The WORLD of LEARNING

Lessons from 52 Countries

Editors

Marmar Mukhopadhyay

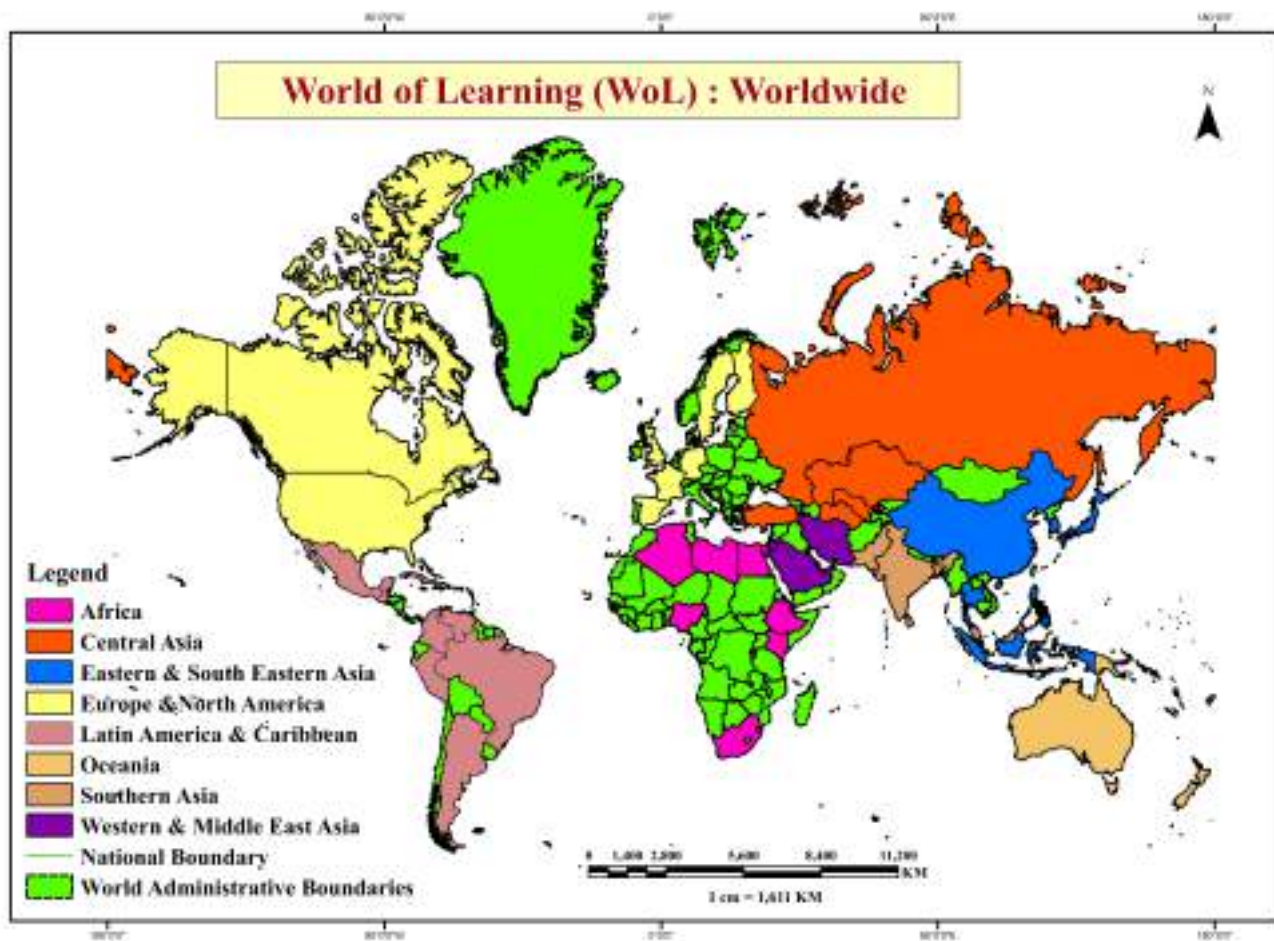Mrityunjoy Kaibarta   Bidhan Gantait

Mrinal Mukherjee

An ETMA Publication

Volume One

The World of Learning
Lessons from 52 Countries
(Volume I)

World of Learning (WoL) : Worldwide

Legend

- Africa
- Central Asia
- Eastern & South Eastern Asia
- Europe &North America
- Latin America & Caribbean
- Oceania
- Southern Asia
- Western & Middle East Asia
- National Boundary
- World Administrative Boundaries

1 cm = 1,611 KM

The **Educational Technology and Management Academy** (ETMA), established in 1993, stands out as a pioneering Indian institution dedicated to educational research and development. Operating as a non-profit charitable trust, ETMA integrates educational technology with management practices to enhance educational quality. Guided by a diverse team of interdisciplinary scholars, it focuses on five core areas: Research and Consultancy, Capacity Building, Seminars and Conferences, Media and Publications, and Social Outreach through its Personal Social Responsibility Programme (PSR).

Significant publications include Scientific Parenting, CCE in Depth, Quality School Education for All, and Indian Education: A Developmental Discourse. ETMA publishes an online peer-reviewed open-access research journal, Education@ETMA. It also earlier published Education Matters@ ETMA, an educational magazine.

The institution has made notable contributions to education by supporting underprivileged students, many of whom have gained admission to prestigious institutions like IITs. Additionally, ETMA has effectively addressed school dropout rates among rural children through engaging learning interventions.

As a thought leader, ETMA pioneered many innovations and research. As early as 2012, ETMA initiated capacity-building programmes supported by self-learning material on blended learning. Its pioneering research is on the employability skills of teachers sponsored by ICSSR. The World of Learning (WoL) is the most extensive comparative education research study, involving 52 countries and 41 scholars. It is the largest study of its kind globally. For more details, please visit www.etma-india.in.

The World of Learning
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(Volume I)

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Dedication

To the children of the world,
the hope of humanity

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Volume I: Country Case Studies

Continents/Regions	Countries
Northern & Sub-Saharan Africa	Algeria, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Libya, Nigeria, and South Africa
Central Asia	Kazakhstan, Russia, Turkmenistan, Turkey and Uzbekistan
Eastern & South Eastern Asia	China, Indonesia, Japan, Philippines, South Korea, and Thailand
Southern Asia	Bangladesh, India, Malaysia, Pakistan, Singapore, and Sri Lanka

Volume II: Country Case Studies

Continents/Regions	Countries
Western & Middle East Asia	Iran, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, and United Arab Emirates
Europe North America	Canada, Finland, France, Germany, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and USA.
Latin America and the Caribbean	Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Cuba, Guatemala, Haiti, Mexico, Peru, and Venezuela
Oceania	Australia, Fiji Islands, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, and Soloman Islands

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Abbreviations

10TW	10 Thousand Windows
21CC	21st Century Competencies
3-D	Three-dimensional
A&E Tests	Accreditation and Equivalency Tests
A/L	Advanced Level Examination
ABET	Adult Basic Education and Training
ABM	Accountancy, Business, Management
ADB	Asian Development Bank
AI	Artificial Intelligence
AICS	Italian Agency for Development Cooperation
AKM	Minimum Competency Assessment
ALP	Applied Learning Programme
ALS	Alternative Learning System
APA	American Psychological Association
AR	Augmented Reality
ARKAS	Aplikasi Rencana Kegiatan dan Anggaran Sekolah (School Activity and Budget Planning Application)
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations Secretariat
ASER	Annual Status of Education Report
BBS	Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics
BECC	Basic Education Core Curriculum
BECE	Basic Education Certificate Examination
BECF	Basic Education Curriculum Framework
BEM	Brevet d'Enseignement Moyen (Lower Secondary Education completion certificate)
BNCC	Bangladesh National Cadet Corps
BOET	Basic and Occupational Education and Training
BRAC	Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee
BSE	Basic State Examination
BVB	Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan
CABE	Central Advisory Board of Education
CAT	Continuous Assessment Tests
CBA	Competency-Based Approach
CBA	Criteria-Based Assessment
CBC	Competency-Based Curriculum

CBE	Competency-Based Education
CBSE	Central Board of Secondary Education
CCA	Co-curricular activities
CCE	Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation
CCIMD	Curriculum and Instructional Materials Development Center
CDC	Curriculum Development Centre
CEFR	Common European Framework of Reference for Languages
CHED	Commission on Higher Education
CHRE	Civics and Human Rights Education
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency (USA)
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
COC	Certificate of Competency
COPTPA	Code of Practice for TVET Programme Accreditation
CPC	Communist Party of China
CQ	Creative questions
CSS	Credit and semester system
CSS for VHSE	Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Vocational Secondary & Higher Secondary Education
CT	Complex Test
CTE	Career and Technical Education
DAV	Dayanand Anglo Vedic
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DepEd	Department of Education
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
DIET	District Institute of Education and Training
DLIT	Digital Learning Innovation Transformation
DLMS	DepEd Learning Management System
DoS	Singapore Department of Statistics
DPP	Direct-Entry Scheme to Polytechnic Programme
DSHE	Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education, Bangladesh
DVT	Dual Vocational Training
EALA	External Assessment of Learning Achievements
EBA	Eğitim Bilişim Ağı (Education Information Network)
ECCD	Early Childhood Care and Development Council
ECCDE	Early Child Care and Development Education
ECCE	Early Childhood Care and Education
ECD	Early childhood development
ECE	Early Childhood Education

ECEC	Early Childhood Education and Care
ECPE	Early Childhood and Primary Education
ELDS	Early Learning Development Standards
ELDS	Early Childhood Learning Development Standards
ELLNA	Early Language, Literacy, and Numeracy Assessment
EMIS	Education Management Information System
EPD	Education Publication Department
EPDC	Education Policy and Data Center
EPP	Edukasyong Pantahanan at Pangkabuhayan (Home Economics and Livelihood Education)
ERIC	Educational Resources Information Center
ESA	Educational Service Area
ESP	Education Sector Plan
EsP	Edukasyon sa Pagpapakatao (Education in Human Values)
ESSLE	Ethiopian Secondary School Leaving Examination
ETF	European Training Foundation
ETMA	Educational Technology and Management Academy
ETP	Egypt Tours Portal
EU	European Union
FCT	Federal Capital Territory
FDRE	Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
FDSE	Free Day Secondary Education
FET	Further Education and Training
FICCI	Federation of Indian Chambers of Commers and Industry
FME	Federal Ministry of Education
FPE	Free Primary Education
FSES	Federal State Education Standards
GCE	General Certificate of Education
GCIS	Government Communication and Information System Republic of South Africa
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEM	Global Education Monitoring
GER	Gross Enrolment Ratio
GET	General Education and Training
GIIC	Global Indian International School
GLONAL	National (NAL) policies inset into GLObal context
GNI	Gross National Income
GOI	Government of India
GOP	Government of Pakistan

GOU	Government of Uzbekistan
GOVPH	Government of the Philippine
GPE	Global Partnership for Education
GPS	Game-play story
GSE	General Secondary Education
GSECE	General Secondary Education Certificate Examination
HDI	Human Development Index
HIV	Human immunodeficiency virus
HPB	Health Promotion Board
HPE	Health and Physical Education
HRF	Health-related fitness
HSBC	Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation
HSC	Higher Secondary Certificate
HUMSS	Humanities, Social Sciences
IASE	Institute of Advanced Studies in Education
IBE-UNESCO	International Bureau of Education Under UNESCO
IBO	International Baccalaureate Organization
ICDS	Integrated Child Development Services
ICHPER-SD	International Council for Health, Physical Education, Recreational-Sports, and Dance
ICL	Income Contingency Loan
ICSE	Indian Certificate of Secondary Education
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IEP	Institute for Economics & Peace
IFES	International Foundation for Electoral Systems
IGCSE	International General Certificate of Secondary Education
ILO	International Labour Organization
ILRC	Inclusive Learning Resource Centers for Learners with Disabilities
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IMO	International Office of Migration
IPST	Institute for the Promotion of Teaching Science and Technology
ISA	In-Service Advisors
ISHP	Integrated School Health Programme
ITE	Institute of Technical Education
iTEACH	Integrated Approach, Teachers as learning Facilitators, Engaging Children, Authentic Learning, Children as knowledge constructor
ITI	Industrial Training Institutes
JAISCE	Junior Arabic and Islamic Studies Certificate Examination

JNV	Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya
JORA	Journal Officiel De La Republique Algerienne N° 59
JPN	Japanese migration in Malaysia
JSE	Junior School Examination
JSS	Junior secondary school
K-12	Kindergarten to 12th Grade
KBK	Curriculum Based on Competence
KBSM/SSIC	Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Menengah (Secondary School Integrated Curriculum)
KBSR	Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Rendah (Primary School Integrated Curriculum)
KCF	Kindergarten Curriculum Framework
KCPE	Kenya Certificate of Primary Education
KCSE	Kenya Certificate of Secondary Examination
KG	Kindergarten
KICD	Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development
KICE	Korea Institute of Curriculum and Evaluation
KNCPE	Korean National Curriculum for Physical Education
KNEC	Kenya National Examinations Council
KSPK	Kurikulum Standard Prasekolah Kebangsaan (National Standard Preschool Curriculum)
KSSM	Kurikulum Standard Sekolah Menengah (National Secondary School Standard Curriculum)
KSSR	Kurikulum Standard Sekolah Rendah (National Primary School Standard Curriculum)
KTSP	School Unit Level Curriculum
KV	Kendriya Vidyalaya
KWPF	Korea-World Bank Partnership Faculty
LASI	Learning Assessment of Secondary Institutions
LSAT	Life skills assessment instrument
LCP	Life Competencies Programmes
LEAD	Literate, Empowered, Active, Doer program
LLP	Learning for Life Programme
LO	Life Orientation
LSE	Life Skills Education
LSZOP	Learners and Schools as Zones of Peace
MBOT	Malaysian Board of Technologists
MCQ	Multiple Choice Questions
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MDM	Mid-Day Meal

MEP	Music Elective Programme
MES	Ministry of Education and Science
MESA	Monitoring of Students' Educational Achievements
MESRK	Ministry of Education and Science of The Republic of Kazakhstan
MEST	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology
MEXT	Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology
MFEPT	Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training
MHA	Ministry of Home Affairs
MHESI	Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research, and Innovation
MHLW	Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare
MHRD	Ministry of Human Resource Development
MNE	Ministry of National Education
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoEC	Ministry of Education and Culture
MoECRT	Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology
MoETE	The Ministry of Education and Technical Education
MOH	Ministries of Health
MoNE	Ministry of National Education
MOOC	Massive Open Online Course
MOPE	Ministry of Public Education
MoPME	Ministry of Primary and Mass Education
MOPSE	Ministry of Preschool Education
MoRA	Ministries of Religious Affairs
MoRTHE	Ministry of Technology and Higher Education and the Ministry of Research
MOSHE	The Ministry of Science and Higher Education
MPED	Ministry of Planning and Economic Development
MQA	Malaysian Qualifications Agency
MQF	Malaysian Qualifications Framework
MSP	Ministerial Strategic Plans
MTB-MLE	Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education
MUET	Malaysian University English Test
MVPA	Moderate-to-vigorous physical activity
NAA	National Archives of Australia
NAAA	National Assessment of Academic Ability
NAEA	National Assessment of Educational Achievement
NAF	National Assessment Framework
NAS	National Learning Assessment System (Uzbekistan)
NAS	National Achievement Surveys (India)

NAVTTC	National Vocational and Technical Training Commission
NBC	National Business Certificate
NC	National Certificate
NCC	National Cadet Crops
NCCA	National Commission on Culture and the Arts
NCEE	National Center on Education and the Economy
NCERT	National Council of Educational Research and Training
NCF	National Curriculum Framework
NCP	National Curriculum of Pakistan
NCS	National Curriculum Statements (South Africa)
NCS	National Course of Study (Japan)
NCTB	National Curriculum and Textbook Board
NDA	National Democratic Alliance
NEA	National Education Act
NEAS	National Education Assessment System
NEC	National Education Commission
NEIS	National Education Information System
NEL	Nurturing Early Learners
NELF	National Early Learning Framework
NEP	National Education Policy
NEPA	National Education Policy Act
NEPF	National Education Policy Framework
NER	Net Enrolment Rate
NERDC	Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council
NEREC	National Education Research and Evaluation Centre
NESC	National Economic and Social Council (Kenya)
NESD	National Economic and Social Development Plan
NICA	National Accreditation Agency
NICARM	National Information Center on Academic Recognition and Mobility
NIE	National Institute of Education
NIER	National Institute for Educational Policy Research
NIETS	National Institute of Educational Testing Service
NIOS	National Institute of Open Schooling
NIS	Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools
NORRIC	Nordic Recognition Network
NPE	National Policy on Education
NQF	National Qualification Framework
NSA	National Student Assessment

NSEQ	National Study of Education Quality
NSSO	National Sample Survey Office
NTC	National Technical Certificate
NTI	Nuclear Threat Initiative
NTLT	Novel Transforming Learning Taxonomy
NTS	National Testing Service
NUFFIC	Netherlands Organisation for International Cooperation in Higher Education
NVC	National Vocational Certificate
NVQF	National Vocational Qualifications Framework
O/L	Ordinary Level Examination
OBB	Operation Blackboard
OBE	Outcomes-based education
OBEC	Office of the Basic Education Commission
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
ONEC	Office of the National Education Commission
O-NET	Ordinary National Educational Test
ORLEU	Kazakhstan's National Skills Upgrading Centre
OTPC	One Tablet Per Child
PAPS	Physical Activity Promotion System
PBECD	Post-Basic Education and Career Development
PBECE	Post-Basic Education Certificate Examination
PBS	Pentaksiran Berasaskan Sekolah (School-Based Assessment)
PCEP	Philippine Cultural Education Program
PCTB	Punjab Curriculum and Textbook Board
PE	Physical Education
PEPT	Philippine Education Placement Test
PERI	Primary Education Review and Implementation
PFP	Polytechnic Foundation Programme
PHE	Health and Physical Education
PIRLS	Progress in International Reading Literacy Study
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
PLA	Programme for Active Learning
PMM	Platform Merdeka Mengajar
PMR	Penilaian Menengah Rendah (Lower Secondary Assessment)
POA	Plan of Action
PPP	Purchasing Power Parity
PPP	Public-Private Partnership (UAE)
PRC	People's Republic of China

