



unesco

Centre
Under the auspices
of UNESCO

APCEIU

Asia-Pacific Centre of
Education for
International Understanding

유네스코 아시아태평양 국제이해교육원

A Situational Analysis for the GCED Curriculum Development & Integration (CDI) Project in Bangladesh

**GCED CDI PROJECT
ROUND 4**

A Situational Analysis for the GCED Curriculum Development & Integration (CDI) Project in Bangladesh

Publisher



The Asia-Pacific Centre of Education for International Understanding (APCEIU) is a UNESCO Category 2 Centre established in 2000 according to the Agreement between UNESCO and the Government of the Republic of Korea, with the mandate to promote Education for International Understanding (EIU) and Global Citizenship Education (GCED) toward a Culture of Peace. APCEIU has been at the forefront of promoting GCED and thereby supporting UNESCO Member states to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, SDG 4.7 in particular.

Researchers

Andy Smart, independent education and publishing consultant and co-convener of NISSEM.

Disclaimer

The ideas and thoughts included in this publication do not necessarily represent the view of the APCEIU.

RG-IGCED-2024-030
ISBN 979-11-93573-38-9

© APCEIU 2023
All Rights Reserved
Reprinted in 2024

Contact

Institute of Global Citizenship Education, APCEIU
120, Saemal-ro, Guro-gu, Seoul, Republic of Korea
Tel: (+82-2)774-3360
Fax: (+82-2)774-3958
www.unescoapceiu.org
igced@unescoapceiu.org



unesco

Centre
Under the auspices
of UNESCO

APCEIU

Asia-Pacific Centre of
Education for
International Understanding

유네스코 아시아태평양 국제이해교육원

A Situational Analysis for the GCED Curriculum Development & Integration (CDI) Project in Bangladesh

**GCED CDI PROJECT
ROUND 4**



Acknowledgements

We would like to acknowledge the valuable inputs and discussions from Dr Md. Mostafizur Rahaman, Deputy Director, Campaign for Popular Education, Bangladesh and Associate Professor, United International University, Bangladesh; Mohammad Abdul Quddus, Co-Researcher, Campaign for Popular Education, Bangladesh; and Goutam Roy, Associate Professor, Institute of Education and Research, University of Rajshahi, Bangladesh.

Project Introduction

This situational analysis was commissioned by APCEIU as a background paper to inform key issues and strategies for its GCED Curriculum Development and Integration (GCED CDI) Project in Bangladesh (2022-2024).

Global Citizenship Education Curriculum Development and Integration Project (GCED CDI)

In the face of the global challenges of the 21st century, the need for global citizenship education became ever more evident and increasing, eventually leading to the integration of GCED into the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs 4.7) in 2015. To effectively respond to such growing needs, APCEIU launched the GCED Curriculum Development and Integration Project (GCED CDI) in 2016, with the support of the government of the Republic of Korea. Designed as a three-year project for each round, the GCED CDI aims to support the participating countries with mainstreaming GCED into their educational system specifically by embedding GCED into their curricular materials and/or enhancing the capacity to integrate GCED into curricular implementation. Starting from the 1st Round (Cambodia, Mongolia, Uganda, and Colombia, 2016-2018), APCEIU completed the 2nd Round (Kenya, Lebanon, Sri Lanka, and the Philippines, 2019-2021) of the Project and is currently operating the 3rd Round (Georgia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, and Rwanda, 2021-2023) and the 4th Round (Bangladesh, Bhutan, Ghana, and Malaysia, 2022-2024).

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Executive Summary | 7 |
| 1. Introduction | 9 |
| 2. Citizenship Education and GCED in Bangladesh | 11 |
| 3. The Education Ecosystem in Bangladesh | 16 |
| 3.1 General education policy and donor support | 16 |
| 3.2 Vision 2041 | 17 |
| 3.3 Education sector organisation and decentralisation | 18 |
| 3.4 Civil Society Organisations | 21 |
| 4. Curriculum, Textbooks, and Student Assessment | 24 |
| 4.1 Curriculum | 24 |
| 4.2 Textbooks | 25 |
| 4.3 Student assessment | 26 |
| 4.4 Global citizenship and Bangladesh and Global Studies | 26 |
| 4.5 Education for democracy | 27 |
| 5. Teachers and Teacher Education | 28 |
| 5.1 Primary teachers | 28 |
| 5.2 Secondary teachers | 28 |
| 5.3 Teacher Continuing Professional Development (CPD) | 29 |
| 5.4 Teachers and teaching | 30 |
| 6. Education Technology Initiatives | 32 |
| 7. Schools and Their Communities | 33 |
| 8. Discussion | 34 |
| 8.1 The curriculum | 34 |
| 8.2 Teachers and teaching | 35 |
| 8.3 Textbooks | 35 |
| 8.4 Digital | 36 |
| 8.5 Research | 37 |
| 9. Possible Areas of Focus for the Three-year Research Project | 38 |
| 9.1 Aims of the project | 38 |
| 9.2 Guiding principles for the project design | 38 |
| 9.3 Possible entry points and approaches | 39 |
| Bibliography | 41 |

Acronyms

| | |
|------------------|---|
| APCEIU | Asia-Pacific Centre of Education for International Understanding under the auspices of UNESCO |
| B.Ed. | Bachelor of Education |
| BGS | Bangladesh and Global Studies |
| IED-BRACU | IED: Institute of Educational Development. BRACU: BRAC University. BRAC no longer uses the full form of its name. |
| CAMPE | Campaign for Popular Education |
| CSO | Civil Society Organisation |
| DPE | Directorate of Primary Education |
| DPEd | Diploma in Primary Education |
| ESP | Education Sector Plan |
| GCED | Global Citizenship Education |
| IER | Institute of Education and Research |
| MOE | Ministry of Education |
| MoPME | Ministry of Primary and Mass Education |
| NAPE | National Academy for Primary Education |
| NCTB | National Curriculum and Textbook Board |
| NEP | National Education Policy |
| NFE | Non-Formal Education |
| NGO | Non-governmental Organisation |
| PEDP | Primary Education Development Programme |
| PTI | Primary Training Institute |
| SDGs | Sustainable Development Goals |
| TES | Transforming Education Summit |
| TTC | Teacher Training College |

Executive Summary

As a country with a large majority population who speaks Bangla and a number of minority language groups, Global Citizenship Education (GCED) has long been part of the national response to its own diverse citizenry. In recent years, education policy has made some efforts to accommodate this linguistic diversity in an otherwise fairly monolithic education system. The experience since 2017 of hosting a large number of Rohingya refugees is now a long-term addition to this ethnic and linguistic diversity.

According to most recent policies and statements, the country's development priorities are focused mainly on economic growth and the risks associated with climate change in a land that is extensively flat and riverine. Therefore, the proposed GCED project will need to align with and support these development priorities. However, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have also made their mark on the national education strategy, and the Education Sector Plan (ESP) of 2020 includes amongst its aims the development of 'responsible individuals, community members and national and global citizens guided by a moral and ethical compass.'

The proposed GCED project will need to align with and support the new curriculum, which has begun to be implemented in Classes 1, 6, and 7 as of the start of 2023 (the academic year starts in January). The new curriculum is reported to be very much like the current one, which was launched in 2012, and is described in terms of its attempt to change the pedagogical approach of teachers in primary and secondary schools. The new curriculum will include a detailed plan for teaching and learning, the effectiveness of which will depend on those tasked with implementing it.

The well-established subject of Bangladesh and Global Studies (BGS), which has been part of the core curriculum and the primary leaving exam since 2012, offers potential for intervention. Whether the proposed – and surprisingly radical – removal of high-stakes exams at the end of primary and lower secondary cycles will have a positive, neutral or negative effect on the status of BGS within the curriculum remains to be seen.

The concept of GCED, however, has little currency among teachers.

Therefore, in order to have an impact, an intervention such as the proposed GCED curriculum integration project will need to recognise the challenges of implementing previous curriculum reforms, in terms of moving towards the ambitions of the competency-based approach, and in terms of teacher professional development. It should identify an approach to defining GCED and implementing GCED and its related themes within Target 4.7, which is based on a clear and

pragmatic understanding of a competency-based curriculum approach.

The intervention will need to recognise national developmental priorities and how the country is responding to and helping to shape the forces of globalisation, while also recognising the significant challenges of economic and ethnic differentials within the country. Defining the meaning of 'global citizens' and their place in national development, as well as defining GCED, can be foundational elements of the proposed intervention.

The proposed project should seek to work with Bangladesh's thriving civil society organisations in the education sector as well as with key government partners. It may also seek an academic partner, most likely from Dhaka University, to help design and document the intervention and its impact.

