

8. From low-cost to low-fee: BRAC's transition to a for-profit private school model in Bangladesh

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INTRODUCTION

Globally, private provision of education grew by 58 percent between 1991 and 2014. Although private sector involvement in education is not new, what is new is its manifestation (Macpherson, Robertson and Walford, 2014). From public-private partnerships and charter schools to large-scale franchises and private tutoring businesses, private actors are increasingly penetrating education systems all over the world. In low- and middle-income countries, a large portion of growth in the private education sector is due to the emergence of low-fee private schools that are accessible to the disadvantaged. By charging minimal fees and locating these schools in areas where public education provision is limited, low-fee private schools have emerged as a new and important player in education markets in low-income countries, such as India, Kenya, Nigeria and Uganda (Srivastava, 2013; Macpherson, Robertson and Walford, 2014).

Bangladesh has likewise witnessed rapid growth in its private education sector in recent decades. The majority of this growth has been within the low-fee private school (LFPS) sector, which now accounts for more than 25 percent of total school enrollment. Indeed, the number of private schools has multiplied almost three-fold in the last 15 years, and in certain districts, more than 60 percent of children are enrolled in LFPS (CAMPE, 2015). However, the reliability of data on these schools is questionable due to

the significant portion of LFPS that are unrecognized and unregistered by the government. As a result of such lax regulation, it is likely that the educational data is underestimating the number of LFPS (McLoughlin, 2013; Dfid, 2013).

Indeed, registration, regulation and monitoring of non-state education providers are nearly non-existent in Bangladesh. As a result of ambiguous legislation, coupled with a lack of alignment and coordination between Ministry of Education departments and wings, a diversity of providers has entered the private education market in recent years. Individual “edupreneurs” and private school chains, as well as internationally affiliated missionaries have emerged as important players in the provision of primary education. No actor’s entry into the market is more surprising than that of BRAC, the largest non-governmental organization in Bangladesh, and the world. Widely known for its cost-effective and tailored approach to providing basic health, education and poverty-alleviating interventions, BRAC is considered a model NGO in low-income contexts. Dedicated “to empower people living in poverty” BRAC now works in 11 countries around the world (BRAC website), but its largest outreach is still in Bangladesh. However, in 2012, BRAC piloted a chain of LFPS, which operate entirely on the fees they collect and remain distinct from BRAC’s reputable non-formal primary schools that provide (free) educational opportunities for the most marginalized. Today, BRAC oversees a franchise of thousands of fee-charging private schools.

This chapter presents an excerpt from a larger study on the low-fee private school sector and educational quality in Bangladesh. Findings from this study’s sector mapping revealed that BRAC has recently been shifting its low-cost approach to educational provision for disadvantaged children to a low-fee private school model that no longer reaches low-income families. Using primary data collected through semi-structured interviews with 25 key education stakeholders and policy document analyses, this chapter highlights evidence of BRAC’s entry into the private education sector, its plans for expansion in the coming years, and policymakers’ perceptions of this phenomenon. This chapter begins with a brief overview of the structure and expansion of the low-fee private education sector in Bangladesh. Next, this chapter examines BRAC’s perspective on its position in the private education space. Finally, this chapter addresses the implications of a global NGO’s role in

operating and overseeing (low-fee) private schools that may no longer reach its disadvantaged beneficiaries.

METHODOLOGY

As there is limited data on low-fee private schools, and no current legal frameworks overseeing the registration and regulation of the sector, I sought to collect such information, as well as perceptions on the growth, demand, and quality of LFPS in Bangladesh from key policymakers and education administrators. Specifically, I sampled 25 politically important individuals (Creswell, 2007) who currently work or formally worked at the Ministry of Education departments, local education offices, and government-affiliated bodies, various actors involved in the delivery of or management of LFPS, or stakeholders who have been engaged in research or dialogue on the LFPS sector in Bangladesh. The participants comprise a representative sample of different actors involved in all aspects of the LFPS sector. Likewise, participants represent a range of designations, from education officers up to senior-level policymakers, but participants' specific designations were excluded from analyses for confidentiality purposes. Table 8.1 presents the list and count of national- and district-level participants by office.

