this signify that the subject is vested with enough power to undo the workings of the state/market/knowledge and go beyond the limits? If that’s the case, politics of resistance is possible. Foucault himself has taken stance for certain movements, bringing into play his own subjectivity as a resistor, albeit not on the basis of any belief in essence or ultimate truth.

Despite the ordering authority of neoliberalism in construction of knowledge, now evident all over the world, one cannot also fail to observe the resistance to that knowledge and power and to the development paradigm that this knowledge and power uphold. The events in Seattle and Washington DC of 1999 and 2000 are but a centralised manifestation of many resistances the world over. The May 1998 protests in Geneva against WTO, downfall of Indonesian government due to a social upheaval against subsidy cuts as agreed between the Government and IMF, the union strikes in South Korea against restructuring prescriptions from IMF and the World Bank are a few instances of resistance to neoliberal modes of development and worldviews (O'Brien, Goetz, Scholte, & Williams, 2000, p. 1). Here, the notion of discourse is of help. A dominant discourse always presupposes the existence of a counter-discourse, a contestation (Terdiman, 1985), opulently exemplified by the vast realm of critique against neoliberalism. A counter-discourse brings into play alternative knowledge, potent to constitute alternative power or at least a real threat to the power that be. This contention can also be understood from the Gramscian notion of hegemony and counter-hegemony. The ongoing hegemonic project of trying to co-opt dissenting counter-hegemonic voices through leadership, persuasion and consensus (Buttigieg, 2005, pp. 33-52) is met sometimes with recalcitrance. The dissenting voices remain unmerged.

In the context of the present study, which attempts to intrude into global-local plexus to decipher meanings of policy iterations, the location from where the dissenting

voice emerges could be of particular interest. Drawing upon Kenneth Frampton's idea of critical regionalism, Peters posits that the local or the regional place-form may provide a "critical vantage point of resistance to the phenomenon of universal placelessness... The place-form of critical regionalism has the resources and potential to resist the relentless onslaught of global modernization" (Peters, 1996, p. 102-3). However, one can arguably say that the powerful onslaught of neoliberalism in many cases has subdued that critical localness, either through a strategy of cooption or through dismissal. Then, is resistance possible?

2.6 RESISTANCE AND REARTICULATION OF THE NOTION OF EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Though the notion of resistance has been much debated in critical education scholarship, some of the recent scholarship has shown how it can be productively conceptualised within the poststructuralist conceptualisation of power and discourse.

Thomas Pedroni discusses the emergence of subaltern agency among poor black families of Milwaukee in the United States receiving educational vouchers. He particularly brings into focus 'the tactical choices groups of parents and guardians make in negotiating their sets of perceived educational options on a terrain that is not largely of their choosing' (Pedroni, 2005, p. 85). The free market educational discourse still opens a space for African American communities, somewhat in contradictory ways to negotiate their choices (Pedroni, 2005, 2006). Taking the case of Black women voucher advocates, he recounts the strength of their potential political agency, as opposed to 'naïve submission to hegemonic conservative educational and economic discourses' (Pedroni, 2006, p. 226)

Central to Pedroni's analysis of African-American women's tactical use of the subject position is the work of critical cultural theorist Michel de Certeau, who in turn adapts to Michel Foucault's concept of 'microphysics of power.' De Certeau distinguishes between the 'strategy' deployed by the dominant groups and the 'tactics' used by the less powerful to promote their interest. Pedroni looks at the participation of the African American community in Milwaukee as a 'tactical' and 'conditional alliance' with the dominant groups rather than their wholesale acceptance of the market principles put forward by the hegemonic alliance of the neoliberals and neoconservatives. In explaining the situation, Pedroni draws upon Michel de Certeau's notion that in such act, the parents are 'never passive or without agency within this process of alliance-building

and subject formation' (Pedroni, 2007, p. 36). Pedroni uses another notion from de Carteau, 'make do', to explain how the parents and guardians make use of the given subject positions to ensure that the system best serves their educational and social interests. He observes that 'articulations and alliances formed around vouchers in Milwaukee are much more transient, ephemeral, opportunistic, and unstable' (p. 36). This alliance makes creative use of the fragile tensions and contradictory tendencies within the dominant groups to open up spaces for 'progressive rearticulation within the formation of these subjectivities' (Pedroni, 2006, p. 222-3). The acceptance of the voucher system is not to be read as succumbing to the Right, but as a tactic of asserting agency in constituting own identities in a nuanced way. As Pedroni puts it:

Many voucher families and community leaders who defend vouchers have turned to such reform not as atomized consumers within an educational free market, nor as parents who believe, as social conservatives have asserted, that private schools will deliver to their children the values that they have somehow not been taught at home. Rather, rightly or wrongly, voucher families have asserted the opposite—that vouchers represent, at least potentially, the opportunity to finally 'work the system' in ways that will allow social movements and the communities to which they are connected, which have long struggled for access to quality education and educational self-determination, to realize some of these things (Pedroni, 2007, p. 7).

The social conservatives attempted to discursively produce the identity of the African-American communities as participants in the voucher system and consumers in educational free market premised upon acceptance of the principles of private education. On the other hand, the people in the community looked upon their act as a tactic 'to work the system' and to advance their struggle to be audible to the system—an extremely creative move to rearticulate their own identities while operating within the given system. Pedroni and Apple together explore the agency of the Black Alliance for Educational Options (BAEO) to show a 'crucial example of the politics of how social movements and alliances are formed and reformed out of the material and ideological conditions of daily life' (Apple & Pedroni, 2005, pp. 2068-2105). Contrary to the generalised notion that BAEO is the front organisation for the educational Right setting example of less powerful communities finding merits in free market principles in education services, Apple and Pedroni charts the way BAEO painstakingly treads to articulate its self-interest within the given limits of its options.

While the African American Community in Milwaukee uses the language of

neoliberalism like ‘choice, parental empowerment, individual freedom,’ it also imports the idea of collective Black freedom and redistribution of power, hence inserting itself as a key actor in this renegotiation and rearticulation of power. This gives rise to a ‘hybrid discourse that blends meanings from multiple political sources and agendas’ (Apple & Pedroni, 2005, p. 2083). Although situation will be different in different countries and communities, the case of Milwaukee is certainly a great example of how tensions within the dominant discourses can be creatively remolded and hybridised to import liberatory agenda into focus and rework the relations of power incrementally.

A parallel of such creative tactical positioning, albeit in a country-wide context, is also observable in Mongolia. Mongolia has gone through several selective reconstructions of its history from pre-socialist era to socialist era to now free market economy era. Each succeeding epoch has tried to efface the previous adversarial other construction as anachronous and outside the ‘correct flow of history.’ Nothing can be effaced completely and therefore the Mongolian society is crisscrossed with many tensions and many penchants in social development. Priorities with regard to education and largely for social and economic development have also undergone several changes. Emphasis on education from the socialist era has yielded place to emphasis on market-based economic development in the market economy era. Priorities also suffered with the change of the locus of decision making due to an ongoing tension between traditional and popular internal demand and pressure from the external actors such as international financial institutions—the new allies in development in the era of market economy (Steiner-Khamsi & Stolpe, 2006, pp. 185-204).

While examining the global/local nexus in policy discourse in Mongolia, Steiner-Khamsi notices a ‘policy-bilingualism’ among the local actors involving “two different scales or ‘spaces’ from which one and the same policy actor or state institution speaks or operates” (Steiner-Khamsi, 2012). When one digs deep into the apparent ‘global speak’, one would observe ‘a universal language addressed to international donors, and a native language of reform that resonates with citizens.’ And ‘both languages are spoken simultaneously, one language for policy talk, and another when it comes to selectively enacting and implementing imported policies’ (Steiner-Khamsi & Stolpe, 2006, p. 203). Often such choices of double-speak are ordained by the political realities of the countries receiving policies. Such situations are fraught with many possibilities of outcomes and therefore many uncertainties too leading to different possibilities of discursive formations.

These studies suggest that political agency of resistance is possible even within an all-encompassing dominant discourse—an issue this study explores in the context of secondary education governance in Bangladesh.

More radical construal of resistance is not impossible, either. The workings of neoliberalism or free market principles in shaping educational policies in developing countries are anything but clandestine. At the academic/intellectual level, it faces considerable criticism and resistance. This can also translate into organised resistance, if viable alternatives are in sight and if neoliberal policies are laid bare by intellectuals, grassroots policy activists and educationists etc. Some of the questions we can raise are: Are there any viable alternatives? Will the states in developing countries, so dependent upon global capital, venture out to find other alternatives? If so, under what circumstances? Or, does the state still have that autonomy and intellectual and material resources at its disposal to reject neoliberal policy options and look for alternatives? What kind of redistribution of power within the policy actors will be needed for this to happen? Are there local or international NGOs who can promote such alternatives to influence government thinking? Are there indigenous educational ideologies, values and practices rooted in a country's culture and history that provide the basis for an alternative? All these make the answer very complex, and certainly context-specific. Answering all these questions is beyond the scope of the present research, but some of them will be addressed in the subsequent chapters.

2.6.1 Complex Interplay with Neoliberalism: Defining Negotiations

The developing countries' encounter with neoliberalism is anything but linear. History of a particular country, perception of development, the stage of development of a country, strength of the non-state actors, the dependence of the rest of the world on that country, the resources—both material and intellectual—that a country can call upon to define its own course at a particular historical juncture—all factor into the encounter with neoliberalism and the Bretton Woods institutions like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) that act as mediators for neoliberalism. Sometimes, a historical continuity of what is perceived to be 'development' since the colonial era sets the ground for acceptance, legitimacy and flourishing of neoliberalism, despite a tension or even non-acceptance of World Bank or IMF prescription at the discursive level. A case in point is India.

Any development effort, for visible results, has to crisscross through India, perhaps more so in education. For example, some 30 to 40 million children out of 145 million who were out of primary school in 1985 in the whole world were in India (Colclough & De, 2010, p. 497). Therefore, for any program to bring children to school and to show its result at a global scale one has to think of doing something in India. Institutions like the World Bank were always keen to support elementary education programs (from Grade 1 to 8) in India, but this was not met with equal enthusiasm from the Government of India until 1990s. Indeed, there was considerable resistance from the Ministry of Education against World Bank involvement in education for what Ayyar describes as World Bank's 'propensity to offer universal prescriptions, to ignore country experience, to induct expatriate consultants regardless of need, and to insist on setting up the recipient country parallel project structures' (Ayyar, 2007). The situation changed after the foreign currency crunch in the early 1990s, however. As Conclough and Anuradha put it:

... (W)hen India's foreign exchange crisis appeared, broader external support was required. In response to a GOI (*Government of India*) request, the World Bank indicated that IDA (*International Development Association*) support would be forthcoming, but only if aid for primary education were accepted.¹⁴ In the new circumstances the Ministry of Finance pressed the Ministry of Human Resource Development to accept the Bank's condition and, in 1991, an IDA loan to support basic education was agreed for 5 districts in Uttar Pradesh (Colclough & De, 2010, pp. 501-502).

The country, eventually, became more receptive of foreign funds in education, mostly though in elementary education. However, India, being a big economy, had more clouts to assert its priorities and power to move ahead with its own aspiration of development, rather than being dictated by the multilateral institutions. Despite World Bank's engagement in elementary education in India, Conclough and Anuradha argue 'the donors were kept away from discussing sensitive areas of policy and their inputs were incorporated in ways chosen by the government' (p. 506). However, they admit that:

(W)ilst it is clear that donors have had no direct influence on the GOI's changing domestic policy objectives in education, they have, in fact, been influential in initiating some of the major changes in the sector by funding innovative projects at their pilot stages. Evidence from officials in both donor agencies and in the

¹⁴ The example is quite telling and has its parallels in many African countries where structural adjustment programs (SAP) were allegedly forced upon those nations when they were undergoing serious economic crises. SAP came straight from the development model preferred by the Bretton Woods institutions.

bureaucracy confirms that the first generation of aided projects... provided important inputs to DPEP¹⁵ design (Colclough & De, 2010, p. 505).

Knowing how the multilateral institutions function, one would be intrigued to notice an inherent contradiction in these two statements, particularly when one takes into cognisance the wider trajectory of policy processes. Projects and ‘innovations’ in projects are the edifices on which new policies are often formed and legitimated. A resonance of this is also found in a Government of India document, which says:

It is important to note that...the external agencies are also providing advice and guidance on pro-poor targeting, greater accountability for outcomes, attention to quality and improved financial management. In addition, the DPs (*development partners*) have also helped to increase the level of discipline in programme supervision and monitoring and to also raise the quality of technical analysis by bringing in to the policy dialogue international experiences from the developed and developing world (Government of India, 2006, p. 8).

This is of crucial importance. The way the international experiences are discursively advanced in the policy dialogue, as seen from experiences in many countries, has considerable implications for policy legitimation and outcomes, even if they are dismissed on the ground of national pride or sovereignty issue.

The issue is much deeper, stemming from the very notion of telos of development, which has remained deeply engrained in India since the colonial days. Rohit Chopra recounts the history of India to show the roots of the present day neoliberalism in the very trajectory of development India had chosen from the very beginning of political developments under the colonial rule. Even a counter-discourse of ‘Indianness’ had to set itself in a dialogue with Western enlightenment and rationality. Indian historicity had to be reconstructed to meet the demands of rationality. A continuity of development along this line has brought India to its present day stage where neoliberalism is naturalised as the ‘essential meta-value for every sphere of sociality in India,’ and is legitimised as a ‘culturally authoritative view across Indian social space’ (Chopra, 2003, pp. 419-444). The later-day advent of the multilateral institutions worked as a conduit to import and legitimise further development along the same line.

However, different countries deal with this encounter in different ways. The first encounter of the multilateral institutions is with the state, the government as its representative, in instituting the education governance policies of its choice. Then,

¹⁵ District Primary Education Program

through the state it attempts to implement policies, which involves others in the state. Every interface – the multilateral institutions vs. the state, the state vs. the communities, the multilateral institutions vs. the community with the state in between, the multilateral institutions vs. the communities with the state and the larger education community, including education NGOs and NGO networks and trade unions, in between – would pose a uniqueness depending on the country situation including varying degrees of dependence on multilateral institutions and intensity of political activism prevalent in society. In the midst of this complexity, again, the state is not to be seen as a monolithic entity, either. The administrative-bureaucratic and the political arms of the state or the government sometimes behave in completely different ways. Dale identifies multiple propensities and multiple actors within state who are not equally subject to central control and they function with a certain level of autonomy within the state. This is particularly true for the bureaucracy. Dale quotes Renate Mayntz on this as follows:

To say the public bureaucracies are agents of policy implementation does not mean that they are lifeless instruments. Public agencies have significant margins of discretionary action in the fulfillment of their tasks. How wide these margins are depends, first, on the nature of the task, and secondly, on the extent of central (hierarchical) control to which a given agency is subject...As for central control, the public sector is never a fully integrated hierarchy but must be seen as a highly differentiated macro-system of organizations, a network which is more or less hierarchized by virtue of existing vertical lines of communication, but which is basically made up of relatively autonomous elements (Dale, 1989, p. 56).

This autonomy comes into play, particularly in discretionary interpretations of laws, regulations and policies much of which are done by the bureaucracy. There is, of course, a hierarchy, but then there are numerous ruptures in this hierarchy through which emerge various propensities and numerous responses one different from the other, one contesting other, defying the apparent unity of what is known as ‘state’.

The state has to be seen as a conglomerate of many interests and therefore, endowed with considerable tenacity. Some authors, Lingard, Rizvi, Ozga, Taylor and Henry for example, reject the idea that the autonomy of the state has completely disappeared under the domination of market or the actors advancing market principles in the operations of the state. To Lingard, ‘The nation-state still retains some capacity,’ and the manifestation of globalisation within nation-state and in educational restructuring is more nuanced than just top-down homogenisation. In support of his argument Lingard brings to the fore two mutually resonating concepts – the mutually implicative tension

between the processes of homogenisation and heterogenisation under what is known as ‘glocalization’ borrowing from Robertson and the tension between top-down and policy-driven ‘context-productive’ practices and localised ‘context-generative’ practices under what Appadurai calls ‘vernacular globalization.’ Lingard maintains, “While nations and cultures have to relativize their stance in relation to the capitalist West, and while the most powerful economic interests have more capacity to affect global politics and cultures..., globalization has seen a move beyond a center/periphery relationship in these matters, with multiple centers now across the globe and the periphery ‘speaking back’ to these centers in a variety of (postcolonial) cultural and political ways” (Lingard, 2000; Ozga & Lingard, 2007; Rizvi, 2004; Taylor & Henry, 2007).

Similarly, Luke and Luke, while discussing education reforms in Thailand, do not see the process of globalisation as isomorphic and refuses to discuss globalisation as a ‘victim narrative,’ as ‘a brakeless train wreaking havoc,’ resulting in a complete ‘erosion of the local’ ‘robbed of agency, stripped of authenticity, and reduced to nothing more than a hapless consumption machine’ (Luke & Luke, 2000). Lukes are interested in “the complexity of the multidirectional traffic of ‘flows,’ of homogenizing and heterogenizing forces that are mutually implicated in the dynamics of so-called globalization” (Luke & Luke, 2000, p. 286-287) much in line with Robertson’s idea of ‘glocalization’ (Robertson, 1995).

This hybridisation of policies is not to be understood as a result of negotiations only between the globalizing agencies and the government as a representative of the state, which in some countries could be complicit with the globalizing agencies. It also needs to be understood in terms of complex relations of the state with diverse interests, the larger civil society, and the local communities and communities with particular interest—social or political. Sometimes contentions can deny any possibility of even hybridisation, let alone whole-sale acceptance of neoliberal policies.

Lastly, Anderson-Levitt puts together experiences from Brazil, Tanzania, Israel, China, Thailand, South Africa and Guinea, based on the education reforms proposed by international agencies to draw a conclusion that although ‘the global view does reveal models that affect educators in local situations,’ the policy effects are much less homogenous (Anderson-Levitt, 2003). This negotiation between what is prescribed and what is implemented, and the context of this negotiation both in terms of resistance and submission/acquiescence is worth probing in different country situations.

All these studies suggest that globalisation of neoliberalist educational policy, albeit a dominant rallying force, necessarily contains many ruptures in it. The design of neoliberalism is nothing clandestine and is not something not understood by its critics, who are now everywhere. As discussed earlier, the state response to neoliberal assertion in educational policy formulation is varied depending on the capacity of the state and its place in global polity. The multilateral agencies of neoliberalism have gone through several waves of legitimation crisis themselves, which compelled them to adjust their rhetoric and discourses and the way they deal with these countries. All these have exposed ruptures in the neoliberal discourse, knowledge production and its ability to compel countries to accept designs and policies advanced by them. Resistance can emerge through these ruptures and crevices. These issues are discussed in Chapter 8.

2.6.2 Eclectic Construction of Knowledge: Does It Help Describe Lived Experience of People on the Ground?

Amidst all these efforts, one question, very relevant to educational policy designs, some social scientists are trying to grapple with is – is it possible to construct, eclectically, a knowledge paradigm to make sense of the lived experiences of the periphery? Connell takes an arduous journey through alternative epistemic endeavors in diverse locations like India, Australia, Iran, Africa and Latin America in search of a Southern theory (or theories). She describes the predicaments related to production and circulation of alternative knowledge and somewhat inevitability of the Northern circuit of knowledge for anyone from the South to be visible and intelligible. Connell admits that ‘Every significant development in the social sciences in the periphery makes some use of concepts and techniques from the metropolis’ and therefore it is unrealistic ‘to imagine the future of world social science as a mosaic of distinct knowledge systems...all functioning independently’ (Connell, 2007, p. 223).

Despite these predicaments, she proposes a strategy: “It is possible to reshape the circuits through which social-scientific knowledge moves, to modify—since we cannot quickly end—the metropolitan focus” (Connell, 2007, p. 228). But then she is inclined to depend on the ‘intellectuals of rich peripheral countries’ and ‘privileged classes’ of other countries to resurrect the subaltern voices. One would find serious flaws with such a strategy and Connell herself is mindful of the flaws as she concludes, “Current alternatives to metropolitan dominance of social science are not particularly stable. Methods of cooperative intellectual work across regions and across traditions of thought

are not yet well established.” Still, she thinks that this could be a ‘possible path’ to follow (Connell, 2007, p. 232).

An outright rejection of the Western knowledge tradition is certainly impossible. Even within that tradition, there are numerous trends that have interrogated knowledge that have advanced, buttressed and legitimated Western domination. An important task would be to eclectically construct knowledge, from both sides of the globe that identifies and critiques discursive practices advancing this domination and deploy an alternative discourse. The knowledge produced in the West and its discursive dominance that advance neoliberal models of educational governance to the countries in the periphery are interrogated quite forcefully both from the critical traditions in the West and the emerging knowledge industry in the so called periphery. Examples of resistance, in one form or other, and the yearning evident in the works of many from both sides of the globe, as discussed above, are but a sign of positive development. This study attempts to make use of some of these tools gleaned eclectically from critical traditions of knowledge irrespective of their origin. They are considered valid as long as they make sense, convincingly, to the present researcher in interpreting the experiences of school communities in Bangladesh, and their acts of resistance; in identifying ruptures in the dominant discourses through which alternative meanings emerge and in interrogating the knowledge that attempt to constitute identities of the policy recipients in ways different from what they want.

2.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter attempted to recount the critical-theoretical perspectives on globalisation of neoliberal principles in educational governance policies, the itinerary of this meta-narrative from global centers to peripheral locations and the discursive practices leading to the normalization of a particular model of educational governance. One important focus of the discussion here was the workings of the multilateral institutions vis-à-vis the other actors in advancing this neoliberal agenda. The discussion also examined some country experiences in this regard and explored the possibilities of alternative meanings and strategies of resistance. These theoretical perspectives and the examples are germane to the present study, which focuses on the specific case of secondary education governance policies in Bangladesh to account for the changing school-state relationship. I will come back to these theoretical discussions in the concluding chapter wherein I will

attempt to tease out theoretical insights gained from the examination of the practical experience related to advancing of and resistance to the governance model in Bangladesh.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This study examines the policy processes for secondary education governance reforms in Bangladesh focusing on the trajectory of changing school-state relationship during the period 1993 and 2012. It particularly probes into the use of subvention given to nongovernment schools in various forms as an instrument for governance reforms and how discourses around these have been molded and reacted to. The key research issues, as mentioned in Chapter 1, that this study attempts to address are:

- i. The policy processes and actors in governance reforms in secondary education;
- ii. The discursive construction of knowledge and legitimation of the governance reforms;
- iii. New identities and categories created in relation to new governance and
- iv. The responses, particularly from the school communities, to these identities on offer.

Given the nature of the investigation, the epistemological stance that prompts this research and the key research issues, a qualitative research method drawing upon analysis of various discursive products was considered to be best suited for this study. The present chapter describes (i) qualitative research as being used in this study and its relations to theories; (ii) research design for the present study including the theoretical framework, data collection process and analytic approach and; (iii) issues related to validity and credibility in this qualitative research; (vi) ethical considerations; and (v) limitations of the study from the methodological point of view.

3.2 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Qualitative research is an ‘umbrella term that encompasses enormous variety’—a site of ‘multiple methodologies and research practices’ (Punch, 2009, p. 115). Any discussion on qualitative research admits the immanent tension, not just about what it is, but also about how to go about doing this. The other major tension emanates from a pervasive disagreement on the role of theories, when they should appear in qualitative research and the insertion of the researcher’s subjectivity in the whole process of research—the epistemological relationship between the knower and what is to be known. No consensus

on any of these is in sight. Some authors, projecting positivist research tradition on to the critical theorist and post-structuralist research trends, argue for some sort of neutrality of researchers and objectivity of research. Others recognise the dilemma but they still, rather hesitantly, stand for some sort of ‘accuracy’, as if to suggest neutrality from researcher’s theoretical position is achievable. For example, Drew et al argue:

The scholar designing qualitative research must be very clear where he or she stands in order to assure the accuracy and trustworthiness of results and integrity of communicating findings to readers. This not only forces the researcher to be cognizant of this issue, but also provides the reader with the information in order to judge the researchers’ success at achieving neutrality (Drew, Hardman, & Hosp, 2008, p. 184-85).

However, there are others who outright dismiss such a researcher’s position as impossible, particularly when the researcher is looking at the world of his/her study from a theoretical base. Despite these tensions and contradictions, the qualitative research traditions tend to accommodate more or less all these competing modes of inquiries as valid.

Various theoretical tools are at hand for interpretation in qualitative research. Social science research, including education, has made use of a rich texture of theoretical paradigms and even anti-paradigms—from positivism to postmodernism—to make sense of the world we live in. The ideological adherence to a particular theoretical premise and, therefore, to a well-fenced and reductionist worldview, is now in the wane.

In keeping with these developments, a significant portion of social science research is now moving into what is now known as critical social research. According to Harvey

...critical social research is concerned with the broad social and historical context in which phenomena are interrelated. It is concerned with revealing underlying social relations and showing how structural and ideological forms bear on them. Critical social research, then, is interested in substantive issues and wants to show what is really going on at a societal level. Not only does it want to show what is happening, it is also concerned with doing something about it (Harvey, 1990, p. 20).

To Harvey, critical social research is ‘not bounded by a single (grand) theoretical perspective. It is not (a version of) Marxism, or feminism, or anything else for that matter’ (Harvey, 1990, p. 8). Many researchers now attempt to combine, rather eclectically, different critical theoretical perspectives in their inquiries.

3.2.1 Theory as an Inspiration for Methods

It is interesting to note that all notable social scientists operate from the premises of one or other theory or from a position against a theory or theories. If they do not, a critical reader finds it uncomfortable if s/he cannot assign a label to the social scientist to make him/her intelligible. These social scientists arrive at a theory through a ‘systematic’¹⁶ enquiry or through their intuitive interpretation based on knowledge they have been exposed to or they preferred to dwell in. No matter how much the ‘benighted number-crunchers’ (Silverman, 2004, p. 343)¹⁷ abhor these theoretical social scientists on the ground of their ‘unscientific’ subjectivities, the truth is—they have contributed significantly to bringing social sciences to their present stage. On the other hand, the number crunchers themselves are as much theory driven as other theoretical social scientists are, perhaps less reflexive, less circumspect and more focused on controlled environment for research, which in the real world of humans is difficult to find.

The question what is ‘scientific’ is considerably loaded with epistemic and political content, which the mainstream research tradition does not want to recognise. In questioning the neutrality of the traditional research, Harding says:

...the conceptual frameworks of the disciplines and of public policy never achieved the desired political and cultural neutrality that their scientific methods and related administrative procedures had been claimed to promise....The conceptual frameworks themselves promoted historically distinctive institutional and cultural interests and concerns, which ensured that the knowledge produced through them was always socially situated... The more value-neutral a conceptual framework appears, the more likely it is to advance the hegemonous interests of dominant groups, and the less likely it is to be able to detect important actualities of social relations (Harding, 2004, p. 5-6)

Dismissal of ‘subjectivity’ as unscientific from this research tradition has come under serious interrogation from those who want to use research for human emancipation of various kinds from different standpoints. Here, subjectivity is valued, and it is considered empowering in unveiling the normative features of standard philosophies of science, epistemologies and methodologies cloaked behind a claim of neutrality. And subjectivity is celebrated. The primary goal of research is to produce knowledge, and knowledge can

¹⁶ One can legitimately contest the positivist construal of what is ‘scientific’ and what is ‘systematic.’

¹⁷ David Silverman rather grudgingly uses this expression to label the quantitative researchers “whose concerns for mere ‘facts’ precludes a proper understanding of...’the actor’s perspectives.”

be produced from different subject positions, perhaps in a richer way, be it post-colonial, feminist, or from any of the theoretical positions. Harding makes a case for multiple knowledge possibilities from different locations where subjectivity entails empowering reflexivity. While she presents the example of cultures bringing in ‘different discursive resources—metaphors, models, narratives, conceptual frameworks’ (Harding, 2004, p. 258-59) that may give rise to various knowledge possibilities, the same can be said about class, gender, sexual orientations, or any theoretical position informed by workings of power within society or societies. Subject positions, particularly in qualitative research have now come to be accepted as valid. Flinders and Mills put it as the following, ‘few of us now claim that we enter the field *tabula rasa*, unencumbered by notions of the phenomena we seek to understand’ (Flinders & Mills, 1993, p. xi).

Developments in critical theories in social science have also had significant impact on modes of enquiries and the understanding of the positionality of the researcher over the past seventy years. For Bourdieu and Giddens, ‘when individuals act, they do so in contexts or settings that are structured in certain ways and are continually being restructured’ (Minichiello, Aroni, & Hays, 2008, p. 6). The act itself is not the whole story, the context within which the act takes place is equally important, if not more. According to Hall,

...we all write or speak from a particular place and time, from a history and a culture which is specific. What we say is always ‘in context’, positioned ...Representation is possible only because enunciation is always produced within codes which have a history, a position within the discursive formations of a particular space and time (Hall, 1990, p. 222).

In the post-positivist traditions, research methods and methodologies have much to do with the theories. Considerable literature exists on the linkages between theories/epistemologies in qualitative research and the methodologies used for research. However, debates are rife as to what comes first, methodology or the theories. Denzin and Lincoln look at epistemological and ontological premises (in other words, theories) as paradigms or an interpretive framework. According to them, ‘all research is interpretive, it is guided by a set of beliefs and feelings about the world and how it should be understood and studied.’ The paradigm ‘makes particular demands on the researcher, including the questions he or she asks and the interpretations the researcher brings to them’ (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003a, p. 33). Clearly, Denzin and Lincoln believe in an effective linkage between theory and methodology and that a qualitative researcher is a

‘bricoleur,’ eclectically choosing paradigms and theories which are the guiding epistemologies in the research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003b, p. 6).

Yet some other research methodologists think methods should precede theories.

For Creswell:

In a qualitative study, one does not begin with a theory to test or verify. Instead, consistent with the inductive model of thinking, a theory may emerge during the data collection and analysis phase... or be used relatively late in the research process as a basis for comparison with other theories (Creswell, 1994, quoted in Anfara & Mertz, 2006, p. xxii)

Interestingly, the same Creswell, after four years, acknowledged that researchers bring paradigmatic and theoretical assumptions that influence the designs of their studies and guide their studies (Anfara & Mertz, 2006, p. xxii). Merriam takes a strong stance on the linkage between theory and research with precedence of theory. To her ‘it would be difficult to imagine a study without a theoretical or (a term that can be used interchangeably) conceptual framework.’ This framework is derived from the ‘orientation or stance’ the researcher brings to the study. It is the ‘lens’ through which the researcher views the world (Merriam, 1998, p. 45).

Evident from the above debate is the fact that theory has an unavoidable place, as Anfara and Mertz put it, and a substantive role in the research process. However, even if one clings to a particular broader category of theories, say, critical theories, there are many theories, which would bring into play different interpretations of the same phenomenon being studied. This is where the researcher needs to broaden her/his knowledge base, be circumspect and eclectic in choice of theories to be used in order to impart richness to her/his analysis in the role of what Denzin and Lincoln call ‘bricoleur.’ Sometimes, some methodologies are imbricated with certain theoretical traditions. For example, critical discourse analysis is directly related to the critical theory of language that examines language in terms of its historical context, existing social relations that involve discourse and relations of power (Janks, 1997, pp. 329-42). While the choice of a methodology in such a case would be preordained by the preference of the researcher for a particular theoretical tradition, the choice does not need to be limiting as long as they are not mutually conflicting. For example, policy research can be undertaken as an analysis of the hegemonic exercises of the ruling classes from the Gramscian Marxist tradition and at the same time policies can be examined, from a post-structuralist perspective, as texts fraught with many uncertainties and giving rise to multiple

meanings. The idea of these multiple meanings is not incongruent with the emerging literature on policy borrowing and policy lending. Policy borrowing and policy lending have also been looked into from the critical perspectives on globalisation and in post-colonial literature by authors like Anderson-Levitt, Tickly, Dale, Jones, Lingard and others. One can be eclectic in choosing various theoretical tools within the broader rubric of critical theoretical tradition to investigate policy issues and come up with intelligible and valid findings that enrich knowledge of policy processes.

3.3 ECLECTICISM AS THE THEORETICAL STANCE

The present study also has its epistemological base in an eclectic combination of some interpretive trends in comparative education within the broader realm of critical theories and some analytic and perceptual tools of post-structuralism (Douglas, 1995; Scott, 1990)¹⁸ (See also the conceptual/theoretical framework for the study later in the chapter). Such a combination may appear oxymoronic to many serious taxonomers of social-scientific knowledge traditions who would raise question about the possibility of a combination of these two traditions—one being paradigmatic and the other avowedly anti-paradigmatic. Critical theory, much of which is attributed to the Institute for Social Research (popularly known as Frankfurt School), clings to the progressive and emancipatory role of knowledge derived through continued critical investigation, which defines its telos of politics. Critical theorists, particularly from the Frankfurt School, have consistently emphasised the role of human agency in leading society towards emancipation, bringing to the fore the issues of consciousness and culture. Built into this theory is a practical intent of understanding the world and transforming it as seen in the works of Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, Herbert Marcuse and Jurgen Habermas. Theory is meant to inspire agency and practical actions (Alway, 1995, pp. 1-10) to transform the world, obviously for better. On the other hand, post structuralism deconstructs various narratives, including critical theory, and rejects the notion of progress in knowledge showing it to be a specific formation informed by power at any given time under particular social-historical circumstances problematizing its truth content (Hatch, 2002, pp. 17-18). Problematisation of the power-knowledge-truth trio is the political realm post structuralism assigns to itself.

¹⁸ Given many points of convergence, post-structuralism is also considered by many as a trend within the larger critical theory tradition or that many trends in critical theories are post-structuralist.

Despite this apparent irreconcilability, many social scientists of the recent years have converged in their pursuit of knowledge to be known as, say, critical poststructuralist or feminist poststructuralist, while working towards their political goal using both critical theories and post structuralism as their analytic tools. The present study also selectively makes use of the perceptual and analytic tools both from critical theories and post structuralism to achieve its research goals to analyse the policy processes and governance reforms and also to understand the agencies of various actors that respond to the policy processes and the reforms.

3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN FOR THE PRESENT STUDY

This section describes the theoretical framework to approach the issues, methods of data collection, data analysis, validity and reliability of the approach and limits and limitations of the study.

3.4.1 Theoretical Framework

This research draws upon Stephen J. Ball's framework for critical policy research in education (Ball, 1997). Ball attempts to summarise the trends in education policy research drawing upon the dichotomy between policy scholarship and policy science. Here, policy science is presented as trends attempting to 'abstract problems from their relational settings,' and to exclude 'ideological and value conflicts as externalities beyond its remit,' whereas policy scholarship is viewed to represent 'a social-historical approach to research' that can illuminate the 'cultural and ideological struggles in which schooling is located' (Grace quoted in Ball, 1997, p. 264). While such nomenclature can be contested and it can be argued that such straightforward dichotomy does not do justice to the rich texture of educational policy research, it cannot be denied that the elements in such dichotomy can sensitise researchers against an understanding as if 'educational studies stand outside and above the political agenda' and as if they have 'a neutral status embodied in a free-floating progressive rationalism,' a stance which, Ball maintains, are 'dangerous and debilitating conceits' (Ball, 1997, p. 264). Ball presents a template, which is considered quite useful in the present study, as follows:

Table 1: Policy Scholarship and Policy Science

Policy Scholarship	Policy Science
a. Design and scope Policy oriented Multi-focus Multi-level Temporal Global/local Linked focus	Practice oriented Single focus Single level A temporal National/general Detached
b. Embeddedness Context rich Conceptually thick	Context barren Conceptually thin
c. An ethics of research Social justice Critical	Social efficiency Incorporated
d. Peopling policy Voiced	Silent

(Ball, 1997, p. 264)

The elements of this template presented in the form of binaries compose a rich texture that a critical education policy researcher should be mindful of. While the objective of the present research is to trace the changing school state relationship and the changing mode of governance of the nongovernment secondary schools in Bangladesh, it attempts to place those practices in the larger perspective of history—a temporal chain—of these practices and in the context of changing policies. This way, the constitution of the practices is not seen in isolation, to be studied only on their own—a historically—rather in the context of how these practices came into existence and what agenda might have worked behind constitution of these practices. The research that exclusively focuses on the practices, as is the tendency in traditional policy research, and the technical-rational discourse it often brings into play, “slips neatly back into the unreflexive, ‘blame-based’ tactics of policy-makers wherein policies are always solutions and never part of the problem” (Ball, 1997, p. 265).

In this study, the practices are examined in the relational setting in which they emerge in relation to the policies. If there are problems in practices, they are to be understood also in terms of the problems in the policies that deploy such practices. Institution of certain governance practices, as opposed to possible others, is a political choice enacted through policies. The realm of policy formulation is intensely political and the actors involved in the process are political actors pursuing a political agenda—be they endogenous or exogenous. This research approaches the research questions in the

relational context between the governance practices and the policies buttressing them, and while approaching the local policies, embeds them in the larger ideological terrain of global policies from which they are borrowed.

Situating the local/national policies in this larger global context has two important dividends. First, it helps the researcher understand the embeddedness of a country's policy environment in the global environment of policy borrowing, its relative strength and weaknesses in borrowing and recontextualising policies, if at all. Second, it also helps the researcher understand the political content of the global policies as well as the local version of them and how they influence the nature of practices on the ground as they travel from the global to the local situation.

As regards theoretical framework for this study, there are four layers of concepts. While they resist any tight compartmentalisation, still four aspects of the study can be attributed to four theoretical approaches. First, the analysis of local policy context and its interface with global policy environment enacted through the global agencies is approached through the critical theories that have recently emerged under a rich branch of comparative education dealing with the issues of policy borrowing/lending and recontextualisation (*a la* Steiner-Khamsi). Second, the enterprise of knowledge construction attempting to provide legitimacy to the borrowed policies and structuring of governance practices is approached through the theories of discourse formation and their relations to 'truth' and knowledge. Third, the changing school state relationship and the new mode of governance manifested in the newly instituted practices are approached from the Foucauldian notion of Governmentality, the architecture of self-governance. Fourth, the actual and possible re-articulation of the new governance regime, identities on offer under the changed relationship and responses of various kinds to the new governance regime draw upon Thomas Pedroni's post-structurally informed Gramscian notion of creative and tactical re-articulation of identity positions on offer. While the chapter on literature review (Chapter 2) dealt with these broader themes, in the following sections, I elaborate these themes as part of the theoretical framework of the study.

3.4.1.1 Policy Borrowing/Lending

When policies travel, they travel along with their paradigms and principles, which are often tied to perceptions and preferences as to how the education systems around the globe should be structured, what kind of administrative arrangements and institutions should be in place and to what end. There are multiple dimensions that need to be

examined: the agenda of those who borrow policies, the environment under which some countries are compelled to borrow policies, context-specific changes in the borrowed policies when they are implemented and then of course the agenda of those who lend policies.

David Phillips and Kimberly Ochs provide a model of policy transfer encapsulated in four stages: (i) cross-national attraction; (ii) decision; (iii) implementation and (iv) internalisation/indigenisation (Phillips and Ochs, 2003, pp.451-461). Cross-national attraction can come into effect through various impulses, e.g. internal dissatisfaction, systemic collapse, negative external evaluation, political change, investigation into other foreign situation and perceived superiority of other models, or even distortion and scandalisation of the deficiencies at home situation. Such impulses can lead to the possibility of externalisation and the possibility of borrowing guiding philosophy or ideology, ambitions/goals, strategies, enabling structures, processes, and techniques. The cross-national attraction can lead to a decision which can come from theoretical adherence, realistic/practical considerations still based on successes elsewhere or in the form of a quick fix.

Then policy borrowing moves into the third stage, namely, implementation, possibly the most important stage. At implementation, a foreign model can be adapted and, as Phillips and Ochs say, ‘the degree of adaptation will depend on a large number of contextual factors’ (2003, p. 456). Adaptation and change will be influenced by ‘significant actors.’ These actors can support adaptation in the form of national and local encouragement, enthusiasm and financial incentives. They can also mount resistance which may become manifest in the form of, interestingly, inaction, delaying tactics or non-decision—all being various forms of subversion. Non-decision can also take also the form of ‘inattention to details’ (Corcoran, 1974, p. 5, quoted in Phillips and Ochs, 2003, p. 456). Internalisation or indigenisation, the fourth stage, according to Phillips and Ochs, takes place in four steps: impact on the existing system, absorption of external features, synthesis and evaluation.

All these theoretical premises are pertinent to the present study. From the very beginning of the policy borrowing process, conscious decisions are made as to what impulses are to draw from, what decisions are to be made, what to implement and how to implement, what strategies of internalisation to be taken and how to evaluate the adopted/adapted policies. To say the least, such decisions are all political, so are the responses to policies from the recipients on the ground.

Rappleye identifies a research trend in education that shifts “the research gaze away from the ‘official’ policy problematic to actors and their political motives (Rappleye, 2012b, p. 123).” To him, policy borrowing has an important dimension, which may not be quite understood if we look only into “the recognized deficiencies in the ‘home’ context” and ‘widespread consensus about the superiority of the provision abroad.’ It also needs to be approached from the perspective of the domestic political agenda. A ‘reference to elsewhere’ is brought to the centre to provide legitimacy to the act of the domestic policy borrowers.¹⁹ In the same stroke, Rappleye cautions us that ‘reference to elsewhere’ is also the effect of “the production of a discourse about the superiority of provision ‘elsewhere’” which cannot be fully understood with a focus solely on the domestic actors. He finds post-structuralists’ attention to the notions of power, production of knowledge and discourse and how they enforce closure on alternative thinking useful.

Another trend in approaching the phenomenon of policy borrowing, advanced by those whom Rappleye calls Systems Theorists (e.g., Steiner-Khamsi, Schriewer), suggests that ‘behind the façade of policy convergence we find continued context-specific variations of education policy formation and practice’ (Rappleye, 2012a, p. 26). For Florian Waldow, there are two broad trends in understanding the phenomenon of policy borrowing: first, what can be learned from abroad, mainly carried out by the international organisations, and the second is why and how of policy transfer, as investigated by authors like Steiner-Khamsi, Shriewer and others (Waldow, 2009). To authors like Schriewer and Martinez, externalisation of policies is often a response to the global environment in search of a ‘supplementary meaning’ to buttress internal needs and therefore it is often rearranged and the reception and description of what is externalised is filtered (Shriewer & Martinez, 2004, p. 32). Recipient countries often select ‘reference societies’ of their choice.

While this interplay between what is borrowed and the form in which policies are discursively reproduced internally is interesting, one would be remiss not to ponder the constraints in autonomy some developing countries face in the process. Steiner-Khamsi recognises that policy borrowing in some developing countries could be coercive where receiving aid is conditional upon policy acceptance and implementation (Steiner-Khamsi, 2012b, p. 5) and the economic reasons of policy borrowing for such countries are

¹⁹ Shriewer and Martinez discuss the selective construction of ‘reference societies’ that are expected to provide the needed legitimacy. Please see Chapter 2.

significant. Therefore, while the internal politics of the policy recipient countries would be an important determinant, autonomy of such countries in deciding from a menu of choices is often limited. Research in this area becomes even more interesting when we notice the economic reasons of policy borrowing mingle with the political reasons of policy lending. Waldow identifies two issues that rule the realm of policy borrowing and lending and these relate to the outcomes in the process of global standardisation and the production of legitimacy, both fraught with political content.

As regards global convergence towards a standard global model of education, the views are considerably divergent between world culture theorists (e.g., John Meyer, Francisco Ramirez) who emphasise gradual global isomorphism in policies and the theorists (Waldow labels them as culturalists) who emphasise cultural contexts leading to multiple policy formations and are interested in the issues of power and coercion working for enforced convergence. Waldow observes, “The culturalists point to the importance of and perseverance of local contexts, showing how world culture may be resisted or processed, adapted and appropriated to local conditions, leading to hybridisation and new local particularities” (Waldow, 2012, p. 413).

Waldow points to the fact that the production of legitimacy is a yearning both from policy borrowers and policy lenders. The borrowers want to earn legitimacy for themselves or try to delegitimise their political adversaries through externalisation of policies (p. 417). For policy borrowers in different countries, the process of gaining legitimisation can be quite complicated and an outright externalisation can be counterproductive. As Keita Takayama observes, ‘Political decision as to whether to foreground the externality or internality of reform ideas or to hybridize them is shaped by the constantly shifting domestic political context and corresponding changes in the logic of policy legitimisation’ (Takayama, 2013, p. 143). On the other hand, the policy lenders, according to Waldow, survive on lending policies (p. 417). Steiner-Khamsi terms the phenomenon as ‘export for survival’ and identifies three reasons that inspire international organisations to lend educational policies apart from the ‘economic gains associated with educational trade.’ These are (i) to mark their presence and demonstrate their effectiveness to their constituencies and donors; (ii) to transfer policies in a cost effective way through a division of labor between headquarters staff and local staff in these organisations, which, in effect, brings into play a neocolonialist mode; and (iii) to transfer prepackaged programs developed in headquarters which are easier to manage than locally

developed programs (Steiner-Khamsi, 2004, pp. 204-6). Through all these, the policy lenders try to earn legitimacy for their policy products and stay in business.

Any theorisation, while empowering in understanding various phenomena, by definition also has reductionist tendencies that disregard many nuances observable in specific country situations. These nuances depend, among other things, upon the location of the country in what it perceives to be the developmental scale and its own aspiration in terms of that notion of development. This is also mediated by the position of those who constitute power in the country in the ideological spectrum, and the nature of the country's acceptance of dependence on global resources—both material and intellectual. Still, many in such countries, despite their pronounced or tacitly critical, and therefore unwelcoming, stance to policy diffusions, may find it difficult to withstand the influx of policies preferred by actors representing the global policyscape at least at the discursive level. Variation, therefore, is not to be searched only in policies as implemented, but also in what is not implemented due to various strategies of subversion, procrastination, deferment and withdrawal affected through use of power at the disposal of those who are entrusted with implementation of policy reforms. At very rare occasions, this can be brought into play also through finding crevices in the dominant reform discourses and effectively silencing them if and when time is opportune. Dominant reform discourses are not equally dominant at all times. The local policy environment is sometimes informed by heightened nationalist sentiments posing varied stance to policy borrowing. At times, there are flares of counter-discursive tendencies emanating from a country's political realities at some historical moments, which may pose a substantive threat to offset the hither-to-dominant policy borrowing discourses.

3.4.1.2 Discourse and Construction of Policy Knowledge

A very important element of this research is an examination of the process of construction of policy knowledge of secondary education governance in Bangladesh. By way of doing this, the study attempts to trace the trajectory of policies—from conceptualisation to formulation to implementation, and examines the policies as discursive formations with all the imprints of a discourse—their production of knowledge, their claim to truth, their relations to power and their endeavor to ensure their legitimacy reinforced through self-generating practices, values, norms and institutional arrangements.

The main thrust in approaching discourse came from the poststructuralist tradition of Michel Foucault and his notion of discursive formation (Fairclough, 1992, p. 30-31)

and its relations to knowledge and power. A discursive formation is ‘that which in a given ideological formation...determines ‘*what can and should be said*’ (Fairclough, 1992, p. 30-31). The process of determining this is much more complex than it appears. Discursive formations are informed by the preferred construct of knowledge in a given context and by the relations of power. In addition, discursive formations are also informed by other discursive formations. One important contribution of understanding the policy discourses is that it brings to the fore the political struggle involved in policy processes.

Doherty defines discourse as “a body of ideas, concepts and beliefs that have become established as knowledge, or an accepted way of looking at the world. Such discourses form a set of lenses that have a profound influence on our understanding and action in the social world.” Doherty then identifies ‘texts,’ various kinds of texts, ‘as establishing, embodying, symbolizing or expressing such discourse’ (Doherty, 2007, p. 193-94). What we see, how we see and how we interpret what we see depend on the lenses we use. Our understanding, when embodied in texts we produce, has a regenerative impact on knowledge and construction of truth. Such construction entails both inclusion (of what we want to be included and propagated) and exclusion (of what we want to dismiss, marginalise or subdue). The act of inclusion and exclusion and the choice that comes into play in this regard are all political. Therefore, the field of discourse is intensely political and one has to understand it in terms of the agonistics that discourse is always fraught with. Discourse helps constitute power for some at the expense of others and power, in a symbiotic process, helps provide legitimacy to a particular discourse that helps constitute that power. However, in the horizon, there is always the possibility of contestation. While commenting on discourse, Bakhtin put it this way, ‘its assertion, its tone, its rhetoric—everything that constitutes it, always presuppose a horizon of competing, contrary utterances against which it asserts its energies’ (Terdiman, 1985, p. 36).

For Foucault, ‘Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it’ (Foucault, 1981, p. 101). It designates the ‘conjunction of power and knowledge.’ Meutzenfeldt defines discourse as ‘The complex of..notions, categories, ways of thinking and ways of communicating that constitutes a power-infused system of knowledge’ (cited in Taylor, 1997). To Shapiro, discourse is to be assessed, among other things, in terms of ‘dominant versus subjugated modes of statements and knowledge practices’ (Shapiro, 1992, p. 109). Regarding how discourse works Britzman says,

Every discourse constitutes, even as it mobilizes and shuts out, imaginary communities, identity investments and discursive practices. Discourses authorize what can and cannot be said; they produce relations of power and communities of consent and dissent, and thus discursive boundaries are always being redrawn around what constitutes the desirable and the undesirable and around what it is that makes possible particular structures of intelligibility and unintelligibility (MacLure, 2003, p. 175).²⁰

Discourse is, therefore, to be understood in terms of power in its pervasive meaning “circulating in a capillary fashion around and through institutions, reaching ‘into the very grain’ of those who are made subjects through their involvement in discourse – parents, children, prisoners, teachers, therapists, clients, claimants, lawyers, employers, and so on” (MacLure, 2003, p. 176). Taylor argues that critical analysis of policy discourses allowed us to deal with the complexity of education policy making and implementation through a focus on the ‘politics of discourse’ (Taylor, 1997, p 32).