1. Introduction

'We look forward to raising our children as truly global citizens. We are introducing a new national curriculum from next year. It will prepare our students for the Fourth Industrial Revolution. It will make them aware of becoming climate-resilient. It will turn them into the real agents of our Vision-2041 to become a developed, knowledge-based economy.'¹

*Sheikh Hasina, Prime Minister of Bangladesh,
United Nations Transforming Education Summit, New York, September 2022*

The above statement by the Prime Minister, which was part of a speech delivered at the Transforming Education Summit (TES) in New York, indicates the central concerns of Bangladesh's current development priorities. These are largely focused on economic growth and the risks associated with climate change. Elsewhere in the speech, the Prime Minister also referred to plans for the education sector, in which she pointed to the expectations of the new national curriculum that has begun to be implemented from 2023. The new curriculum framework, as well as the national blended education initiative that seeks to build on the country's growing digital economy, are arguably the two main focal areas of governmental activity in the education sector at present.

Vision 2041, referred to by the PM, is intended as a blueprint for economic and social development. Bringing a greater definition to the notion of 'global citizen' can be a foundational element of the proposed GCED intervention.

Elsewhere in her speech, the Prime Minister referred to Bangladesh's role on the SDG4 High-Level Steering Committee,² a post that has been held since 2021 by Bangladesh's Minister of Education, Dipu Moni. Following the TES held in New York in September 2022, this High-Level Steering Committee issued a call to action to follow up on TES commitments, calling on countries to:

- Agree to set a small number of indicators, linked to the Global Initiatives, which will be added to the list of SDG 4 benchmark indicators; and
- Set national targets for these indicators for 2025 and 2030. Progress towards them will be reviewed on an annual basis.

¹Full text available at:
<https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/2022/09/bangladesh-commitment-statement-v.pdf>

²<https://www.sdg4education2030.org/high-level-steering-committee-members-2022-2023>

This work is intended to be led by the High-Level Steering Committee and will be coordinated jointly by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics and the Global Education Monitoring Report.³ The place of Bangladesh on the Steering Committee may be significant in defining the indicators to be developed, notwithstanding the difficulty of defining Target 4.7 and GCED in this way.

³<https://knowledgehub.sdg4education2030.org/TESEFollowUp>

2. Citizenship Education and GCED in Bangladesh

Bangladesh's dreams of building a developed society through modernising its education system are reflected in several national and international commitments, including the SDGs. At the national level, the National Constitution of Bangladesh (1972) and the National Education Policy (NEP) of 2010 provide the framework for all current educational sector planning. It is worth noting that since the country gained independence in 1971, the NEP is the only national education policy that has been enacted to date. Neither of the two earlier attempts to formulate an education policy – the Dr Qudrat-e-Khuda Commission, just after the war of liberation, and the Education Policy draft of 2000 – were successful.

The first paragraph of the NEP states:

'The primary objectives of this policy are directed toward the cultivation of human values. It seeks to prescribe ways through which citizens can be groomed to become leaders in pro-people development programs and progress of the society. They will become rational and intellectually accomplished human beings with ethical perceptions, who have respect for their own religion as well as for others' faiths. Education will help them to grow up as non-communal, patriotic and efficient persons free from superstitions. And simultaneously, it is only education that can equip the nation to acquire the qualities and skills that will strengthen Bangladesh to work with equal capacity and pace of the global community.'

This opening statement describes a vision of citizens who are well-grounded in their own culture but who are also global citizens, patriotic but also respectful of diversity, and who ultimately can help the nation play its part on the global stage. In this context, citizenship, in terms of the curriculum and in the view of many teachers in Bangladesh's schools, sets out the responsibilities of individuals towards the state as well as ways in which individuals benefit from the state (Bhowmik, Roy & Sultana, 2021b). Despite its clear reference to the economic dimensions of being part of the global community, the statement indicates how citizenship education – through qualities as well as skills – may extend and expand to global citizenship education.

Later in the document, the NEP's main objectives are 'directed toward the cultivation of human values' and give significant attention to issues of human rights. For example, the objectives include:

- To inspire students with the spirit of our war of liberation and develop patriotism, nationalism and qualities of good citizens (i.e. sense of justice, non-communalism, dutifulness, awareness of human rights, cultivation of free thinking and discipline, love for

- honest living, the tolerance of corporate life, friendliness and perseverance);
- To remove socio-economic discrimination irrespective of race, religion and creed and to eradicate gender disparity; to develop non-communalism, friendliness, global fraternity, fellow-feeling and respect for human rights;
 - To show tolerance for different ideologies for the development of a democratic culture and to help develop a life-oriented, realistic and positive outlook; and
 - To ensure skills of high standard at different areas and levels of education so that learners can successfully compete in the global context (Islam, 2019).

Here too, the development of the individual and the cultivation of respect for human 'values' are seen as leading to the development of skills that will contribute to economic development on the global stage.

However, perhaps more significantly, the NEP also includes the following statement among its thirty aims, objectives, goals and principles: 'to remove socio-economic discrimination irrespective of race, religion and creed and to eradicate gender disparity; to develop non-communalism, friendliness, global fraternity, fellow-feeling and respect for human rights.' This statement, which expresses a need to address social challenges as well as develop pro-societal attitudes among citizens and towards citizens of other countries, may be considered as representing a high-level, national statement regarding GCED and may therefore be a starting point for a GCED-based curriculum intervention.

The concept of GCED gained significance in national strategic responses after its inclusion in the themes and values of Target 4.7 of the SDGs. Immediately following the publication of the SDGs, Bangladesh established a National SDG Steering Committee.⁴ In 2016, Manzoor Ahmed (professor emeritus of BRAC University)⁵ and Md. Mostafizur Rahaman (Deputy Director at Campaign For Popular Education (CAMPE)), undertook an analysis of the SDGs – not only the SDG for education – against the then-new five-year economic plan.⁶ This five-year plan had been developed by the General Economics Division of the national Planning Commission and had included consultations with government agencies, research and academic institutions, and civil society.

⁴ <https://unstats.un.org/capacity-development/UNSD-FCDO/bangladesh/>

⁵ The acronym BRAC initially stood for Bangladesh Rehabilitation Assistance Committee, then the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee, and later Building Resources Across Communities. The organisation, often described as the largest NGO in the world (in terms of employees), generally only uses the acronym.

⁶ The five-year plan is entitled 'Accelerating Growth, Empowering Every Citizen' (2016–2020).

Ahmed and Rahaman's analysis, entitled 'SDG4/Education 2030 and 7th Five-Year Plan of Bangladesh: Aligning National and Global Objectives, Strategies and Indicators', examines the priorities and actors set out by the five-year plan and calls for a greater definition of indicators as well as a larger role for civil society: 'It may be noted that CSO [civil society organizations]/NGO [non-governmental organisation] role is mostly seen in public awareness raising, capacity development, and generating local resources. They are also seen as supporting the government in monitoring and accountability' (Ahmed & Rahaman, 2016).

At the same time, civil society and NGOs held their own dialogue about the post-Millennium Development Goals agenda. Coordinated by Dr Q.K. Ahmed, economist, development thinker, activist and currently chair of Dhaka School of Economics at the University of Dhaka, the dialogue produced what is described as 'a people-centred, equitable, inclusive, and sustainable Post-2015 Development Agenda as a contribution to the international discourse and to the national formulation of an appropriate framework along with goals and associated targets and indicators. The civil society came up with 13 Goals, 50 Targets and 199 Indicators' (Ahmed & Rahaman, 2016).

Ahmed and Rahaman's analysis highlighted the process towards effective implementation of SDG4 that the GED (General Economics Division) had set out and offered the following caution: 'How meticulously and diligently this [the process] is done with appropriate participation and involvement of stakeholders will determine how credible and workable the subsector strategy and plan are and how these fit into the national SDG plan and strategy' (Ahmed & Rahaman, 2016).

In December 2020, at the height of the Covid-19 pandemic and with assistance from the Global Partnership for Education, the government published a new ESP (Ministry of Education (MOE), 2020), which is monitored by the MOE's own High-Level Steering Committee. Section 4.2 of the ESP, entitled 'Implications of climate change and natural and man-made emergencies', includes the following passage and is worth quoting in full:

'Need for a transformative view

The COVID-19 pandemic has broad causal and consequential links with the effects and implications of climate change, which is the pervasive and all-engulfing influence on shaping the present and the future of humanity and life on the planet.

Human invasion of the natural habitat of other life forms has raised the risks of new mutant pathogens that cross over from animals to humans resulting in such a havoc as the COVID-19 pandemic. This pandemic is not likely to be the last one.