Several key documents also emerged during the data collection process. Specifically, government and non-government strategy reports, that were not available online at the time of this study, were shared with me, along with consent to use them in my study. Policy documents can offer information that may not be covered during an interview, and “tell the formal story of what an organization or government plans and attempts to do” (Gibton, 2016: 63). Indeed, the documents included in this analysis provided important supplementary data and information on the LFPS sector in Bangladesh, and particularly, the engagement of several actors.

Table 8.1 National and district level participants, by count and code

Stakeholder	Number	Interviewee Code
Government		
District-Level Education Officers		
Directorate-Primary Education (DPE)		
Ministry of Mass Primary Education (MoPME)	10	MoE
National Academy for Primary Education (NAPE)		
Academic/Research Institutions		
University		
Professors/Researchers/Practitioners	4	Researcher
Professors/Education Researchers		
BRAC-Affiliated Organizations		
BRAC Education Programs		
BRAC University, Institute for Education Development	5	BRAC
Local or International Non-Governmental Organizations		
Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE)		
Former government officials now working for international NGOs on education development projects	6	NGO
TOTAL	25	

A DIVERSE PRIMARY EDUCATION SYSTEM

With one of the biggest and most diverse education systems in the world, Bangladesh has between 12 and 24 different types of primary schools alone, depending on how they are categorized. Broadly, there are three categories of schools, which include government-funded primary schools, fee-free NGO/private schools, and fee-charging private schools (CAMPE, 2015). Within each of these categories are several types of schools (see Table 8.2).

Table 8.2 *Types of primary schools in Bangladesh*

Government (free)	NGO/Religious (free)	Private (fee)
Government primary schools (GPS)	NGO schools	Kindergartens
Registered non-government primary schools	Community schools	Christian missionary schools
Newly nationalized primary schools	BRAC primary schools	High school attached primary schools
Experimental schools	Reaching Out of School Children Project schools	High-fee private schools
	Non-registered NGO schools	
		Madrassas ¹

Source: DfID (2013); CAMPE (2015).

LOW-FEE PRIVATE SCHOOLS

Low-fee private schools form a distinct category of private schooling—one that has quickly emerged as the most common form of private education in Bangladesh. The LFPS sector itself is quite heterogeneous with many different types, fee-levels, locations, language, and ownership models as the broader private education sector. To date, there is no standardized or universally agreed upon definition of low-fee private schools in the literature (Srivastava, 2013). However, a number of researchers (Macpherson, Robertson and Walford, 2014; Srivastava, 2013; McLoughlin, 2013) have classified LFPS according to specific characteristics in order to distinguish this type of school from other types of non-governmental education providers. In this study I delimit “low-fee” private schools to those that charge less than 600 Taka (\$8 USD) per month, which is equivalent to the wage of a daily laborer, and are owned and operated by a non-state actor, such as an entrepreneur or retired educationist. Also, it is important to note that

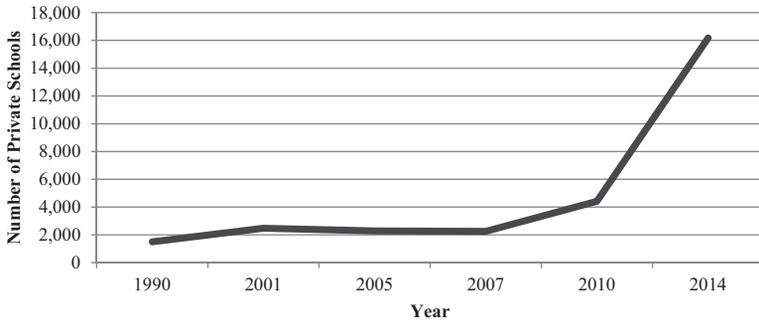
¹ Islamic primary school that teaches Arabic and the Qur’an; these can be both free and fee-charging.