As evident from the discussion above, there are a number of notions—truth, knowledge, power, institutional practices and agonistics—associated with discourse that would help us understand the policies as discourse and locate policies as they reside in the political terrain. The production of certain policies as ‘truth,’ creation of knowledge to buttress and legitimise that ‘truth’ in abnegation and marginalisation of other possibilities of truth, the imprint of power—already in existence or discursively produced—in the creation of knowledge about that truth, aligning and streamlining institutions to pervade that knowledge and attendant practices, and the agonistics around such policies—manifest in assertion of and resistance to policies—in the realm of politics of policies—all these make it imperative that we understand policies as discourses. In the realm of policy discourse, various actors are bestowed with uneven distribution of power and discourse itself is a constitutive and generative element in power. This research project examines the entire gamut of policy discourses—the knowledge products that attempt to legitimise certain policies, the processes of production of those knowledge products within the given discursive molds and assertion for certain practices and institutional and administrative arrangements in keeping with the policies. The idea here is to analyse various texts and the processes of development of policy discourse, as to who produced the policies, and to what end. This would allow us to look into specific circumstances of “what and how particular kinds of knowledge informed the policy, how particular

²⁰ Britzman, D. ‘The question of belief’: writing poststructural ethnography,’ quoted in MacLure, 2003; p. 175.

perspectives were included or excluded, and who benefited and who was disadvantaged by these inclusions and exclusions” (Ninnes, 2004, p. 47).

3.4.1.3 Governmentality and New Managerialism

Foucault’s notion of Governmentality and the growth of an art of government in the form of a new managerialism are of immense importance in understanding governance reforms advanced by agents of neoliberalism in developing countries. The framework of the present study draws upon six interrelated features of neoliberalism that promote enterprise culture and enterprising self in education governance. These are (i) ‘the judicial-legal rules governing the framework within the game of enterprise,’ (ii) processes of voluntary agreement to import economic models in explaining non-market behavior, (iii) ‘a close relation between government and self-government,’ (iv) a ‘new managerialism’ with ‘a shift from policy and administration to management’ drawn upon private sector management systems of self-management of individuals and institutions, (v) ‘degovernmentalisation of the state’ where market takes over government’s role and ‘consumer-driven forms of social provision’ and ‘contracting out’ of public provision in education and (vi) a new relationship between government and knowledge leading to a system of governance at a distance (Peters, 2001, pp.68-69).

3.4.1.4 Governance Reforms: Re-articulation and Resistance

The fourth element in the theoretical and conceptual framework of this study is the notion of resistance to policies, practices and consequent identities on offer to the school communities in relation to the new governance model. This section of the study largely draws its theoretical incentive from Pedroni’s study of the voucher program extended to Milwaukee’s communities of color. While this has been discussed at length in Chapter 2 (section 2.6), I would like to reemphasise Pedroni’s point that participation of the African American families of Milwaukee in the voucher program was not a whole-sale acceptance of a system of educational privatisation but a ‘momentary strategy,’ a tactical choice to assert their agency on a social and educational terrain over which they had very little control in the past. Such a move partly owed to the communities’ understanding of the possibility of re-articulation of their educational concerns within the given parameters of educational reforms—a phenomenon that has significant relevance to the Bangladesh context.

Nevertheless, a transient alliance or tactical acceptance can still be hegemonic in favor of the educational conservatives with lasting impact on legitimizing legislation and global spread of a policy reform. It is, therefore, important to understand the nuances in rather contradictory ‘discursive tendencies’ that expand the space for progressive rearticulation and creative negotiations within the given situation. Obviously, the scope and possibility of such rearticulation and creative negotiation would vary from country to country. Still, Pedroni’s analysis of the Milwaukee situation provides enough incentive to look into a different mode of resistance, in the form of reworking the system from within.

The concept of this study is built upon the four theoretical premises discussed above, e.g., the issues of policy transfer, construction and legitimation of policy knowledge, the neoliberal model of new managerialism and agency of recipients in responding to policies and their implementation. The issue of secondary education governance in Bangladesh is addressed from these perspectives.

3.4.2 Sample, Data Collection and Analytic Approach

Given the nature of intertextuality and layers of discursive formations, which appear at different times and in different texts, it was considered that the phenomenon of governance under the present study would be better understood through a cyclical approach as opposed to a sequential or linear approach (Newman, 2007, p. 85). The issues of governance represent a complex intertextuality, a discursive interplay among the actors, forming a power-grid within which governance policies are conceived, shaped, formulated and executed. Looking at any one level in a linear way and moving on from there might give a truncated view. Flexibility and openness and coming back to the same phenomenon with observations in a cyclic way are the key to such a study.

As characteristic of flexible qualitative design (Sarantakos, 2005, p. 113), the present research used multiple sources of information and data and moved between the steps of fine-tuning of concepts, data collection, and sampling rather freely. Broadly, data for this research and their interpretation came from four major sources: (i) review and interpretation of embedded discourses in various documents (discussed in the next section) primarily from 1993 to 2012 (but for some relevant policy documents, circulars, acts and ordinances, I had to go back to some documents even from 1961); (ii) interviews and focus group discussions with various actors both at the school and community level and at the policy making level such as teachers, School Management Committee (SMC) members, local level politicians, a Member of Parliament, teacher union leaders,

education ministers/advisers, bureaucrats in the Ministry of Education, Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education and government projects, officials and consultants from multilateral institutions, members of education commission (see Table 2 below); (iii) in-depth analysis of two school situations chosen on the basis of varying characteristics relevant to this study such as age of the school, location, political propensities in relation to the school etc. (discussed in details in Chapter 8) and (iv) observations from various meetings and training and workshops organised by the government and the World Bank under secondary education projects.

Table 2: List of Interviews/FGDs/Events

<i>Category</i>	<i>Respondents/Events</i>	<i>Number</i>
Interviews	1. Former Secretary, Education	1
	2. Deputy Secretary Education	2
	3. Former Additional Secretary, now consultant to WB	1
	4. Project Director, Secondary Education Sector Development Project (SESDP)	1
	5. Deputy Director, Secondary Education Quality and Access Enhancement Project (SEQAEP)	1
	6. Director MEW, DSHE	1
	7. Former Director (Planning) DSHE	1
	8. Former WB Country Director, now Governance Consultant	1
	9. Editor, Amader Shomoy	1
	10. Education Economist, WB	1
	11. Senior Education Specialist WB	1
	12. Former Advisor, Education Ministry, Executive Director Power and Participation Research Centre	1
	13. Former Advisor, Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (MoPME), Executive Director, Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE)	1
	14. Professor, Institute of Educational Research (IER), Dhaka University	1
	15. NGO Activist	1
	16. Headmaster	3
	17. SMC Chair	2
	18. SMC members from two schools	2
	19. Community members in two school communities	4
	20. Teachers' Union Leader at national level	2
	21. Political Leader One at national level and two at school community level	3
FGD	1. SMC of both the selected schools	2
	2. Eight head teachers in one upazila (subdistrict) from which one of two schools were chosen	1
	3. With 12 teachers of a school	1
Workshop/ Training	1. Training of SMC trainers under Secondary Education Quality and Access Enhancement project (SEQAEP)	2
	2. Training of SMC members	2
	3. DP workshop on SWAp in secondary education (ADB)	1
	4. Training of resource teachers under SEQAEP	3

3.4.2.1 Analysis of Documents

This research is built upon an extensive review and analysis of written sources and documents and the discourses embedded in these documents. Five distinct areas of documents were intensively examined:

- i. Policy documents: For trends in national policies, the national education policies since 1949 were reviewed with emphasis on the national educational policies prepared during the study period (1993-2012). All circulars and executive orders issued during the study period were reviewed. Some of these circulars and executive orders had their antecedents since 1977 which were also reviewed. All available institutional documents of the relevant agencies under the Ministry of Education, laws and acts of the Government of Bangladesh, statistical reports from Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics (BANBEIS), Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) and the Monitoring and Evaluation Wing (MEW) of the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education (DSHE), projects documents, consultants' reports, and training manuals aimed at governance reforms in secondary education in Bangladesh were also studied.
- ii. Documents and articles prepared/published between 1993 and 2012 by academics, academic institutions, civil society groups/think-tanks and media reports in relation to governance reforms were reviewed.
- iii. Documents prepared by the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank, particularly the project related documents, evaluation reports, consultants' reports and strategy papers published between 1993 and 2012 that have relevance to governance reforms in secondary education in Bangladesh constituted a major part of the analysis.
- iv. Meeting proceedings of SMCs of the two selected schools between 2009 and 2012 were also reviewed.

3.4.2.2 Interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGD)

The researcher interviewed a total of 30 people for the study both at school level in the two schools selected and at national level (see Table 2 for the list). The samples of interviewees included teachers (including head teachers), parents, students, SMC members, local politicians involved in school management, policy makers at national level, bureaucrats at the Ministry of Education, officials at the executing agencies (e.g.

DSHE, various project offices), academics, NGO activists, officials in education sector of the development agencies, teacher union leaders among others (Table 2). The primary selection criteria for the interviewees were their engagement in the field of education, particularly in policy processes, governance and subvention during the study period from their respective positions and consideration of possible diverse perspectives on the issues of secondary education governance as seen from their subject positions. Interviews were a combination of key informant interviews and loosely structured/unstructured interviews with various actors. Key informant interviews were conducted with those who were knowledgeable about the governance reforms initiatives and their impact and have been involved in the policy processes for a long time. At the community and school level, interviews were mostly loosely structured or unstructured depending on the nature of information sought, knowledge of the interviewees, and the way they felt comfortable sharing their experiences. Though unstructured or loosely structured and with minimal control, the interviews were purposive in steering the conversation in a way that it remained relevant to the problem being researched (Minichiello, et al., 2008, p. 52-53).

The decision about the sample as to who should be interviewed was taken on the basis of known knowledgeableability of the respondents at the national level and on the basis of discussion with people at the school community level. For example, the civil servants and ministers/advisors interviewed were all from the Ministry of Education, the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education, and the development projects that were responsible during the study period. Political leaders were chosen on the basis of their direct engagement either with a school or with Parliamentary Committee on Education. At the school community level, the research followed a purposive non-probability sampling method typically employed in the case of qualitative research where size is flexible and is not determined statistically, and the sample is chosen before and during the research using flexible parameters, based on judgment about the importance of the prospective respondents (Neuman, 2003, p. 211) and the issues that became important from interviews with others.

The researcher conducted four focus group discussions in 2010, two with all school management committee members of the two selected schools, one with eight head teachers of an upazila (sub-district) and one with 12 teachers of one of those two schools. The decision about a focus group discussion only with head teachers was taken after a key informant interview with a head teacher who expressed the view that it would be useful to have an focus group discussion only with head teachers of different schools in

absence of political leaders who would be present in the focus group discussions with the SMCs. Both for interviews with various stakeholders and focus group discussions, separate questionnaires were developed, pre-approved by the research supervisors and the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) of the University of New England. Information regarding the research project was shared with the respondents both in interviews and focus group discussions and prior consent was sought from the respondents for their participation in the interview or focus group discussion. Based on consent from the participants, all interviews and focus group discussions were audio-recorded. These were transcribed later for use in the analysis. Both the information sheet about the research project and the consent form were pre-approved by HREC.

Interviews and FGDs at school and school community levels were conducted primarily in two schools in the district of Mymensingh, and one FGD with head teachers at an upazila level. The two non-government schools were selected on the basis of some prior information collected on the schools and some differences in school characteristics. These included distance from urban areas, school's relations to the existing political power in the area, the age of the school in terms of getting subvention, school community's relations to the school, etc. The school characteristics have been discussed in Chapter 8. These two schools were taken both for intensive case studies and for interviews and focus groups discussions with school level actors.

3.4.2.3 Observation of Events

The researcher was also present as unobtrusive observer in a number of events like meetings, workshops and training programs on issues related to this research. A prior permission was sought from the respective authorities to attend the event as observer and for use of information in the research project. Important data were gleaned also from these events.

3.4.3 The Approach in Analysis

Sarantakos identifies three types of qualitative analysis: (i) iterative qualitative analysis, (ii) fixed qualitative analysis and (iii) subjectivist qualitative analysis (Sarantakos, 2005, p. 346). The present research chooses the approach of subjectivist qualitative analysis with explicit adherence to theoretical paradigms discussed earlier, which has an avowed preference for emancipatory role of subjectivity in interpretation of phenomenon,

production of alternative knowledge and a disbelief in ‘strict techniques and methods’ to find ‘objective truth.’ In keeping with the key research objectives, the researcher in the present study analyses the policy processes, roles of various actors, process of knowledge production and legitimation of a development culture and institution of a management model in order to bring in a different perspective in the knowledge of education governance in Bangladesh. Policy-making has been looked upon, agreeing with Taylor, as ‘politics of discourse’ (Taylor, 1997), which does not leave any neutral ground for those who are already in this politics or for those who are vying for a space in this politics. Such a discourse links contexts, texts and consequences, as Taylor puts it, which needs to be analysed in its totality. Also, the present study takes a theoretical position to look into the issue of agency in resistance to the given governance model or re-articulation of a socio-political discourse on governance.

3.5 VALIDITY AND CREDIBILITY

Despite inevitable subjectivity of the researcher in qualitative research, s/he needs to be mindful of the needed rigor in ensuring quality to be fair to the phenomenon being studied. There is still no consensus among research methodologists as to what would constitute validity and credibility in qualitative research, particularly when the research is conducted from critical theoretical perspectives. On this count, qualitative research is still an emerging area, much of it is still to be defined, and much of it perhaps will always defy being confined to any particular definition, and therefore, will be contested. Contention, of course, is a *sine qua non*, a prerequisite for advancement of knowledge.

The present study strictly adhered to a rigor to be internally consistent in examining a wide range of documents to draw upon various perspectives in understanding the formation of the discursive field of policy-making processes. In interviews and focus ground discussions, views were carefully recorded, which were later transcribed and preserved to reconfirm the iterations of the participants, if needed. The validity of interpretation under this study is corroborated by the existence of literature on the issues based on experiences from different countries. With regard to credibility of the present research, the researcher’s position is laid out at the very outset to inform readers of the particular conceptual lenses through which the given phenomenon of secondary education governance in Bangladesh is viewed and interpreted. The context has been described which would also allow the readers to make their own judgment. The study also puts forward a conceptual framework and its analytic tools that hopefully gave a clear idea

about the tenor of analysis. The sources of data have also been clearly described which would allow readers to make a judgment about the study on its own merits rather than casting the notions of validity and reliability from a positivistic paradigm.

3.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

This research involved analysis of various texts, including individual opinions as expressed in interviews and focus group discussions, institutional opinions as expressed in various documents. For interviews and focus group discussions, an information sheet was prepared about the research project, researcher and supervisors. The information sheet also contained contact details of the researcher, supervisors, School of Education and the Research Services of the University of New England. For each category of respondents and focus group discussions, a questionnaire was prepared with unstructured and open-ended questions in keeping with the objectives and the method of the study. These documents went through several iterations between the researcher and the supervisors. Once finalised, these, along with their Bangla translation, were presented for approval of the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) of the University of New England. Only after HREC approval, the questionnaires and the information sheet were used during the field study. The information sheet, either in English or in Bangla, as appropriate, was shared with all respondents both in interviews and focus group discussion along with a consent form, which was also approved by HREC. The respondents had the option of remaining anonymous or of being directly quoted. Those who opted to be directly quoted, were also informed that the direct quotes would be shared with them if they wanted. The researcher preserved the signed consent forms from the respondents.

3.7 LIMITS AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

A number of limitations are discussed about qualitative research in general, mostly viewed on the basis of categories and perceptions extracted from quantitative research. For example, like many other qualitative research projects, the present study would not meet the criteria of representativeness, generalizability, objectivity, validity and reliability, comparability and replicability (Sarantakos, 2005, p. 46) as generally conceived of, mostly though in quantitative research. This study cannot claim to be generalizable, representative, objective and replicable if studied from other theoretical

perspectives. The study is one of many possible subjective interpretations of the policy processes.

The study has predominantly depended on written materials and documents of various kinds. The review of such documents is not, and cannot be, exhaustive. The guiding principles in selection of the documents were availability and relevance to the issues being examined. While most of the documents of the multilateral institutions were available, some important government documents, particularly in relation to litigations, were missing from the Ministry of Education or its policy implementation arms and also from the High Court/Supreme Court library. Therefore, some of the litigation cases could not be examined thoroughly. Many of the government circulars between 1996 and 2000 were also not available. Some of them, however, could be recovered from the schools.

In interviews, there were a few cases of interviewees' reluctance to talk about contentious and sensitive issues despite the fact that confidentiality and anonymity were promised. In those cases, other respondents were sought. The problem was more acute in focus group discussions, where the respondents were expected to give their opinion in front of others. For example, in the focus group with teachers, some teachers were visibly hesitant to express their opinion in front of the head teacher. Similar case was observed in focus group discussions with SMC members where the members were not forthcoming in front of the local political leaders who were also members/ chair of the SMC. Based on this observation, number of individual interviews was increased.

While policy-making process is a long-term historical process, the study confines itself to the period between 1993 and 2012. Although historical data have been retrieved as available and as needed in the analysis, the study cannot claim to have captured fully a scenario that predates the large-scale presence of the multilateral institutions in secondary education. Besides, the study confines its focus only on two multilateral institutions—the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank, not on other multilaterals and bilaterals, partly due to less involvement of others in secondary education in Bangladesh.

CHAPTER FOUR: POLICY MAKING PROCESSES FOR EDUCATION GOVERNANCE: INTERPLAY AMONG KEY ACTORS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter mainly examines the interplay among various actors and their roles in the policy-making processes related to secondary education governance in Bangladesh. Beginning with an examination of the issue of subvention, the chapter, in particular, deals with the following questions: (a) how various actors, e.g., the education commissions,²¹ the elected representatives, the bureaucrats, the multilateral institutions and civil society groups, interplay with each other in the policy processes; and (b) how the state attempts to manage all these actors with conflicting views on policies. Understanding the roles of these various actors is crucial for understanding the nature of policy discourses and the reforms undertaken to give shape to the school-state relationship in secondary education in Bangladesh. In the process, it will be examined how certain actors, as Stephen Ball would have said, validated new policy discourses, enabled new forms of policy influences and disabled or disenfranchised established actors and agencies (Ball, 2008, p. 156).

In Bangladesh, seven education commissions and one expert committee produced a total of seven national education policy reports and one set of expert committee recommendations since the liberation of the country in 1971, and still, none of these policies has ever been implemented mainly because there was no continuity of any party in the government long enough to implement its education policy and most of the policies were prepared/finalised almost at the end of the tenure of each government (discussed later in the chapter). This is not to say that nothing has happened in the education sector over the past 42 years. To the contrary, the sector has undergone considerable reforms. For example, in secondary education, subvention to schools, examination reforms and changes in teacher recruitment processes—all have happened during this period. It would be worth investigating what the sources of incentives are for these changes if they have not been inspired by the national education policies. This also legitimately gives rise to the question how important the national education policies really are. A critical

²¹ An Education Commission is formed by a government to prepare a national education policy mostly in line with the government's policy preferences. The Commission is composed of members from academia, think tanks, and other civil society groups mostly drawing upon people who support the party in power. Generally, each government would have one such commission in its tenure of five years.

examination of the policy making processes and positions of various actors within the process would be helpful in subsequent investigation into policy implementation conundrum in secondary education.

While the problem is multifaceted, given the scope of this study, this chapter will probe only into the roles of various actors in the policy discourses and in the construction of knowledge in these processes drawing upon examples from a few policy elements, e.g., subvention, curriculum management, etc. However, it should also be noted that an important focus of this entire thesis is the roles of these various actors in the emerging governance system. Some of the issues are discussed in greater details also in the subsequent chapters, often leaving a clue in this chapter as to what would be discussed later.

4.2 SUBVENTION AND EDUCATION GOVERNANCE: A BRIEF HISTORICAL ACCOUNT

Subvention is given to the nongovernment secondary schools largely in the form of Monthly Pay Order (MPO) to the teachers as monthly salary support. However, from time to time, other supports are also provided, e.g., for reconstruction, renovation, extension of school facilities, establishment of labs etc. According to the 2010-11 Annual Budget for the Ministry of Education, teachers' salaries accounted for 96.9 percent of the total support provided by the Government to the nongovernment secondary schools.

Subvention is an important instrument that the government has used in governance policy reforms in nongovernment secondary schools. Subvention provides life-line to the nongovernment secondary schools in Bangladesh. Although it did not exist from the beginning of secondary schools, school financing has always been an important issue in policy discussions. It is, therefore, necessary to trace the path that eventually led to subvention to these schools, and to probe into the policy decisions about subvention as to how they relate to the political aspects of educational governance, which will provide a context to understanding the interplay among various policy actors.

Secondary education has a long history of community-driven growth in Bangladesh. The governments have been conscious of this nature of secondary education development in the country. The first few policies since 1947 have recognised the support needed to clear off the financial problems faced by the schools, to pave the way for growth in schools to take place and to give them a structure and a sense of direction, albeit in keeping with the ideological underpinnings of the state of Pakistan. For instance,

the “Report of the East Bengal²² Educational System Reconstruction Committee” of 1951, led by Maulana Akram Khan, President of the Provincial Muslim League maintained that ‘Government should take up the development of at least one secondary school on modern lines in each sub-division’ and that the Government should pick up at least 50 per cent of the expenditure of this school. Besides, the report also observed, ‘Voluntary efforts for development of secondary schools in other places should also receive due consideration of Government’ (Khan, 1951, pp.84-85). The 1957 report of the “East Pakistan Educational Reforms Commission,” chaired by the then Chief Minister of East Pakistan suggested, ‘Government should take responsibility of providing the deficit, i.e., the difference of the income and total expenditure, of the secondary schools in order to enable them to function usefully.’ The sympathetic tone of these reports during the time of the political governments²³ is well evidenced. None of these recommendations was implemented during the Pakistan period, however.

The sympathetic tone changed with the military dictator General Ayub Khan taking over state power in 1958. The report of the Commission on National Education appointed on December 30, 1958, soon after military takeover, prescribed that 60 percent of the recurring expenditures of the secondary schools should come from fees, 20 percent from the school management and the rest 20 per cent from the Government.²⁴ Secondary schooling was described more as an investment of the families rather than a right. Equating education with an entrepreneurial activity marks a distinctive change between this report and the preceding ones. The report had no qualms about portraying secondary education as a privilege. Implementing this policy could enhance privatisation of education and perhaps a ‘class-based violence’ in education (Fine, 1993, pp. 33-39). The first political movement against the military regime started from a strong opposition to this education policy (Q. F. Ahmed, 2009). A number of students were killed on

²² Until 1956, East Pakistan was officially known as East Bengal.

²³ A distinction has to be made between the political governments, elected through democratic processes, and the military governments, and also between the elected part of the Government, which is referred to as “political government” in this thesis and the bureaucracy. This distinction is useful in understanding the roles of various actors across times and interplay among various actors within a government and those outside the government.

²⁴ As expected from a Commission under the military rule, the report said, “ (The Education) Boards ... have failed to enforce the rules of recognition, partly under pressure from Government and partly to win popularity with the public” (there were four Education Boards to administer school governance and examination of secondary education in the entire country). Realities aside, immanent in such statements are the efforts to discredit democratic politics and legitimise extra-democratic power take-over.

September 17, 1962 while police opened fire on the demonstrators chanting against this education policy.²⁵

The military Government of Pakistan soon responded to the political environment by instituting another commission named “ The Commission on Students’ Problems and Welfare” headed by Justice Hamoodur Rahman in 1964. The political overtone was obvious even in the name of the commission. And the commission, keen to steer away from the elitism of the past commission, put forward more student-centred recommendations for secondary education, e.g., more scholarships for poorer and meritorious students, free mid-day meal for students, supporting the recommendation from the previous commission on making free and compulsory education up to Grade 8 within 15 years. The Government moved quickly to accept these recommendations (National Academy for Educational Management, 2004, pp.14-15). The Presidential election was around the corner and General Ayub khan, by then a politician, could not afford to face another round of student agitation.

However, resentment against the military regime was not confined only to the education sector, and no act of appeasement was enough in the changing political landscape poised for the movement for autonomy in East Pakistan. The growing political imbroglio compelled General Ayub to step down and to be replaced by General Yahya Khan in 1969. Under this regime, another new education policy was proposed by Air Vice-Marshal Noor Khan, then in charge of the Ministry of Education. Noor Khan envisaged a secondary education system with ‘a massive shift toward technical and vocational education’ (National Academy for Educational Management, 2004, p. 21), not unlike all three other reports since 1959. However, time was too short for implementation of any new policy amidst growing political turbulence.

In post-independence Bangladesh after 1971, the Government, in its effort to help expand secondary education, decided to patronise community initiatives by providing salary support to the teachers of the non-government secondary schools, equivalent to 50 per cent of the basic salary accorded to the teachers of the government schools. This came into effect on January 1, 1980 and instantly sparked a huge enthusiasm among the communities, otherwise starved of funds, to open new schools. Since the early 1990s, subvention rose to 90 percent of the government teachers’ salaries, which was eventually increased to 100 percent in August 2006 (See Table 3) under the pressure of the teachers’

²⁵*The Pakistan Observer*, September 18, 1962.

unions (discussed later in the chapter). The increase in the number of nongovernment schools from 10131 in 1990 to 18439 in 2008 (BANBEIS, 2012b) directly correlates to increase in subvention.²⁶

Table 3: Changes in Subvention and Other Benefits for Nongovernment Secondary School Teachers²⁷

The time when change in subvention introduced	Subvention and benefits
January 1, 1980	50% of basic salaries of government school teachers
July 1, 1982	15% dearness allowance ²⁸ added to 50%
March 1, 1983	30% dearness allowance added to 50%
January 1, 1984	Tk.60 medical allowance and Tk. 100 housing allowance in addition to previous benefits
March 1, 1986	60% of basic salaries of government school teachers and Tk. 100 medical allowance
July 1, 1986	70% of basic salaries of government school teachers
July 1, 1989	10% dearness allowance added to 70%
December 1, 1990	20% dearness allowance added to 70%
July 1, 1994	Medical allowance increased to Tk. 150
January 1, 1995	80% of basic salaries of government school teachers
July 1, 2000	90% of basic salaries of government school teachers
August 6, 2006	100% of basic salaries of government school teachers

However, there is a significant disjunction between increase in subvention and the work of the national education commissions, which prepared seven education policies and one expert report between 1974 and 2010. While the education policies until the liberation war in 1971 had a considerable focus on the financing of secondary education and distribution of financing responsibilities between government and non-government sources, policies in the post-liberation period (after 1971) were conspicuously silent about subvention. National education policies were effectively delinked from the issue of subvention, although most of them recommended increase in annual expenditure for education. They were more focused on content and directions of educational development. This is also the period when subvention was introduced and it rose from 50 per cent of government school teachers' salaries to 100 percent of their salaries. There has been no study on subvention from the Government whatsoever in all these years since 1980. Policies regarding subvention followed a separate decision-making track, entirely

²⁶ During the same period, the number of government secondary schools remained constant at 317.

²⁷ Prepared on the basis of circulars issued by the government at different times and from newspaper reports.

²⁸ Dearness Allowance is addition to the salary to offset high cost of living due to inflation.

political in nature, independent of the commissions and the policy reports the commissions prepared.

After independence in 1971, the new state had secularism and socialism as two of the four important pillars of the state policy.²⁹ While these basic principles of the state have had significant impact on curriculum and textbooks, socialism also defined state-citizens relationship in a different mold. The state was expected to take more responsibility in terms of education, health care, etc. The first post-liberation education policy was prepared by the Qudrat-e-Khuda Commission in 1974 (Ministry of Education, 1974).³⁰ The post-liberation government, treading the socialist path of development, was considering nationalisation of all nongovernment schools. This would have rendered the issue of subvention in policy discourse irrelevant. However, a military *coup de tat* in 1975 completely changed the scenario. Socialism was instantly banished. Secularism was eventually dropped in favor of an Islamic identity for the state. Many subsequent developments moved the state away from the ideals of liberation. Under the changed situation, the next education policy was prepared by the government in 1979. The possibility of school nationalisation was by then obsolete. The new report was silent on subvention. The other education policies that followed were also silent on subvention.

Today, subvention from the government to the nongovernment schools is the key ingredient in the relationship between the Government and these schools. It is a major intervention from the Government to improve school quality and to ensure better governance, both of the schools and of the education system as a whole. The Government has a clearly defined policy since the colonial time for recognition of schools based on physical facilities, teachers, students, performance and management, which, however, underwent several changes over time. When subvention was introduced in 1980, the government initially followed the same criteria as those for recognition (detailed below). However, with subvention, additional punitive measures were also built into this policy basically to state under what conditions subvention would be repealed.

In most of the cases, the physical existence of a school is a contribution of the local community. Generally, a well-off family donates the land either for philanthropic or

²⁹ The other two were democracy and nationalism.

³⁰ While the Report emphasises adherence to all four principles of the state, i.e., Nationalism, Democracy, Secularism and Socialism, it particularly mentions building socialist society as one of the main objectives of education in keeping with the spirit of the inaugural speech of the then Prime Minister and founder of the country Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at the launching ceremony of the Commission on September 24, 1972.

political reasons or purely to immortalise someone in the family. If wealthy enough, the family also pays for the construction. If not, the whole community chips in or patrons from outside the community are sought for. For the Government to recognise a secondary school, the school must have at least .25 acres of land in the metropolitan areas, .50 acres of land in other municipal areas or .75 acres of land in rural areas. There are also a minimum number of students needed for a school to start which again depends on the area, for example, the minimum number in rural areas being 100 students. The school building also needs to be reasonably well-built either as a full building or as a tin-shaded 'half building' as it is popularly known. There are thirteen such criteria, related to physical facilities and structure, teachers, students and management, to be fulfilled by secondary schools for recognition (Ministry of Education, 1997c).

Although the criteria have undergone changes, the practice of recognition from the Government has been there since the colonial days. Once these basic criteria are fulfilled and a School Management Committee is duly formed, an inspection from the Education Board on satisfactory compliance with all criteria will lead to a provisional recognition of the school for three years. Since January 1, 1980, this recognition also means that the school is eligible for subvention if it applies for Government support. Based on satisfactory performance, a second level of recognition will be accorded for five years. On successful completion of that term, the final and permanent recognition is provided. Today, some 98 percent of the secondary schools are nongovernment schools in Bangladesh recognised by the Government. According to the latest statistics available from 2010, 93.15 percent of the secondary and higher secondary schools receive subvention (BANBEIS, 2012a).

Evidently, the school facilities are under scrutiny for their propriety from the Government, at least on papers. Do the schools comply with the criteria for physical facilities? The pervasive belief is that in most cases, they do not. According to the criteria, a school cannot be established in an area if there is another school within a radius of four kilometers. A school mapping completed by the Bangladesh Bureau of National Educational Statistics (BANBEIS) has shown that 115 upazilas (sub-districts) are over-served by secondary schools (BANBEIS, 2006, p. 15), which means even after inspection, many schools in those 115 upazilas have been recognised for government subvention which would not have received support if the criteria were strictly followed. There are many instances of schools not meeting the criteria of number of students or physical conditions but have been recognised allegedly because of influence of powerful

people either in the Government or outside, or because of alleged indulgence of the relevant inspectors from the Education Boards in rent-seeking.³¹ The governance problem emerging from issues of this nature indicates skewed application of criteria for subvention.

4.2.1 Education Policies, Education Commissions and Politics of Subvention

Unlike the first post-independence education policy, the national education policies, particularly since the 1980s, were moving towards broad principles for each segment of education rather than providing specific directions in each area. Furthermore, it is important to note that none of them was translated into an implementable program from the Government. The governments made sporadic interventions to implement some recommendations but this cannot be perceived as implementation of the policy as such, because the incentives to implement many of those recommendations, sometimes in modified forms, were visibly extraneous—coming from projects aided by ‘development partners’ (discussed in details in Chapter 5). Besides, the major recommendations were never implemented. Extension of basic education up to grade VIII, more resource for education sector and emphasis on vocational education are but a few major recommendations that recurred through a number of education commission reports, but the governments never seriously attended to these recommendations.

In a sharply divided political environment, there was no continuity in implementation of any education policy.³² For example, the first education policy after restoration of democracy in 1991 was finalised in 2000 during the period of Awami League Government (1996-2001), just before the end of its tenure. The next Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) Government shelved it immediately and formed its own National Education Commission, which submitted its report in March 2004. In order to implement its recommendations, a new committee was established on October 21, 2004. Before any visible implementation could take place, the tenure of the BNP government ended.³³ It is not the case that the two parties have very different views with regard to education governance, except for the question as to whether basic education should be up to Grade V (as BNP prefers) or Grade VIII (proposed by all commissions under Awami League

³¹Interview with former Additional Secretary, Ministry of Education. July 26, 2011

³²*The Daily Star*, Bangladesh, ‘Education Roundtable’ (Intervention from Dr Osman Farruk, former Education Minister) May 29, 2007.

³³*The Daily Star*, ‘Education held back by political tangles,’ September 24, 2008.

rule). Still, the polarity between the two major political parties, which has so far proved to be unbridgeable and which is pegged in insurmountable hatred for each other, has made continuity of education policy implementation impossible. Each Government would listen only to its own commission staffed by members allegiant to the government of the time.

After a hiatus of a care-taker government for two years, the Awami League came to power again in the end of 2008 and put aside the education policy of the previous political government. Later, the Government formed a new education commission, which submitted its draft report to the Government on September 2, 2009. The Government approved the final version on May 31, 2010.³⁴ The Commission recommended a major restructuring of the primary and secondary education systems with basic education to be extended up to Grade VIII. Twenty-four subcommittees were formed on January 26, 2011 for implementation of the education policy including one on secondary education and one on teacher recruitment and salaries each headed by an additional secretary of the Ministry of Education.³⁵ However, any tangible implementation action from the Government is still to be seen.³⁶ Despite its pronounced intention, any possibility of the implementation of the Commission's recommendations lies in the re-election of the Awami League in 2014. If history of the past 20 years is any indication, the incumbent has always failed to come back to power and form the subsequent government. In brief, implementation of any education policy faltered with the changes in government, a phenomenon that recurred every five years since 1991.

Subvention for the new schools has always been a political decision. The 2010 National Education Commission under the Awami League Government made a recommendation that school recognition and subvention should logically follow from a school-mapping exercise identifying the needs of schools in different areas (Ministry of Education, 2010, p. 66). The Commission basically reiterated what was an agreed principle from the past. Still, this could not be followed for political reasons. Sometimes, such a decision ensued serious wrangling within the party in power. An incident in this regard is illustrative of the situation. The Education Minister of the present Awami League Government, known to be the most honest minister in the cabinet, prepared a list

³⁴*The Daily Star*, 'Green signal to unified education system,' June 1, 2010.

³⁵*The Daily Star*, '24 subcommittees to implement edn policy,' January 27, 2011.

³⁶ As of September 30, 2013, thirty months after the formation of these 24 committees, nothing is heard about any action from subcommittees. Meanwhile, a consultant team from ADB, under technical assistance to the Government, has translated the 71-page National Education Policy into a 500+ page implementation plan for donors and multilateral institutions. Interestingly, the main national consultant to ADB in this exercise is a recently retired Education Secretary.

of new institutions to receive subvention in 2010, reportedly, as objectively as possible sticking to the criteria for such selection. However, he faced a serious consternation from his colleagues in the cabinet and the members of parliament from the ruling party for not including many institutions of their patronage (Habib, 2011). The pressure was so much that the Prime Minister had to intervene, withdraw the list and give responsibility to the Education Adviser to the Prime Minister to prepare a fresh list, which went through two revisions, reportedly to satisfy others in the ruling party. About one hundred schools were dropped from the original list and more than 300 schools were added.³⁷ Distribution of public resources followed the path of favoritism dictated by political expediency.

Despite much brouhaha with education policies, there was a growing skepticism among the public and the media that the policy reports from the education commissions did not matter, as these principles embedded in the policies were never translated into implementable programs in the end. With the change of government, policy reports were completely ignored. Besides, these policies did not say much about subvention and resourcing of the schools—a very important issue for the schools. As mentioned earlier, recognition of schools in large numbers for subvention or increase in subvention gradually from 50% to 100% of teacher salaries, of course, were major policy decisions, but they followed a separate political track completely disconnected from the Education Commission Reports. These decisions, mostly taken before the national elections, entailed significant political and social reactions. This was more so as at least three different associations of secondary school teachers were quite organised with large following and these associations had a considerable voice, which made each government to yield to their demands for increase in subvention.³⁸ The pinnacle of teachers movement for increased subvention was to be seen in June/July 2006 when all teachers unions, divided as they were along political lines, went on strike *sine die* to press home their demands for 100 per cent of teachers' salaries, equal to the salaries of the government school teachers, as subvention.³⁹ On August 6, 2006, the Government declared 100 per

³⁷*The Prothom Alo*, (2010) 'MPO Talikay Poriborton,' May 31, 2010.

³⁸ Three associations of secondary school teachers active in this movement were linked to the major political parties. Jatiya Shikshak Karmachari Front (National Teachers' and Employees' Front) and Shikshak Karmachari Oikya Parishad (United Council of the Teachers and Employees) are associated with the currently ruling party Bangladesh Awami League and Shikshak Karmachari Oikya Jote (United Alliance of the Teachers and Employees) is allegedly linked with the other major political party BNP now in opposition. These unions have open membership meaning any teacher can join their activities without any proper membership.

³⁹*The Daily Star* (Bangladesh newspaper), "Countrywide NFTE protest today." July 30, 2006

cent salaries for nongovernment teachers.⁴⁰ Immanent in this decision was a fear of losing the support of a constituency, visible and organised, just before the impending elections, more so as the support for two major parties hung in balance.⁴¹

The National Education Commissions had no role in all these matters. The grand education policy narratives were rather constructed as ideals, the goals and directions along which educational development should take place at a given time. Subvention, though providing the only effective link between the Government and 98 percent of the nongovernment secondary schools, was largely ignored in national education policies. There can be a number of interpretations of this conspicuous absence of subvention from grand policy narrative. One is that subvention is taken as a 'given,' as a 'budgetary element,' which will only be dealt with by the government of the day as budget permits and thus depoliticizing the political content of such a decision. The other is that discussion on subvention, for the last few decades, has always been constructed in the political terrain, both by the governments and the teachers' unions. Therefore, any commission, generally self-styled by its members as apolitical and neutral (albeit handpicked by government based on their allegiance), would shy away from any iteration that might create a political stir.⁴²

The other reason behind ineffectiveness of the National Education Commissions is the attitude of the civil servants towards the Commissions which are often considered an extension of the political part of the Government, worse still, without any popularly earned authority and staffed with members allegiant to the government of the day.⁴³ Sometimes a tussle ensues between the elected officials of the Government and the bureaucratic part of the Government on the question of the role of the Commission. An episode in this regard is telling. The Education Minister of the Awami League Government (2009-2014) wanted to involve the Commission members in an education

⁴⁰*The Daily Star* (Bangladesh newspaper), "100 pc basic govt salary for nongovt teachers declared." August 7, 2006. Government secondary school teachers are government employees and their salaries follow the national salary scale, which is reviewed periodically. The government school teachers never got into any strike for pay hike.

⁴¹ A similar scenario was observed in August 2000. As the Awami League Government was nearing the end of its term, the teachers' associations pressed hard for a pay hike. The government yielded to the pressure and signed an agreement with the leaders of the teachers association on August 24, 2000 for a pay raise of the nongovernment school teachers to 90per cent of the salary of the government school teachers. See *The Prothom Alo*, August 25, 2000.

⁴² There was, however, a one-sentence recommendation of 100% of teachers' salaries to be given as subvention from the 1997 Education Commission. Implementation of this was ignored at that time.

⁴³ Interview with a former Additional Secretary of the Ministry of Education, July 26, 2011

policy implementation task force. This was strongly opposed by the then Education Secretary on the ground that the Commission had done its job in formulating the policy, and now it was the responsibility of the Government (read bureaucracy) to see how to implement it.⁴⁴ It is useful to note here that the 24 subcommittees, formed later to implement the policy, were all headed by bureaucrats except for the subcommittee on higher education, which was headed by the Chairman of the University Grants Commission, an academic.⁴⁵ In summary, the National Education Commissions provide guidance on the ideals and general directions of educational development that the country should pursue, but they have no role in policy interpretation or oversight over policy implementation.

4.3 THE POLICY PROCESSES: THE POLITICAL VS. THE BUREAUCRATIC SPHERES

The interface between the political spheres of the government and the bureaucracy vis-à-vis policy formulation and implementation processes is quite complex. This relationship is sometimes intriguing often giving an upper-hand to the bureaucrats over the political segment of the government. As Putnam put it:

Public bureaucracies, staffed largely by permanent civil servants, are responsible for the vast majority of policy decisions taken by governments. ..Bureaucrats, monopolizing as they do much of the available information about the shortcomings of existing policies, as well as much of the technical expertise necessary to design practical alternatives, have gained a predominant influence over the evolution of the agenda for decision. In a literal sense, the modern political system is essentially 'bureaucratic'—characterized by the 'rule of the officials' (Putnam, 1973, pp. 257-290).

As regards education policies in Bangladesh, the Ministry of Education plays the central role in policy formulation. If the policy demands enactment, it also goes to the legislature. However, a policy to be presented as a draft act before the legislature needs vetting from the Ministry of Law and Parliamentary Affairs and then a cabinet approval is required. If the implementation of a policy entails budgetary allocation, it also needs consent from the Finance Minister who is also an important member of the Cabinet. In the centralised political culture of Bangladesh, any important policy needs to have the nod of the Prime

⁴⁴ Interestingly, the same secretary became the lead national consultant of the ADB consultant team that prepared the implementation strategy for the national education policy on his retirement soon after this incident.

⁴⁵ *The Daily Star*, '24 subcommittees to implement edn policy,' January 27, 2011.

Minister, either formally or informally. Even a policy discussion is sometimes pre-empted by the presumption of the likes and dislikes of the Prime Minister.⁴⁶

However, the Prime Minister is not expected to be omniscient about the needs and demands, the constraints and solution faced by each of the ministries for each of the problems. Therefore, she would depend upon her colleagues in the ministries for advice. In practice, secretaries and his/her subordinates in the ministries would shape the problem, find the solution and suggest required policy changes. In short, within the government, primarily they mold the policy plans and associated discourses. Thus the bureaucrats in relevant ministries hold important responsibilities as well as power to determine the directions of policy.

Many civil servants make their way to the Ministry after working for years at remote upazilas (sub-districts). They take pride in their knowledge of ‘realities’ of the ground, right or wrong, and bring it to the table, quite frequently, on policy discourses. Some of them would market their very organic relationship, still in existence, with their villages or even their schools in the villages.⁴⁷ Depending on the location of the actors in the discursive space and the policy formulation process, these assertions could be vital to the outcome.

The policy discourse brings into play a moral component with a high value to ‘objectivity’ in the decision making process, which, allegedly, only the bureaucrats can uphold and the politicians cannot because of their political obligations to their constituency—just or unjust. The bureaucrats, distanced from people, shielded from various pressures and apparently buttressed by a moral stance of impartiality, are considered better placed to take ‘right decisions.’ Deployed to the foreground of policy implementation discourse are the ‘rules,’ the rules that are presented as inviolable and sacrosanct until further amendment and are subject to interpretation by the bureaucrats. Often such interpretations are obnubilated as they are interpreted in conjunction with other rules, better known by the bureaucrats. Accordingly, power comes into play through knowledge that the civil servants possess. Also, in policy discourses, ‘politicisation’ has always been portrayed as a ‘lowly’ exercise advanced by the politicians from sectarian points of view. As a former Additional Secretary of the education ministry said, ‘every day, I would have five to six members of parliament as visitors all requesting exceptions

⁴⁶ Interview with a former Additional Secretary, Ministry of Education, July 26, 2011

⁴⁷ Interview with a Deputy Secretary, Education.

to rules vis-à-vis the schools of their patronage.’⁴⁸ Only those who know the rules can bend them or know how to find an exception.

Apparently a matter-of-fact statement, this assertion is fraught with many subtexts to be deciphered if read in conjunction with what Hamza Alavi observed about the relationship between politicians and the bureaucracy in the context of post-colonial state, more particularly in the context of South Asian subcontinent. The colonial state left the legacy of ‘institutionalized procedures’ that were ‘extended and consolidated by the proliferation of bureaucratic controls.’ “(W)hen individual politicians seek favors from officials for some of their supporters,...their relationship vis-a-vis the bureaucracy is weakened rather than strengthened. Politicians are reduced to playing the role of brokers for official favors. This mediation between the public and the bureaucracy is one of the important sources of political power...” (Alavi, 1972). One subtext that emerges out of this iteration is that real power rests in the hands of the bureaucrats and secondly, the political power of the elected representatives lies in how effectively they can broker favors for their constituencies from the bureaucracy.

A policy process, thus molded, accords one-upmanship to the civil servants vis-à-vis the politicians, though ostensibly the politicians are considered to be more powerful with mandate from people. The bureaucrats also represent the stable edifice of government as opposed to the politicians who so far have never been in office for more than five years at a stretch. When the civil servants fend off politicians from the core policy processes, others are farther distanced. The civil society groups, think tanks, academics and education NGOs, can wield influence mostly through politicians to whom they have better access than through the bureaucrats.⁴⁹ The bureaucrats, unless otherwise under pressure, are often oblivious of these other potential contributors to the policy processes and consider these groups extraneous to the government and therefore not to be taken seriously for policy discussions once such discussions move from the political domain to the inner core of the bureaucracy.⁵⁰ Implementation of policies and often interpretation of broader policies are the prerogative of the civil servants. What actually gets implemented is also a function of a number of other factors, most notably, resources

⁴⁸ Interview with a former Additional Secretary of Education, now working as a consultant to the World Bank, July 26, 2011

⁴⁹ Interview with Rasheda K. Chowdhury, Executive Director, Campaign for Popular Education (a leading education NGO network in Bangladesh). Former Advisor to the Care-taker Government on the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education. May 29, 2010.

⁵⁰ Interview with Rasheda Chowdhury. May 29, 2010.

available for implementation, preferences of the resource providers if they are external to the Government, the instruments available for policy implementation, and interpretation of the ideas embedded in the policies brought into play through a series of iterations. In the process, other actors come into the picture, most visibly the multilateral institutions and bilateral donors. A new policy community emerges.

Like the Education Commissions, once the elected part of the government makes a policy decision, either on their own or based on the recommendations of a Commission, it dissolves in the background at implementation stage. Interpretation and implementation of decisions are then practically rested in the hands of the bureaucrats. The bureaucrats at the Ministry of Education and the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education (DSHE)⁵¹ work out the details of these policies for implementation, sometimes with financial and technical assistance from the donors/multilateral institutions and impart meaning to them, often without much ado and much deliberation with the elected representatives of the government unless something requires approval from the minister or the cabinet and unless it demands enactment. Besides, many policy decisions are executed through circulars, orders or directives all originating from the central bureaucracy. When the minister needs to be involved, s/he mostly depends on the briefs prepared by the bureaucrats.⁵²

An example from the process of preparing the Annual Development Plan (ADP) and budgetary allocation in education can be helpful in illustrating the policy making and implementation process reflective of above mentioned dynamics. It is to be noted that ADP as part of the Medium Term Budgetary Framework (MTBF) fits into the overall Five-Year Plan (FYP) of a given time and once approved finds its way into the national budget of the year in question. The draft plan and needed allocations are received from respective agencies (e.g., Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education) under the ministries and compiled by the Planning Wing of the two ministries of education,⁵³ endorsed by the respective ministries, and sent to the Planning Ministry for vetting and inclusion in the Annual Development Plan (ADP). After several iterations, the draft plan and budget for implementation of the plan are placed before the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (ECNEC), which approves the plan, programs and the

⁵¹The implementing arm of the Ministry of Education for secondary and higher education.

⁵²Interview with former Additional Secretary, Ministry of Education.

⁵³Ministry of Primary and Mass Education for primary and mass education and the Ministry of Education, for secondary, tertiary, vocational, religious education.

budget. Then the Finance Ministry includes them in the annual development budget, makes the budgetary allocation after Cabinet approval and places them before Parliament (Oulai & da Costa, 2009, pp. 86-114). The bureaucrats in different ministries dominate the whole planning and budgeting process. They decide on the budget figures for the ministries. Despite many recommendations for budget increase in education, there was no significant change in allocations over the last two decades.⁵⁴ While the elected representatives have a slightly bigger role in the form of Ministers' endorsement and ECNEC approval, clearly, they depend on the papers and plans prepared by the civil servants.⁵⁵

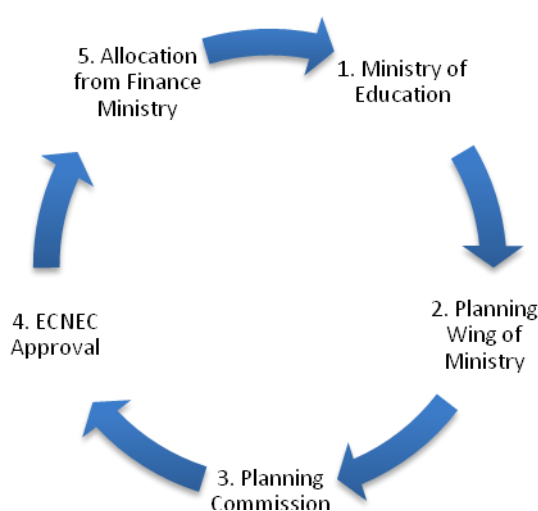


Figure 1: ADP Preparation Process for the Ministries of Education

In brief, although there are a number of policy actors within the government and national education commissions, the most important of them is the bureaucracy, endowed with the responsibilities of setting policy agenda, preparing plans and papers for policies and then interpreting them for implementation.⁵⁶ In a separate track they also produce numerous orders, circulars, directives on secondary education governance, which define policies as implemented. The fact that civil servants, detached from civil society groups and real stakeholders in educational governance, are so important in the policy processes has its own implications for the policies chosen, which will be discussed in chapters 5 and 7.

