

Export of Education from New Zealand to Bangladesh:

Issues and Opportunities

EXPORTATION DE L'EDUCATION DE LA NOUVELLE-ZELANDE VERS LE BANGLADESH:

ENJEUX ET OPPORTUNITES

Ershad Ali¹

Geetha Subramaniam²

Abstract: The internationalisation of education is the key to the globalisation of knowledge for the development of human societies that incorporate equal opportunities. The gap between the developed and developing societies in terms of knowledge and technological know-how can be minimised by opening up education at every level by the advanced societies for the not-so-advanced nations. This paper identifies the opportunities created by the internationalisation of New Zealand education and raises relevant issues for further development for countries like Bangladesh, a poor country. The paper concludes that Bangladesh, having traditional aspirations towards educational excellence and yet is unable to provide adequate facilities due to resource constraint will benefit from destinations such as New Zealand for world class education.

Key words: International education; Export; Opportunities; New Zealand; Bangladesh

Résumé: L'internationalisation de l'éducation est la clé de la mondialisation des connaissances pour le développement des sociétés humaines qui intègrent l'égalité des chances. L'écart entre des pays développés et des sociétés en voie de développement en termes de connaissances et de savoir-faire technologique peut être minimisé en

¹ Director, Centre for Research in International Education. AIS St. Helens. PO Box 2995, Auckland 1140, New Zealand. Ph: 64 9 815 1717 ext 622.

E-mail: ershada@ais.ac.nz

² Geetha Subramaniam, Senior Lecturer, Universiti Teknologi MARA.

E-mail: geethamaniem@gmail.com

* Received 16 January 2010; accepted 2 March 2010

offrant l'éducation à tous les niveaux par les sociétés avancées pour les sociétés moins avancées. Cet article identifie les opportunités créées par l'internationalisation de l'éducation de la Nouvelle-Zélande et soulève des questions pertinentes pour le développement ultérieur pour des pays comme le Bangladesh, un pays pauvre. L'article conclut que le Bangladesh, ayant des aspirations traditionnelles envers une bonne éducation et n'étant pas capable de fournir des installations adéquates en raison de contraintes liées aux ressources, bénéficiera des pays de destination comme la Nouvelle-Zélande, pour avoir une éducation de classe mondiale.

Mots-Clés: éducation internationale; exportation; opportunités; Nouvelle-Z élande; Bangladesh

1. INTRODUCTION

Bangladesh is a South Asian country with a total estimated population of 144.5 million located at 20.34-26.39 north latitude and 88.00-92.41 east longitude with an area of 147,570 sq. km (BBS 2009). It is bounded by India from the north, east and west and by the Bay of Bengal and Myanmar in the south. Bangladesh emerged as an independent country after the war of independence in 1971 which involved the sacrifice of more than 3 million lives and the destruction of almost all infrastructure in the country including education. To achieve a socio-economic transformation and a knowledge-rich society, education has to play a significant role and thus the importance of education as the prime ingredient of human resource development is recognized and given special value by public and the private sector institutions in Bangladesh.

This paper identifies the opportunities created by the internationalization of New Zealand education and raises relevant issues for fostering development for countries like Bangladesh, a poor country. The paper concludes that Bangladesh, having traditional aspirations towards educational excellence and yet is unable to provide adequate facilities due to resource constraint will benefit from destinations such as New Zealand for world class education. We will give an overview of Bangladesh education in section 2 followed by historical perspective in section 3. After that we will discuss the education structure in section 4 and New Zealand as a study destination issues in section 5. The key issues which needs to be addressed will be discussed in section 6 followed by conclusion in final section.

2. AN OVERVIEW OF BANGLADESH EDUCATION SECTOR

According to law of the land, each citizen of Bangladesh has equal right to access in education of the country. The constitution of Bangladesh Article 17 requires that:

*“The State shall adopt effective measures for the purpose of –
(a) establishing a uniform, mass-oriented and universal system of education and extending free and compulsory education to all children to such stage as may be determined by law; (b) relating education to the needs of society and producing properly trained and motivated citizens to serve those needs; (c) removing illiteracy within such time as may be determined by law.”*