Specific and immediate responses to the emergencies are underway along with consideration for medium term coping mechanisms. The effects of the emergencies are deep and not just a matter of going back to the 'old normal' once the emergency is over. There is at the same time an opportunity and challenge to imagine the 'new normal' that takes on board the interconnected impact of climate change and emergencies. This entails considering transformative education responses for strengthening behavior pattern, values, creativity and resilience of the new generation of learners to build a sustainable world and sustainable societies. SDG4, the overarching education goal and Target 7 on purposes of education envisage the kind of transformation needed.

As part of school education curriculum reform, as noted in chapter 3, a move has been taken to follow a seamless curriculum up to grade ten and to delay streaming of students into disciplinary areas (science, humanities, business, etc.) until grade 11, rather than at grade 9 as at present. This is a step towards building a common foundation of basic competencies for all students. The aim is to equip all young people with basic skills and competencies, not forcing them to make future life choices too early, and also help them inculcate the common values and attitudes necessary to grow up as responsible individuals and citizens. The success of this measure will depend on adequate provisions for qualified teachers and necessary change in teaching-learning embracing classroom and co-curricular activities' (MOE, 2020, p. 110).

For the non-formal education (NFE) sector, the ESP identified other key activities (p. 82) where global citizenship itself is mentioned:

'Designing and trying out learning activities related to cultural, aesthetic and creative expressions. Public and private universities, local artists, cultural and research institutions, and university departments will be involved. The emphasis may be on promoting the celebration of cultural diversity, peace and global citizenship.'

Section D.2 of the ESP's table of Across-Sector Results Monitoring (Climate Change and Natural and Man-made Emergencies, p. 223) includes an indicator for Target 4.7. It is worth noting that this indicator is described in terms of the promotion of 'ethics and values' for sustainable living and global citizenship:

| Target Item (1) | Indicator (2) | Baseline c. 2021 (3) | End-year (2025) (4) | MoV (5) | Lead Agency (6) | Risks/enabling conditions (7) |
|--|---|---|---|--|--|---|
| | resilience as pandemic response | loss; and longer-term measures initiated in institutions | Steering Committee actions on sector response | survey reports | | |
| 7. Promotion of ethics and values among young people appropriate for sustainable living and global citizenship (SDG Target 4.7), | Assessed findings on student and teacher awareness knowledge and practices about ethics and values, co-curricular activities role. Action plans by sub-sectors and institutions | TA linked to D2 items; Current plans and practices reviewed in sub-sectors as reflected in learning content, teacher training, pedagogy practices, and student assessment. Action Plans for future work | Curricular content, pedagogy teacher preparation, school culture, co-curricular activities, student assessment reflect ethics and values objectives, Action plan followed | TA reports; Action plans of sub-sectors and institutions. Independent research reports. Third party assessment | MoE/MoP ME steering Committee, NCTB, Education Boards, Teacher training Institutions | Policy commitment guided by Steering Committee. Public support generated with civil society and teacher's organization involvement. |

Furthermore, it appears that the new curriculum, now being introduced in certain grades, places some emphasis on global citizenship with the aim that 'students become aware of the interconnectedness and interdependence of different countries and people being informed about local, national, and international issues and, and that they should acquire a wholehearted mindset to accept the difference and diversity by having a sense of mutual empathy, solidarity and respect' (personal communication with Dr A.Q. Prince, CAMPE).

As a final observation on the GCED landscape in Bangladesh, UNESCO's contribution to efforts in support of GCED in the country has included GCED workshops⁷ and the National Association of UNESCO Clubs Bangladesh, which has a national GCED Adviser.⁸

⁷ <https://www.daily-sun.com/post/587028/UNESCO-GCED-Workshop-held-in-Dhaka->

⁸ <https://www.observerbd.com/details.php?id=391060> Also: <https://bangladeshpost.net/posts/workshop-on-dissemination-of-unesco-priorities-held-in-jashore-77>

3. The Education Ecosystem in Bangladesh

3.1 General education policy and donor support

The National Education Policy (2010), supported by the ESP of 2020, is the framework for all current education activity.⁹ The Education Ministry sent a draft Education Bill in 2022 to the Cabinet for approval. Once enacted into law, the much-awaited Education Act, formulated in line with the NEP of 2010, will be the first-ever Education Act in Bangladesh.¹⁰

In terms of support by development partners to the primary sector (which extends to Class 5), the sector has seen a series of Primary Education Development Programmes (PEDP):

- PEDP 1: 1997–2003;
- PEDP 2: 2004–11;
- PEDP 3: 2011–18; and
- PEDP 4: 2018–23.

The PEDP programmes have all been designed as Sector Wide Approaches, in which development partners have particular roles alongside the government in the overall design and implementation of the programme. The implementation of the PEDPs is overseen by four quality working groups, one of which includes teacher development, curriculum, and textbooks. It is therefore of most relevance to the proposed project.

The current PEDP plan (PEDP 4) can be seen at:

https://dpe.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/dpe.portal.gov.bd/page/312f836e_fda3_4fb0_973a_26ffff78a95d/DPP%20of%20PEDP-4_Scan%20copy%20%28Full%20and%20Final%29%2009-12-18.pdf

Work towards a new programme (PEDP 5) is now underway.

By contrast, technical assistance to secondary education (Class 6 to 12) has not followed a Sector Wide Approaches model. The main programme of assistance at present was led by the World Bank, but this ended in June 2023.¹¹

⁹ Although the NEP sought to establish a Permanent National Education Commission, this has not been implemented.

¹⁰ <https://www.newagebd.net/article/177464/govt-must-make-education-law-draft-public-for-review>

¹¹ <https://projects.worldbank.org/en/projects-operations/project-detail/P160943>

3.2 Vision 2041

In 2015, the National Economic Council started work on developing a long-term vision for economic development. Published in 2020 with the full title of ‘Making Vision 2041 A Reality: Perspective Plan of Bangladesh, 2021–2041’, the document has two main goals that are expected to be achieved by 2030: economic development, transforming Bangladesh from the Least Developed Country status to Upper Middle-Income Country status; and the achievement of the SDGs. Vision 2041 is the basis of the current five-year plan.

Vision 2041 does not refer to ‘citizenship’ or ‘global citizenship’. The section headed ‘Strategy for primary and secondary education’ (p. 58) makes no reference even to the SDGs. However, the section entitled ‘Beyond Human Development: Values, Culture and Heritage’ (p. 61), on the other hand, states that:

‘A developed nation must cherish the attribute of good citizens – abiding of laws, building the habit of cleanliness of surrounding environment, following certain invisible norms and behaviour, treating women, elderly with respect, tolerance of different faiths and beliefs etc. The development of nations hinges on the social and cultural make up of its population since this predicts the response, capacity and efforts made individuals in nation building and also affect the decisions that they take in their lives. Upholding the culture is upholding the characteristics and profile of a nation’s population and this has a strong influence in the way the population engage with each other and for the welfare of the nation as well. Bangladesh has a rich cultural history and has significant archaeological assets dispersed across the country. In addition to that, in terms of literature, music and arts, the intellectuals of the country are continuing to make progress. In today’s global village, it is the citizen’s duty to showcase the cultural heritage and contribute to the progress of future generations and to the world.

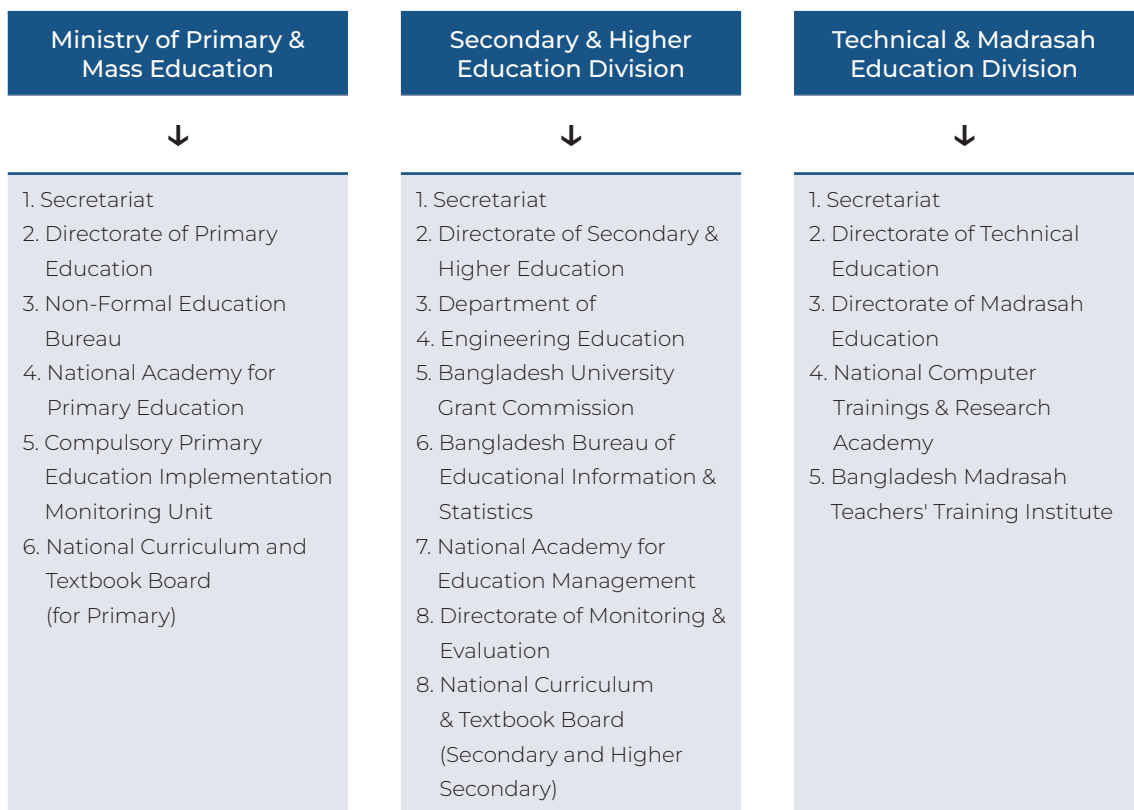
Intrinsic to a nation’s identities is also the religious beliefs and practices, which is again an integral part of the cultural fabric of our nation. Bangladesh has traditionally been a tolerant society with co-existence of people from different religions and practices. In the world that we live in at present, indiscriminate freedom to practice one’s religious beliefs and respect of all religions is an essential part of development of nations and required for excelling actively in the global economy.’