“fees” are considered only monthly-based tuition costs, and exclude books, uniforms, transportation and other expenditures.

The number of LFPSs in Bangladesh has grown rapidly, and between 2007 and 2011, there was a 450 percent increase (DfID, 2013). Since 2007, only 12 new GPSs have been established. At present, there are over 15,000 kindergartens, the most common type of low-fee private *primary* school in Bangladesh. In the context of Bangladesh, kindergartens are not pre-primary schools but are a type of low-fee private *primary* school. There is no official explanation for why they are called ‘kindergartens’, other than they may have started as pre-primary schools and owners took advantage of the lack of regulation of private schools and added additional primary grades. Since 2007, the number of teachers in LFPS has increased fivefold, from 20,874 to 98,119 (DfID, 2013).

Low-fee private schools are the fastest growing category of schools, especially in urban areas. In Dhaka, low-fee private schools comprise more than half of the total schools (DfID, 2013). Likely as a result of increasing migration from urban areas and congestion in GPSs, more low-fee private schools (kindergartens) are opening each year, all over the city, including slums. In fact, approximately 12 percent of children in Dhaka slums are attending low-fee private schools (Cameron, 2011). Given the widespread inequality in Dhaka City, and the largest proportion of residents living slums, it is clear that private schools are no longer catering to the wealthiest quintile. Figure 8.1 presents the growth in the private education sector between 1990 and 2014.

National policies regarding private education provision have historically been relatively lax. In Bangladesh, the *Regulation of Private Education Ordinance, 1962* has not been updated, nor enforced in recent decades. In 2010, the Ministry of Education delivered its new *National Education Policy, 2010* in which it reiterates its constitutional mandate that the state is solely responsible for the management of primary education. However, it simultaneously stipulates that NGOs and individuals can operate schools, with approval (MoE, 2010). Specifically, the National Education Policy states:



Source: CAMPE (2015).

Figure 8.1 Number of private kindergartens (primary schools) in Bangladesh, 1990–2014

The responsibility of primary education cannot be delegated to private or NGO sectors. Any individual or any NGO willing to run primary education institutions must seek permission of the respective authority in compliance with rules and regulations of the State. (MoE, 2010: 6)

Yet, there is no authority that grants permission, at present. Thus, as a result of the outdated regulatory ordinance, coupled with an ambiguous current national education policy, there has been and continues to be a proliferation of private, fee-charging primary schools that are operating without regulation or formal quality assurance. Much like before, there is little coordination between the government and local NGOs, as well as the private sector. Thus, there continues to be a surge in private, for-profit primary schools as well as providers in Bangladesh.

BRAC'S LOW-FEE PRIVATE SCHOOL FRANCHISE

The newest player to enter the low-fee private education market in Bangladesh is BRAC, the world's largest non-governmental organization. Founded in 1972, shortly after independence, BRAC (formerly Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee) was initiated as a small-scale relief and rehabilitation project to support war refugees as they returned from the Bangladesh Liberation War (Srivastava, 2010). Over the next several decades, BRAC expanded

its programs to micro-credit and social enterprises, health, and education. Dedicated “to empower people living in poverty” BRAC now works in 11 countries around the world (BRAC website), but its largest outreach is still in Bangladesh.

Today, BRAC operates a banking franchise, a micro-credit enterprise, a university and institute for research, grocery and handicraft shops, health and sanitation programs, hospitals, community development projects, legal aid services, and of course, schools, all over the country. BRAC has essentially become “a shadow government within Bangladesh” (Cronin, 2008: 5). BRAC’s education program in Bangladesh has run over 33,000 non-formal pre-primary and primary schools across the country, typically in rural districts and villages, although it currently operates approximately 15,000. With its own category of schools in the EMIS database, known as BRAC Primary Schools (BPS), BRAC’s schools “are designed to give a second chance at learning to disadvantaged children left out of the formal education system due to extreme poverty, violence, displacement, or discrimination” (BRAC website).