PSLE	Primary School Leaving Examination
PSLM	Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement
PT3	Pentaksiran Tingkatan 3 (Form 3 Assessment)
PTR	Pupil-Teacher Ratio
QCTO	Quality Council for Trades and Occupations
QLI	Quality of Life Index
RCE	Renewed Content of Education
RMSA	Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan
RPWD	Rights of Persons with Disabilities
RTE	Right to Education
SAERA	South African Education Research Association
SAHO	South African History Online
SAIL	Strategies for Active and Independent Learning
SAISC	Senior Arabic and Islamic Studies Certificate
SASA	South African Schools Act
SAT	Scholastic Aptitude Test (Zhongkao)
SBA	School-based assessment
SCERT	State Council of Educational Research and Training
SCS	State Compulsory Standard
SD	Sekolah Dasar (Primary Education)
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SEA	Southeast Asia
SEC	Singapore-Cambridge Secondary Education Certificate
SEED	Strategies for Effective Engagement and Development
SEL	Social and emotional learning
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SFC-9	State Final Certification of the 9th grades
SHS	Senior High School
SIPLah	Sistem Informasi Pen- gadaan Sekolah
SJK	Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan (Primary school in Malaysia)
SMA	Sekolah Menengah Atas (Senior high school)
SMK	Sekolah Menengah Kejuruan (Vocational school)
SMP	Sekolah Menengah Pertama (Junior high school)
SMSE	State Mandatory Education Standards
SNC	Single National Curriculum
SOLO	Structure of Observed Learning Outcomes
SOS	Si Opus Sit (as needed)
SPA	Science Practical Assessment

SPED	State Programme for Education Development in the Republic of Kazakhstan
SPED	Special Education
SPESD	State Programme for Education and Science Development
SPM	Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (Malaysian Certificate of Education)
SSC	Senior School Certificate (Nigeria)
SSC	Secondary School Certificate (Bangladesh)
SSCE	Senior School Certificate Examination
SSS	Senior secondary school
STBB	Sindh Textbook Board
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
STPM	Sijil Tinggi Pelajaran Malaysia (Malaysian Higher School Certificate)
SWAYAM	Study Webs of Active Learning for Young Aspiring Minds
TEOG	Temel Eğitimden Ortaöğretime Geçiş Sistemi (Transition System from Primary to Secondary Education)
TESDA	Technical Education and Skills Development Authority
TIMSS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study
TLE	Technology and Livelihood Education
TPE	Technical and Professional Education
TQF	Turkish Qualifications Framework
TRT	Turkish Radio and Television Corporation
TSC	Teachers Service Commission
TSECE	Technical Secondary Education Certificate Examination
TSLN	Thinking Schools, Learning Nation
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
TVL	Technical-vocational-livelihood
UEC	Unified Examination Certificate
UIS-UNESCO	UNESCO Institute for Statistics
UK	United Kingdom
UKS	Usaha Keeshatan Sekolah (School Health Efforts)
UN	United Nations
UNAOC	United Nations Alliance of Civilizations
UNBK	Computer-Based National Examination
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNESCO-APNNIC	UNESCO Asia-Pacific Regional Bureau for Education
UNESCO-UNIVOC	UNESCO International Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training

UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UPSR	Ujian Pencapaian Sekolah Rendah (Primary School Achievement Test)
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USE	Unified State Exams
USSEQ	Unified system of school education quality assessment in Russia
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
VEI	Vocational Enterprise Institutions
VET	Vocational Education and Training
VR	Virtual Reality
WASSC	West African Senior School Certificate
WCE	World Congress of Epidemiology
WENR	World Education News + Reviews
WFB	World Factbook
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organisation
WWF	World Wide Fund for Nature

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PREFACE

The French Scholar, Marc-Antoine Jullien (1775-1848) is considered the father of modern science of comparative education for his work, *Plan and Preliminary Views for Work in Comparative Education* (1816-17) published in 1964 by Columbia University, New York. Comparative education as a subject of serious study arrived at the modern generation between the two world wars. One of the important foundational books through which I had my introduction to the field in 1966 was Isaac Kendal's Comparative Education (1933). The second was Nicholas Hans' Comparative Education, published in 1949.

However, comparative education elements can be traced back to traveller's tales. Marco Polo's story is well known. Plato compared Greek and Spartan Education and recommended incorporating elements of Spartan physical education into Greek Education. Scholars have classified the developments in comparative education in several phases, from travellers' tales to the phase of heterogeneity in the 1990s. In the process of evolution of the discipline, the purpose of comparative education has also changed and evolved. The major purposes are description of education in different countries, interpretation, explanation and evaluation of the system, and application of knowledge in educational planning, constructing the fields of educational studies, and furthering philanthropic ideals, such as serving and improving the state of humanity (Wolhuter, 2021).

Our studies, The World of Learning and Education 5.0 for Global Peace and Harmony, are inspired by the larger concern of the 'philanthropic ideal' category. Two vital issues that triggered this study are the concern for the sustainability of life on earth and human civilisation due to the threat of slow poisoning through global warming, pollution, poverty, conflicts, migration and refugees, unabated population growth, discrimination against women and the deprived and proliferation nuclear and chemical weapons of mass destruction. What Jullien believed then, "ignorance led to the conflict and turmoil of his age (French Revolution, Napoleonic Wars) and he saw a solution in education", is still valid.

Countries are still the victims of the education of the colonisers and the colonised. The world must find freedom through the emancipated education for philanthropy to live in peace and harmony. At a time when we live in a connected world where vibrations of pandemics or scientific inventions in one corner of the world vibrate everywhere, where student and employee migration, cross-border education delivery, and education standards accords like

Washington Accord are the order of the day, national educational policies and systems without reference to the regional and global developments would be a utopia.

The challenge is to create a GLONAL education system where national education is inset into the regional and global contexts. An education system where every child has the right not only to education for literacy and fulfilling qualification frameworks for employment but to optimise full potential; where every child must develop as a national and global patriot and a global citizen; where every child must learn to live together in diversity with peace and harmony. The inspiration for this mega project by a tiny charitable trust like ETMA was to co-create a model of education for global peace and harmony.

A new educational paradigm designed to cultivate new generations and their leaders for global peace and harmony offers a beacon of hope in the face of these challenges. The world has ample resources, knowledge and good practices to stitch a model and bring it to life. By effectively utilising the science of comparative education and pushing the boundaries, we can construct a model that draws from the scattered evidence of good practices worldwide, offering a promising path forward.

The largely adopted comparative education format of studying a few countries would not have served our purpose. Our goals compelled us to select a large sample of 52 countries based on the limited population criteria (2020), HDI Value, and Literacy rate, representing every region of the six continents according to the UN Regional Block classification.

The World of Learning (WoL) chose to study school education reforms in fifty-two countries, selected from Northern and Sub-Saharan Africa, Central Asia, Eastern and South Eastern Asia, Southern Asia, Western and Middle East Asia, Latin America and The Caribbean, and Oceania. There are gaps and inadequacies. Fifty-two countries still look small for the purpose; for example, African countries are not adequately represented.

The study parameters in each country case include educational policies, structures, and an academic framework inclusive of curriculum, teaching-learning, learning assessment, health and physical education, prevocational and vocational skills education, hobby and life skills education, moral, social and cultural education, and peace and happiness education against the backdrop of the country's history, geography, demography, economy, and education. The case studies have been developed by scholars based on desktop research consulting authentic documents of the concerned country governments, publications by the UN and other international organisations and databases, and institutional and individual field research. The fifty-two case studies are preceded by an introductory chapter detailing the background, methodology, etc. Case studies are succeeded by a chapter on Lessons from 52 Countries – an overview of practices in different study domains.

12 May 2025   Prof Marmar Mukhopadhyay
ETMA, Gurugram

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The World of Learning: An Introduction

Marmar Mukhopadhyay
Madhu Parhar

Backdrop

Human civilisation is currently grappling with a web of interconnected challenges, each carrying a sense of urgency. These include global warming, climate change, pollution, overpopulation, and resource depletion. These issues are further compounded by the extreme poverty of many with ruthless consumerism of the few, border and ethnic conflicts, migration, discrimination, and ethical, legal, educational, economic, and environmental concerns related to scientific and technological advancements. The proliferation of chemical and nuclear weapons, driven by competitive nationalism, poses a significant threat to our collective existence on Earth.

The Comity of Nations, particularly the UN and its organisations such as UNESCO and UNICEF, have voiced their concerns and proposed solutions through the visioning documents of 1972 (Learning to be), 1996 (Jacques Delores), and 2021 (Reimagining our Future Together). These visions and well-informed documents in 2015, 2018, and 2000 are beacons of hope. The MDG and SDGs were the UN's response to overcome the crisis. While the MDG did not achieve its goals by 2015, UN organisations are diligently monitoring the progress of the SDG. There are hopes and concerns, as indicated in the UN Director General's Address to the UN General Assembly on 22 September 2022, especially his concern about undermining the Security Council and SDG in SOS – the developed economies failing to fulfil their commitments (United Nations, 2022a).

The world is no longer a collection of isolated human habitations in different locations (nations). We now inhabit a robust, interconnected world. Any disturbance at any corner can reverberate in far-off corners of the planet Earth. Wherever it originated, COVID-19 affected all countries in the world. The economic recession and depression in the early 2000s were a global phenomenon. The

Washington Accord was necessary as educated human resources produced in one country influenced many others. The cross-border delivery of online education is bridging the world. Nationalism must be viewed within the context of 4.0 globalism (World Economic Forum, 2020).

Every crisis is pregnant with hopes and opportunities. *"A world without extreme poverty, want, or hunger is not an impossible dream. It is within reach. That is the world envisaged by the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. However, it is not the world we seem to have chosen. Because of our decisions, sustainable development everywhere is at risk. The SDGs are issuing an SOS. Even the most fundamental goals –poverty, hunger, and education – are going into reverse",* said the UN Secretary-General (United Nations, 2022b). Glenn (2012) and UNESCO (2021) listed the hopes. Indeed, the end of poverty (Sachs, 2006), war and strife, equality of genders, and pollution-free healthy living are within human capability. The Maha Upanishad, an ancient Indian Vedic scripture, pronounced that for large-hearted people, the whole world is a family (Vasudhaiba Ktumbakam- Maha Upanishad.[1]). The world can be free of conflicts, violence, and disharmony by cultivating the right mindset—large-heartedness—and each individual's social, emotional, and spiritual life. Education is the only instrument for cultivating large-hearted people.

Concerns and Inspiration

The expression of these concerns is not new. As early as 1947, Harold Laski addressed the crisis in our civilisation (Laski, 1947). These concerns found expression over the years in Edgar Faure's report, Learning to Be (UNESCO, 1972), Report of the International Commission on Education to UNESCO (UNESCO, 1996), Rethinking Education (UNESCO, 2015), Reimagining Our Futures Together: A New Social Contract for Education (UNESCO, 2021), UN Secretary-General's address to the UN General Assembly in 2022 (United Nations, 2022b), and the Millennium study (Glenn, 2012). There are several independent scholar-writings (Ahmed, 2010; Scales, 2017; and Karis, 2014, for example) on the crisis of civilisation. Threats to the environment and climate change; growing population and vanishing resources; the global food and refugee crisis; growing economic inequality; the threat of nuclear war; the military-industrial complex; limits to growth; and institutional mechanism deficit for managing the interdependent world economy are the primary challenges before the human civilisational crisis (Avery, 2017). However, the response has been

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[1] Vasudhaiba Kutumbakam is part of the Sloka *"अयं निजः परो वेति गणना लघुचेतसाम्।*
उदारचरितानां तु वसुधैव कुटुम्बकम्॥"

(ayaṃ nijaḥ paro veti gaṇanā laghucetasām | udāracaritānāṃ tu vasudhaiva kuṭumbakam) from Maha Upanishad, meaning 'Small-hearted people count things as theirs and others; large-hearted people see the whole world as a family'. Maha Upanishad is one of the minor Upanishads. There are two versions of Maha Upanishad – one is attached to Atharva Veda, and another to the Sama Veda.

inadequate, as indicated by the state of global peace and harmony and response to the UN initiatives through MDG and SDG. Countries still engage in prolonged, deadly wars for supremacy, hegemony and expansionism, highlighting the urgent need for a more effective response.

Crisis of Education

The education crisis is the vast disparity between the Global North and the Global South, which host 25% and 75% of the world's population, respectively. This 75% of the Global South has access to 20% of global resources (HandWiki, 2022). This assumes special significance as demographic dividends favour the Global South when the population in the Global North is shrinking. The Global North will increasingly depend upon the human power from the Global South for survival. Quality primary education for all (SDG4) is more necessary today than ever for global development, peace, and harmony.

Most of the global south space was colonised by a few countries of the Global North, especially the Western European countries. *"Although Europe represents only about 8 per cent of the planet's landmass, from 1492 to 1914, Europeans conquered or colonised more than 80 per cent of the world. Being dominated for centuries has led to lingering inequality and long-lasting effects in many formerly colonised countries, including poverty and slow economic growth"* (Stoller-Conrad, 2015, p. 1).

The key to global peace and harmony is the development of the Global South, which would require developing human resources through universal quality education (SDG4).

One of the significant crises of education is the policy deficit. At the dawn of their political independence, most countries in the Global South, the former colonies, inherited empty coffers and poor educational infrastructure, dismantled native education systems and cultures, and interfered with Western educational models. Most of the Global South countries are economically still developing. The financial allocation to education is far too inadequate to cope with the challenge. The end of political colonialism has left an indelible impact, giving birth to neo-native colonialism. Countries seem to prioritise the education of the economically affluent by encouraging private participation and reducing state funding and state institutions; they seem to prefer military power over human power. The result is alarming.

Nearly 260 million children are out of school, and approximately 175 million are not enrolled in pre-primary education worldwide. This becomes disconcerting when extrapolated with the fact that 90% of children's brains develop during preschool—between birth and 5 (Global Business Coalition for Education, 2024). The valiant efforts of UNICEF have spread the message that preprimary education figures are in educational schemes in many countries. However, pre-primary education

is neither compulsory nor free, especially in the Global South. The quality of pre-primary education is another question. Further, it is estimated 'that over 13 million children in the Middle East and North Africa are being prevented from attending schools due to conflict' as schools are used, on the one hand, as military camps and on the other as refugee camps (Kariyawasam, n.d.).

World Bank (2019) pointed out that *"hundreds of millions of children reach young adulthood without even the most basic skills like calculating the correct change from a transaction, reading a doctor's instructions, or understanding a bus schedule—let alone building a fulfilling career or educating their children"* (p. 1). The Global Business Coalition on Education (2024) stated that if no action is taken, 825 million youth globally will not have the skills necessary for the future workforce by 2030 since 'Being in School Is Not the Same as Learning' (World Bank, 2019).

Despite significant advances in universalising primary education, schools fail to reach education goals. Instead of 'how' schools insist on 'what' to think; instead of 'developing', schools continue to 'identify' intelligence; instead of mastering knowledge and love for the subject, schools focus on exam marks; instead of taking the 'risk of failure' to experiment, schools 'shame failure'; and instead of encouraging exploration and constructing knowledge, schools insist on rote learning. Schools kill creativity and divergence and celebrate obedience. Schools are outdated – they insist on paper-pencil writing instead of keyboard fingering. Instead of the future, schools prepare students for the past (Info Bites, 2024; Whitworth, 2023). With the ushering in of Education 4.0, consequent upon the Fourth Industrial Revolution, disruptions in learning, inequity and inequitability, the digital divide, and one-dimensionality (cognitive development) are increasing.

The challenge of education is to optimise talent and promote the holistic development of every child. Swami Vivekananda articulated this goal of education best in his statement: 'Education is the manifestation of perfection already in human beings'. There are several models to promote the elements of perfection. A few of them are:

- Howard Gardner's Multiple Intelligence Model: Linguistic-verbal intelligence, Logical-Mathematical Intelligence, Visual-Spatial Intelligence, Bodily-Kinesthetic Intelligence, Musical Intelligence, Interpersonal Intelligence, Intrapersonal Intelligence, Naturalistic Intelligence, and Existential Intelligence (Gardner, 2011),
- Four planes of the living model – Physical, Intellectual, Emotional, and Spiritual (Mukhopadhyay & Kundu, 2023),
- Four Pillars of Learning: Learning to Know, Learning to Do, Learning to Live Together, and Learning to Be (UNESCO, 1996),
- Educatedness model – informed, skilled, cultured, emancipated, self-actualised, and blissful (Mukhopadhyay, 2003),

- Benjamin Bloom's Three-Domain Model – Cognitive, Affective, Psychomotor (Bloom et al., 1956),

- 11-Gem Model: Academic, Skills, Life Skills, Health, Physical Education, Emotional-Wellbeing, Hobby, Aesthetics, Moral, Social-Cultural, Peace and Happiness Education (Mukhopadhyay & Kundu, 2023).

In different languages and articulations, all these models have professed intellectual, physical, emotional, social and spiritual development as the components and determinants of holistic development.

The crisis is equating schooling with education and education with cognitive development alone. Bloom's cognitive taxonomy is referred to and adopted worldwide, but not the affective and psychomotor domain taxonomies. SOLO Taxonomy (Biggs & Collis, 1982), David Merrill's Component Display Theory (Merrill, 1983), Gagne's Eight Conditions of Learning, Bloom's revised taxonomy (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001), and Robert Kozma's four-tier knowledge Ladder comprising primary education, acquiring, deepening and creating knowledge emphasised cognition and higher-order cognition. However, school education continues to nurture rote learning and lower-order cognition, not higher-order cognition of evaluation, extended abstraction and creation. When education's purpose is to develop conceptual complexity, the school fails to enhance the power of cognition (Harvey et al., 1961). Thus, it fails to fulfil its cognitive goals even within the unidimensionality of cognition as education.

In many countries, schools provide opportunities for participation in physical and sports activities, cultural activities, and moral and value education. However, in most cases, these are neither compulsory nor credit programmes and are not counted for school performance. Physical fitness, obesity among adolescents and associated problems are not uncommon.

Bullying, campus violence, glue sniffing, substance abuse, withdrawal, juvenile suicide, adolescent pregnancy among school-going girls, and other behavioural problems affect interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships, the development of personality and conventional learning outcomes. However, social and emotional learning and peace education are rare dots on the canvas of the world of learning. Thus, social, emotional, physical, and spiritual development are left to chance and by default.

The crisis is that schools produce one-dimensional people with poor thinking, problem-solving, and creative skills. Without well-planned skills and constructivist education, school graduates lack the skills necessary for the future workforce. Empathy, cooperation, and the skills of learning to live together are missing from the schooling scheme.

