

A Study on Revised Curriculum and Educational Trends in Bangladesh

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ABSTRACT

This study identifies critical factors related to changes in the curriculum and their impact on the quality of education. It proposes a significant pathway toward personalized curriculum design, a crucial step in bridging noticeable gaps in Bangladesh's urban and rural areas. The study presents its findings by adopting a decolonial theoretical framework and using storytelling and intergenerational conversations. These findings not only address gaps but also significantly enhance the effectiveness of the curriculum. By considering diverse perspectives and highlighting decolonization, the research aims to enhance equity in education. The outcomes of this study lay a robust foundation for improving the educational system in Bangladesh, making it more effective for future students to succeed.

Keywords: Curriculum, Educational Dynamics, Decolonial Framework, Systematic Analysis, Dropout

INTRODUCTION

Education plays a pivotal role in the progress of a nation, with the development of educational infrastructure essential for creating a favorable atmosphere for learning. Infrastructure is a broad term that encompasses various things. These include playgrounds, library facilities, laboratories, computer centers, technology, machinery, tools, and equipment. Bangladesh encounters difficulties in ensuring sufficient educational infrastructure that includes these vital elements. A significant factor contributing to the underperformance of many schools in Bangladesh, particularly public educational institutions, is the lack of adequate resources (Kapur, R., 2019; Mustary, M., 2021). The significant dropout rates show the absolute reality of the education system in Bangladesh. Out of every 100 children initially enrolled in the first grade, only 32 continue their education until the upper secondary level (UNICEF, 2023). In the framework of the new curriculum, highly skilled instructors are essential for effectively implementing outcome-based education concerning infrastructure. Implementing the creative curriculum in schools in 2008 without adequately preparing teachers proved ineffective. Educationists have suggested that the new curriculum may exhibit the same pattern and could potentially be similarly unsuccessful (Jasim et al., 2022). Teachers, who are the most influential tools, were not provided with a thorough understanding of their responsibilities, leaving them uninformed. As part of a five-day training program organized for teachers, 418,000 instructors were expected to receive training to enhance their knowledge and abilities to implement the new curriculum effectively. A mere 280,000 instructors were provided with this insufficient preparation, even though half of the academic year had already passed. One hundred thirty-seven thousand instructors were deemed ineligible for inclusion in the program, whereas 30,000 selected teachers could not get it for various reasons (Nilratan H., 2023).

The correlation between curriculum and dropout rates is noteworthy, as research suggests that while raising

curriculum requirements may enhance students' skills, it could also lead to an increase in dropout rates (Görlitz et al., 2016). Education facilities and infrastructure are crucial for enhancing the educational experience in schools. Implementing teaching training in schools would face problems when there was a lack of sufficient facilities and infrastructure (Pal, S., 2010). In their study, Hajeng and Karwanto (2014) demonstrated that administrative professionals with specialized knowledge play a crucial role in effectively managing school buildings and infrastructure. In addition, to ensure the success of facility management and school infrastructure, it is essential to train instructors and establish supporting facilities that can enhance students' learning interests, such as a well-equipped and engaging library. All students residing at the school actively contributed to the upkeep of the current facilities and infrastructure. Ensuring adequate school infrastructure allows the staff to perform their responsibilities efficiently and in an orderly manner (Kapur, R., 2019). Furthermore, teacher training programs facilitate inclusive education within any curricular framework (Forlin & Hopewell, 2006). A significant obstacle developing countries face is the inadequate training provided to teachers for the successful implementation of inclusive education initiatives in their institutions. To become effective and inclusive educators who can effectively address the needs of all students, instructors must undergo proper training in inclusive education (Siddik et al., 2020).

The study delves into the diverse factors of curriculum change and its effects on primary, middle, and high school educational outcomes. This paper provides a path of relevance for customized curriculum and a way of addressing significant gaps according to the scenario of both rural and urban areas to accelerate the dynamics of education in Bangladesh. The study will align with the right approach by concentrating on the subject and identifying the causes of student disengagement, potential solutions, and the root cause and solution of a lack of adequate infrastructure and teacher training.

The center's focus is based on the administration's proposed redesigned curriculum. Also, the study focuses on the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB), explaining its crucial role in shaping the educational trajectory by providing textbooks and other assessments. The primary objectives that will be pursued are as follows:

1. To determine the level of student engagement with their studies, emphasizing the deficiencies of the previous system and how the new system might restore success.
2. To examine the effectiveness of the new proposed model by determining its compatibility with the existing infrastructure.
3. To explore the impact of teaching methods, teacher approaches, and training programs, focusing on determining how these aspects contribute to future success.

