

SURVEY OF DISTANCE EDUCATION IN PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BANGLADESH

COUNTRY PROFILE *Bangladesh is a small coastal country in south central Asia covering an area of 55,598 square miles (143,998 square kilometers). It is bordered on the southeast by Myanmar, the south by the Bay of Bengal, the west and the north by the Indian state of West Bengal, the north and the east by the Indian state of Assam. The capital is Dhaka.*

Economy, Population and Demography: One of the poorest among the developing countries of Asia and the Pacific region. The country's economy is predominantly agrarian. Agriculture accounts for half of the GDP and about two-thirds of employment. The population is over 108 million (1991). Population density is 750 per sq. km. and the growth rate is 2.16%. There are 106 males per 100 females. The infant mortality rate is 98 per 1,000. Life expectancy at birth is 56. People are strongly attached to the land. The literacy rate of people 5 years old and above, according to 1981 census, was 23.8%. Per capita income in Bangladesh is 170 US dollars. Cereals, principally rice, are the main crops. About 69% of the total work force is employed in agriculture, followed by transport, sales and services. Many Bangladesh workers are employed overseas in the Middle-East.

Language of Instruction: Bangla and is also the national language (also called Bengali). Bangla is spoken by all except a small ethnic minority.

Educational System: The present education system is based mainly on the Western model. A number of old indigenous institutions are, however, still in existence. Primary education is free. The Primary Education (Compulsory) Act was passed in February, 1990. It has become effective in 68 out of 487 upazilas from January, 1992. There are many non-government (private) institutions of different types and standards. Non-government secondary schools receive up to 70% of their teacher's salary support from the government. There are nine universities with Faculties, Departments and Institutes. Each university has its separate Statutes, Ordinances and sets of rules. The latest university began in July, 1992. Of the nine universities, one is the University of Engineering and Technology and another one is the Agriculture University. Besides, an affiliating university and an Open University are being organized likely to start functioning sometime in 1992. The universities are autonomous institutions receiving over 90% of their budget allocation, through the University Grants Commission, from the government. Parallel

to the general stream of education, there is a religious stream, known as Madrasah Education. The total number of institutions under this stream - from pre-primary to post-graduate level - is over 80,000. Approximately 50% of these institutions are mosque-based informal schools and their principal curriculum is to teach reading of the holy Quoran (the holy book of the Muslims). Education expenditure is 1.7% of GDP. The annual average cost per student comes to 10 US dollars for primary education, \$61 for secondary and higher education, \$202 for vocational education and teacher training, \$536 for university education and \$625 for education in specialized colleges and institutes.

*Communication
Infra-structure:*

During 1985-90, communication facilities were still inadequate. The entire country is covered by radio and television with nine radio stations and sub-stations and 10 television stations/relay stations. Postal services, although providing unsatisfactory services, are available almost nation-wide through 7,590 post-offices (1985); 1,518 in the urban areas and 6,072 in the rural areas comprising 68,000 villages. Telephone services are gradually being extended to an increasing number of new townships and clients, with a telephone density of 0.23 per 100 population by 1989/90. As of 1989-90, there were 205,500 telephones. Telegraph and telex services are also insufficient and not satisfactory. There are 119 daily newspapers, including more than 38 in metropolitan Dhaka, with wide variations in their circulation. There is no stated communication policy for education or distance education.

**OVERVIEW OF
DISTANCE
EDUCATION:**

Distance education in Bangladesh began in 1985 when a post-graduate degree programme, Bachelor of Education, was offered through distance education by the National Institute of Educational Media and Technology (NIEMT). NIEMT was established in 1983 from the merging of the Audio-Visual Education Centre (AVEC-1962) and the School Broadcasting Programme (SBP-1980 under Japanese funding). NIEMT introduced the B.Ed. programme through distance education with a view to improving professional competence of untrained working secondary school teachers without dislodging them from schools. Later in 1986, the organization and management of NIEMT and that of the distance education programme were merged into one institution under the "Bangladesh Institute of Distance Education" (BIDE). BIDE was responsible for the Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.), the only distance education programme in the country, in addition to the existing non-distance education B.Ed. programme. However, the distance education B.Ed programme lasted for only three years as it was suspended in 1988.