Progress in education is illustrated by the rise in literacy rates that have gone up from 26.83% in 1974 to 32.40% in 1991, 44.8% in 1996, 48.7% in 1998 and 65% in 2006 (BBS 2009). During the same period the population of Bangladesh has increased at a rate of 1.43% p.a. whereas urbanization of the population is growing at a rate of 5% per annum making cities, such as the capital city Dhaka of more than 10 million people, very densely populated. Primary education comprising the first five years is free

and compulsory for all in Bangladesh and has an enrolment of 95%. Education up to higher secondary school level is also free for female students which have resulted in an overall increase in student enrolment growth (BOI, 2007). With an annual per capita income of US\$599 (in year 2007-08) of an economy of US\$79.69 billion and a rate of economic growth of 6.21% and export earnings of only about US\$21.82 billion, Bangladesh faces difficulties in providing adequate facilities for such a large scale undertaking to fulfil her traditional aspiration to educational excellence (BBS 2009). Table 1-5 shows some useful statistics about the growth of educational institutions and the number of students in Bangladesh up to the year 2005 (BBS 2009, BANBEIS).

Table-1: Number of secondary schools (Junior+High) & students

Year	No. of Secondary School			No. of Students		
	Public	Private	Total	Total	Girls	% of girls
1970	148	5646	5794	1352700	249169	18.4
1990	295	10153	10448	2993730	1015745	33.9
2000	317	15778	16095	7746885	4082702	52.8
2005	317	18183	18500	7398552	3868014	52.3

Source: BBS (2009)

Table 2: Number of college (general) & students

Year	No. of Collage			No. of Students		
	Public	Private	Total	Total	Female	% of Female
1970	32	362	394	30007	28834	9.6
1980	74	525	599	333580	64348	19.3
1990	198	650	848	824112	202322	24.6
2000	233	2176	2409	1715455	675993	39
2005	251	2899	3150	1367246	569337	41.6

Source: BBS 2009

Table 3: Number of madrasah (religious stream) & students

Year	No. of Madrasah			No. of Students		
	Public	Private	Total	Total	Girls	% of girls
1970	3	1515	1518	283380	12242	4.3
1980	3	2681	2684	380013	18545	4.9
1990	3	5790	5793	996996	76953	7.7
2000	3	7273	7276	3112205	1226209	39.4
2005	3	9211	9215	3453221	1648665	47.7

Source: BBS 2009

Table 4: Number of universities and students

Year	No. of Universities			No. of Students		
	Public	Private	Total	Total	Female	% of Female
1970	6	-	6	26390	4448	16.8
1980	6	-	6	36530	6958	19.1
1990	7	-	7	51780	10672	20.6
1999	13	16	29	82876(70355)	19169(16660)	23.1(23.7)
2000	13	19	32	85224	19939	23.4
2005	26	56	82	207577	49867	24.0

Note : Figures in the parenthesis indicator no. of Students of Public Universities. Source: BBS 2009; BANBEIS

Table 5: Number of Students by Type of Education, Level and Management (2004)

Type of Education	Management	Junior Secondary	Secondary	Higher Secondary	Degree	Masters	Total
General Education	Public	146021	75072	171892	245533	50560	689078
	Private	4911816	2117110	780958	348797	3343	8162024
	Total	5057837	2192182	952850	594330	53903	8851102
	%	57.14	24.77	10.77	6.71	0.61	100.00
Madrasah (religious) Education	Public	171	192	748	698	1405	3214
	Private	905703	441718	161818	55249	19671	1584159
	Total	905874	441910	162566	55947	21076	1587373
	%	57.07	27.84	10.24	3.52	1.33	100.00
Technical Vocational Education	Public		5837	31129			36966
	Private		58007	27336			85343
	Total		63844	58465			122309
	%		52.20	47.80			100.00
Professional Education	Public			19705	24797		44502
	Private			1126	48996		50122
	Total			20831	73793		94624
	%			22.01	77.99		100.00
TOTAL	Public	146192	100806	228566	246231	51965	773760
	Private	5817519	2617961	1019108	404046	23014	9881648
	Total	5963711	2718767	1247674	650277	74979	10655408
	%	55.97	25.52	11.71	6.10	0.70	100.00