3.3 Education sector organisation and decentralisation

Unusually, the responsibility for leading and monitoring the education sector in Bangladesh lies with two separate ministries:

- The Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (MoPME)¹²; and
- MOE: responsible for secondary, technical, madrasa, and higher education.¹³

The roles of the ministries and divisions are as follows:¹⁴



The primary cycle consists of Classes 1–5, junior secondary includes Classes 6–8, secondary consists of Classes 9–10, and upper secondary provides Classes 11–12. The school year runs from January to November.

¹² <http://www.mopme.gov.bd/>

¹³ <http://www.moedu.gov.bd/>

¹⁴ With acknowledgements to GPE: <https://www.globalpartnership.org/node/document/download?file=document/file/2020-10-Bangladesh-ESA.pdf>

Pre-primary

The pre-primary cycle has been expanded in the new curriculum: 'the pre-primary level will comprise two years, starting when the child is four up till when he or she is six. There will be two classes in the pre-primary level – pre-primary class one and pre-primary class two. Presently, a five-year-old starts with one year of pre-primary education. A child over 6 is admitted to Class 1. According to sources in the primary and mass education ministry, approval in this regard has been given from a high level in the government.'¹⁵

Primary

The MoPME is responsible for primary education, adult literacy, and ethnic minorities and is supported in all administrative functions by the DPE, which manages all government schools and teachers, teacher training, school grants, and supplies to schools.¹⁶ DPE also manages the PEDP programmes on behalf of the MoPME.

For many years, as set out in the NEP (2010), it has been planned that primary education would be extended from five to eight grades. This expansion still does not appear to be imminent.

Secondary

As shown in the above organigram, MOE has two divisions: one for secondary and higher, the other for technical and madrasa education, each with several branches. Unlike for pre-primary and primary education, the management of secondary schools is decentralised to seven regional boards.

National Academy for Primary Education (NAPE)

Located at some distance from Dhaka, NAPE is responsible for all primary school teacher qualifications. According to its own website, 'NAPE is an apex training and research institution under the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (MoPME) ... It is headed by a Director and regulated by a Board of Governors headed by the Secretary, Primary and Mass Education Division (PMED). NAPE envisions to be the centre of excellence of primary training and research in Bangladesh.'¹⁷

¹⁵ <https://en.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/books-to-be-changed-exams-to-be-dropped>

¹⁶ <http://www.dpe.gov.bd/>

¹⁷ http://www.bd-directory.com/National_Academy_for_Primary_Education_Bangladesh.html

The Institute of Education and Research (IER), Dhaka University

A description by Hiroshima University, which has worked for many years to implement Japan International Cooperation Agency-funded projects in Bangladesh, summarises IER well: 'It is the only Institute of its kind under the public universities of Bangladesh which offers teaching programmes leading to higher professional degrees, conducts advanced research studies and provides extension services in education. Its professional staff, most of them having overseas post-graduation and doctoral degrees and long experiences with specialization in various aspects of education render professional services to Government sponsored committees and commissions on education to help develop the education sector of Bangladesh and provide consultancy services at both national and international levels.'¹⁸

The National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB)

Reporting to the MOE, NCTB is responsible for the development of all curricula for primary and secondary cycles as well as related teaching and learning materials, with the exception of specialist secondary schools (see below). Since all textbooks are resupplied to pupils each year, NCTB is one of the largest textbook printing and distribution institutions in the world, with an annual production of over 350 million copies.

The NEP includes the following references to textbooks:

- *Primary*: 'To develop a curricula and textbooks imbued with the national spirit with a view to cultivate the humanistic values' (NCTB is not mentioned as the responsible agency, but this is assumed).
- *Secondary*: '*The National Curriculum and Textbook Board will be responsible to design the uniform curriculum and prepare necessary textbooks for every stream at secondary level, excepting the special subjects of Madrasa and Vocational Education. Bangladesh Madrasa Education Board and Bangladesh Technical Education Board will be responsible for designing and preparing the textbooks and curriculum of special subjects of Madrasa and Vocational Education.*'

Public v. private sector

In primary schooling, the private or non-state sector has an approximately equal role to the government sector: 'Slightly less than half of primary schools are state schools which are owned, financed and operated by the government, and include three types of schools: government

¹⁸ <https://cice.hiroshima-u.ac.jp/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/UD.pdf>

primary schools (38,916 schools), newly nationalized primary schools (26,613 schools) and experimental schools (64 schools).¹⁹

The majority of secondary schools are privately owned: 'According to Bangladesh Bureau of Education Information System (BANBEIS) data (2019), a total of 4,495 colleges or college sections are offering HSE [Higher Secondary Education] across the country. Out of the colleges or college sections offering HSE, 673 (15 percent) are operated by the government, and 3,822 (85 percent) are privately operated... About 66.3 percent of Grades 11–12 students are enrolled in private colleges' (United States Agency for International Development, 2021).

Non-formal education

Within the MOE, the Bureau of Non-Formal Education is responsible for non-formal education.²⁰ For an overview of the main actors in the NFE sector, an article in the Bangladesh Education Article reported in 2019 that 'BRAC is the largest non-formal education provider in Bangladesh... Some other NGOs are working with non-formal education as part of their routine work or on different projects. Bidyananda, Onnorokom Pathshala, FIVDB, Risda Bangladesh are some of the mentionable names in non-formal education.'²¹ For more information on BRAC, see Section 3.4.

3.4 Civil Society Organisations

CAMPE

CAMPE represents over 1000 education NGOs in the country and carries out an annual study into aspects of education. It is therefore an actor of major significance.

CAMPE also operates a network of over 600 primary schools and produces DVDs for teacher development (subject-specific) in collaboration with NCTB and DPE.

Since 2013, CAMPE has conducted a Citizens' Report Card on primary education, which gathers and elicits information about the beneficiary's awareness of, access to, use of, and satisfaction with public services. For schools, the Citizens' Report Card includes school governance, the school learning environment, and the distribution and management of textbooks.

¹⁹ Cited in UNESCO's recent survey, Bangladesh: Non-State Actors in Education: [#https://education-profiles.org/central-and-southern-asia/bangladesh/~non-state-actors-in-education](https://education-profiles.org/central-and-southern-asia/bangladesh/~non-state-actors-in-education) #Primary%20and%20secondary%20education

²⁰ <http://www.bnfe.gov.bd/>

²¹ The informative Bangladesh Education Article (<https://bdeuarticle.com/>) publishes quality articles related to Bangladesh Education.

BRAC

BRAC is the world's biggest NGO with an annual budget of over USD 750 million, working in the fields of education, health, microcredit, livelihoods, water and sanitation, and legal aid. It has operated thousands of its own schools in the NFE sector since 1985.²² The organisation states that '14 million children have graduated from our award-winning schools in Bangladesh, and our learning models have been adopted by governments worldwide.'²³ It has also worked in the non-formal sector in other countries including in sub-Saharan Africa.

Today, non-formal education is a much smaller part of BRAC's work than it used to be. In 2016, BRAC began to open fee-paying, English medium schools (known as Nobodhara), when direct donor funding levels began to fall following the rating of the country's economic status as a Lower Middle Income Country rather than a Low Income Country. BRAC is still exploring the potential of these new, fee-based 'recovery model' primary schools.