Concerned by the looming dangers to human civilisation and unexploited hopes and inspired by UN efforts, especially UNESCO and UNICEF, academicians from various countries under the umbrella of Educational Technology and Management Academy (ETMA: India) undertook a significant challenge of co-creating Education 5.0 for Global Peace and Harmony.

The Postulates

We believe that educating the new generation of children and young people to grow up with a balance of cognition, physical, social, emotional and spiritual qualities with shared global concern and understanding may be the long-term response that complements the UN's SDG. Second, we believe the world needs a GLONAL academic framework where the local and national academic frameworks are inset into the Global one (Figure 1.1).

In addition, we believe that the new education must build the spirit of *Cooperative Nationalism*, replacing contemporary and dangerous *Competitive Nationalism*. Fourth, we contend that the new education should shape people's minds to recognise freedom from poverty, deprivation, and discrimination and celebrate empathy, cooperation, and sharing of resources as indicators of superpower instead of military power, GDP, and per capita GDP.
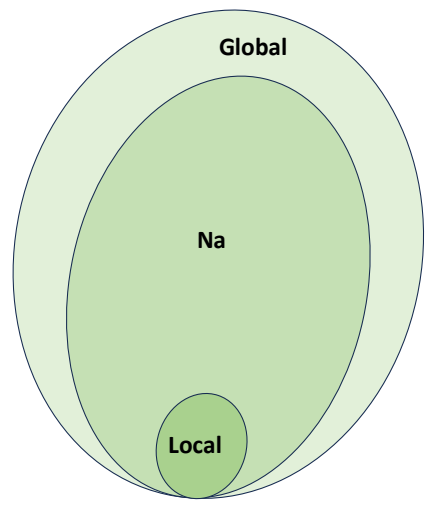
Figure 1.1 GLONAL Curriculum Construct
Source: *Authors*

Our world would be a much better place if we distributed wealth rationally rather than accumulating wealth by a few at the cost of billions in poverty. Development has to be redefined in terms of human power, not military or economic power. The future of human civilisation is in developing

the world as one developed nation without the economic and developmental boundaries and disparities between the Global North and Global South.

We argue that all this would be possible only when education truly means the holistic development of children and young people - physically, intellectually, emotionally, socially, and spiritually – to grow up as peace-loving global citizens concerned for all living beings.

Education: Challenge for the Future

Education is culturally embedded and a double-edged innovation. It is an instrument of social and economic change; however, environmental changes also impact education. Beginning in the later part of the twentieth century, especially with the developments of communication technology like the Internet, education is undergoing significant changes. Education policies and programmes are changing, and technology is invariably a reference point. With the ongoing Industrial Revolution 4.0, educational challenges are also changing. It is a very dynamic situation.

Industrial Revolution 4.0 is characterised by "*connectivity, data, and computational power:* cloud technology, the Internet, blockchain, sensors; *analytics and intelligence:* advanced analytics, machine learning, artificial intelligence; *human-machine interaction:* virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR), robotics and automation, autonomous guided vehicles; and *advanced engineering:* additive manufacturing (such as, 3-D printing), renewable energy, nanoparticles" (McKinsey & Company, 2022, p.2). It is all about technology; the human face is missing.

Joshi (2024) defined, "Education 4.0 is a learning technique connected with the fourth industrial revolution and focuses on transforming the future of education through advanced technology and automation. Smart technology, artificial intelligence and robotics are part of this industrial revolution" (Joshi, 2024, p.1). There are, however, other versions of Education 4.0, e.g., the World Economic Forum (2020) that identifies global citizenship skills, innovation and creativity skills, technology skills, interpersonal skills, personalised and self-paced learning, accessible and inclusive learning, problem-based and collaborative learning, and lifelong and student-driven learning as the eight key features of Education 4.0. Nonetheless, the dominant theme is technology-revolutionised education to fit into IR4.0

The technology-revolutionised education version of Education 4.0 emphasises the development of cognitive prowess. Without the corresponding emotional development, Education 4.0 may steadily create robotic minds with growing indifference to concerns for others, neighbours, and humanity. Obesity, physical inactivity, stress and depression, juvenile suicide, bullying, substance abuse,

campus violence, and gender discrimination among schoolgoers are on the increase and are matters of grave concern. There is a need for a new model of education to arrest the decadence of the human side in education. This project aims to create a framework for the new schooling age collectively.

Conceptual Framework

The ultimate agenda of this project is to collectively create (co-create) an academic framework for schooling, ensuring sustainable global peace and harmony – Education 5.0. We believe such an educational framework needs to ensure the holistic development of students—physical, intellectual, emotional, social, and spiritual qualities. Cognitive development alone will not be enough, and without the corresponding social and emotional development, one-dimensional cognition-rich individuals can threaten peace and harmony. The world needs happy denizens. Peace is the precondition of happiness (*शान्तिर अशान्तस्यकुतः सुखम्* - to the peaceless, how can there be happiness.[2]).

Our first contention is that only holistically developed, talent-optimised individuals can be happy and peaceful beings ('*Learning to be*'). Our second argument is that future citizens must grow beyond the geographical boundaries of the nations and evolve as citizens of one world (global citizens). Our third conviction, echoing the sentiments of the UN, is that since violence resides in the minds of men and women, peace must be planted in their minds; peace education must find a place in school education.[3]

Multiple choices were available to construct the new global peace and harmony educational model. Since the expression of concerns is not new, there must be evidence of efforts, even though such efforts may be disjointed and scattered around different countries. We chose a two-stage methodology for co-creating the new model.

Methodology

We chose to collectively construct (co-construct) our thesis of Education 5.0 based on evidence of effective practices that work rather than ideal or 'best practices' only. We decided to adopt a five-tier process (Figure 1.2)

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[2] From Bhagavad Gita Chapter 2 - Verse 66

[3] Indian scriptures described violence as having three levels – manasic (mental or in thoughts), back (in words like quarrelling and abusing others) and satiric (physical). The origin of manifested physical violence is in the mind.

Figure 1.2 5-tier Project Plan

Source: Authors

At the bottom of the pyramid are the case studies of school education reforms in 52 countries, focusing primarily on developments since 2000 but not excluding historical perspectives, as many of the Global South countries were European colonies and still struggling to emerge from the colonial legacies and mindsets (Ross, 2019). The primary objective of developing country cases is to identify evidence of good practices that can work as bricks for building the new academic framework. The case studies have been developed with more than forty scholars from various countries, including India, following a case template (Table 1.1). The selected 52 countries are divided into eight groups – continents and regions of continents. This volume(s) presents all the fifty-two country cases under the title, *'World of Learning: Lessons from 52 Countries'*.

In the second phase, scholars from India and a few other countries analyse trends in educational reforms. The main objective of this stage is to identify the regional trends of educational reforms, for example, whether there are identifiable common trends of educational reforms in African, Oceanian, and other regions. The regional trends can work as building blocks for co-constructing the new academic framework. Furthermore, these trend analyses would be complemented by expert views and proposals for academic educational frameworks for regional and continental peace and harmony. The regional trends will be further analysed to decipher trends of global reforms, if any.

World of Learning: Lessons from 52 Countries

Table 1.1 Academic Framework of Case Studies (Case Writing Template)

Parameters
Introduction
• **History**: Only if necessary
• **Geography**: Land area, borders and coastlines, the special feature of physical geography; administrative composition – e.g., provinces, and any special feature
• **Demography**: population, gender composition, ethnic, linguistic and religious composition, longevity, population growth rate, and any special feature
• **Economy:** GDP, GDP per capita, GDP growth rate, unemployment rate, Happiness Index, HDI, Quality of life index, any other special features
• **Education:** Literacy with gender difference, school enrolment – GER & NER; percentage of people completing secondary education and graduation; PISA ranking, if relevant; number of primary, secondary and upper secondary schools, students, and teachers; any other special feature.
Educational Policy
• Brief history of educational policy development.
• Special features of the policy in practice now
Structure of the school education system
- years of schooling: Preschool, primary/elementary, high—junior/middle, high, higher secondary, Vocational education at the school level.
An authentic diagram of the school education system with source
Curricular frameworks
• curricular goals for each level, subject goals only if relevant,
• Core, elective and optional subjects.
• Weightage to different subjects - allocation of weekly periods for each level.
• Any special feature
Teaching-Learning
• Recommended pedagogy by policy and curricular framework; technology integration in teaching-learning
• Teaching-learning and technology integration in education practices through review/ reference to research
• Any special feature
Learning Assessment
• Formative and summarised assessments,
• National qualification framework,
• Public examination and certification,
• National achievement survey.
• Actual Practice, based on research review.
• Any special feature
Health and Physical Education

• Whether integrated health and fitness education or only physical education, Curriculum, weightage, Activities, evaluation, credit or non-credit programme, Whether counted in performance framework, Any special feature
Skills Education   • prevocational: hands-on activities, construction of artefacts, use of hand tools, trades education, integration of skills education in the curriculum, instructional strategy. Learning assessment, credits? Whether counted in the performance framework, Any special feature
Hobby and Life Skills Education   • Whether hobby development is an articulated agenda; what and how hobbies are developed; how is hobby development assessed; whether there are credits associated with hobby students learn visual and performing arts, etc. Credits?   • Is life skills education part of the curricular framework, contents and processes of life skills education, the process of life skills assessment, and whether life skills education is a credit programme and counted in the performance framework?
Moral, Social and Cultural Education   • Whether there are any provisions for moral, social and cultural education; its contents, teaching-learning and assessment strategies, whether it is a credit course and performance counted in the performance framework.
Peace and Happiness Education   • Is there any provision for peace and happiness education, its contents, pedagogy and assessment? Whether peace and happiness education is a credit programme and counted in school performance.
Summary and Conclusion   • Expert comments, especially responding to the following questions: 1. Is all-round development happening? Are health and physical education, skills education, hobby development and life skills education, moral, social and cultural education, peace and happiness education part of the curriculum, compulsory and credit programmes? Are the performance in these areas also considered for learners' overall assessment?   2. Are students burdened with cognitive education? Is there a balance among cognitive, affective, social and psychomotor education?   3. Does education nurture peace-loving, happy global citizenship attributes?   4. Is there any special/unique feature of the curricular framework?
Reference: APA7 Style only

Source: Authors

UNESCO has made outstanding contributions to peace education initiatives. Since the theme of Education 5.0 is peace and harmony, an expert analysis of UNESCO initiatives in peace education

will be conducted. We aspire to conduct a few expert consultations on education for global peace and harmony.

With all these inputs, including regional and global trend analyses, analyses of UNESCO peace education initiatives, and expert consultation on the theme, we will collectively construct Education 5.0 for Global Peace and harmony. The result of this second phase of the project will be documented and disseminated as *'Education 5.0 for Global Peace and Harmony'*.

Choice of Countries

The research team decided to document educational reforms in fifty countries. Fifty is just more than 25 per cent of the 195 countries on the UN roll—193 member countries and two observers (Worldometer, 2024). Fifty was decided as it would be a large sample, and selected on the limited population criteria (2020), HDI Value, and Literacy rate, representing every region of the six continents according to the UN Regional Block classification.

Two countries were later added, considering their importance in the region. We followed the UN (2024) classification of countries and areas into six major geographical areas: Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, Northern America, and Oceania. The countries' selection was based on population size, literacy rate, and HDI, representing different continents and regions. All six inhabited continents, namely Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin (South) America, North America and Oceania, were included. Antarctica was excluded as there are no countries and no permanent settlement, though scientists and their staff live part of the year (Antarctica[4]). Africa and Asia are two continents with many countries-54 and 48, respectively. However, there is an imbalance in selecting countries from Africa based on the three criteria mentioned above, seven out of 54 countries, compared to many Asian countries. This is a limitation of the study. The selected fifty-two countries have been grouped into eight regions (Table 1.2).

African countries have been chosen from Northern and sub-Saharan Africa. Because of their wide diversity and variations, Asian countries have been grouped into Central, Eastern, South Eastern, Southern, Western, and Middle East Asia.

Since such studies do not intend any generalisation, sampling does not need to be random. Indeed, it is purposive. Every country is unique. Since the number of countries under study is large and

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[4] "Antarctica is the only continent with no permanent human habitation. There are, however, permanent human settlements where scientists and support staff live for part of the year on a rotating basis" (National Geographic, n.d.).

represents all continents and regions, the selected countries reasonably represent the state of the global trends of education reforms.

Table 1.2 Sampled Countries from Different Regions and Continents

Serial	Continents/Regions	Countries
1.	Africa: Northern & Sub-Saharan	Algeria, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Libya, Nigeria, and South Africa
2.	Asia: Central	Kazakhstan, Russia, Turkmenistan, Turkey and Uzbekistan
3.	Asia: Eastern & South Eastern Asia	China, Indonesia, Japan, the Philippines, South Korea, Thailand
4.	Asia: Southern Asia	Bangladesh, India, Malaysia, Pakistan, Singapore, and Sri Lanka
5.	Asia: Western & Middle East	Iran, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates
6.	Latin America and the Caribbean	Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Cuba, Guatemala, Haiti, Mexico, Peru, and Venezuela
7.	Oceania	Australia, Fiji Islands, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Soloman Islands
8.	Europe North America	Canada, Finland, France, Germany, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the USA

Source: *Authors*

Academic Framework of the Study

The design of the case study framework was dictated and informed by the demands of the project's objectives and goals, especially all-around development and peace-loving global citizens. The research team identified eleven areas (variables) for documenting country cases, followed by a summary and conclusion (Table 1.1). The special purpose of the conclusion was to get an expert assessment of whether and how far the educational reforms in each country support the holistic development of peace-loving global citizenship.

The introduction must set the context and provide a 'look and feel' of the educational reform situation – brief history, geography, demography, economy and education. The policy, structures and curricular framework studies reveal the status and reforms in the concerned areas. However, integral components of the academic framework, teaching-learning and learning assessment, have been treated separately as these two processes define the success of academic reforms. For example, despite the policies of child-centric education, in most countries, classroom practice continues to be dominated by teacher-centric direct instruction.

Education's cherished goal is all-around development. The framework for assessing the provision for all-around development includes physical and health education, hobby development and life skills education, skills and vocational education, and moral, social, and cultural education.

We included peace and happiness education and moral, social, and cultural education to determine whether peacebuilding's building blocks are being laid and whether multiculturalism in education shows seeds of global citizenship.

The conclusion of each case evaluates whether education practised in a country ensures all-round development, global citizenship, and education for global peace and harmony.

Case Documentation

The case documentation was onerous and more complicated because of the significant divergence among the countries. As indicated in the case template, we structured the case studies under eleven heads, succeeding by summary and conclusion. Such case studies require authentic information on government policies and programmes, quantitative data, measures of success of policies and plans, and development initiatives. Since visiting so many countries was not possible with the small means of an NGO, the research team decided to adopt desktop research.

All the cases were based on data and information from online sources, without direct access and field experiences except a few cases like India, China, and Malaysia, and a few other cases like Brazil, Kenya, Pakistan, Sweden, and Solomon Islands where resident national experts of the respective countries could verify the data and information. The research team carefully chose the sources of data and information. It was a combination of national and international sources for policies and programmes, national and international databases for quantitative data and Institutional and individual research studies for assessing the field realities and gaps between policy and programme intents and actual impacts on the field.

The government sources of information for policies and programmes are websites of the country governments and concerned ministries, especially the Ministry of Education, Sports and Health, and Vocational Education. Other authentic sources of information were international agency websites. The research team consulted the websites of UNESCO, UNICEF, IBE-UNESCO, UNDP, EU (Eurydice), OECD, WENR, World Bank, CIA, and others. OECD's Policy Outlook was especially helpful. Another authentic source of information was Britanica's scholarly articles. Wikipedia is the most easily accessible and comprehensive source of information. However, since Wikipedia articles are editable, the research team decided not to use Wikipedia data and information directly. Nonetheless, Wikipedia was helpful as it provides verifiable references that were consulted. Research team members occasionally consulted AI-based apps like Copilot, Perplexity, and others that provide verifiable references.

The major challenge before the research team was retrieving data from Spanish, French, Dutch, Mandarin, and Arabic documents, as team members had linguistic skills limited to English. Google Translator was helpful, but researchers were not as comfortable with documents originally in English.

The case studies collected quantitative data about each country and its education system. The research team chose country databases, respectable international resources such as the IMF, Statista, UIS-UNESCO, and the World Bank, and only trustworthy others. However, there were limitations, as the data differed from one source to another. Secondly, some data were old by a few years. Efforts have been made to refer to quantitative data from 2018 onwards.

There are gaps between policy intentions and policy impact. For example, there is a mismatch between the recommended learning environment and provisions for creating such an environment, such as the recommendation and provisions for ICT-integrated education and assessment, health and physical education, etc. There are cases of recommended moral and value education coexisting with bullying, campus violence, gender stereotyping and discrimination, juvenile drug addiction, and crimes. Hence, it was necessary to understand the reforms on the ground. The research team consulted field research and evaluation studies by individual scholars, institutions and state or international agency-sponsored evaluative studies. Such research studies were accessed from journals, online publications, blogs, ERIC databases, etc.

Case studies pose a different kind of challenge compared to other varieties of research. Drawing from the principles of Naturalistic Inquiry, case studies are expected to produce a live image of the situation without inducing the researcher's opinion bias. The research team has made serious efforts to arrest or restrict personal biases, except in conclusion, where they were expected to share their expert opinion on whether the education system and the reforms ensure all-around development and the development of peace-loving, happy children as global citizens.

Conclusion

The project was designed to be implemented in two phases. This first phase, *World of Learning*, brings authentic documentation of good educational practices from both Global North and South countries. Indeed, it brings lessons from fifty-two countries from six continents for mutual learning, searching for elements that can be stitched together to co-create Education 5.0 for Global Peace and Harmony. That is the agenda of phase two of the project – to propose a new framework based on sound and effective practices complementing the future vision. We will call the new framework Education 5.0 for Global Peace and Harmony.

This is a unique project of colossal magnitude, one of the largest in the world, with massive implications for the future of education by a lean, loosely coupled, non-governmental organisation with modest means and colossal commitment.