Source: BBS 2009; BANBEIS

3. HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

University of Dhaka, the most prestigious educational institution in Bangladesh was established in 1921 on the basis of the recommendations of the Sadler (Sir Michael Sadler) Commission in an undivided India. The University of Calcutta was established in 1857 by the British East India Company following the model of the University of London. *Shalbon Vihara* at Mainamati Hills of Comilla, Bangladesh, was a great centre of learning of the Buddhist religion during the eighth and ninth centuries. The monastery during sixth to ninth centuries in Paharpur in the district of Naogaon with 177 rooms was another centre for study of religion, philosophy, metaphysics, logic, astronomy and medicine, research and meditation. Famous scholars such as Pundith Shilbhadra and Atish Dipankar (born about 1000 years ago) were known for scholarly works and were made *Moha Acharya (Great Chancellor) and Acharya* in distant lands during those days. Some of the famous educational institutes with their dates of establishment in Bangladesh are Dhaka College (1841), Dhaka Survey School (1876), Jagannath College in Dhaka (1884), Victoria College at Narail (1886), Braja Mohan College at Barisal (1889), Pubna Edward College (1898), Comilla Victoria College(1899), Ananda Mohan College at Mymensingh(1908), Dhaka University (1921), University of Rajshahi (1953), Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (1961), Bangladesh Agricultural University(1961), University of Chittagong(1966), and the Jahangir Nagar University(1970). At present there are 27 public universities (19 in 2004) and 51 private universities (31 in 2002) functioning in the country including an open university which operates under the Act 38 of 1992. The Non-government Universities Act 34 of 1992 allowed the operation of private universities which subsequently lead to the growth of many non-government universities in the private sector. There are many other tertiary institutions in Bangladesh such as 4 engineering colleges, 3197 general colleges, 171 polytechnics, 15 government and 27 private medical colleges, and a few textile technology and leather technology institutes (BBS 2009; BANBEIS).

4. BANGLADESH EDUCATION STRUCTURE

The Bangladesh education system has three streams: secular, religious and British-Western-education system. The mainstream system, as shown in Figure 1, is modelled largely on the western education system and has three levels: primary, secondary and tertiary. Primary education of five-years for children aged 6-10 was made compulsory by an Act in 1990 and is available in government and private primary schools and schools run by non-government organizations (NGOs). Prior to going to primary school, children can attend private informal pre-schools or kindergartens for one or two years.

After 3 years of junior secondary school (Age11+-13+), students can continue for 2 years secondary education in streams of science, commerce, humanities, pre-engineering etc at government/non-government secondary schools or switch over to vocational streams such as vocational training institutes. The students have to face the first public examination called the Secondary School Certificate (S.S.C.) conducted by the seven regional educational boards. The Madrasha Education Board conducts a similar public examination called Dakhil and students from the English-medium schools can sit for the O'Level examination under the London/Cambridge University curriculum locally. After passing S.S.C./Dakhil/O'Level students (Age16+) can join college for a further 2 years of higher secondary education in one of the streams and finally sit for the second public examination called the Higher Secondary Certificate (H.S.C.) conducted by the education board. Similarly students in the religious stream sit for the public examination called Alim and the English medium stream sit for the A'Level under London/Cambridge University curriculum.

After H.S.C., students (Age18+) can join under-graduate programmes (2 to 5 years) in public/private universities or degree/technical colleges or specialized institutions. After this level the students can join the workforce with entry level jobs or pursue 2-3 years of post-graduate education in Masters, Diploma or Ph.D.