The study has theoretically investigated the essential aspects of the scenario, focusing on many concerns and their impact on social dynamics and learners. Moreover, a comprehensive analysis has effectively characterized forthcoming undertakings. The systematic study provides a comprehensive overview of the Ministry of Education's administrative procedures per established policy. The study's aims necessitated gradually clarifying positionality and the theoretical framework. Subsequently, the study delved into the research methodology and the potential approaches for conducting the research. Ultimately, based on our research findings, we endeavored to categorize the problems and propose answers and suggestions provided by students, teachers, and parents. Lastly, the process of learning reflection and potential enhancements are examined.

RESEARCHER POSITIONALITY

Education research outcomes intertwine researchers' multifaceted roles, identities, and positions. (Chapman, 2007). Recognizing our position within knowledge production and validation holds profound significance. It

profoundly influences how a text or discourse is interpreted, comprehended, and contextualized. The personal context in which knowledge is generated contributes significantly to constructing meaning (Dei, 1999; Datta, 2020). This section will highlight the positionality of the researchers who developed the form in various ways, including socioeconomic impact, citizen perspective, and professional experience and expertise. In pursuing the questions posed in this paper, as authors, we must acknowledge the impact of our socialization, identity, education, and professional experiences on our understanding of the theoretical framework. Our identities, shaped through our experiences of socialization, education, and professional endeavors, have made us acutely aware of our vantage point and our responsibilities towards the communities that participate in our research.

Author 1, a sociology background academic and decolonial researcher, is committed to contributing her expertise to academic pursuits for future generations.

Author 2, a Bangladeshi citizen, student, and keen observer, is actively involved in studying curriculum changes in Bangladesh. Having grown up within the local educational system, he now possesses an insider's perspective. Centering on the role of an observer, the individual strives to maintain objectivity while recognizing the strengths and limitations of the evolving curriculum. The aim is to offer perspectives that will enrich and elevate the broader discussion on educational transformations in Bangladesh.

The goal is personal and professional development. This research activity allows academics to actively shape and contribute to the broader discussion on educational developments in Bangladesh, advancing their role as dynamic and impactful researchers.

This research on curricular changes in Bangladesh not only enriches the academic environment but also benefits the community directly by offering essential insights into the strengths and limitations of the developing educational framework. The research contributes to establishing a more informed and successful educational policy by addressing the local context and considering the perspectives of community members. The findings serve as a foundation for encouraging positive changes within the community, aiming to improve overall educational quality and empower students. This research aims to significantly enhance educational opportunities for people in Bangladesh, which will benefit society.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

We opted for a decolonial theoretical framework for our research because of its many benefits. Prioritizing cultural sensitivity and respect ensures that research is conducted respectfully with the community. Secondly, this framework places a high importance on decolonial initiatives. Therefore, knowledge production can be viewed rationally (Smith, 2012). This method promotes a comprehensive grasp of intricate issues, acknowledging the interrelationships of different factors and viewpoints. It promotes a thorough and inclusive examination, crucial for tackling complex social and environmental educational philosophies. It delves into learning challenges to address the fundamental questions of what education is necessary, why it is essential, and how societies can pursue and accomplish such educational opportunities. At various points in time and space where people's lives intersect, the learning programs were predominantly created by the community and reflected their outcomes. However, they eventually had to adapt to outside pressures, leading to the imposition of education systems that stripped away the history and activities of the colonized population. These aspects of colonial education did not support overall social welfare inclusivity (Abdi, A.A. 2011). Therefore, exploring and evaluating new ways to decolonize educational philosophies is essential.