Historically, BRAC’s primary schools have been funded entirely by international donors, with no government financial support. Operating one-room, single-grade, single-teacher non-formal primary schools, BRAC targets the most vulnerable, marginalized, or excluded children and provides them with free education. At least 65 percent of students are girls and 100 percent of BPS teachers are women, hired locally to teach in their own communities. BPS teachers typically have no formal teacher training, though BRAC provides a two-week practice-based training for teachers before they begin, and then ongoing refresher courses at various times throughout the academic year. Teachers are paid around 1,500 Taka (USD \$20) monthly, which is significantly less than their government school counterparts who earn at least 10,500 Taka per month (USD \$130). BRAC also prioritizes accountability by having its officers and volunteers visit each school at least once a month and supporting school-based parent-teacher committees to monitor the school’s daily activities (Sommers, 2013).

However, in the last four years, BRAC’s education model has changed significantly. In response to impressive economic growth and Bangladesh’s lower-middle income status, BRAC has recently been strategizing how it will remain an active education provider as donor funds decrease. In 2012, BRAC piloted a fee-charging model

in 60 primary schools and two secondary schools.² Named *Shishu Niketon*, these low-fee private primary schools are catering to the lower middle class, no longer “the bottom 10 or 20 percent of the population, but slightly, marginally better” (BRAC Interview, April 28, 2016). Another participant further explained the rationale for the *Shishu Niketon* approach:

Basically the main motive of *Shishu Niketon* was to cover the quality education. Because there are lots of kindergartens in Bangladesh you will find that, but there is a question always raised about quality. So BRAC is thinking to give some quality education and take some money from the family you know. Because you know the economic status is growing up in this country, so it’s been easy to pay for the education of their children. So *Shishu Niketon* is working on that motive. (BRAC Interview, April 24, 2016)

Thus, BRAC is currently creating a for-profit model as their funding is decreasing and “the situation demands to be self-sustainable” (BRAC Interview, April 24, 2016). Indeed, BRAC’s funding has decreased in recent years. Between 2014 and 2015, funding decreased by over \$33 million (BRAC, 2015). Moreover, as funding decreases and the number of BPSs likewise decreases, many BRAC’s teachers have lost their jobs. Another BRAC representative stated:

The whole initiative started really to give some employment opportunities to our teachers, who have been working for years, gaining experience, but due to government improved presence in those areas, we are reducing our involvement and moving into other sub areas. So some of the teachers who have been really doing extraordinarily well, we advised them that why don’t you try to take advantage of your good reputation and do something in the education ... we are very excited that they are having an alternative private opportunity, particularly with their good skills. (BRAC Interview, April 22, 2016)

Since its 20-school pilot in 2010, BRAC has now scaled to 7,390 *Shishu Niketon* schools all over Bangladesh. Similar to non-formal BPSs, *Shishu Niketon* schools are single room, single grade, one-teacher schools. They also follow a similar curriculum, which

² Nobodhara Secondary Schools, run by BRAC, are also for-profit schools. However, they are currently being phased out and were not included in this study.

offers a combination of the NCTB curriculum and books and supplementary BRAC-produced materials. There are 7,390 female teachers employed and nearly 210,000 children enrolled. Meanwhile, the number of BPSs has decreased to 15,000 and by 2018 there will be no BPSs, but there will be more than 15,000 *Shishu Niketon* schools. According to BRAC, by 2020, “all the people will have the ability to pay” (BRAC Interview, April 24, 2016).