The BRAC group includes the Institute of Education Development (IED-BRACU), which awards MAs/MScs in education and early childhood education.

Other CSOs in the education sector

The Volunteers Association for Bangladesh developed a model for quality education that embraces knowledge, competence, and good citizenship for rural high schools (Zaman, 2016). According to Zaman, 'VAB (Volunteers Association for Bangladesh) is arguably the only NGO in Bangladesh which has been solely devoted to rural high school education for nearly two decades.'

The publication Bangladesh Education Journal should also be noted. The journal is published by Bangladesh Forum for Educational Development and IED-BRACU, with assistance from UNESCO.²⁴

Rohingya education

The educational experience of the Rohingya refugees has been extremely challenging for all.²⁵ With over 860,000 refugees in one place, nearly half of whom are children, the Rohingyas

²² See also research published by BRAC: <http://research.brac.net/new/staff/content/24-workingpapers/>

²³ <https://www.brac.net/program/education/>

²⁴ <https://www.bafed.net/ejournals.php>

²⁵ <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/03/21/bangladesh-officials-threaten-rohingya-setting-schools>

represent the largest refugee camp in the world.²⁶ A Myanmar Curriculum Pilot was launched by UNICEF and partners in November 2021.

²⁶ <https://medium.com/airbel/five-years-on-an-update-on-the-education-and-learning-of-rohingya-refugee-children-38030c13106e>

4. Curriculum, Textbooks, and Student Assessment

4.1 Curriculum

After the delayed implementation, due to Covid-19, the new pre-K to 12 curriculum is being introduced gradually as of 2023 and is expected to be fully rolled out by 2026. In 2023, pre-primary and Classes 1, 6, and 7 are being implemented with new 'pilot' teaching and learning materials in 62 schools in 24 districts.²⁷

The development of the curriculum has been led, as is customary, by the National Curriculum Coordination Committee, coordinated by the MoPME and largely carried out by NCTB.

The competency-based approach of the new curriculum is seen as moving away from rote teaching. This is in line with the NEP of 2010, which referred to one of its aims as being 'to ensure the marginal competencies of learners at each level so that they are discouraged from rote learning, rather use their own thoughtfulness, imagination and urge for curiosity.' However, the same announcements about a new competency-based approach that will address the challenge of rote-teaching were made at the time of publishing the previous (2011–12) curriculum.

One can go back even further to trace the history of competency-based approaches in Bangladesh, when a 'competency based curriculum' was first introduced into Grade 1 of government schools in 1991 (Sedere, 2011). Roy (2016) reported that, 'In 1992, NCTB introduced a total of 53 terminal competencies for the primary level which were modified in 2000 and then the total terminal competencies were reduced to 50. Later in 2011, the NCTB again reduced the number of terminal competencies to 29. Though the number of terminal competencies has been reduced time to time but competencies remained unchanged in the list and no major change was made. Most of the previous competencies are either merged or aggregated or just rearranged' (Roy, 2016).

As in many countries, the meaning of a 'competency-based' approach is not always clear or coherent. The perceived dual aim of a competency-based approach – in terms of both moving away from exam-focused rote-teaching as well as preparing for economic productivity – is also highlighted in the NEP, namely: 'to develop a learner with competencies so that s/he can compete in the job market, especially in the economic sector of the country.'²⁸

Eight subjects have been selected for primary students in the new curriculum: Bangla, English,

²⁷ <https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/news/new-curriculum-rolls-out-preparations-not-enough-3209681>

²⁸ For further discussion of the history of CBC in Bangladesh, see Obaydullah & Jahan (2020).

maths, science, social science, religion, well-being, and art and culture, but with no separate books for well-being and art and culture – instead, teachers in these subject areas will have ‘instruction books’.²⁹

A major change is that all students up to Class 10 will follow the same subjects. Three streams – Science, Business Studies, and Humanities – will be introduced in Class 11 (Previously, students would choose one of the three streams after Class 8).

4.2 Textbooks

All textbooks for government schools are developed and published centrally by NCTB, who also manage the printing – using printers in Bangladesh but more often in India – in an enormous annual operation that concludes with a celebratory textbook festival. Due to the pandemic, January 2023 saw the first textbook festival since 2020. In 2023, some 347 million textbooks have been distributed including almost 100 million at the primary level and almost a quarter of a billion books at the secondary level.³⁰

After the initial implementation of the curriculum in 2023, students in Classes 3, 4, 8, and 9 will get new curriculum books in 2024 and students in Classes 5 and 10 will get books in January 2025. Grade 11 will receive books in 2026 and Grade 12 in 2027. As a result, ‘students will take part in the SSC examinations [Secondary School Certificate Examination] under the new curriculum from 2026 and in the HSC exams [Higher Secondary Certificate Examination] from 2028.’³¹

New textbooks have often generated controversies, whether in terms of linguistic, social, or political issues, and the textbooks newly published in 2023 are no exception.³²

²⁹ <https://en.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/books-to-be-changed-exams-to-be-dropped>

³⁰ <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/2022/10/31/will-students-get-new-books-on-first-day-of-2023>

³¹ <https://www.tbsnews.net/bangladesh/education/educationists-preparing-teachers-introducing-new-curriculum-432502>

³² See for example: <https://archive.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/2017/07/21/corrections-no-changes-school-textbooks> <https://archive.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/education/2017/01/09/nctb-asked-explain-mistakes-textbooks> <https://www.nst.com.my/world/world/2023/02/878829/bangladesh-withdraws-school-books-after-an-ti-lgbtq-backlash>

4.3 Student assessment

One of the biggest changes in the new curriculum will be the structure of national exams. Three main exams have traditionally dominated the school system:

- Primary Education Completion Examination
- Secondary School Certificate: at the end of Class 10 (entry to Class 11 of upper secondary)
- Higher Secondary Certificate: End of Class 12 (completion of upper secondary and entry to higher education)

Under the new curriculum, the primary leaving certificate at the end of Class 5 will be abolished and the first national exam will now take place at the end of Class 10.³³ This is in response to widespread criticisms of the effect of exam culture:

'The focus on a high-stake public examination at the end of the fifth grade and the preoccupation with it of teachers, parents, students and education authorities clearly distracts students from actual learning of and achieving the foundational competencies in primary education. It subjects all concerned to anxiety, stress and counter-productive teaching-learning practices and school activities' (Haq, et al., 2017).

NAPE (see Section 3.3) conducts research on primary education, including monitoring the performance of students. In terms of post-primary, student assessment is managed by eight regional Boards of Intermediate and Secondary Education located in Barisal, Chittagong, Comilla, Dhaka, Jessore, Rajshahi, Dinajpur, and Sylhet. They are complemented by the Bangladesh Madrasah Education Board and the Bangladesh Technical Education Board.³⁴

4.4 Global citizenship and Bangladesh and Global Studies

Social Studies was first introduced into the primary curriculum in 1978 with its own textbook called *Poribesh Porichiti* (Introduction to the Environment). It was replaced by BGS in 2011, by the Awami League Government under the NEP (2010) and was first introduced into schools in 2012.

BGS, unlike other curricular subjects that formed part of high-stakes examinations at the end of primary and lower secondary (until the new curriculum), did not have its own section in the NEP

³³ For more detail on the examination system in Bangladesh and its impact on curriculum, students, teachers and society, see: <https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1186/s40468-018-0060-9.pdf>

³⁴ <http://www.educationboard.gov.bd/>

(MOE, 2010). Since 2012, BGS has been taught from Class 3 through to Class 8 (In the first two Classes, 1 and 2, it is considered to be integrated with Bangla, English and Maths). In Classes 6 to 8, there is now also an additional optional subject of 'language and culture of minority ethnic groups'. In Classes 9–10, BGS is compulsory for science stream students, while humanities stream students study three compulsory social science subjects including the history of Bangladesh and world civilisation, geography and environment, economics, and civics and citizenship. BGS, economics, and civics and citizenship are also offered as options for humanities stream students in these two final grades of secondary school.

According to Bhowmik, Roy and Sultana (2021a), 'Social studies education is the main tool to instil national culture and identity among the students ... more pertinently to issues pertaining to sovereignty of the country, equal opportunities, discrimination, tolerance and climate change.'

4.5 Education for democracy

Certain activities for greater democratic participation by students in the post-primary cycle have been promoted alongside the formal curriculum. Islam (2019) reported that 'In 2015, the Bangladesh Government announced a new focus on practicing and developing students' democratic values, for example, students' voice, participation and engagement in school activities through the development of student cabinets in secondary schools..

However, while this active participation was suggested as an important pedagogical approach in the curriculum, and as an incentive for schools to develop a stronger focus on student involvement in this area of learning, there is evidence that it has been challenging for teachers, and required teacher professional learning.'