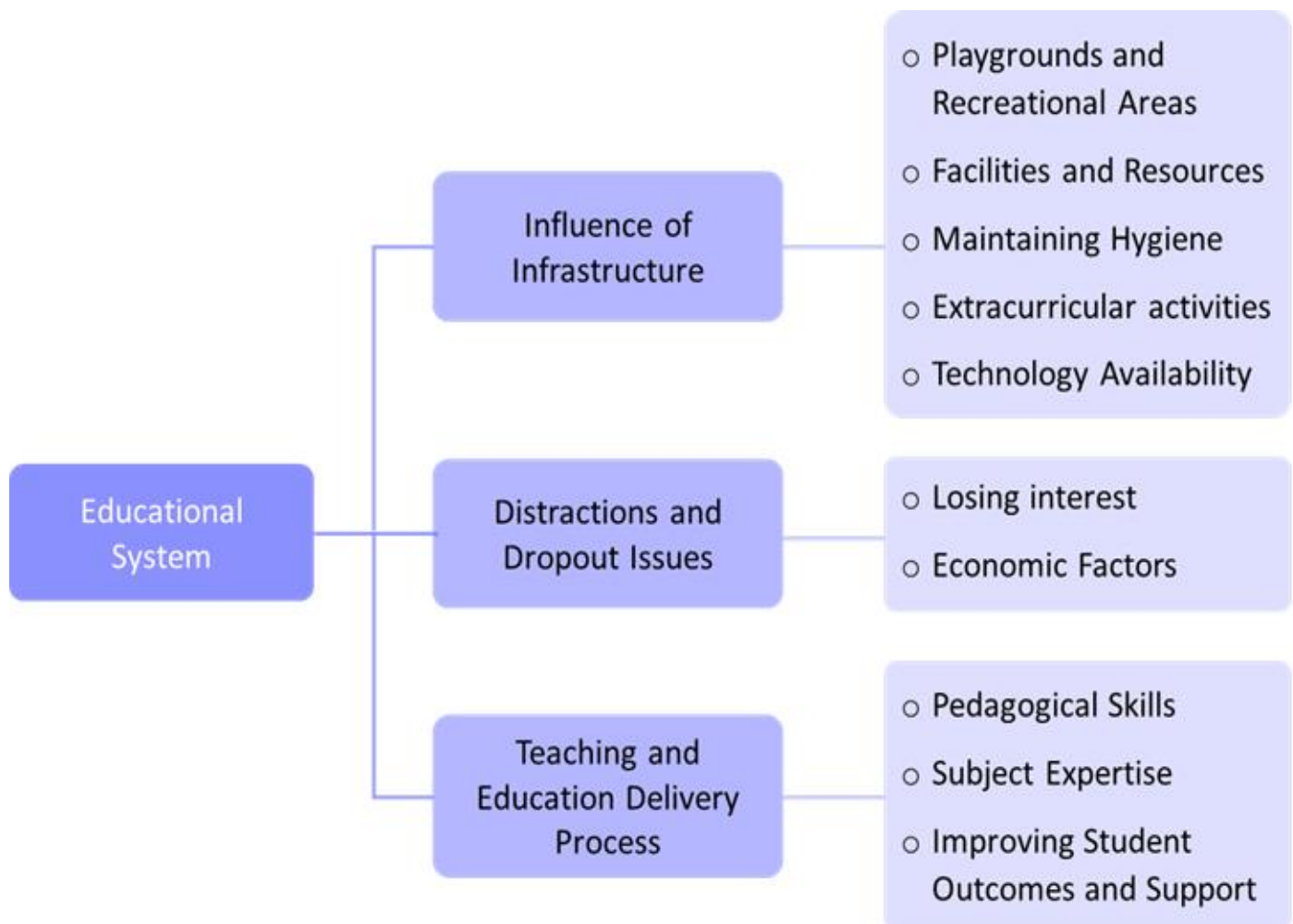
Following the decolonial theoretical framework, we used a critical research methodology representing a relational and holistic method of reconnecting every component. In doing so, we followed storytelling and

intergenerational conversations with students, guardians, and experts. We randomly collected data about ten personnel from June to August 2023. Our selection includes students (from secondary and higher secondary schools) with new curriculum experiences, guardians, old students, and experts. During the data collection, we got permission from them. Our decolonial theoretical method empowers and teaches us how to synchronize the data and get solutions from them.

FINDINGS

Diverse perspectives have been studied based on a survey conducted among students, their guardians, associated people, and specialists. Information was collected from various regions to clarify several viewpoints relevant to the identified research gaps. The subsequent key points provide detailed insights into the circumstances of distinct locales and their corresponding educational systems. We have accumulated our findings in the core, the primary focus, and subsidiary themes.

Diagram 1: Core, Primary Focus, and Subsidiary Theme according to findings.



Influence of the Infrastructure of an Institute.

This section provides an overview of the importance of proper infrastructure in an educational institute for a learner's social, physical, and mental development. In the subsections below, we explore the impacts of structure and environment on students in rural and urban areas.

Playgrounds and recreational areas: Many students claim that some institutions, especially in urban

areas, have insufficient outdoor spaces for physical and recreational purposes to promote students' overall well-being. Additionally, even among the institutions equipped with such facilities, a noteworthy observation reveals a lack of proper utilization for student learning or deficient maintenance. As per the perspectives of general students and specialists, this challenge presents a substantial barrier to cultivating an environment that effectively supports comprehensive development and enriches the lifelong learning experience of learners.