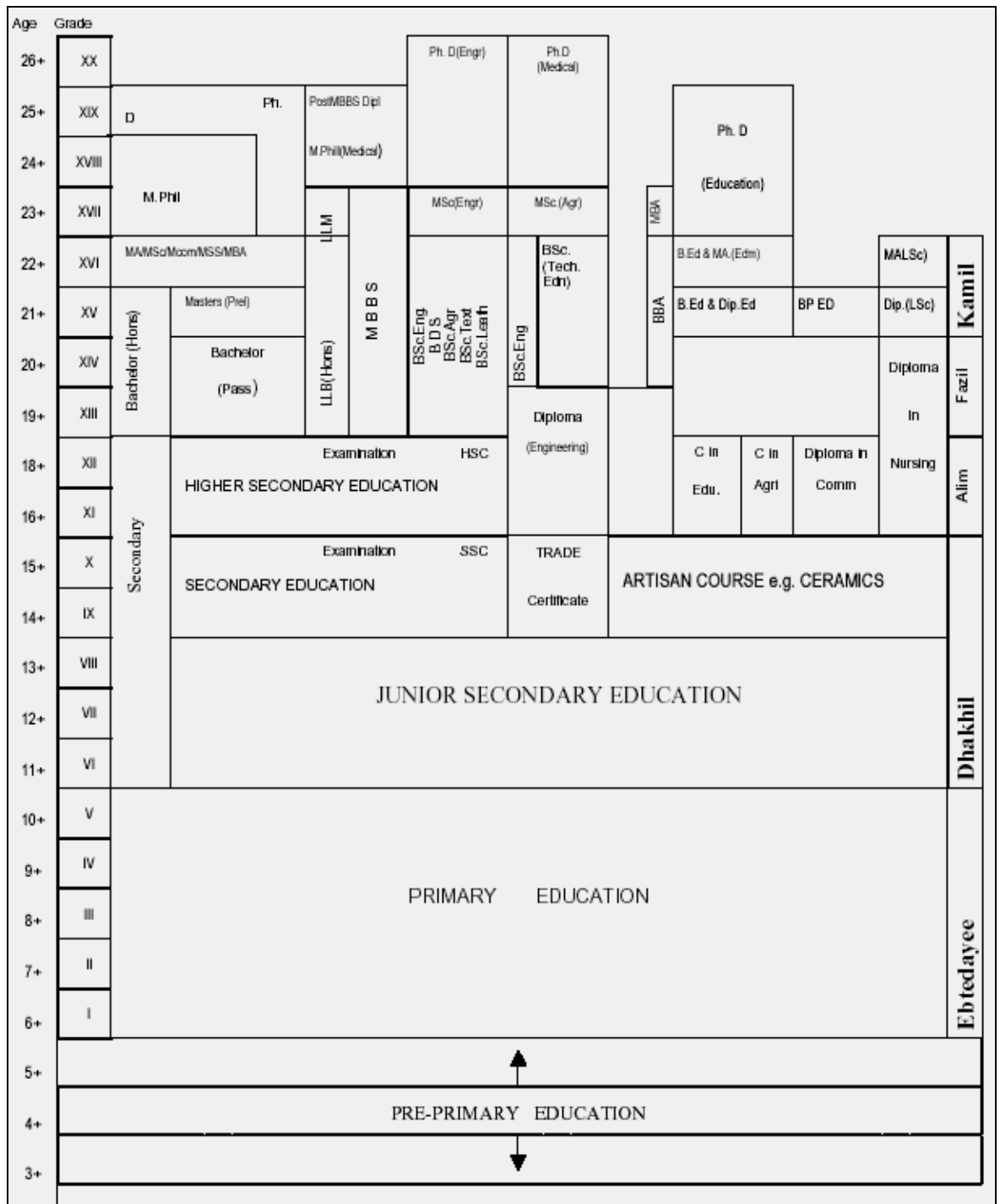


Figure 1: Educational structure of Bangladesh (source: BANBEIS)

5. DESTINATION NEW ZEALAND

Most of the students from developing countries prefer to study abroad due to growth in international

business opportunities and their career development. There has been an increase in number of tertiary international students worldwide by 2.7 percent, around 2.9 million international students enrolled in 2005- 2006 (Buoyant International Market 2008). It is forecasted that the number of tertiary students worldwide will rise to 7.2 million by 2025 (Ali 2008; Xiaoying and Abbott 2009; IDP 2002) from the current number of nearly three million involved in formal education outside their own country.

The demand for international education is also increasing rapidly in New Zealand. By changing the immigration policy and exporting education New Zealand has attracted huge number of international students. According to available data, the number of international students studied in New Zealand were 79,030 in 2001; 126,919 in 2002; 117,621 in 2003; 110,817 in 2004; 94,246 in 2005; 93,856 in 2006; and 90,934 in 2007 respectively (Education Count 2008). About 80 percent of these students came from Asian countries such as China, South Korea, Malaysia and Japan where Bangladesh could be a valuable source of supply.