The manual for the student cabinets, which are held in Classes 6–10, describes seven aims for the cabinets: 'Student leaders will be able to (1) practice and be respectful to democracy since the childhood, (2) be liberal and respectful to others opinion, (3) support the teacher in teaching-learning in the school, (4) assist in ensuring 100% student admission and prevention of drop out, (5) engage guardian by the student in teaching-learning, (6) ensure the participation of the student in improving the environment of the school, (7) confirm the participation of the student in sports, cultural and co-curricular activities.'

Furthermore, Roy (2020) reported that 'Zaman (2016) in his study explained how participation in clubs and volunteer squads for diversified extra-curricular activities in the high schools throughout the country may possibly improve the academic performances of the students in schools.'

5. Teachers and Teacher Education

5.1 Primary teachers

The pre-service curriculum for pre-primary and primary school teachers, developed by NAPE, has been delivered through the Primary Training Institutes (PTIs) since 2017.

'The Diploma in Primary Education (DPEd) is one of the significant advances of TED [teacher education] plan. In 2011, the MoPME decided to start DPEd for primary school teachers against Certificate in Education (C-in-Ed) course. The MoPME instructed the National Academy for Primary (NAPE) to develop curriculum and course materials for this course which was piloted in 2012 at 7 Primary Teachers' Training Institutes (PTI). After that in 2013, this course was introduced at 29 PTIs and in 2015 at 36 PTIs and 2019 in all 67 PTIs (Hossain, et al., 2015). The DPEd course is six months longer than the C-in-Ed. The program is structured in a way that it actively combines student teachers' practical experiences in school with the learning on taught courses at the Primary Training Institutes (PTIs)' (Khatun & Salahuddin, 2019).

5.2 Secondary teachers

Various government and private teacher training colleges (TTCs) provide in-service and pre-service teacher education, offering four-year (eight-semester) integrated Bachelor of Education, one-year professional Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.), and a one-year Master of Education.

Aspects of GCED have been incorporated into the B.Ed. curriculum: for example, gender equity and equality, ethics in safe Information and Communications Technology use, national and international laws of inclusive education (i.e. the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities), teaching civics and citizenship, the concept of child rights, child rights according to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the situation of child rights in Bangladesh, the role of the United Nations in removing discrimination against women in Bangladesh, the role of Bangladesh to the United Nations mission for peacekeeping.

Khairul Islam, a professor at IER, Dhaka University, carried out a case study of GCED in in-service teacher education programmes for secondary school teachers, in order to:

- i) Explore how the aspects of GCED are addressed in the curriculum of selected in-service teacher education programme;

- ii) Explore the understanding and views of teacher-educators and in-service teachers about GCED;
- iii) Understand how the learning and teaching approaches of in-service teacher education programme connect the values of GCED; and
- iv) Identify the challenges of the teacher education programme to prepare in-service teachers for GCED.

Twelve teacher-educators and a principal were selected for the study. Based on interviews with the teacher educators and focus group discussions with in-service teachers themselves, the research found that GCED in the teacher education programme in the case study college was not fully developed. Most teacher-educators had very limited understanding, as well as misconceptions, about global citizenship and GCED. More than half had never experienced a discussion of GCED. Almost none of the in-service teachers had heard the term global citizenship or GCED.

The study identified several challenges including the lack of teachers' professional training on GCED, very traditional teaching–learning practices in the B.Ed. classes, traditional assessment strategies, certificate-focused B.Ed. programme, the attitudes of some of the teacher-educators and in-service teachers, an absence of dynamic leadership roles, and the transfer system of faculties between general colleges and TTCs. Among their conclusions, the researchers recommended 'promoting teacher educators' professional learning on GCED, establishing a culture of activity-based teaching-learning practices in TTC, increasing monitoring and mentoring of activities, modification of assessment strategies, breaking the culture of certificate-focused B.Ed. program, valuing class attendance should be taken, more promotion for GCED through education policy makers, practitioners, mass media as well as social media' (Islam, Asma, & Dey, 2022).

5.3 Teacher Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

Much in-service training of teachers, including the preparations for new curricula, has traditionally used a cascade model and has been very brief. It seems the new curriculum will be introduced the same way, with even less preparation time during 2022 compared with previous curriculum implementations due to the ongoing effects of the pandemic.³⁵ It is reported that training for those teachers who are about to implement the first phase of the rollout of the new curriculum

³⁵ <https://www.tbsnews.net/bangladesh/education/educationists-preparing-teachers-introducing-new-curriculum-432502>

consisted only of one hour, which cannot achieve much apart from informing teachers of the content of the documents. It is clearly not enough time for even a minimum number of questions and discussions. Its effectiveness will also depend, of course, on whether teachers were given the documents before the training and whether they had time to read them.

The World Bank's Quality Learning for All Program includes in-service training for primary school teachers: 'The Project will focus on improving learning outcomes for Bangla and mathematics in Grade 3 students. This will be achieved through an evaluation of the current curricula, textbooks and supplementary learning materials based on the new curriculum, recruitment and training of about 100,000 teachers, providing digital materials for teachers and students, exams system reforms, and the expansion of one-year quality pre-primary education in all government schools.'³⁶

The IER (see Section 3.3) at Dhaka University is widely believed to be the only major institution capable of providing large programmes of professional development.³⁷

5.4 Teachers and teaching

Teachers' capacity for taking on new initiatives is constrained by several factors including large class sizes, which can be 60 or more in secondary schools. Teacher attendance has also been highlighted as a challenge: 'One persistent problem in the rural schools is the level of regularity in attendance in the schools. This becomes more acute during the cropping seasons' (Zaman, 2016).

Section 4.1 of the ESP, entitled 'Education Workforce for School Education' (p. 103), states:

'An education workforce fit for the purpose:

Efficiency and effectiveness of governance and management of the teaching workforce cannot be separated from the purposes of education and the teachers' role in realizing those purposes. SDG4.7 targets indicate the range of education objectives in the context of the sustainable development goal, which call for balancing the needs of current and future generations. There is an expectation that school is the setting where young people can learn and practice ethics and values.'

³⁶ <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/loans-credits/2018/06/14/bangladesh-quality-learning-for-all-program>

³⁷ <https://ierdu.edu.bd/>

Khairul Islam commented:

'This study identified that teachers developing new knowledge and understanding of core concepts, and access to appropriate resources and teaching models are all of critical importance in implementing new approaches. In addition, having appropriate professional learning to support teachers helps them to become more active, engaged and empowered. Overall, this research challenged authoritarian approaches and didactic teaching in the school and achieved some progress in building new and more positive dimensions in relationships between teachers and students, and the school and community' (Islam, 2019).

The authoritarian and didactic approaches described by Islam, are widespread. Teachers commonly follow the textbook content and its sequence very closely. Islam (2019) also found that 'teachers did not develop any lesson plans for stating the learning intentions and outcomes of the activities in the classroom and said that this was not common practice in Bangladesh because teachers mainly followed the text book as their plan for the lesson.'

On the other hand, unlike in many Lower Middle Income Countries, the actual availability of textbooks is not a widespread issue, since all students are issued with a set of textbooks at the start of each school year.

6. Education Technology Initiatives

The Bangladesh Blended Education Framework (2022) is expected to have an impact on many schools, with the Blended Education Master Plan: 2022–2031 intended to create 60,000 multi-media classrooms by the end of 2023.³⁸

From 2008, the Department for International Development-funded English in Action project,³⁹ implemented with the United Kingdom’s Open University, developed a widely praised, low-tech ‘trainer in the hand’ methodology, which used regular cell phones to provide content to teachers in the target districts supported by printed resources. However, funding ended in 2017.⁴⁰

The 10 Minute School is a small, award-winning online educational platform that aims to deliver quality academic and skill development content to Bangladeshi students and beyond.⁴¹

With regard to the digital dimension, Vision 2041 focuses mainly on investment in digital infrastructure and the consequent potential for economic development, but it also notes, ‘The potentially powerful negative side effects of technology will need to be proactively, continuously and adequately dealt with to ensure the economic growth is sustained and social cohesion is strengthened. Alarming phenomenon such as the proliferation of fake news and control of personal data by mega corporations have to be addressed with citizen-centric regulation and mass digital literacy.’