Educational facilities and resources: According to feedback from students in both rural and urban areas, numerous schools lack essential educational facilities and resources such as well-equipped classrooms, fully equipped laboratories, adequately stocked libraries, and modern educational equipment. Consequently, students are deprived of opportunities to explore diverse subjects, diminishing interest in creative activities and adversely impacting the learning environment.

Maintaining health and hygiene: Several students argue that many schools face significant challenges due to inadequate toilet hygiene measures and a lack of fresh water. Furthermore, the nutritional quality of canteen food is often compromised, exposing students to an unhygienic system that can lead to physical illnesses. Such substandard conditions not only threaten students' overall well-being but also serve as distractions from academic activities.

Extracurricular facilities: Student survey responses reveal a vital concern over many schools' lack of extracurricular activities. Students express concern about missing facilities such as art studios, music rooms, and other club-based activity areas.

Technology infrastructure: As indicated in surveys, many students report challenges related to technology infrastructure in various schools. Especially in rural areas, there is a common observation that schools lack sufficient and up-to-date technological resources. Specialists say modern teaching methods require solid and up-to-date technological infrastructure, such as computers, internet access, and audiovisual equipment.

Distractions and Dropout Issues Among Children.

This section reveals children's disinterest in regularly attending classes or irregular attendance patterns. High dropout or irregularity rates in education hamper a nation's development by limiting its people's potential and abilities, affecting economic growth and social progress. We aimed to thoroughly investigate the underlying factors causing this phenomenon by administering a survey to students who had problems with inconsistent class attendance and dropout issues.

Losing interest due to the competitive system: According to the guardians, students often lose interest in their studies due to unwanted pressure, perceiving education as a source of stress and anxiety. The heightened expectations and competitiveness associated with exams contribute to a sense of discouragement, making the learning process seem complicated. The intense focus on academic achievement and the fear of failure may lead students to view education as a frightening challenge rather than an opportunity for personal growth. When exams focus too much on memorization rather than life-oriented learning, students may struggle to appreciate the value of their education. Additionally, it is claimed that students who attend private coaching centers tend to get more attention than other students, leading to inequality in society and the system. This emphasizes a form of colonization where students from underprivileged backgrounds may face unfair challenges that promote inequalities and limit social mobility.

Economic factors: Individuals note that they prefer work over school during puberty due to financial restrictions and the need to contribute to the family's income. In many households facing financial constraints, parents may view their children as additional sources of income rather than as students pursuing education. This perspective can lead to children being pulled out of school to engage in labor or other

income-generating activities, hindering their academic development. It is argued that the high tuition fees of many private schools, which offer better facilities, are unaffordable for underprivileged communities, which is another reason for distraction. The scenario mirrors aspects of colonization, where access to quality education is restricted to people facing financial instability.

Teacher Training and the Process of Education Delivery.

Teacher training is of utmost importance in ensuring the effectiveness of the education delivery process. Educators who undergo comprehensive training are better equipped to meet the varied needs of their students and create an inclusive and engaging learning environment. By conducting the survey, we aimed to learn more about the psychology of their interactions with tutors and the nature of their relationships. These findings have the potential to inform improvements in tutor training programs, ensuring that educators are equipped with the skills and strategies needed to facilitate meaningful and impactful interactions with their students.

Pedagogical skills: Tutor training programs aim to provide educators with practical teaching approaches, classroom management strategies, and curriculum-building processes suitable for varied student requirements. However, in many schools, the implementation of comprehensive tutor training programs may not be consistently followed, as many students and guardians claim. In some rural and underserved areas, the implementation of comprehensive tutor training programs may not be consistently followed. Consequentially, educators in such areas might face challenges in developing the essential skills and strategies to engage with learners and deliver quality education effectively.

Subject expertise: Tutors receive specialized training to deepen their expertise in their teaching subjects. This training equips them with a thorough understanding, enabling them to convey information accurately and with confidence to their students. Despite what the specialists claim, there is a widespread shortage of specialized teachers for subjects, which may force educators to teach various subjects in which they may lack expertise.

Improving student outcomes and support: Enhancing student outcomes and care is a pivotal objective in education, encompassing not only academic achievements but also the overall well-being of learners. However, guardians and students have raised concerns that teachers prioritize private tuition or coaching centers over school-based learning. This concern raises questions about the supportiveness of the educational environment, as educators play a vital role in identifying and assisting students facing challenges.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The study examines several aspects of Bangladesh's education system, specifically focusing on the revised curriculum. By analyzing student engagement, infrastructure efficiency, teaching methodologies, and teacher training, we aim to comprehensively understand the diverse impact of educational changes. Through proper analysis, we have identified potential solutions to address existing gaps, make the revised curriculum more effective, and contribute to overall improvements in the education system.