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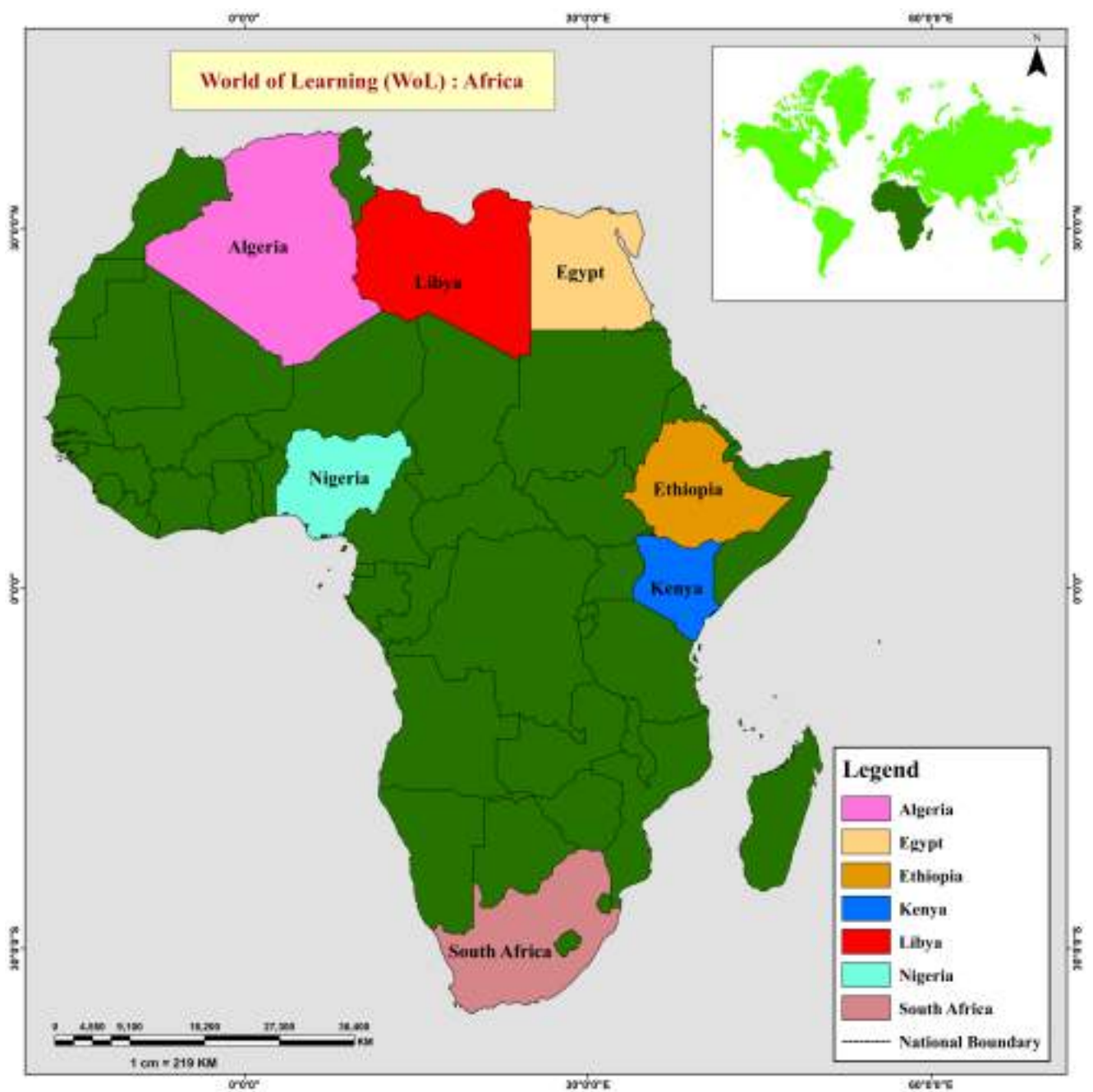
2

Educational Transformation through Policy Reforms: Algeria

Aditi Bardhan

Abstract

Algeria, a previously French colony, is now a new country that has embarked on promoting its own culture and native population, in which education has played a significant role. The 1971 and later 1976 education policy reforms made compulsory primary education and Arabization provisions, drastically increasing native literacy to 81.41% (2018). Dominantly a public domain, the education sector of Algeria is also seeing a government-supervised growth in private education post the spread of the 90s economic liberalisation in the Global South. The school education system comprises a 5+4+3 year model leading to primary, lower secondary and optional upper secondary education or vocational education, respectively. Despite public policies for educating the nation, the country suffers gender disparities in literacy rates and barriers in secondary education and completion rates.

Introduction

Algeria, situated in the northern region of Africa, has a rich history as a French colony from 1830 until gaining independence in 1962. Spanning a vast expanse of 2,381,741 kilometres2 (Britannica, 2021), it is the tenth largest country worldwide with the most substantial national border in Africa. Bordered (2,148 km) by the Mediterranean Sea to the north, Algeria shares its 6,343 km other land borders with Morocco, Western Sahara, Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Libya, and Tunisia. The convergence of these borders gives rise to the young fold mountain of Atlas, culminating in Mount

Chélia at 2328 meters, the highest point in Algeria. There are 58 provinces (wilayat) under which 1541 communes (baladiyahs) as of 2019 (Sutton et al., 2024).

This culturally diverse nation, a part of the larger Arab world, is officially an Islamic state. With a population exceeding 45 million, Algeria is the 34th most populous nation globally, accounting for approximately 0.57% of the world's population (Worldometer, 2024). The population growth rate was recorded at 1.57% in 2023 (Macrotrends, 2024), with a gender ratio of 102.1 males per 100 females (Statista, 2023a) and an average life expectancy of 77.50 years (Macrotrends, 2024). Arab Muslims constitute the largest ethnic group in Algeria, followed by the Berbers, shaping a linguistic landscape dominated by Arabic and Tamazight (Berber language). However, no longer the official language, French retains significance in various sectors owing to its historical colonial influence.

Despite its vast territorial expanse, most of Algeria's population resides along the Mediterranean coast due to milder climatic conditions. Urbanisation is pronounced, with 74.26% of Algerians living in urban areas as of 2021. Post-1989 reforms ushered in a mixed economy model, focusing on natural gas and oil exports. However, this economic orientation poses challenges for employment, particularly for the highly educated segment of the workforce, leading to high unemployment rates, notably among youths and women (Statista, 2023b). The GDP of Algeria in 2020 was $195 billion (World Bank, 2022), and the GDP Per Capita was $5,722. The country stands at 96th on the Happiness Index with a score of 5.122, below the world average of 5.54 (Helliwell et al., 2022). HDI of Algeria is 0.745 (91st position out of 191 countries), which makes it a medium human development nation (UNDP, 2021). Algeria's score for the Quality-of-Life Index is low at 104.28 with a poor purchasing power index (23.91), moderate safety index (47.95), moderate health care index (54.69), high pollution index (96.14) (Numbeo, 2023).

Algeria's educational landscape has undergone significant transformations, transitioning from discriminatory colonial policies to providing widespread access to education since independence. While public education dominates, private education has gradually grown since 2002 (Oxford Business Group, 2018). Compulsory primary education is offered free to children aged 6 to 16, contributing to an overall literacy rate of 81.41% as of 2018. However, gender disparities persist, with female adult literacy lagging behind their male counterparts. Despite strides in primary education, secondary education faces challenges in enrolment and completion rates, indicating areas for further improvement and development in the educational sector (Trading Economics, 2018).

GER at the primary school level was 108.76%, and that in secondary education was 102.70% as of 2023 (UNESCO-UIS, 2023). NER at primary education is 98%, and the completion rate at this level is almost universal (EPDC, 2018). NER in the upper secondary level is, however, much lower as it stands beyond the compulsory education period and is only 29.04%. The completion rate of secondary education is also as low as 42.9% (USAID, 2020), whereas the completion rate at lower secondary education is 76.1% (World Bank, 2023).

The approximate number of pupils in primary schools was 4.67 million in the 2019-20 academic year (Statista, 2024a). More than 1.2 million students attended 2488 secondary schools in the 2019-2020 academic year (Statista, 2024b). Algeria has around 1,88,000 primary (Statista, 2024c) and 1,04,000 secondary school teachers (Statista, 2024d).

Educational Policy

The long colonial rule profoundly impacted the nation's general condition, and education was no exception. The colonial rulers dismantled the Madrasas (Islamic schools run on the principles of the Quran). They established a replica of the French education system that enabled Europeans and a few native elites to access such a Western form of education, throwing most natives into the darkness of illiteracy (Abadeer, 2018).

After independence, the Algerian government prioritised education as a national development forerunner and formed the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) in 1963. Between 1973 and 1980, Algeria drew five loans from the World Bank for educational expansion, accounting for one-third of the national budget (Abadeer, 2018). Algeria spent 6.1 per cent of its GDP on education in 2019. In 2022, including spending from international sources transferred to the country's government, it increased to 13.10% (Statista, 2024e).

In 1971, an education reform bill introduced a nine-year basic education system. In 1976, the following National Education Policy introduced the nine years of primary schooling as free and compulsory for the age group of 6-16 years. The 1976 reform also delivered education as an exclusive public domain affair, which was amended in 2004 to introduce private education (Clark, 2006). Under its widespread school-building programme, Algeria focused on building school infrastructures covering remote villages so that distance does not become a barrier to accessing education. The state also provides social services through school infrastructures, such as health care, school meals, school bus transportation, education for students with learning difficulties, and allowances for poor students (UN Women, 2019).

In Algeria, the dropout rate in primary and secondary schools is high among the poorest quartiles (EPDC, 2018). The income disparity is reflected in the children's education; hence, a widespread public education system has helped pull down the intense disparity from the colonial period to a situation where more than 80% of the nation is literate. Despite prioritising education in the national budget, the Algerian government identified high school dropouts, inefficient pedagogies, and inadequate instructional leadership from the school leaders as causes for the insufficient generation of employable masses.

UNESCO Report 2017 addressed the public education sector's scope for improvement compared to other emerging economies and placed Algeria in the 119th position out of 140 nations. MoNE

has identified these shortcomings and created a goal of improving primary education by 2030, with teaching quality, education governance, and pedagogical overhaul as the primary focus (Oxford Business Group, 2018).

Language policy is one of the most live issues in contemporary Algerian education. As a former French Colony, French has been the dominant and official language. With Arabisation, post-independence, French has been challenged by Arabic. On the other hand, following the global trend of the dominance of English in the contemporary world, the Algerian government introduced English in grade 4 in 1993 as a foreign language instead of French. Initially, it was piloted in a few schools and later introduced throughout the country in 1995 (Bellalem, 2022). Rouabah (2022) contended that the recent language policy of Algeria is an effort to promote multilingualism while acknowledging Tamzight as the official language. However, there is a palpable sensitivity to language policy as competition between official and foreign languages in education is likely to reshape the sociolinguistic profile of society at large. Further, it is feared that English language learning may unleash Neoliberalism and silent linguistic imperialism (Maraf, 2024). Algeria is an interesting case of language policy study that aims to balance resurgent indigenous languages and European languages for mainstreaming with the world.

Structure of the Education System

The Algerian academic cycle spans from September to July. Children of 3 to 6 years old may take pre-school education, a preparatory period offered in Quranic schools in Arabic. Post-preparatory schooling, the country runs a 5+4+3 school model where the initial five years are in primary education, four years in lower secondary, and another three years in upper secondary. Primary and lower secondary schooling constitutes the basic compulsory national education programme. The enrollment rate is relatively low at the secondary level compared to the primary level, especially among boys. After completion of lower secondary, a student can enter vocational education or the same after the higher secondary (Table 2.1 and Figure 2.1) (EPDC, 2018).

Primary Education is compulsory and accessible to all Algerian children aged 6 to 15 -nine years of primary and lower secondary schooling. Nevertheless, several youngsters continue not to attend, and the situation is particularly unfriendly for females. Arabic is the language used for schooling. A typical school day consists of 6 hours of instruction (Scholaro, 2024).

"Less than half the children who complete primary school take their studies further. At the secondary level, there are three streams: general, specialised and technical/vocational. Those in the general and specialised streams study for three years before writing their baccalauréat de l'enseignement secondaire, which is the key to entry into tertiary education. Technical/vocational education may last between 1 and 4 years and aims to prepare students for an active life in industry. It may also lead to higher education in certain cases" (Scholaro, 2024).

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Table 2.1 Structure of the School Education System in Algeria

Education	School Level	Grade	Age	Years	Notes
Primary	Primary Education	1-5	6-10	5	Primary education is compulsory for all children between 6-10 years
Secondary	Lower Secondary Education	6-9	11-15	4	Brevet d'Enseignement Moyen
	Upper Secondary Education	10-12	16-18	3	Baccalauréat de l'Enseignement Secondaire
Vocational	Vocational Secondary Education	10-12	16-18	3	Certificat d'Aptitude Professionnelle - CAP Certificat de Maîtrise Professionnelle - CMP Diplôme d'Enseignement Professionnel du 1er Degré - DEP 1 (2008-2017) Brevet d'En
	Higher Vocational Education			2 to 3	Brevet d'Enseignement Professionnel Supérieur- BEPS /

Source: Scholaro, 2024

The Algerian vocational training system is transforming significantly, aligning more effectively with the country's needs. This evolution shapes a progressive and promising job landscape (Scholaro, 2024). The active engagement with local traditional and religious values is a testament to its relevance and potential.
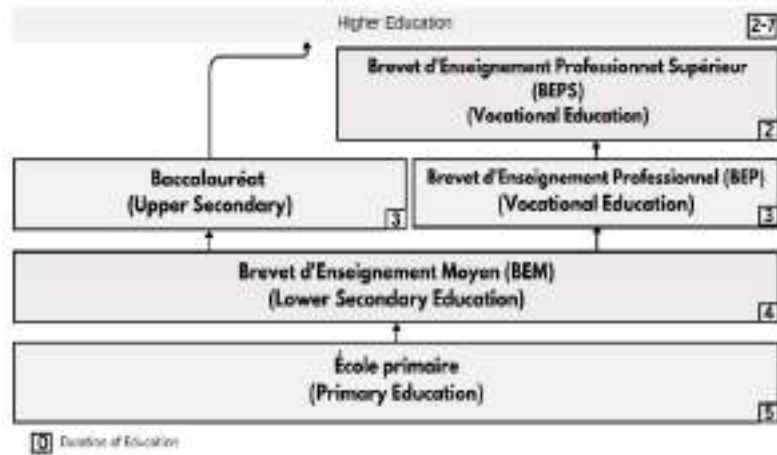
Figure 2.1 Structure of the Educational System in Algeria
Source: Nuffic, n.d. (Adapted by author)

Curricular Framework

Curricular Framework

After inheriting a colonial education system aimed at educating the French settlers' children, the Algerian government had to redesign education through indigenisation and Arabization and put more emphasis on technical and scientific studies for the national cause of its growing industrial field and managerial enhancement. To bring education under the native language, during the early 1960s, the primary level medium of instruction was changed to Arabic from French; in the later 1960s, it was standardised at the secondary level as well. In 1991, the law mandated Arabic to be used at all levels of education, yet French continues to be the primary language in some professional fields after high school. (Clark, 2006).

The Algerian education system, which is predominantly public with limited private sector involvement, is thoroughly supervised by the state. This oversight is crucial in maintaining a consistent standard of education, as the state has reinstated a common curriculum across all institutions.

Primary Education (Enseignement Fondamental)

Primary education in Algeria is a comprehensive curriculum that ensures students receive a well-rounded education. During the compulsory period of primary education, students study a range of subjects, including Arabic, Maths, Geography and History, Political education, Physical sciences, Natural sciences, Information technology, two foreign languages (English and French), Art and Music, Islamic studies, and manual work as per their stream (Soreda, 2013). Mathematics, natural sciences, and technology are emphasised, reflecting the country's focus on these areas.

English was first introduced in primary schooling in the academic year of 1992-93 as the second foreign language besides French. Students must attend classes for 27 hours a week during the first six to five years of basic education, and in the next three/four years (Table 2.2), lower secondary classes extend to 32-35 hours/week. The enrolment rate at the lower secondary is 31.7% (2016) (Oxford Business Group, 2018). After nine years of basic education, students take a certificate exam, on passing which they receive the Brevet d'Enseignement Moyen (BEM) award. In 2023, the pass rate of this exam was 60.97% (Algérie Presse Service, 2023a).

Secondary Education (Enseignement Secondaire)

The enrolment rate at this level falls drastically to 13.7% (2016) (Oxford Business Group, 2018). The education system at this level is divided into two branches – general and technical or vocational. At this level, the academic year comprises 36 weeks, divided into three parts called trimesters. The students in the general stream are prepared for further studies and will take the Baccalauréat to further their studies in universities. In contrast, the students in technical and vocational streams are trained in professional courses that collaborate with industries, business units, labour unions, and

other such professional public institutes. These professional courses are also available right after the basic education period of nine years for those who do not want to go for Baccalauréat.

For the students in general studies, the three streams offered are – Sciences (physical and natural), Social studies and Languages (letters), and Technology (mathematics, technology and physical sciences), from which the students based on their BEM (Brevet d'Enseignement Moyen) score opt for their preferred stream in the first year of the secondary studies. For the following two years, they specialise within their streams. Fifteen concentrations or core subjects (séries) are offered in the Algerian secondary education level totality. They are:

- The general stream offers five main concentrations: hard sciences, life and natural sciences, religious studies, literature and liberal arts, and literature and foreign languages.

- Six concentrations are offered for the vocational/technical streams: electrotechnology, electronics, mechanics, chemistry, public works and construction, and accounting. One concentration must be studied as the primary concentration.

- Hybrid concentrations are offered in civil, electrical, mechanical, business, and management. On availing of these concentrations, students are awarded the "Baccalauréat de l'Enseignement Secondaire", a degree in technology (Clark, 2006).

Even though Arabic is the medium of instruction for general subjects, the science stream students (studying maths, natural and physical sciences) have to take supplementary classes in French at the tertiary level; these subjects are mostly taught in French. The first year of secondary education has compulsory subjects like Arabic, Maths, Geography and History, Physical sciences, Islamic studies, two foreign languages, Art and Music, Information technology, and Physical education. Apart from these, students can opt for Natural sciences, a third foreign language, and technical designs based on their stream. In the second year, the general stream students must attend classes in Arabic, maths, Islamic studies, geography and history, two foreign languages, philosophy, physical education, arts and music, and the natural or physical sciences (Clark, 2006).

In the final year, students specialise in their main concentration subject. On the contrary, technical or vocational students start training and specialising in their technical subjects. At the end of the final year, when taking the school leaving certificate exam, the general students receive "Baccalauréat de la Enseignement Secondaire Général" and the technical students receive "Baccalauréat de Technicien". The discipline and grade-wise weekly hours are presented in Table 2.2).