⁵⁴The education budget hovered around 15 per cent of annual government expenditure or 2.3 per cent GDP for many years, never close to 6-7 per cent of GDP as proposed by most of the Commissions.

⁵⁵ Interview with former Additional Secretary, Ministry of Education, July 26, 2011

⁵⁶ Interview with former Additional Secretary, Ministry of Education, July 26, 2011

4.4 NEW POLICY COMMUNITY: ENTRY OF MULTILATERAL INSTITUTIONS IN POLICY ARENA

In addition to the political and bureaucratic dimensions involved in the policy process and discourses, a third dimension deserving attention is multilateral institutions. Multilateral institutions entered the policy arena with considerable importance and, as will be discussed here, wielded the policy discourse significantly both through policy lending and through inducing an environment that legitimates certain policies to be borrowed. It is useful in the context of this chapter to examine their importance, the process of gaining this importance, how they attempt to engage others in their policy discourses and what it means for a legitimated perception of educational governance.

Many in the civil society bemoan the predominance of the bureaucracy in policy-making process, which has led to other concomitant developments—importantly the enhanced role of the multilateral institutions now exerting considerable influence in the policy arena.⁵⁷ Since the early 1990s, there was a significant reconfiguration in the strength of various actors in the policy arena in Bangladesh, particularly when it came to implementation of government policies. The international development agencies like the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the World Bank (WB) got actively involved in secondary education in Bangladesh. Funds from the multilateral institutions started to flow into the sub-sector earning them a seat on the policy table. Two major development projects came into the picture—Secondary Education Development Project in 1993 assisted by ADB and Female Secondary School Assistance Project (FSSAP) in 1993 supported by WB. The financial contribution of such projects was insignificant. For example, the government's total budget in secondary education in FY 1993-94 was \$148 million. Program cost for FSSAP in 1993-94 (the first year of the six-year program) was only \$4.87 million, about 3.29 percent of the total secondary education budget (Liang, 1996, p.13). While the recurrent budget in secondary education is entirely borne by the Government itself, these two development projects (worth US\$72 million and US\$68 million respectively for five to six years), albeit a miniscule in the total budget, proved to be a significant catalyst in the policy processes and governance reforms.

Girls' enrollment in secondary education took a big leap with the introduction of a conditional cash transfer (CCT) model under WB's FSSAP. In 1990, a total of 1,015,745 girls were enrolled in secondary education accounting for 33.93 percent of total

⁵⁷ Interview with Rasheda K. Chowdhury, May 29, 2010

enrollment in secondary education. By 1996, after introduction of CCT, girls' enrollment rose to 2,627,073, accounting for 47.03 percent of total enrollment (Table 7). This immediate success gave credence not only to the borrowed model of CCT, but also to the knowledge of the multilateral institutions regarding the needed policy reforms for expansion of secondary education in Bangladesh. In early 1990s, when the project came into existence, the country did not have any effective education policy.

CCT's success in expanding girls' education and demand for project support for targeted interventions in secondary education created a legitimate space for the development agencies which, since then, played a significant role in prodding the country towards a comprehensive governance reform. The Secondary Education Sector Development Plan (1998) prepared for the Government by ADB consultants, the Secondary Education Sector Improvement Project (1999) from ADB, the Second Female Secondary School Assistant Project (2002) from WB and a series of Education Sector Development Support Credits from WB proposed a number of governance reforms (discussed in details in Chapter 5). These included school performance based management system, school based assessment, and examinations reforms brought into effect through ADB assisted project (Asian Development Bank, 1999, pp. 51-52), performance contract with schools for eligibility of student stipends under a WB assisted project (World Bank, 2002, p. 10), linking salary subvention to school performance, introduction of nongovernment school teachers registration and certification system, outsourcing school evaluation for subvention support, changing the structure of school management committees, restructuring the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) (World Bank, 2004, p. 23-24), just to name a few. Whether or not all these elements changed the architecture of policy-framing with increasing dependence on global policy borrowing and whether these policies had an ideological content, borrowed from any preferred mode of educational development in the country are to be investigated in the subsequent chapters.

On the surface, the governments and their education commissions have always posited themselves as autonomous and free from any exogenous influence from MLIs in policy-making processes. This deserves further scrutiny. The two education commissions of 1997 and 2003 and an Education Reforms Expert Committee of 2002 had extensive consultations with various stakeholders, including those from schools, before they prepared the policy reports and recommendations. Indeed, the Education Commission of 2003, led by Professor Moniruzzaman Miah, had 13 subcommittees comprising 96

members. Five consultants worked with the Commission and the Commission consulted with 430 stakeholders (Ministry of Education, 2004b, pp. 316-41). Not a single participant in this whole impressive list was from the multilateral agencies working in the field of education. One would logically conclude that the Education Commission Report 2004 prepared by the Education Commission of 2003 was purely a homegrown one and was immune from all exogenous influences. A closer scrutiny of the report itself, however, reveals a striking contrast as discussed below.

The Education Commission Report 2004 made a number of recommendations regarding governance in secondary education and reforming the secondary education system. Apart from the consultations mentioned above, there was little or no public discussion, or any written background paper to buttress the rationale for some of these recommendations. For example, the report recommended the introduction of a uni-track system of education at Grades IX and X (Ministry of Education, 2004b, p. 81) abolishing the multi-track system of science, commerce and humanities which had been in place for decades. The Commission also recommended that education committees be formed at district and upazila levels in an effort to decentralise secondary education governance to divisional, district and upazila levels. The nine regional offices of the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education should be given more power for recognition of new schools, renewal of recognition, and approval of school management committees. The report also recommended establishment of 25 new schools every year in the underserved areas based on school mapping. As regards student assessment, the report recommended that 25 per cent marks for assessment of student performance at Secondary School Certificate level should come from school-based assessment (SBA).

Table 4: Trajectory of Some Secondary Education Governance Reforms as Presented in Various Documents

Governance Issue	Education Policy 1997	ADB Documents SESDP/SESIP	WB Documents FSSAPII or PESAC	Education Policy 2004
Uni-track system of education at Grades IX and X	No	Yes	No	Yes
Education committees at district and upazila levels	No	No	Yes	Yes
Upgraded regional offices of DSHE	No	No	No	Yes
New schools in underserved areas	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
School-based assessment (SBA) added to terminal assessment	No	Yes	No	Yes
School performance based management system	No	Yes	No	No
Linking subvention to performance	No	Yes	Yes	Yes (at HS level)
Teacher Recruitment Commission	Yes	No	Yes, to pre-certify, not to recruit	Yes
Examination reforms	No	Yes	No	Yes
Reorganisation of NCTB	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Privatisation of textbook production	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Separate secondary education directorate	No	Yes	No	Yes
Private inspection body for school evaluation	No	No	Yes	No
SMC reforms	No	Yes	Yes	Yes

SESIP: Secondary Education Sector Improvement Project; SESDP: Secondary Education Sector Development Plan; FSSAP II: Female Secondary School Assistance Project; PESAC: Programmatic Education Sector Adjustment Credit.

All these ‘home-grown’ policy recommendations were suggested in the documents of the multilateral agencies like ADB or WB in the years preceding the publication of the 2004 National Education Policy Report, however. A comparison of the recommendations of the 2004 education policy report with those of the 1997 Commission and juxtaposing them with the policy reforms suggested by MLIs in-between will be instructive here (Table 4). As the Table clearly demonstrates, the 1997 Commission did not propose any of the governance reform measures mentioned here except one on establishing a teacher recruitment commission. In contrast, they were all present in the proposals or interventions either from ADB or from the World Bank between 1998 and 2004 and later in the next national education policy of 2004. Although the 2003 National Education

Commission never formally consulted with MLIs, their policy preferences discernibly made way into the National Education Policy.

Much of this influence comes from the avalanche of reports prepared by the MLIs. It is to be noted that each final document of the multilateral institutions, be it a project document or an analytic report, was generally supported by a number of background papers.⁵⁸ Besides, numerous supporting reports were produced during implementation of projects. For example, the Secondary Education Sector Improvement Project of ADB alone produced 77 consultant reports between May 2001 and June 2006 (Asian Development Bank, 2008a). The contents and terms of reference for consultants to work on these reports were laid out in the documents of the multilateral institutions. And then there were a number of evaluation reports both for the whole project and for different components, many with lessons learned from the intervention. Compared to this, only one descriptive document (Ministry of Education, 2004a), a few monitoring and statistical reports and an education policy document (2004) were produced by the Government during this period and those too were not exclusively on secondary education. The background papers and the reports produced under projects, in combination, were overwhelmingly dominant in the production of technical knowledge of the reforms needed, actions undertaken and results achieved tilting the discursive balance towards the multilateral institutions. The official discourse borrows profusely from them as evident from the indebtedness of the 2004 Education Policy Report to the project documents and the documents prepared by the multilateral institutions. An in-depth investigation into one governance measure in the next section will make the case of this relation between government policy initiative and suggested policy reforms from MLIs clearer.

4.4.1 Uni-track System: Locating the Discursive Locus

At the time of independence, Bangladesh had a multi-track curriculum for Grades IX and X, students taking decision whether they want to study science or commerce or humanities or agriculture etc. at Grade IX. Beginning from the late 1990s, the government began to consider introduction of a uni-track system. The uni-track system would allow students to have general education covering all disciplines at Grades IX and X with the decision to choose a particular stream in the later years. There was no official record of any government discussion on the issue until the 1990s. It was as late as 2004 that the

⁵⁸ The Program Document for the Programmatic Education Sector Adjustment Credit (PESAC) from the World Bank was buttressed by three background papers.

government policy formally recognised the uni-track system as a policy agenda. A probe into the making of this policy decision, as follows, shows how various actors, including ADB, played their roles in the process.

In fact, ADB, one of the multilateral agencies, expressed their strong preference for a uni-track education system in Bangladesh as early as in the late 1990s. The Secondary Education Sector Development Plan, prepared by ADB consultants in 1998, proposed,

...unitrack range of subjects would help secondary schools make the most effective use of their limited resources. As relatively few subjects have to be developed, effort can be directed to making these courses high quality. A curriculum such as this would lead to all students having a broad base on which to make an informed choice of their options for classes XI-XII. It would also allow the teachers themselves to develop an opinion of each student's potential so as to assist in guiding them to make the most appropriate choice (Asian Development Bank, 1998 p. 69).

ADB consultants argue that many schools, particularly in rural areas, cannot afford to have teachers, say, for separate branches of science like, physics, chemistry and biology, as required in multi-track system. However, they can afford to have a teacher for general science under a uni-track system.

While this could be a valid opinion on its own merit, the process of coming to such a decision for a plan so important has been conspicuously opaque. The ADB 'consultant' report makes no claim to any consultation or to building any social consensus on this issue. Based on this plan, ADB went ahead with the preparation of the Secondary Education Sector Improvement Project in 1999 scheduling a provision for revised curricula for Grades IX and X to be introduced at the second phase of project implementation across the entire country. Since there was no record of any public demand for such an important systemic change at that time, one can logically ask if the National Education Policy 2004 drew its incentive for recommendation of the uni-track system from the preferences of the multilateral agencies although no formal consultation of the Commission with them was ever reported.

Such a claim is validated by the agonistic social-political discourse that followed the government decision to institute uni-track system in 2005. On July 12, 2005, a circular to the secondary schools mentioned the government decision to institute uni-track system. Interestingly, the circular was issued under the series of circulars related to SESIP assisted by ADB (Ministry of Education, 2005). On September 1, 2005, Education

Minister Osman Farruk announced that beginning from 2006, secondary education would follow a uni-track system from Grade IX, which, he argued, would provide the students with a 'unified knowledge' and enable them 'to make a well-informed choice of which area of studies they want to specialise on after completion of SSC(Secondary School Certificate)' (The Daily Star, 2005). This perception about uni-track system clearly resonates with the statement earlier made in ADB's Secondary Education Sector Development Plan. At a later discussion with the World Bank Management Team in November 2005 where the researcher was present, the minister claimed that uni-track system was successfully implemented in 79 other countries.

This similarity in iterations is dictated by several considerations. First, projects supported by multilateral agencies bring financial assistance, which the government needs and, therefore, the government has an obligation to implement what was agreed on during project preparation (the next chapter traces the itinerary of project preparation). As Steiner-Khamsi put it, the policies, reforms, best practices, or international standards, adopted from elsewhere 'are not necessarily borrowed for rational reasons, but for political and economic ones' (2012b, pp. 4-5). Once agreed upon, the government's policy iterations, at least the public ones, cannot deviate much from their pronounced position.⁵⁹ Secondly, the global actors, these days, are often the conduits for international political support that help build coalitions with other influential nations pursuing similar public policies. Many of the governments in countries like Bangladesh consider this political support for their policy actions important, in some cases, in the face of internal crisis of legitimacy. The policy preferences are shaped up in a complex interplay among the global and local actors within the given discursive environment. The underlying constant in the whole process is a yearning for legitimacy of the policy choice. Much of this legitimacy comes from the policy's appropriateness or its discursively constructed relevance to the 'situations internal to the given system' (Shriewer and Martinez, 2004, p.32). Evidently, the government could not present the case of the unitrack system as relevant to the internal needs and therefore the process of introducing the unitrack system did not go well as intended. Neither the government nor the global agencies could construct legitimacy for the unitrack system through external reference because of the constraint imposed on such construction by the given discursive environment. While in some countries, the external reference by itself accords the needed legitimation, in others, it needs to be

⁵⁹ There are situations, however, when various actors within the government take positions other than the one desired by the multilateral institutions. This has been discussed in Chapter 8.

complemented with a quick discursive shift from externalisation to internalisation (Steiner-Khamsi, 2001, pp 68-86) to account for the local specificities. In countries like Bangladesh, while the Government takes impetus for policy adoption from external sources, the legitimacy for such policies is largely drawn from internal construction of policy discourses. In the case of the unitrack system, the process of internalisation was not complete although a recommendation for adoption of the unitrack system in the National Education Policy was included. This was not buttressed with any robust policy discourse to provide the system with internal legitimation.

Prescription from a multilateral institution for uni-track system and internalisation of the policy suggestion from the state and enactment of an internally legitimating discourse are all threaded together with a perceived to be legitimate model drawn from global best practices. On the other hand, policy lending from the global repository of experiences, such as the ones from the multilateral agencies, attempts to build its own legitimacy when a policy is borrowed and implemented elsewhere contributing to the perceived universality of the policy (De & Michelle, 2012, pp. 309-336). However, one needs to understand that a country's yearnings and aspirations are also a function of the development discourses it is embedded in. For example, a country can aspire to develop its entire education system solely focusing on developing 'human capital' keeping an eye on internal and external labor market if the development discourse is constructed as such. Choices can emerge from such discourses creating a situation of involuntary subjection, if not coercion. And indeed, coercion can come from the MLIs in the form of denial of resources if their preferred policy option is not accepted—something that resource-starved countries cannot afford (Steiner-Khamsi & Stolpe, 2006, p. 187). Indispensability of project aid, dissonance with the idea behind the model being advanced, given political environment, strategies to deal with MLIs—all come into play, giving rise to a situation of contradictory and conflicting policy iterations.

4.4.1.1 Policy Discourses: A Door Fore-closed for Others?

While the presence of many actors in the policy arena is presumed, space for policy discussions is not equal for all of them. And clearly, there are two tracks in policy discourse—one for public discussion, e.g. through national education policies which outwardly deny any exogenous influence, and the other, the more important one, the reworking of the policy iterations for implementation which is more an affair between the bureaucrats and the multilateral agencies. By examining who gets included in and

excluded from the discursive space vis-à-vis uni-track system and the debate that followed, I will show how the voices of certain policy actors were privileged over others and how this gave rise to a particular nature of policy discourse, enactment and implementation—a crucial issue this research intends to investigate.

As mentioned earlier, the first mention of the uni-track system was in the Secondary Education Sector Development Plan, prepared by ADB consultants. This document was never widely distributed.⁶⁰ The National Education Report of 2004, the first government policy document that recommended the idea of a uni-track system, does not mention anywhere the original source of the idea, the ADB assisted consultants' report. The Commission that produced the report attempts to efface the foreign origin of the policy reform and instead tries to domesticate the idea to provide it with needed legitimacy within the given politico-discursive environment in Bangladesh. While the government depends enormously on these agencies both for policy prescriptions and their implementation, the Commission is keen not to recognise any influence of the external agencies, because of its own composition and the politico-discursive environment within which they operate.⁶¹ Most of the members of the Commission, including its chair, are taken from the academia, think-tanks and civil society groups. Most of these people are highly placed (e.g., former Vice-chancellors of public universities), most of them do not work with the multilateral agencies and many of them are endowed with a national pride that important decisions about Bangladesh should be taken by the Bangladeshis without any external influence. This attitude prompts them not to recognise any exogenous influence even if it creeps into their policy choices, knowingly or unknowingly. Secondly, Bangladesh has a long history of the presence of a strong internal left-of-center political discourse dominant that pervaded the moral-political ground since the liberation of the country in 1971. The national media are considerably dominated by this political penchant. All these create an environment where policy legitimacy is sought from internal sources with cautious indifference to anything of external origin.

There was hardly any follow-up discussion on uni-track system after the 2004 commission's report had been published. However, such a report legitimates policy decision that follows. The next time it was mentioned publicly was during a press conference of the Ministry of Education where the Education Minister announced the

⁶⁰ A formally published document was not found.

⁶¹ Around 2004, there was a huge brouhaha from various civil society groups and the media on the question of immunity of the World Bank, all being very hostile towards the MLIs in general.

decision to adopt this policy on September 1, 2005. In the meanwhile, preparation was under way for introduction of the system with support from an ADB assisted project, rather surreptitiously as there was no visible public discourse in this regard.

Regarding the process, Anwarul Haque, an academic, wrote, rather angrily,

‘...the general public has largely been kept in the dark about ... the kind of changes that are being imposed from the top ... why has there not been any public debate over this vital issue of national importance?’(Haque, 2005).

It is evident from his article that Haque did not know that there was a recommendation from the Education Commission in this regard, clearly revealing the absence of any public discourse based on the Commission’s report.⁶² However, the Government and ADB started working on it as early as 2003. According to Quazi Afroz Jahan Ara, an Associate Professor of the Institute of Education and Research of Dhaka University, National Curriculum Co-ordination Committee (NCCC), ADB supported Secondary Education Sector Improvement Project (SESIP) and National Curriculum and Text Book Board (NCTB) developed the objectives for the proposed uni-track curriculum in 2003(Jahan Ara, 2005). The curriculum was developed in November 2004, almost a year before the public announcement was made. Vice-President of the Secondary School Teachers Association Zainal Abedin labeled the whole process as a ‘clever deception’ (Haque, 2005).

There was a tremendous social resistance after the decision was made public in 2005. First of all, the government hastily decided to introduce this curriculum only in the case of general education excluding madrasahs (schools for religious education), technical education and the English medium schools. Secondly, it did not consult education experts and stakeholders. It was not even discussed in the Cabinet or Parliament. Thirdly, teachers were not prepared for the new curriculum. Besides, in many rural schools, there is also a shortage of science and mathematics teachers. None of these issues was addressed before abruptly introducing the uni-track system leading to a strong resistance (Jahan Ara, 2005). Under the proposed system, religious learning was more prominence than science education (Bayes, 2005). Other staunch critics believed that with

⁶² Interestingly, in this whole article, Anwarul Haque did not mention even once that it all originated from the ADB supported project SESIP. Is it ignorance or a willful omission? Anwarul Haque worked as the team leader of a group of consultants who undertook a study on the School Management Committees under the same project SESIP, that too at a time when discussion of uni-track system under SESIP was going on full steam. The discursive tenors are perhaps to be understood not only on the basis of what is said, but also what is unsaid.

more emphasis on religious education, religious militancy in the country would rise (The Daily Star, 2005a).

In the face of the resistance, the Government decided to postpone the implementation of the uni-track system by a year (Ministry of Education, 2005a). Of course, introduction of a policy reform, as controversial and resisted as this one, was nearly impossible in an election year. The national elections were scheduled for early 2007. A face-saving iteration was also found in the ADB Project Completion Report on SESIP: “The Project developed a modern skills-based or unitrack curriculum for grades 9-10 that will correlate the curricula of grades 6-8 and grades 11-12 under SESDP. *The new curriculum is being reviewed and refined before being implemented* (emphasis added)” (Asian Development Bank, 2008a, p. 4). By June 2008, when the ADB report was released, everyone knew that the idea was dismissed irrevocably. With a new caretaker government taking charge in January 2007, the idea was shelved.

The allegations of denial of space for public in real policy discourses are common and found in many other reform initiatives, particularly the ones proposed by the multilateral institutions. For example, formation of District and Upazila Secondary and Higher Education Committees in the name of decentralisation had its root in two administrative circulars (Ministry of Education, 2003b & 2003f), which drew its incentive from policy reforms proposed by ADB’s Secondary Education Sector Improvement Project (SESIP) and WB’s Education Sector Adjustment Credit (discussed in greater detail in the next chapter). There was no record of any public discourse on this important governance decision. While it was done in the name of decentralisation devolving some decision making authorities from DSHE to these district and Upazila committee, the measures had also provisions to take away many decision-making authorities about the schools from the hands of the communities and give them to the bureaucrats at district and upazila levels. Litigation from a community and a consequent injunction from the High Court on June 16, 2003 stalled the execution of this reform (Ministry of Education, 2003a).

Similar trend was also found with regard to school-based assessment (SBA), a reform originally proposed by ADB under SESIP in 1999. SBA is used in countries like the USA, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, Hong Kong, and Malaysia. The school based assessment system has also been introduced in many developing countries like Malawi, Zambia, Bangladesh, and Bhutan, in some of them with assistance from MLIs. While there are pros and cons for such an assessment system, the stakeholders and civil society

groups concerned about education system certainly needed to be taken into confidence before introduction of such a system. Clearly, this was not the case, resulting in a considerable skepticism, sometimes translated into antagonism, about the system. Renowned educationist Manzoor Ahmed wrote, “(t)he on-going attempt to initiate ‘school-based assessment,’ without adapting it to prevailing realities and preparing for it in a professional way, is likely to land the authorities in the same quandary as it faced with the uni-track fiasco” (Ahmed, 2007). Along the same line, Anwarul Haque on the details of SBA,

Another complicating factor that we can foresee is the reported allotment of 30 marks out of 100 in each subject for the internal evaluation of each examinee. ... (T)his will inevitably result in inflated subjective marking distorting and further lowering the existing standard. Moreover, teachers may have to face political and other undue local pressure to raise internal marks. By pursuing such a short-sighted myopic policy, are we not courting educational disaster? (Haque, 2005).

While SBA has been piloted in internal assessments in schools, it could not be introduced into public examinations at the end of secondary education amidst a strong view against it among the stakeholders at the stage of implementation.

The Government is in a double bind to work with the multilateral institutions providing needed support in the education sector and to appease its internal political constituencies which are sometimes hostiles to the policy prescriptions coming from the MLIs. A government in a country like Bangladesh is subjected to many political pressures often irreconcilable to each other. The Government needs to walk on a tight rope maintaining a balance. The balance is sometimes miscalculated and the government pays a political price for it.

4.5 CIVIL SOCIETIES IN POLICY DISCOURSE

In the policy context, generally it is expected that the larger society would be involved at least in discussion of the policy options and the choices best suited for the society. Even the multilateral agencies are expected to discuss proposed projects with various stakeholders. Bangladesh is gifted with a vibrant civil society that boasts of some globally recognised NGOs, think tanks and a vociferous media. It might be useful to examine their roles in secondary education governance reforms as an actor as to what space they occupy and how they react to the policy decisions.

The general tendency, as far as the bureaucrats and the multilateral institutions are

concerned, is to keep the detailed discussions on policy issues for implementation within their inner circuit. This happens even if a few consultations take place to provide democratic legitimacy to any policy initiative. The policy decisions thus taken, particularly the controversial ones, have faced, in many cases, considerable resistance at the stage of implementation. One recurrent reason for resistance is that such reforms do not adequately take into account the ground realities and particular interests of domestic stakeholders.

Bangladesh has some of the influential and big NGOs of the world, such as Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC), Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE) and many of them are actively engaged in the field of education.⁶³ There is no systemic obligation to involve the education NGOs and think-tanks in the process of government initiated policy deliberations. For example, the 18-member National Education Commission of 2010 did not have a single member from the NGOs or the think-tanks. The Chair and the members were largely from the academia except for the Member-Secretary drawn from the bureaucracy and two other members who were retired bureaucrats (Ministry of Education 2010, p. 71). Similarly, the 24-member National Education Commission of 2003 also did not include any member from NGOs or think-tanks (National Academy for Educational Management, 2004b, p. 91). Such research groups and watch groups by and large work on their own. Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE) is a well-known education advocacy NGO that mobilises NGOs and think tanks under the banner of an Education Watch group. Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS), Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), Power and Participation Research Centre (PPRC), Human Development Research Centre (HDRC) and many other think tanks are involved in policy research and advocacy. One would notice a parallel track of education policy research and advocacy led by civil society groups. This track is outside the mainstream processes led by the government. Some members of civil society, in their personal capacity, might be invited by the government to join the sub-committees of the Education Commissions.⁶⁴ However, once the policies are received from the education commissions or from other sources such as government orders and they move to implementation stage, the civil society groups hardly have any discursive

⁶³ For example, BRAC has a large education program, albeit mostly in primary education.

⁶⁴ For example, Rasheda K Chowdhury, Executive Director of CAMPE, was invited to join the subcommittee on primary education by the Education Commission 2003.

engagement.⁶⁵ In effect they are marginalised in the formal policy making and implementation processes.

Civil society groups like CAMPE try to reach out to the government, share the drafts of their annual education watch reports with the Ministry, some of which were on secondary education, invite the ministers and the secretaries to the launching of their reports and the workshops as Chief Guests and Special Guests.⁶⁶ The elected representatives of a government can hardly afford to ignore these civil society groups. However, the bureaucratic part of the government, the stable edifice of the government cutting across various epochs of power, also known for its general disdain for the hollering civil society groups, do not care much for any popular engagement. Instead, they determine centrally what is good for the country and the sector and tend to rely on bureaucrats and schools to implement the policy directions.

An interesting example is worth citing here. The Education Advisor to the Care-taker Government of 2007-08 Hossain Zillur Rahman, who also happens to run a think tank, once designated a team of civil society members to review a new policy option, suggested by the World Bank, to introduce a proxy means testing (PMT) method for selection of poorer students for stipend support under the Secondary Education Quality and Access Enhancement Project (SEQAEP) from the World Bank.⁶⁷ The team members asked the Government to be cautious about its implementation and suggested some changes in the selection criteria. While the Education Advisor had all the intention to follow the recommendations, the civil servants and the World Bank implemented exactly what the World Bank proposed.⁶⁸ Implementation of the PMT method began after the change of the Government in 2009 and the Education Advisor was no longer in charge of the Ministry of Education. The tactic they follow in cases like this is one of procrastination, deferment and gradual oblivion unless they themselves own a policy recommendation emerging from civil society groups, and sometimes, unless it is also vetted and supported with funds from donors or multilateral agencies. There is hardly any

⁶⁵ After years of resistance from the bureaucrats, the situation has slightly changed in primary education where some civil society members have been given a seat on the policy table during the preparation of the Primary Education Development Program III under the insistence of some bilateral donors. Secondary education is still an affair between bureaucracy and multilateral donors. Interview with Rasheda K. Chowdhury, Executive Director, CAMPE, also former Adviser to the Care-taker Government. May 29, 2010.

⁶⁶ Interview with Rasheda K. Chowdhury, Executive Director, CAMPE, also former Adviser to the Care-taker Government. May 29, 2010.

⁶⁷ Interview with Hossain Zillur Rahman, Former Advisor, Ministry of Education, May 29, 2010

⁶⁸ Interview with Deputy Director, SEQAEP, June 10, 2010

evidence of reports, research findings and recommendations from civil society groups having any direct influence on actual policy decisions.

Having an influence on a particular policy decision requires policy actors to be present at the ‘right’ meeting at the ‘right’ time. If the implementation of the policy decision entails a cost, which is often the case, then coming up with the monetary support may also be an important element. The civil society groups on their own are not endowed with any of these privileges. While they can make their voices heard, quite loudly at times on major policy decisions (e.g., uni-track system), there are many policy decisions, taken and implemented routinely, that go somewhat unnoticed. At least, the magnitude of these policy reforms does not generate larger resistance movement as they come in piece-meal forms often at the announcement stages. Still, they become building blocks for a gradually developing discursive architecture in favor of larger reforms completed in fragments, bearing an imprint of preferred ideological stance, not quite liked by many of the civil society groups. Since they come in fragments and appear to be not-so-significant, sometimes they go unnoticed. An example will clarify the case better.

The World Bank floated the idea of upazila-based dissemination of information on schools performance since 2004 (World Bank, 2004, pp. 8-9), which is now being implemented under several projects.⁶⁹ This comes with a presupposition of a problem that the schools do not perform well because they do not compete with each other and recipients of educational services do not exercise their choice of institution based on performance. The problem here is defined as non-performance of the school because of absence of parental choice and competition among the schools—‘choice’ and ‘competition’ being two very basic tenets of the private sector model in education that institutions like the World Bank have been promoting for many years. *Inventing* or defining a problem and aligning it with a pre-existing reform package advanced by global actors such as the World Bank or regional development banks, is one of the initial steps towards a sequence of policy reform (Steiner-Khamsi, 2012b, p. 6). The avowed goal is to allow the recipients of the educational services to compare the performance of the institutions and make a choice as to which institutions the children should go to. The objective of this quasi-market model is to hold the schools accountable and enhance the performance of the institutions through competition. The civil society groups did not

⁶⁹ Female Secondary School Assistance Project II and Secondary Education Quality Enhancement Project financed by the World Bank have both instituted actions from the schools to disseminate information about their performance.

oppose this as an idea. However, this came as a first step towards a number of changes that were introduced eventually to align school governance with the neo-liberal principles modeled after management in private sector, e.g., aligning subvention with performance, setting performance parameters for the schools to follow and to be governed on. As I discuss at length in Chapter 7, these elements of reforms come in piecemeal form without any clear depiction of the governance model at the outset, but they piece together to form at the end a model which is neoliberal at its core based on choice, competition, performance, withdrawal of subsidy or linking subsidy only to performance, market relevance of education, etc. As Foucault put it, ‘they converge and gradually produce the blueprint of a general method’ (Foucault, 1979, p. 138). Resistance was mounted only when reforms got to the stage of cancelling subvention because of poor performance (discussed in Chapters 7 and 8).

4.6 GOVERNMENT’S POLICY BILINGUALISM: APPEASING ALL ACTORS

The Government works with different actors in the policy arena—both local and global—often suggesting policies irreconcilable to each other. While it needs external resource support, often tagged with policy prescriptions, it also needs to manage its internal political constituencies. The state’s dependence on foreign investment and aid has been an important source of policy changes in Bangladesh. Although foreign aid has receded from 6% of GDP in 1990 to less than 2% in 2012 (Pakistan Defence, 2012), the absolute value of foreign aid is still considerably high (Quibria, 2010) and in the last decade, it accounted for, on average, 48% of the annual development program (Raihan, 2010). This dependence has defined the negotiating power of the government vis-à-vis the multilateral institutions. Development support has come with development ideas as to what the development problems are and how to tackle them. Multilateral institutions bring in both development ideas hinged upon development ideologies known as neoliberalism.

Successive governments, despite their internal difference on other issues, have more or less accepted neoliberalism as a state ideology, evident in gradual denationalisation of many industries, privatisation, trade liberalisation at the instance of IMF and the World Bank. Such an ideological penchant is also observable in the tenor of reforms in the structure of educational governance as evident from the examples just discussed (this will be discussed more thoroughly in the following chapter). However, the more visible sections of civil society groups, think tanks, the academia and the media, in

general, posit a distinctively negative discursive stance against neoliberalism,⁷⁰ due to the continuity of a left-of-center intellectual dominance. From a Foucauldian perspective, this discord between power and what appears to be the dominant discourse certainly demands further investigation.

Since the ouster of the military autocrat in December 1990, the two major political parties, Bangladesh Nationalist Party and Bangladesh Awami League, belonging to two larger political alliances, have alternated in power every five years in Bangladesh. The first one is right-of-center, generally silent about neoliberalism but known for its neoliberalist state ideology, despite the presence, in its larger alliance, of many politico-religious groups with pronounced disdain against the West. The second alliance is left-of-center, largely drawn into left political discourse by the left political parties, hence ostensibly against neoliberalist policies. However, both of these two major political parties heading the two alliances would generally consider neoliberal state policies inevitable in the given global context and due to the country's dependence on aid and international market. They would strenuously try to adjust to the demands of globalisation, orient the education system to meet the demands of global competitiveness in producing skilled labor, encourage private sector led growth, and create greater space for competition, choice and market determinism. This happens despite the presence of a strong counter-discourse against neoliberalism from the larger civil society groups, which parties in power need to take cognisance of (discussed in Chapter 8).

Given this, there is always a tension resulting in an uncertainty as to what really the dominant discourse is. Is it neoliberalist discourse much of which comes from the character of the state and also brought to the fore by the MLIs molding the development discourse? Or is it the critique of the neoliberalism that is also pervasive and well attended by the national media? This creates a situation where the state is in a double-bind to submit to the global neoliberal discourse of development for its international dependence and at the same time, adjust its iterations to the internal anti-neoliberal discourse for its internal democratic survival resulting in a policy double-speak.

Steiner-Khamsi's notion of 'policy bilingualism' would perhaps be useful in explaining the phenomenon (Steiner-Khamsi, 2000, pp. 155-189). Steiner-Khamsi describes dichotomous iterations of the policy receiving governments, one meant for the international organisations providing much needed loans and assistance and the other for

⁷⁰ Interview with Editor, Amader Somoy, May 31, 2010

the disenchanting internal constituencies, equally important for the governments in a democracy. What is appropriated in such a case is a political rhetoric, sometimes not a real submission to the prescribed policy option. Perhaps, one could even decipher many voices within a policy discourse when it becomes public, around a borrowed policy—a situation of policy polyvocality—some of which may also lead to resistance (discussed in Chapter 8).

Steiner-Khamsi elaborates her notion of policy bilingualism in terms of ‘positionality’ and ‘audience’. She presents the case of teachers’ salaries in Mongolia where the government would have two sets of documents, one ‘global speak’ in English for donors to secure financial assistance and the other ‘local speak’ in Mongolian for its internal constituencies. The second is allegedly “barely accessible to international consultants and researchers, leading donors to perpetuate the myth that the only reform projects the Government of Mongolia is carrying out are those funded by international donors” (Steiner-Khamsi, 2012a, pp. 455-471). While it would be difficult to exclude audiences on the basis of languages of the documents in Bangladesh as English is easily accessible, policy double-speak or polyvocality come into play through various layers and spaces of discursive engagement.

For example, when the government at the top level agreed to performance-based subvention for schools with the MLIs to get budget support from the World Bank, politicians from the same political party were allowed to mount resistance on the ground of practical constraints faced by the schools. The civil servants also invoked various rules to procrastinate the process. After getting the budget support, they suspended the discussion on performance-based subvention.⁷¹ When the government canceled subvention to non-performing schools to satisfy the World Bank and get the budget support under ESDSC (World Bank, 2006, p. 14), it kept room for exception allowing the schools to make a case and get re-enrolled for subvention.⁷² The discourses that wield state power have to be understood in terms of these various layers, and various positions of iterations—some behind the doors with a limited number of actors and some public. Understanding this reality also helps us explain the occasional disconnect between policy discourses and responses to policies prescriptions—be it adoption, deferral or even subversion. The specific examples of policy bilingualism will be discussed with more details in Chapter 8.

⁷¹ Interview with Former Director Planning, DSHE, December 10, 2011

⁷² Interview with Director, Monitoring and Evaluation Wing, DSHE, July 2, 2010.

4.7 CONCLUSION

As discussed in this chapter, the policy making processes for educational governance in Bangladesh travel through several layers, intercepted and informed by various actors. Key actors in the policy formulation are the elected governments, the education commissions appointed by them, the civil servants in the government, the multilateral institutions, and various civil society groups. Evidently, roles are uneven among these actors. The education commissions are charged with preparation and submission of the final policy report when it comes to national policies. The elected representatives perform their role by endorsing such reports but for the rest of the policy process, they largely depend on the civil servants in terms of preparation of the details of the policies and their implementation. However, many of the policy actions do not flow directly from the grand education policies. Some of them are recast and redefined in the hands of those who work out the details of implementation and often in keeping with the preferences of those who fund implementation of policies. And day-to-day policy decisions issued in the form of circular, official memoranda and directives often circumvent national education policies.

Since the early 1990s, the elected governments and the civil servants have depended on another important actor, the multilateral institutions, for interpretation and expansion of these policies and preparation of actionable plans through technical assistances. The multilateral institutions and their consultants were either given the responsibility or they took on their own the responsibility to interpret policies, prepare development plans, purportedly based on the national policies, as was the case with the education policies of 1997 and 2010. In doing this, sometimes they went far beyond what is postulated in the national education policies and recast and redefine them in their own ways, basically to legitimise their own investment plans. When the multilateral institutions provide these technical assistances, they prepare numerous documents, both on their own and under the alleged ownership of the government, giving rise to a field of knowledge for policy actions. Contribution from the domestic sources to this field of knowledge is almost insignificant compared to that from the MLIs. The chemistry changes with the introduction of new ideas, experiences and practices, buttressed by evidence of success both inside the country and elsewhere, so does the interplay among the actors with inclusion of MLIs in the policy community, more so when they bring both ideas and resources to put those ideas in action.

The MLIs have different strategies in different countries based on the assessment of the prevalent politico- discursive environment. In some countries, MLIs draw legitimacy for their proposed policy reforms drawing upon examples of ‘best practices’ from other countries or presenting them as ‘international standards.’ In the process, they try to create an aspiration inside the country to be internationally comparable. Depending on the ability to negotiate with the MLIs, the countries sometimes recontextualise the proposed policy reforms to fit into their own situation. However, there are other countries like Bangladesh, where the MLIs know very well that any trace of exogenism in a proposed policy reform would not go well within the given political environment. Therefore, from the very outset they efface any mark of the exogenous origin of a proposed policy reform, taking cue from the grand policy narratives of the country (e.g., the national education policies) and constructing a referential web from within—a circuit of knowledge stemming and culminating in what the multilateral institutions themselves produce (discussed in Chapter 6).

The reception of policies thus borrowed—veiled or open—is also nuanced. The choices made by policy receiving governments like in Bangladesh, albeit offered and constructed as rational, are often on political and economic grounds—for reasons of building coalitions with international communities driven by political imperatives and/or for receiving much needed financial assistance. The governments are also mindful of the endogenous political/development discourse, sometimes hostile to the international actors. This often leads to a ‘double-speak’ from the government, a phenomenon Steiner-Khamsi describes as ‘policy bilingualism.’ In the case of Bangladesh, this policy bilingualism works two ways: (i) it attempts to satisfy both the international and local actors and (ii) it also builds into the policy making process an element of uncertainty if the policies being advanced by MLIs would really be acted upon. In Bangladesh, where the growth rate is around 6 percent, and dependence on foreign aid has dwindled down from 6 percent in the 1990s to less than 2 percent recently, MLIs, unlike in the past, are not always so certain about acceptance of their policy advances. Policy bilingualism, while leaves a leeway for the internal actors to go either direction as situation dictates, it also provides incentive to policy resistance, where necessary, an issue to be discussed in Chapter 8.

CHAPTER FIVE: MLI SUPPORTED PROJECTS AND TEXTS: STEERING GOVERNANCE REFORM DISCOURSE

5.1 INTRODUCTION

While the previous chapter examined various actors in secondary education governance policy processes and dominant policy discourses and concluded the predominance of the multilateral institutions (MLIs), the present chapter probes in depth the most important instrument the MLIs deploy to create this discursive dominance—the educational development projects. Projects are solid interventions from multilateral institutions—the site where borrowed policies and governance practices are implemented, experiences are generated and ordered leading to outcomes, lessons learned and constructed knowledge—much needed elements for policy validation and continuity.

The projects supported by international donors and lending agencies become nationalised as they are implemented in the specific context of the receiving country. Therefore, acceptance of the policy contents of the projects, if any, is not a case of diffusion without any adaptation. The governments, induced by what Alasuutari calls a ‘banal localism/nationalism’ (Alasuutari, 2013), is keen to show its authority and also to give the impression to its domestic political constituencies that anything that comes from the global actors does not lead to a total developmental ‘isomorphism’, rather a domesticated version of the global model adapted to the local situation. The governments take loans and credits from the MLIs and implement these projects using their own machinery and paraphernalia. However, the decision about the contents of the projects and the tenor of development sought under projects comes through a much more complex process where the roles of various actors become blurred. The apparent truth, in such a situation, demands critical scrutiny, particularly for one to understand the role of these projects in shaping the national policy discourses.

In view of this, the present chapter examines the processes of preparation of projects, starting from its design, and project related texts and the roles of MLIs and governments in these processes. It also examines some important projects and associated texts prepared by MLIs in secondary education and concomitant policy actions taken by the Bangladesh government. In looking into these two aspects, the present chapter attempts to understand the discursive closure such projects try to enforce in discussion and implementation of governance policies in secondary education in Bangladesh. This investigation relates to the central research question of how the multilateral institutions

influence the discursive environment to advance and legitimise governance reforms of their choice in secondary education and create an impact on the school-state relationship at the end.

5.2 DESIGNING AND PREPARING PROJECTS SUPPORTED BY MLIS

The process of project preparation, particularly in ADB and the World Bank, and the structure of a project or program that would emerge out of this process itself is an important discursive element. For ADB, a Country Partnership Strategy (CPS), prepared every two/three years and updated quite frequently, would provide the guiding principles for engagement with the government and its implementing agencies in different sectors.⁷³ The CPS lays out ADB's role in the country's development, its strategies for various sectors and an indicative figure of monetary support for the entire period of strategy implementation. At the World Bank, this is called the Country Assistance Strategy (CAS). While these documents lay out the overall vision for each of the sector, the goals to be achieved during the strategy period, the respective sector professionals within both ADB and the World Bank translate them into work programs in the forms of knowledge pieces, projects and programs. Both CPS and CAS are expected to draw their incentives from and be in sync with the country's own overarching development strategy/document. In Bangladesh, that document in the past was the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP), and now it is the current five-year plan.⁷⁴

At the project preparation stage, the procedures at ADB and the World Bank are slightly different. Officially, ADB provides grants to the Government for hiring consultants in the name of Project Preparatory Technical Assistance (PPTA). The ADB website claims, "ADB usually hires consultants to work with government counterpart staff to undertake the project's feasibility study. The consultants work closely with the various stakeholders including the government, civil society, affected people, and other development agencies working in those sectors. ADB monitors the consultants' work. The draft final report is reviewed at a tripartite meeting attended by representatives of the government, ADB, and the consultants."⁷⁵

⁷³ For ADB Project Cycle, please see <http://www.adb.org/projects/cycle.asp>, accessed on August 16, 2011.

⁷⁴ For World Bank Project Cycle, please see <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/PROJECTS/0,,contentMDK:20120731~menuPK:41390~pagePK:41367~piPK:51533~theSitePK:40941,00.html>, accessed on August 16, 2011

⁷⁵ Asian Development Bank, Project Cycle, <http://www.adb.org/projects/cycle.asp>, accessed on August 16, 2011.

At the World Bank, before a project is prepared, its conformity with CAS has to be ensured and then generally an Analytical Advisory Activity (AAA) would be undertaken. This AAA, earlier known as Economic and Sector Work (ESW), is treated as a ‘knowledge piece’ on the issue to be dealt with. For example, the World Bank prepared a report on the situation of the skills development in Bangladesh which preceded the support to a skills development project. It is more or less an internal document of the World Bank, although the World Bank undertakes consultations and shares the early draft of the report with the Government and accommodates government comments unless they are too divergent from the World Bank’s view.⁷⁶

When it comes to the project preparation stage, ADB mostly uses its consultants—national or international or a combination of both—and the World Bank, generally uses its internal staff, with support from consultants.⁷⁷ However, on paper, ADB would still say that the government prepared the project with grants from ADB to hire consultants and the World Bank would say, “The borrower government and its implementing agency or agencies are responsible for the project preparation phase,... The World Bank generally takes an advisory role and offers analysis and advice when requested, during this phase.”⁷⁸ In practice, however, as a former Additional Secretary of the Ministry of Education testifies,

There is very little contribution from the government side in putting together a project document except for giving opinion on the design and which components to be included in the project. The Government, however, prepares a Development Project Proposal (DPP) for approval at the meeting of the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (ECNEC), chaired by the Prime Minister. This document is also strenuously made to conform to the project document prepared by the multilateral institution.⁷⁹

Both ADB and the World Bank are supposed to undertake consultation with civil society and other stakeholders during feasibility study, preparation of AAA or preparation of project. However, there is no hard and fast rule as to how much consultation should be considered optimum and who should be consulted with.⁸⁰ The projects are expected to follow from CPS (in the case of ADB) and CAS (in the case of World Bank). These two

⁷⁶ Interview with Senior Education Specialist, World Bank, July 19, 2011

⁷⁷ Interview with Senior Education Specialist, World Bank, July 19, 2011

⁷⁸ World Bank, How the Project Cycle Works,

<http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/PROJECTS/0,,contentMDK:20120731~menuPK:41390~pagePK:41367~piPK:51533~theSitePK:40941,00.html>, accessed on August 16, 2011.

⁷⁹ Interview with a retired Additional Secretary of MoE, July 26, 2011

⁸⁰ Interview with Senior Education Specialist, World Bank, July 19, 2011

documents are prepared through extensive consultation. While these documents lay out the broad vision of assistance and the indicative amounts for the sector, they do not specify the processes for project preparation. Consultation is always there, these days, during the preparation of projects. However, there are questions about the quality and extent of consultation.

Let us take the example of preparation of ADB's SESIP II (2006), later named as Secondary Education Sector Development Program, to probe into the process. At the preparation stage, the ADB consultants held 14 focus group discussions and 8 workshops on various aspects of the forthcoming projects. The consultant's final report provides a comprehensive list of people consulted (Asian Development Bank, 2006b, pp. 189-205), but it also shows except for the gender issues, other aspects of SESIP were not widely consulted on. While the dates of the first focus group discussion with the Ministry and DSHE and all the workshops are properly mentioned, the thirteen other focus group discussions with stakeholders on the ground did not have proper records as to when they were held. As it appears from the report, only the national consultant working as the gender specialist held all these ground level consultations. From the composition of the focus groups, it is evident that 10 out of 13 consultations were on gender related issues. The rest three might as well be on gender related issues although they involved head teachers of a number of schools, a small group of SMC members and only two teachers in another focus group discussion. Six out of eight workshops were primarily attended by the bureaucrats of different levels although there were a few participants also from some schools. The two other workshops on school based assessment, held in Dhaka and Kishoregonj, were meant for school level participants.

In this consultation process, except for the gender issues and school-based assessment, all other substantive issues were mainly discussed with the bureaucrats leaving out other stakeholders. This is also evident from the list of individual meetings. Consultants met only the bureaucrats of the Ministry of Education and the officials of ADB and EU, a few ground level government officials and only four teachers from different schools. This shows the imbalances that are characteristic of such exercises.

Absent from this whole list are the national level think-tanks, civil society groups and their members except for only two teachers from the Institute of Education Research, Dhaka University. No meeting or consultation was reported even with the members of the National Education Commission that submitted its policy report only two years ago. While SESDP gives the impression of being a widely consulted project during

preparation in terms of number of consultation events, the content of consultation and the categories of participants portend a discursive closure for many potential stakeholders, particularly the ones who would have a stronger voice on governance reform issues. This discursive closure allows the multilateral institutions to keep the process manageable and doable within the time frame for project preparation, often unilaterally decided by the multilateral institutions in keeping with its arbitrarily decided pipeline of projects for a three-year plan and work program agreements between sector and country management.

At other times, particularly during the preparation of a successor project, there is also an imperative from the government side to ensure that the successor project becomes effective right after completion of implementation of an ongoing project in order to avoid financing gap for certain activities under a project. For example, the stipend program under WB-assisted FSSAP II could not be stopped. Therefore SEQAEP, the successor project, had to be prepared in the shortest possible time to avoid financing gap which put pressure on the project preparation time compromising wider consultation. There were two very important policy decisions taken in SEQAEP—first, transition from girls’ stipend to poverty targeted stipend both for boys and girls, and second, selection of stipend recipients through a proxy means testing (PMT) method—both were practiced in WB assisted education projects in other countries. PMT was introduced for the first time in Bangladesh. Both these policy elements were introduced in the project, meant for schools in the rural areas, without consultation with the stakeholders outside Dhaka.⁸¹

As is the practice, a project preparation team (PPT) is formed from the government side, generally, with members from the Planning Wing of the Ministry of Education, the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education (DSHE) or the project implementing agency of the Government, the Planning Commission and sometimes with one member from the Economic Relations Division (ERD) of the Ministry of Finance. At the preparation and appraisal stage of a project, the primary counterpart of the multilateral institutions is ERD.⁸² However, ERD depends largely on the PPT for inputs from the government side. A PPT is never well-resourced to undertake any study on its own to consider various options with regard to components or activities to be covered under a proposed project.⁸³ Membership in a PPT is not a full-time job. It is only an add-on to a

⁸¹ Interview with Director, Monitoring and Evaluation Wing, DSHE. July 2, 2010.