The industry's has been contributing a significant amount to the New Zealand economy. The industry has earned NZ\$545 million in 2000; NZ\$1.3 billion in 2001; NZ\$1.7 billion in 2002; and NZ\$2.2 billion in 2004 respectively (Skinner 2009). There is an estimated benefit to Auckland City of NZ\$450 million and an expected growth of NZ\$4-5 billion within the next 10 years (Ali and Navneet 2009).

International students contributed US\$12 billion spent on tuition, living expenses, and related costs in 2003 to the USA economy while for Australia, the third most popular choice after USA and UK for international students, the value was AU\$4.9 billion in 2002 and for UK£ 8 billion a year (Open Doors Online 2008). While New Zealand maintains a comparable growth in the education export market, there are opportunities for expansion creating new markets.

The education sector of Bangladesh gets the highest priority in the annual budget allocation and thus in 2007-08 financial year it was 7.9% (Taka 63.96 billion or US\$ 0.94 billion) of the total budget of 803.460 billion taka (US\$11.82 billion) (BBS 2009; http://www.moedu.gov.bd/edu_budget.php?id=3). This total amount is not enough for the huge sector and thousands of government-financed institutions. The public and private universities can offer only about 18 000 seats for more than 200 000 students (~9%) applying for an entry into university education. This is a huge dropout and added to this are many more students from the polytechnics and other similar streams capable of further education only if opportunities existed. Bangladesh is a less prosperous Asian country but there is always a class in her society able to afford to send their children overseas for education. As a result a large number of students look for education abroad to qualify for national and international job markets in a highly competitive world. An estimated 75 000 students go to neighbouring India every year for education while thousands of highly capable students study in the USA, UK, Canada, Australia, Japan, Germany and east European countries. Although there is no statistics available from these countries, the bulk of the students choose USA and other western developed countries for reasons such as:

- English as a medium of instruction
- Historical and socio-political links developed over many years
- Traditional scientific and technological cooperation
- Equipment, technology and services linked to these countries
- The Commonwealth and other historical organizations
- Better job opportunities in these countries
- Large Bangladeshi migrant communities in these countries
- Development Partnership between these countries and Bangladesh

6. KEY ISSUES TO ADDRESS

In recent years a look-east trend is observed in selecting Asia-Pacific countries like Australia, New Zealand, Singapore and Malaysia as destinations for education abroad by the Bangladeshi students. A report by IDP Education Australia (www.IDP.com) shows that Bangladesh is within the top 20 student visa receiving countries with a growth experience of 74% in 2003 increasing from 636 in 2002 to 1084

in 2003. There are full fee paying Bangladeshi international students in various institutions of New Zealand including universities, polytechnics and others. Statistics (www.educationnz.org.nz) show student visas issued for Bangladesh students shows a very encouraging trend in March, April and May 2004 as 113, 116 and 121 respectively. From December 2007 to April 2009, visa approval for Bangladeshi students has been increased sharply. For example, in 2008, about 30 students were studying at a single tertiary education provider, AIS St Helens, New Zealand. In a small country like a Bangladesh with a population of 144.5 million, this trend is more important than the total contribution and with time the figures will increase provided more effective marketing efforts is made. Bangladeshi students choose New Zealand as their preferred overseas study destination for the following reasons:

- Internationally recognized courses and degrees (e.g. Washington Accord etc)
- Use of world class technology in delivery systems
- Affordable tuition fees (compared to UK, Australia, USA etc)
- Affordable quality living conditions (compared to UK, Australia, USA etc)
- Degrees help application for NZ immigration and employment
- British based education system with USA equivalent degrees
- Flexible and innovative degree programmes
- Welcoming, friendly and safer host communities

The key issues to address for helping this new trend are:

6.1 Effective Marketing

Bangladeshi students and parents know little about the New Zealand's education system compared to other western countries. For example although New Zealand follows a similar curricula and is able to offer a similar academic environment to that of Australia, Bangladeshi students and parents are more aware of the Australian education system compared to the New Zealand system. The choice of genuine educational local agents can not be overemphasized in this context.

6.2 Economic issue

In general, per capita income in Bangladesh is very low and hence ability of individual students to meet overseas education cost is also limited. However, due to an uneven income distribution a large part of tertiary level students are capable to study overseas. Consideration on tuition fees might have a positive impact on Bangladeshi students to study at New Zealand.