Table 2.2 Weekly Hours by Discipline and Grades

Disciplines	Cycle de base			Cycle d'é veil			Cycle d'ori- enta- tion		
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9
Arabic	14	14	12	9	7.5	7.5	6	5	5
Islamic Studies	2	2	2	1.5	1.5	1.5	1	1	1
Political education	-	-	-	-		1.5	1	1	1
History/ Geography	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2	2
Mathematics	6	6	6	5	5	5	5	6	5
Natural Sciences	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	3	3
Social studies	-	-	2	2.5	4	4	-	-	-
Technology	-	-	-	-	-		3	2	2
Manual work	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	-	-	-
1st Foreign Language	-	-	-	5	5	5	5	4	4
2nd Foreign Language	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	5
Art	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Music	1	1	1	-	-	-	1	1	1
Physical Education	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	2	2	2
Total	27	27	27	27	27	27	31	32	32

Source: Clark, 2006

Teaching Learning

The pupil-teacher ratio (PTR) in Algeria is 24:1 (EPDC, 2018). The post-colonial government prioritised free and larger access to education. An extensive and efficient teachers' community was the basic need to achieve that goal.

The purposeful monocultural policy for the cause of nation-building has created a cultural dominance of the Arab culture over the entire Algerian education system, and diversities of the Berber and other small communities were ignored. As a process of indigenisation, traditional pedagogies that are essentially Islamic folk pedagogies have been revived. Parallelly, the post-colonial state aimed to remodel the education system to match international standards and hence

acquired a modern curriculum that needed a Western secular pedagogical approach. Hence, a substantial section of higher education has remained non-Arabicised. Therefore, a hybrid educational approach emerged from the fusion or clash of these two. It has largely derived its basis from Islamic moral and spiritual grounds, accommodating Western theories wherever relevant.

The basic difference between the indigenous and Western pedagogies is the teacher's role. Where the former puts the teacher at the centre, and under the Islamic approach, a teacher holds greater authority than a Western teacher in a student-centric pedagogy. Even when teachers are trained under Western pedagogies, in their subconscious, their basic approach remains the traditional one they acquire in natural settings, both formally and informally (Miliani, 2014). In 2016, a plan of action was framed under Benghabrit-Remaoun's leadership, where the improvement of the existing pedagogies and the need for a holistic approach through teachers' training were addressed (Oxford Business Group, 2017).

For educational reform in schools, the MoNE collaborated with the British Council to train the school inspectors and recruit new teachers to implement a more 21st-century relevant skill-based pedagogical framework. The project aimed to create a better-equipped teaching-learning framework to help the employable masses develop skills for more economic opportunities. This school reform project spanned between 2016 and 2022 and recruited 53,000 new teachers, trained by education experts from the UK directly under the new Teacher Competency Framework. The project also trained school inspectors under the Inspector Competency Framework (British Council, 2022).

Algeria has implemented the Competency-Based Approach (CBA) in its school education system. This approach aims to modernise and enhance education to meet globalisation's demands. This reform has introduced new aspects related to globalisation, such as the use of ICTs and a focus on foreign language teaching, while still maintaining cultural identity and avoiding acculturation (Benadla, 2012). However, the pedagogy is teacher-centric, where memorisation is emphasised in all subjects, and teachers remain committed to teaching at memory level only (Miliani, 2014).

Learning Assessment

"Assessment is an ongoing part of learning. Ongoing or regular assessment should take various forms and address the competencies learned in class so that the assessment can provide useful information, which teachers and learners can review to aid learning" (IDDOU, 2017, p 43).

Even though the curriculum has been purposefully indigenised through several education policies, the assessment framework still follows the colonial French structure. After completing the basic education programmes, there is an obligatory national exam called "Brevet d'Enseignement Moyen" (BEM). This diploma certifies whether a student has successfully passed the compulsory

primary education level and is eligible for further studies. The passing score is 50% on average for all subjects. The Algerian education structure uses a 20-point scale, where a score of more than ten equals 50% and more. Students get to choose one of the three streams based on its scores. Over the decades, the pass rate has improved from 32.3% (2000) to 55.9% (2018) (Oxford Business Group, 2018). The BEM scores determine entry and choice of the field of higher education.

Completing secondary education, the Baccalauréat or school-leaving competitive exam at the national level is the gateway to higher education. This high school diploma opens the door to the tertiary education sector. In this exam, at the end of the three-year (upper) secondary programme, students have to take tests in all the subjects they have studied in this programme period, and they pass it only when they score an average of 50% in all the subjects. On passing, they are awarded with the Baccalauréat degree. The exam is extremely competitive and has a high failure rate. The pass rate was 50.63%; the previous year, it was 58.75% (Algérie Presse Service, 2023 & 2022, respectively).

Algeria has a 20-point grading scale compared to the US equivalent Grading system (Table 2.3).

Table 2.3 Grading Scale of Algerian School Education

Scale	Grade Description	U.S. Grade Equivalents
15+	Trés Bien (Very Good)	A+
13 - 14.9	Bien (Good)	A
12 - 12.9	Assez Bien (Quite Good)	B+
11-11.9	Passable (Satisfactory)	B
10 - 10.9	Moyen (Sufficient)	C
8 - 9.9	-	It may be considered a passing grade if the entire year is passed.

Source: Clark, 2006

Health and Physical Education

The MoNE oversees the implementation of health and physical education in Algerian schools. The Ministry sets guidelines and standards for including these subjects in the curriculum and provides training and support for teachers responsible for delivering health and physical education lessons. However, due to funding, infrastructure, and staffing, the availability and quality of health and physical education programmes vary across different regions and schools in Algeria.

Physical education is a vital component of the programme throughout high school. The objectives of physical education in Algerian schools are multifaceted. They aim to promote the harmonious development of students, preparing them to be informed citizens and productive workers. These objectives are integrated into the education system and align with broader societal goals. Teachers generally strive to adhere to official guidelines for physical education. However, there is a negative perception of the subject among the physical education teachers themselves; the subject is seen as less critical by its teachers, which impacts the pedagogy of the same (Saker et al., 2014). Teacher training in physical education focuses more on practical skills and less on intellectual aspects, contributing to this identity struggle (Tappe & Burgeson, 2004).

On the other hand, students tend to appreciate physical education as a valuable part of their school experience (Saker et al., 2014). Physical education programmemes face an identity crisis, are torn between various approaches, and are sometimes confused with sports. Clarifying its aims remains a challenge. The allotted time for physical education at the primary level is 30 minutes per week and 120 minutes per week at the secondary level (Hardman et al., 2013). The credits allotted to the subject are 1.5 in primary and 2 in secondary education (Clark, 2006). The schools have health units that the Ministry of Health deploys and are responsible for health screening, promoting preventive care, and creating awareness among students at all levels through health education (Oxford Business Group, 2017).

Skills Education

The primary and lower secondary school curricula include manual work with a 1.5 credit score. Despite having vocational courses from the secondary level, this education sector lags in quality and output compared to the general streams. The last phase of the compulsory education years (lower secondary) is designed to facilitate polyvalent education so that the students are familiar with the basic idea of what they are approaching at the secondary education level. However, the education system is more inclined towards general streams, leaving less scope for those who want to join the labour force sooner. The current job market also demands language proficiency, so French and English need more attention in the subject curriculum.

The British Council has been involved in school reform efforts, focusing on 21st-century skills and personal development (ETF, 2020). Algerian students acquire a diverse set of skills during their schooling years. These skills are essential for their personal development, future careers, and active social participation. The essential skills that Algerian students typically learn include Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving, Communication Skills, Digital Literacy, Cultural Awareness and Tolerance, Vocational Skills, Foreign Languages, Creativity, and Artistic Expression. These skills empower students to contribute positively to their communities and adapt to a dynamic world. Other

than this, soft skills like adaptability, persistence, perseverance, managing self and emotions, thinking skills, and other social skills are essential for the current Algerian job market (World Learning, 2019). Specific vocational programmes within Algerian schools might include apprenticeships or internships, offering students hands-on experience in authentic work environments. This exposes the students to apply their theoretical understanding in practical situations.

To build a skilled workforce, the government emphasised vocational and technical education. (Clark, 2006). The vocational training programmes have seen growth in both public and private institutes. The government identifies skill development through these training programmes as vital to reducing youth unemployment. The Ministry for Vocational Training and Education (established in 1983) plans to introduce skill development programmes on trade and commerce, agriculture, textiles, tourism, and electronics to capture the inflating global markets (Oxford Business Group, 2017).

Hobby and Life Skills Education

In Algerian schools, the focus extends beyond academic subjects to include hobby and life skills education. Life skills are essential competencies that empower students to navigate various life situations effectively to enhance personal development, well-being, and adaptability. Algerian students learn various life skills like Communication Skills, Problem-Solving, Critical Thinking, Time Management, Emotional Intelligence, Financial Literacy, Conflict Resolution, etc. (British Council, 2022).

Hobby Education is encouraged to foster creativity, passion, and personal fulfilment. Algerian schools offer hobby-related activities such as arts and crafts, music and dance, sports and fitness, gardening, cooking and culinary skills, photography and film, literary clubs, School organised clubs, etc.

However, implementing hobby and life skills education in schools has its share of challenges. There are issues like curriculum overload, funding constraints hindering the establishment of well-equipped hobby clubs or workshops; emphasis on standardised testing often leads schools to prioritise academic subjects over extracurricular activities, and above all, parental expectations to prioritise academic achievements over following hobbies distract the process of holistic education (State University, 2023). Later, students may professionally approach these subjects at higher education institutes to develop them into career options (Saker et al., 2014).

Moral, Social and Cultural Education

Moral education is crucial to educating the next generations to realise the virtuous idea of citizenship and their identity through creating a "sense of belonging". Cultural and moral education is present in the Algerian teaching system's formal curriculum and informal pedagogies. Islamic studies are compulsory in the primary education period, which imparts knowledge of the country's social, cultural and moral pillars. There are referential government policy documents such as "The Official Journal of the Algerian Republic" (JORA, 2008 Cited in Hachelaf, 2019), the "General Reference to Curricula", the Orientation Law (2008), and the General Reference of General Education (2009) by MoNE. All these documents have guidelines to uphold education's moral and axiological aspects.

The 2009 document from MoNE suggests that education quality is as dependent on ethics as on knowledge generation and acquirement. General Referential Guide (MoNE 2008, n.p.) states that the primary task of education is to "…convey the values chosen by society for itself. The values that all members share are political, moral, and cultural. They act as spiritual frames of guidance to strengthen national unity" (Cited in Hachelaf, 2019, p. 45). JORA (2008) also states that students must understand the twin culmination of liberty and responsibility that will help them adhere to a fundamental moral, civic life. All moral education programmes prioritise respect, caring, and tolerance toward each other. With the introduction of English as a foreign language and modern pedagogies, teachers sometimes have to deal with traditional vs. Western moralities, which conflict. Somehow, the ingrained natural adaptation of the culture and prioritisation of traditional ethics maintain dominant Islamic moral values (Hachelaf, 2019).

Peace and Happiness Education

Educating the students on their moral values, the state promotes a peace-creating attitude among the growing youths to build a tolerant and harmonic future nation. Through the UNESCO platform, the country has forwarded its intention to build a peaceful world by collaborating with other countries through education (Mahfooz & Norrmén-Smith, 2022). This initiative aims to create a universal humanitarian ground to understand each other through exchanging knowledge, science, and culture and thus proceed toward a peaceful world (Remili, 1974). In an initiative by the Arab Scout Region volunteers, the young scouts promote youth education through the "Change Makers Project". Teachers play a crucial role by building trust and viewing students holistically—considering their body, mind, and heart (Calp, 2020).

Students are at the centre of a peaceful school community, emphasising their well-being and growth. The goal is to create an environment where children feel safe, supported, and encouraged to learn. They uphold peaceful dialogues to develop life skills and ideas and create a safe space for the youths. They also directly contribute to some SDGs like gender equality, quality education, economic growth and decent work, and peace and justice.

Summary and Conclusion

The post-colonial government of Algeria prioritised education since independence, leading to significant improvement in literacy through scholarships and free compulsory education. However, quality issues persist, attributed to the lack of a quality assessment system. The curriculum emphasises science and technology, with English introduced alongside French. Women benefit more from education, with higher enrollment rates in higher education. However, societal pressure leads to higher dropout rates among men, affecting gender dynamics in the labour force. Despite a holistic curriculum, vocational and technical streams are neglected, impacting workforce readiness. Improvements include an accreditation system, gender-equal opportunities, and preserving cultural diversity.

In Algeria, while there is a focus on education, including subjects like science, technology, mathematics, and languages, there are gaps in addressing all-round development. The curriculum includes health and physical education, moral and social education, and cultural studies. However, the emphasis on these areas is not as pronounced as in other subjects. Skill development, hobby cultivation, and life skills education do not receive as much attention as traditional academic subjects. The emphasis on cognitive education overshadows the other aspects. Recently, there has been a growing recognition of the importance of holistic education that addresses all aspects of a student's development. However, achieving this balance requires efforts in curriculum design, teacher training, and educational policy implementation.

While cognitive education receives considerable attention, efforts are made to incorporate elements of affective (emotional), social (interpersonal), and psychomotor (physical) education into the curriculum. This includes activities promoting emotional intelligence, interpersonal skills, and physical development. However, balancing cognitive, affective, social, and psychomotor education remains challenging.

The curriculum includes components promoting peace, tolerance, and understanding of global issues. Lessons on history, civics, and social studies include conflict resolution, human rights, and international cooperation discussions. Cultural studies also highlight the importance of diversity and mutual respect. However, the effectiveness of these efforts faces challenges like the quality of teaching, resources available to schools, and the broader socio-political context.

One notable feature of Algeria's school curricular framework is its emphasis on promoting Arabic and Islamic studies alongside more traditional subjects. As an Arab-Muslim majority country, Algeria places significant importance on preserving its cultural and religious heritage through education. Algeria has also tried to adapt its curriculum to meet the needs of its evolving society. The introduction of English as a third language alongside French reflects a recognition of the

importance of global communication and collaboration. There is an ongoing effort to address gender disparities in education, with initiatives to promote equal access to school for boys and girls. This includes measures to encourage girls' enrollment and retention in schools and universities.

However, challenges such as ensuring quality education across all regions of the country and balancing traditional values with modern educational needs remain areas of focus for Algerian education policymakers.

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3

Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship: Egypt

S. P. Malhotra

Abstract

The education system in Egypt has undergone various reforms and initiatives to improve access, quality, and relevance. The country has a dual education system, with secular and Al-Azhar schools. The Ministry of Education is implementing the EDU 2.0 reform plan to improve early grades and modernise the curriculum. Egyptian education promotes active learning and critical thinking. The assessment system is being redesigned to move away from high-stakes exams towards a more comprehensive evaluation of student learning. Physical education is mandatory in schools; extracurricular activities and clubs cater to various interests and hobbies. Skill education and vocational training are also emphasised to align with the labour market's needs. The education system in Egypt promotes moral, social, and cultural education with a focus on Islamic values and national identity. Efforts are being made to promote peace, education, and multiculturalism. Egyptian Knowledge Bank and the free distribution of tables catalysed Digital transformation in Education. However, overcrowded classrooms, outdated materials, and inadequate infrastructure remain challenges.

Introduction

With its annual flood and the natural barriers of deserts to the east and west, the Nile River played a pivotal role in shaping Egypt into a magnificent civilisation. It was around 3200 BC when a unified kingdom was established, marking the beginning of a 3000-year rule by a series of dynasties. The Persians, Greeks, Romans, and Byzantines successively left their mark on Egypt. In the 7th

century, Arab conquerors introduced Islam and the Arabic language, ruling for the next six centuries and completing the Suez Canal in 1869, elevating Egypt's status as a crucial transportation hub. In 1882, Britain seized control of Egypt, leading to its colonisation. Egypt achieved partial independence in 1922 and full sovereignty in 1952 (CIA, 2024).

Egypt, strategically positioned between the Mediterranean Sea and the Sinai Peninsula in Northeast Africa, is not just a landmass but a strategic gateway. It covers a total area of 1,001,450 km² and has a 2,450 km coastline, making it one of the largest countries in Africa and the 30th largest in the world (World Data.info, 2024). Its unique geographical location, a crossroad of continents and cultures, has influenced its history, culture, and interactions with other nations. Libya borders Egypt to the west, Sudan to the south, and Israel to the northeast. It also has coastlines along the Mediterranean Sea to the north and the Red Sea to the east. The nation is divided into 27 governorates, with Cairo, Alexandria, Port Said, and Suez designated governorates. Each governor is appointed and can be removed by the republic's president, holding the highest executive authority within the governorate (Smith et al., 2024).

As of 2022, Egypt, the most populous country in the Arab world and Africa, is a vibrant tapestry of cultures. It is home to an estimated population of 102.88 million, with a growth rate of 1.86% (Walsh, 2020). The population is diverse, with almost equal representation of males and females. Most of the population resides along the Nile River, covering only about 5% of Egypt's land area. Islam is the main religion, with about 90% of the population, mostly Sunni Muslims, practising it. The remaining 10% of the population follows Christianity, adding to the cultural mosaic. Ethnically, 99.7% of the population is Egyptian, with other ethnic minorities including Turks, Greeks, Abazas, Bedouin Arabs, Swiss, and Nubians, each contributing to the diverse fabric of Egypt. Arabic is the official language of Egypt, but the educated classes widely understand English and French. Egypt's life expectancy at birth is 75 years (CIA, 2024).

Egypt's economy primarily relies on agriculture, media, petroleum, natural gas, and tourism.[5] The current GDP is 347.59 billion US dollars, with a growth rate of 3%. The GDP per capita is USD3,220, and the unemployment rate is 7.1% as of 2024. In the World Happiness Report 2024, Egypt ranked 121 with 4.170 scores (Helliwell et al., 2024). On HDI (2022), Egypt ranked 105 with a 0.728 HDI score (UNDP, 2022). Egypt ranks 121 with a score of 2.267 in the Global Peace Index (IEP, 2023).

The literacy rate in Egypt is 73.1 per cent (2021) - 78.8 per cent among males and 67.4 per cent among females (CIA, 2024). Egypt's GER (2022) for the primary is 91.59% and for Upper Secondary 70.91%, whereas NER as of 2021 for the primary is 99.54% and for Upper Secondary

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[5] https://globaledge.msu.edu/countries/egypt/economy

72.39% (UNESCO-UIS, 2024). During the 2021/2022 school year, Egypt had 58,807 schools. Most teachers, totalling close to 246,000, work in primary and preparatory schools. Approximately 13.7 million students were enrolled in primary education, with a significantly lower number in secondary education. About 1,170,000 children were admitted to kindergarten (KG) (Galal, 2023).