⁸² Interview with former Additional Secretary, Ministry of Education, July 26, 2011

⁸³ In the past, MLIs used to provide a Project Preparation Fund (PPF) as a retroactive financing from the project being prepared. This practice has now been withdrawn.

member's overly-loaded work. In most cases, the members only concentrate on the project when they meet together.⁸⁴ Much of the energy of the PPT is exhausted in preparing the development project proposal (DPP) following the documents of the multilateral institutions for approval by ECNEC. The choices about components and activities are made based on the consultants' reports of the multilateral institutions. Often the options with regard to which activities are to be supported are presented to PPT with a preferred choice and the rationale behind such a choice.

Hence, what often transpires from the whole exercise is a validation of the choices already made by the multilateral institutions.⁸⁵ A project, its design and various activities to be supported by the project, are, by and large, an outcome of discussions between the multilateral institutions and the bureaucrats with a visible advantage for the multilateral institutions buttressed by many studies and knowledge pieces they produce prior to coming to discussion with the bureaucrats.⁸⁶ Because a project preparation team is put in place from the government side, it might appear as if the government were actively involved in designing and preparing the project. But the reality is that it mostly follows what the multilateral have already decided for the project.

Project design itself is an integral part of the policy discourse and processes often leading to borrowing of particular policies. Inclusion or exclusion of various components or intervention areas entails policy decisions. Borrowing and indigenizing external knowledge or hybridizing a practice to make it usable in a local context demands extensive negotiation. Such negotiations would encompass issues like what is to be borrowed, the array of options available and, if at all, how to indigenise the choice made. Varied experience, diverse perspectives and inclusion of larger stakeholders would ensure better outcome from this negotiation. However, this often does not happen because of the structured process of project design and implementation, and the strict time-line the MLIs follow in project preparation. These are all pre-set for each level—preparation, appraisal, negotiation and board approval. When the MLIs use international consultants, the roles are always overly defined in the terms of reference—all set to a rigorous timeline which does not specifically mention the time needed for consultation. Besides, the known apathy both from the bureaucrats of the Ministry of Education and the Directorate of

⁸⁴ Interview with Director, Monitoring and Evaluation Wing, DSHE, July 2, 2010.

⁸⁵ Interview with Director, Monitoring and Evaluation Wing, DSHE, July 2, 2010

⁸⁶ Interview with former Additional Secretary, Ministry of Education, July 26, 2011

Secondary and Higher Education (DSHE) and from the multilaterals deters the possibility of extensive consultation.

5.3 MLIS' PROJECT SUPPORT TO SECONDARY EDUCATION IN BANGLADESH

Before we examine the process of discursive influence emanating from the MLI assisted projects and the MLI preferences in educational development, it will be useful to describe the extent of MLI project assistance and its rationale, drawing from a few examples of such assistance and putting them in the context of the overall secondary education development.

The major share of the budget for secondary education comes from the Government, not from the lending agencies or the donors. The Government bears the responsibility of the whole recurrent budget for secondary education and of the biggest chunk of development budget. For example, the total recurrent budget for the post-primary education in FY 2007-08 was BDT 51.73 billion.⁸⁷ At the same time the total development budget was BDT 12.23 billion of which only BDT 2.6 billion was project aid and technical assistance coming from different development partners, roughly about 21 percent of the total development budget.⁸⁸ Still, the multilateral institutions like the World Bank and ADB, figure quite prominently in the discursive landscape of secondary education reforms, first because of the financial support they bring to specific activities under development projects that lead to policy reforms in the sub-sector and secondly, because of the overwhelming number of texts they produce in relation to each project.

The main actors among the Development Partners (DP) in secondary education reforms in Bangladesh are the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the World Bank, the European Union (EU) and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). The most important projects that have supported activities to improve secondary school governance in the past two decades were Female Secondary School Assistance Projects (1993-2008), Secondary Education Quality and Access Enhancement Projects (2008-2013) and a series of Education Sector Development Support Credits (2004-2007) from the World Bank, Secondary Science Education Sector Project (1985-1990), Secondary Education Development Project (1994-1999), Higher Secondary Education Project (1992-

⁸⁷Ministry of Education, People's Republic of Bangladesh. *Education Budget*. http://www.moedu.gov.bd/old/edu_budget.php?id=2. Accessed on October 6, 2012.

⁸⁸Ministry of Education, People's Republic of Bangladesh. *Education Budget*. http://www.moedu.gov.bd/old/edu_budget.php?id=7. Accessed on October 6, 2012.

1998), Secondary Education Sector Improvement Project (1999-2006) and Secondary Education Sector Development Program (2006-2013) from ADB, Teaching Quality Improvement in Secondary Education Project (2004- 2011) supported by ADB and CIDA, and the Program for Motivation, Training and Employment of Female Teachers (PROMOTE) supported by EU (World Bank, 2000, p. 87). The major projects with development credits and loans from international development agencies came into existence since 1993.

The two Female Secondary School Assistance Projects supported by the World Bank had their main objectives to increase girls' enrollment in rural secondary schools in roughly about one third of the country through stipend assistance and getting each school into a contract with the government in implementation of the projects (World Bank, 1993, 2002, p. 8). One important aspect of the projects was to improve school management and accountability through various interventions. A follow-up project from the World Bank in 2008, Secondary Education Quality and Access Enhancement Project (SEQAEP) was further targeted only to poorer children in rural areas. While this project introduced proxy-means testing (PMT) for governance of targeting mechanism, borrowed from experiences in some Latin American countries,⁸⁹ it also introduced a number of measures to streamline school management and accountability and a study on school management committee (World Bank, 2008a, pp. 40-49). Also, the World Bank supported the government with a series of three education sector development support credits beginning from 2004 all geared toward governance reforms in three areas of secondary education; system management, teacher effectiveness and curriculum and textbook production management (World Bank, 2008b).

For the Asian Development Bank, two major interventions were Secondary Education Sector Improvement Project in 1999 and its follow-up Secondary Education Sector Development Program which introduced reforms almost in every area of secondary education now considered undertaken by the Government. The areas include, inter alia, examination reforms, curriculum and textbook reforms, teacher education reforms, school management reforms, reforming the directorate of Secondary and Higher Education. For teacher education reforms, ADB introduced another project in 2004 named Teaching Quality Improvement in Secondary Education Project in collaboration with Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). As evident from the table

⁸⁹ Introduction of PMT was preceded by a study tour of high government officials to Mexico organised by the World Bank.

below, ADB has been involved in all reform programs secondary education between 1993 and 2002. While the reforms initiatives began with Secondary Education Development Project (1993) and Secondary Education Sector Improvement Project (1999), the reform program was full-blown with the Secondary Education Sector Development Program (2006). In reality, the government involvement in all these reform areas has been predicated by the support from ADB. The World Bank, although was not involved in some of the reform areas in 2002, also got involved in privatisation of textbook production and much more intensively into school management reforms, subvention governance and teacher recruitment reform with the introduction of a series of policy lending interventions⁹⁰ under the name of education sector development support credits beginning from 2004. However, WB, unlike ADB, stayed away from two important areas of reform—curriculum reform and examination reform. As will be seen in the table 5, SESIP, supported by ADB, was involved in all reforms, whereas FSSAP II, supported by WB, reinforced and complemented some of the reform initiatives. These were further complemented with support from ESDSCs of WB.

The rapid expansion of secondary education in Bangladesh since early 1990s is synchronous with two other notable developments—increase in subvention to nongovernment schools which now constitute about 98% of the secondary schools, and targeted investment from the international development agencies to introduce certain reforms. The number of schools increased from 10448 in 1990 to 18756 in 2008 (See Table 6 below), a period when subvention from the government's recurrent budget also increased substantially (See Table 3). The number of public secondary schools has remained static throughout this entire period.

⁹⁰ This policy lending instrument provides budget support to the government against certain policy measures desired by the World Bank. Based on the agreed policy actions, the support goes straight into the government coffers once the actions are all taken.

Table 5: Issues and Actors in Secondary Education in Bangladesh

Issue/Activity	GOB	FESP (NORAD) ⁹¹	PROMOTE (EU)	SESIP (ADB)	FSSAP 11 (IDA) ⁹²
Stipends for female secondary Students	X	X		X	X
Training and employment of female teachers	X		X	X	X
Reforms to teacher education	X			X	X
Curriculum reform	X			X	
Examination system reform	X			X	
Privatisation textbook production	X			X	
School repair and construction	X			X	
Strengthening school management and supervision	X			X	X
Incentives for improving school quality (improvement fund)	X			X	X
Strengthening of DSHE	X			X	X

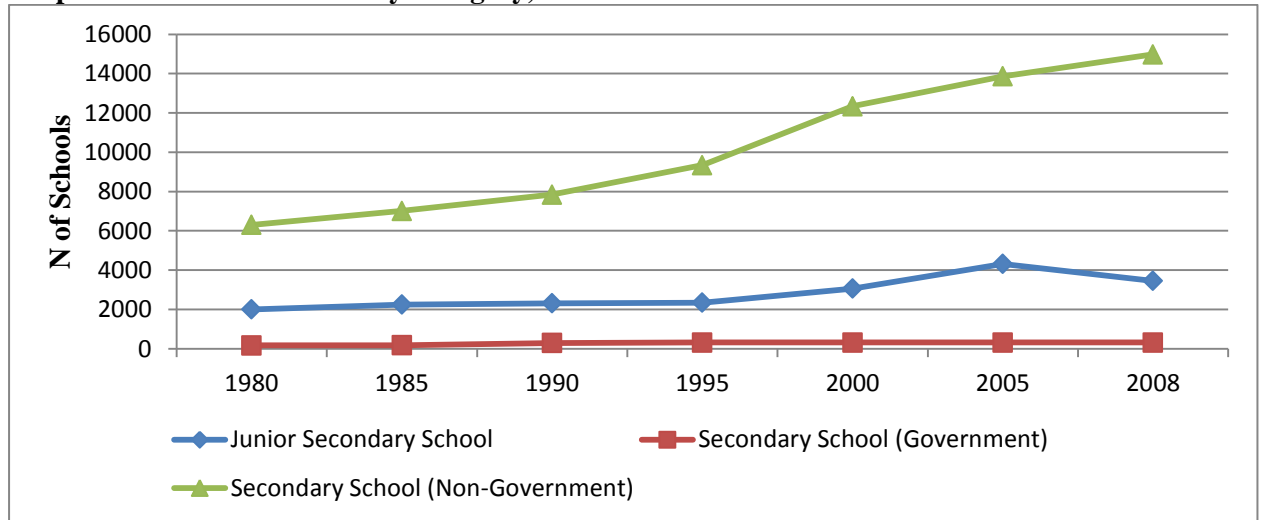
(World Bank, 2002, p. 9)

Development projects have various components, e.g., management reforms, quality improvement and stipends to students, but did not have much to do with establishment of schools except for a negligible number of schools established in the remote and underserved areas after 1999. This started with ADB's SESIP and continued with WB's FSSAP II. Between 1990 and 2008, enrollment rose from about three million to above 6.8 million (See Table 7 below). The most spectacular was the increase in girls' enrollment which rose from about one million in 1990, only 34 percent of secondary school students, to more than 4 million in 2000 and to 4.36 million in 2002 accounting for 53.4 percent of all secondary school students. Certainly, increase in the number of schools has contributed to the rapid expansion of enrollment. However, increase in girls' enrollment was also catalysed by the stipend program introduced by two development projects, FSSAP assisted by WB and SESIP assisted by ADB.

⁹¹ Norwegian aid agency

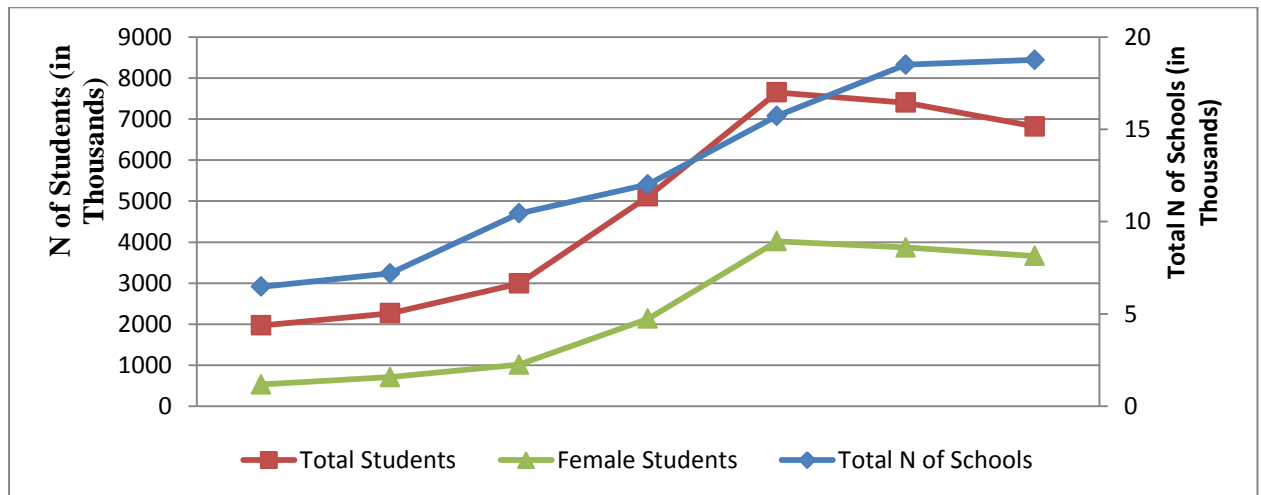
⁹² International Development Association, soft and concessional lending arm of the World Bank.

Graph 1: Number of Schools by Category, 1980 to 2008



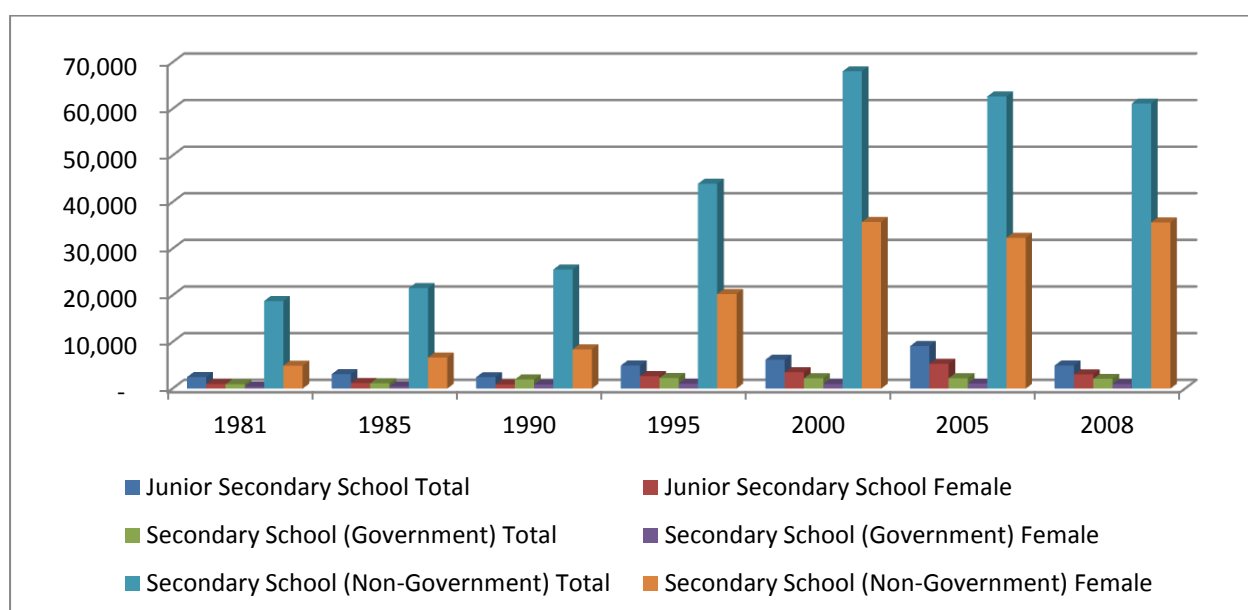
Graph 1: number of secondary schools increases but number of government schools remains static at a very low level. Number of junior secondary schools remained almost the same with a slight increase around 2005

Graph 2: Total Number of Schools and Students, 1980 to 2008



Graph 2: With increase in total number of schools, enrollment increases.

Graph 3: Number of Students by Gender and Category of School, 1980 to 2008



Graph 3: Students increased in non-government secondary schools and junior secondary schools

The World Bank and ADB supported stipend program for girls in 174 upazilas (roughly about one-third of the country) which brought about a spectacular rise in girls' enrollment in secondary education. Later, the Government, convinced by the impact, adopted the policy of supporting girls' education with stipend for the entire country. It also convinced the Government of the necessity of large-scale and sustained engagement of the development partners in secondary education and expanding areas of intervention under several projects.⁹³

The World Bank's Female Secondary School Assistance Project (FSSAP) paved the way for two more successive projects with gradual expansion of areas, particularly in relation to governance—a series of development policy credits with specific focus on governance in secondary education. Similarly, ADB supported Secondary Education Development Project of 1993 led to several other large projects like Secondary Education Sector Improvement Project (SESIP) of 1999, Teaching Quality Improvement in Secondary Education Project (TQISEP) in 2004, Secondary Education Sector Development Project (SESDP) of 2006 and a number of technical assistance mostly geared toward governance reform in secondary education. While these interventions showed results and brought financial support to the sector, they gradually also created policy clout for the MLIs. It will be useful to probe further into some important

⁹³Interview with Director, Monitoring and Evaluation Wing, DSHE, July 2, 2010.

interventions from ADB and the World Bank that will provide more insight into the process of creation of this policy clout of the MLIs and production of knowledge as a ‘regime of truth’ emanating from projects that aided the policy clout and provided rationale for successive interventions.

Table 6: Number of Secondary Schools, 1980-2008⁹⁴

Year	Junior Secondary School	Secondary School (Public)	Secondary School (Private)	All Secondary School
1980	2009	175	6301	6476
1981	2039	175	6546	6721
1982	2073	175	6604	6779
1983	2074	175	6604	6779
1984	2200	175	6710	6885
1985	2248	181	7011	7192
1986	2588	216	7053	7269
1987	2291	252	7429	7681
1988	2267	262	7628	10157
1989	2330	292	7598	10220
1990	2311	295	7842	10448
1991	2000	302	8413	10715
1992	1962	316	8722	11000
1993	1905	317	8873	11095
1994	2136	317	9035	11488
1995	2349	317	9346	12012
1996	2687	317	9974	12978
1997	3002	317	10459	13778
1998	2985	317	11216	14518
1999	2846	317	12297	15460
2000	3063	317	12340	15720
2001	3245	317	12604	16166
2002	3287	317	12958	16562
2003	3982	317	13087	17386
2004	4157	317	13793	18267
2005	4322	317	13861	18500
2006	3251	317	1532	18700
2007	3355	317	15056	18728
2008	3458	317	14981	18756

5.3.1. The Case of Secondary Education Development Project (SEDP) and Subsequent Interventions from ADB

As mentioned earlier, among the development agencies, ADB was the most active in secondary education since the early 1980s. While one focus of the projects supported by

⁹⁴ Extracted from BANBEIS data, website: http://www.banbeis.gov.bd/webnew/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=316&Itemid=171; Accessed on October 11, 2012.

ADB was on access, the other emphasis was on quality and governance. After a few smaller projects on science education at secondary level and technical assistance on capacity building, the largest loan from ADB, worth US\$ 72 million, came in December 1993 for the Secondary Education Development Project (SEDP). One of the three objectives of the project was to improve governance at the level of Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education (DSHE) through decentralisation and capacity building at the district, zonal and central level offices of DSHE (Asian Development Bank, 2002, p. 2). The governance issues were to be tackled under a technical assistance piggybacked on this project.

According to the completion report of the project, four international consultants were employed for this purpose. There was no local consultant to work on governance issues. The consultants' recommendations included (i) refining the definition of goals and objectives of the DSHE in the longer term; (ii) appropriateness of its organisation structure in relation to the Ministry of Education (MOE) and actual practice in the field; and (iii) realignment of the organisational, functional and individual responsibilities of DSHE. At the end of the project, the completion report admits that the project could not achieve its goal with regard to restructuring DSHE. However, the completion report goes at length to praise the work of the international consultants. The report says, "Performance of the consultants both in terms of conduct of services and quality of work was satisfactory. The technical assistance (TA) made substantial output in line with the TA objectives. Reports prepared by the consultants offered important recommendations on institutional and policy-related matters" (Asian Development Bank, 2002, p. 18). They included, among other things, 'formation of an executive management committee to effectively monitor and manage the functions of the DSHE' and 'bifurcation of DSHE into the Directorate of Secondary Education and the Directorate of Higher Education' (Asian Development Bank, 2002, p. 18). These recommendations were not implemented, according to the report, because of the "lengthy bureaucratic approval process requiring inter-ministerial decision and follow-up from the DSHE' (Asian Development Bank, 2002, p. 19). But this could also be a deliberate attempt of resistance from the government to the policy options advanced by the MLIs, an issue discussed in chapter 8.

Table 7: Enrolment in Secondary School 1987-2008⁹⁵

Year	Junior Secondary School		Secondary School (Public)		Secondary School (Private)		All Secondary School	
	Total	Female	Total	Female	Total	Female	Total	Female
1987	267913	105329	158161	73226	2315750	714643	2473911	787869 (31.85)
1988	265231	97467	164437	73226	2377879	757450	2807547	928143 (33.06)
1989	272602	100176	192854	86194	2435182	785575	2900638	971945 (33.51)
1990	245380	86654	194835	87079	2553515	842012	2993730	1015745 (33.93)
1991	212646	75231	198805	88898	2744668	906049	3156119	1070178 (33.91)
1992	284806	121174	210673	90679	3252563	1387352	3748042	1599205 (42.67)
1993	341975	183498	214915	94319	3594600	1585709	4151490	1863526 (44.89)
1994	446060	227239	217715	103924	3871027	1754298	4534802	2085461 (45.99)
1995	494692	266811	228799	105453	4391970	2027520	5115461	402784 (46.97)
1996	564416	299315	234896	108325	4786494	2219433	5585806	2627073 (47.03)
1997	632211	340982	216056	95765	5276058	2484813	6124325	2921560 (47.7)
1998	624153	345038	217665	96689	5927260	3023015	6769078	3464742 (51.2)
1999	616094	349095	219271	97613	6401574	3312115	7236939	3758823 (51.9)
2000	619774	350140	220508	99820	6806603	3570277	7646885	4020237 (52.6)
2001	732298	439437	221215	101447	6933497	3655213	7887010	4196097 (53.2)
2002	741776	445124	222125	101964	7198233	3813690	8162134	4360778 (53.4)
2003	942869	568927	222740	104124	6960753	3649517	8126362	4322568 (53.2)
2004	858162	503312	222451	105627	6422634	3316171	7503247	3925110 (52.31)
2005	910914	531164	221887	106316	6265751	3230534	7398552	3868014 (52.28)
2006	577366	340799	221538	105974	6620275	3430141	7419179	3876914 (52.25)
2007	536551	322218	215438	103183	6367476	1962938	7119464	3769186 (52.94)
2008	495735	303637	209337	100392	6114676	495735	6819748	3661457 (53.68)

Note: Figures in the Parenthesis Indicate % of girls' enrolment.

⁹⁵Extracted from BANBEIS data. Website: http://www.banbeis.gov.bd/webnew/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=316&Itemid=171; Accessed on October 11, 2012.

In the report, there was an undertone of consultants' infallibility and no explanation was given for government reluctance. Here, the 'international' consultants of ADB are the sources and enunciators of knowledge, understandably canonised and authorised by the label 'international' affixed to it. The institutions like the World Bank and ADB have a pool of international consultants from which they draw the required expertise. These consultants form what Phillip Jones calls 'epistemic communities,' something like 'transnational networks of like-minded actors linked together through a convergence of interest, outlook and technique.' According to Jones, "Such networks powerfully transcend their functions at local and national level, as well as transcending conventional interstate authority and structures. Especially powerful are epistemic communities grounded in economic, business and financial communities, whose motivations, values and methods converge in a systematic fashion" (Jones, 2007, p. 330). The knowledge they bring in is considered tested, 'universally applicable' and unquestionable.

ADB draws a line between knowledge produced and actions not taken to still claim its 'knowledge 'to be valid. However, in the section on lessons learned, the report observed that such reforms could not be accomplished 'within the short span of a single TA duration,' which needed 'sustained long-term inputs' in a way to legitimise further interventions. ADB had two more substantial project supports and a number of technical assistance in a time span of one decade all preferring bifurcation of DSHE. The recommended restructuring of DSHE is yet to happen.

In order to ensure continued engagement, most of the project documents of the multilateral institutions would have a section on rationale for intervention where they would discuss the weaknesses of the system in order to legitimise the intervention. For example, ADB's project document on Secondary Education Sector Improvement Project (SESIP) identified weak policy and planning structures, poor quality, low internal and external efficiency, limited access and equity particularly in the rural areas as systemic weaknesses (Asian Development Bank, 1999, p. 4). The project document constructed the problems and provided solutions, which were the main objectives of the project intervention. After nine years, a completion report on SESIP prepared internally by ADB comments that the project achieved most of its project objectives (Asian Development Bank, 2008b, p. 3). Some specific interventions were with regard to improving the quality of secondary education.

In 2006, ADB again provided fund and technical assistance to update the Secondary Education Sector Development Plan (2000-2010) and moved its time-line to

2013 to make room for its next intervention named Secondary Education Sector Development Program. In the program document, ADB admits that quality of secondary education has ‘decreased gradually’ which negates the claim of the previous completion report but provides justification for new intervention (Asian Development Bank, 2006a, pp. 4-5). In order to legitimise another intervention, the program document had to reclaim weaknesses to justify that the system needed further support. The Asian Development Bank will have to justify its cycle of intervention, to remain in the business of educational development in Asian countries and to give legitimacy to its existence.

The Secondary Education Sector Improvement Project (SESIP) of 1999, worth \$60 million, that followed SEDP was a major intervention in terms of direction of development of the secondary education sector. Justification and legitimation for this intervention came not only from unfinished and yet ‘much needed reforms’ under SEDP but also from a Secondary Education Sector Development Plan.⁹⁶ The Plan, as discussed in the next chapter, was prepared by ADB consultants and unceremoniously attributed to the government as a follow-up to the national education policy of 1997. Interesting in this articulation is a yearning to construct the problems and solutions with reference only to the domestic knowledge products—be it the national education policy or the sector plan—which are strategically provided an endogenous origin, in line with what Alasuutari calls a ‘banal localism/nationalism’ (Alasuutari, 2013, p. 104), a national pride in deciding its own policy choices and its own destiny. This leads to ‘domestication of transnational models, whereby local trajectories of social change constantly converge or near each other but exogenous elements are tamed so they are experienced as domestic within each polity’ (Alasuutari, 2013, p. 104). While the ADB consultants understandably did not have intention to ‘tame’ the exogenous elements, certainly they had an intention to go with the prevalent sentiment and present the exogenous ‘Plan’ as if produced endogenously not to be in conflict with the perceived national pride. The consultants who prepared the Plan, allegedly for the government, also prepared the project documents for SESIP (Asian Development Bank, 1998). SESIP envisaged a major overhaul of the sector, which would have its impact on all other future projects, supported both by ADB and others. The project introduced a plethora of reforms including a uni-track curricular system, school performance based management system, school based assessment, privatisation of textbook production—all derived from global policy trends in educational

⁹⁶The Plan was financed by ADB and ownership was rather arbitrarily attributed to the Government. This has been discussed at length in the next chapter.

reforms advanced by MLIs, all new to the country and all legitimated—discursively—by tying the Plan to the national education policy, synchronously, in a circuitous referential web, surreptitiously pampering a banal national pride, as if it is all done locally by the country itself.

Meanwhile, the girls' education program since 1993, a conditional cash transfer model envisioned and supported by the multilateral institutions, had met with resounding success and was being showcased and replicated around the globe.⁹⁷ This gave added legitimacy to borrowing of policies and educational development models imported by MLIs. Against this backdrop, ADB projects introduce a plethora of reforms starting with SESIP and then following up in the Secondary Education Sector Development Program (SESDP) attempting a complete overhaul of the governance structure of the nongovernment secondary schools, which is discussed at length in chapter 7.

For now, it might be useful to recapitulate from the discussion above that ADB found ways to support projects for its continued engagement in secondary education and to steer the system towards certain policy reforms. In doing this, it found the World Bank as its natural ally, which came up with similar agenda albeit with different intervention named development policy lending—a series of education sector development support credits.

5.3.2 Education Sector Credits: Policy Lending from the World Bank

Sometimes the structure of a project itself may posit a discursive closure either for fear of public resentment or for the presupposition that policy discourse beyond regular projects is the exclusive domain of the central government. Therefore, it is a matter of dialogue primarily, and sometimes exclusively, between the bureaucrats in government and the multilateral institutions. This certainly accords an advantage to the multilateral institutions because of their preparedness, the discursive products at their disposal and the overall development environment within which they operate. A case in point here is the Education Sector Development Support Credits (ESDSCs), a series of policy lending credits provided in the form of a budget support by the World Bank. As will be discussed here, these credits attempted to change the school-state relationship by introducing certain market principles, competition among schools, certain forms of decentralisation, contractual relationship between schools and the state and a governance structure for

⁹⁷ The project received the best project award at the global Human Development Retreat of the World Bank in 2000.

nongovernment schools conforming to neoliberal principles. In doing so, ESDSCs used subvention as a lever.

These sectoral policy-lending credits are linked to a number of things. A sectoral development support credit, be it education or health or energy, is tied to the overall development support credit (DSC) from the World Bank for reforms in country governance environment. This in turn is linked to support from International Monetary Fund (IMF). If IMF provides support based on its judgment of the country's willingness to toe its prescribed line of macroeconomic development, only then the World Bank can move ahead with its own DSC and can provide credit under a sectoral DSC. IMF advances a preferred model of globalisation based on free market choice and competition, market-friendly policies, private sector led growth, liberalisation of trade regimes opening opportunities for foreign direct investment, private sector's lead in various industries and the banking sector (International Monetary Fund, 2005, pp 1, 8-10) and withdrawal of subsidy from key public sectors and state-owned enterprises (International Monetary Fund, 2002, pp. 5-10).

This development philosophy is incontrovertibly neoliberal in its ideological stance. IMF, being convinced of Bangladesh's compliance with its development model evident in meeting a number of conditions, put in place a Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (PRGF) to support the country's balance of payment adjustment. This was then followed by a Development Support Credit from the World Bank to push forward a medium-term reform agenda that focused on 'reforms in governance, the financial sector, state owned enterprises, and the energy sector' –all geared toward 'improving' the 'investment climate' and broadening the space for the private sector (World Bank, 2008b, p. 1). The DSC set the ground for an Education Sector Development Support Credit.

It is to be noted that the first of a series of three ESDSCs was named as Education Sector Adjustment Credit (ESAC) (World Bank, 2004, p. 7). ESAC, and for that matter, all DSCs are criticised to be 'successors of much discredited structural adjustment loans, presented in a new garb.'⁹⁸ Such criticisms would merit consideration if these credits are perceived as second generation balance of payment support, conditional upon meeting some adjustment reforms. These days, however, 'conditions' are replaced with the expression 'prior actions' that would qualify the governments to receive budget support.

⁹⁸Interview with an NGO activist, July 11, 2010.

The Education Sector Development Support Credits from the World Bank primarily focused on three broad areas of governance in secondary education: (i) systemic improvement, (ii) teacher effectiveness and (iii) curriculum and production of textbooks. As for rationale for World Bank intervention, the program document on the first credit observes, “Poor system quality is directly related to the lack of effective governance, with limited accountability or autonomy. There is little accountability of either teachers to students and school management committees; or of school management committees to government. Under the broad umbrella of governance, key constraints arise in the areas of: system management, teacher effectiveness; and textbook and curriculum” (World Bank, 2004, p. 7).

Under these broad areas, the education sector development support credits were to support reforms, among others, in the following areas: (i) tying subvention to school performance and eventually moving into grants-based financing for schools, enforcing Monthly Pay Order (MPO) criteria rigorously, setting up district/upazila committees and devolving administrative functions to districts and upazilas, amending composition of SMCs; (ii) establishing autonomous Nongovernment Teacher Registration and Certification Agency, ensuring a common set of standards for teachers in public and private institutions, initiating certification of teacher training institutions, instituting incentive scheme for teachers; and (iii) restructuring National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB), and opening up textbook production to competition. Two more successive credits followed the same trail with the aim to ‘deepen the reforms in the three key areas’ (World Bank, 2006, p. 13).

Like ADB’s projects, ESDSCs also tend to present the suggested reforms as locally grown for their political legitimacy. The first program document dated July 20, 2004 claims that the recommendations of a 51-member Expert Committee formed by the Ministry of Education in 2002, the in-depth studies conducted by MOE in selected areas, and ‘the relevant work undertaken by development partners’ were the basis for a medium-term reform framework. ESDSC was to support implementation of this medium-term reform framework in secondary education. The claim here is that the World Bank was basically supporting the endogenous reform initiatives. Such a claim deserves scrutiny as to how endogenous the reform initiatives are.

The reforms suggested by ESDSCs go far beyond the recommendations of the 51-member Expert Committee established by the Government in 2002. The Committee made policy recommendations for all sectors of education. Though not a full-fledged national

education commission, the Committee functioned with a similar mandate and came up with a set of 55 recommendations for secondary and higher secondary institutions.⁹⁹ This was a separate process from MLI supported interventions. There were a number of recommendations in relation to teacher education and incentives and a few were on devolution of administrative functions to some zonal education authorities somewhat akin to the actions taken under ESDSCs. However, the Expert Committee did not have any recommendation regarding tying subvention to school performance or to gradually move towards grant-based financing—the hallmark of ESDSC’s governance reform agenda. It did not have any recommendation for establishing teacher registration and certification authority. And, while the Committee endorsed separation of curriculum wing and textbook wing under NCTB, it did not have any recommendation for privatisation of textbooks, another important area of reform, strongly supported by both ADB projects and ESDSCs of the World Bank. There is no record of any in-depth study undertaken by the Ministry of Education following the recommendations of the Expert Committee on which World Bank claims to have built the ESDSCs. It also appears unlikely as the Government soon embarked on a new education policy under a new Education Commission led by Prof. Moniruzzaman Miah. And the new education policy published in March 2004 does not claim to have gained from any in-depth study following the recommendations of the Expert Committee.¹⁰⁰ It is clear that although WB attempts to present the ESDSCs as home grown or at least their impetuses were endogenous, there is no record to support such claims.

Therefore, the reference to the 51-member Expert Committee as the source of medium-term reform measures is not quite substantiated, although all reform measures supported by ESDSCs were being labeled as reforms undertaken by the Ministry of Education. Nonetheless, there were a number of studies undertaken by the World Bank consultants in each of these three areas—on governance for improving quality by Hilary Thornton (Thornton, 2002), on teacher recruitment and deployment by Beatrice Avalos (Avalos, 2002) and on textbook policy by Phil Cohen (Cohen, 2002). As mentioned earlier, the World Bank has the practice of having Analytical and Advisory Activities (AAAs), formerly known as Economic and Sector Works, or background papers to

⁹⁹ National Academy for Education Management, Ministry of Education, Government of Bangladesh (undated), *An Abstract of the Education Commission/Committee Reports (1951-2003)*, pp. 50-52.

¹⁰⁰ As discussed in Chapter 4, the Moniruzzaman Miah Commission was considerably influenced by the policy options put forward by MLIs under different projects.

generally precede project interventions. In addition to the contributions from the consultants' reports, ESDSCs basically picked up the tab from SESIP, carried it forward and further deepened the initiatives to reform governance in secondary education. At this stage, it is necessary to critically examine some of the major reforms pursued under ESDSCs as it can give us further insights into the way these MLIs operate in the local and national context.

Linking school recognition to performance is not completely a new phenomenon. Indeed, since the beginning of school recognition during the colonial days, the schools had the obligation of performing well within a well-defined time frame after recognition from the government. The World Bank identifies laxity in enforcement of the regulations and brings it to the center of all discussion on needed governance reforms. Laxity, however, in the past was not to be understood only in terms of governance weaknesses of the Government, but also as flexibility and space left at the disposal of the communities, out of the Government's own volition, to allow the communities to act on their own to run the schools.¹⁰¹ In that governance environment, some schools did very well despite the absence of constant surveillance while others failed to achieve expected results.

This was also the time when the communities had a strong feeling of ownership of their schools (discussed in Chapter 1). As one SMC Chair put it, "the communities thought, not only they were the owners of the schools, they were also in charge to take joy in their success and take action if the schools did not do well. We were happy if we got support from the government, but we would run the schools any way."¹⁰² But the chemistry began to change with increasing subvention to the nongovernment schools. With additional support also came various measures of control, e.g., influence in teacher recruitment, subvention to schools under political influence which did not meet the criteria for establishment. This provided the discursive ground for governance reforms on the nongovernment schools. With the reform initiatives since the mid-1990s, subvention has been brought to the center—like a hub to which all reforms connect. The schools and school communities like the reforms or not, they have to comply with them to receive subvention. Community ownership of the schools has gradually given way to a contractual relationship between schools and the Government. Those who cannot live up to the contract will not receive subvention (discussed in details in Chapter 7).

¹⁰¹ Interview with the SMC Chair of School 1, May 15, 2010

¹⁰² Interview with the SMC Chair of School 1, May 15, 2010.

ESDSCs of the World Bank wanted a strong connection between subvention and the governance of the nongovernment schools, particularly in terms of their performance. The program document for ESDSC II says, “1300 of the worst performing schools (those in which less than 10 percent of the students graduated) were informed that their subventions would be stopped unless they showed an improvement in performance, and 226 of these institutions, which showed no improvement in their performance in the 2004 annual examination had their MPOs¹⁰³ suspended in 2005.” The same document also says, “Poorly performing schools (with less than 40 percent students passing standardised examinations in grades 10 and 12) are being given a two-year period in which to improve their performance, failing which the subventions will be suspended” (World Bank, 2006, p. 14). According to the World Bank estimate, some 60 percent of schools of the whole country fell under this category (World Bank, 2006, p. 14).

The trajectory of the reforms, piggybacked on subvention, portends that this contractualism is going to be ensconced further. Linking subvention to school performance is pronouncedly expected to lead to a system of grants-based financing that would eventually delink teachers’ salaries from subvention. Schools will be handed down with a grant along with a set of performance parameters for schools and teachers to be monitored periodically from a distance:

Within the next few years, MOE is planning to shift to a grants-based financing system, where resources going to institutions will be linked more closely to student enrollment. Under this scheme, schools will not directly receive salaries for teachers but will be given tuition grants—that can be used to pay teachers as well as for other quality-enhancing purposes. The grants will be linked to the number of students, examination performances, and teacher and student attendance (World Bank, 2004, p. 18).

A new management based on principles of new managerialism, still somewhat mixed with bureaucratic control, was gradually to come into play (discussed further in Chapter 7) with a new contractualism, which disaggregates and individualises relationship to governance in the form of self-governance that promotes certain behaviors and limits others (Peters et al., 2000). The grants based financing system would powerfully turn the relationship between the Government and the schools into a detailed contract. Under the new financing system social responsibility of the schools would yield place to the principles of a business enterprise. Enrolling more students, which has long been

¹⁰³ Monthly Pay Order, the teachers’ salaries, in other words, subvention to the nongovernment schools.

considered a moral responsibility of the communities, would now be looked upon as an act yielding more money for those who run the schools. A subtle shift takes place in the fundamental principles, although it appears on the surface as if the role of the schools has remained the same—getting more students to schools while increasing the efficiency of running them.

The present practices of subvention cancellation suggest that a contract between the schools and the government will be a general one applicable to all schools irrespective of their specific condition. There are known areas such as those inhabited by ethnic minorities or disadvantaged people or remote and inaccessible areas for which it is difficult to get teachers, and the Government may devise a separate category in terms of performance expectations. But these areas differ from each other on various grounds. Besides, there are also some schools more disadvantaged than others for various reasons, often in the same upazilas. Faced with the enormous challenge of customizing the expectation from schools based on their varied situation, the Government goes for a simple formula, which jeopardises the entitlements of the remote and disadvantaged areas. Despite these problems, the projects like ESDSCs pushed for these reforms without much discussion about the details, more from a formulaic solution than from a detailed consideration of the ground realities.

To oversee the implementation of the reforms, a governance mechanism was to be put in place, which went by the name of decentralisation as it attempted to delegate some responsibilities now held centrally at the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education (DSHE) to zonal, district and upazila levels. However, at the same time, there were measures also to take away some responsibilities from the school communities and give them to the local level bureaucrats which in other words can be called a rescaling of centralisation from the national to the district level. For instance, ESDSCs supported establishment of district and upazila advisory committees ‘with the authority to monitor school performance and ensure public disclosure of information.’ The program document also says, “To ensure that these committees are broadly representative and effective, they are chaired by the Deputy Commissioner and the Upazila Nirbahi Officers, respectively, and will be composed of staff of various government agencies at the local level” (World Bank, 2004, p. 20). Also, regarding the composition of the school management committees, the policy lending instrument supported an amendment to the regulations to ensure that only deputy commissioners, upazila nirbahi officers, or retired government officials nominated by them, can chair SMCs/GBs, and that any particular individual

(other than deputy commissioners or upazila nirbahi officers) cannot chair more than four school management committees. A bureaucratic predominance in all these bodies is all too conspicuous. Still, paradoxically, the document claims, “this...will significantly reduce the problem of ‘elite capture’ of those bodies and engender greater community participation in the running of schools and colleges” (World Bank, 2004, pp. 19-20).

One way to explain these policy recommendations is to see who the participants are in these policy discourse and processes. As discussed earlier, such policy discussions mostly take place between the multilaterals and their bureaucratic counterparts in the Government. Therefore, one can hardly expect any objection to such policy measures as long as the dialogue remains confined to these actors. In policy lending credits like the ESDSCs, the civil servants of the Government and the MLIs agree to certain reform actions that are to be undertaken before getting the credit. In the Program Document, WB lists a number of such prior actions that have been successfully implemented by the Government to qualify for the credit (World Bank, 2004, p. 23). These discussions and preparation for prior actions start more than a year before the actual actions are taken. In the case of this series of ESDSCs, the Government acted quickly in forming the District and Upazila committees as prescribed by the MLIs. On May 3, 2003, the Government issued two circulars, one on the formation District Secondary and Higher Education Committee (Ministry of Education, 2003f) and the other on the formation of the Upazila Secondary and Higher Education Committee (Ministry of Education, 2003b). The district committee was to be chaired by the Deputy Commissioner and the upazila committee by the Upazila Nirbahi Officer, both being the top bureaucrats in their respective areas.

There were 34 clauses under section 4 in each of these two circulars describing the scope of the work for each of these committees. The overarching responsibility of these committees was to help improve the quality of education in the district/upazila through monitoring and evaluation of all institutions and ensure participation of local people in education management through building awareness. Out of 34 Clauses, Clause 4.24 of the first circular said, ‘the (district) committee will form a panel every year for recruitment of teachers and staff based on well-defined policies and instructions of the Government.’ And Clause 4.24 of the second circular said that the upazila committee would assist the district committee in preparing the panel for recruitment of teachers and staff.

It is to be noted that recruitment of teachers and staff has long been the prerogative of the school management committees, and for that matter of the communities. Out of 34 areas of responsibilities for these committees, the first thing the

Government did was to issue another circular (Ministry of Education, 2003c) -- on May 20, 2003, within 17 days of issuance of the previous circulars—to form a committee at the district level that would prepare a panel of potential teachers. The circular also said that based on the expressed need from the head teacher of an institution, deputy commissioner will select a teacher from the panel and then the school management committee will appoint that teacher. The following day, there was another order from the Education Secretary cautioning the schools that any appointment not following the previous circulars would result in punitive actions against the institutions (Ministry of Education, 2003d).

Clearly, with this circular, the right and responsibility of the school management committee to appoint teachers in their schools were taken away from them and it was rested with the bureaucrat at the district level under the guise of the district committee. The role of the community, represented through the SMC, was thus curbed through this governance reform, supported by the policy lending credit.

However, this action, like many others mentioned earlier, was challenged, this time through litigation. Communities were not ready to give up their role. Two writ petitions were submitted to the High Court, one against formation of upazila committee¹⁰⁴ and the other against the formation of the district committee on panel for teacher recruitment.¹⁰⁵ And implementation of these governance reforms was stalled by injunctions from the High Court (Ministry of Education, 2003a, 2003e). The episode itself is a testimony to the fact that there would be resistance to governance reforms, steered by multilateral institutions, if they do not serve the people they are meant for, the topic to which I will return in Chapter 8.

As evident from the discussion above, the governance reforms under the ESDSCs attempted to recast the school-state relationship by instilling a new form of management founded upon some sort of contract, shifting the oversight and residual management on to the bureaucrats at the district and upazila levels and reconstituting the schools and school communities as contractees to be governed under the new management. It was a move towards what Ball describes as 'new public management' but the system was not quite there, with a big role still played by the bureaucrats in the system. As will be discussed in Chapter 6 and 7, the MLI projects were gradually changing the language, providing a new set of incentives, reconstituting a set of roles, positions and identities with set

¹⁰⁴ Bangladesh High Court, Writ Petition No. 4066/2003, dated 14.06.2003

¹⁰⁵ Bangladesh High Court, Writ Petition No. 3906/2003, dated 28.05.2003

performance targets and rewards,¹⁰⁶ but it might take still some time to get where the MLIs are trying to drive the system. Meanwhile, they took on their own to interpret the intentions of the government, mold an educational development discourse accordingly and advance the governance reforms of their choice for the nongovernment secondary schools in Bangladesh. The very basic principle and sense of community ownership of schools begin to erode in the process (see also, The Daily Star, 2007).¹⁰⁷

5.6 CONCLUSION

Despite the fact that the national governments are responsible for the biggest chunk of the revenue and development budgets in education sector, the multilateral institutions exert considerable influence on the policy processes through the educational development projects they support. Projects are the sites where borrowed policies and governance practices are implemented and validated and experiences are funneled and authenticated, which in turn, give credence to borrowed policies and governance practices. The legitimacy thus earned allows policies and practices to travel from one country to another. The national governments need support from the multilateral institutions to implement projects, and projects bring in policies and practices, which are made acceptable through a complex discursive process largely dominated by the multilateral institutions.

Important policy choices are made even at the stage of preparation of projects when the multilateral institutions deploy a number of knowledge products, often prepared by their international consultants from the global ‘epistemic communities’ who draw their ideas about project elements from their neoliberal ‘discursive repertoire’ While an inclusive discursive environment in project preparation could create a better opportunity for mediation and recontextualisation of the policy tenets built into the projects, largely, this has not been the case in Bangladesh so far, except for some efforts from the bureaucratic side of the government. However, they have always been ill-equipped and under-resourced at project preparation stage giving a clear upper-hand to the multilateral actors who bring to the fore a plethora of discursive products buttressing their own choices. Given the role of knowledge they bring in, it has to be made sacrosanct, even if it

¹⁰⁶ Ball, Stephen J. (2008) *The Education Debate*, Bristol: The Policy Press, p, 43

¹⁰⁷ Many participants in an education round-table organised by the Daily Star, most notably renowned educationist Prof. Zillur Rahman Siddiqui and Abdul Quayum, Joint Editor of the largest daily newspaper of Bangladesh “Prothom Alo,” bemoaned the fact that with the bureaucratic way of looking for solution, the community initiatives in schools disappeared.

fails to deliver in implementation, because this knowledge has to be the basis for their continued engagement.

Apparently, there is little capacity at the disposal of the national government represented by ill-prepared civil servants for mediation or recontextualisation of these borrowed policies validated both by in-country experiences from projects and legitimized by the MLIs and the global experience they bring into play. Such policies face resistance on the ground if they do not yield results to the recipients—an issue to be discussed in Chapter 8. However, before going into the issues of resistance, it would be useful also to examine in the next two chapters the architecture of referential web created by the MLIs with new and redefined categories within the educational development discourse and the case of subvention as to how this has been used in reconstituting identities of schools and school communities.

CHAPTER SIX: POLICY ARCHITECTURE, NEW AND REDEFINED CATEGORIES AND INFLUENCE ON GRAND DEVELOPMENT NARRATIVES

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The last chapter examined how the MLI assisted projects create policy clout for MLIs, construct problems and solutions, attempt to create a discursive closure denying space to other actors in implementing governance reforms and set the ground for change in secondary education governance and the school-state relationship. This chapter aims to show how the MLIs, through their various interventions, attempt to bring the whole policy architecture into the fold of their own discursive web. In keeping with this objective, the present chapter investigates (a) how the multilateral institutions attempt to construct the knowledge of governance policies using their discursive tools sector reports, project documents, policy notes etc.; (b) how the MLIs create and deploy a regime of concepts and categories creating a discursive web through which they interpret education policies and remold them to fit their agenda and (c) how this discursive web influences the country's "own" grand policy narratives giving rise to a policy architecture preferred by the MLIs.