Factors Leading

The major factor leading to the establishment of distance education

Factors Leading to Establishment of Distance Education Programmes:

The major factor leading to the establishment of distance education in Bangladesh is the need to upgrade the professional quality of secondary school teachers. Over 90% of the secondary schools are non-government institutions and about 70% of their teachers are untrained. The academic standard of the majority of these teachers is rather poor but they have been, and will remain, in the teaching profession. With a view to boosting teachers' morale and giving incentive to their improved professional performance, pay scales of teachers in approximately 10,000 non-government secondary schools have been raised. However, for obvious reasons it has neither been possible to increase the intake capacity of the existing 10 TTC's nor to establish new TTCs for training of the back-log of these untrained teachers. In this context NIEMT started, through distance education, a B.Ed programme, a post-graduate degree.

Year of Establishment:

1985 when the first batch of students were registered under the NIEMT's post-graduate degree Bachelor of Education (B.Ed) programmes.

Media for Distance Education:

(1) Printed textbooks, (2) audio cassettes, (4) regional centres, (5) radio programmes, (5) television programmes, (6) tutorials and demonstration, and (7) bulletins.

Sources of Financial Supports:

(1) the Government through the Ministry of Education's Director-General of Secondary and Higher Education (DGSHE), mostly for staff salary and maintenance costs; (2) the grants given by the Boards of Intermediate and Secondary Education, and the National Curriculum and Textbook Board for facilitating the management of distance education, and (3) students' fees.

The B.Ed. distance education programme was introduced as an experimental programme to be contained within the regular budget of BIDE without additional financial support. The DGSHE gave BIDE *taka* 10 *lakh* (US\$30,000) in the 1985/86 fiscal year and *taka* 40 *lakh* (US\$120,000) in the following year for meeting initial costs of the distance education programme. The grants received from the four Boards was *taka* 40 *lakh* (US\$72,000). Each student of BIDE pays a fee of approximately 50 US dollars.

Trends of Development in Distance Education:

Since BIDE's distance education programme lasted only for three years, there are some irregular students yet to complete the course and seek the degree. Registration in the programme has remained suspended with effect from 1988. The question of growth and expansion, therefore, does not arise. The only hope is that when the Open University starts, the distance education programme is likely to be revived.

Legal Status: Distance education, in fact, has a firm policy commitment written in both the Second and the Third Five Year Plans (TFYP). In the 1980-85 SFYP, it was stated that "...Correspondence and evening courses will be introduced for training primary and secondary teachers; Radio and TV will also be used." And from the 1985-90, "...Audio-visual aids, viz, charts, posters, globes, maps, etc., will be supplied to primary and secondary schools under the BIDE project. TV sets, video tapes, cassettes, tape recorders, films, slides, film projectors, slide projectors will be supplied to TTC's, NIEAER and NAPE under the BIDE project,..." and "...Correspondence courses in secondary teachers training will be experimented under a pilot project."

For NIEMT, the predecessor of BIDE, the University of Rajshahi passed an Ordinance on 28.10.84 offering the Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) course through the distance education system in coordination with the NIEMT in Dhaka, UR's Faculty of Education, and Teachers' Training Colleges. The UR agreed to award the B.Ed. degree to such candidates as would fulfill the requirements of the programme, as specified by BIDE. The B.Ed. distance education programme of BIDE was introduced with the approval by the president of the country in June 1985. No law was passed or government executive order issued to give distance education a legal footing.