Increase in Recreational Areas and Resources: The significant advantage of infrastructural facilities is that the school members can carry out their job duties in a well-organized manner, students can concentrate on learning effectively, and individuals can achieve educational goals (Kapur, R., 2019). The different types of infrastructural facilities are school buildings, clean drinking water, restrooms, air-conditioned classrooms, playground facilities, technology, library facilities, laboratory facilities, teaching-learning materials, and electricity facilities. Individuals are required to spend six to seven hours in school. Therefore, when these facilities are provided, they feel pleasurable and amiable within the school environment (Kapur, R., 2019).

The study found that the proper management of resources determines the effectiveness of the revised curriculum process for students, as the new curriculum is associated with the assessment-type system, which promotes a more practical or life-oriented approach. Furthermore, maintaining and increasing the necessary resources would accelerate the quality of education.

Enhancing Teacher Training Programs for Enhanced Educational Expertise: To be effective, a teacher must develop professionally, personally, and socially (Bell & Gilbert, 1996). Teacher training and development foresees the teacher's professional development and skills to address the constant curriculum change (Diane et al., 2017). Increasing teacher training programs is essential for keeping up with advancements and effectively implementing new curriculum systems, thereby providing quality education to students. Subject expertise teachers can provide life-oriented education to learners that emphasizes practical application over memorization-based knowledge. Furthermore, by considering learners' nature and psychological factors, educators can effectively guide students in the right direction, considering their learning styles, motivations, and developmental stages to achieve the best educational outcomes.

Developing a Way to Increase Student Engagement to Reduce Dropout Rates: Research has shown a positive correlation between high levels of student engagement and better physical and mental well-being (Griffiths et al., 2009). Students who are less engaged in school are at a greater risk of experiencing academic failure and show higher rates of credit incompleteness and dropping out of school (Appleton et al., 2008). The psychological component refers to the affective aspects of student connectedness, such as positive feelings toward school, teachers, and peers (Jimerson et al., 2003). Depending on memorization-based examination systems causes students to become stressed and lose interest in learning. The new curriculum highlights fewer exams and more assessments and can significantly boost student engagement. The changes allow students to demonstrate their progress, encouraging active learning participation regularly. With constant life-oriented assessments, students can receive well-timed feedback and support, creating a more dynamic learning experience. Education is for life and thus unfolds innumerable horizons of possibilities and understandings. As a result, it must not be an imitation of colonized educational models (Navneet Sharma et al., 2019). The cycle of colonization in education can be broken by prioritizing equal treatment for all students, terminating the reliance on coaching centers, and providing underprivileged students with sufficient educational resources. Furthermore, establishing decolonization principles ensures that educational opportunities are equally accessible to all students, which may increase student engagement.

The research provided a complete analysis of the current state of education in Bangladesh, encompassing essential elements. The study delineated the educational process elucidated in prior and current curriculum frameworks. Furthermore, it highlights dropout rates, infrastructure inadequacies, and educational approaches as notable deficiencies in the country's current state. In addition to examining pedagogy and curriculum, the study aimed to explore institutions' influence in promoting or limiting social change. The research sheds light on the importance of these gaps by analyzing interviews with people directly or indirectly involved in the country's educational system and secondary literature. The interviews cover various perspectives, including those from social, economic, and cultural contexts. Through the process of decolonization, our work aims to promote a more sophisticated and equitable approach to community observation by incorporating many views and questioning traditional notions. Decolonization ensures that individuals' experiences and viewpoints are acknowledged and esteemed. By leveraging individuals' insights, ideas have been put forward to tackle the deficiencies effectively, offering potential benefits to the community and future generations. Decolonial approaches prioritize relational validity, while social justice education focuses on catalytic validity (Lather, 1991; Fine, 2008). This is why credible research connects with people's lives and empowers them to bring about change, even if the change does not involve decolonization.

In terms of learning and studying, understanding the system's drawbacks offers a strong foundation for more academic research and discussions. The consideration of multiple viewpoints and the emphasis on

decolonization in the research process help to build a more inclusive and equitable academic discussion resulting in a better understanding of complex social issues. Additionally, by identifying areas for improvement according to the gaps, researchers and educators can collaborate to develop targeted ways and innovative approaches to address these issues. Hence, the study serves as a foundation for enhancing the educational system in Bangladesh, enabling future students to achieve success more effectively.

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