In terms of fees, *Shishu Niketon* schools fall right into the range of “low-fee” private schools. Charging between 250 Taka and 500 Taka (USD \$3.50 to \$6.50) per month, depending on which grade the child is enrolled, *Shishu Niketon* schools offer the promise that parents will not need to pay any additional amount for after-school tutoring sessions, like parents with children enrolled in GPS or kindergartens typically do. Rather, BRAC ensures that the quality of *Shishu Niketon* schools will meet parents’ needs. However, in addition to monthly tuition fees, there are also fees for: annual admissions examination, and possibly uniforms, books, and extra-curriculars, although this again depends on grade, location and the school’s capacity. Though there is a waiver program for parents who cannot afford *Shishu Niketon* schools, it is usually only offered to one student per school.

BRAC has faced some challenges in its transition to a fee-based education model. First, parents oftentimes continue to associate BRAC with “free” schools for disadvantaged children. As such, in certain areas, parents have not grasped the fee system and BRAC has had to follow up with parents one-on-one to collect monthly fees. Several education officials expressed their concern over this matter, as it appears that BRAC is “riding on its good name” (NGO Interview, April 12, 2016). Second, BRAC’s funding stream intends to rely entirely on the fees collected from each school. The fees will be used to pay for school facilities and furniture, teachers’ salaries, and program costs for monitoring, teacher training, and operating the schools. At present, however, BRAC’s *Shishu Niketon* schools are not yet self-sustainable. BRAC has contributed funds for capital costs, particularly for furniture, teaching and learning materials, and teacher training. BRAC believes it will be fully self-sustainable by its fifth year, in 2018. Third, BRAC is still in the “learning stage” and is evaluating its position in the market (BRAC Interview, April 28, 2016). Thus far, BRAC has realized it is better equipped to operate in semi-urban districts as opposed to urban cities, like

Dhaka, where there is already a thriving market of kindergartens, madrassas, private schools, and missionary schools.

In Spring 2016, BRAC commissioned Pearson Education, a British-owned education publishing and assessment corporation, to conduct a market analysis and develop a business model that can be used to expand *Shishu Niketon* schools into a nationwide franchise of low-fee private schools. *Future BRAC Schools as a Social Enterprise: A Strategy and Business Plan for BRAC Education*, draws on lessons learned from “leading low-cost private school chains” like Bridge International Academies in Kenya and Uganda and APEC Schools in Asia and offers a strategy and value proposition for BRAC Education (Centenera, 2016: 17). Specifically, Pearson recommends the following tactics:

1. **Pricing:** Carefully assess ability to pay (not willingness), and price initially toward the high end. Willingness to pay should be disregarded, as it will be affected by the existing provision of MPO [monthly pay-out] schools, which are extremely low cost and consequently generally low quality. Moreover, a high price point communicates high quality to the market ... Finally, higher fees and therefore greater investment in the quality of education will attract wealthier students, which will help build a positive reputation in the community. To serve poorer students, BRAC can always use financial aid models as used by American Universities.
2. **Marketing:** Create a new brand distinct from BRAC, which evokes feelings of quality and excellence. The BRAC brand currently connotes very basic free education to the market. There is a positive association with strong teaching, so that should be retained. Therefore, the brand can have connections to BRAC, but it must strongly emphasize quality itself.
3. **Location:** The ideal regions are likely to be small urban centers and semi-urban regions as this is where facilities will be more affordable and easier to find, whilst still being near a population with disposable income and propensity to pay for education.
4. **Facilities:** Many parents use facilities as their main proxy for determining the quality of a school, therefore unlike BRAC free primary schools, these fee-based schools must deliver a minimum expected level of facilities and also impress parents.

To impress parents, sites must appear attractive from the outside, which will require a neatly painted exterior, clear signage, and basic gardening and landscaping. It is not recommended that a significant amount be invested in facilities as it does not translate into better learning, but this minimum level will be required. (Centenera, 2016: 20–23)

There were several additional recommendations outlined in the business plan, including tests, books, accreditation, uniforms, teachers' pedagogical skills and content of lessons. Moreover, the business plan also outlines ways to minimize costs and scale more quickly and consistently. It is clear that BRAC is intending to shift even further away from its mission to empower the disadvantaged, particularly in rural villages, and work more closely with "wealthier students" in semi-urban and urban centers, on the motive of parents' "ability to pay, not willingness" (Centenera, 2016: 20). Thus, its role in the "low-fee" private education sector may be short-lived if BRAC intends to move forward with Pearson's proposed business strategy and target a wealthier segment of the population.