Aims: Generally, to upgrade the professional quality of primary and secondary school teachers. As specified by BIDE, it is aimed (1) To enable untrained secondary teachers to receive professional training at low cost by staying where they are, through correspondence materials, audio cassettes, radio and television programmes, tutorial services, demonstration teaching, and organization of winter and summer schools; (2) To improve professional competence of untrained working secondary teachers; (3) To improve the quality of teaching-learning in secondary schools by increasing their stock of trained teachers; (4) To tone up the general level of secondary education; and (4) To reduce pressure on the TTC's.

Control and Management: The distance education programme was administered by the BIDE under the academic umbrella of an Ordinance passed by the University of Rajshahi. BIDE's Director is the chief executive officer and has the overall responsibility of the institute and its programmes, assisted by the Deputy Director, Assistant Directors, and the Heads of divisions. The academic standards of the B.Ed. programme through distance education were set in consultation with experienced professionals, external experts and academics, including TTC principals, NIEAER specialists and IER teacher educators. BIDE does not determine nor set the academic standards by itself.

<i>Instructional System:</i>	Each student studies from reading modular textbooks, listening to audio cassettes developed for the programme, attending face-to-face meetings with the tutors in the regional centres, listening to a 30 minute weekly radio programme, viewing a 26 minute fortnightly television programme, reading a quarterly Bulletin, and correspondence.
<i>Geographical coverage:</i>	The entire country is covered by the B.Ed. distance education programme through 11 Regional Centres at Teachers Training Colleges in Chittagong, Comilla, Dhaka, Feni, Jessore, Khulna, Mymensingh (for men), Mymensingh (for women), Rajshahi, Rangpur, and NIEAER in Dhaka. The country is divided into four administrative divisions and 64 districts. The regional centres are spread over all four divisions. Students registered under the programme came from all districts.
<i>Research Activities:</i>	As of 1991, no research on distance education was undertaken on the programme and none is on-going.
<i>Enrollment and Graduates in Distance Education Programmes:</i>	During the three year period before its suspension, the intake was 3,211, 3,287 and 3,787 respectively in 1985, 1986, and 1987, totalling 10,285. There are some 33,63 irregular students yet to complete the requirements for the degree. Only after expiration of the time limit in June 1992 will it be possible to take an account of the drop-outs, if any. The accumulated number of graduates in the B.Ed. distance education programme, as of 1990, was 6,918.
<i>International Affiliation and Cooperation:</i>	BIDE was neither a member of any national/regional/international organization of a similar nature, nor has it ever sought or received any foreign aid/grant/support.
<i>Problems and Constraints:</i>	(1) The institutional limitation of staff and facilities of BIDE in performing the dual tasks of the former AVEC, NIEMT, and SBP, and the task of the distance education programme, (2) weak and mostly unsupervised teaching practice, (3) lack of seriousness on the part of some students and tutors, (4) absence of a law or a government order to support it, and (5) lack of financial and moral support for the programme. However, the programme was a breakthrough in the inadequate traditional system and inefficient conventional methods of delivery. The programme was, and still is, in demand.

**LIST OF
DISTANCE
EDUCATION
INSTITUTIONS:**

1. Bangladesh Institute of Distance Education (BIDE).

BANGLADESH INSTITUTE OF DISTANCE EDUCATION

INSTITUTIONAL DATA

*Year of
Establishment:* 1985.

Name of Head: Giasuddin Ahmed
Position: Director
Address: Dhanmondi, Dhaka-1205
BANGLADESH.

Telephone: 501126; 502073.
Telex:
Fax:

Nature of institution: Established in 1985. The Bangladesh Institute of Distance Education (BIDE) is a conventional institution with a distance teaching programme only in Education at the Bachelor degree level. The institute ceased to enroll students in 1988.

Educational levels provided for DE programmes: Postgraduate Level.

Titles and levels of DE programmes: Postgraduate Level: Bachelor of Education.

Governance: A national establishment.