Digital and media literacy has clear relevance for some dimensions of GCED. In this respect, see ‘Digital Kids Asia Pacific: Insights into Children’s Digital Citizenship, Country Report – Bangladesh’ (2019), carried out with technical and financial support by UNESCO and Korean Funds-in-Trust.⁴²

³⁸ <https://www.observerbd.com/news.php?id=358173>; <http://befa.a2i.gov.bd>

³⁹ <https://www.eiabd.com/>

⁴⁰ https://www.researchgate.net/publication/351700913_Use_of_Mobile_Phones_in_Teaching_English_in_Bangladesh_A_Systematic_Review_2010-2020

⁴¹ <https://hundred.org/en/innovations/10-minute-school>

⁴² <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000367985>

7. Schools and Their Communities

Despite the size of the education sector and the very large number of schools and students, the highly-centralised nature of the sector appears to have resulted in relatively low involvement by communities in the running of schools. 'The long-standing practice of centralized education management is clearly a barrier to proactive community participation and contributing to better management of primary education. A culture of non-participation and abdication of ownership has developed over the years. Community stakeholders often appeared lacking awareness and were reluctant to take interest in their neighborhood school' (Haq et al., 2017).

Some observers are a little more sanguine: 'it is evident that parents and other community members such as school managing committee (SMC) members are often willing to be involved in school activities, although they perceive challenges (Tithi et al., 2016). Kabir and Akter (2014) argue that while community members and parents can significantly contribute to school improvement though parental involvement in schooling, it is relatively a new concept in Bangladesh' (Islam, 2019).

8. Discussion

The early sections of this Situation Analysis indicated that certain tensions are at play in terms of national strategies and how these set the context for the proposed GCED curriculum integration project – that is:

- Economic growth and prosperity, on the one hand, and environmental protection and mitigating the effects of climate change, on the other;
- The longstanding inclusion of BGS in the national curriculum, and how it might embrace a wider perspective of global citizenship; and
- The ambitions and timetable of the new curriculum and its intended competency-based approach.

A key question is therefore how to explore and develop a pedagogical approach that does not consist only of knowing the curriculum content. An intervention to introduce and/or strengthen GCED needs to address the challenge of changing (or improving) a pedagogy so that it is based on and informed by GCED.

8.1 The curriculum

The effectiveness of the new curriculum will depend on the capacity and abilities of those tasked with its implementation. The risks of underachieving are clear unless the enormous number of practitioners – especially in a country with a teaching cadre and student population the size of that in Bangladesh, however centralised it may be – are able to adapt to the plan by understanding and changing their own practices.

Given that the curriculum itself is unlikely to be very different from the previous curriculum, the challenge for the project lies more in terms of identifying to what extent the new curriculum reflects national policies and strategies that reflect the SDGs, especially Target 4.7, and the extent to which BGS continues to remain a core subject. Bangladesh's role in the SDG4 High-Level Steering Committee is a clear level for advocacy and engagement.

The importance of preventing climate change and mitigating its effects on Bangladesh suggests that an intervention based on both GCED and Education for Sustainable Development might be effective, which links the two priorities. This will depend on the content of the new curriculum.

Extra-curricular activities represent a potential area of interest, both in terms of after-school clubs and student cabinets.

8.2 Teachers and teaching

Teachers will clearly need considerable help to be able to deliver the ambitious aims of the new Education Act and the new curriculum.

Identifying training providers will represent a challenge, particularly if a large-scale intervention is proposed. IER at Dhaka University may be able to provide the training, but other providers may also be sought, who might work with IER as the lead institution. CAMPE would be well placed to advise on how to reach out to other CSOs, including those with strength and expertise in particular regions.

8.3 Textbooks

Textbooks are a constant source of controversy in Bangladesh. Some of this is due to the continuing role of the curriculum and textbooks in reinforcing the country's national identity. Thanks to efforts to provide textbooks in ethnic minority languages for Grades 1–3 since 2018, textbooks are now available in five minority languages: Garo, Chakma, Marma, Tripura, and Sadri.

Qazi and Shah (2019), who studied textbooks for Classes 8–10 BGS, reported that 'Other significant national identity markers that textbooks promote/project are narratives of secular/liberal ideals and plural society with ethnic and religious diversity. However, findings from the interactions with study participants suggest their feeble identification with these aspects. They rather tend to attach strong value to individuals' tendency to adhere to religion and traditions to be good Bengalis.'

There have been widespread criticisms of the textbooks that have been published to support the grades currently being implemented in the rollout of the new curriculum.⁴³

As one NCTB source says in *The Daily Star* article, 'many writers and editors take the work casually as they do not get enough money for this job.'

The role of textbooks in guiding methodology is significant in all the cycles. Studies suggest that the underlying methodology is highly textbook-centred, with little actual methodology. For example, Islam (2019) reported the following:

⁴³<https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/news/nctb-textbooks-never-ending-cycle-controversies-3224766>

'A textbook analysis study conducted by Islam and Tithi (2014) found that aspects of human rights were not well addressed in the secondary school curriculum and textbooks, although some contemporary issues of human rights are incorporated. They found that aspects explored were mostly knowledge dominant, rather than values and skills focused (Islam & Tithi, 2014). These emphases do not provide students with opportunities to develop their views on issues and capacity to take-action on HR. Similarly, Islam (2015) conducted a study of democratic citizenship education in the Bangladeshi secondary school curriculum focusing on how opportunities for practicing values of human rights and democracy were provided. He found that aspects of human rights values (i.e. rights and responsibilities of citizens, diversity, and participation) were unevenly explored in the curriculum and that opportunities for active participation by the students were very limited in schools.'

Is this 'transmission model' inevitable? Anecdotal evidence suggests it is not. To an extent, the issue is one of the 'level' of the school and its teachers, as a former colleague who was working at IED-BRACU at the time reported:

'Teachers in low achieving school provided very general perceptions. This was because they found it difficult to produce critical ideas as they followed a teacher-directed traditional teaching strategies in the classrooms. Therefore, the data I got from them I am struggling how should I compare them with the data that I got from the teachers in high achieving schools. In high achieving schools, teachers are very enthusiastic and engaged, they could produce very interesting critical ideas regarding the CPD activities at school setting' (personal communication, Badrul Allam, 2019).

One of the aims of an intervention that includes textbook development should be to address the default assumption that learning will necessarily be based on rote teaching. It should also address the fact that students' boredom and lack of motivation are important factors in the effectiveness of textbook-centred teaching and learning.

For further background on how the primary school textbooks were 'refined' in 2013–15, see Smart (2019) on refining the Bangladesh and Global Studies textbooks for Classes 3–5.

8.4 Digital

It is not clear what 'blended' will mean for schools in Bangladesh. Most of the research, published policy, and planning focus on the higher education sector.⁴⁴ For schools, aside from providing internet access for schools, some commentators have placed their faith in the potential of blended learning to transform traditional rote teaching, much like the faith that is being placed in the competency-based approach of the new curriculum.⁴⁵

8.5 Research

The project might consider an action-research-based design, working with schools and teachers in collaboration with civil society and government, and led by a local research partner. This partner is likely to be IER at Dhaka University. Action research can build on the potential for change that is identified by Badrul Allam above.

⁴⁴ For example, the University Grants Commission of Bangladesh's Policy on Blended Learning for Bangladesh (2021): http://www.ugc.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/ugc.portal.gov.bd/policies/ddeb0952_f123_4d24_8dd_f_53b9b24031f8/2022-06-06-06-44-a6a5dea173d2d0ec327b83f57cd55e24.pdf

⁴⁵ See for example: <https://www.daily-sun.com/printversion/details/628019/Blended-Learning-in-Bangladesh:-Roadmap-Ahead>

9. Possible Areas of Focus for the Three-year Research Project

This Situation Analysis does not seek to define the scope of the planned three-year project. Nevertheless, it may be useful to indicate some possible entry points for the project, based on our analysis. In all cases, the objective should be to turn policy into practice.

In order to arrive at possible entry points, we might begin by asking:

- What are the aims of the project?
- What guiding principles might be applied, based on the above situation analysis?
- What approaches might therefore provide possible entry points, according to these principles?
- Should the project target primary and/or secondary cycles?
- Should it target teacher education for primary or secondary?
- Should it include textbooks to support the new curriculum, including textbooks that have not yet been written?
- How can it work with the national digital strategy, including a focus on Media and Information Literacy which is central to the themes of GCED?⁴⁶

9.1 Aims of the project

Bangladesh is an emerging high-growth economy that is greatly dependent on globalisation, whether in terms of its exports of textiles or manual labour. It also faces challenges in terms of migration, refugees, and the effects of climate change. In this context, GCED offers a framework for responding to the challenges and opportunities of globalisation. Does the new curriculum reflect such responses as well as national policies and strategies with respect to globalisation? This kind of analysis would seem to provide a clear opportunity when preparing for and planning a GCED curriculum integration project.

9.2 Guiding principles for the project design

Given that the new curriculum is in the process of being rolled out and that MOE confirms that the first editions of the textbooks that will be introduced may be seen as prototypes that can be subsequently modified and improved, the project design may seek to work with NCTB to refine the new textbooks in order to introduce activities that include:

⁴⁶See: <https://www.unesco.org/en/media-information-literacy>

- Competency-based teaching and learning; and
- Connectedness between the themes and values of Target 4.7, including GCED, and the priorities identified in the PM's words at the TES.