6.2 PATTERNS IN POLICY INTRODUCTION

Since the early 1990s, a general pattern in introducing policies on education governance in secondary education in Bangladesh has been observed particularly in relation to the policies preferred by the multilateral agencies. A proposed reform initiative would make its first appearance in policy discourse, in most cases, through a document prepared by the multilateral institutions.¹⁰⁸ Around the time of preparing such a document, a multilateral institution would have several rounds of discussion with 'the Government,' almost invariably meaning in this case the civil servants in the Ministry of Education. In Bangladesh, the civil servants are transferrable moving from one ministry to another, sometimes quite frequently. For example, the Ministry of Education had five secretaries and four additional secretaries (development) between July 2006 and June 2011. Continuous shuffles are going on at the level of joint secretaries and deputy secretaries. These are the bureaucrats who undertake bulk of the discussions with the multilateral agencies and much of it is a technical-rational discourse.

¹⁰⁸ Such documents, throughout the 1990s have been restricted from public circulation, only recently, the institutions like the World Bank are opening up its documents, that too for its own survival in an increasingly scrutinizing global environment.

On the multilateral institutions' side, during this period, there were some technical specialists who were working in the country education programs for more than 15 years. Besides, there were others, both regular employees and consultants, who were parachuted into the programs from elsewhere with considerable claim to knowledge of the education systems around the globe.¹⁰⁹ The strength across the table in this discursive encounter is uneven, to say the least. As a professor of the Institute of Education and Research of Dhaka University puts it, the documents, and the policy reform proposals for that matter, that emerge out of these discussions, again mostly prepared by the consultants of the multilateral institutions, are more a reflection of the preferences of the multilateral institutions, buttressed by claims to 'global' knowledge, presented now as a consensus between the government and the multilateral institutions and ready to be funded by the same agencies.¹¹⁰ There are occasional meetings with the ministers. However, these meetings involve the Country Directors of these agencies who are not particularly knowledgeable about the details of the educational issues but are briefed by their technical specialists. On the government side, the bureaucrats brief the minister, which is no different from what transpires from their discussion with the technical specialists of the multilateral institutions. Such meetings are more ritualistic than substantive, often to put a seal of approval on what has already been agreed upon at lower levels.¹¹¹ The main point here is that policy discourses emanate from the documents of the multilaterals and travels through levels of the government machinery finally leading to a policy decision, which is preordained by the policy preferences of the multilateral institutions.

6.3 CONSTRUCTION OF POLICY KNOWLEDGE: TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND THE REFERENTIAL WEB

For proposed policies to be legitimate and to claim any discursive space, they need to be buttressed by knowledge, and validated by practices and results. Therefore, it is important for any actor deploying a policy option for uptake that s/he embeds that option in a circuit of accepted and validated knowledge, in a web of references legitimating the proposed policy's truth claim. The present section, as an extension of the previous chapter, aims to trace the circuit of knowledge and the web of reference from which proposed policy

¹⁰⁹ As revealed from interviews, one ADB employee was there for more than 15 years who has recently retired. WB had one employee who worked in the Bangladesh education program for almost 21 years and at least four other employees and consultants about ten years. Some regular employees, on retirement, worked as consultants.

¹¹⁰ Interview with a professor of IER, Dhaka University, November, 12, 2013.

¹¹¹ Interview with a former Education Secretary, June 29, 2010.

reforms in the context of secondary education in Bangladesh gain legitimacy with some broad textual analyses of selected documents.

The irreconcilability of the two political parties alternating in power every five years over the past 23 years has resulted in an absence of any follow-through in educational policies. Although the bureaucracy is more permanent than the political parties, there are frequent turn-overs also among bureaucrats in the Ministry of Education denying the system much of institutional memory. Absence of any formal process or enthusiasm to engage the civil society groups in the policy processes, which could otherwise compensate for the lack of institutional memory, also deprives the government of the much needed knowledge of the sector. Meanwhile, the multilaterals offer both money and expertise to create/expand knowledge of the sector, as evident from the policy and strategy documents prepared over time.¹¹² Often, the Government prepares its own documents with technical and resource support from these agencies. Apart from the national education policies, there were only three government documents since 1992 that reviewed secondary education in Bangladesh comprehensively, all prepared with technical and resource support from MLIs. These were *Secondary Education in Bangladesh: A Sub-Sector Study* and the *Post-Primary Education Sector Strategy Review* prepared in 1992 and 1994 respectively in collaboration with UNDP, UNESCO and the World Bank (World Bank, 2000, p. 60). The third one *Secondary Education Sector Development Plan 2000-2010* was prepared in 1998 with support from ADB. Preparation of such documents provides important insights.

A textual analysis of the *Secondary Education Sector Development Plan 2000-2010* (SESDP), for instance, should illuminate how the policy discourses are molded and determined. The report identifies 14 areas of intervention including crucial actions such as redefinition of the roles and responsibilities of the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education (DSHE), upgrading secondary education management, strengthening management and administration capabilities, strengthening inspection and accountability systems, reorganizing and professionalizing the National Curriculum and Textbook Board, and improving student evaluation – all to be supported by ADB. For all practical

¹¹² For example, the Secondary Education Sector Development Plan, 1998 supported by ADB, Higher Education Strategic Plan 2006-2026 supported by the World Bank, and National Education Policy 2010 Implementation Strategy supported by ADB.

purposes, this report represents a vision of ADB loan assistance to secondary education in Bangladesh over a period of 11 years.¹¹³

The fact that ADB drove the deliberation of these reform measures is revealed from a lack of acknowledgment of any government's participation in the preparation of the document. The cover page of the document clearly acknowledges the support for the publication of the document, 'provided by the Academy of Educational Development and Pathmark with financial assistance from the Asian Development Bank.' In paragraph 12, the report also states that the plan was produced by a technical assistance team 'with funding by the ADB to provide a secondary education subsector profile and analysis and a set of priorities to develop the subsector with loan assistance.' Hence, the considerable influence of ADB over the preparation of SES-DP is beyond any reasonable doubt. In contrast nowhere in the document would one see any indication that the Government or any part of it ever participated in its production.

However, the Bangladesh government is not completely ignored in the document. Despite the lack of any participation of the government in the preparation of SES-DP, the plan claims to have taken its incentive 'for the most part' from the policies and objectives outlined in the 1997 Report of the National Education Policy Formulation Committee. However, a careful reading of the document reveals that the authors have taken full liberty to expand the objectives in its own way to describe how secondary education in Bangladesh should be restructured in the following years. For example, none of the 14 areas identified for loan assistance in the plan was mentioned in the National Education Policy 1997 except for a general statement about the area of 'regular inspection and monitoring' (Ministry of Education, 1997b, pp. 13-16).

Couched as originating from the 1997 Education Commission Report, SES-DP legitimises the subsequent dissemination of knowledge about the aforementioned set of nongovernment secondary education reforms. Since 1999, ADB has supported three major projects—Secondary Education Sector Improvement Project (1999-2006), Secondary Education Sector Development Project (2006-2013) and Teacher Quality Improvement Project (2005-2011)—all in line with the objectives of the Plan and as part of implementation of the Plan—the source of substantive knowledge of what reforms to undertake in secondary education. And curiously, while preparing the Secondary Education Sector Improvement Project in 1999, ADB attributes the ownership of the Plan

¹¹³ A Table in the document outlines the loan assistance from ADB for the next 11 years, pp.96-98.

to the Government saying that the project is ‘formulated within the framework of the Government’s Secondary Education Sector Development Plan 2000-2010’ (Asian Development Bank, 1999, p. ii). From now on, ADB would not have to draw its legitimacy for intervention from the National Education Policy or the Five-Year-Plan (FYP). SES-DP, claimed to have been drawn from the National Education Policy and the Government’s FYP, would now provide the requisite credence. The Plan, from this point onward, would be quoted in many documents as the source of original knowledge. The ADB consultants who authored the Plan were given the dual task of preparing the Plan and a project—Secondary Education Sector Improvement Project—supported by ADB. As will be discussed in the subsequent sections of this chapter, the projects born out of the Plan, attempted to put in place a secondary education system modeled after private sector, bolstered with the language, categories and concepts, such as ‘school choice,’ ‘competition,’ ‘developing human capital’ that uphold neoliberal ways of thinking about educational development.

Policy knowledge of the multilaterals is buttressed with project loans coming from these agencies. Between 1993 and 2008, ADB alone provided \$365.1 million as project loan in secondary and higher secondary education (Asian Development Bank, 2008b, p. 53). During this period, the World Bank credit assistance to secondary education in Bangladesh was \$619.6 million (Asian Development Bank, 2008b, p. 53; World Bank, 1993, p. iv; World Bank, 2008a, p. i; World Bank, 2008b, p. 1.). Each project gives rise to a regime of documents—the project appraisal documents or program documents, background papers, consultants’ report during project implementation, implementation completion reports—all define the parameters of knowledge in secondary education. The constructed knowledge and actions stemming from that knowledge buttress each other and create their own legitimating discursive web. The production machine of the multilaterals is so overwhelming that they inevitably earn a place of dominance in the policy discourses, monopolise the knowledge production processes and capture the means of their propagation.

Curiously, in the example earlier, ADB was trying to efface all traces of external origin of the reforms they introduced and draw legitimacy from a carefully constructed endogeneity of the reform measures. This needs to be understood in connection with the political environment in Bangladesh in the post-autocratic era in the 1990s and the first decade of the 21st century marked with a resurgence of a left-of-center nationalist social discourse that dominated both the media and the various circles of intelligentsia. The

prominent think-tanks like the Centre for Policy Dialogue, Bangladesh Unnayan Parishad, Bangladesh Institute for Development Studies, Human Development Research Centre have all been largely dominated by left-of-center intellectuals, economists and academics (e.g., Professor Rehman Sobhan, Dr. Debapriya Bhattacharya, Qazi Kholiquzzaman Ahmad, Professor Moinul Islam, Dr. Binayak Sen and Dr. Abul Barakat). Many of them were trained in the former Soviet Union. The elected office bearers of Bangladesh Economic Association over the past two decades have also been largely from left political persuasion. The largest Bangla daily is edited by Matiur Rahman, a former communist party member. The editor of the largest English daily of the country was an activist of the Bangladesh Students Union, a left-wing student organisation, during his student life. All these people are active contributors to the discursive environment. All of them write and many of them frequently appear on national television channels on development issues. A reflection of this discursive environment is also to be found in the views expressed by the participants in a seminar on aid effectiveness organised by the Centre for Policy Dialogue on December 7, 2004. The participants, drawn from civil servants, economists, academics, media and business leaders, critiqued the donors' high influence on national policies, that reforms are mostly exogenous leading to lack of country ownership and that they should be home-grown and vetted by Parliament (Centre for Policy Dialogue, 2005).

The socio-political environment in Bangladesh makes it an imperative for the MLIs to conceal the exogenous nature of the policies they advance. The borrowed policies, often remain, as Florian Waldow put it, 'non-explicit' or 'unacknowledged' and travel as 'silent borrowing' with exclusively domestic frame of reference (Waldow, 2009, pp. 477-494). Both the MLIs and the local actors such as the education commissions tried to highlight the domestic origin of the policy measures and presented them as rational solutions emanating from within the country. In brief, the discursive dominance of the MLIs is brought into play by a referential web they create and they are careful in concealing the exogenous traces in that referential web in view of the political and discursive realities on the ground.

6.4 CHANGING STRUCTURE OF SECONDARY EDUCATION GOVERNANCE: CATEGORIES BORN, CATEGORIES REDEFINED

All MLI assisted projects discussed in the previous chapter had the common goal of instituting a new management structure for the secondary schools. For this to happen, it is important that various elements needed for such a structure be created or recreated and

redefined and made acceptable both discursively and in practice. Such elements and reconfigured concepts would constitute the tropes, the principles of organisation that would provide legitimacy to the new management structure. Therefore, it is important to look into the itinerary of these elements and concepts, their metamorphoses and then their use in the principles of organisation in order to make the new management legitimate.

One good example is the discursive reconfiguration of the ‘nongovernment schools’ as ‘private schools.’ The development partners were keen to look upon subvention provided to the non-government schools as ‘public-private partnership.’¹¹⁴ An ADB consultant report on preparing the Secondary Education Sector Development Program characterizes all 98 percent nongovernment secondary schools as ‘private.’ Likewise, a World Bank document attributes ‘rapid expansion of education opportunities—especially at the secondary and tertiary level’ to the ‘private providers’ under what it calls ‘public-private partnership in the delivery of education.’ The report mentions, ‘An extraordinary feature of Bangladesh’s secondary education system is that most secondary schools are privately managed’ (World Bank, 2004, pp. 3, 5). In a number of World Bank documents, one would find celebratory iterations about the ‘private’ sector engagement in secondary education and increased access ‘as a result of successful expansion of the private sector’ in education (World Bank, 2008a, p. 1).

The fact of the matter is that in Bangladesh, these non-government schools are more community owned and community-run schools than private schools. There is no private ownership of these schools and the nature of their operation and management is very different from the private enterprises. In the metropolitan areas, there are ‘private schools’ where well-off parents spend considerable amount of money to ensure better education for their children under the supervision of well-paid and qualified teachers. Although apparently non-profit, owners of such schools make huge money and run the schools just like private enterprises. They never want subvention from the government which comes with compliance requirements. If anything, they want to stay as much as away from the government as possible. This is not the case with the schools in the rural areas which have meager resources of their own, if at all, and are largely dependent on government subvention. These are community-run schools with little tuition fee taken from the students. Despite the fact that in many cases the donation of land and initial costs for establishment of schools come from a few people, they by no means are the

¹¹⁴ Subvention is provided solely from the government funds. This is not supported by the development partners

exclusive owners of the schools. The whole community owned the schools.

The MLIs now reconstitute them as ‘private’ in the overall policy framing set-up. The word ‘private’ in the context of these schools, albeit loosely used, contributes to a discursive environment where ‘private’ as a provider of social good earns further legitimacy for a neoliberal development discourse. Any contribution of the ‘private sector’ or any achievement of the ‘private sector’ needs to be celebrated. On the other hand, such schools are now positioned quite differently in the overall policy regime where they are expected to act as an ‘autonomous’ enterprise whose actions will be governed from a distance by numbers and parameters set anew under a new management.

The expression ‘public-private partnership’ will mostly be found in the texts produced by the development partners while praising the achievements of the system. The third Education Sector Development Support Credit from the World Bank claims, ‘This unique public-private partnership has brought about some significant achievements’ (World Bank, 2007, p. 4). Then it goes on to attribute the credit for expansion and gender parity in secondary education to, among other things, public private partnership.

Steering the concept of ‘private’ to the center discursively paves the way for deploying a new public management in reforming education sector and making it accountable. It would help define ‘incentive’ in a particular way akin to market mechanisms, which will then be dished out to schools, teachers and students—all in a subtle celebration of the conquest of the realms of education by the new principles of governance. It would also create an environment for celebration of competition and in the process, disappearance of some schools as a failure to survive in a competitive environment. Also, the sphere of the ‘public’ will be gradually attenuated under the public-private partnership, to leave more space for the ‘private.’ There will be a continued discursive support to the message that public goods like education can be dispensed off more efficiently by the private sector. The ‘private’ was brought to the discursive center through twisting the concept of community and blurring their traditional role.

Therefore, naming nongovernment secondary schools as private schools could have many implications. First, it helps legitimise the functioning of these schools as any enterprise in the private sector. Secondly, the role of the state would be restricted allowing questions to be raised about any subsidy given to these ‘private’ schools. Thirdly, the rewards and punishments could also be modeled after private sector practices. Fourthly, a legitimating environment thus created would allow subvention to be

used as a lever to impose governance of its choice on these schools. In this regard, a closer look at an ADB document is somewhat revealing:

Secondary education is, therefore, a private sector business. While there appears to be an apparent over centralised system of administration and control in secondary education, in reality the power of the government over its secondary school sector is not as strong as it would appear. Examples of this can be seen in the government's (past) difficulties in linking performance to the substantial subsidies it gives to private education, with the result that there have been problems establishing and maintaining the quality of education and the quality of management in secondary schools. Yet, and despite this, the secondary school sector is critical to any national manpower (or other) development plans produced by government. This pivotal fact has been recognised by government and, therefore, much of its current and future planning and resources are – and will continue to be - concentrated on improving accountability and in asserting quality within secondary education. The government will attempt to do this by using the (almost) sole sanction that it has at its disposal – the 90% teacher salary subvention – to control events and quality in schools. Whether it will succeed in doing so will be a crucial factor in the implementation of SESIP-2 (Kelly, 2006, p. 99).

Curiously, the foregrounding of 'private' in the MLIs' discussion of Bangladesh secondary education is coupled with somewhat derogatory use of what they see as the antithesis, 'community.' In many project/program documents on secondary education, the word 'private' will disappear right after the first few pages when the panegyrics are done except for cases where there is a reason again to invoke the private sector principles. There is more or less a universal structure of such documents—where a few words of praise for the country will soon be followed by a section on challenges which will then lead to a description of the project or the program to steer the country out of those challenges. In the section on challenges, where weaknesses of the system would be discussed at length, 'private' will disappear and 'community' reappears. Here community is defined as something that cannot ensure accountability and proper functioning of schools, 'real' community is not 'properly' represented in committees and hence subject to various pressures:

...the SMCs and GBs (*Governing Bodies*) are often composed predominantly of male elites... and often use this position for political gain/favor (especially in hiring teachers). The political interference has led to an apparent lack of interest of community members and guardians to participate in SMCs/GBs—they are reluctant to play an active role. This has undermined the accountability of the school towards community (World Bank, 2004, p. 9).

Therefore, the logic goes that measures have to be taken keeping the communities at bay. Under the Education Sector Development Credits(ESDSCs), as discussed earlier, this led to a number of measures from taking certain responsibilities away from the SMCs and for that matter from the communities to reconstituting the School Management Committees(SMCs). The oft-quoted accusation in MLI documents is nepotism and political interference in teacher recruitment in these schools. It is true that SMCs are largely influenced by local political elite, a complex issue discussed at length in Chapter 8, but using this as a pretext to undermine their role also curbs whatever representation is there from the community. The governance reform discourses, steered by MLIs, tend to bypass this issue. The communities are shown to be disempowered under political influence.

What also happens surreptitiously in such discursive practices is the disappearance of the community as a visibly functioning category in the neoliberal vortex. A community, which also brings in people with political clout, in its entirety cannot be trained and held accountable as such to run the schools. Therefore, the MLI assisted projects train individuals who can be held responsible. In Bangla, they are the '*abhibhabaks*,' the "parents" of students who are expected not to have any political identity. The training manuals under projects like FSSAPII or SEQAEP supported by WB are meant for the '*abhibhabaks*' who are on the school management committees or on the parent teachers associations (Madhyamik of Uchcho Shikhsha Adhidaptar (Female Secondary School Assistance Project II), 2006, pp 12-48). Thus the community dissolves into the category 'parents' and the long standing traditional role of the community as a whole vis-à-vis the schools is made to disappear or at its best kept alive only at a rhetorical level.

This is clearly reflected in a 97 page study on the School Management Committees under the Secondary Education Quality and Access Enhancement Project mentions community only eight times, once to endorse Dakar Conference resolution about school-community relations, and three times to repetitively mention 'community participation' in SMCs as opposed to 'parents' mentioned 43 times (Ministry of Education, 2011). The 'parents'—the truncated and weak substitution of the community is moved to the center, reconfigured and given a role as the critical driver for reform under the MLI assisted projects. The parent cannot be a rural elite, the parent cannot be a politician with a voice. They are just parents, trained, reconstituted and a historical, representatives of newly constituted and designed 'democratic' school management

committees, only to supervise the schools activities based on a set agenda they are trained for under their new roles as contractees. The ‘community’ is not an operative concept in the quasi-market policy space where individual parents, defined as rational choice makers, are the basic operative unit. Collective voice of the community is disaggregated in the name of giving voice to individuals who are portrayed as marginalised. The intention, however, is to make such voices manageable and trainable.

‘Community’ is a curious construct in the documents of the multilateral institutions. For political correctness, of course, everything has to be done for the communities. Communities need to be involved. Communities need to be empowered. They need to participate in school management, but then they cannot be trusted. They cannot be entrusted with the responsibility to recruit teachers for their own schools. They cannot have rural elite as their representatives on School Management Committees (SMCs). They cannot be represented by someone who has a voice, because s/he is political, not to mention the process of representation itself is a political process. As the former Education Minister observed, the political workers and leaders at the local level are the ones who can provide leadership in education in their areas. ‘It is misleading to say that education cannot be politicised.’ The chairmen of the union council are expected to look after education in their areas (The Daily Star, 2007). What goes unnoticed is that the very attempt to depoliticise SMCs is itself a political act of silencing certain voices.

Anything political at the community level is a major irritant for multilateral institutions and the bureaucrats and is to be presented as ‘politicisation’ with a negative connotation. However, the paradox remains unresolved. Election to the School Management Committees is a political process. People who can articulate the community’s interest the best vis-à-vis the schools would always have a stronger chance to be on SMCs. In all likelihood, these people would also be involved in other areas of the local political arena, some of them with strong connection with national politics and with elected members from those constituencies. Besides, they will have local accountability as they have to go back to the community for electoral purposes. But then the mere presence of these people on SMCs translates for multilateral institutions and bureaucrats into ‘politicisation.’ SMCs therefore, need to be reconstructed. This paradox demands an in-depth discussion, which will be undertaken in chapter 8.

As discussed above, the projects, supported by the multilateral institutions, attempt to put in place a contractual relationship between the state and the schools. In

doing so, they bring into play a number of concepts and categories and remold others already in use in order to validate the market principles they attempt to introduce in school governance. The changed notions are steered to the discursive center by the projects to uphold the neoliberal principles founded upon open market principles, performance based rewards, competition and choice modeled after private sector operation and a constricted space for the state. They are directed to reify a governance structure in secondary education compatible with neoliberal principles. Here, provision of education is to be seen as a transaction.

What this transaction in the market place produces is also expected to be marketable. As Ball said, ‘education is not simply modeled on the methods and values of capital, it is itself drawn into the commodity form’ (Ball, 1998, p. 126). For instance, the Education Sector Adjustment Credit from the World Bank in 2004 observed about the reform initiatives in secondary education that they ‘will ultimately lead to a more skilled labor force attuned to the needs of the Bangladeshi labor market, raising its competitiveness in global markets’ (World Bank 2004, p. v). The document mentioned ‘human capital’ six times out of which five times, it has been associated also with building infrastructure as a necessary element in country’s development. A reference to ‘human capital’ with an ensemble of many objects like roads, bridges, electricity, energy etc. as a constituting element of development leads to dehumanisation of development, conducive to imposing market principles and values—everything to be seen as a product, everything to be seen in terms of its cost and price. Typical of market considerations, a student is to be measured in terms of ‘unit costs per student completing the cycle’ (World Bank, 2004, p. 28) very much in line with the production cost of each unit of product to be marketed. While presenting the Secondary Education Sector Improvement Project, the ADB President’s report to the Board of Directors said,

The growing local economy and linkages with global economy are now creating demand for a well-trained and productive workforce, prepared for local production and commercial markets. To make the leap from subsistence lifestyles to wage-based employment, individuals need academic and cognitive skills that can link them with the job market (Asian Development Bank, 1999, p. 13).

Likewise, secondary education for girls was expected to equip them for ‘small business and employment in the formal and informal market’ and would ‘help reduce the current wage disparities with men.’ As a clincher on the theme, the document claims that the aim of the project was ‘to lay the foundation’ of ‘a reoriented secondary education system’

that was ‘more relevant to a growing formal market...’ and the project would better prepare students ‘for the world they will face’ (Asian Development Bank, 1999, p. 14).

The world they were to face was to be understood as a market where they, as ‘commodities,’ or ‘products’ were to be sold. In order to acquire the value as a ‘commodity’ or a ‘product,’ attractive enough to draw the attention of the potential buyers, they must have acquired something intrinsic from the system in which they are ‘produced.’ A ‘product’ comes from the ‘production house.’ Like the ‘product,’ the ‘production house’ also needs to follow the market rules, perhaps more so. Therefore, the ‘production system’ named ‘education’ itself needs to be modeled after market principles, which will ensure not only harmony between what produces and what is produced, but also with the market place now posited as *raison d’etre* for everything named education. ‘Laying the foundation’ under a project attempts to efface everything that preceded the project and start anew a ‘reoriented secondary education system’ all for the market and within the market.

This understanding of education through market parlance is one very important way of looking at the role of education, very prominently so under the pervasive global ideology of neoliberalism. The project documents are quite explicit about the market parlance, the choice to be given to the customers and the competition it attempts to put in place among schools even if it puts many schools in disadvantage. If the nongovernment schools providing education are viewed as private business, they are expected to take this risk, as is the case in private business.

6.5 NEXUS BETWEEN DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION NARRATIVES

The understanding of education in neoliberal terms goes deep into societies/communities where the secondary schools are located and create categories, identities of schools, SMCs, teachers, students and parents and a discursive ambience for the changes of their choice. These terms also permeate the education policy discourses positing themselves as ‘experiences’ and ‘testing and validating ground’ for policies. But then, they also go further up and pervade the grand development narratives of the country—the major development documents like the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) or the Five-Year Plans—sometime directly, but most often indirectly, to construct the overarching development discourse and in turn draw their own legitimacy through cross-references within a closed discursive circuit. The aims of this section are (i) to provide a brief account of this upward discursive trajectory of projects to help understand how the

country's development discourses and efforts are ordered around a uniform set of codes originating from MLI assisted projects and creeping into the grand narratives in the context of secondary education policy reforms in Bangladesh and (ii) to examine the authorship of the grand development narratives.

These aims will be achieved by closely examining Government's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) (Government of Bangladesh, 2005) of 2005. An important point to be noted here is that the discussion about the agencies of the national actors in this discursive construction is somewhat truncated with a focus only on the policy discourse at the top level. There is an important disjunction in many cases of policy issues between policy formulation and policy implementation. The role and response of various agencies are different at these two different stages, a discussion we postpone for Chapter 8. Here we discuss the discursive tenor enforced at the policy formulation stage.

6.5.1 PRSP in the Project Referential Web

Preparation of PRSP was a prerequisite for Bangladesh to get loan from IMF and International Development Association (IDA), a concessionary lending arm of the World Bank. PRSP was expected to be prepared through a consultative process and only after a Bank-Fund Joint Staff Assessment and approval by the Boards of World Bank and IMF, Bangladesh would qualify for loans. The assessment and approval from these two institutions would also impose an indirect condition on the content, which compromises the country ownership of PRSP (Vavrus & Seghers, 2010). As the critics say,

The government is responsible for writing the PRSP and for commissioning and organising technical and donor input into it. In practice it often means building 'ownership' around pre-existing, IFI¹¹⁵-preferred standard economic policies... governments opt for programmes that they know will be accepted even if this conflicts with priorities identified through consultative processes... it is ultimately questionable to what extent a programme can be truly government or nationally owned.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁵ International Financial Institutions like the World Bank and IMF.

¹¹⁶ Bretton Woods Projects: Critical Voices on the World Bank and IMF, *Poverty Reduction Strategy: A Rough Guide*. Website <http://www.brettonwoodsproject.org/art-16298#E>; Accessed on October 16, 2012

Given the general development model preferred by the World Bank and IMF, and given the country's dependence on foreign aid and loan,¹¹⁷ there was hardly any possibility for Bangladesh to digress much from the development principles the World Bank and IMF preferred. In Bangladesh, the World Bank funded the preparation of PRSP. A few suggestions with regard to secondary education were as follows:

- (i) make secondary education up to class X into one unified stream with adequate focus on communication skills, science and mathematics for all students. (Education Commission Report, 2003);
- (ii) undertake a subsector development programme for the under-served groups; (iii) build new schools based on school mapping and a model high school should be built by the Government in each Upazila within 10 years; (iv) ensure that NCTB is concerned with only curriculum development and has permanent professional staff; .. (viii) make public examinations and internal assessment mutually complementary ... School-based assessment, currently under implementation, is a move in the right direction.

As regards governance, the PRSP said,

It is necessary to shift operational decisions to Division, Zila and Upazila levels. Education Committees should be established at the national and sub-national levels up to the Upazila to provide general oversight and guidance. .. In 2003, the NEC has identified the need to decentralise DSHE operations and increase authority and capacity at the zonal, District and Upazila levels for effective planning, monitoring, inspection, audit, and academic supervision to improve the quality of secondary education (Government of Bangladesh, 2005, pp. 132-133).

A closer scrutiny of the PRSP suggestions reveal that the measures mentioned here are extracted from the National Education Commission (NEC) Report of 2003 (Ministry of Education, 2004b, pp. 66-105). It's only natural that two important documents of the Government should be in sync with each other, more so as they were produced under the same political regime. As discussed in Chapter 4, most of the observations of the NEC report, now being reproduced in the PRSP, have striking similarity with the recommendations presented in the Secondary Education Sector Development Plan (SE-SDP), produced by ADB consultants for its investment project, and with activities implemented under the ADB assisted Secondary Education Sector Improvement Project (SESIP) since 1999, the first project ever formulated after SE-SDP (Asian Development Bank, 1999), prepared again by the same group of consultants. These policy initiatives predated the National Education Commission Report of 2004 and the PRSP of 2005. And

¹¹⁷ For example, Tk. 264.4 billion was expected as foreign assistance in FY 2012-13, which was about 9.7 percent of the total budget of the country for that year.

these observations and measures found their way into both NEC report and PRSP. Then, they were the basis for activities under the next ADB assisted project Secondary Education Sector Development Program (SESDP).

In keeping with the language of the MLI documents, PRSP suggested that ‘an overhauling of the nation’s education system’ was needed which was ‘divorced from the evolving market realities’ (Government of Bangladesh, 2005, p. 78). As regards subvention to nongovernment schools the PRSP recommends, ‘Devise transparent methods to link the amount and disbursement of subventions to the performance of schools’ (Government of Bangladesh, 2005, p. 133). This is the language repeated used by all three documents of WB’s ESDSC program. Linking subvention to performance, setting parameters for evaluating performance, defining performance in terms of marketability of students, and putting a governance system to support these are but a chain of actions leading towards a quasi-market model in educational development. PRSP endorses this when it borrows language from the discursive construction of educational development by the MLIs.

Noticeable in these locutionary itineraries is a closed discursive field, a self-contained and circular referential web, a forced intertextuality, where a limited number of discursive products are cross-referencing and reinforcing each other to endow each with requisite legitimacy from the other. A truth claim ensues providing the *raison d’etre* for reforms advanced. Identity of the original author of this constructed truth is of course concealed, for political reasons.

6.6 CONCLUSION

The projects supported by the multilateral institutions, in the process of implementation, create new categories and reconstitute others in keeping with the neoliberal principles. They attempt to reorganise the secondary education governance system in keeping with the market principles, or as closely as possible, where provision of education is to be seen as a product sold and bought in the market place. ‘Community schools’ are rearticulated as ‘private schools’ delivering public good under a ‘public-private partnership,’ which is then celebrated as a successful model, however, only up to a certain point. Then, private sector principles will have to be invoked in order to restrict the state’s role in the ‘business’ of secondary education and giving subsidy to them. If at all, that has to be done through a contractual arrangement where the schools are to be seen as service providers, the parents and students as consumers of these services and the government as the

facilitator of the market mechanism. Once provision of secondary education is recognised as a private enterprise, the regulatory regime that has to be in place should also be modeled after private sector regulation. The projects thus work toward entirely changing the school state relationship that the country has known for ages.

The knowledge that emanated from MLI supported interventions was poured back not only into education policies and policy thinking, but also into the grand development narratives of the country, like PRSPs, which also had to follow neoliberal principles for education policies to be legitimate in that larger context. A referential web, a closed discursive field, was thus enforced where policies implemented under projects, national education policies and the grand development narratives drew legitimacy from each other.

CHAPTER SEVEN: SUBVENTION AND GOVERNANCE REFORMS ON THE GROUND: RECONSTITUTING IDENTITIES

7.1 INTRODUCTION

While the previous three chapters examined the interplay among various actors in the education governance policy processes and the use of projects as important instruments by the multilateral institutions in securing its discursive dominance in the policy arena, this chapter focuses on the rearticulation of the concept of subvention by these multilateral institutions to implement governance reforms of their choice. It aims to examine how the identities of schools and school communities have been reconstituted discursively and through successive reform measures, using subvention as a lever, attempting to change the school-state relationship gradually and what their implications are for school governance. In particular, the chapter looks at the following issues:

- a. How the neo-liberal rearticulation of subvention gradually changed SMC composition and its leadership in nongovernment secondary schools and the very nature of the school state relationship;
- b. How the knowledge products, supported by the multilateral institutions, instituted a hybrid of bureaucratic control and new managerialism for nongovernment schools reconfiguring roles, responsibilities and identities of various actors on the ground;

The chapter particularly draws upon the Foucauldian concepts of ‘governmentality’ (Gordon, 1991, pp. 1-52) as discussed in Chapter 2 and discursive production of knowledge that constructs problems, advances solutions and legitimises certain practices with truth claim (Peters et al., 2000, pp. 109-132). It also relies on Ball’s concept of ‘new public management’ as a form of new managerialism that is gradually made to blend with pre-existing governance practices within the aura of neoliberal market principles (Ball, 2008, p. 48).

7.2 SMC COMPOSITION: A POLITICAL TRAJECTORY

The composition of the School Management Committees for the nongovernment secondary schools has undergone several changes over the years.¹¹⁸ However, some of the core principles have remained constant. First, the SMC members have to be elected

¹¹⁸ The present composition of SMC is governed by the Bangladesh Gazette Notification of June 8, 2009 named S.R.O No. 99 Act/2009.

directly by eligible voters. The four parent members are to be elected by the parents, two teachers by teachers, one founder member by founder members and one donor are to be elected by donors. Second, the highest local authority has always administered the elections to SMCs. For example, for a school in a district town, it is administered by the Deputy Commissioner and for a school under an upazila, it is administered by the Upazila Nirbahi (Executive) Officer. After many changes in the composition over the years, it has now (i) one Chairperson to be elected within seven days of election of the SMC by the full body of elected members of SMCs either from themselves or from local educationists, social workers, people's representatives or retired first class government officers, (ii) two members from teachers elected by the teachers, (iii) one member from the female teachers elected by the female teachers, (iv) four parent members elected by the parents/guardians (v) one female guardian/parent elected by all parents/guardians (vi) one founder member elected by the founders of the school (vii) one donor member elected by the donors of the school (viii) Head teacher of the school as the ex officio member-secretary of SMC and (ix) one member to be co-opted by the majority of the members of SMC from among local people with interest in education. A teacher cannot be the Chairperson of the SMC of the same school (Government of Bangladesh, 2009b, pp 4259-60).¹¹⁹

While the basic structure of the SMC has remained more or less the same, the leadership of SMC has gone through several changes. During the pre-liberation period, four education boards of the then East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) drew authority from the East Pakistan Ordinance No. XXXIII of 1961 (Government of Pakistan, 1961) to oversee the governance of the nongovernment secondary schools and the school management committees. Generally, the boards were hands off except in the case of administration of secondary school terminal examinations vis-à-vis these schools. In post-liberation Bangladesh (after 1971), the first comprehensive regulations, named "*The Managing Committee of the Recognized Nongovernment Secondary Schools Regulations 1977*" to govern the SMCs were formulated in March 1977, during the time of military rule under Major General Ziaur Rahman as the Chief Martial Law Administrator. In early 1977, the military ruler still did not have its own political processes in place down to the community level to dictate its own preferences in composition of SMCs. Therefore, the military ruler, under the 1977 regulations, bestowed the SMC leadership on to the

¹¹⁹ The same regulations were promulgated for all other Intermediate and Secondary Education Boards of the country on the same day.

bureaucrats on the ground whose allegiance could be relied on. At the same time, any fundamental shift from the community character of the nongovernment schools would have been too conspicuous. The 1977 Regulations, therefore, were a queer mix of all these considerations.

According to the 1977 Regulations, the Deputy Commissioner, or the Sub-divisional Officer or the Circle Officer was supposed to be the Chairman of the committee depending on the location of the school.¹²⁰ At the same time, the regulations also kept a provision for the Education Board to nominate a ‘locally respected person interested in education’ as the Chairperson of the committee. It so happened that in most cases, the Deputy Commissioners and Sub divisional Officer¹²¹ did not have time to chair the school managing committees. Therefore, in many cases, either a person nominated by the Board or the Vice-chairman, elected from among the SMC members, barring the elected teacher representatives, would have run the SMC affairs as Chair. This was, however, not the case with the Circle Officers (COs) at the Thana(area under a police station) level.¹²² COs were generally deeply engaged in all affairs of the Thana and hence also with the affairs of the schools.

SMCs were endowed with the power, *inter alia*, to raise funds; appoint, dismiss or remove teachers with prior approval of the Education Board; approve annual budget including development budget of the school; create various kinds of funds, act as custodian of school property and ensure regular payment of salaries and allowance to the teachers (Government of Bangladesh, 1977; Ministry of Education, 1996, pp. 261-63). The committees were formed with considerable community representation under the 1977 regulations. At least seven out of the 11 members of the committee were to be from the community including a representative from the founders, a representative from the donors and a person interested in education nominated by Divisional Deputy of Director of DSHE. While chairperson was supposed to be a civil servant, there was a provision for the civil servants to nominate someone from the locality as a chairperson. If the chairperson were from the same area, then community representation would come to eight in an 11-member committee. Often many of the teachers were also from the same

¹²⁰ Before 1977, election of SMC Chair was entirely a community affair.

¹²¹ At that Sub-division was an administrative tier next to the districts and the Sub-divisional Officer was the executive chief of that unit. This tier was later abolished in 1984 and all subdivisions were converted into districts.

¹²² Thana was an administrative tier below the subdivision. They were converted into upazilas (sub-districts) in 1984 following the introduction of the *Local Government (Upazila Parishad and Upazila Administration Reorganization) Ordinance* in 1982.

community in the past. Therefore, management of schools was by and large a community affair. And as evident from the 1977 Regulations, the community representatives were bestowed with virtually all power to run the school. They could create and manage funds, hire teachers and dismiss them with prior approval of the Education Board, approve annual budget and manage all physical facilities of the school.

The 1977 Regulations gave expression to how the schools were being run until late 1970s. All decisions regarding the schools were left to the community representatives except for the prior approval needed for suspension and dismissal of teachers. And that too was the decision of the SMC only to be vetted by the Education Boards.¹²³ Without any significant support from elsewhere, the communities were on their own to support well-being of their schools, because not maintaining the school facilities and not having the right teachers would have translated into gradual attrition of the schools depriving their children of schooling opportunities. This was more so as there were limited number of schools in each area and most of the parents in rural community did not have financial capability to send their children to far-off places for secondary education. In summary, the communities had good reasons to remain fully engaged with their schools. They had to own their schools and support it fully in absence of any significant support from elsewhere. SMCs, on behalf of the communities were at the helm of affairs. However, without much oversight from elsewhere, the local elite representing the communities in the SMCs got many management decisions their way which did not always serve the communities' best interest,¹²⁴ a concern that was at the center of many governance policy decisions later by the government and the multilateral institutions.

Community reactions to this arrangement under the 1977 Regulations were mixed. Some welcomed the Government taking active interest in their schools and being involved in the school affairs, others resented this government control, more so as government support to schools (say, in the form of renovation cost or extension of certain facilities) was still sporadic and anecdotal rather than systematic.¹²⁵ By 1981, other significant changes took place in the political arena, as discussed below, having impact on government thinking about school management.

¹²³The Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (BISE). There were four such regional Boards in Bangladesh in 1977, which administered central examinations at the end of Grades 10 and 12. The Boards also administered recognition of schools, which was a prerequisite for getting subvention.

¹²⁴ Interview with the Head Teacher of School 1, May 16, 2010

¹²⁵ Interview with the Head Teacher of School 1, May 16, 2010

As mentioned earlier, the 1977 Regulations were promulgated during the military rule following a *coup d'état* in 1975 and imposition of martial law. All trade unions were banned in 1976.¹²⁶ Not surprisingly, during this period, attempt was made to keep SMC leadership securely rested in the hands of the bureaucrats.¹²⁷ However, the situation began to change with the Chief Martial Law Administrator (CMLA) Ziaur Rahman assuming the presidency and floating his own political party in the same year. The CMLA-turned-politician was desperately looking for popular support from all possible quarters. One way to move forward was to release the public positions from the clutch of the bureaucrats and give it to the people with influence at all levels and thus form a support base.¹²⁸ Although Rahman was killed in an abortive military *coup d'état* on May 30, 1981, his party followed suit. On August 8, 1981, the Ministry of Education issued a circular stating, "For managing committees in schools outside the district town (municipalities), a local educationist, social reformer, social worker, retired senior government official or anyone interested in education can be nominated as Chairman. In special cases, the Board, with approval from the Government, can nominate a locally respected person interested in education as the Chairman of any school under the Board" (Ministry of Education, 1981b). This is clearly an effort to de-bureaucratise SMCs for political support.

A new military ruler, H. M. Ershad, took over in 1982. In keeping with his own vision of governance of the country and his political aspiration, he reorganised the administrative units and introduced an Upazila (subdistrict) system through the introduction of the Local Government (Upazila Parishad and Upazila Administration Reorganisation) Ordinance in 1982 midwifing the birth of a new political figure—the Upazila Chairman—in 1985. The Upazila Chairman was to be elected through direct votes. The system, among other things, was expected to provide a solid edifice of support to the military ruler who floated his own political party in the same year. Researchers have shown that 'the Parishad (*Council*) was a part of Ershad's effort to build a support base in the rural areas.' The system was expected to work as 'neutralising agent against urban based opposition of the government.' 'There were widespread allegations of

¹²⁶ Interview with a teachers' union leader, December 11, 2011

¹²⁷ Interview with the SMC Chair. May 16, 2010. Although, in many cases, the vice-chairmen were allowed to run the affair, the bureaucrats as chairs of SMCs, still could exercise authority when they thought was necessary.

¹²⁸ Interview with a teachers' union leader, December 11, 2011. This has been known tactic from all military rulers beginning from General Ayub Khan in 1958.

political use of the Parishad by the autocratic regime' (As-Saber & Rabbi, 2009, p. 64). Sarker's comprehensive study has shown that 'majority of the elected Parishad Chairman had allegiance to the ruling party' (Sarker, 2003, p. 540). Interestingly, on March 31, 1986, a circular of the Ministry of Education instituted a change to the 1977 Regulations saying that the Upazila Chairmen will be the Chairmen of all schools outside the municipalities of the district towns (Ministry of Education, 1986). As the chief of the upazila administration, the Upazila Chairmen, the newly elected political figures born under the military regime, were to be in charge of public good at the upazila level. This decentralisation of power to the level of upazila chairman and dispensation of public good through the chairmen, most of whom were allegiant to the military regime, were expected to provide political dividend to the military regime. Governance of SMCs was thus integrated into a highly politicised decentralisation scheme.

The Upazila Council was abolished on November 23, 1991 after democracy had been restored and so was the position of the Upazila Chairman. However, Upazila as an administrative unit was maintained. A circular of the Ministry of Education on December 31, 1991 stated that the Upazila Nirbahi (Executive) Officers would officiate the Chairmanship in the ad hoc committees of schools replacing the Upazila Chairman (Ministry of Education, 1991) now to be formed after abolition of the position of the Upazila Chairman.

Curiously, this replacement was meant for interim arrangements of ad hoc committees. It was meant for schools where the regular committees had completed their three-year tenure or had to be abolished for their dysfunctionality, but could not have new elected committees for various reasons, or, had to be reconstituted in absence of the Upazila Chairman. However, for many regular SMCs, chairpersons were from the communities, as postulated in previous circulars. Indeed, a circular from the Ministry of Education on December 22, 1988 with an amendment to the Clause 4(1)(a) (ii) of the 1977 Regulations regarding the position of the Chairman of SMCs reaffirmed that chairmen for schools outside the district headquarters (i.e., at upazila and rural levels) could be nominated from local educationists, social reformers, social workers, retired senior government officials or anyone interested in education (Ministry of Education, 1988). There was a restriction imposed by a circular on February 6, 1989 that one person could not be nominated as chair for more than one SMC (Ministry of Education, 1989a). All these indicate that in many cases, the position of the SMC chair was being held by people from the community not just the government officials or the Upazila

Chairman.¹²⁹ The government had an issue with one person being chairperson for several school committees but the basic fact bears the testimony that people from communities were SMC Chairs even at a time when the bureaucrats were expected to be responsible for SMCs. With the change in the political environment during the democratic era, the restriction of one person being the chair of only one school was relaxed in 1997 for the Members of Parliament who could chair more than one SMC (Ministry of Education, 1997a).¹³⁰

Clearly, the political developments in the country had much to do with the decision about leadership of SMCs in secondary schools. Also, a pattern is observable in this regard. In absence of due political processes, for example, during the period of military rule, the bureaucracy took charge of SMC leadership. However, when the political processes were in place, even if it was introduced by the military rulers aspiring and taking initiative for earning some sort of political legitimacy, there was always a trend to make room for people's representatives to lead the SMCs, although sometimes, particularly during the time of the military rulers turning politicians, such efforts were not always altruistic or guided by innocuous democratic spirit, rather steered by the ulterior motive of garnering social-political support and creating a support base for not-so-legitimate rulers. Sometimes, they wanted to have exclusively their own people to be in charge of schools, sometimes they opened up farther in their effort to create a broader support base. Still, the communities had someone representing their interests at SMC, in most cases as the chair of SMC. The chairman had more accountability than the bureaucrats to the communities. And with most members of SMC from the community virtually taking all decisions about running the school, from recruiting teachers to looking after physical conditions of the schools, they were well-placed to call the school theirs. Also, despite some ups and downs synchronous with the political trajectory of the country, the relationship between the schools and their communities was what could be described as almost 'organic'—the schools growing in the communities from their own initiatives, and being nurtured and looked after by them with due care and affection.

While community ownership of schools was largely unproblematic, there were, however, problems with regard to accountability, which remained undefined in the 1977

¹²⁹ There is no data available from that time as to how many SMC Chairs were from communities and how many from bureaucracy. In absence of data, one can only extrapolate an informed guess from the government circulars and people's memory as to what the situation was.

¹³⁰ Local MPs had always a role in their respective areas, either as chair of SMC or otherwise, also before 1977.

ordinance. The ordinance described the structure, election and procedures related to SMCs rather elaborately. It also listed 16 functions of SMCs (Government of Bangladesh, 1977, pp.14-16),¹³¹ all related to raising and managing funds, appointing, dismissing or removing teachers, administering leave, holidays, free studentship and accommodation of residential students, managing physical facilities of the schools etc. Academic responsibilities and decisions were solely rested in the hands of the head teacher who, in consultation with other teachers would take final decisions. The ordinance did not say much as to who they are answerable to. Among other things, this might have given rise to some management issues. With regard to recruitment of teachers, dispensing favor to those who were allegiant was not unknown. Selection processes were not always transparent. These problems became an issue particularly when the government started providing subvention to nongovernment schools since 1980 and more vigorously they were brought to the fore when the multilateral institutions came into the picture with their ideas of reforming the governance system in secondary education.

MLIs traced back the problems of secondary education governance mainly to two issues—administration of subvention and engagement of politically influential people in SMCs. The MLIs did not invent the issues. They were there and they needed to be addressed through reforms. The question was—how they were to be addressed and through what reforms. In the discourse of governance reforms, the MLIs appeared to have strong views as will be discussed shortly. While I will come back to the issue of political influence of SMCs in the next chapter, first I would like to deal with the gradual construction of subvention as a problem in MLI literature. The next section discusses the itinerary of the concept of subvention and subsequent developments.

7.3 SUBVENTION, NONGOVERNMENT SCHOOLS AND THE STATE

Introduction of subvention (i.e., provision of staff salary to nongovernment school staff) in 1980 was an unobtrusive move at the beginning not disturbing the existing relationship between the schools and the communities. Until the end of the 1980s, an identical performance requirement was used for schools both to get recognition and to receive subvention though it underwent several amendments thereafter. Subvention¹³² came more

¹³¹ Clause 18(1) of the Ordinance.

¹³² After several changes as discussed later, subvention now covers about 97 percent of the operating budget of a typical school in the form of teachers' salaries. The schools also get reconstruction and renovation budget from the government on a need basis.

as a support to the pre-existing schools established by communities to help ease their financial difficulties.¹³³ This also reflected government recognition of the community initiatives to provide secondary education, which would otherwise have been the responsibility of the Government. Certainly, the Government did not have the paraphernalia to dispense this responsibility at the scale required. After introduction of subvention, enrolment in secondary schools rose from 1.97 million in 1981 to 3.15 in 1991 (BANBEIS).¹³⁴ This was the period when subvention was the only added incentive.

Provision of subvention also reflects government's recognition of the importance of the teachers of these nongovernment secondary schools. The Government avowedly wanted to bring conformity between the salaries of the teachers of the government secondary schools and those of the nongovernment secondary schools (Ministry of Education, 1981a) so that they could fully devote their time in the schools without being distracted by looking for other avenues of income. The tonality of government circulars as late as 1994 provide evidence that the whole purpose of according subvention was to relieve the teachers of the anxiety of not being paid or paid enough on time for the important work they do. For example, a circular on November 17, 1994 stated:

The Government is keen to improve the quality of education in the nongovernment educational institutions (schools, colleges and madrassahs) and to dispense the government subvention for the teachers and staff of nongovernment institution at the same time when the teachers and staff of the government institutions receive their salaries. However, it has been observed with great regret that although the teachers and staff of the government institutions receive salaries by the 7th of every month, the teachers and staff of the nongovernment institutions are not getting the government subvention along with their salaries on time... (translation mine) (Ministry of Education, 1994)

Then the circular describes the government decision for 'immediate implementation' of the measures to remove these discrepancies between government and nongovernment institutions. Measures like this did not come only out of benevolence of the government, it was the pragmatism characteristic of democracy, combined with demands from the teachers unions¹³⁵ that inspired the government to address such an issue which involved 98

¹³³Interview with a teachers' union leader, December 11, 2011.