Objectives: The primary objective of BIDE was for teaching training. Other objectives included:
1. National development, 2. individual personality development, and 3. cost-effectiveness.

Sources of financial support of DE programmes: *Tuition and Fees:*
From initial grants and students were required to pay all tuition expenses by themselves. The amount was about U.S.\$50.00.

Budget: Data not available.

Trends of development of DE resources and activities:	Data not available.
Trends of enrollment in DE Programs:	Increasing.
Number of current DE students:	The institute ceased to enroll students since 1988.
Number of annual intake of DE students:	Not Applicable.
Number of students currently enrolled in each DE level:	Not Applicable.
Number of annual DE graduates:	Average 2,204.
Accumulative number of DE graduates:	6,918.
Components of personnel in DE:	All faculty members were full-time employees and they shared their work duties between a non-distance education institution and BIDE.
Number of full-time staff:	55.
Number of part-time staff:	Not Applicable.
Number of Courses and programs:	Number of courses offered: 1. Number of programmes offered: 1.
Production of teaching materials/media:	Educational professionals and experts in teacher education from different teacher training institutions prepared the teaching materials. So far, 48 books on 12 subjects have been prepared.
Regional/Study Centers:	There were 11 regional centres.
Operators of these centers:	These centres were run by principals, vice-principals and teachers of Teacher Training Colleges.

<i>Sources of financial support:</i>	The sole source of the programme's financial support was the students themselves by paying tuition fees. Operational cost of the institute comes from the government.
<i>Major functions of these centers:</i>	To provide tutorial, registration and counselling services. The centers also managed summer and winter schools as well as examinations.
Overall student Profile:	
<i>Age distribution:</i>	Most of the students were between 22 and 50 years old.
<i>Gender distribution:</i>	Data not available.
<i>Income Level:</i>	Mostly at the bottom to lower middle level.
<i>Geographical distribution:</i>	Students came from both the urban and rural areas. They came from all over the country.
Occupational and Ethnic Composition of DE Students:	Data not available.
Future development:	The institute ceased to enroll students since 1988.
Major obstacles for implementing distance education:	Data not available.
Affiliation with regional and international DE organizations:	Not applicable.
PROGRAMMES OF INSTRUCTION MEDIA, METHODS, & EVALUATION:	List of programmes: Postgraduate level: Bachelor of Education.

PROGRAMME : POSTGRADUATE PROGRAMME

Level:	Postgraduate degree level.
Titles of programmes offered in this level:	Bachelor of Education .
Courses or programmes of instruction:	<i>Education and Teacher Training:</i> The <u>compulsory</u> subjects for the B.Ed. distance education programme are: Principles of Education History of Education Educational Psychology Evaluation, Counselling and Guidance Educational and National Development. Each student has to choose any two of the following <u>electives</u> : Mathematics Science Bengali English Geography Social Science (Economics, Civics and History). One <u>Optional subject</u> : Educational Administration. Practical work: Preparation of lesson plans Teaching aids Teaching practice
Length of course:	<i>Total number of weeks per course:</i> 104 weeks.
Media and method:	<i>Most dominant:</i> Printed texts Regional services <i>Dominant:</i> Audio-vision Radio Video cassettes Practical work

Least dominant:
Audio cassettes
Television
Face-to-face tutoring.

Language of instruction: Bangla

Admission requirements:

1. Completed undergraduate education in Science, Arts, Commerce, Agriculture and Home Science
2. Must be a citizen of the country
3. Must have had 2 years of work experience before entering the programme.

Number of students: 3,000 per semester.

Annual intake of DE students: Approximately 3,000.

Evaluation system:
Continuous assessment: Written intermediary examination
Oral intermediary examination

Final course assessment: Written and oral examinations

Educational and employment arrangements for graduates: Students were already employed in schools as teachers.

Profile of students in this level: School teachers.

Acceptance of final award, certificate, and degree: B.Ed degree given by a University is recognized by other universities and is socially accepted.