The project may develop a pool of trainers, with a focus on creating a cadre of knowledgeable specialists who are also able to provide training in pedagogical approaches. The pool of trainers should include headteachers and teachers. IER at Dhaka University can lead the training of this pool. Criteria for the length of experience required for potential trainers would need to be developed but should be able to include younger, enthusiastic teachers as long as they have completed the agreed minimum number of years of service (for example, three or five years).

Support for teachers might be provided through the methodology developed by the English in Action project (see Section 6).

9.3 Possible entry points and approaches

Some curriculum integration projects have followed an infusion approach, in which the whole curriculum is mapped against a GCED framework. Given the ongoing development of the new curriculum in Bangladesh, such an approach would be likely to create confusion if not resistance. However, a focus on specific parts of the new curriculum would be more manageable. In the longer term, it might be that successes achieved by the project could be adapted for other subjects and cycles.

A *pedagogical* objective for the project is likely to be both the most effective and the most challenging, for the reason that changing practices depends on changing thinking, even if the scale of the intervention is limited. On the other hand, given the near lack of teacher continuing professional development that has been provided to date to support the implementation of the new curriculum, the project can play an important part by providing GCED-based training.

The agreement that APCEIU comes to with government partners will have a large influence on whether the intervention will target the primary or secondary cycle. If it is the secondary cycle, it is suggested that lower secondary (Classes 6 to 8) would be the most appropriate, due to the fact that national exams loom large over the upper secondary cycle.

The subject of BGS, which has been part of the core curriculum taught in schools since 2012, offers clear potential for intervention. Whether the proposed removal of high-stake exams at the

end of primary and lower secondary will have a positive, neutral or negative effect on the status of BGS within the curriculum remains to be seen.

In terms of partners, civil society should be invited to play a part. CAMPE is well placed to help with ensuring broadly-based representation from different stakeholders and including rural and ethnic minority schools, if they are included.

Bibliography

- ADB. (2018). Supporting Fourth Primary Education Development Program: Report and Recommendation of the President.
<https://www.adb.org/projects/documents/ban-50192-002-rrp>
- Ahmed, M. & Rahaman, M.M. (2016). SDG4/Education 2030 and 7th Five-Year Plan of Bangladesh: Aligning National and Global Objectives Strategies and Indicators. <https://bdplatform4sdgs.net/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/SDG-Education-2030-and-7-Five-Year-Plan-of-Bangladesh.pdf>
- APCEIU. (2017). Global Citizenship Education: A Guide for Policymakers. Seoul: APCEIU
- Bhowmik, M.K., Roy, G., & Sultana, F. (2021a). Social studies education in Bangladesh: Contextual influences, reforms and development and curriculum. In Kerry Kennedy (Ed.), *Social Studies Education in South and South East Asian Contexts*. Routledge.
<https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9781003057598-6/social-studies-education-bangladesh-miron-kumar-bhowmik-goutam-roy-foujia-sultana>
- Bhowmik, M.K., Roy, G., & Sultana, F. (2021b). Civic and citizenship education in Bangladesh. In Kerry Kennedy (Ed.), *Social Studies Education in South and South East Asian Contexts*. Routledge.
<https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9781003057598-14/civic-citizenship-education-bangladesh-miron-kumar-bhowmik-goutam-roy-foujia-sultana>
- Directorate of Primary Education. (2018). Fourth Primary Education Development Program (PEDP4). https://dpe.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/dpe.portal.gov.bd/page/312f836e_fda3_4fb0_973a_26ffff78a95d/DPP%20of%20PEDP-4_Scan%20copy%20%28Full%20and%20Final%29%2009-12-18.pdf
- DSHE. (2019.) Digital Kids Asia Pacific: Insights into Children's Digital Citizenship, Country Report – 2019, Bangladesh.
https://drive.google.com/file/d/18Nq2FtK2fQN1zjwQ1gxxjYLB_CjLzXdr/view
- General Economics Division. (2020). 'Making Vision 2041 a Reality: Perspective Plan of Bangladesh.' Bangladesh Planning Commission, Ministry of Planning, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.
<http://oldweb.lged.gov.bd/uploadeddocument/unitpublication/1/1049/vision%202021-2041.pdf>

- Haq, M.N., Habib, M.A., Das, S.K., Mahmud, T., & Rahman, M. (2017). Citizen's Report Card on Service Delivery in Government Primary Schools of Bangladesh. *Bangladesh Education Journal*, 16(2).
https://www.bafed.net/pdf/edecember2017/4_citizens_report_card_on_service_delivery.PDF
- Islam, M.K. (2019). A case study of developing pedagogy about, through and for human rights education in Bangladesh. PhD thesis, Monash University
- Islam, M.K. (2020). Voice and participation of 'student cabinet' in school activities through the development of 'teamwork': A case study of a government secondary school in Bangladesh. *Social Science Review*, 37(2).
<https://www.banglajol.info/index.php/SSR/article/view/56517>
- Islam, Asma, & Dey. (2022). A case study of Global Citizenship Education through in-service teacher education program for secondary school teachers in Bangladesh.
- Khatun, R. & Salahuddin, M. (2019). Practicing Diploma in Primary Education at Government Primary Schools: Policy and Reality, *Primary Education Journal*, 10(1).
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/335755781_Practicing_Diploma_in_Primary_Education_at_Government_Primary_Schools_Policy_and_Reality
- Ministry of Education. (2010). National Education Policy.
https://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/sites/default/files/ressources/bangladesh_national_education_policy_2010.pdf
- Ministry of Education. (2015). Student cabinet manual.
- Ministry of Education. (2020). Education Sector Plan (ESP) for Bangladesh: Fiscal Years 2020/21–2024/25.
<https://unstats.un.org/capacity-development/UNSD-FCDO/bangladesh/>
- General Economics Division. (2020). Making Vision 2041 a Reality: *Perspective Plan of Bangladesh 2021-2041*
- National University. (2017). Curriculum for Bachelor of Education. National University: Gazipur.
https://nu.ac.bd/uploads/2018/01/1Bed-One-Year-Syllabus-2017_pub_date_01012017.pdf

- 
- Obaydullah, A.K.M. & Jahan, N. (2020). Competency based primary education curriculum of Bangladesh: SDG. *SPC Journal of Education*, 3(1).
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/343224087_Competency_based_primary_education_curriculum_of_Bangladesh_SDG
- Qazi, M.H. & Shah, S. (2019). A study of Bangladesh's secondary school curriculum textbooks in students' national identity construction in an overseas context. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*, 39(4), 501-5.
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/02188791.2019.1671806>
- Planning Commission. (2015). The Seventh Five Year Plan of Bangladesh (SFYP), 2016–2020, 'Accelerating Growth, Empowering Every Citizen.' Dhaka: General Economics Division, Planning Commission.
<https://policy.asiapacificenergy.org/sites/default/files/Seventh%20Five%20Year%20Plan%20FY2016%20%E2%80%93%20FY2020%20%2522Accelerating%20Growth%2C%20Empowering%20Citizens%2522%20%28EN%29.pdf>
- Roy, G. (2016). Competency-based Assessment in Primary Education in Bangladesh: A Review. *SHARE Education Monograph 6*.
https://www.academia.edu/30021647/COMPETENCY_BASED_ASSESSMENT_IN_PRIMARY_EDUCATION_IN_BANGLADESH_A_REVIEW
- Roy, S. (2020). Student Cabinet and Curricular Activities: A Case Study of a Secondary School in Bangladesh. *Journal of Education and Research*, 10(2).
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/346758686_Student_Cabinet_and_Curricular_Activities_A_Case_Study_of_a_Secondary_School_in_Bangladesh
- Sedere, U.M. (2011). Guidelines for Curriculum Review and Development: National Curriculum and Textbook Board. Published by IED BRAC University, Dhaka.
<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED533200.pdf>
- Smart, A. (2019). Refining primary social studies textbooks for behavior change in Bangladesh. In: Smart et al. (2019). *NISSEM Global Briefs: Educating for the social, the emotional and the sustainable*. p. 512–531.
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1TT0GmXI2hHemVMGjC2uPRn00A4ixH0UZ/view>

USAID. (2021). Situation Analysis of Higher Secondary Education in Bangladesh.
https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00XX8G.pdf

Zaman, J. (2016). Rural high schools in Bangladesh: An experiment on quality education.
Bangladesh Education Journal, 15(2).
https://www.bafed.net/pdf/edecember2016/3_Rural_High_Schools_in_Bangladesh.PDF