¹³⁴BANBEIS

data.http://www.banbeis.gov.bd/webnew/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=316&Itemid=171; Accessed on October 11, 2012

¹³⁵Interview with Quazi Faruque Ahmed, leader of a teachers' union, December 11, 2011. Mr. Ahmed said that the teachers' unions were always very active. Introduction of subvention catalysed more consolidation of union activities, which is also attested by some observations of

per cent of the entire secondary education system. In any case, the attitude of the government manifested in this official discourse vis-à-vis government subvention was one of support, not of control. And the style the state employed was one of input management.

In 1980, the government subvention for these nongovernment schools came as 50% of the starting salaries of the equivalent government schoolteachers. However, unlike the government schools, these nongovernment schools had their own earnings from tuition fees and other sources. Therefore, it was expected that the schools would pay the rest 50% from their own resources. The primary concern of the Government at that time was to provide as much support to the schools as possible while communities were doing a commendable job in opening schools and running them without much headache for the Government. The Government wanted only to ensure the minimum standard for the schools (see also Ministry of Education, 1997c),¹³⁶ which was built into the recognition process. Subvention was purely a support with no extra strings attached. This support increased over time to 70% of the salaries of the government schoolteachers on July 1, 1986 and to 80% on January 1, 1995, to 90% on July 1, 2000 (Rahman, 2009, p. 390), and finally to 100% on July 1, 2006 (Daily Star, 2006).¹³⁷

However, this increase in subvention catalysed a rapid increase in the number of secondary schools. Many resource-starved communities could now afford to take the risk of opening new schools with the anticipation of government subvention in the future (Ministry of Education, 1989b). While the need for this increase was well-understood by the Ministry of Education and therefore, encouraged, two attendant developments created significant concerns to the Ministry officials. First, in some areas, establishment of schools was also seen as a job creating opportunity. The founders sought to employ people as teachers who they knew, either from their own families or from those who were close to them. Some of the founders did have political connections. There were instances of nepotism and political favouritism in recruitment of teachers. In fact, for some founders, the whole incentive of establishing school was to create employment for the

the World Bank Public Expenditure Reviews, mentioned later. There is no formal system of membership of these teachers' unions and all teachers are free to participate in union activities as they will.

¹³⁶ As discussed in Chapter 4, there were 13 criteria related to physical features of schools, number of teachers and students, facilities available including library and laboratories etc. Based on these criteria schools were recognised.

¹³⁷ It is worth noting that the last three increases were all just before the elections and under tremendous political pressure from the nongovernment secondary school teachers' unions. The support for two major political parties alternating in power was so hung in balance that none of them, while in power, could afford not to yield to this pressure before the elections.

closest relatives like son, daughter, nephew and nieces who had requisite education but had difficulty finding job elsewhere. Sometimes, the patriarch in the family wanted them to stay home, be with the family, look after the family property and at the same time do something good for the village.¹³⁸

Secondly, with the rapid increase in the number of schools, the quality of provision of secondary education could not be maintained at its optimal level. In some areas, it began to deteriorate, particularly in remote and disadvantaged areas where it was difficult to find good teachers¹³⁹ and also in areas where political and other social-familial considerations took precedence over comparable qualifications in recruitment of teachers, particularly, say, in the case where two candidates both met the minimum qualifications. There was hardly any monitoring or other administrative support from the government at this time of rapid expansion. At upazila level, there was no secondary education officer until 1993 to supervise and provide academic or administrative support to the secondary schools. Even after 1993, only in 174 upazilas, roughly about two-fifths of the country, there were upazila secondary education project officers. Clearly, while government encouraged expansion of secondary education, supervision and support from the Government was constrained. Schools also faced practical constraint in arranging training of teachers in the 10 existing Teachers Training Colleges of the country at that time. The system was certainly stretched too thin.

It is evident that subvention scheme was rolled out without much thought about its impact and about its aftermath. It was in the midst of the ensuing chaos that the multilateral institutions appeared in the scenario, rather visibly, with big projects: Secondary Education Development Project from ADB in December 1993 and the Female Secondary School Assistance Project from the World Bank, also in 1993.¹⁴⁰ For them, this was a clear case of domestic policy failure in governance, which needed to be

¹³⁸ For example, the Headmaster of the Brahmanikunda Model Girls' High School at Peergachha, Rangpur, was the nephew of the founder of the school. However, the Headmaster was found to be very sincere, well-qualified and well-respected in the community.

¹³⁹ One school community member expressed concern about a long-standing problem of finding good teachers even at the upazila headquarters. A Professor of the Institute of Educational Research at Dhaka University, in an interview, bemoaned the fact due to the deterioration in quality of tertiary education, good teachers for secondary schools are scarce to come by.

¹⁴⁰ The World Bank and ADB supported many small projects over the previous decades and a large project named General Education Project (GEP) earlier, which covered both primary and secondary education. However, GEP was primarily focused on universal primary education. Targeted projects for secondary education got into a new phase since 1993 with these two major projects.

‘salvaged.’ They came up with the solution, with an entire set of policies that upheld their preferred principles—principles and logic of market, as will be discussed below.

7.3.1 Rearticulation of Subvention in Multilateral Documents

From the beginning, the multilateral institutions criticised the fact that subvention did not have any clear link with school performance. They had been prescribing since 1989 a reconsideration of the subvention system in place for secondary education. A World Bank public expenditure review in 1989 emphasised, ‘The Government needs to ensure that it receives adequate benefits for its substantial contribution to private secondary education.’ As discussed in previous chapter, the MLIs were keen to look upon the nongovernment secondary schools as ‘private’ schools and therefore, expected to operate as private enterprises with minimal support from the government. If the government provides subvention, they suggest, a number of reforms should be in place in the areas like curricula, teacher training and supervision ‘for schools to qualify for the government subvention.’ Furthermore, the review states:

More importantly, the Government needs to take firm line on retaining the subvention for teachers’ salaries at the current rate (despite very strong pressure from the teachers’ associations) and limiting the number of new schools that become eligible for the subvention (World Bank, 1989, p. 207).

‘High wastage rates and expanding government support for private schools’ continued to concern the MLIs during this period (World Bank, 1990, p. 38). The World Bank (WB) concludes that the principal factors behind the expansion in education costs had little to do with the stated objectives of the government, that is, to address inequitable educational access (World Bank, 1990, p. iii), but more to do with ‘demand of well-organized and politically powerful teachers unions’ (World Bank, 1991, p.94).

A number of messages come out very strongly from this series of reviews from the World Bank. First, subvention needs to be contained and number of schools receiving subvention should be limited. Second, the political pressure from teachers unions and others must be withstood. Third, certain measures of reforms should be tied to subvention to cut down ‘wastage’ and ‘improve school quality.’ What they highlight is the ‘failure’ of the present system and what they deploy to the foreground of policy discourse is a relationship based on low-trust between the government and schools, which now needs to be formalised. It appeared that the multilateral institution was successful in eliciting a commitment from the government in its Fourth Five-year Plan (1990-95) to put a cap on

subvention. Also, the government of the time attempted to link subvention to performance for newly established schools through a circular on July 23, 1990 (Ministry of Education, 1990) just around the time when the World Bank was insisting on this linkage. It is unknown if in the midst of on-going political imbroglio to oust the military ruler this circular was ever implemented.

However, the situation changed with the ouster of the military ruler in 1990. The new democratically elected Government could not afford not to listen to popular demands or freeze subvention. On the other hand, the multilateral institutions already set the discursive penchant in their numerous documents on public expenditure. A link between subvention and performance, albeit under-developed, was prescribed. This re-articulation of subvention began to make sense to the government. It took the government another four years to come to terms with this prescription. By then, the multilateral institutions were well-ensconced in secondary education with considerably large projects to steer reforms in the direction of their choice.

The government needed resources for secondary education system which traditionally drew support from fewer development partners than in primary education. Also, the much neglected secondary education system, largely a nongovernment domain, lacked innovation or exposure to alternatives. The projects promised all these possibilities. Therefore, the projects and assistance coming with these projects mattered to the government, so did the policy prescriptions from the multilateral institutions as noticed in the years beginning from mid-1990s. As will be discussed shortly, a fundamental shift began to take place since this time in the school-state relationship as the government proceeded to link subvention with performance opening the door for a number of governance reforms with far reaching consequences for nongovernment secondary schools.

7.3.2 Subvention and Shifting Focus of State Support to Schools

For about 15 years since 1980, the government gaze of the schools was fixed upon the schools' meeting the criteria for recognition allowing a school to provide education and its students to participate in the terminal public examinations. If the schools did not meet the criteria for recognition, their recognition would have been cancelled. Once the recognition was cancelled, of course, the schools would have been disqualified for receiving government subvention. Still, the Government made no serious effort until mid-1990s, to make subvention conditional upon school performance as the whole objective

of subvention was completely different—with government solely focused on the input. Whatever performance was expected of the schools was tied basically to the governance of recognition. Subvention did not have much to do with performance. As stated earlier, this began to change when the MLIs came into the picture, more visibly since 1993.

On October 24, 1995, four circulars were issued, one each for nongovernment secondary schools, colleges, madrassahs and technical institutions, tying the criteria of institutional performance, as measured on the basis of the results of the terminal public examinations at the end of Grade 10¹⁴¹ for each category of institution, with subvention (Ministry of Education, 1995). On the surface, it looked quite innocuous or even prudent. Besides, such an assertion did not make much of a difference in as much as school recognition and subvention were premised upon the same set of criteria. However, at a deeper level, such a move was potent to impel a fundamental shift in the very relations between the government and the communities running the schools and the very identity of the communities as owners of the schools.

Although the earlier insistence of the multilateral institutions and the government's issuance of the circular tying subvention to performance mark the beginning of the shift in 1995, SESIP (1999-2004) was the first project ever to provide a structure of this linkage and put a seal of permanence on the new notion of subvention. The SESIP project document observes, '...the quality of secondary education and the effective use of the educational resources will be improved through performance-related subventions and better accountability, auditing and quality control' (Asian Development Bank, 1999, p. 13). Under this project, the nongovernment schools were to be remolded 'to meet certain identified performance standards to continue to be eligible for subventions' (Asian Development Bank, 1999, p. 13). An audit culture was also being installed at this early stage of changes in the modes of governance through the implementation of the project.

The communities for ages were in a mode of 'giving.' Now they were also made to understand they were 'taking' something in exchange for what they were giving. As one SMC Chair mentioned in an interview, "When the government first introduced subvention, it recognized that the communities providing education through secondary schools were doing the job of the government. But gradually, the perception has changed. The discussions these days is not what about what we give, rather we take from the

¹⁴¹ These public examinations have been there since the colonial period variously named though at different times as Entrance, Matriculation and lately as Secondary School Certificate.

government.”¹⁴² Now the linkage between ‘subvention’ and ‘provision of education’ was to be reconceptualised by the schools as a ‘transaction’ of economic nature. This brought about a clear shift in the way the schools were to be held accountable to the school communities with creation of new identities of the community members now to be seen as ‘consumers of educational services’. This also necessarily separated parents and community members from the day-to-day operations of the schools now to be viewed as ‘service providers.’

State fund, as subvention, was now at the centre to provide the organizing principles for educational ethos. It also came to be used as a lever to steer significant changes including how schools and SMCs should be governed. In the face of these changes, schools and SMCs encountered a momentous challenge. The old schools, many of which were receiving subvention from 1980 could not refuse it as subvention was now also tied with the recognition and the new schools could not survive without subvention and would not get government recognition if they did not fulfill the same set of criteria now also meant for subvention. The SMCs and school communities, now dependent on subvention, could not renounce it as they needed the support badly. Putting ‘money’ at the centre and organizing everything else around this and thus leveraging all educational reforms using money as bait gradually became the rule of the game. Schools were locked into it.

Beginning from January 1, 1995, salary subvention to nongovernment school teachers was increased to 90 percent of the salaries of the government school teachers. The support was increasingly being tied to a number of performance and management measures. These measures, as mentioned in the circulars of the Ministry of Education of October 24, 1995, were to be drawn from eight areas for schools to receive subvention. They were: (i) following criteria for recognition, (ii) appointment of teaching and school staff following set rules, (iii) number of students, (iv) curriculum and co-curricular activities, (v) financial management as demanded by the government, (vi) school results, (vii) school management as prescribed by the education boards, and (viii) adherence to government directives as issued from time to time (Ministry of Education, 1995). As regards school results, the requirement in 1995 was set at 30 percent pass rate in the public examinations like secondary school certificate and higher secondary certificate

¹⁴² Interview with the SMC Chair of School 1, May 17, 2010.

examinations in the early years of receiving subvention. After five years of receiving subvention, the requirement was 50 per cent pass rate.

As for the implications of introducing these criteria, we need to be mindful of the time of introducing these measures. This was an early stage of MLI engagement in secondary education sector. They were still defining the ‘failures’ of the system and were in a mode to control and contain the nongovernment secondary schools. The MLIs wanted the civil servants as part of the government to deal with the issues of failure and to use subvention as the lever for this. During this stage, it was intended that subvention be used to ensure an upward accountability. While accountability of the schools to the community is considered as ‘given,’ subvention was also to be used to ensure that schools were accountable to the government in return for the subvention they received.¹⁴³ Civil servants were to receive all monitoring reports on these criteria through an education management and information system (EMIS)¹⁴⁴ located at the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education.¹⁴⁵ They were the ones, at that early stage, expected to salvage the system from the ‘failures.’

This was sure to engineer a shift in the priority of the schools as to who they should be more accountable to, the government or the school community. Of course, subvention was a big determinant to make school accountability lopsided towards the government. In preparation for this shift, the projects supported by the multilateral institutions trained the SMC members in their new role both as consumers and as accountable to the government, as discussed later. Simultaneously, they created Parent Teachers Associations (PTA) under their projects with two expected effects. First, deploying the concept of ‘parents’ as members of PTAs brings to the fore the notion of parents as ‘consumers,’ buttressed with ‘choice’ and ‘disclosure of information’, discussed later in the chapter, as opposed to the SMCs, which had the dual role both as part of school management and as representatives of community. It was thought, PTAs could also be assigned an identity of MLIs’ choice from the very beginning. Second, they were to be redeemed as what Tikly mentioned as ‘social capital’ (Tikly, 2004, pp. 173-198) for social acceptance of the management reforms they advanced. Tikly deploys the

¹⁴³ Interview with Director, Monitoring and Evaluation Wing, Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education. July 2, 2010

¹⁴⁴ While EMIS existed even before MLIs came into the pictures, all projects and technical assistance supported by MLIs attempted to revamp the system.

¹⁴⁵ Interview with Director, Monitoring and Evaluation Wing, Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education. July 2, 2010

idea to make sense of the recent efforts of the institutions like the World Bank to engineer social acceptance of the neoliberal educational development model through acceptance of some ‘core values.’ In the Bangladesh context, it is expected that the parents—trained, assigned with a new identity—would provide the basis for a social solidarity upholding ‘a liberal notion of the social good based on a common set of values’ (Tickly, 2004, p. 172) advanced by the MLIs.

The criteria and performance measures for the schools to receive subvention, mentioned earlier, sound legitimate and incontrovertible except in certain specific cases. For example, a secondary school will be eligible for subvention in an area with minimum population of 10000 and the number of students should be a minimum of 130 in urban areas and 100 in rural areas. For the girls’ secondary schools, the minimum number of students should be 120 in urban areas and 80 in rural areas. In the urban or peri-urban areas, a school needed to have 0.50 acres of land, which was 0.75 acres for schools in rural areas and only 0.25 acres of land in the metropolitan areas (Ministry of Education, 1997c). Besides, the government had an ordinance to govern SMCs, circulars on teacher appointment and staff rules and a standing instruction to follow all orders and circulars from the government. Most importantly, school performance was important as discussed earlier. Failure to meet these criteria would result in cancellation of subvention. However, this is only one part of the story. Once these measures are accepted, inevitably, many of them are developed into a set of indicators under various projects supported by the MLIs. This initial step towards changing the governance system paves the way for many other changes, particularly in the school state relationship wherein performance indicators are used to redefine identities and roles of various education actors, the topic to which now I turn.

7.4 RECONSTITUTING SCHOOL MANAGEMENT AND IDENTITIES OF SCHOOL COMMUNITIES

An important thing the multilaterals attempted to do in changing governance of the nongovernment secondary schools is to reconstitute the school management structure and, for that matter, the identities of those involved in the governance of the schools to suit the advanced governance structure. The FSSAP supported by the World Bank and the SEDP supported by ADB, the first two major projects, did not bring subvention under their gaze although in parallel track other documents of the multilateral institutions were harping on it. The Secondary Education Sector Development Plan (SES-DP), prepared by ADB,

brought into focus the possible linkage between subvention and school performance. SES-DP observed, ‘Despite the challenge inherent in the concept and implementation of the subvention system, the system of financial support could theoretically be a powerful tool for government to leverage higher performance and school quality’ (Asian Development Bank, 1998, p. 24). Then it suggested, ‘A performance based, transparent management system for secondary schools should be developed, characterised by accountability, effective auditing, and mechanisms for control’ (Asian Development Bank, 1998, p. 67). All projects and all knowledge products supported and prepared by the multilaterals since then focused on subvention as a useful instrument to affect governance reform of their choice and to reconstruct the identities of the school communities.

Temporally, in Bangladesh, the locus of this development left traces of three stages, sometimes blurred and overlapping—bureaucratic control leading to market principles in governance in keeping with neoliberal developments and then on to new managerialism or some early variant of it. However, as Ball put it, the policy technologies used for the purpose of changing governance ‘do not totally displace previous forms of organization or administration or previously important goals and purposes for education’ (Ball, 2008, p. 40).

The first phase was the early stage of MLI engagement from 1993 to roughly until 1999 when the focus was, as discussed earlier, on defining the failures of the system, and putting an effort to streamline and ‘fix’ the subvention system through imposing bureaucratic control on the system. Simultaneously, from 1999 onwards, particularly with ADB’s Secondary Education Sector Improvement Project (SESIP), there was a strong effort to instill market principles in provision and reception of educational services from the nongovernment secondary schools (discussed in Chapter 5 and 6). While it continued under SESIP and its subsequent ADB-assisted project Secondary Education Sector development Project (SESDP) (2006), the projects also deployed to the fore with more prominence the already existing contractual relationship between the schools and the government—a step towards moving on to some sort of a new public management. However, the contour of this management system became sharper, as will be discussed shortly, under the Female Secondary School Assistance Project (FSSAP) II in 2002 and its follow-up project Secondary Education Quality and Access Enhancement Project (SEQAEP) in 2008 both supported by the World Bank.

In SESIP, ADB brought its own notion of the ‘identified performance standards’ to give the governance of subvention, and for that matter, the whole secondary education system, a shape of its choice, modelled after market. Performance was to be judged by the quality of the end-products and adherence to the rules. The project also included ‘features to stimulate good governance... such as strengthening of EMIS’¹⁴⁶ which would allow the government to monitor if the standards were being met. The schools and the local committees needed to have a different kind of involvement ‘in the design of the management system, to ensure commitment to the implementation of the system.’ Clearly, under the project the school management would be ‘designed,’ meaning the management system that was in place would be replaced. The local communities would be involved in the design so that they know what their roles are in this new design and also a commitment would be elicited from them to go by the role. In the process of remolding the whole nongovernment secondary education system under a new form of contractualism, the project creates new identities for all actors, the government as ‘contractor’ who would expect certain results monitored from a distance and the teachers and school communities as contractees who are to deliver the products and the results as expected in exchange for subvention.

This is how SESIP worked, creating a trail for other projects during the following decade, both from ADB and the World Bank—all reinforcing this process of identity formation, and contractual arrangement marking a move towards a new form of managerialism. In some projects, this is quite explicit. The Female Secondary School Assistance Project (FSSAP) II (2002-2008) states in the Project Appraisal Document:

Given the largely private and decentralized¹⁴⁷ nature of secondary education provision, there are significant structural challenges to improving management and accountability at the school level. The proposed FSSAP II project will address these issues in several ways. For example, the *contractual responsibilities* (emphasis mine) of school management and SMCs under the stipend program agreement will be more clearly defined, with performance standards and the penalties associated with failure to maintain standards, both fiscal and academic, clearly stated (World Bank, 2002, p. 8).

¹⁴⁶Education Management Information System.

¹⁴⁷ As has been mentioned earlier, the multilateral institutions are keen to define these nongovernment schools as private schools in order to install private sector norms in administering these schools. They also attempt to define them as ‘decentralised’ using the term rather loosely to highlight the fact that they are located outside the government control with the double meaning of both letting them operate as private sector enterprises without much support and imposing regulatory framework befitting for the private sector.

FSSAP II built a number of measures into its design to ensure greater participation of the school communities so that they ‘take a more active role in ensuring better educational programs, school management and outreach’ (World Bank, 2002, p.11). To democratise this participation further, the project also kept a provision of at least two female members in the SMCs. The functions of the school communities and SMCs needed to be redefined and the communities were ‘provided with relevant information and training to assist them with these functions.’ The project set its target to organise 23,310 training programs for SMCs. The number is quite impressive when juxtaposed against the number of school participating under this project (a little more than 5000 in 2002). In addition to the girls’ stipend program, the project introduced a number of other incentives such as incentives awards for schools’ performance, incentive awards for student achievement etc. On the one hand, FSSAPII was bringing in a number of incentives and redefining roles and responsibilities of the school communities through intensive and extensive training, workshops and orientation programs. On the other, on a separate track, a development policy lending instrument of the World Bank, a series of education sector adjustment/developments credits, was prodding the system towards delinking subvention from teachers’ salaries and towards a grants based financing. Grants were to be based on performance, as discussed in Chapter 5

The incentive culture created by FSSAP II was further strengthened by the Secondary Education Quality and Access Enhancement Project (SEQAEP), successor of FSSAP II, which added a teacher performance award to the already existing performance awards for schools and students. It further streamlined the incentives for student awards for class performance and completion of the school certificate examinations. Teachers’ award was tied to performance of the whole class in the school terminal examinations (World Bank, 2008b, pp. 40-49). An elaborate system was put in place with the establishment of a Monitoring and Evaluation Wing (MEW), different from EMIS, within the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education (DSHE) to collect data on schools and to publicise them, particularly for the use of the school communities and the bureaucrats in the project office and DSHE. Awards were to be given to the well-performing schools in a ceremony to be organised at the upazila level. This would give visibility to the award winning schools infusing both competition among the schools in the upazila and encouraging choice among the *abhibhabaks* (parents) about which school they should send their children to. All MLI assisted projects, particularly since the policy

lending of the World Bank beginning from 2004, tried to promote disclosure of information about school performance leading to choice and competition.

SEQAEP also introduced 'social auditing' and 'school score card system', buttressed by an awareness campaign through a hired communication consultancy firm, furthering competition and choice and taking performance monitoring of the schools by the *abhibhabaks* to the next step. The score-cards were to be publicly displayed at the district and upazila education offices and at the schools. The project also resurrected the idea of establishing Parent Teachers Association (PTA) in every SEQAEP supported school, something the World Bank has been trying to establish and mainstream since the beginning of FSSAP in 1993, but met with limited success so far. The project attempted to engage the PTAs with responsibilities, among others, to (i) conduct social audit at least once a year including matters like student access, dropout rate, quality of education and financial performance to be submitted to SMC and higher authorities, and (ii) ensure preparation of school report card for five years with a year to year comparison (World Bank, 2010, p. 3).

One would notice a remarkable shift in the PTA responsibilities from the time of FSSAPII to that of SEQAEP. Under FSSAP II, PTA responsibilities were more general in nature supporting the school with social issues, physical facilities, financial support to poorer students, deferred marriage of the girl students, etc., but none related to performance monitoring of schools (Madhyamik of Uchcho Shikhsha Adhidaptar (Female Secondary School Assistance Project II), 2006, pp. 38-39). SEQAEP took it one step further towards performance monitoring assigning a new role and identity to PTA members. Along with SMC training, all PTAs in nearly 7000 schools under SEQAEP underwent training on their identity as PTA members, their roles and responsibilities. Evidently, the project was gradually trying to anchor the system in a culture of performance measures, incentives, competition among schools and choice for parents and to reorient the thinking of the school communities about the schools along this line. Reorientation of the schools, teachers and the schools management committees to enhance their understanding of this governance culture were to be brought into effect by extensive training programs under SESIP, Secondary Education Sector Development Project (SESDP) and Teacher Quality Improvement in Secondary Education Project (TQISEP) supported by ADB and Female Secondary School Assistance Project II (FSSAPII) and Secondary Education Quality and Access Enhancement Project

(SEQAEP) supported by the World Bank.¹⁴⁸ Such training programs, among other things, attempt to reshape their identities as school communities with a new set of roles and responsibilities replacing the previous ones, as will be discussed shortly, more as dispassionate number crunchers largely depleted of the emotional content of their relationship with the schools.

7.4.1 Training Manuals for SMCs

The projects supported both by ADB and the World Bank prepared extensive training manuals for SMCs and head teachers. A critical examination of these manuals would be important in understanding the discursive propensities as to how the roles are being redefined and identities of SMCs and SMC members are reconstituted to render them administrable and monitored under a new form of managerialism. As an example, a closer look into the training manual on secondary school management and accountability produced under FSSAPII is necessary.

From the preface to the manual written by the Project Director of FSSAPII it is learned that the manual has been prepared with technical assistance from four consulting firms—three international and one national, all employed by the project—conducting a number of workshops at divisional and national level. These workshops involve stakeholders both at national and upazila levels. Also evident from the preface is that the manual has not gone beyond the level of the project for its approval, otherwise, as is the practice, it would have been mentioned. At the project level, any discussion between the multilateral institutions, who bring in their international expertise, and the project officials is often marked with an uneven distribution of knowledge and discursive power to the advantage of the multilateral institutions as discussed in chapter 5. Therefore, what transpires in the manual is likely to be more a reflection of the thinking of the multilateral institution in question than otherwise.

Training manuals are often claimed to have been prepared on the basis of pre-testing the content and involvement of real stakeholders in some preparatory workshops. Could the findings from the workshops have an effect on the content of the training manual for SMCs? A middle-aged male head teacher from an upazila in Mymensingh, who participated in many such workshops, had this to say on this question:

¹⁴⁸ The role and size of the projects and their discursive dominance have been discussed in Chapter 5.

I have attended many workshops. Those who organize them come with a list of things to discuss. In most cases, I did not have any prior knowledge of the details of what were to be discussed. Sometimes the experts conducting the workshops give us a list of things and ask us to see if we agree with them. I find it difficult not to agree, because they are experts, I am not. Sometimes, they ask open questions. I say something, rather hesitantly, which even to me sounds banal. The person conducting the workshop goes around the room, collects opinion also from others and then he summarizes it and writes it on the flip chart. What he writes looks much better, much more polished. I can't but agree.¹⁴⁹

The structure of discussions in such workshops often leads to predetermined outcomes as desired by those who organize them. The content and the questions to be asked are often pre-decided to elicit desired responses. Besides, there is a visibly uneven distribution of power in that discursive environment between the workshop facilitator, who happens to be an expert and those from the remote schools who at the end are supposed to get support from the projects. Much of the deliberations from such workshops are predictable and mostly providing legitimation to the content already decided.

More recently, a similar situation was observed in four workshops. I had the opportunity to attend these workshops in 2011 and 2012—two in Dhaka, one in Comilla and one in Mymensingh—under the Secondary Education Quality and Access Enhancement Project (SEQAEP). The training manual from FSSAP II was further revised under this project. Two workshops involved actual SMC members basically to field test the manual the project consultants had prepared and two for trainers of SMC training as to how the training should be imparted. The workshop contents remained exactly the same after the workshops. Even the format and order of the presentations also remained the same. Much of this was also ordained by the rigidity of the structure of the projects, where everything was more or less predetermined in terms of areas to be covered, objectives to be achieved, and outcomes expected in each area down to the level of monitoring indicators through which all these were to be measured. These were generally put down in the Project Implementation Manual. The outcomes of the workshops, meant for preparation of the manual, were then tailored to be in sync with pre-decided objectives, expected outcomes and the monitoring indicators. The manual produced following this process was then used for country-wide training of SMC members.

Selective presentation of SMC Regulations and its amendments to fit the desired goal of the MLIs is also a part of the strategy. A case in point is again the way the FSSAP

¹⁴⁹ Focus group discussion with Head Teachers May 16, 2010

II training manual used the SMC regulations. As discussed earlier in the chapter, the SMC Regulations of 1977 underwent several amendments over the past three decades gradually making room for the people's representatives as chairs for SMCs. However, the manual reproduced the original SMC Regulations of 1977 and the amendment of June 24, 2004, although at the time of preparing and using this manual the implementation of this amendment was stalled because of a writ petition against it.

The year 2004 represents in many ways the pinnacle of project intervention for the World Bank and ADB in secondary education. The World Bank moved into the second phase of Female Secondary School Assistance Project after spectacular success of the first phase in enhancing girls' enrolment (discussed in Chapter 5). In 2004, it started a policy lending series worth \$300 million in credit to overhaul secondary education governance. This series came in concert with on-going SESIP and a new project for teacher quality improvement supported by ADB. By then, ADB also moved into the preparation of another project SESDP. In short, the presence of multilateral institutions in secondary education was overwhelming in 2004. Both the policy lending series of the World Bank and SESIP from ADB were pushing for SMC reforms, which resulted in the amendment of 2004 that tried to bar the presence of political representatives on SMCs. The implementation of this amendment was immediately halted due to a writ petition. Still, the training manual, published in 2006, two years after the writ petition and the unresolved status of the amendment, used this amendment for training of the SMCs with a footnote saying that SMC composition following this amendment has been stayed because of a writ petition (FSSAPII, 2006, pp. 14, 22-23). A training that would also discuss composition of SMCs used a version of regulation which was meant to exclude political representation in SMCs and which was certainly not to be used. The MLI irritation about presence of politicians in SMCs has been explicit in many of their documents.

The SMC Training manual of FSSAP II describes the roles and responsibilities of SMCs from the 1977 Regulations and their subsequent amendments. Then it goes on to expand these roles and responsibilities into 30 clauses, against the original 16 clauses. These expanded roles and responsibilities include, among other things, a major emphasis on strictly following the 'acts, regulations and circulars' issued by the government and submitting various reports to the education authorities as desired by them. The Manual describes various reports that would be expected from the school management committees and monitoring indicators for various roles and responsibilities. Additionally,

the Manual prescribes 15 indicators and each indicator is again divided into 4/5 sub-indicators with a score for each sub-indicator. The important indicators were (i) functioning of the SMCs in terms of regular meetings, compliance with government orders and relationship with the institution (e.g., scores for required number of meetings held); (ii) qualifications of the Head Teacher with various scores for various qualifications; (iii) results of the public examinations and class tests (e.g., score for 80% pass rate higher than that for 60% pass rate); (iv) teacher-student ratio (1:40 being considered most desired with the highest score of 5); (v) qualifications of teachers; (vi) community participation; (vii) record keeping; (viii) student attendance etc. School performance was to be graded against an aggregate score of 100. SMCs are expected to quantify the performance of the schools against these indicators and sub-indicators on a scale of 1 to 100.

This set of indicators and sub-indicators do not come from any government circulars or regulations. Its origin is in the project. In order to engage the SMC members in the new managerial mode, they are inducted into the newly introduced management values through extensive training. They are also given the tools for planning in keeping with the monitoring indicators that attempt to reconstitute them both as actors to achieve these indicators and as 'subjects under gaze' for the desired performance. SMC members learned, as Foucault said, 'how to be ruled, how strictly, by whom, to what end, by what methods, etc' (Burchell et al., 1991, p. 88). Success of this new managerial mode for the SMCs resides in successfully instilling the values and practices through training and reconstituting them to be willing to be ruled according to the values and parameters set for them.

At a number of places in the manual, it is mentioned that not conforming to the requirements might lead to legal actions against the SMCs. Tying these roles and responsibilities with monitoring indicators also subject the SMCs to surveillance, to be observed continually for the performance indicators. The mechanisms of self-reporting put in place, and occasional inspection from education authorities, either from the education boards or from zonal or local education offices would ensure conformity to rules, regulations and requirements.

On the other hand, unlike in the past, the activities of SMCs are now more elaborately described and converted into administrable categories against a detailed set of disaggregated indicators drawing them more visibly into a juridical space with punitive measures more pronounced than before. Here, the numbers are replacing the emotional

content of the school-community interface of the past. The SMC members are being trained to measure performance of schools rather dispassionately by crunching numbers. In combination, the elaborate procedures they are expected to follow and the apprehension of legal actions for any deviation and real threat of stopping subvention would make the SMCs accountable both upward, and through performance monitoring of schools and making the information public, to the communities, and the *abhibhabaks*, in other words, the consumers. The SMCs, once trained and fully absorbed into their new identity, are also expected to enjoy a certain level of autonomy, the space being defined by the indicators they are expected to follow and conform to. They are simultaneously controlled and given autonomy to function within the defined parameters. A new mode of management comes into existence better described by Du Gay as ‘controlled decontrol’ (quoted in Ball, 1998).

SMC members now acquire an identity as contractees, bound by their contract with the Government, to act in a particular way in running the schools, as prescribed by these projects. The system involves both input-based bureaucratic surveillance mostly from a distance and an output based new management with redefined role of SMCs and PTAs in performance monitoring and reporting both to government and to communities. One aspect of it is guided by the incentive of subvention from the government and the other aspect of it is related to survival of the school amidst competition and choice of consumers of education in an environment where school information is made public.

Obviously this creates a tension. The upward accountability, geared toward meeting the demands of the education authorities, is reported to be one of the reasons behind a growing indifference to the school communities the SMCs are expected to represent and serve.¹⁵⁰ The organic linkage that was there between the communities and their schools thus gets weaker, gradually, and unceremoniously. The Joint Editor of the Prothom Alo, the leading Bangla newspaper of the country, said in an education policy round table:

We heard from our parents and grandparents that social awareness played an important role. No one ever thought that the government would provide the funds ... rather the people themselves got together and decided by themselves to run their own school. When the bureaucratic way was introduced, the community initiatives disappeared (The Daily Star, 2007).

¹⁵⁰Opinion of a participant in a focus group discussion with SMC members.

Also, this apathy is self-damaging in a culture where the system is also promoting competition and choice. The schools need to be visible as performing schools both to get incentives of different kinds from the government and the projects and at the same time, need to attract parents/consumers to keep the rationale of their existence alive.

7.4.2 Studies on SMC under Projects: Knowledge to Support New Identities

The constitution of new identities for the schools and school communities, introduced through various MLI assisted projects, needed to be buttressed by yet another set of knowledge products to mainstream these ideas into the official educational development discourses. Funds at the disposal of the projects were used for the studies on SMCs that informed both the official discourses and provided the legitimating edifice for the manuals used for SMC training and expanding the ideas beyond what were laid out in the government ordinances.

As mentioned in Chapter 5, such studies would always have some policy underpinnings. For any study to be conducted under a project, the terms of reference for the consultants for the study would have to be cleared by the multilateral institutions. Often these institutions prepare the terms, although officially they are supposed to come from the project office. Then, selection of consultants also needs to be vetted by these institutions. The ADB often provides separate technical assistance for such studies in which case they have a much greater voice in preparing the Terms of Reference (ToRs) and selection of consultants. Consultants are often known to be ADB consultants. Against this backdrop, this section investigates two intensive studies on SMCs conducted by consultants under two projects—SESIP supported by ADB and SEQAEP supported by the World Bank to provide further insights into the identities being offered to the schools and school communities. The first study report was published in 2004 and the second one in 2011.¹⁵¹ Both of these reports described the state of SMCs in nongovernment secondary schools in Bangladesh, problems with the functioning of the SMCs and recommendations to make them effective.

The common recommendations that emerge from these two studies are as follows:

¹⁵¹ The status of such studies is queer. Often they are consultants' reports, as is the case here, published as a draft by the projects, and for that matter, by the government, but often funded by the multilaterals. The label 'draft' allow them to sit somewhere just on the brink of 'officialness,' but they are still not completely official. Yet they are the most important raw materials, leaping themselves at the first opportune moment to a "position of rationale," for the next level of official policy discourse.

- Changing the SMC regulations;
- Depoliticisation of SMCs
- Extensive training of SMC Chairs and member; and
- Making a particular level of education mandatory for SMC members;

One objective of the study under SESIP was to ‘recommend key changes to MOE/BISE¹⁵² regulations concerning the composition and responsibilities of SMCs’ (Government of Bangladesh, 2004, p. 2). While commenting on the possible expansion of the project under a new phase, the study said, “...the success of the country-wide expansion will be further subject to rationalizing and reforming the SMC Regulation objectively, including authorisation and control, freeing SMC from political entanglements... and finally professionalizing the SMCs through training by NAEM¹⁵³ and its in-service training network” (Government of Bangladesh, 2004, pp. 10-26). Such a statement merits further examination.

In 2004, SESIP was nearing its completion and ADB was embarking on preparation of SESIP II, later to be named as Secondary Education Sector Development Program (SESDP), which was to be a bigger intervention as a program rather than as a project. This study was geared more toward setting the ground and steering the government towards certain policy decisions with regard to SMCs before the next intervention. The study makes a prophecy that the follow-up program was not to be successful unless SMC regulations were ‘reformed’ and ‘rationalized’.¹⁵⁴ The study recommends ‘rationalizing’ and ‘reforming’ SMCs in terms of ‘authorization and control’, ‘freeing SMC from politics’ and ‘professionalizing the SMCs through training.’ Each of the expressions is loaded and fraught with many possibilities of interpretation. Then, numerous other documents prepared by the multilateral institutions in relation to the projects would come in aid to interpreting these expressions. However, the focus here is on how the SMCs are professionalised anew with identities and roles on offer for them, what indicators are in place for them to measure their own performance and that of their schools, and how the studies attempted to rationalise these new roles and identities.

¹⁵² BISE is Board of Secondary and Intermediate Education.

¹⁵³ National Academy for Education Management.

¹⁵⁴ This study predates the indicator-based monitoring under FSSAP II after 2006. Besides, upazilas under SESIP operation are different from FSSAP II operation areas.

One of the major emphases of SESIP and its follow-up projects, as it transpires from this study, was to institute “School Performance Based Management System (SPBMS)” since November 2003 in place of the present management practices and scale it up to the whole country. The objectives of SPBMS were very clear. It was expected eventually to be “a basis for payment of salary subvention to all non-government schools. Instead of paying salary subvention to all non-government schools at a fixed rate (90%),¹⁵⁵ it would be possible to rationalise the subvention rate based on the performance of schools. This could be done by linking SPBMS with DSHE’s EMIS” (Government of Bangladesh, 2004, pp. 1-8). SPBMS, among other things, focused on seven performance indicators:

(1) Leadership of Head Teacher, (2) Performance of School Management Committee (SMC), (3) Teacher Professionalism and Motivation, (4) Student Attendance, Dropout and Completion, (5) Student performance (pass rate at SSC and internal assessment and examinations at classes 6-9, class/grade levels obtained by proportions of students at SSC, proportion of enrolled students who are preset for SSC, (6) Co-curricular programs, (7) Guardian-Teacher Relations (Government of Bangladesh, 2004, pp. 1-8).

With some variations to make these indicators more quantifiable, we notice that this same set of indicators has also been worked out into detailed subset of indicators and then into numerical scores for each of these indicators under FSSAP II training manual for SMCs. At this early stage of moving towards a new management, the MLIs and the government still preferred considerable control. In order to monitor the performance of the schools and the SMCs, the study recommended revamping the surveillance system through enhancing the capacity of the government’s regimes of inspection—the directorate, the education boards and the field offices and the monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. A new Monitoring and Evaluation Wing (MEW) was established at DSHE again under project support. All field officers were brought under revenue budget of the government.

At the rhetorical foreground, the word ‘decentralisation’ also makes its appearance off and on, carefully maneuvered with considerable amount of ambiguity as to what it means, because of MLIs’ distrust to the political voice of the SMCs. Both the ADB assisted projects and World Bank assisted projects attempt to put in place a layer of administration at district and upazila levels in the name of decentralisation, slicing some authority away from the central bodies like the Ministry of Education, Directorate of Secondary and Higher education and the Education Boards, and at the same time

¹⁵⁵ The proportion of subvention was later raised to 100%.

snatching away some authorities traditionally enjoyed by the communities through SMCs (e.g., full responsibility of recruiting teachers for their schools) as discussed in Chapter 5. This was in 2004 when bureaucratic authority was still quite dominant and MLIs were still not sure about silencing the political voice of SMCs.

Communities and SMCs are considered ‘empowered’ when they are given the tools for Annual School Development Plan,¹⁵⁶ when they are ‘trained’ to know what they would monitor, what they would be monitored against and how they would report their performance. The authorizing environment for schools, while posited to be liberating, is ensnared into a number of bindings, a panoptic gaze is just everywhere either through the monitoring system in place or through the system of self-reporting. This gaze would be further enhanced, also at the community level, when school performance and school score-cards are made public and juxtaposed against performances of other schools. At the core of all this is a ‘distrust,’ the hidden insignia of everything that follows market principles and the new managerialism that follows.

For all practical purposes, SPBMS led the system one more step towards new managerialism, with all its attributes in place, e.g., surveillance, monitoring, self-reporting, performance contract, penal measures and reconstituted identities to be governed from a distance under a mechanism that can be described as ‘controlled decontrol’ (Du Gay, quoted in Ball, 1998) First piloted in 40 schools in four upazilas under SESIP beginning from 2003, it was to be scaled up to the whole country under subsequent project interventions within a period of 10-15 years. It is being implemented under the second phase of SESIP named Secondary Education Sector Development Program, again assisted by ADB.

7.5 CONCLUSION

The School Management Committees of the nongovernment secondary schools in Bangladesh have metamorphosed into what they are today through a complex process crisscrossing both with internal political developments of the country and the governance reform initiatives from the multilateral institutions through various educational development projects. The two trends had two different incentives: one emanating out of political developments and consequently based on consideration of political gains and the other from the multilateral institutions, which in conjunction with the bureaucratic part of

¹⁵⁶ As an instrument for SPBMS, SESIP introduced Annual School Development Plan (ASDP), which is to formulated based on “prescribed indicators” to be monitored and reported about.

the government, attempted to install a particular structure of governance. The structure has been a hybrid of input based bureaucratic management still guided by market principles and an output and performance based new managerialism, with the aim of modelling the secondary education system after private sector enterprises in keeping with their neoliberal development principles. Increasingly, the governance system moved towards a mechanism to bring to the fore the competition among schools and consumer choice premised upon public knowledge of school performance.

The implication of such a construction of the educational system is quite significant. In the process, new identities were created for every element in the educational system. Perceptions of who does what for whom are all 'reoriented' and are strenuously made to meet the market principles. Accountabilities and measures to monitor accountabilities of all those in the production line—the teacher, the communities and the school management committees were reoriented. Because of the vastness of the production process spread all over the country, the government simply cannot supervise the whole production process, despite its reticulate presence down to the upazila level. Therefore, management system was gradually reorganised with new role for school communities.

In the whole process, the school communities were at a receiving end, obligated to follow the directives from the government and in turn from the multilateral institutions advanced through the government, as they became increasingly dependent on subvention from the government. Under the new managerial mode instituted through various projects, the identities of the school communities and the school management committees, the previous owners of the schools, were reconstituted as 'contractees' to perform against certain monitoring indicators. Under the projects, the SMCs are extensively trained both as actors who are to achieve the indicators and subjects willing to be ruled according to the new managerial logic.

The chapter shows that multilateral institutions reconstruct the notion of subvention that suits its own purpose of advancing a particular governance reform. Such a move is buttressed and legitimised by its discursive dominance created through a plethora of knowledge products, as discussed in the previous two chapters. The managerial reforms are generally premised upon real issues related to subvention. The discursive products of the multilateral institutions pick up these issues and attempt to respond to the real concerns of the people. However, they rearticulate these real concerns regarding subvention into their own preferred political discourses that normalise the whole

assemblage of their preferred managerial mode of governance in keeping with neoliberal market principles and make sense of the ‘past failures’ in a preferred way.

While such narratives remold the discursive regime, it also signifies an attempt at pre-emptive discursive closure to any contention. This attempted silencing itself is a political move although, on the surface, it claims to depoliticise development discourse. It is important to understand that this attempted depoliticisation is a preferred re-articulation of the problems by the MLIs to advance certain preferred reforms of their choice. Understanding this would be a right step to disentangle the discursive construct of the multilaterals, which, with due rigor, can be re-sutured bringing forward alternative solutions to the problems other than those advanced by MLIs. The real concerns of the people still need to be rearticulated back into a different set of political discourses that might serve their concerns better in the long run. Often such re-articulation begins with non-acceptance of what is offered, sometimes even with resistance. The next chapter deals with these issues.

CHAPTER EIGHT: DILEMMAS, RESISTANCE AND RE-ARTICULATION OF IDENTITIES

8.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous three chapters discussed how the multilaterals dominated the discursive space of education policies normalizing a particular kind of knowledge largely in keeping with neoliberal notions of educational governance, how they put such policies into action through various projects and in so doing reconstituted the identities of schools and school communities to bring them under a preferred mode of governance gaze. The previous chapters also discussed how various notions and categories had been created or redefined and deployed to the foreground of educational policy discourse and used to legitimize a particular model of education governance in conformity with market principles. While at the national policy level, such discursive formation claims victory, as many of the prescriptions in this regard were accepted at the national level, the other part of the story is equally illuminating, if not more—the story of tactics of resistance, subversion, deferment, policy double-speak and ongoing undercurrent of counter-discourse constantly interrogating the policy discourse imposed from the top.

The tactics are employed both to withstand certain reforms and to deny or re-articulate the identities offered to the actors through such attempted reforms. Here I draw on Pedroni's notion of a 'momentary strategy,' a tactical choice to assert communities' agency although they accept project support coming from the MLIs. Such a move partly owes to the communities' understanding of the possibility of re-articulation of their educational concerns within the given parameters of educational reforms—a phenomenon that has significant relevance to the Bangladesh context. I also draw upon Steiner-Khamsi's notion of 'policy bilingualism' particularly from various wings of the government to tackle conflicting views from various actors within the policy arena. The present chapter examines various tactics of resistance, subversion, deferment and counter-discourse from various actors who have stake in education governance. In particular, the chapter investigates:

- (i) The discursive interplay of various actors with MLIs in the governance policy arena, particularly, on issues marked with contention and various tactics of resistance used by the actors at the national policy formulation and decision level;

- (ii) Responses from the school communities to the identities on offer and creative re-articulation of the identity discourse interrogating various governance policy reforms and
- (iii) School communities' tactics in building political alliance to advance their cause.

The issues need to be understood against the backdrop of the prevalent culture of resistance to various governance initiatives in education sector in the past decades. The secondary education scenario has ample evidence of a dominant policy discourse being directly confronted and defeated by popular resistance or tactical moves. The uni-track system, proposed by the BNP government in 2006, could not be introduced. Local resistance forced the government to significantly modify the School Based Assessment, proposed under SESIP after 1999, to appreciate the realities of the schools, only in internal examinations of the schools not in public examinations as proposed in SESIP.

Successive attempts to impose bureaucratic control over school management committees (SMC) have failed. The attempt to form District and Upazila Education Committees in 2004, which would have taken away some important roles of SMCs, was stayed by a court order after a writ petition. Putting a layer of bureaucracy atop SMCs to curb their power through changing SMC regulations in 2008 did not see much support and hence was dropped in the new regulations in 2009. These examples signify the presence of a culture of resistance. This chapter draws, for the most part of it, from the interviews including key informant interviews, focus group discussions, and unobtrusive observations from various workshops, and training events that the researcher attended. The participants and events have been mentioned earlier in Table 2 (Chapter 3).

Various actors are endowed with varying levels of power in the discursive economy vis-à-vis the multilateral institutions. Some of the actors, e.g., politicians and civil servants, have direct contact with MLIs who negotiate reforms and policies to be borrowed on behalf of the country. Teachers' union members get to meet and discuss policy matters with MLIs 'by invitation only.' Schools and school communities are recipients of the results of actions taken by the national and multinational policy actors. However, each of these other actors also has a voice at one or other node of the policy process, and on the governance system put in place. Together they form the 'political reality' in which policies and governance systems are embedded or are to be embedded. Resistance to some reforms comes from different levels and the strategies of resistance are also different, which need to be understood in the larger context of resistance,

interface between actors that triggers or subdues resistance, and the dynamics of the changing interface among the actors over time and with changes in circumstances. As we will discuss in the subsequent sections, these actors were not in unison with each other on all reform issues and did not have a common stance against the multilaterals. While some actors, particularly the bureaucrats, tactically opposed some reform initiatives coming from the multilaterals, they sided with the multilaterals on other initiatives against some of the local actors, e.g., the politicians and the school communities with political voice.

The trajectory of governance policy thus features considerable incertitude. Iterations and actions are not always mutually consistent. Sometimes, they are not consistent with what is purportedly believed. What is publicly pronounced is not always put on paper and what is put on paper is not always implemented (Steiner-Khamsi & Stolpe, 2006, p. 147). At each level of this trajectory, the actions are guided by pragmatism, perception of realities and political consideration from the subject position of the actors making the cobweb of policy reforms immensely complex and intriguing. Each action, from any of these actors, is a part of a tactic to deal with the situation at hand. The following section examines these varied responses from various actors at policy formulation and policy decision level, e.g., the politicians, civil servants and the teachers' unions. The examples are drawn from reforms related to subvention and move towards grants-based financing premised upon a new performance based management system.