Educational Policy

The history of education in Egypt can be traced back to ancient times when schools were mainly for religious and moral instruction. Modern education in Egypt was introduced by Ottoman Pasha Muhammad Ali, the ruler of Egypt from 1805 to 1848 (Heyworth-Dunne, 2019). He established two different types of educational institutions catering to the educational needs of the masses and elites separately. The elite schools, known as Al-Azhar Institution, focused on training Islamic scholars. After the 1952 Revolution, the Egyptian government under Gamal Abdel Nasser (1954-1970) launched an "education revolution involved eliminating fees and expanding access to education at all levels" (Williamson, 1987, pp. 118-19), while Anwar Al-Sadat (1970-1981) emphasised quantitative expansion, (Ginsburg & Megahed, 2008).

Over the years, Egyptian school education "has consistently faced persistent strains related to a rapidly increasing student population, deteriorating teaching quality, rigid curriculum, inequality, uncertain political will for change, and lack of resources" (Moustafa et al., 2022, p. 51). Mustafa et al. (2022) also mentioned that the reforms during the last thirty years have "focused on improving access, changing pedagogies, and restructuring teachers' professional development training. There was little focus on developing students' competencies, improving curriculum development, or creating an assessment of outcomes" (Art 3.5). All these policies lacked coherence and were replete with isolation and disregard for a comprehensive view of different educational elements, especially political and socio-economic conditions (Ginsburg & Megahed, 2008).

Article 19 of the Constitution of 2014 stipulates that "Every citizen has the right to education to build the Egyptian character, maintaining national identity, planting the roots of scientific thinking, developing talents, promoting innovation and establishing civilisational and spiritual values and the concepts of citizenship, tolerance and non-discrimination. The state commits to upholding its aims in education curricula and methods and providing education by global quality criteria. Education is obligatory until the end of the secondary stage or its equivalent. The state grants free education in different stages in state educational institutions as per the law. The state commits to allocating a percentage of government spending that is no less than 4% of the GDP for education. It will gradually increase this until it reaches global rates. The state oversees education to ensure that all public and private schools and institutes abide by its educational policies" (Constitute, n.d.).

Egypt Vision 2030 is a strategic initiative introduced by President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi's government in February 2016. It aims to achieve sustainable development across three key environmental, economic, and social areas. The vision prioritises enhancing Egyptians' well-being and living standards through promoting fairness, societal cohesion, and active citizen engagement in political and social spheres (MPED, 2020). Education is one of the important social dimensions.

In August 2017, Dr. Tarek Shawky, the newly appointed Minister of Education, introduced a sweeping transformation of Egypt's education sector, focusing on placing students at the heart of the learning process. The ministry aims to provide all Egyptian children and youth with relevant and high-quality education. This initiative involves two parallel strategies for reform: firstly, implementing incremental improvements to the current system (Education 1.0), and secondly, boldly modernising Egypt's education system through substantial interventions (Education 2.0) (UNICEF, 2018).

The Ministry of Education and Technical Education (MoETE) initiated a comprehensive reform plan in 2018 to bring about social and economic change through the education system. The objective is to modernise K-12 schooling and enhance its quality. The reforms are being implemented in phases between 2018 and 2030 due to limited resources. The plan, EDU 2.0, focuses on reforming early grades one by one each year, starting from 2018 with pre-primary grades. Meanwhile, EDU 1.0 aims to reform higher grades simultaneously. EDU 2.0 involves five key components: a new multidisciplinary curriculum, technology integration, school management, continuous professional development, and reformed assessment. The strategy aims to transform education in early grades to be "competency-based" and focuses on enhancing the classroom experience for learners (Moustafa et al., 2022).

Concurrently, EDU 1.0 focuses on reform actions for existing students in the education system. The reform proposal will somewhat impact all students in Egypt's education system by addressing significant challenges in higher grades, especially secondary school assessments. The initial phases of the reforms will focus on pre-primary and primary grades until EDU 2.0 is fully implemented for all K-12 students (Saavedra, 2019; World Bank, 2018).

Structure of the Education System

Egypt has two parallel education systems: the secular structure and the Al-Azhar school system. The Ministry of Education oversees the secular structure, while the Supreme Council of the Al-Azhar Institution supervises the Al-Azhar schools. Both systems consist of six years of primary school, three years of preparatory school, and three years of secondary school (Universities in Egypt, n.d.).

The Egyptian school comprises pre-primary education for 4-6-year-olds, six years of primary education from grades 1-6, three years of Preparatory Education for 12-14-year-olds, and Secondary education for grades 10-12 (Figure 3.1).
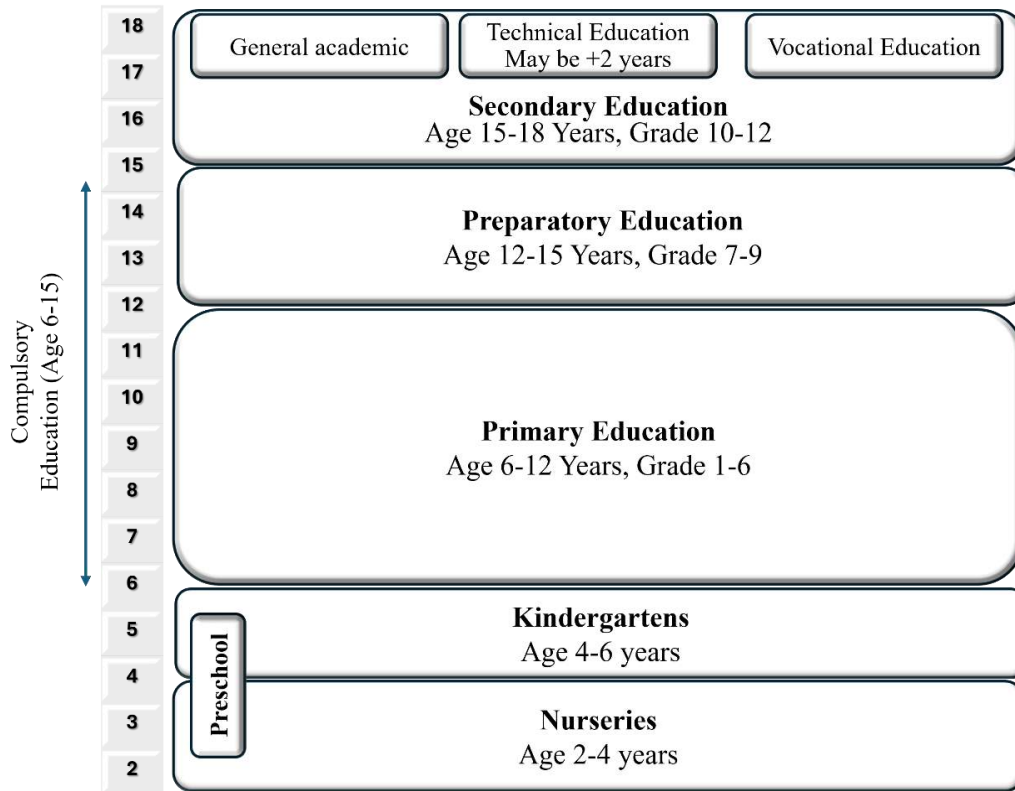
Figure 3.1 Structure of the Egyptian School Education System
Source: Salto, n.d. (Adapted by author)

In 1998, the Ministry of Education reduced the length of secondary school from four to three years to align with the Al-Azhar system. Both types of schools teach religious and non-religious subjects, but the Al-Azhar schools place more emphasis on religious education. These schools are located throughout Egypt, particularly in rural areas; as of 2007 and 2008, there were 8,272 Al-Azhar schools in the country. At that time, less than 4% of students were enrolled in Al-Azhar schools (K12 academics, n.d.).

Preschool education in Egypt includes kindergartens and nurseries. Kindergartens are for children aged 4-6, while nurseries are for children aged 2-4. Preschool education is not mandatory in Egypt.

Around half of the children enrolled in kindergarten attend private schools. In urban areas, 62% of children attend preschool, compared to 32% in rural areas (Makhloyf, 2019).

Nine years of compulsory basic education is split into two stages: primary and preparatory education (Awad, 2009) (Figure 3.1). Primary education lasts six years, from grade 1 to 6, and is designed for children aged 6 to 12. This is followed by three years of preparatory school. Both primary and preparatory stages are free and mandatory for children aged 6 to 14. Upon completion, students receive the Basic Education Completion Certificate (Britannica, 2024).

After finishing basic education, students move on to the secondary stage from Grades 10 to 12 for three years. At this stage, they can choose from a general or technical path based on their exam results. The general track provides a comprehensive education, while the technical track lasts 3–5 years and offers specialised training in industrial, agricultural, and commercial studies. Egypt has also introduced Applied Technology Schools as part of the education system (ETP Team, 2024). Only graduates from general secondary schools (general track) are eligible to apply for university admission upon obtaining their General Secondary Education Certificate (GSEC) or an Advanced Technical Diploma with scores exceeding 75% (Salto, n.d.).

Curricular Framework

Egypt has periodically undertaken education reforms in the past. Reforms in the curricular system focus on modernising the curriculum to align with current global challenges and trends. Accordingly, there have been changes in curricular content, teaching methods, and assessment practices (Ewiss et al., 2019). Minister of Education Reda Hegazy announced that the government will reform school curricula from 2018 to 2030. The reform will cover education from the first two years of kindergarten to the final year of high school, totalling fourteen school grades (Winter, 2023).

The Ministry of Education has developed a comprehensive curriculum framework centred on five fundamental elements: equality and non-discrimination, globalisation, health and population, environment and development, and citizenship awareness. The proposed new curriculum addresses perceived societal challenges in Egypt, emphasising civic engagement, non-violence, active citizenship, respect for diversity, and fostering social cohesion, justice, and equality (Winter, 2023, p. 20).

The Curriculum and Instructional Materials Development Center (CCIMD) of the Ministry of Education and Technical Education, under the direction of Dr. Nawal Shalaby (2018-2022), developed a new general framework for the general and technical education curricula for 2018 - 2030. Each grade follows a curriculum framework that corresponds to the General Framework.

The philosophy behind the reform of pre-university educational curricula was to build citizens capable of living successfully and working efficiently at the local, regional and global levels of competition. Therefore, the Framework defines a few characteristics and identifies fourteen life skills as basic skills and their supporting necessary values. Since separate subjects can never achieve the development of learners' life skills, the curricula framework is made under four main study areas: languages (including Arabic and other foreign languages), science and technology (natural sciences, social sciences and humanities), arts (art, music, theatre and educational media education) personal and social education including areas of character development (professional fields, economics and applied sciences, physical education, health and religious education) (CCIMD, 2018, p.3).

Egyptian Knowledge Bank (EKB) was launched in 2016 as a national digital library and educational resource hub, making a vast array of high-quality academic and scientific content freely available to Egyptians. EKB aims to provide students, teachers, researchers, and the general public with access to scholarly publications, textbooks, videos, and interactive materials from leading global publishers and research organisations. By democratising access to information, EKB supports Egypt's vision of a knowledge-based society and aligns with the educational reforms that emphasise lifelong learning, critical thinking, and digital literacy, positioning Egyptian students and educators to succeed in a globalised environment.

Pre-primary Curriculum

The preprimary curriculum is based on four themes: Who am I? The world around me. How does the world work? and communication. Under every theme, there are some subjects: Arabic Language, Mathematics, Science, Social studies, Arts, Economy and Applied Sciences, ICT, and Occupations (CCIMD, 2018).

Primary Curriculum

General objectives for primary 1, 2 and 3 grades are based on the principles of basic general education and the four dimensions of learning. This profile is supported by grade-based learning outcomes, which are either multidisciplinary (multidisciplinary statements outline what students are expected to know, understand, and demonstrate upon completing each grade level) or windows-based (and, therefore, discipline-specific outcomes that the students are expected to achieve in both Arabic and mathematics after completion of the grade). These learning outcomes are then deconstructed into life skills-linked and project-based learning objectives, allowing the learning outcomes to be evaluated inside each project (four per grade). Primary grade curriculums are also based on the same four themes and include subjects such as Arabic Language, Mathematics,

Science, Social studies, Arts, Economy and Applied Sciences, ICT, and Vocational field (CCIMD, 2019).

The grades 4-6 curriculum framework aims to develop global citizens who can express themselves, communicate respectfully, learn continuously, and compete effectively in the workforce. This stage focuses on the specialised nature of each school subject while also integrating the different branches of the subject, such as the four language skills. Additionally, it promotes integration among academic school subjects, including Arabic Language, English, maths, science, social studies, Art education, ICT, value and respect for others, religious education, and vocational education (CCIMD, 2019).

Preparatory School Curriculum

The curriculum under EDU 2.0 is currently being developed. CCIMD has not released the curriculum document for this level, so the old curriculum is still in use. During the preparatory phase (grades seven to nine), students learn Arabic, agriculture, art, English, mathematics, music, religious studies, and social studies. At the end of grade nine, students in secular schools who pass the final graduation examinations receive the Basic Education Certificate. In contrast, Al-Azhar-affiliated schools receive the Al-Azhar Basic Education Certificate. "The curriculum for Al-Azhar schools is generally the same as in secular public schools, but it places a greater emphasis on Islamic studies" (Mohamed, 2019).

Secondary Education Curriculum

The secondary stage also follows the old curriculum. The secondary stage curricula aim to consolidate what learners have acquired in the basic education stage and prepare learners for life alongside preparing them for university education, participation in public life and involvement in the labour market in line with twenty-first-century skills. The educational system provides two paths for learners -General Secondary Education and Technical Secondary Education (CCIMD, 2018a). In secondary education, the general education track prepares students for higher education and includes subjects like mathematics, science, literature, and foreign languages. The vocational education track provides specialised training and skills for various trades and careers (Hamdi, 2019).

Egypt is committed to achieving the UN's SDGs. Subjects such as environmental science, civics, and social studies include content related to the SDGs, followed by awareness about health, environment, and social development. Social studies, geography, and civics are compulsory and taught to promote understanding of global issues, intercultural communication, and civic

engagement, preparing students as responsible global citizens aware of global challenges, intercultural understanding, and human rights (UNICEF, 2018).

The criticism of Egypt's education system focuses on the increasing influence of conservative Islamic teachings in schools. Islamic-oriented curriculum is integral to educational policies, with Islamic values promoted in religious education, Arabic language classes, and social studies. This emphasis on Islamic teachings has led to concerns about the lack of recognition for religious diversity and other faiths (Ibrahim, 2023).

Teaching Learning

The curriculum and textbooks prescribed by the Ministry of Education play a significant role in classroom instruction. Teachers often follow these textbooks closely, and lessons are aligned with the content in the books. Therefore, rote learning, or memorisation, is prevalent in the school system (Ginsburg & Megahed, 2008). Students are often required to memorise large amounts of information, including poems, historical facts, and mathematical formulas. Religious education often follows traditional teaching methods, including memorisation of Quranic verses and Hadith.

Additionally, efforts have been made to modernise and reform the education system in Egypt in recent years, including promoting more interactive and student-centred learning approaches (Saavedra, 2019). Traditional methods and an emphasis on examinations remain prevalent in many public schools. Private and international schools often have more flexibility in adopting innovative teaching methods to promote interactive teaching at Al-Azhar Institution. Teachers encourage group work, discussions, and collaborative projects to promote critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Some schools also use ICT to enhance learning.

The education system in Egypt tends to prioritise passive learning and memorisation rather than active learning, critical thinking, and creative expression among students. This is mainly because of the system's heavy reliance on end-of-year exams for ongoing education, which causes teachers to focus more on teaching for exams than overall learning outcomes. As a result, students are often taught standardised grade-level content and may miss out on acquiring important practical skills (Alan & Varma, 2020).

Under EDU 2.0, the government is significantly overhauling the school education system to empower students with 21st-century skills. This reform agenda emphasises competency-based, multidisciplinary learning that leverages technology, aligning with global efforts to foster the acquisition of modern skills. Key components of this initiative include integrating technology into education, updating teaching methodologies, and reforming assessment practices—the

development and implementation of EDU 2.0 involved collaboration with diverse stakeholders and international partnerships (Moustafa et al., 2022).

Like many other countries, Egypt recognises the importance of preparing students for the digital age and has introduced courses in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics). To foster creativity and critical thinking, schools are advised to incorporate project-based learning, problem-solving activities, and extracurricular programmes in addition to traditional subjects, emphasising areas such as technology, entrepreneurship, creativity, and critical thinking (Ministry of Planning and Economic Development, 2020).

Learning Assessment

The EDU 2.0 reforms prioritise shifting away from rote memorisation and high-stakes examinations. Instead, they emphasise implementing a fair, valid, and reliable assessment system that moves beyond rote memory-based evaluations (World Bank, 2018). Edu 2.0 defines the learning outcomes and standards for each grade level. A comprehensive assessment system has been designed based on a multidisciplinary approach to learning.

There is no examination before grade 4. However, the class teachers assess the students by following a comprehensive assessment system that includes formative and summative examinations (Ewiss et al., 2019). Teachers create an annual report for each student that records, based on assessment, their progress in verbal and written skills and assigned competencies. This report utilises a four-level matrix from "above expectation" to "less than expected" to evaluate the student's performance. This approach aims to cultivate intrinsic motivation for learning during the formative years, moving away from dependence on external pressure to excel in examinations (MoETE, 2014).

At the end of the preparatory stage (grade 9), students take the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE), which is a standardised national exam that covers Arabic, English, mathematics, science, social studies and religious education (Hamdi, 2019). The exam is paper-based, has multiple-choice questions, and the Ministry of Education scores it. The results determine whether students can enter the general or technical secondary stage or enrol in vocational training. At the end of the general secondary stage (grade 12), students take the Thanaweya Amma or General Secondary Education Certificate Examination (GSECE), a high-stakes national exam covering subjects of their chosen track: arts, science or mathematics. The exam is computerised, tablet-based, and scored by the Ministry of Education (Ewiss et al., 2019). The results determine whether students can enter public or private universities or other higher education institutions (Moustafa et al., 2022).

At the end of the technical secondary stage (grade 12), students take a national exam, the Technical Secondary Education Certificate Examination (TSECE).

Health and Physical Education

Physical education (PE) in schools promotes physical fitness, health, and well-being among students. Physical education is a mandatory subject in Egypt's national curriculum. Students must participate in PE classes as part of their overall education at all levels, i.e., primary, preparatory, and secondary.

Education 2.0 General Curriculum Framework (2018a) includes physical development (body and mental health) for every level of education. Curricular content includes callisthenics, running, team sports (e.g., soccer, basketball, volleyball), gymnastics, and swimming. The specific activities vary from school to school and are influenced by the available facilities and resources.