6.3 Curricula and Teaching Style

Although like New Zealand, Bangladesh education system has been developed based on the British education system, the nature of demand for skilled manpower is different in the two countries. For example teaching a development economics paper is less important in New Zealand whereas that curriculum is very important for the development of Bangladesh. So consideration on curricula adjustment may be required.

6.4 The Language and Cultural Issues

Basic standard of Bangladeshi students is different from that of New Zealand students, or even in cases it is different from other countries too. English is a second language in Bangladesh. A large number of general students study their courses in Bengali, the native language. Even though English is all through a compulsory second language at schools and colleges, it is acknowledged that the communication skill in English may not be sufficient for some students and hence special arrangements for enhancing their English language communication will be helpful. Some arrangements for upholding the distinct Bengali culture within New Zealand socio-cultural environment will add plus points.

6.5 Lack of Local Consular Services

Absence of diplomatic office in two countries is also a big constraint. As there is no visa office of New Zealand in Bangladesh, students usually face challenges to get visa from the visa office situated in a third country, which discourages students from choosing New Zealand as a destination.

6.6 Degree Structure and Standards

Bangladeshi students need qualifications for jobs within Bangladesh as well as for jobs worldwide. Degrees standardized with world class structures as common as possible with the developed economies will be easy for international job markets. This may require slight adjustment of the curriculum structure where elective papers with international flavor should be offered.

6.7 Offshore Operations

There are quite a number of institutions in Bangladesh that formed strategic alliances with international education providers for local delivery and management of offshore education. There are joint venture organizations who have established campuses in Bangladesh or educational institutions at every level. New Zealand providers can explore such opportunities in future as Bangladesh follows a free market economy.

7. CONCLUSION

Internationalization is not just about commercialization of education for economic benefits; but it is also about enhancing ideas and improving the understanding among communities and nations. Based on opportunities we see in New Zealand and comparing cost and quality of private education in Bangladesh, we can make a general prediction that Bangladesh could become another important client-country for New Zealand and other Asia Pacific countries such as Malaysia, Singapore and Australia if the education providers are properly marketed. Inadvertently, this will result in better economic, educational and cultural benefits for the importing country and the exporting country as well.

REFERENCES

- Ali, E. (December 2008). The Impact of Exchange Rate variations on the Destinations of International Students. *Economic Bulletin, Universiti Teknologi Mara, Malaysia, Vol.9 2008*.
- Ali, E. And Navneet, R. (2009). Exploring the Relationship Between International Education and Tourism Growth in New Zealand. *Paper presented at the International Conference held on July 3-5, 2009 at Auckland organised by AIS St Helens*.
- BBS (2009). Statistical Pocket Book of Bangladesh. *Government of Bangladesh, January 2009*.
- BANBEIS (2008). Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics. Ministry of Education. Govt. of Bangladesh. <http://www.banbeis.org/keyedu.htm>
- BOI (2007). Board of Investment. Govt. Of Bangladesh, Dhaka (<http://www.boibd.org>)
- Buoyant International Market 2008 (2008). *Education Review*. New Zealand. p. 3.
- Daily Jugantor : <http://www.dailyjugantor.com> (July01, 2004)
- Education Count (2008). www.educationcountnz.org.nz

GOB (2003). Bangladesh Economic Review 2003. *Ministry of Finance. Govt. Of Bangladesh.*

IDP (2002). Global Student Mobility 2025, *IDP Education Australia, September 2002.*

[http://www.idp.com/marketingandresearch/research/GlobalStudentMobility2025.](http://www.idp.com/marketingandresearch/research/GlobalStudentMobility2025)

<http://www.seriouslyasia.org.nz/pdf/exporting-education.pdf>

Open Doors Online: <http://opendoors.iienetwork.org/>

[http://www.idp.com/marketingandresearch/research/internationaleducationstatistics/2002 Annual Report.pdf](http://www.idp.com/marketingandresearch/research/internationaleducationstatistics/2002%20Annual%20Report.pdf)

<http://www.educationnz.org.nz/>

Skinner, R. (2009). Now for Phase Two. *Education Review.* p.3.

Xiaoying, M. And Abbott, M. (2009). *Entering International Markets: New Zealand's Challenges.* Regional Spotlight, Washington. P 9-24.