8.2 POLITICIANS, POLICY REALITIES AND POLICY BILINGUALISM

The government response to MLI preferred policies in education has gone through a process of evolution. The relative power at the disposal of each of these two actors in the terrain of policy discourse has not remained static. For a long time since independence, and throughout the 1970s and 1980s, Bangladesh, as a state, remained considerably gullible to the policy suggestions of the multilateral institutions, partly because of the state's own dependence on financial support from these institutions, partly because of the international scenario as it existed at that time when such institutions were more assertive.¹⁵⁷

Bangladesh was a major recipient of development aid, loan and credit throughout the 1970s and 1980s with much of its development budget being financed by external resources. Most of it came in the form of food and commodity aid. However, the situation

¹⁵⁷ Interview with a Former Additional Secretary, Ministry of Education, July 26, 2011

has changed considerably since the early 1990s. By 2002, aid, loans and credit accounted only for 25 percent of development budget that too mostly in the real sectors. Economy has grown steadily from 4.2 percent per annum in 1975-1980 (Green & Curtis, 2005) to 6.32 percent per year in 2010-11 (Govt. of Bangladesh, 2012, p. 1). Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) accounted for 7.2% of GDP in the 1970s (Green & Curtis, 2005). Now (2012 estimate) the \$122.7 billion economy (Index, 2013) receives about \$2.78 billion as foreign aid (the highest amount received in 2013),¹⁵⁸—only about 2.2% of GDP. This is, however, a reflection more of the growth of overall economy than a fall in gross assistance. A growing economy accords more power to the government negotiating with the donors and international financial institutions.

The point is—Bangladesh’s dependence on ODA has steadily declined over the past two decades. While still not completely independent, the country can finance much of its development activities from its own resources. Some economists, belonging to think-tanks like Bangladesh Economic Association and Centre for Policy Dialogue argued that if the leakage from corruption could be stopped, the country would not need any external development assistance. While the dependence is still there for large investment projects, the gradual decline in dependence has its effect upon the national psyche, the state’s dealings with the multilateral institutions, its self-esteem and its assertiveness in policy dialogue only if adequately buttressed by knowledge and capacity of those who deal with the multilaterals. Despite deficiencies in knowledge and capacity, the relationship has still undergone metamorphosis over the past decades. Considerable change in this relationship has taken place during the period under the present study. The trajectory of the government response to the MLI demands for governance reforms in secondary education between 1993 and 2010 itself is an indicator of this change.

On the other side of the spectrum, the multilaterals also have gone through considerable changes, partly due to changes in global scenario and consequent changes in the demand for aid, and partly because of their internal legitimation crisis. Many countries refused to take financial support from the multilaterals, many others decided to be highly selective as to what they wanted to take from these institutions. The World Bank underwent serious legitimation crisis in 1999-2000 around the time when the Meltzer Commission Report (2000) recommended radical downsizing of both the World

¹⁵⁸ bdnews24.com (2013), ‘Bangladesh gets a record \$2.78 bln foreign aid,’ August 1, 2013. Retrieved from <http://bdnews24.com/economy/2013/08/01/bangladesh-gets-a-record-2.78-bln-foreign-aid> (on January 8, 2014)

Bank and IMF on the ground of legitimacy of many of its programs (Meltzer, 2000). This was, however, strongly opposed by the US Treasury Secretary Larry Summers saying rather blatantly that the reforms would “weaken the IMF, the World Bank and other regional development banks to the point where vital US interests would be compromised because of the reduction in their capacity to respond effectively to promote *market-oriented development in the world* (emphasis added)”(Bullard, 2000). Around the same time, Ravi Kanbur, principal author of the World Development Report 2000 and the Chief Economist of the World Bank Joseph Stiglitz resigned from the Bank critiquing the way the Bank operated (Bullard, 2000). The business was at stake raising questions about the necessity of existence of the Bretton Woods institutions under the changed circumstances. This also had bearing upon the relations with the states where these institutions worked and in the past dictated much of their policy directions.

Bangladesh also experienced similar changes. While the overpowering discursive dominance of the MLIs due to their capacity to produce ‘knowledge’ is more pronounced at policy making level, government response to execution of such policies is much more nuanced. The government, and for that matter the state, can now exercise much more power at its disposal vis-à-vis the multilateral institutions, to be eclectic as to which advice to accept for execution, which conditions to conform to and which ones to disregard. Such decisions are influenced by a combination of knowledge and experience at its disposal on a particular policy issue and its political underpinnings, understanding of its own negotiating power in the given circumstances and the ideological position of the government of the day. Multiple tactics come into play in such responses. A Member of Parliament, who also happens to be on the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Education, said,

There was a time when the World Bank used to dictate everything. We had to accept the structural adjustment program as much of our development budget depended on foreign aid from the World Bank and other multilateral and bilateral donors. This was more so during the time of the military rulers. We had to even accept reforms that jeopardized the country’s significant achievements in the health sector. But those days are gone. Even if they don’t support any program in any particular sector, say, in education, we can still manage.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁹Interview with Rashed Khan Menon, Member of Parliament. With regard to the example on health, he was referring to the donor-insisted unification of health and family planning, which allegedly jeopardised the family planning program neutralizing much of the gains in family planning in the earlier years.

The relationship between the state and multilateral institutions, however, is not monolithic because of the multi-faceted nature of the state. The state is a conglomeration of many actors, disparate groups and many opinions. It resides at the cusp of multifarious tensions from within as it tries to accommodate various interests and ideological penchants. This is more so in the context of Bangladesh. The country has been ruled by one or other alliance composed of a number of political parties from a wide spectrum over the past 20 years. Some of the constituent parties in these alliances are left-of-centre cohabiting with those from the right in the same alliance based on some broader principles (e.g., a particular perception of national identity) or with a pure and unwavering commitment to opposing the other alliance. On the question of multilateral institutions, which are identified as institutions upholding capitalism or representing the West, the parties in the same alliance would have difference almost instinctively following their ideological stances. To some, these institutions represent Western capitalist interest. To others, particularly the religion-based parties, the West comes to be interpreted as anti-Islamic in the present-day geopolitics. As the political leader, quoted earlier, said:

I come from a left background, with quite intense opinion about the World Bank. The World Bank has a design to develop a market-oriented economy in Bangladesh. I know what has happened to the jute sector in Bangladesh because of following their structural adjustment prescription. I know how we lost the gains in family planning due to the prescription of the World Bank. But my party is just one out of fourteen in our alliance. There are others who are as critical about the Bank as we are.

The overt response at the point of contact between the Government and the multilateral institutions could range from hostility to skepticism to carefully instrumented ambiguity to ambivalence to even enthusiastic acceptance depending on who the multilateral institutions are dealing with. The government at its various nodes of contact with the MLIs is thus polyphonous, to use a Bakhtinian term, a conglomeration of unmerged and often contradictory voices contributing in bits and pieces from varied perspectives and various political positions to the collage of policy realities.

Also, the responses are a part of a larger tactic. It is not unknown that much of Bangladesh's economy depends on external markets both for its products and its cheap labour, which earns remittance for the country. These multilateral institutions act as interlocutors in the global economy. They provide leadership in the donor community. Their judgments about economy and state also draw considerable attention from the

international community. The government has to walk on a very tight rope when it comes to dealing with MLIs. It needs to simultaneously accommodate the political agenda from the political Right to the political Left and those who see positive relationship with MLIs as a way to advance Bangladesh's export economy. The country, not to forfeit or jeopardise its place in the global economy, is extra-careful in dealing these well-known interlocutors. These realities also factor into the relationship between the state and the multilateral institutions. Therefore, overt engagement with the multilateral institutions is sometimes camouflaged where an outright hostility is considered detrimental. The same Member of Parliament mentioned earlier, who now belongs to the ruling alliance said:

Whether we accept it or not, and whether we like the institutions like the World Bank or not, the reality is that we have to deal with them and we have to live with this. When I was in opposition, of course, I was extremely critical of the World Bank. But now that our alliance is in power and I am responsible for looking into issues related to education, I can't avoid the fact that institutions like World Bank and ADB are major actors. I talk to them, attend various programs organized by them, but at the same time, I am critical about them.¹⁶⁰

The varied responses from the politicians to the MLI prescription for tying subvention to performance and enforcing punitive measures are a revealing case. As discussed earlier, both SESIP from ADB and the policy lending instrument of the World Bank named Education Sector Development Support Credits (ESDSCs) insisted on this governance reform. ESDSCs provided instant budget support if actions were taken in this regard. The government needed that support and at the top policy level, took actions by serving notice to 1300 schools and later suspending subvention to 226 schools (World Bank, 2006, p. 14). The government received the ESDSC support, but later released subvention to all these schools.¹⁶¹ About this action, a Member of Parliament from the ruling coalition had this to say:

Multilaterals have their views seeing things from a distance, but we work with the people and they vote us to power. We need to hear what they have to say. When the schools cannot get good teachers, we need to help them with good teachers, not punish the schools. Punishing the schools means punishing the students, punishing the families. As politicians, can we afford this? Do we not need to go back to them for votes?¹⁶²

¹⁶⁰ Interview with Rashed Khan Menon, Member of Parliament, May 30, 2010

¹⁶¹ Interview with Director, MEW, DSHE, July 2, 2010.

¹⁶² Interview with a Member of Parliament, May 30, 2010.

The opinion of a local level political leader, who also happens to be the Mayor of the municipality elected from the ruling party and the chair of an SMC, resonated with this view. He said:

If Monthly Pay Order (*MPO, the most commonly used name for subvention in Bangladesh*) is stopped to my school, it is my responsibility to do everything to get it back. Yes, we want good performance of the school. Who doesn't? But you need to find the reasons behind bad performance and address them. Even for this we need help from the government.¹⁶³

In order to comply with the prior actions stipulated under an ESDSC from the World Bank, the government decision put on paper went through its first phase—issuing notice to the schools about stopping their subvention. But then the same government subverted the decision at implementation stage. Noticeable in this whole series of policy acts is what Steiner-Khamsi calls “policy bilingualism” (Steiner-Khamsi, 2000) of the government—the use of global and domestic languages to appease both the international donors and domestic political constituencies.

There are various layers of realities, which help reconstruct the educational governance policy discourse also into an ethical-political discourse. When constructed as a political discourse, it denies entry to the MLIs, the exogenous actors. Drawing the issues into the political terrain, on the one hand, debilitates the MLIs, and on the other, opens up space for political agency of the other actors. They resist or subvert implementation of policies agreed upon at the top level. While acceptance of policy at the national level is guided by one set of realities—realities of external support needed for overall educational development—implementation of those policies sometimes follows a different a set of realities, which were marginalised in the MLI advanced development discourses and now steered to the centre. Since the policy decision to stop subvention was tied to budget support, the policy itself was not revoked. A former Additional Secretary of the Education Ministry said,

When subvention is stopped, the schools appeal to the Ministry explaining the situation of the schools requesting resumption of subvention. Invariably, all such applications are immediately followed by ‘*tadbir*’¹⁶⁴ either from Members of Parliament or from ministers of other ministries or from other influential politicians. Most often they bring the application themselves to the Secretary of

¹⁶³ Interview with the SMC Chair of School 1, May 17, 2010.

¹⁶⁴ The word used in Bangla means a combination of recommending, persuading, and influencing with an element of power tacitly built into it.

Education. Each of these decisions is taken on a case-by-case basis, and each as an exceptional case.¹⁶⁵

While dispensation of subvention is the responsibility of the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education (DSHE), discretionary decisions on resumption of subvention were all taken at the Ministry of Education. Such decisions were all political, either for genuine reasons or in consideration of political implications of cancellation of subvention.¹⁶⁶

Evidently, there are two parallel constructions of truth—one playing against the other. On the one hand, the multilaterals are bringing in money as incentive for the government and constructing subvention as ‘rewards’ for schools meeting the performance benchmark. The politicians in the government, on the other hand, accepts part of that truth, but then moves on to collect data as to why the schools do not perform and why they need to be in existence to construct another level of truth and reconceptualise what the government “should do” from a different political-ethical point of view. The government then attempts to identify the “ill-performing schools” and provide additional support, e.g., sending resource teachers, organizing additional classes for weaker students, etc. The Government wants the schools to be supported, rather than subvention as ‘reward’ being withdrawn for poor performance. Interestingly, the Government sometimes makes a case for project resources to be provided to the schools for such additional support. The multilateral cannot and don not oppose such moves as the schools are being made ‘competitive.’

8.3 CIVIL SERVANTS: THE STRATEGIES OF DEFERMENT

The civil servants form the permanent edifice of the Government. As discussed earlier, multilaterals primarily deal with bureaucrats and only occasionally come in contact with the politicians under normal circumstances. They are also the official interlocutors between the political part of the government and the multilaterals. The bureaucrats filter policy suggestions of the MLIs and the policy decisions of the politicians through an ensemble of rules and procedures at their disposal.¹⁶⁷ They construct an official discourse, through various circulars, orders, directives, office memoranda, all based on rules or their interpretation of rules. This discourse is separate from the political discourse of the

¹⁶⁵ Interview with Asahabur Rahman, former Additional Secretary, Ministry of Education, July 26, 2011

¹⁶⁶ Interview with Deputy Director, Secondary Education Quality and Access Enhancement Project (SEQAEP), June 10, 2010.

¹⁶⁷ Interview with a Former Additional Secretary of the Ministry of Education, July 26, 2011

politicians or the informed popular discourse of the civil society groups or the general popular discourse of the stakeholders on the ground, e.g., the schools and school communities. They follow the government's rules of business and are expected to run the business of the government rather dispassionately.

However, underneath the apparent rigidity of the rules they follow, bureaucrats understand that they work within a given political environment, which has its own imposition. They need to work with the incumbent political party. In an overly politicised environment these days, they need to feel the pulse of the incumbent politicians to retain their position and not to be labelled as "sympathisers" of the Opposition. This enforces a certain level of pragmatism in them as to what is doable in the given political environment. Besides, they have their own judgment about the governance reforms proposed by the multilaterals and judgments about how to deal with the multilaterals and what to accept and up to what level. While they have been allies of the multilaterals in many policy initiatives, as discussed in the previous three chapters, they also have views, different from those of the multilaterals on certain policy initiatives, formed by their perception of political realities and implement ability of policies. All these feed into their pragmatism about education governance policy reforms. This is epitomised in their response to the very important policy initiative of moving towards a grants-based financing mechanism for secondary education.

The multilaterals recommended since 1998 that the Government should move to a grants-based financing system doing away with the current system of monthly pay order for secondary school teachers. First of all, such a system would transform the schools as a unit for subvention rather than the individual teachers. A lump sum given to the school annually on the basis of its performance was to cover all expenses of the school including teachers' salaries. While delinking teachers' salaries from subvention, grants-based financing aimed to introduce a system of subvention based on performance of the schools to be judged on a certain number of indicators. The amount of subvention given to a school will be based on a formula, which has not been worked out yet. Still, at the policy level, the discussion was on, derived from the policy suggestions from SESIP and SESDP supported by ADB and the education sector development support credits from the World Bank. The ADB assisted projects and SEQAEP from the World Bank went ahead to lay the foundation of such a financing mechanism, as discussed in the previous two chapters, pending a policy decision at the national level.

However, this decision has not been taken because of, among other reasons, deferment from the bureaucrats at the Ministry of Education and DSHE. A former Director of Planning at DSHE said,

I don't know if grants-based financing is good or bad or whether it is suitable for our country. We never had a full discussion. We know both ADB and the World Bank wanted this. But for this to be implemented, some 216000 secondary school teachers will have to accept it. They know for sure that they are getting the MPO (*Monthly Pay Order, which stands for teachers' salaries*) under the present system. Now the grants-based system will replace this certainty with uncertainty as to how much they will get as salary and whether they will at all get anything. To convince them to accept it is a huge political task, we couldn't deal with this and the politicians wouldn't do it, either.

The documents of the multilateral institutions do not have any full description of the grants-based financing. Little they have so far raises more questions than answers. As the former Director of Planning of DSHE said:

Well, what I understand is that you will have a formula based on performance and different schools will have different allocations based on their performance. Now, are the schools endowed with similar situation in terms of communities they serve? Or the teachers and other resources they have at their disposal? Performance may vary for a number of factors. A formula has a tendency to be general in nature. Can we ensure justice to all those schools and the communities out there if we follow general formulae?

When intercepted with a question if a detailed formula would be helpful, she answered:

You can have a detailed formula about performance, say on a scale of 1 to 5 on a number of indicators and perhaps you can allocate subvention based on this scale. But how would you quantify why the schools didn't perform at a particular level? It's not just about rewarding or punishing, it's about developing a system.

She thought grants-based financing would create an "uneven competition among the schools for resources" unless there was a very detailed formula for different schools in different areas of the country, e.g., urban, peri-urban and rural, areas with high poverty incidence and low literacy rates; areas inhabited by disadvantaged communities: areas inhabited by different ethnic groups, areas which are geographically challenging such as hilly areas and areas in the remote wetlands. The discussion, she said, never got to that stage.

The Director of the Monitoring and Evaluation Wing (MEW) of DSHE has also a concern about how performance will be monitored. He said:

Here at MEW, we conduct sample based monitoring of various activities and performance. If we relate subvention to performance, then the monitoring has to be full-scale. With our staff strength, we cannot do it. The Education Board cannot do it from here. The Upazila Secondary Education Officer, being just one official on the ground, cannot do it, either. Then what do we do? We have to depend on the schools themselves. This is something FSSAP II tried to do—gathering performance data from the schools and SMCs. It was not very successful.

Generally, the civil servants have serious skepticism about the possibility of implementation of the grants-based financing because of the political sensitivity of the issue. A former Additional Secretary of the Ministry of Education is not against trying the grants-based financing system, but he said that the ‘politicians can’t even take the message of delinking subvention from teachers’ salaries to the teachers’ unions.’

While the literature on grants-based financing is still very scanty, MLIs are trying to prepare the ground to shift to such a system through various measures under their projects, as discussed in the previous chapter. On the bureaucratic side, there is hardly anything on papers about the grants-based financing system, but an undercurrent of official skepticism about grants-based financing system is there which comes to the surface only when the issue is brought up in discussions. The mentions about such a system are noticed with indifference or skepticism, and all decisions are deferred and discussions postponed.

8.4 RESPONSES FROM TEACHERS’ UNIONS

While the policy discourse initially confined among a few actors at the top gradually molded subvention as a lever for instituting governance reform in the secondary education system, in the popular discourse, the ‘political aspect’ of subvention became increasingly pronounced, both on the ground at the school community level, as will be discussed later, and from the teachers unions, the most vociferous groups with considerable clout in the mainstream politics. The teachers’ unions, between 1996 and 2006, were clamoring and were successful in eliciting 100 percent of teachers’ salaries from the government and were consistently trying to construct the secondary education development discourse in terms of inputs rather than what should be expected, which they thought was an issue to be addressed later once the basics are fixed. And they disregarded the MLIs in this discourse completely. As one of the former teachers’ union coordinator said,

On MPOs, the multilateral institutions didn't talk to us, we didn't talk to them, either. We wanted the teachers to have a decent pay so that they can discharge their responsibilities with love and commitment to their job. This is a discussion we had with the government, because the government paid salaries to the teachers.¹⁶⁸

As regards performance, he said,

Of course, we all want good performance from the schools, but how do you ensure good performance? You need good teachers, right? How do you get good teachers if you don't pay them well?

Asked if they would accept punitive measures against bad performance, he said:

As it stands now, school performance is measured against the results of the school in the SSC examinations. This depends on a number of factors—teachers, students, facilities, etc. Performance of a school can be affected just for one teacher. And we have seen it in many rural schools, which didn't do well because they didn't have good English teacher. Now you can take action against a particular teacher, not the whole school by stopping subvention to the school. Because, then you are punishing all other teachers, you are punishing the students and you are punishing the entire community. There are provisions to take action against a particular teacher if he or she is not performing. The SMC initiates the process and the Education Board approves it.

Clearly, use of subvention as a single instrument to penalise non-performing schools has its limitation, as pointed out by the teachers' union leader. Such measures, when applied, were certainly not well thought out. The above assertion has a legitimate point but this was not taken into consideration when the government took such a policy decision perhaps in consultation with the multilaterals. Apparently, there was no discussion with the teachers' unions on grants-based financing, but the union leaders are aware of the discussion at the government level about tying subvention to performance. On the question of making subvention completely performance based and delinking it from teachers' salaries, as is the practice now, a current union leader said:

Look, how much salary does a teacher get? It's one of the lowest in the government salary scale. Unfortunately, because of this, the best people do not come to the profession of teaching any more. If you want a secondary education system to be in place, you shouldn't touch this minimum. For better performance, you can have additional incentives.

This is an interesting observation, which does not concur with the idea of completely delinking teachers' salaries from subvention, but at the same time, expresses willingness to accept grants based financing as an additional layer, perhaps in a modified form. He

¹⁶⁸ Interview with Quazi Faruque Ahmed, Chief Coordinator of the National Front of Teachers and Employees, December 11, 2011.

said, “The modalities of these performance based incentives and the monitoring mechanisms to measure performance should be worked out in discussion with the schools and teachers.”

The political discourse brought into play by the teachers’ unions in itself was extremely powerful which fore-grounded the necessity of supporting nongovernment secondary school teachers. It was quite emphatically presented that they were responsible for 98% of secondary school education and without them the whole system would collapse. Constructing it as a political discourse, the teachers’ unions enforce an endogeneity of the issue of subvention to be worked out between the schools and the government and thus a foreclosure, denying entry to the multilateral institutions in that discursive terrain rendering the MLIs irrelevant to the concerns of the nation. They are delegitimized as institutions which do not understand the local context. The issue of performance, albeit not ignored, was much less important compared to the assertion that schools need support to enhance performance. In the realm of politics, subvention was being reconstructed as a necessity, and as a moral responsibility of the government of the day, almost like resurrecting the tropes of educational development discourse that governed the government’s views on subvention in the 1980s.

As discussed above, at the national policy decision level, the actors fought it out in constructing their own discourse in relation to the governance reforms they did not like or were skeptical about. While the multilaterals attempted to bring the discursive focus on subvention and performance and connect them through various projects and programs making subvention conditional upon performance, the politicians and the teachers’ unions attempted to steer the issues to the ethical-political terrain. They resurrected the idea of support to the schools as an inevitable necessity and the issue of performance as secondary and conditional upon better support making the notion of subvention highly contested. While for the teachers unions, the discursive construction of subvention was intensely political and in tactic, they were almost grudgingly exclusionary vis-à-vis the multilaterals, the politicians in power were in a double bind of taking into cognisance the political realities and at the same time working with the multilaterals from whom the support was still needed. As a tactic, they resort to ‘policy bilingualism’ and surreptitious subversion of the policy decisions already taken at the national level when it comes to implementation. The civil servants or the bureaucrats also worked through various layers of educational development discourse—the one they received from their political masters often with mixed signals, the one they worked out with the multilaterals in preparation of

the projects and the one they constructed themselves based on the ensembles of rules and regulations they were expected to follow and their skeptical pragmatism as to what was workable and what was not. When they know that something will not work, or at least not in the form it is presented, e.g., the idea of grants based financing, they use the tactic of deferment bringing to the fore all kinds of details that need to be worked out. And those details are never worked out. The civil servants in the Ministry and at DSHE keep changing and major shuffles take place with the change of the government. Discussions begin afresh.

Still, the multilaterals went ahead with ground preparation for grants based financing through projects like SESIP and SESDP from ADB and FSSAP II and SEQAEP from the World Bank as discussed in Chapters 5 and 6. Each of these projects commissioned studies and produced manuals based on those studies to buttress those governance reforms with epistemic rationale. And each of these projects organised numerous training programs for schools and school communities to establish performance as the organizing principle for school governance. They also attempted to redefine the schools and school communities as subjects of gaze, from a distance and much of it through a self-monitoring system based on an elaborate set of performance parameters that would suit the governance system they intended eventually to install, as discussed in the previous chapter. How the communities reacted to these efforts is discussed in the next section.

8.5 RESPONSES FROM SCHOOLS AND SCHOOL COMMUNITIES

The present study undertook investigation into two nongovernment schools in two upazilas (subdistricts) under the district of Mymensingh. One school (School 1) was established in the colonial era in 1913 and is located in the upazila town. The school started off as a middle school and then it functioned as a high school between 1918 and 1922. However, the school did not get recognition as high school and therefore continued as a junior high school since 1922. It was recognised as a high school in 1945. The current enrolment in the school is 913. It started receiving MPO (subvention) since July 1, 1984. There were 15 teachers in the school receiving MPO. All of them have the minimum qualification of Bachelor of Education except one who is now undertaking the B. Ed. program. Five of these teachers have Master's degree. The school has been uninterruptedly governed by an SMC. The Mayor of the municipality was the chair of the

SMC at the time of this investigation, who also happened to be the brother-in-law of the local Member of Parliament. The chairperson was nominated by the elected members of the SMC and has been holding this position since 2009, the year his party came to power in Bangladesh. Recently, the District Education Office organised a training program for the SMC Chair and the head teacher who is also the ex-officio member-secretary of the SMC on the roles and responsibilities. The school serves an area with a population of approximately 307,000. The school shares the responsibility of providing general secondary education with 26 other recognised high schools in the upazila. However, being located at the upazila centre and being in existence for a long time, the school has earned a reputation which draws considerably high number of students compared to many of the rural schools in the areas.

The other nongovernment school (School 2) is in the rural area of another upazila in the district of Mymensingh. The school was first established in 1972 as a junior high school and was later expanded into a high school in 1993. It serves a poorer area of the upazila where the main subsistence of the populace comes from agriculture, that too mostly through sharecropping. The enrolment is about 300 and the school faces considerable difficulty getting students in this poor locality where most children of secondary school age work for a living or help parents in their family earnings. The school has been receiving MPO since 1999. It shares the responsibility of providing secondary education with 31 other high schools including a government high school in the upazila. The government school, being the oldest and the best in the upazila, established in 1911, has the trend of drawing the better students of the upazila and also those from the well-off families. All 13 teachers in this nongovernment school receiving MPO have the minimum qualification of Bachelor's degree in addition to the degree of Bachelor of Education except one who teaches religious subjects. The present headmaster, from the same locality, took over as head master after the death of the founding head master. He was a freedom fighter during the liberation war of the country and has since been quite influential. At one stage, he was also the Vice President of the students union of the local college. The headmaster has a contention with the local MP with regard to the chairperson supported by the MP. The chairperson in this school was never elected but always nominated by the members of the SMC. This nomination allegedly was influenced by the MP and was not liked by the head teacher. This remained unresolved at the time of this investigation. SMC members of this school have not received any training on management issues over the past years.

The researcher conducted individual interviews with SMC chairs, SMC members, community members, head teachers in those schools. Besides, there were two focus group discussions, one with all SMC members of School 1 and another with all teachers of School 2. In addition to studying these two schools, the researcher also held a focus group discussion with eight head teachers of other schools in one of the two upazilas. Five out of those eight schools had participated in SMC training organised under SESIP. There was also an individual interview with the head teacher of another high school located in the upazila town in one of the two upazilas. Findings from these two schools were also complemented with researcher's experience of working with other schools under various projects in other parts of the country.

In the following sections, I discuss the perceptions and alternative interpretations of the problems from the school communities different from those eloquently presented in the MLI discourses and project documents. These alternative perceptions and interpretations, some of which relate to policy implementation, provide the rationale for resistance and subversion from the school communities.

8.5.1 School Communities: Rearticulating the 'Political'

In general, there is a strong incentive for the schools to aspire to be included in project activities supported by multilaterals, because the projects bring in a number of benefits. Over the years, girls' stipend program under various projects has not only incentivised girls to come to school, it also increased tuition earning for the schools from the projects. In some cases, projects helped build lab facilities in schools, provided computers and other kinds of equipment, enhanced library facilities, provided school improvement funds, particularly in the underserved areas, and organised training for teachers at project costs. These are a few of many benefits that come along with projects and therefore, the schools are eager to be included in projects. Some projects are implemented countrywide and it is mandatory for schools to participate in activities related to projects. The material benefits from participation in projects are quite obvious. As the head teacher of School 2 said:

Being included in a project is a good thing. I have been desperately trying to get some computers for my school. I just have two computers, which are certainly not enough. I even have a computer teacher, but I can't utilize him fully because I don't have enough equipment. The Government has not been able to give computers to all schools. This is something the projects can do.

This signifies an interesting construction of the perception of ‘project’ at the ground level. The teacher is intent upon using the project money to meet his needs in teaching, paying little attention to what the project actually intends to achieve. Although schools do not have any choice to participate or not to participate in an MLI supported project in Bangladesh, a decision always taken centrally, still the schools construct the notion of ‘project’ in their own way—project as material support for the school. This does not mean an endorsement of the other objectives the project may have.

However, projects are not all about materials benefits to the schools. Projects, as discussed earlier, also implement policies or test the ground for future policies. There is very little participation from the schools and school communities in the policy processes at the national level or in the preparation of the projects supported by the multilaterals. For them, a project comes as a finished package both with benefits and intended reforms. The MLI-led reforms are premised upon certain views about how secondary education should be governed. The problems are discursively defined in ways that would indispensably lead only to certain solutions. In response, those on the ground, whose identities the governance reforms attempt to reconstitute, unbundle the policy texts to add new meanings to the reforms imposed on them. Sometimes, they bring up the nuances that policy iterations fail to capture. And they contest the views and terms on which certain reforms are premised. One of the most prominent points of such contestation is political identity of the SMCs.

Both the schools studied in this chapter had political connections in selection/nomination of the SMC chair. In one school, it was the mayor of the municipality who was also the brother-in-law of the Member of Parliament from that area. He took charge as SMC Chair the year his party came to power. In the other, the local MP nominated the Chair that too after his party had come to power. An easy interpretation of the situation, the one that is readily accepted by the multilaterals, is that the school committees had been subject to ‘political capture’ and that the identity of the SMC members as independent actors on behalf of the school had been compromised under political interference. The community would have lost interest in the school and their voice would have been silenced (World Bank, 2004, p. 9). However, the story from the school communities was much more nuanced.

However, such a view was contested by many participants in individual interviews and focus group discussions with both the schools and the focus group discussion with

head teachers of an upazila. Some participants in the focus group discussion with SMC members said that it is true that all SMC members do not voice their opinion in SMC meetings. Even in the focus group discussion, there were some members who were rather reticent. The participants said that there are a number of reasons behind people not being quite vocal. Some of the members are not very educated, some do not speak up in deference to others who are natural opinion leaders in the community. One member, who was found to be reticent during the focus group discussion, said in an individual interview after the focus group discussion:

Sometimes, on some issues, I don't speak up in SMC meetings, not because of any fear, but perhaps I don't know much about the issue. Then I leave it to others to discuss and come to a decision. The teachers, particularly the head teacher, play a significant role in such discussions. There are very few occasions when the political persons on SMC impose their decisions.¹⁶⁹

He added:

When the issue is about a teacher not attending classes or our children not doing well in the examinations, I do raise it in the SMC meetings, but when it comes to dealing with, say, the district education office or the Ministry, it is beyond my reach. I leave it to others.

Regarding both negative and positive implications of having people with political inclinations on SMCs, the communities reportedly look at the trade-off and they often favour having them on board. In the given political environment of Bangladesh, most of them think that those who can act as powerful interlocutors between the communities and the government machinery and those who can articulate the communities' voice should be associated with the schools, more so because of the problems they have repeatedly faced in dealing bureaucracies in the past. The people who cared about communities' aspirations vis-à-vis the schools and the people who had proven themselves to be apt in articulating the voices of communities make the SMCs much stronger. One head teacher attested to this sentiment;

Leaders grow from the community through their engagements in different institutions. The guardians choose those as members of SMCs who can speak on behalf of them and who can fight for their cause. Generally, the people who aspire to represent their communities and their voices in one way or other are the political voices of the community.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁹ Individual interview with an SMC member, May 15, 2010

¹⁷⁰ Focus group discussion with 8 head teachers, May 14, 2010

The reach of the SMCs, representing rural communities, extends considerably when people with political background volunteer themselves to be the interlocutors. While, on the one hand, these people have the potential to provide social cohesion in relation to their schools, engagement of these people has a far greater implication in relation to steering the schools through rough times. One guardian SMC member articulated this in the following way:

As a guardian of a student, I can, at my best, ask the head teacher to do certain things, but what power do I have even to raise an issue with the local administration? If the school gets into problem that can only be fixed at the *Shiksha Bhaban* in Dhaka, you know, we can't start the process at the local administration level. It will never be fixed. Only if we have someone with us who has access to *Shiksha Bhaban*, there is a possibility that it can be fixed.¹⁷¹

Political connection of the schools has a practical meaning for those in the school communities. As it appears, they consider it important to have the support of the political authorities, particularly in an environment where the location of decision-making is far removed from them. They also have a judgment as to what they can do on their own and what demands political support.

8.5.2 A Counter-discourse to Depoliticisation

The multilaterals strongly recommend depoliticisation of SMCs for a number of reasons mentioned earlier. On the foreground of the rhetoric, they present the argument that 'political or elite capture' of the SMCs deprives the school communities of their 'true' voices. The political influence of SMCs, they consider, makes it difficult to implement various governance measures and, therefore, it needs to be eliminated. They get bureaucracy on their side in this initiative. What is not brought to the fore is that effacing the political voice in the given political environment in which the schools operate has other implications. The school communities have their views about it. One SMC member said:

I am not sure what exactly the Government intends to do. Time and again, they have tried to get politicians out of SMCs, and put the bureaucrats in charge of SMCs. How are the bureaucrats better than the politicians? Politicians are from the locality. They have much more accountability to the community than the bureaucrats. Bureaucrats are accountable to their bosses, not to the community. SMCs members and chairmen are elected. If the school community

¹⁷¹ Interview with an SMC member, May 15, 2010

wants a politician to be elected, how can you not allow it in a democratic setting?¹⁷²

In the focus group discussion with head teachers, some head teachers, however, observed that it is better not to have politicians on SMCs on the ground that they try to control everything from school resources to recruitment of staff. Some other head teachers, on the contrary, observed that they faced no problem at all with politicians on board the SMCs. Another head teacher in an individual interview confirmed this. He was of the opinion that having a member or a chairman, particularly from the ruling political party on the SMC has certain advantages. “At least, there will be someone to help out when I try to do something good for the school.”¹⁷³

On the question of politicians getting hold on to the school resources and controlling the schools, one head teacher observed:

For most of these rural schools, the resources are very small, in fact too small to attract the attention of the Members of Parliament. They are rich enough not to be bothered by these resources. However, sometimes MPs place their own people in SMCs who are lower level politicians. Sometimes, these people create problem.¹⁷⁴

The same head teacher thought much of this depends on the head teacher’s integrity, his/her acceptability in the community, the respect s/he commands and his/her assertiveness. “If the head teacher is honest and firm in withstanding such problems, half the problems will never appear.” It is evident that the nature of entanglement between SMCs and politics is far more complex than a simple solution of ‘depoliticisation of SMCs.’

One oft-cited reason for attempted depoliticisation is the alleged political favour dispensed in recruitment of teachers. Some of the respondents agreed that sometimes there were problems of nepotism, but once again the issue is much more complex than how it is presented. One head teacher, in the focus group discussion with eight head teachers, dissects the issue as follows:

Sometimes, in the past, the founders provided land, supported building the school houses in the villages and established schools with the explicit intent of providing jobs to younger people in the family or in the village who have the requisite qualifications. Some of them acquired qualifications after becoming teacher when teachers with requisite qualifications were not found in the village or in the nearby villages. The schools were not supposed to have

¹⁷²Focus Group Discussion with SMC of School 1. May 15, 2010

¹⁷³ Interview with a head teacher, May 16, 2010

¹⁷⁴ Interview with a head teacher, May 16, 2010.

recognition and teachers were not to receive MPOs unless they had the right qualifications. If it happened, and it did happen sometimes in the past, then it was more a problem at the level of education board (*for recognition, explanation mine*) and DSHE (*for MPO provision, explanation mine*) that they could not enforce rules. It was not a problem at the level of SMCs.

Another head teacher added:

These days SMCs recruit teachers from a pool of potential teachers certified by NTRCA,¹⁷⁵ which is mandatory for the teachers to receive MPO and the requisite qualifications are now looked after by NTRCA. SMCs have no opportunity to deviate from the requirements in teacher recruitment. Besides, in the teacher recruitment committee, there is supposed to be a representative from DSHE. It is possible that one candidate is favoured against others, but then there has to be a complicity of all members of the recruitment committee.¹⁷⁶

Interestingly, the interviewees and the participants in the focus group discussions reconstructed the dominant discourse wherein political connection is unproblematically associated with corruption, shifting its centre to the locations where actual decisions are made implicating mainly the civil servants involved in the secondary education system. They think, political influence in recruitment of teachers is much less a problem these days than the problems of the officials of the education board and DSHE seeking bribe. One teacher in School 2 also spoke to this issue in the focus group discussion with the teachers:

Sometimes, the officials of DSHE unnecessarily create bureaucratic snag only to extract bribe. Suppose a school has a teacher's position, following the formula, to receive MPO and the school has done everything for a particular teacher to receive MPO and sent it to DSHE for approval. DSHE will sit on it for months, unless the teacher goes to Dhaka and pushes the file from table to table with bribe. The less powerful you are, the bigger the bribe you have to pay. If you have someone with political clout to support you, it will be much easier to get things done, perhaps with little or no bribe.

According to these participants, recognition of undeserving schools and enlistment of undeserving teachers would never be possible if the board authorities and DSHE strictly followed rules and did not indulge in taking bribe.

¹⁷⁵ Nongovernment Teachers Registration and Certification Authority (NTRCA), a government body, certifies potential nongovernment secondary school teachers through an elaborate screening mechanism. This certification is a prerequisite for any teacher to receive government subvention.

¹⁷⁶ Interview with a head teacher of a secondary school at the upazila headquarters, May 16, 2010. This head teacher himself established the school on an abandoned land leased for the school. The place was initially used by a juvenile organisation which he ran as its convener.

Despite these views about political influence on schools emanating from teachers and SMC members, there is no record anywhere that they have made way into the policy discussions where decisions about depoliticisation of SMCs have been taken several times over the past two decades. As evident from the responses from the school communities discussed above, the way the school communities perceive the role of the people with political voices in schools is different from the way the policy makers in bureaucracy and the multilateral institutions perceive the role of politics in school management. While the communities are mindful of the malpractices that might arise from political favouritism, they also look at the positive aspects of having politically influential people on or around SMCs, from the pragmatic consideration of the environment within which the schools operate both locally and in their relations with the government and its various agencies.

The politicians in question are often the elected representatives of the people. They can have a legitimate interest in schools in their areas. The question is whether their involvement in school management committees compromises the independence of the school's operations. As it transpired from interviews and focus group discussions, the respondents did not believe that a blanket solution of depoliticisation, the way it has been conceived of in the past, is a solution. The rupture between the policy decisions at the national level and a very different counter-discourse on the ground explains failures of repeated attempts at depoliticisation of SMCs. The counter-discourse on the ground is mostly oral rather than written, which comes to the fore only when discussed and confronted with actual attempts at depoliticisation or curbing the power of those with political clout in the school communities.

One can also legitimately ask the question whether the move to depoliticise SMCs itself is a political move, which attempts to deprive the community of its political voice, as opined by a teacher union leader. He thinks the educational development model advanced by the World Bank and ADB is no less political.¹⁷⁷ Considering the persistent efforts to institutionalise neoliberal market principles in secondary education governance and change the school state relationship, one can arguably say that this in itself is a political move, taking politics one level up and neutralizing political voices on the ground—one trying to subdue the other both in the realm of politics—only to ensure the acceptance of a governance architecture, which is political in its core.

¹⁷⁷ Interview with a teachers' union leader, December 11, 2011,

The link between this move and the technical-rational discourse to ensure implementation of governance reforms, as discussed in the previous chapters, is all too obvious in the project documents of the multilateral institutions. Both the move and the discourse supporting the move enjoy a certain level of dominance at the policy level labelling politicisation as a “bad” thing and come up with prescriptions to efface the political identity of the actors in the school communities. However, the communities prefer to keep their political voices alive in order to combat the odds prevalent in the system, as they encounter. They accept reforms only to the extent that they do not debilitate their political power and do not compromise their political identity.

8.5.3 Resistance Against the SMC Training

As discussed in Chapter 7, the projects supported by the multilaterals were designed to plant a number of measures in the form of awards, incentives, punishment, promotion of choices, and performance indicators, among other things, to move governance system towards grants-based financing and a new management akin to such a system. In order to gradually institutionalise the system, they embarked on extensive training of the SMCs on these measures and to reconstitute the identities of SMCs as custodians of the new governance system at the ground level. Although the major thrust for this policy change came through World Bank’s \$300 million development policy lending instrument named Education Sector Development Support Credit, the training activities to institutionalise and buttress the system on the ground were supported by projects like FSSAP, FSSAP II and SEQAEP from the World Bank and SESIP and SESDP from ADB. As discussed in the previous chapter, the School Performance Based Management System (SPBMS) proposed under ADB assisted projects clearly attempts to install a new managerial system in secondary schools. The World Bank assisted projects, albeit not explicitly advancing ADB’s SPBMS, pushed for similar management system in secondary education.

Much of the success of SPBMS depends on molding the roles and responsibilities of a new SMC reincarnated through intensive training. Albeit bereft of the required juridical authority, the SMC study (discussed in Chapter 7) even proposed that the trained SMC chairs and members “be empowered to take any action against any teacher failing to or unwilling to implement SPBMS/PBM¹⁷⁸ in the school, which may vary from deducting a portion of salary subvention to dismissal, as appropriate. Of course, for these, SMCs

¹⁷⁸ Performance based management

have to be on right track, available in schools, above politics and dedicated to the cause of school improvement” (Govt. of Bangladesh, 2004, pp. 10-27).

Discursively, SPBMS is presented as something already ‘given’ and ‘unquestionable.’ In reality, such claim does not have any juridical legitimacy as the regulations related to SMCs do not mention SPBMS, let alone making it mandatory for secondary schools. Therefore, the punitive measures, presumptuous about teacher truancy, to allow SMCs to slice away any portion of teachers’ salary subvention do not have any legal support.

Multilaterals have long been clamoring for revamping of legal-juridical provision to eventually align SMC responsibilities with the new management system. However, nothing much has happened so far in this regard. In response, multilaterals took the tactic of overcoming this lack of legislation through creating buy-in for new management through extensive training. Empowerment of the SMCs as conceived here was expected to come from redefinition of their roles to steer new management and their acceptance of that role. Much of these training programs, however, have not yet proved to be appealing to the SMC Chairs and members.

Recalcitrance of the members and Chairs to attend training programs organised under projects is amply bemoaned in the ADB study on SMCs under SESIP. The study observed:

Even though management training for SMC Chairmen and members are considered very important for orienting them in institutionalizing SPBMS, essential for improving school operations and students’ achievement, experts expressed their frustrating experience about the prospect and impact of training on SPBMS. Because, SMC Chairmen and members were found to be least interested and motivated to take training, especially the absentee/de facto/ elite capture chairmen (Govt. of Bangladesh, 2004, pp. 10-25).

The disenchantment with SMCs not interested in training on SPBMS was so intense that at one point the SMC study even proposed to reconsider the necessity of SMCs and “revisit the whole purpose of SMCs” (Govt. of Bangladesh, 2004, pp. 10-25) which was squarely in contradiction with many carefully crafted iterations about “empowerment of communities” in multilateral documents. The primary complaint was about noncooperation from SMC actors with political identity. Here their disengagement is explained away as part of the overall problems associated with ‘elite political capture.’

By contrast, the teachers and SMC members provided a very different explanation as to the SMC Chairs’ and members’ non-participation. The respondents from the school

communities in both the schools for instance explained that if an MP was the SMC chair, which was not the case with any of the two schools studied, this could have happened. For others, particularly if the training is organised somewhere close by, it should not be a problem even for the local level politicians. The problem, they think, is somewhere else—in the content of the training programs itself. They understand that they need the projects to support the resource-starved schools in various ways. In some cases, they are asked to sign cooperation agreement¹⁷⁹ to allow the projects to be implemented and they comply. Understandably, such cooperation agreements are less than exhaustive as to what the schools would have to do to participate in the projects. When it comes to actual implementation, the school communities find a number of things they gladly accept, and then also a few things that they cannot agree with. One of them is to make operations of schools increasingly technical. As one respondent observed:

The projects want to measure the performance of a school on a number of things—some 15/16 areas. On most of these things, the SMC and the schools are expected to produce a report. We cannot expect the teachers to write these reports. Then they will have very little time to teach. We cannot expect the SMC members or Chairperson to write these reports. Their job is voluntary. Besides, educational level of the SMC members is an issue. *We are community members, we love our school and that is why we are here* (emphasis mine). Now the projects come to tell us that we have to do this, we have to do that. I know many people who do not want to be on SMCs because of this.¹⁸⁰

This sense of belongingness and attachment to the schools is visibly at odds in spirit with the technical rational discourse of school management the projects attempt to enforce. It appears the perceptions follow two different loci. The measure of performance, as conceived under the projects, would require the SMC members to collect a set of relevant data about the school's operation and analyse them in terms of the benchmarks. When they endorse this technical-rational discourse, they are also expected to form a different kind of relationship with the schools they serve, that is, they are to redefine themselves as detached, objective evaluators of the school. The discourse thus puts SMC members in a radically different identity position, certainly at odd with the sentiment expressed in 'We are community members. We love our school and that is why we are here.'

The projects identified a number of areas for school performance, which were then worked out into indicators with a set of performance scores attached to each of the

¹⁷⁹ The World Bank assisted projects make each school, nongovernment as they are, to sign a cooperation agreement with the Government for implementation of the projects.

¹⁸⁰ From a focus group discussion with SMC members, May 15, 2010.

indicators (discussed in Chapter 7). The scores thus derived could eventually be used for calculation of grants the schools should receive once the system moved to a grants-based financing system. As mentioned in the previous chapter, some project documents were explicit about moving the system from fixed rate subvention for the schools to a ‘rationalised’ subvention based on performance (Govt. of Bangladesh, 2004, pp. 1-8). The onus of reporting performance based on a common set of criteria was on the schools and SMCs. The SMCs, the representatives of the school communities, now as contractees, were to keep elaborate records of school’s performance expressed in numbers. All these were being done under the projects with a purpose—the purpose of moving towards a grants-based financing system.

As it appears from the interviews and focus group discussions, however, the schools knew nothing about this possible move. As one head teacher, who also belongs to the local school community, said in the focus group discussion with the head teachers:

I don’t understand why we need so detailed reports. All we want to know if a school is doing well or not. That we know from the results of the terminal examinations and SSC (Secondary School Certificate) examination results of the schools. From interaction with teachers and students, we know if a teacher is doing his/her job well or not. The numbers assigned to each indicator wouldn’t say much. Besides, we can never be sure how uniformly the numbers are being assigned. I still don’t understand the logic of making things so complicated.

Clearly, the respondent is rejecting the use of indicators (data) as a form of teaching quality assessment. Also, he is refusing to take up the identity position on offer asserting a different kind of relationship between teachers and schools. While identities on offer pose a contention, for others, the issue is also a pragmatic one. For them, writing reports has already become burdensome even before writing reports on performance. Data collecting and writing reports remove teachers away from students. One head teacher said:

We are asked to prepare all kinds of reports, some of them are regular reports, and others are prepared on demand from different education offices and project offices. Preparing these reports take a lot of time. These responsibilities, on top of our teaching responsibilities take up all our time. We hardly have any time for interaction with the parents and members of community.

Non-acceptance of the detailed performance parameters handed down to the SMCs and teachers and the roles and identities of SMCs and other actors in the school as the producers of these records, ascribed by the projects, is quite vivid in the two statements

above. They also demystify the much-celebrated rhetoric about new governance system empowering the school communities to do everything to enhance their school's performance. What the school communities consider more prominently are the parameters set for them, which they find more binding than liberating.

Another very important contention comes out of these statements. The multilateral institutions have always claimed in their project documents that the real community members lost interest in SMCs because of 'elite capture' and 'political capture' of the SMCs. On the contrary, a view emerges here that because of the complexity imposed by projects, many community members are losing interest in SMCs. Being an SMC member is to concede to take up a different identity position from which a radically different school-community relationship is normalised. This is particularly unworkable with multiple identities in their communities. Remolding the SMC members as an 'administrable subject' and bringing them into a juridical space only in connection with the school, which would be a tiny part of their larger identity as community leaders, proved difficult. Some people were recalcitrant and powerful enough to fend off any new identity attribution and resist being trained in this new role as 'contractees' vis-à-vis their schools as opposed to being 'owners' of the schools. While some joined SMCs and battled it out, others found peace in evasion.

8.5.4 The Discursive Shift: Problematizing Policies to Pose Resistance

As discussed in the previous chapter, the nature of subvention to the secondary schools in Bangladesh and the real problems associated with it have been a major concern to the multilateral institutions. While the problems are real, they have privileged a particular construction of the problem eventually to advance a solution that would also help install a governance system of their choice. However, there are other aspects of the problems, hidden or not duly considered, which were brought up by the school communities during the interviews, more vividly than the general picture portrayed by the teachers' union leaders, discussed earlier. These, many of which to them were 'irrational' implementation problems, also provided them with the rationale for resistance.