In rural areas, there is gender segregation, with separate classes for boys and girls. All students must undergo physical fitness tests in PE classes (Alan & Verma, 2020). These tests assess students' physical abilities and are used to monitor their progress. The availability and quality of PE facilities and resources vary widely between schools. Urban schools have better sports facilities; rural schools have limited resources. In addition to physical activity, PE classes include education on healthy lifestyle choices, nutrition, and the importance of physical fitness for overall well-being. Sports and athletics are popular choices for students. Schools have sports teams that compete in various sports like soccer, basketball, volleyball, and track and field events. These teams allow students to develop athletic skills and compete against other schools (Egypt Today, 2018).

Skills Education

Skills education is integrated into every grade's Education 2.0 General Curriculum Framework. The first objective of the kindergarten stage includes Physical development (body and mental health): "The child uses his five senses to understand and interact with the outside world, develop motor skills, and develop awareness of self-protection and prevention of sources of danger" (CCIMD, 2018a, p. 10). Education 2.0 General Curriculum Framework also identified 14 life skills as basic skills and suggested necessary steps to develop these skills in students.

The Egyptian government has launched various initiatives to promote skill development and vocational education (Booth, 2012). These initiatives often aim to align education and training with the labour market's needs. The country has a well-established system of vocational education and training. VET programmes equip students with the skills and knowledge to pursue trades, crafts,

and technical careers. These programmes are typically offered in parallel with general academic education.

The technical schools provide specialised vocational training in mechanics, electronics, construction, hospitality, and more. Students can choose to enrol in technical schools after completing their preparatory education. Additionally, skill education is integrated into the broader curriculum, with vocational subjects offered alongside traditional academic subjects in many schools. Some vocational schools collaborate with local industries and businesses to ensure students receive training relevant to the labour market (El-Zayat, 2020). The vocational programmes provide students with certifications or diplomas in their respective fields upon completion. The private and international schools in Egypt offer a more comprehensive range of skill-based and career-oriented programmes and provide more options for students to explore their interests and develop practical skills (Egypt Today, 2018). However, as per UNICEF (2018), "there is a mismatch between what is learned in school and the skills needed to find decent jobs or engage positively in the country's development".

Hobby and Life Skills Education

Despite differences, schools offer extracurricular activities and clubs catering to various interests and hobbies. These clubs can include sports teams, art clubs, music ensembles, drama clubs, science clubs, and more. Schools also have science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) clubs and competitions, which are usually very popular in Egyptian schools. These clubs relate to robotics teams, coding clubs, and participation in STEM-related contests and events.

The Education 2.0 General Curriculum Framework identified fourteen life skills as basic skills and suggested necessary steps to develop these skills in students. So, life skills education is integrated into the curriculum and is the main driving force for EDU 2.0. The suggested fourteen life skills include creativity, critical thinking, problem-solving, cooperation, negotiation, resolution, productivity, sharing, empathy, respect for diversity, communication, resilience, self-management, and accountability. Another most important noticeable thing is the curriculum framework for every grade named Life Skills and Citizenship Education, i.e. "Curriculum Framework Third Primary Grade Based on Life Skills and Citizenship Education".

Ahmed (2023) found that students at applied technology schools develop some life and entrepreneurial skills, with high average scores in some skills and moderate scores in others.

Moral, Social and Cultural Education

Being predominantly a Muslim country, Islamic values and ethics play a central role in moral education (Booth, 2012). Students receive instruction in Islamic studies, including the Quran and Hadith, to promote moral development and understanding of religious principles. Added to it is the importance of national identity and patriotism. Students learn about Egypt's history, culture, and

heritage, instilling a sense of pride and love for their country. To preserve and promote the country's rich cultural heritage. Students learn about ancient Egyptian history, art, civilisation, and modern Egyptian culture (El-Baradei & El-Baradei, 2004). The Arabic language and literature curriculum often includes the study of classical Arabic poetry and literature as important cultural components. Some schools incorporate community service projects to instil social responsibility and student community engagement. Moral and cultural education also addresses gender roles and social norms within Egyptian society, promoting gender equality and respect for diversity (Egypt Today, 2018).

Education 2.0 General Curriculum Framework Classified values are to be nurtured in students according to the four dimensions of learning.

- Learning to know: Objectivity, Appreciation of Science, Curiosity and Honesty.
- Learning to do: Cooperation, Perseverance, Culture and Integrity and Indoctrination.
- Learning to live: Respect, Share, Made and Peace.
- Learning to be: Independence, Mercy, Love and Dream (CCIMD, 2018a).

Peace and Happiness Education

Peace Education is not explicitly mentioned in the Egyptian school curriculum. However, SDG4 is the main driving force behind the development of the EDU 2.0 curriculum in Egypt. Multiculturalism should be at the core of the curriculum, and it can foster a peace-loving culture in Egyptian students. Islamic education is also predominant in the Egyptian education system, promoting peace education.

"Peace in textbooks is portrayed as a national and Islamic value. Teachers must preach love, peace, and humanity to their students. Peace is taught as a national ethos that characterises Egypt and its policymakers from ancient times to today and as an Islamic commandment supported by Quranic verses, traditions, and the common Muslim greeting of 'salam aleykum'. Egyptian students are encouraged to strive for peace with other nations and cultures, particularly internal peace among the different sectors of Egyptian society" (Winter, 2023, p. 36). A Grade 7 social studies workbook mentions the peace treaty between Ramesses II and the Hittites, which followed his victory in the Battle of Kadesh. This treaty is noted as the first of its kind in history and was established through military force. The agreement encompassed several key elements: a mutual ceasefire, the restoration of friendly relations, and a commitment to mutual assistance in case of an attack by a third party (Winter, 2023).

Summary and Conclusion

The Arab Republic of Egypt is a transcontinental Islamic country with a rich ancient civilisation. The Egyptian education system has two parallel structures: the secular and the Al-Azhar school system. Both systems encompass six years of primary school, three years of preparatory school, and three years of secondary school. They teach religious and non-religious subjects, but the Al-Azhar schools emphasise religious education more. Modern school education typically consists of three levels: primary education (1 to 6 grades), preparatory education (7 to 9 grades), and secondary education (10 to 12 grades). Education up to preparatory school is free and compulsory to ensure basic literacy and numeracy for all. In 2016, the Egyptian government introduced Egypt Vision 2030, a Sustainable Development Strategy to enhance its citizens' quality of life and standard of living. Subsequently, in 2018, the Ministry of Education and Technical Education (MoETE) launched an extensive reform initiative designed to foster social and economic progress through the educational sector. The plan, EDU 2.0, focuses on reforming early grades one by one each year, starting from 2018 with pre-primary grades.

The Ministry of Education has crafted a detailed curriculum framework centred around five core principles: equality and non-discrimination, globalisation, health and population, environment and development, and citizenship awareness. This curriculum is structured into four primary study areas: languages, science and technology, arts, and personal and social education.

The preschool curriculum is based on four themes: Who am I? The world around me. How does the world work? and communication. The primary curriculum includes Arabic Language, Mathematics, Science, Social studies, Arts, Economy and Applied Sciences, ICT, and Occupations. The Grades 4-6 Curriculum Framework aims to develop global citizens who can express themselves, communicate respectfully, learn continuously, and compete effectively in the workforce. The preparatory school curriculum is under development under EDU 2.0, with subjects taught during the preparatory phase (grades seven to nine). The secondary education curriculum consolidates what learners have acquired in the basic education stage. It prepares them for university education, participation in public life, and involvement in the labour market in line with twenty-first-century skills.

Egypt's education system is complex and multifaceted, focusing on achieving the UN's SDG. The curriculum and textbooks prescribed by the Ministry of Education often lead to rote learning or memorisation. This approach has been criticised for not recognising religious diversity and other faiths. The education system in Egypt has traditionally favoured passive learning and memorisation over active learning, critical thinking, and creative expression. However, recent reforms are set to revolutionise the school education system and equip students with essential 21st-century skills.

These reforms encompass the integration of technology, the adoption of modern teaching methods, and the overhaul of assessment strategies.

Egyptian schools have introduced courses in STEM subjects fostering creativity and critical thinking through project-based learning, problem-solving activities, and extracurricular programmes. Assessment systems have been designed to be fair, valid, and reliable, with comprehensive assessments based on a multidisciplinary approach.

Physical education (PE) promotes physical fitness, health, and well-being among students. Physical education activities are mandatory at all levels, including primary, preparatory, and secondary. PE classes often include callisthenics, running, team sports, gymnastics, and swimming.

Despite the challenges, Egypt's education system continues to evolve and adapt to meet the evolving needs of its diverse population. The country's commitment to promoting global citizenship and embracing diverse learning approaches is a testament to the country's commitment to a more inclusive and effective education system.

Skill education is integrated into every grade's curriculum, and the government promotes vocational education and training to align with labour market needs. Technical schools provide specialised vocational training in trades, crafts, and technical fields, while private and international schools offer a more comprehensive range of skill-based and career-oriented programmes.

Hobby development is facilitated through extracurricular activities and clubs catering to various interests and hobbies. Life skills education is the main driving force for EDU 2.0, with the curriculum framework for every grade named Life Skills and Citizenship Education.

Egypt's moral, social, and cultural education is integral to the curriculum, reflecting the country's commitment to instilling ethical values, national identity, and cultural heritage. Islamic values and ethics play a central role in moral education, with students receiving instruction in Islamic studies, including the Quran and Hadith.

Although peace and happiness education are not explicitly mentioned in the Egyptian school curriculum, SDG 4 is the main driving force in developing the EDU 2.0 curriculum in Egypt. Multiculturalism and Islamic education are predominant in the Egyptian education system; they promote peace education.

Efforts are afoot to modernise the curriculum to promote critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Some school education issues are overcrowded classrooms, outdated materials, and inadequate infrastructure (UNICEF, 2017). In recent years, the Egyptian government has made efforts to improve the quality of education in public schools by improving teacher training programmes and infrastructure. Additionally, there is a push to promote technical and vocational

education to address the country's workforce needs. In short, Egypt's school education system has made strides in addressing its challenges with a commitment to prepare students for the global world. However, there is a long way to go for all-round development. Tahrir Square has been the epicentre of violence in Egypt. Students and teachers have been witnesses. Students have been an easy target of political violence. Peace education and peacebuilding are special in school education in such a situation.

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4

Quality and Equitable Education for All: Ethiopia

S. P. Malhotra

Abstract

Ethiopia's education system faces significant challenges, including low literacy rates, gender disparities, inadequate infrastructure, and resource limitations. Since the 1940s, various political governance systems have shaped education policies and reforms. The Imperial System aimed to expand access, while the military/socialist regime introduced a curriculum emphasising agriculture and production technology. Currently, the federal system focuses on decentralisation, curriculum development, and improving access for marginalised groups. The education structure comprises pre-primary, elementary, secondary, and tertiary levels. Pre-primary education is optional, followed by eight years of elementary and four years of secondary education. After grade 12, students can pursue vocational training or higher education. The curriculum aims to develop well-rounded individuals with 21st-century skills. Assessment methods include formative and summative evaluations supported by a National Qualification Framework. Despite many challenges, Ethiopia is committed to enhancing education quality and accessibility for all citizens.

Keywords: Education Sector Plan, Holistic Development, Core competencies, Emotional Well-being, Reflective Journals

Introduction

Ethiopia is the only African country that has never been colonised (Trines, 2018). Ethiopia played a prominent role in world affairs during World War II. It was among the earliest sovereign nations to sign the United Nations Charter (Mehretu et al., 2024).

The country covers 1,112,000 km^2. It borders Eritrea to the north, Djibouti to the northeast, Somalia to the East, Kenya to the South, South Sudan to the West, and Sudan to the Northwest. It is in northeastern Africa, commonly known as the Horn of Africa (Embassy of Ethiopia, 2022). Characterised by high plateaus and rugged mountain ranges, including the Simien and Bale Mountains, Ethiopia shelters Ras Dashen, reigning as its highest peak. Danakil Depression is the Earth's lowest and one of the hottest places.

Ethiopia is governed by a federal republic comprising nine regional states and two chartered cities. Among chartered cities, Addis Ababa serves as Ethiopia's political, economic, and cultural capital, while Dire Dawa emerges as the pivotal industrial and commercial centre in the east (Kaplan, 2008).

Ethiopia is the second-most populous country in Africa, with a population of about 129.72 million; 50.21% are male, and 49.79% are female. Ethiopia is home to 80 different ethnic groups, the largest being the Oromo (35.3%), followed by the Amhara (26.2%), Somali (6%), Tigray (5.9%), Sidamo (4.3%), Gurage (2.7%), Welaita (2.3%), and other groups (17.3%). In terms of religion, the population consists of Orthodox Christians (43.1%), Muslims (34.1%), Protestants (19.4%), followers of traditional beliefs (1.5%), Roman Catholics (0.9%), and adherents of other faiths (1%) (Mehretu et al., 2024). Ethiopia has around 66 years of life expectancy and a rapid population growth of approximately 2.5% annually (Statistics Times, 2021).

Ethiopia's GDP is USD205.13 billion, and its GDP per capita is USD1,910. High unemployment rates, especially among the youth, present significant challenges (Tena & Motuma, 2024). Ethiopia ranked 130th out of 143 countries in the World Happiness Report 2024 (Capital, 2024). As of 2023-24 in the HDI ranking, Ethiopia ranked 176th out of 193 countries and territories in the globe (UNDP, 2024). Quality of Life Index is 49.28, which is very low (NUMBEO, 2024).

The literacy rate is 51.77%, with 59.24% for males and 44.42% for females, indicating a significant gender gap (Countryeconomy, 2018). As of 2022, GER at the primary stage is 85.54 and at the lower secondary stage is 47.71; NER at the primary stage is 76.16, the lower secondary stage is 50.42, and the upper secondary stage is 32.87 (UNESCO-UIS, 2024). In Ethiopia, 1% of the population has completed their secondary education. Around 16,200,000 students are enrolled in primary education, 4,423,000 in lower secondary, and 796,000 in upper secondary. As of 2020, the number of teachers at the pre-primary education level was 35,501, at the primary education level was 537,596, at the lower secondary level was 87,157, and at the upper secondary level was 36,166 (UNESCO-UIS, 2024).

Educational Policy

Ethiopia has had three political governance systems since the 1940s. The first was the Imperial system, which began after WWII and lasted until 1974. The second was the military/socialist system, which persisted until 1991. The third is the federal system, which became fully operational after 1994 (Negash, 2006).

The Imperial System of Education was put in place with the support of UNESCO, IMF, and USAID in the development of the policy. The policy advocated for universal primary education and the expansion of schools (Yeneayhu, 2011). In the 1960s and 1970s, significant efforts were made to expand access to education.

In 1974, the Imperial regime was led by a socialist/communist workers party, which aimed to teach ideology like Marxism and emphasised the value of production as a key principle. They also started focusing more on the importance of education for development. A new curriculum with five new subjects, such as agriculture, production technology, political education, home economics and introduction to business, was introduced. (Yeneayhu, 2011).

In 1991, the new government, led by the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front, introduced educational reforms aimed at decentralisation, curriculum development, and improving access to education for marginalised groups. In the 2000s and beyond, Ethiopia continued its efforts to expand access to education, focusing on increasing enrolment rates, improving infrastructure, and enhancing the quality of education through curriculum reforms and teacher training programmemes (Areaya, 2008).

In 1994, the Education and Training Policy was introduced to nurture individuals capable of actively participating in the country's economic, social, and political aspects at all levels.

In Ethiopia, the National Early Childhood Care and Education Policy Framework, Strategy, and Guideline was prepared and operationalised in 2013 with the vision that every child from 0 to 6 years old enjoys nurturing care and achieves their full developmental potential (UNICEF, 2022).

The 2016-2020 education sector plan, introduced in 2015, focused on capacity development for improved management, quality, access, equity, internal efficiency, technical and vocational education, and training for school education. To achieve quality, it is recommended that children be motivated to complete primary and secondary school and become productive and responsible citizens. To achieve access and equity, it was recommended that pre-primary education and access to nearby institutions be provided (Federal Ministry of Education, 2015).

Ethiopia brought the General Education Curriculum Framework in December 2020, which includes the curriculum architecture, teaching and learning process, competency, learning areas and subjects, school time, teaching methodology and strategies, assessment evaluation procedure, etc.

As of 2023, Ethiopia's new education policy is pending approval from the Parliament (Borkena, 2023). Based on the report, the new policy is to introduce an 8+4 system consisting of eight (to six) years of compulsory elementary education and four years of secondary education.

Challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, resource constraints, and persistent inequalities remain, requiring continued efforts to ensure all Ethiopians have access to quality education (Tadesse & Melese, 2016). Every Girl in School GEC, The African Girls Can Code Initiative - AGCCI, and Education Can't Wait-ECW) support Girls' education via skills, scholarships, and safe spaces. While remarkable progress has been made toward universal primary education, Ethiopia acknowledges persistent obstacles like infrastructure deficiencies and gender disparities, underscoring the ongoing commitment to ensure quality education for all Ethiopians (Worku, 2017). The Ethiopian government has prioritised integrating information and communication technology in education to equip students with the digital skills necessary for the 21st-century workforce (Tadesse et al., 2022).

Structure of the Education System

The structure of school education in Ethiopia comprises pre-primary, elementary, secondary, and tertiary levels (Figure 4.1). Pre-primary education/kindergarten lasts for two years. The elementary and secondary school system consists of 12 years [(6+2)+(2+2)]. Elementary education lasts eight years, and secondary education lasts four years.

Pre-primary education is not mandatory and is offered before entering elementary education for children aged 4-6 years (KG-1 & KG-2), but the provision is patchy (K12 Academics, 2024). Non-governmental organisations, faith-based organisations, and other private providers mostly run these schools. The availability of preschool programmes varies widely by region and is extremely limited in some areas. Kindergarten enrolment numbers remain low.

Elementary education has two cycles: primary school from ages 7 to 12 years (grades 1-6) and middle level ages 13 to 14 (grades 7-8). At the end of grade 6, the Primary School Leaving Certificate exam is conducted, and at the end of grade 8, the Middle School Education Certificate exam is conducted (NUFFIC, n.d.).

The secondary level includes grades 9-12 and represents the completion of general education (Figure 4.1). During grades 9 and 10, students continue studying general education subjects, which consist of 10 compulsory and two optional courses out of 5. In grades 11-12, students choose one

of the eight Career and Technical Education areas of study. The Ethiopian Secondary School Leaving Examination (ESSLE) is taken at the end of secondary education to pass to the next level (NUFFIC, n.d.).