During follow-up interviews, BRAC participants assured that they plan to target as "close to disadvantaged" a population as possible (BRAC Interview, August 3, 2016). In addition, BRAC recognizes that Pearson takes a more business-focused approach, whereas BRAC plans to operate *Shishu Niketon* schools as a social enterprise model, although it aspires to have a "marginal profit" for emergencies and increasing teachers' salaries (BRAC Interview, July 31, 2016). At present, BRAC has not engaged in a formal partnership with Pearson, and is unsure if or when this partnership will be realized. Rather, BRAC hired Pearson for "pro-bono consulting for a market analysis" of its education programs and *Shishu Niketon* model.

Overall, the majority of stakeholders interviewed in this study were unaware of BRAC's new fee-charging model, or its intention to develop a nationwide franchise. Whether this is intentional or not is unclear. The World Bank published a report in late 2016, entitled *Bangladesh Engaging the Private Sector in Education*. Using its Systems Approach for Better Education Results (SABER) methodology, the World Bank claimed to have conducted an up-to-date thorough analysis of the private education sector in Bangladesh.

However, they categorize BRAC schools as private NGO schools, aimed at “educating out-of-school children, including students who have dropped out” (World Bank, 2016: 10). As such, it is clear that the World Bank, as well as most other stakeholders are entirely unaware or intentionally not addressing the fact that BRAC is shedding its free NGO school model in lieu of a fee-charging private school franchise.

While these schools only initiated in 2012, it is true that they have maintained a low-key position in the sector. As this year BRAC has its first cohort of Grade 5 students, it will be the first time *Shishu Niketon* schools participate in the National Student Assessment. Though, to date, it is unclear whether *Shishu Niketon* schools are accounted for and where they fit in the EMIS database. They do not yet have their own category, nor is the name *Shishu Niketon* included in any government documents or data. In addition, there is only one small study available publicly on *Shishu Niketon* schools—a small mixed-method comparative study of kindergartens and *Shishu Niketon* schools. However, this study was conducted by BRAC Education itself, and was written as a report instead of an academic article, and is presumably biased toward *Shishu Niketon* schools. When asked why there is not more data, information, or awareness of *Shishu Niketon* schools, locally or globally, participants explained that it is “still too early to share” as this has been a pilot initiative (BRAC Interview, April 28, 2016).

Nevertheless, a few participants were aware of BRAC’s new fee-charging primary school model. One former government official expressed concern that BRAC is running a parallel education system, and taking a business approach to basic education delivery. Another participant explained:

We expressed a little bit of reservation when they [BRAC] shared it. We said that don’t mix it up with BRAC’s philanthropic image. Don’t mix it up with BRAC’s anti-poverty stem. Don’t give us the impression that you are likewise going for some commercial ... Demand has been created, BRAC is trying to fill it. But, we said, BRAC is a brand name. Don’t try to use it. We warned them it will give the wrong signal, not only to the outside world, but also to other NGOs in Bangladesh ... We even told them, give it a separate name. Don’t use “BRAC”. (NGO Interview, April 12, 2016)

A former policymaker also commented that BRAC was one of the leading agencies to push the state to take responsibility for education and that education should be free. This participant added, “So when NGOs like BRAC are taking this step, can you imagine in Bangladesh, we have 12,000 NGOs, if they started the same thing?” (NGO Interview, July 24, 2016). Thus, several education stakeholders have reservations toward BRAC’s entry into the low-fee private school market in Bangladesh.