It is important to preface that discussion with the fact that the unit of support in secondary education subvention is the teacher, not the school, as much of the subvention constituted teachers' salaries. Throughout the 1990s and until 2005/6, a major focus of the multilaterals was on taking punitive measures of suspending subvention to non-performing schools and reforming subvention as a means to instituting several

governance reforms. Legally, given the nature of subvention as it stands, punitive measures can only be taken against a teacher, not against a school. Therefore, subvention has an inherent limitation as an instrument for other changes in school governance unless the very nature of subvention is changed—something that the multilaterals were arduously trying to get to—changing it to a grants-based financing. Such a change, unless buttressed with adequate safety measures and convincingly communicated, would unleash a plethora of ethical-political issues that no government so far has braved to venture into. So the logic of governance reforms piggybacked on subvention has always remained truncated, much of it unsaid. The school communities do not know what the projects are steering to. They only know and are concerned about the fact that subvention may be suspended or cancelled for various reasons. They have their views about those reasons and they have reasons to resist such moves.

One major critique from the school communities is about the attempt to link subvention to performance of schools considering as if all schools are of similar standing. The government circular says that all schools will have to have at least 50 per cent pass rates in secondary school certificate examinations to qualify for continuation of subvention. They think the punitive measures are “way off the place” given the “practical constraints” they face. When reminded of the exceptions made to the schools in disadvantaged areas, the schools and communities questioned the understanding of “disadvantaged.” One assistant teacher said in a focus group discussion with teachers,

This is now lunch break at the school. Just after this, many students will come to me for leave on different pretexts, but I know what the actual problem is. These boys will have to work with their fathers in the paddy field. These girls will have to help out their mothers. Most of them are by now hungry, and not sure what they will eat. On papers, this is not exactly a disadvantaged upazila, although the literacy rate is quite low. Because of another big and reputed school within four kilometers, all the good students from this area and those from well-off families would go to that school. We only get the remaining students from the poorer families for whom education is not the priority. The government does not recognize the disadvantage we face. We go door-to-door to bring children to school, still we can't ensure good performance of these children in the terminal examinations for reasons beyond our control. Still, we are always under a threat to be penalized for this.¹⁸¹

Evidently, there are different kinds of disadvantages that a blanket formula on performance does not take cognisance of. The performance affected by various factors

¹⁸¹Focus Group discussion with teachers of School 2. May 16, 2010.

related to poverty of schools communities has been a real issue. A parent from the community in School 2 attested to the fact that most of the students in that school were from poorer families and most of the boys and girls work with their parents at home, in small shops in the local bazaar or in the paddy field, particularly during the harvesting season, which is just before the annual examinations. It affects their performance. In one upazila, there exists considerable variation in terms of resources each school receives and the socio-economic conditions of the communities from which students are drawn. Presence of one good school in the vicinity would always have a cream-skimming effect on other schools in terms of quality of students received. Therefore, the definition of 'disadvantaged areas' identifying certain upazilas does not truly capture the problems faced by weaker schools within an upazila not otherwise disadvantaged.

While the problems are quite pervasive and most often beyond the control of the schools, the time frame of two years given to the schools to improve performance before subvention is stopped or cancelled is considered 'unrealistic,' and therefore unacceptable and worth resisting. One head teacher had this to say in a focus group discussion with head teachers:

We were told that the pass rate had to be at least 50 per cent and that has to be achieved in two years if a school has failed to achieve it in any particular year.¹⁸² Now suppose, the problem is in finding the right teacher. Recruiting a teacher and processing everything for getting salary support from the Government itself may take more than two years, that too if the formula of teacher recruitment based on number of students permits and if Shikshsha Bhaban¹⁸³ cooperates in processing the papers. If that's the case how can a school improve performance in two years?¹⁸⁴

When reminded of a measure to help ill-performing schools, one respondent said that certain measures were to be taken under some projects. Identifying the nature of the problem and then providing targeted assistance through projects take enormous amount of time. They have heard about it but they have not seen any of the schools in the upazila, which faced performance problems, ever received such assistance. The government prepared a draft document in 2007 for comprehensive support to under-performing schools, which was a requirement as a prior action under the Education Sector

¹⁸² There are ambiguities about these requirements. No Government circular was found in this regard. However, the program document of ESDSC supported by the World Bank also mentioned these to be the requirements.

¹⁸³ The Office of the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education.

¹⁸⁴ Focus group discussion with Head Teachers. May 15, 2010

Development Support Credit III from the World Bank, but that draft was never finalised and was not therefore implemented.¹⁸⁵

Another theme emerging from the empirical investigation is that the problems are more pervasive than the attempted solutions recognize leading to non-acceptance of the solutions. As one SMC Chairman put it, “The Ministry of Education looks for only an ‘education solution’ to the problems we face. Sometimes, the problems are much bigger, for example, poverty of the families. The ministry cannot do anything about them and we cannot do anything about them either. Still, we are expected to overcome all the obstacles.”¹⁸⁶

When the Government cancels subvention to a school, it draws a strong resentment from the community and its leaders. It became clear from a number of responses to the questions on subvention during the research both from the school communities and teachers’ union leaders. One response from a focus group discussion with the SMC members was as follows:

Education is a right that all citizens are entitled to. It is the responsibility of the state to make provision for education. Communities are helping themselves and helping the government achieve this goal with very little resources and within many constraining factors. If they can’t do it well because of the constraining factors, some of which are imposed by the government,¹⁸⁷ they cannot be punished. Besides, who do you punish? If subvention is cancelled, a school will be closed. Where would the children go? The approach should be one of helping the schools, not closing them down.¹⁸⁸

Such iterations bring into play a total denial of the technical-rational discourse of subvention advanced by policies emanating from the multilaterals. An ethico-political discourse ensues from such assertion setting the ground for resistance to such policies. The issue as to what would happen to the children when a school is closed is particularly disturbing. A World Bank project document, while commending the government decision to suspend subvention to 226 schools in 2004, attempted to address the issue this way:

In spite of this, the government has ensured that students in institutions whose MPO¹⁸⁹ had been suspended did not lose

¹⁸⁵ Interview with a former Director (Planning), Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education, December 10, 2011.

¹⁸⁶ Focus Group Discussion with SMC of School 1. May 15, 2010

¹⁸⁷ Earlier, the same respondent was giving the example of government moratorium on recruitment of teachers for a long time as a constraining factor imposed on the schools.

¹⁸⁸ Focus Group Discussion with SMC of School 1. May 15, 2010

¹⁸⁹ Monthly Pay Order given to the teachers of nongovernment secondary schools from the Government as subvention to the school.

educational opportunities. In most cases, these students have moved to neighboring better performing schools which have been able to accommodate them. Evidence shows that there has not been a decline in enrolment owing to this reform (World Bank, 2006, pp. 14-15).

Obviously, “suspension” of MPO would ultimately mean “cancellation” as a school could not survive if its students moved to “neighboring better performing schools.” However, none in the Ministry of Education, the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education, BANBEIS or the World Bank could cite any empirical evidence about students moving to neighbouring schools. Clearly, this signifies a discursive weakness vis-à-vis the ethico-political discourse put forward by the school communities giving legitimacy to the resistance they mount against suspension of subvention on the ground of under-performance.

Had it worked the way it was prescribed by the multilateral institutions, as in business enterprises, the secondary education system in Bangladesh would have faced a disaster without safety measures in place. The World Bank estimated some 60 percent of the nongovernment schools fell into the category of ill-performing schools (World Bank, 2006, p. 14). The government took a graduated approach in cautioning and cancelling subvention. And then most of the schools survived also because of political interventions and the discretionary decisions of the Ministry, discussed earlier, due to the predicament the school faced in performing better. Much of these actions drew impetus from people resisting subscribing to the technical-rationalist discourse and challenging the premises of the imposed policies from the moral-ethical-political standpoint.

Some communities, in the past, had taken the extreme route of litigation against the Government, reportedly, on the ground that the Government did not have legal authority to suspend or cancel subvention. According to the regulations, if the Government wants to suspend or cancel subvention to all teachers of a particular school, nongovernment as they are, the action in this regard has to come from the SMC, not from the Ministry of Education. Precisely on this ground, many school communities went to the court when served a notice of suspension or cancellation of subvention and got a court verdict in their favour.¹⁹⁰ While the Government issued various orders and circulars from time to time on subvention under the insistence of the multilaterals supporting various

¹⁹⁰ Interview with the Project Director of an ADB assisted project. May 31, 2010

projects,¹⁹¹ no substantial legislation has ever been made to buttress such orders and circulars. This is clearly due to the refusal/resistance of various policy actors from the local to the national levels who became aware of all the implementation issues discussed here.

8.6 THE ART OF POLITICS OF EXCEPTION

Given the nature of policy processes in Bangladesh, the secondary schools do not have much to say at the policy making stage as to what governance reforms they want. While consultations take place these days before major policy formulations or policy enactment, representation from the schools and school communities is scanty. Besides, an under-current of uneven power-relations within the structure of consultation stifles open discussion making it difficult for the representatives of school communities in those intimidating environments to confront the policy initiatives that are detached from the ground realities. They are largely excluded from the policy discourse at the national level. However, at implementation, the communities and all other associated actors forge their own discourse as to what governance reforms are acceptable, what are to be resisted, what are to be subverted and what in the process are to be negotiated to safeguard the schools' interests and to retain their identities as owners of schools. For the school communities, endowed with very little power at their disposal in a highly centralised policy environment, this task is herculean only doable by forging right kind of alliance and being at the same time creative and tactical.

The Government and the schools accepted projects and the attendant educational development discourse as they brought a number of benefits. Approval of projects was often conditional upon accepting reform packages. However, when the schools were affected by government decision to suspend or cancel subvention, generally, the first reaction of the school was to garner political support to negotiate with the Ministry of Education, rather surreptitiously without much confrontation. The attempt was to individualise a common pronouncement of the Government for many schools into discrete cases. Quite often, this involved the political heavyweights drawn from the school's political constituency whose pressure the bureaucracy found difficult to withstand. While the general policy pronouncement was not contested, it was subverted

¹⁹¹ The imprint of such insistence would be found on the memo numbers, which would explicitly mention the projects or the multilateral institutions (e.g., SESIP, IDA etc.) signifying them as the iterative sources of such orders.

by individualisation of cases, and surreptitiously making each case an exception. Multilaterals were never party to these discussions.¹⁹² Eventually, it was found that most schools were exempted from the punishment, albeit on various grounds, much to the chagrin of the multilaterals.

Cancellation or suspension of subvention for a school always raised concern in the school communities. A democratic government could not but take into cognisance these public concerns. The official and dominant technical-rational discourse, which once gained its momentum in the interlocution between the multilaterals and the bureaucrats and in the ponderous documents of the multilaterals before being publicly manifested in the forms directives or circulars, found itself against a strong contender in the growing public discourse on provision of education from moral-ethical ground. The technical-rational discourse, mainly instrumented by the multilaterals, was further debilitated by the fact that in the public domain, it hardly had any voice. The bureaucrats, the regular counterparts of the multilaterals are also generally distanced from such public discourses. On the other hand, the schools and school communities forged a greater alliance by bringing in the potential political voices to their side. The local politicians, the pronounced or unpronounced custodians of the schools of their localities, would have more than one reason to support the cause of their schools. Teachers' unions also would have good reasons to support this, because they were the ones affected directly by suspension or cancellation of subvention as subvention came to the schools mostly in the form of salary support to the teachers. This came out quite strongly in an interview with a former teachers' union leader:

The politicians have much to lose or gain from the schools in their constituencies. Each child has a family and each family has a number of votes. Now if a school is closed for not having government support and if the children's future becomes uncertain because of this, the politicians will find it difficult to get support from these families during the next elections.

Such discursive battles and resistance are more episodic than of nation-wide nature, again for tactical reasons. Although such resistance has all the potential to be escalated to a national level, this has hardly happened in Bangladesh. A remedy is generally sought, as a first initiative, through a representation from the school to the Ministry of Education on the 'constraining circumstances'. If it does not work, the Member of Parliament from the constituency of the affected school would try to negotiate with the Secretary of the

¹⁹² Interview with a former Additional Secretary, Ministry of Education, July 26, 2011

Ministry of Education.¹⁹³ Most of the cases would be resolved at this stage, meaning the order for suspension/cancellation of subvention against the school would be withdrawn. If for any reason, it does not work, the MP will escalate it to the level of the Minister, his/her political colleague with a lateral possibility of teachers bringing it to the notice of the teachers' unions.¹⁹⁴ If the Minister, briefed by his/her subordinate bureaucrats, is too obstinate not to make any exception on the ground of varied realities, the MPs would look for allies from other MPs from other areas where schools might have been similarly penalised. Since the Ministry takes actions all at a time after the results of the terminal exams are out, it is not difficult to find allies to concertedly look for exceptions to policies. This is an important political act. Together they might take it up with the Prime Minister or raise it in Parliament.¹⁹⁵

A trajectory of any particular case of cancellation or suspension of subvention reveals that it increasingly moves away beyond the bounds of bureaucratic officialdom and of the technical-rational discourse to a public space. In the political domain, the logic of internal efficiency, strenuously put in place by the multilaterals, is displaced by the logic of equity and social justice in real terms. The end result is the politics of exception; while the government manages to maintain the overall policy regime that has been put in place and supported by multilaterals, while at the same time meeting the needs of local constituencies negatively affected by the newly introduced mechanism.

8.7 CONCLUSION

As evident from the discussion in this chapter, the technical-rational discourse of secondary education governance, albeit dominant at the national policy level, in many cases faced resistance and subversion from various actors, e.g., politicians, civil servants, teachers' unions and school communities. Tactics, timing and nature of resistance and subversion were different from different actors, all based on pragmatic judgment. Despite the protean nature of relationship between the national governments and the multilateral institutions, as seen over the decades, the governments needed support from the MLIs for educational development. And despite the fact that the governments' ability to negotiate

¹⁹³ As mentioned earlier, a former Additional Secretary said, on any normal working day, he would be visited by five/six MPs, mostly for "*tadbir*" (a recommendation for a person or some entity).

¹⁹⁴ No instance, however, has been reported about teachers' union agitation against cancellation of subvention for any particular school.

¹⁹⁵ Interview with a former Secretary, Ministry of Education, December 10, 2011.

on the policy prescriptions from the MLIs has changed considerably, their dependence on MLIs for credit and loan assistance for educational development is still there. Assistance obligated governments to accept policy prescription and enact policies. If the pragmatic judgment of the civil servants and the politicians in the government suggested otherwise, they resorted to what Steiner-Khamsi calls ‘policy bilingualism’ or what I have called ‘politics of exception’ and even resorted to subverting its own policy implementation. Sometimes, what was said was not written and what was written was not done.

On the question of increasing, cancelling or suspending subvention, the most vociferous actors are the teachers’ unions. The MLIs and the teachers unions have been mutually exclusionary in their respective discursive spaces. While the MLIs focus on efficiency and performance in constructing governance discourse, the teachers’ unions emphasise on more support needed by the schools to perform better. And they attempt to confine the discussion of subvention and support as an affair solely to be dealt with by the in-country actors.

The exogenous origin of the MLI-advanced technical-rational discourse on education governance brings into play other weaknesses. It has its own ruptures through which the counter-discourses of education governance emerge from the ground, particularly from the school communities. The communities take a pragmatic stance vis-à-vis the policy prescriptions and the projects that are used as conduits for implementation of policies. While they are keen to accept material support from the projects for pragmatic reasons, they are quite eclectic in accepting policy prescriptions. They mount a counter-discourse based on the realities on the ground garnering support from those who have political clout. It is evident that there are different sets of logic, each making claim to validity from a given position, which can lead to totally different discursive constructions on the same issues. Identities offered in line with the governance reforms proposed can be contested or negotiated when the ruptures and weaknesses of the dominant policy discourse are identified and inverted into remolding a new discourse from the logic of realities on the ground. As discussed in this chapter, the school communities do it quite aptly.

CHAPTER NINE: CONCLUSION

9.1 INTRODUCTION

The present study investigated the policy processes related to secondary education governance in Bangladesh covering a period from early 1990s to until 2012 focusing on the gradual and yet fundamental change in institutional governance of the Bangladesh secondary education system. The study focused on a number of key elements of policy discourses. These included government subvention to secondary education, the complex interplay of global, national, and local actors in this governance 'reform' processes, and various discursive products and interventions that informed the construction of knowledge of governance. The idea was to see how these elements transformed the policy environment and gradually changed the very nature of school-state relationship that attempted to create new identities and roles both for the school communities and the government in that relationship.

Most importantly, it examined the role and strategies of the multilateral institutions in advancing governance reforms of their choice that attempted to gradually change the school-state relationship and the responses from the school communities and other actors to this change. In doing so, the study examined the trajectory of the global neoliberal agenda for educational development, the discursive and referential web created by the MLIs and their influence on the local policy discourse and policy decisions on educational governance system in Bangladesh. In the process, the study observes that an educational governance system comes into existence which is modelled after private sector, follows much of the market principles and assigns new roles and identities to the state, the school communities and the School Management Committees (SMCs). The study traces the path of gradual change towards a new form of managerialism. However, the system in place is still not completely the new form of management of public institutions as observed in many Western countries and many remnants of the system of bureaucratic control are still there. Despite these, the move is clearly towards instilling a new form of managerialism.

The study makes use of a combination of interpretive trends in comparative education within the broader realm of critical theories and post-structuralism, rather eclectically. It embarked on a political reading of the education governance agenda of various actors with the presumption that the realm of policy formulation is intensely political and the actors involved in the process are political actors—be they endogenous

or exogenous. In particular, four layers of concepts constituted the study's theoretical framework, albeit without any rigid separation of these layers. First, the interface between the local and global policy environment was approached through the concept of policy borrowing/lending and recontextualisation (*a la* Steiner-Khamsi, Shriewer, Martinez and others). Second, knowledge construction to legitimise borrowed policies and structure governance practices was approached through the theories of discourse. Third, the changing school state relationship and the new mode of governance were viewed from the perspective of the architecture of self-governance mostly drawing from the Foucauldian notion of governmentality. Fourth, the actual response to new governance and possible re-articulation of identities on offer under the pursuit of new governance drew upon Steiner-Khamsi's notion of 'policy bilingualism, Alasuutari's concept of 'banal nationalism' and Pedroni's notion of re-articulation of the issues from the perspective of the recipients of policies. In this conclusion, I attempt to recapitulate some key findings of the study in an attempt to identify both similarities with overall conceptual framework of the study and nuances of the Bangladesh case.

9.2 POLICY BORROWING AND LENDING

In postcolonial society of Bangladesh educational policies have always been borrowed. However, two big projects supported by the World Bank and ADB in 1993 mark the beginning of significant engagement of multilateral institutions and of a new era in policy lending and borrowing. The research shows that from the very beginning of the policy borrowing process, conscious decisions were made as to what policies to implement and how to implement them, what strategies of internalisation were to be taken and how to evaluate the adopted/adapted policies. Such decisions were all political, so were the responses to policy borrowing from the recipients on the ground.

The act of policy lending and borrowing in Bangladesh is always strategic and is better understood with due attention to the prevalent discursive environment. Unlike in many countries where externalization is understood to provide legitimacy to borrowed policy immediately, in educational policy discourse in Bangladesh at the national level—much of what has been structured by the multilateral institutions—the 'external' reference societies have largely been kept hidden for strategic reasons. The policies—albeit mostly borrowed from those reference societies—sought legitimation from endogenous sources. The study shows that these endogenous sources, such as the national education policies and PRSPs, have been brought under the referential web—a circuit of knowledge

stemming and culminating in what the multilateral institutions themselves produce—through skillful deployment of a discursive strategy. Occasionally, as part of that strategy, the mark of exogenous origin of the policies proposed has been effaced and passed on as if they are endogenous as was the case with ADB’s Secondary Education Sector Development Plan.

This relates to the point that theorists like Steiner-Khamsi and Schriewer make about the local and national domestication, or indigenization of borrowed ideas and policies. Borrowed policies are discursively reconstituted internally, and this process of domestication is often driven by domestic political interests and pragmatic policy necessities. But the domesticating capacity of the recipient countries depends entirely on what Lingard after Bourdieu calls ‘national capital’ they have—nation-state’s capacity to mobilize institutional, cultural and economic resources to mitigate external pressures. In countries with low national capital such as aid-dependent developing countries, the process of policy borrowing is coercive, as receiving aid is conditional upon policy acceptance and implementation (Steiner-Khamsi, 2012b, p. 5).

However, the coercive policy prescriptions of the multilaterals in Bangladesh underwent a metamorphosis in the past two decades due to a number of reasons such as the country’s decreasing dependence on foreign aid, a pronounced rancour against the multilaterals from international political constituencies, particularly the civil society groups, and multilaterals’ own crisis of legitimation of the coercive practices in the face of which they were increasingly moving towards creating a discursive dominance. Bangladesh has come a long way since its dependence on foreign aid. Now foreign aid constitutes only less than 2 percent of its GDP, although a considerable chunk of its development budget still depends on foreign aid. On the other side, the multilaterals are also in constant search of political legitimacy of their work in the recipient countries like Bangladesh, particularly since the global movement against the multilaterals in the late 1990s. All these contribute to changing relations between the country and the MLIs. The distribution of power in negotiations between the government and the multilaterals leading the ‘donor community’ is also gradually changing. Within the countries like Bangladesh, there are varied perceptions about the support needed from the MLIs. Some NGOs, left-of-center political groups and think tanks are for outright rejection of the MLIs’ policy prescriptions. This has given rise to various social penchants making the government cautious, pondering and eclectic in accepting policy prescriptions from the MLIs and in presenting these policies to the Bangladesh society.

It is important that we understand that the policy receiving society is not a homogenous entity. There are often multiple voices, some subdued or suppressed at certain discursive moments due to internal hegemony or for the strategy of interplay with external policy actors and others are distinctly audible and unmerged and willing to put up a resistance against the policies they find detrimental to their interests. Together, they represent a conglomeration of diverse political interests with a real possibility of one being set against the other having its implication for varied level of policy reception or even rejection as Steiner-Khamsi observed also in Mongolia. In such a politically charged environment, the government's policy choices or the overt responses to policy advances are predicated by a number of considerations which are often strategic and nuanced. The choices are not always rational, they are often economic and political choices, driven by reasons of building coalitions with international communities and receiving much needed financial assistance.

At the same time, the Government needs to manage its internal political constituencies which are sometimes hostile to the international actors. This often leads to 'double-speak' from the government, a phenomenon Steiner-Khamsi describes as 'policy bilingualism.' In the Bangladesh case, as we have seen in this study, while this policy bilingualism attempts to satisfy both the international and local actors, it also deploys an uncertainty in the policy making process. Uncertainty unleashed various propensities. It also provided incentive to policy subversion in the form of 'politics of exception', i.e., finding exceptions to rules and policies for political reasons.

Policy advances by neoliberal institutions and policy choices of receiving governments also stem from a yearning for legitimacy both from policy lenders and policy borrowers (Waldow, 2012, p. 417). Policy borrowers in different countries follow different strategies to earn this legitimacy. Whether the country should foreground the externality or internality or the hybridity of reform ideas depends on the political context (Takayama, 2013, p. 143). On the other hand, the policy lenders survive on lending policies which Steiner-Khamsi terms as 'export for survival' that inspires international organisations to lend educational policies apart from the 'economic gains associated with educational trade' (Steiner-Khamsi, 2004, pp. 204-6).

Bangladesh being a democracy with a vibrant civil society, any public discussion on educational policies and governance reforms has pegged upon an implicit yearning for political legitimacy. The discursive proclivities have been quite fascinating with a continued tension between an in-country anti-neoliberal discourse predominantly led by

various civil society groups and left-of-center political groups and the overwhelming role of the MLI discursive products that have constantly tried to drag policies into their own referential web of technical-rational discourse. Sometimes, it has been enormously confrontational, as was in the case of introduction of unitrack curriculum. In some instances, it has been a case of mutual exclusion giving rise to two parallel policy discourses without any point of convergence, as was the case with the issue of subvention. But whether it is subtle or open, this tension has always been fraught with the possibility of confrontation. Such possibility had implication for MLI strategies either of exclusion of potential adversaries from policy dialogue, or of steering covert policy decisions in association with the bureaucrats of the Government, or of presenting policies as endogenous. Each of these strategies bore the risk of ruptures and of intrinsic weaknesses which put the legitimacy of the policies at risk.

The case of Bangladesh secondary education also shows that dominant reform discourses are not equally dominant at all times and on all issues. For the most part since the early 1990s, the elected governments and the civil servants have depended on the multilateral institutions for interpretation and expansion of education governance policies and preparation of actionable plans through technical assistances and execution of such plans through various projects. The multilateral institutions interpreted policies and prepared development plans, purportedly based on the national policies, as was the case with the education policies of 1997 and 2010. In doing this, they recast and redefined policies to advance their own policy agenda and match their own investment plans. The numerous documents they prepared in this connection gave rise to a field of knowledge for policy actions visibly subduing the local sources of policy knowledge. However, this was also the time when the country's location in the development spectrum was shifting from one of more dependence on foreign aid to less dependence. On the other hand, the strategies of policy diffusion of the global policy actors also had their own vulnerabilities increasing over time in the face of increasing skepticism about the ideological baggage of the development model they advanced. As we notice in the Bangladesh case, the educational development discourse advanced by the MLIs, despite their overall dominance at the national level, was always truncated and exclusionary, often desperately trying to keep it as an affair between the civil servants and themselves. Such an approach stemmed from the vulnerability of the MLIs not being able to deal with some of the political underpinnings of the policies they wanted to install in Bangladesh. This opened up crevices for alternative imaginings and legitimizing actions contrary to what the global

policy actors desired. The Bangladesh example shows that the local actors made use of these crevices, identified the loopholes in the policies advanced and put forward their own rationale for non-acceptance of policies. The responses came into play not only through negotiations and agreed variations but also through various strategies of subversion, procrastination, deferment and withdrawal, as permitted by the power at the disposal of the actors at the receiving end.

9.3 PRODUCTION OF POLICY KNOWLEDGE

The thesis shows that the MLIs were more or less successful in imposing a discursive dominance, at least at the national level. The grand policy narratives of the country (e.g., the national education policies, poverty reduction strategy papers and five-year-plans) have profusely borrowed from the MLI documents, either directly or indirectly, in defining the problems, interpreting them and in finding solutions. The MLI documents had a regenerative impact on knowledge and construction of truth, characterized by inclusion of certain issues and exclusion of others in defining the problems to suit the kind of solution they wanted to advance. The main instrument in this discursive formation was the projects supported by MLIs and all the documents associated with the projects.

The study traced the path of multilateral influence on the policy processes as they came into existence through the educational development projects. Projects were the sites for implementation of borrowed policies and governance practices and validation of experiences providing rationale for large scale replication of practices. The lessons learned from a project have often been structured in a way to legitimise subsequent project interventions. The policies tested under a particular project only gave credence to scale up the same policy. For example, the proxy means testing to identify poorer students, even before a full scale study, was recommended for scale-up in new upazilas under the Secondary Education Quality and Access Enhancement Project supported by WB. The national governments needed support from the multilateral institutions to implement projects for provision of education, expansion of excess and enhancing quality, but projects also brought in policies and practices, which were made acceptable through a complex discursive process largely dominated by the multilateral institutions.

My analysis of MLIs' project and policy documents has shown that the development discourse brought into play by the multilaterals is abundantly strewn with elements of market parlance. All ideas, categories and concepts are refashioned to celebrate a conquest of market in education. The goal of education to create fuller citizens

of the state or to develop into well-rounded human beings endowed with human qualities like compassion and purpose of being together with others is surreptitiously relegated in order to bring to the fore the concepts like human capital, marketability of skills, survival of schools in competition with others, parental choice, etc. To make parental choice actionable, the long-upheld notion of ‘community’ that has been at the heart of secondary school system in Bangladesh has been gradually disaggregated. A nebulous notion of ‘community’ is kept alive only at the rhetorical level and the focus is sharpened on the disaggregated elements of the community—the parents, the *Abhibhabaks* (guardians) who are trainable, segregated, weakened, stripped of collective strength, remoldable and deployable and easier to operationalise in a neoliberal system as rational choice makers whose choice can be influenced through a number of orchestrated discursive moves.

The study shows that the multilaterals rearticulated the ‘community schools’ as ‘private schools’ steering a fundamental shift in the very notions of the schools. These ‘private schools’ receive subvention from the Government and are discursively reproduced as delivering public good under a ‘public-private partnership,’ which is then celebrated as a successful model. Then, private sector principles are invoked to make them even more successful and to restrict the state’s role in the ‘businesses of secondary education’ and giving subsidy to them. Under the projects, nongovernment schools get into a partnership with the government based on an agreement, a memorandum of understanding, in other words, a contract—an arrangement where the schools are seen as service providers, the parents and students as consumers of these services and the government as the distant facilitator/regulator of the market transaction. With reconstitution of provision of secondary education as a private enterprise, the projects, though the use of government mechanisms, put in place the regulatory regime modeled after private sector regulations. All these are geared toward changing the long-standing school state relationship.

Furthermore, I have shown that the policy knowledge produced by MLIs poured back not only into education policies and educational policy thinking, but also into the grand development narratives of the country, like PRSPs and five-year plans. PRSPs and five-year plans have their own obligations to follow neoliberal principles to receive donor funds. A harmony between the country’s grand development policies and the education policies legitimise each other in that larger context of overall development discourse. A closed discursive field is thus enforced, at the national level (but not at the implementation level though as we discussed earlier and will come back to the point

soon), where policies accepted for implementation under projects, national education policies and the grand development narratives are made to buttress each other, complement each other and draw legitimacy from each other.

The entire exercise of formulating governance policies is better understood if we reckon policies as discourse—a discourse that attempts to define what knowledge is valid, a discourse that makes claims to truth in terms of what the problems are and how to resolve them, a discourse that congeals authority around itself not through coercion, but through catalysing acquiescence through various discursive apparatuses. At the national policy level in Bangladesh, such a discourse, primarily advanced by the multilaterals, appear to declare conquest despite instances of resistance, subversion or policy doublespeak from the government. However, responses to this carefully structured discursive dominance, particularly from the ground, belie the apparent dominance. They are nuanced, creative, and strategic and are always in search of the ruptures in the dominant policy discourse to make opportunistic use of their vulnerabilities, mould a counter-discourse based on their own understanding of realities and rationale and put up a resistance as I'll discuss later in the chapter.

9.4 NEW MANAGERIALISM OR A HYBRID GOVERNANCE?

While projects supported by the multilaterals in Bangladesh create policy knowledge, define and resolve problems, in the process, they instill practices that give rise to new system of education governance. The analyses in this study of the policy tenets and the practices brought into play by the multilaterals through various projects in Bangladesh decipher a pattern, a system of practices consistently trying to move the educational governance towards a goal. Premised upon early visible successes such as in expansion of girls' educations, development projects of the multilaterals earned legitimacy to move policies towards that goal. The study shows that from the very beginning the multilaterals expressed discontent with the way subvention was given to nongovernment schools. While they could not do much about this at the beginning, they introduced conditional cash transfer (CCT) which created a dependence on the support from multilaterals. Then the next move was to reconstruct government subvention, first tying it to performance, then bringing in the notions of choice and competition in according subvention. CCTs from FSSAP and FSSAP II from the World Bank and SESIP and SESDP from ADB gave way to the next step of linking subvention to performance under ESDSCs of the World Bank eventually to move towards a complete overhaul through grants-based financing.

This led to preparing school communities and SMCs under SEQAEP of the World Bank and SESDP of ADB through extensive training on the parameters of school performance and monitoring and redefining the roles and identities of the ground level actors. All these indicate a method, a calculated move towards a new system of school governance.

The study draws upon Foucault's notion of governmentality and the interrelated features of neoliberalism that Peters discusses based on the notion of governmentality (Peters, 2001, pp.68-69) in understanding the new managerialism being introduced by the neoliberalist entities in Bangladesh. Even before the 1990s, the multilateral institutions like the World Bank advanced a judicio-legal discourse in a series of country economic memoranda to interrogate the provision of subvention to the nongovernment schools, its rationale and its efficiency much from the view point of enterprise culture where nongovernment schools, perceived as private schools, are expected to be on their own. The study shows that multilateral institutions brought into play a narrative of the problems prevalent in secondary education that legitimised a particular construct of the problems and a solution of their choice. It was shown as a problem of subvention not being tied to performance, it was a problem of the criteria for school recognition not being strictly followed, it was a problem of judicio-legal framework being too weak to be enforced in the face of over politicisation of school management and it was a problem of schools and SMCs failing to manage themselves within the given governance system.

There were, however, genuine problems with school management. The managerial reforms, advanced by MLIs, were premised upon the real issues related to management of subvention. The policy discourses of the multilateral institutions picked up these issues and attempted to respond to the real concerns of the people. However, as we noticed, they articulated these real concerns into their own preferred political discourses to make sense of the 'past failures' in their preferred way and attempted to normalise the whole assemblage of their preferred managerial mode of governance drawn from neoliberal market principles.

Subvention was an important lever at the disposal of the Government, and for that matter, of the multilateral institutions working through the Government. The present study shows how the notion of subvention has been reconstructed to make it useful for governance reform. The notion of subvention was changed from one of unobtrusive support to nongovernment schools to a condition for governance reforms. There was a consistent effort to tie it to performance to be measured through a set of indicators. Under the insistence of the multilateral institutions, gradually a new contractual arrangement

took shape between the state and the school, replacing the previous one from the pre-MLI era, premised upon subvention attempting to change the school state relationship and the school community relationship permanently and irreversibly. The idea was to delink teachers' salaries from subvention and convert the system into one of grants-based financing solely premised upon performance as is the case in an enterprise culture. This needed a new management system.

Acceptance of this new management has to be voluntary which happens with acceptance of the system at the cognitive level and hence we notice the avalanche of knowledge products, new notions, reconceived categories, reconstituted identities, redefined responsibilities and numerous training programs for various actors at the receiving end—all in consonance with the tenets of the enterprise culture legitimizing a shift in the very nature of education—from one as public good to one of many commodities sold in market place. Perceptions of who does what for whom are all 'reoriented' and are strenuously made to meet the market principles. Accountabilities and measures to monitor accountabilities of all those in the production line—the teacher, the communities and the school management committees were reoriented. Because of the vastness of the production process spread all over the country, the government simply cannot supervise the whole production process. Therefore, management system needs to be remolded into a system of self-government,' drawing upon private sector management systems of self-management of individuals and institutions.

However, the study shows that the system of secondary education governance being introduced in Bangladesh is not fully managerial in structure and essence. It is a hybrid of input based bureaucratic management still guided by market principles and an output and performance based form of new managerialism. While this study has not fully addressed the reason behind this hybridity, perhaps the answer can be found in the playful relationship between the multilaterals and the bureaucrats of the government and the overdependence of both the government and the multilaterals on the bureaucrats who are reluctant to give up their authorities. However, this hybridity does not stand on the way of modelling the secondary education system after private sector enterprises. Indeed, the governance system has increasingly moved towards a mechanism to bring competition among schools and consumer choice to the fore premised upon public knowledge of school performance.

The study examines the deeper implication of such a construction of the educational system which is quite significant. In a way, the system attempts to

degovernmentalise the state leaving room for market which would eventually take over the government's role. Such transformation paves the way for a consumer-driven form of educational provision. Education provision is 'contracted out' to the communities and they are expected to perform against certain monitoring indicators. Under the projects, as we have discussed in this study, the SMCs are extensively trained both to be reconstituted as actors to achieve the indicators and as subjects willing to be ruled according to the new managerial mode.

9.5 RESISTANCE, SUBVERSION AND RE-ARTICULATION

The actors in the policy arena in Bangladesh from whom some forms of resistance or subversion were mounted included politicians, civil servants, teachers' unions and school communities. Despite the protean nature of relationship between the national governments and the multilateral institutions, as seen over the decades, and the changing ability of the governments to negotiate on the policy prescriptions from the MLIs, dependence on MLIs for credit and loan assistance for educational development has always been there. This obligated governments to accept policy prescription. However, the responses were often tactical and nuanced, particularly when the governments were not fully convinced of the merit of a policy prescription or of the implement ability on political grounds. If judgment of the government suggested otherwise, they resorted to what Steiner-Khamsi calls 'policy bilingualism' or 'policy double-speak.' Sometimes what was said was not written and what was written was not done. They even resorted to subverting policy implementation in the form of what can be named 'the politics of exception.'

As was the case in Bangladesh, the civil servants, the immediate interlocutors with the MLIs, were sometimes skeptical about practicality of some governance policies or not convinced of the appropriateness of the policies suggested by the MLIs. For example, MLIs wanted to replace salary support to nongovernment school teachers with a grants-based financing system fully linked to school performance. Both ESDSCs of the World Bank and SESIP of ADB insisted on this. In order to get assistance from WB and ADB, the government agreed to this. However, they knew from the beginning of such discussions that for political reasons, this was simply not implementable, nor they wanted this to be implemented. While the government took financial assistance both from WB and ADB, in order to subvert the policy process, they dragged the policy into their own

official discourse, encumbered it with a number of ‘needed’ explanations, subjected it to various regulatory requirements, imposed a number of bureaucratic snags and thus procrastinated its implementation to such a level that the policy initiative lost its momentum. On the other hand, sometimes they subverted policy implementation by introducing what may be called ‘the politics of exception.’ For example, at the national level, they accepted policies of cancelling subvention of the schools not meeting performance criteria. They did it to get support from the multilaterals, issued directives and circulars, but then cancelled each action by foregrounding the reasons for exception.

With regard to the policy responses from the ground, this study draws upon Pedroni’s study of the voucher program extended to Milwaukee’s communities of color and what Pedroni calls the ‘momentary strategy’ of the voucher receiving families. The resource-starved nongovernment secondary schools of Bangladesh are willing to take support from the projects that provide tuition support to girls and poorer students which increases enrollment. The projects also support much needed in-service training of teachers. They help establish schools in underserved areas of the country. If the projects support establishment of various lab facilities, reconstruction after natural calamities, these are also welcome. But a closer scrutiny of such acceptance shows that this is more a ‘momentary strategy’ from the school communities. The projects give them the support for survival and create a space for engagement with the government. Their acceptance of bits and parts of the project package is eclectic and tactical.

If we look at the spectrum of activities launched under projects, we notice not all of them receive blanket acceptance from the school communities. The situation is akin to what Pedroni describes the ‘tactical choices groups of parents and guardians’ make in ‘negotiating their sets of perceived educational options on a terrain that is not largely of their own choosing’ (Pedroni, 2007, p. 6). The school communities are under considerable dilemma. They need support from projects, but projects come as a package with many measures some of which are not of their liking. Making a tactical choice and executing it is not an easy task in the given distribution of power between the government (through which the MLIs operate) and the school communities. Still, they re-articulate their concerns, as in the case of attempted delinking of subvention from teachers’ salaries. In doing so, they both deploy their own preferred elements to reconstruct the rationale for government support in the form of salary support to teachers, and build political alliance either through teachers’ unions or with local political representatives who are dependent on the school communities for political support.

Strategically, the schools communities both take up the support offered to them through projects, but then also refuse to accept the subject position offered to them and reconstitute the notions of what the school-state relationship should be. They find the ruptures and political vulnerabilities in the given educational reform discourse, broaden the parameters of this discourse with their own terms and re-articulate their own concerns in the form of a counter-discourse which is also politically legitimate at the popular level. This political reconfiguration of their concerns garners strong support from the ground. When the popular discourse is drawn to a political space, it denies entry to the MLIs making them completely vulnerable to such discursive formation. Like in the case of Milwaukee, we notice school communities' acceptance of the package from projects in Bangladesh is unstable. Their responses are strategic and opportunistic. And their agencies are asserted in multiple ways, most prominently through alliance building. When it comes to taking away the rights and authorities from the school communities, they resist. They even go to the court to get injunction on government move. This was the case when the Ministry wanted to take away responsibilities of teacher recruitment from SMCs and give it to an upazila level committee headed and dominated by the upazila level bureaucrats.

The study shows that the communities have serious contention about the concept of 'politicisation' with MLIs and the bureaucrats in the Government as many of the attempted governance measures were premised upon 'depoliticisation' of the SMCs. SMCs are elected bodies and politics, among other things, represents interests of various kind. Those who better articulate the interest of the school communities and those who are perceived to better serve the interest of the school are elected. This study shows that the perception of politics and its role in school communities are much more nuanced. By depoliticisation, the MLIs attempt to impose a pre-emptive discursive closure to any contention. This attempted silencing itself is a political move towards articulation of the problems by the MLIs to advance certain preferred reforms of their choice. Understanding this would be a right step to disentangle the discursive construct of the multilaterals, and suggest alternative solutions. To rearticulate the real concerns of the people into a different set of political discourses, we notice, people on the ground aptly find the ruptures in the MLI-led policy discourses and advance their own rationale for resistance to the governance reforms they dislike as an important part of their strategy.

The first rupture is the absence of the MLIs in the political domain, particularly the one constructed by the teachers' unions, a very significant force in secondary

education. The MLIs and the teachers' unions are mutually exclusionary in their respective discursive spaces. While the MLIs focus on efficiency and performance in constructing governance discourse, the teachers' unions emphasise on more support needed by the schools to perform better and they use their political capital to press their demand home. And they attempt to confine the discussion of subvention and support as an affair solely to be dealt with by the in-country actors.

The exogenous origin of the MLI-advanced technical-rational discourse on education governance in Bangladesh has other ruptures too that allow counter-discourses of education governance to emerge from the ground. One strategy, frequently used by local actors, is to drag the technical-rational discourse into an endogenous ethical-political discursive terrain. The exogenous origin of the MLIs and their education governance policy reforms discourse faces a foreclosure when drawn into the political terrain which is an exclusive domain of the local actors. The counter-discourse, thus forged, bring to the center the real life experiences of the schools and school communities with logic of equity, ethicality of supporting community initiatives and sense of social justice. For example, on the question of subvention, the school communities came up with a different set of logic, all valid from their respective positions leading to a totally different discursive construction. If the school performance is measured on the basis of results in the terminal examination, then bad performance in just one subject can affect the results of the entire school as is the system in Bangladesh. This is often the case with English and Mathematics. Bad terminal examination results could be the function of a single teacher not performing well or could be the function other constraints. For example, a school, particularly in the remote and inaccessible areas, may not find a good teacher willing to live in the remote areas. But when subvention is discontinued, the entire school suffers and if the school is closed, then education stops for all children of the school. These arguments are very different from the logic of punishing schools for bad performance opulent in MLI documents. When it comes to taking punitive measures against schools, the affected schools summon all their discursive resources, earlier sidelined or subdued or made to be dormant, to the fore in the form of a quasi-judicial public discourse on the ground of social justice and equity. Despite many recommendations about rationalizing subvention and containing its growth on the ground of limiting public expenditures, it was difficult for the multilaterals to ask governments to overlook the issues of 'social justice' and 'equity'. The civil servants in the government and the multilateral institutions found

themselves at a disadvantage in the face of the moral-ethical discourse, now brought to the fore by the victim schools and school communities.

The political overtone in articulating these moral-ethical arguments, particularly by the teachers' unions, can hardly be overlooked. While bad performance is a real problem, we notice the issue is being constructed into two different sets of discourses by the actors in the policy arena and interestingly, these discourses do not have any meeting point due to mutual exclusion of the actors in policy discourses. The actors like teachers' unions, local level politicians and school communities contest proposed governance reforms through remolding a new discourse from the logic of realities seen from a different perspective.

In Bangladesh's political environment, which is dominated by identity consciousness and left-of-center social discourse, much of the policy discussion is influenced by what Alasuutari calls 'banal nationalism' (Alasuutari, 2013). This restrains the MLIs from portraying the policy recommendations as exogenous for strategic reasons. MLIs strenuously try to efface the traces of exogenous nature of reforms and put an endogenous garb to make them internally acceptable. However, this strategy has an inevitable side-effect, unintended by the MLIs, i.e., the discursive supremacy of everything endogenous. This, at the moments of contention, debilitates the MLIs—calling into question the legitimacy of these exogenous actors as policy players. Many of the National Education Commissions of the past did not even consult the multilateral institutions in the process of formulation of education policies although, as we discussed, the discursive influence of these institutions was quite prominent at least at the national policy level.

The second rupture stems from the use of subvention to affect the MLI desired changes in education governance. The very nature of subvention poses a major weakness. Subvention, the way it is structured, has to be given in full or denied—nothing in between—unless the modalities of provision of subvention are changed. Subvention in that case needs to be delinked from teachers' salaries and take the 'school' as the unit for receiving subvention. Politically, this is extremely sensitive. Secondary school teachers constitute a huge pressure group in the country's bipolar political system. Besides, the country is far from achieving universal secondary education. While access is still a major issue, discontinuity of subvention, on which the rural schools survive, immediately triggers an intense ethical-political battle in an environment where all political actors tend to describe education as a right. Since the provision of secondary education is almost

completely in the hands of the nongovernment providers who largely survive on subvention, the school communities and their allies have always fought the battle rather vigorously to retain subvention in the political terrain. For MLIs, subvention proved to be a weak instrument to affect the changes they desired.

The third rupture results from the fact that the MLIs attempted to gradually construct the governance system as a grants-based system congruent with a new public management of the secondary schools without much rationale advanced in favour of this move. The system intends to offer differential rewards to the schools based on their performance. The new system also attempts to forge new roles and new identities for the actors on the ground. This grants-based system is still not in place. The MLIs are trying to install and mainstream performance measures into the school culture through a set of performance indicators and trying to implant new roles and new identities through training. This is a calculated move toward the goal of creating a grants-based financing system mostly steered through the projects the MLIs support. However, the goal has not been made quite explicit to the school communities again because of the political sensitivity. Such a transition is fraught with serious political implications. Although at the national policy discourse, the MLIs have deployed the idea, rather carefully, none of the governments in the past 15 years has ventured to make any public pronouncement about this transition.

This brings into play another aspect of the discursive rupture. When silence about intention becomes a strategic discursive move, it also becomes vulnerable to alternative imaginings and to contending construction of reform discourses. The discursive stance also subjects itself to questions that it does not want to answer. In absence of information about the 'desired' goal, questions surface about the necessity of an elaborate set of indicators, the role and identities of the schools and school communities on offer, which are then resisted both discursively and in implementation. Through the ruptures emerge alternative discourses as has been the case in Bangladesh. The school communities have rearticulated their concerns with a different set of discursive elements all drawn into an ethico-political terrain.

Fourthly, to offset the weaknesses mentioned above, i.e., the nature of subvention, the absence of grants-based financing system and the discursive ruptures, the MLIs introduced a number of rewards and incentives through projects and got the schools into contracts in order to steer them towards the performance based reward culture, and thus gradually introduce new identities and new management. The schools and school

communities needed support from projects, which are government projects, did not have objection to rewards and incentive, but the necessity of the new identities and new management was not made clear to them, except in banal and superficial terms that the schools needed to perform better. Implementation of the new management, therefore, never met with acceptance from the school communities.

Because of the very structure of the policy environment in Bangladesh, communities cannot participate meaningfully in early deliberations of policy formulation process. They come in contact with policies when they are implemented. But then they react, respond and often resist strategically deploying all the counter-discursive resources they have at their disposal.

9.6 RESEARCH NEEDED IN FUTURE

The secondary education system in Bangladesh is still largely a virgin field for research. While the present research focuses mainly on the policy processes, the actors in the governance policy arena and the results on a broader temporal perspective, there could be a number of in-depth studies on each of the issues like contribution of subvention to increased access and quality in secondary education, interface between secondary education boards and the school management committees, various aspects of secondary education curricula, impact of religious education on the cultural fabric of the country, examination systems reforms, specific recommendations from each National Education Commission, quality of teacher recruitment and training, etc. Except in the areas of religious education and some sporadic and small scale studies on the controversial uni-track system, research in these areas has been scanty. Financing of secondary education has always been based on ad hoc decisions of the government with arbitrary increase or decrease in allocation without any study. All these basic elements of secondary education in Bangladesh need to be researched.

There is an on-going discussion about the establishment of a permanent National Education Commission, often recommended by the National Education Commissions, which is not buttressed by any in-depth study. A commission like this, if well-resourced, can broaden the knowledge base of the education system to withstand the discursive onslaught of the multilateral on the same plain. It can also have some experts as permanent staff/members to meet the experts/specialists from the multilaterals to take the negotiations to an elevated level and put scrutiny on all interventions on behalf of the

government or as an independent body. Establishment of such a body should be preceded by a comprehensive study to give it the right architecture.

It would be to the advantage of the country to make the policy environment more inclusive taking into cognizance the possible role of various stakeholders including civil society groups either through permanent education commission or through other measures. At the same time, it would be interesting to see how these civil society groups, particularly the education NGOs, relate to different donors and multilateral institutions. While the present study hints at this possible role and the relations between the NGOs and the multilateral institutions, a more in-depth study would be useful.

The present study has examined the roles of other actors like school communities, teachers' unions, and various parts of the government vis-à-vis the educational policy processes. However, each of these actors deserves in-depth case studies which, collectively, would aid a fuller understanding of the policy environment. There were a number of litigations on governance issues in secondary education. The data on these litigations were difficult to find. A separate research endeavor on these litigations may surface some interesting aspects of the contentions on governance.

The triad of politicians in government, civil servants and multilateral institutions in policy deliberations presents an interesting case for studies. Particularly, the relations between the civil servants and MLIs demand more investigation.

While the present study focuses on the larger picture, there should be a series of case studies on externalization/domestication based on specific policy prescriptions of the MLIs. One way to deal with these specific cases would be to undertake a series of critical discourse analyses. In brief, the field of secondary education in Bangladesh deserves many more studies.

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