CONCLUSION

LFPS are in demand. While estimates vary, there are at least 16,000, and possibly over 70,000 unregistered kindergartens (LFPS) and BRAC *Shishu Niketon* schools all over the country (MoE Interview 104; Billah, August 19, 2016). Moreover, new players, including BRAC, have entered the private education market, adding up to 15,000 more LFPS in Bangladesh. However, there may be important implications to such rapid expansion, particularly BRAC’s entry and expansion into the low-fee private school market.

First, as BRAC shifts from a low-cost service provider for the marginalized to a low-fee private educational provider for only those who can afford it, undoubtedly BRAC’s beneficiaries will be impacted. As highlighted earlier, until recently BRAC’s educational programs targeted mostly (65 percent) girls and employed only female teachers. However, according to several interviews, majority seats will no longer be reserved for girls in *Shishu Niketon* schools, nor will all teaching posts be allocated to females. As such, female students, and teachers, will likely have fewer educational and employment opportunities in BRAC’s educational programs.

Second, BRAC’s new model will also impact its previous beneficiaries, farmers’ children who were predominantly from rural communities. In the new *Shishu Niketon* schools, an average of one seat per school will be reserved for a child who cannot afford the fees and related costs, in contrast to the 30 seats per school (out of 30 total seats) that went to disadvantaged families in BRAC’s traditional primary schools. Unless these parents can come up with the funds to keep their children enrolled, these children will no

longer be able to attend BRAC primary schools, or any primary school, in particularly rural areas.

Third, little is known about the quality of *Shishu Niketon* schools, as they have yet to participate in any official databases or national student assessments. Moreover, the government is seemingly unaware that BRAC has shifted its model, which begs the question as to whether BRAC wants its new model to be fully publicized, or whether it is in competition with not only other low-fee private schools, but GPSs as well. Also, as BRAC's *Shishu Niketon* schools are currently targeting the same beneficiaries (although it plans to target wealthier communities in the near future), these same beneficiaries—children of disadvantaged and uneducated parents—may lack awareness of what constitutes a quality education. In turn, these schools can continue to provide sub-quality education, as parents seemingly do not know what better quality look likes. Fennell (2013: 79) explained:

The lower level of perception among parents who did not have prior experience of low-fee private schools will likely result in a delay to activate exit and/or voice, limiting the pressure on new providers (hustlers or otherwise) to immediately improve in the short run.

Indeed, until parents have the necessary knowledge about what quality looks like, they will likely not be able to use their voice and demand a high-quality education. Parents continue to demand an alternate provision of education, based on limited knowledge and awareness of the inputs, environment and processes, and holistic outcomes of a quality education. But, unless parents become better informed and change their expectations, schools and policies will continue to emphasize a narrow interpretation of quality as student achievement on exams. Likewise, when the government does not monitor these LFPSS, or in the case of BRAC *Shishu Niketon* schools, does not even realize that BRAC has changed its model, schools continue to comply with the quality expectations that were put in place. As a result, while students may complete their primary education and move on to secondary education, they may not carry with them the necessary analytical-thinking, problem-solving, creativity and interpersonal social skills to succeed in higher education, the workforce, and society.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, BRAC, which has been a long-time model NGO in Bangladesh, is potentially setting what may become a trend of non-profits becoming for-profits. Evidenced by its long history, BRAC is indeed a principal institution in Bangladesh as its programs and services have diffused into all sectors. While BRAC is widely viewed as a “shadow government” in Bangladesh, both for its size and scope, it likewise has a strong reputation outside of the country. In 2016, BRAC was considered the world’s largest NGO (NGO Advisor, June 20, 2016). Ostensibly, other NGOs, both in Bangladesh and abroad, look to BRAC as a role model. Thus, as highlighted earlier, there is a risk that other NGOs may follow suit, and decide to move towards a for-profit service delivery model, under the guise of its reputable NGO status. If this happens, what will become of the NGOs’ targeted beneficiaries, who are typically those most in need? In sum, BRAC is changing the game in educational provision in Bangladesh and, possibly setting an example for BRAC’s work in other countries and/or other NGOs to do the same.

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