At the end of grade 12, students can pursue vocational training or tertiary education, depending on their interests and academic performance. TVETs provide an alternative route to university. These programmes range from informal short-term training courses to formal certificate programmes lasting one to three years. Additionally, after secondary education, students can pursue undergraduate programmes (World Bank, 2013).
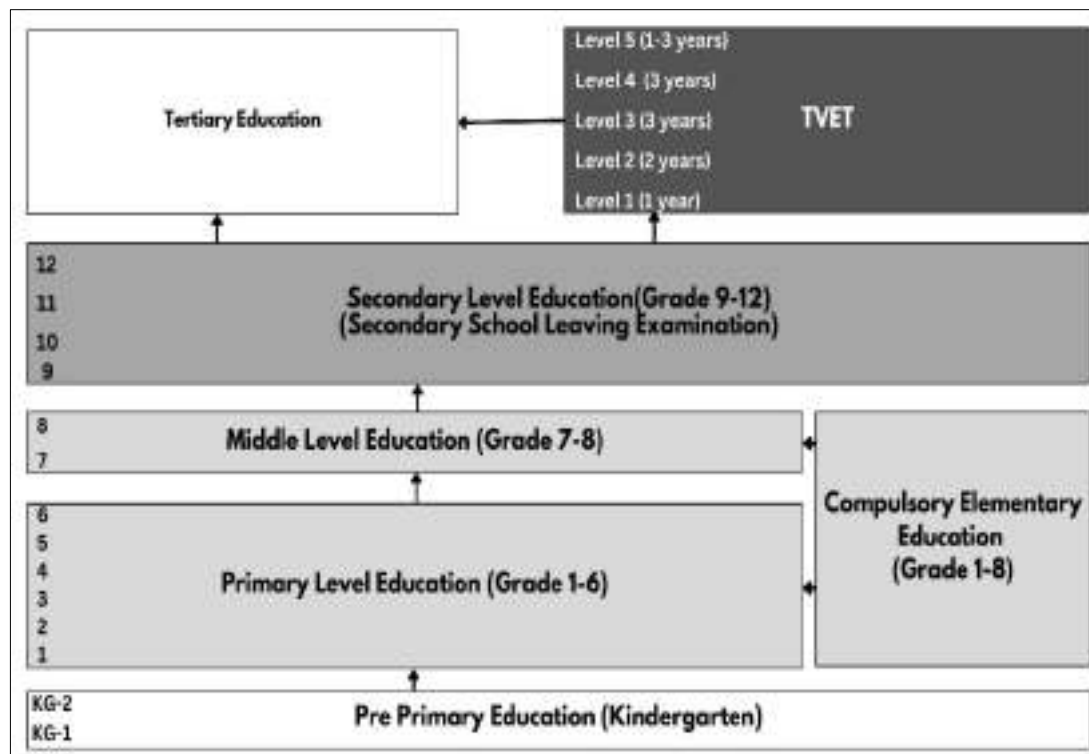
Figure 4.1 Structure of the School Education System in Ethiopia

Source: NUFFIC, n.d.; FDRE, 2020 (Adapted by author)

Curricular Framework

The curriculum focuses on developing well-rounded, ethical individuals equipped with 21st-century skills for global competitiveness. Its aims include fostering essential life skills and promoting further learning and employability.

The pre-primary level focuses on cultivating children holistically and providing the knowledge, attitudes and skill base for learning in primary school. Pre-primary education learning areas include First Language, Environmental Science, Personal and Socio-emotional development, Performing and Visual Arts, Mathematics, Health and Physical Education (FDRE, 2020).

Elementary education aims to give students a strong foundation in basic literacy, numeracy, and essential life skills. It emphasises holistic development, including cognitive, social, emotional, and physical aspects. The eight subjects taught in primary education are First Language, A Federal Language, English, Mathematics, Environmental Science, Moral Education, Performing and Visual Arts, Health and Physical Education. The middle-level education includes eleven subjects: First Language, A Federal Language, English, Mathematics, General Science, Social Studies, Citizenship Education, Performing and Visual Arts, Information technology, Health and Physical Education, and Career and Technical Education (FDRE, 2020).

Secondary education tends to offer a more diversified curriculum compared to elementary education. It prepares students for higher education or entry into the workforce. In 9-10 grades, secondary students are taught ten compulsory subjects: English, Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Geography, History, Citizenship Education, Economics, and Information Technology. Students also opt for any two subjects from First Languages- A Federal Language and Foreign Language (FDRE, 2020). At 11-12 grades secondary level, students can choose between natural and social science streams. Natural sciences have five fields, and social science has three fields. For each field, natural sciences have a maximum of seven general subjects and five field-based subjects, while social science has a maximum of six general subjects and five field-based subjects (Table 4.1).

At the pre-primary level, each period has 25 minutes for KG-1 and 30 minutes for KG-2; six periods in a day and 30 periods in a week for both grades. The school day begins at 8:30 AM and concludes at 12:30 PM. Within this time frame, two and a half hours for KG-1 and three hours for KG-2 are dedicated to classroom instruction. The remaining one and a half hours for KG-1 and one hour for KG-2 are allocated for activities such as arrival, the national anthem, rest, lunchtime, and departure. Table 4.2 specifies the time allocation for the pre-primary level.

At the primary and middle levels, each period lasts 40 minutes. There are six periods a day and 30 periods a week. The eight-hour school day starts at 8:30 a.m. and ends at 5:00 p.m., with a 15-minute break from 12:30 to 12:45 p.m. Table 4.3 specifies the time allocation for the primary and middle levels.

Table 4.1 Streamwise Fields and their Curricular Subjects for Secondary Level (Grades 11-12)

Stream	Fields	Curricular Subjects		
		Field-based Subjects	General Subjects	
			Common subjects	Common subjects
Natural Sciences	Manufacturing	Metal Manufacturing, Automotive Technology, Textile and Leather Garment, Wood Working	English, Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Information Technology	Agriculture
	Construction	Electricity, Plumbing, Carpentry, Finishing Works		
	Information Technology and Computer Science	Information Tech and Computer Science, Computer Maintenance and Network, Website Design, Computer Graphics Design		
	Health Sciences	Personal, Community Health and Patient Care, Nutrition and Dietetics, Child Care and Well-being, Reproductive Health		
	Agriculture	Crop production and Management, Animal Production and Management, Natural Resource Management, Agricultural Technology		Economics
Social Science	Business Sciences	Accounting and Finance, Marketing, Banking and Insurance, Office Management, Hotel and Tourism	English, Mathematics, Geography, History, Economics, Information Technology	
	Language and Social Sciences	First Language and Literature, Social Work, Anthropology, Citizenship		
	Performing and Visual Arts	Graphics and Design Arts, Painting and Sculpture, Music and Dance, Theatre Arts, Film Arts		

Source: *FDRE, 2020 & NUFFIC, n.d. (Adapted by author)*

Table 4.2 Time Allocation for Pre-Primary Level

Subject	KG-1		KG-2	
	Hours Per Week	**Hours Per Year**	**Hours Per Week**	**Hours Per Year**
First language	2 hours and 5 minutes	81 hours and 15 minutes	2 hours and 30 minutes	97 hours and 30 minutes
Personal and Socio-emotional Development	1 hour and 40 minutes	65 hours	2 hours	78 hours
Environmental Science	1 hour and 40 minutes	65 hours	2 hours	78 hours
Mathematics	2 hours and 5 minutes	81 hours and 15 minutes	2 hours and 30 minutes	78 hours
Performing and Visual Arts	2 hours and 5 minutes	81 hours and 15 minutes	2 hours and 30 minutes	97 hours and 30 minutes
Health and Physical Education	2 hours and 55 minutes	113 hours and 45 minutes	3 hours and 30 minutes	136 hours 30 minutes
Total	**12 hours and 30 minutes**	**81 hours and 15 minutes**	**15 Hours**	**97 hours and 30 minutes**

Source: FDRE, 2020

Table 4.3 Time Allocation for Primary and Middle Level

Subject	Primary Level			Middle Level		
	Periods / Week	**Hours Per Week**	**Hours/ Year (hours)**	**Periods/ Week**	**Hours Per Week**	**Hours/ Year**
First language	4	2 hours and 40 minutes	104	2	1 hour and 20 minutes	52
A Federal language	3	2 hours	78	2	1 hour and 20 minutes	52
English	4	2 hours and 40	104	4	2 hours and 40 minutes	104
Mathematics	5	3 hours and 20 minutes	130	4	2 hours and 40 minutes	104
General Science	-	-	-	4	2 hours and 40 minutes	104
Social Studies	-	-	-	3	2 hours	78
Citizenship education	-	-	-	3	2 hours	78
Environmental science	5	3 hours and 20 minutes	130	2	1 hour and 20 minutes	52
Moral education	3	2 hours	78	2	1 hour and 20 minutes	52
Performing and Visual Arts	3	2 hours	78	2	1 hour and 20 minutes	52
Health and Physical Education	3	2 hours	78	2	1 hour and 20 minutes	52
Total	**30**	**20 hours**	**780**	**30**	**20 hours**	**780**

Source: FDRE, 2020

At the secondary education level (grades 9-10), each period lasts 40 minutes. There are six periods a day and 30 periods a week. The school hours are 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., with a break from 12:30 to 12:45 p.m. Table 4.4 specifies the time allocation for secondary education levels (grades 9-10).

Table 4.4 Time Allocation for Secondary Education Level (Grades 9-10)

	Subjects	Secondary education level (grades 9-10)		
		Periods/ Week	**Hours Per Week**	**Hours/ Year**
Compulsory Subjects	English	3	2 hours	78
	Mathematics	4	2 hours and 40 minutes	104
	Biology	3	2 hours	78
	Chemistry	3	2 hours	78
	Physics	3	2 hours	78
	Geography	2	1 hour and 20 minutes	52
	History	2	1 hour and 20 minutes	52
	Citizenship Education	2	1 hour and 20 minutes	52
	Economics	2	1 hour and 20 minutes	52
	Information Technology	2	1 hour and 20 minutes	52
	Sub-total	*26*	*17 hours and 20 minutes*	*676*
Optional Subjects	First language	2	1 hour and 20 minutes	52
	Federal language	2	1 hour and 20 minutes	52
	Foreign Language	2	1 hour and 20 minutes	52
	Health and Physical Education	2	1 hour and 20 minutes	52
	Performing and Visual Arts	2	1 hour and 20 minutes	52
	Sub-Total	*4*	*3 hours*	*117*
Total		**30**	**20 hours**	**780**

Source: FDRE, 2020

At the secondary education level (grades 9-10), each period lasts 45 minutes. There are seven periods daily: five in the morning and two in the afternoon, with one hour and 15 minutes used for a break and lunch. There is a 5-minute gap between periods for teacher transition. Table 4.5 specifies the time allocation for secondary education levels (grades 11-12).

Table 4.5 Time Allocation for Secondary Education Level (Grades 11-12)

Subjects	Periods/ Week	Hours/Week	Hours/ Year
General Subject			
English	4	3 hours	117 hours
Mathematics			
Biology	3	2 hours and 15 minutes	87 hours and 45 minutes
Chemistry			
Physics			
Information Technology			
Agriculture			
Field-based Subjects	3	2 hours and 15 minutes	87 hours and 45 minutes
Total	**35**	**26 hours and 15 minutes**	**1023 hours and 45 minutes**

Source: FDRE, 2020

Teaching Learning

Ethiopia introduced the Education Quality Improvement Programme (EQUIP) that advocates for active learning approaches, where students engage in hands-on activities, discussions, and problem-solving exercises to construct their understanding of concepts. "When employing teaching strategies, teachers have the opportunity to choose from a multitude of teaching techniques or learning activities which range from the usual lecture to small group discussions; role plays, group or individual projects, brainstorming, oral presentations, problem-solving activities, debates, independent learning, drill and practice, discovery, cooperative learning, inquiry-based learning, differentiation learning etc." (FDRE, 2020, p. 66). The EQUIP stresses teacher training and continuous assessment system. The teaching methodology recommended by the General Education Curriculum Framework 2020 should engage students and make learning enjoyable, and it should encourage students to explore, experiment, question, investigate, and create. Teaching-learning processes in Ethiopian schools involve active participation from the community, including parents, local leaders, and stakeholders, to support students' educational goals and holistic development (Worku, 2021). The main feature of the pedagogical approach in the country is that the curriculum framework emphasises integrating local culture, traditions, and indigenous knowledge into teaching and learning activities, fostering a sense of identity, pride, and belonging among students (Molla & Tiruneh, 2023).

The country has implemented policies to promote the integration of ICT in education, aiming to enhance teaching and learning outcomes. The curriculum framework includes digital literacy skills in core competencies and ensures students can use technology effectively for learning, communication, and problem-solving. E-learning platforms and digital resources supplement traditional classroom teaching, providing students access to educational materials, interactive activities, and multimedia resources (Yayeh, 2012).

Learning Assessment

The EQUIP stresses continuous assessment and adopts formative and summative evaluation. Formative assessment is conducted throughout the learning process to monitor students' progress, identify areas for improvement, and provide feedback for further learning (Tadesse et al., 2016).

At the pre-primary level, the assessment evaluates personal, social, emotional, aesthetic, mental, and physical development. The assessment methods at this level do not involve testing, marking, ranking, or labelling. Instead, observation, anecdotal records, interviews, project work, and portfolios are used as the primary tools. Teachers must observe, participate, and maintain a responsive attitude to determine the children's achievements and plan for further learning (FDRE, 2020).

The primary level focuses on assessing core competencies in literacy, numeracy, morals, aesthetics, physical development, and the environment. Classroom assessment using oral, written, or practical works employs classwork, homework, assignments, portfolios, checklists, quizzes, tests, examinations, etc. Summative assessments determine the promotion or detention of pupils from grade to grade. At the end of grade 6, regions prepare and administer a regional examination (FDRE, 2020).

The middle school assessment assesses students' knowledge, skills, and other attributes. The assessment process at this stage includes project work, presentations, displays, fieldwork, debates, tests and examinations done individually or in groups. "At the end of grade 8, an examination whose standards are set by the Ministry of Education shall be administered by regional authorities" (FDRE, 2020, p. 71).

At the secondary level, assessment serves the dual purpose of enhancing learning and gauging levels of progress. Various tools such as project work, presentations, displays, fieldwork, debates, checklists, tests, and examinations done individually or in groups are used for assessment at this level. The Ministry of Education prepares and administers the Ethiopian General Education Certificate examination at the end of grade 12. In this certificate exam, students take subjects from 8 fields they study in high school. The examination is also an entrance requirement for tertiary-level education (FDRE, 2020).

Ethiopia has developed a National Qualification Framework (NQF) to establish standards and criteria for recognising and certifying qualifications at different levels of education and training (Dessie et al., 2016). The NQF provides a framework for aligning qualifications and ensuring consistency and quality across different educational pathways, including formal, informal, and non-formal learning. The Objective is to facilitate the recognition of prior learning and enable learners to progress through the education system by accumulating credits and achieving recognised qualifications (MOSHE, 2020).

Health and Physical Education

Health and Physical Education (HPE) is a core subject of the Ethiopian school curriculum. It emphasises the importance of physical activity, health promotion, and overall fitness and aims to achieve learners' physical, mental, emotional, and social development.

At the pre-primary level, physical development and health focus on children's fine and gross motor development and practising basic rules of hygiene, sanitation, and safety skills for health (FDRE, 2020).

The primary school curriculum aims to help students develop healthy eating habits, good rest and sleep habits, personal cleanliness, and participation in basic sports activities and physical exercises.

Additionally, the curriculum aims to protect students from using addictive substances and engaging in other improper and unhealthy practices (FDRE, 2020).

The middle school offers opportunities to adjust to physical, emotional, and mental changes arising from the onset of puberty, participate in modern and cultural sports activities, and adopt healthy practices. "Health and physical education is an optional subject in grades 9 and 10 since studying and practising it for ten years starting from pre-primary through to the end of middle school is adequate for it to be learnt as a constituent part of general education" (FDRE, 2020, p. 37).

In grades 9-10, Health and Physical Education (HPE) is included to encourage sports participation, promote good health practices, and protect against risky behaviours. Students learn to safeguard themselves from health dangers and strengthen safety for themselves, their family, and their community. In grades 11-12, health sciences are offered as part of career and technical education, providing a foundation for junior-level employment skills and further education.

Students' performance in HPE is typically evaluated through formative and summative assessment methods. Formative assessment includes observation of students' participation, skill development, and understanding of health concepts during HPE classes (Sun et al., 2024). In some cases, HPE courses contribute towards students' overall academic credits, particularly at the secondary and tertiary levels. HPE curriculum mainly stresses incorporating indigenous knowledge, traditional practices, and cultural activities relevant to promoting health and physical activity within local communities (Chekol, 2021). HPE in Ethiopian schools promotes healthy lifestyles, physical fitness, and overall well-being among students, emphasising holistic development and community engagement (Morgan & Hansen, 2008).

Skills Education

The Ethiopian general education curriculum aims to develop well-rounded, ethical, self-reliant, and responsible lifelong learners with 21st-century life, career, and technical skills (FDRE, 2020). Developing skills is integral to the school curriculum for holistic development and life and continuing education. The expected core competencies for all learners at all levels include learning to learn, critical thinking and problem-solving, creative thinking and innovation, communication, collaboration, leadership and decision-making, digital literacy, and cultural identity and global citizenship.

Skill education in Ethiopian schools aims to prepare students for future careers, entrepreneurship, and lifelong learning, emphasising practical skills, hands-on experiences, and vocational readiness (Ziyn & Wogasso, 2017, cited in Yitbarek et al., 2022). Learning assessment in skill education includes formative and summative evaluation methods, assessing students' practical skills, knowledge, and competency. Students may earn credits or certificates upon completing the skill

education programmes, recognising their attainment of specific competencies and vocational readiness (Mohammed, 2016).

The Ethiopian school education system has a robust provision of skills education. At the elementary level, career and technical education and information technology are two subjects. At the secondary level, especially in grades 11 and 12, there are many vocational or skill subjects related to manufacturing, construction, information technology and computer sciences, health sciences, agriculture, and business sciences (Table 4.1). These subjects are taught under the Field-based Subjects category.

Hobby and Life Skill Education

Hobby development is not explicitly articulated as a formal agenda in school education policies. Schools offer extracurricular activities, clubs, and workshops to encourage students to explore and develop hobbies such as arts and crafts, music, sports, gardening, photography, cooking, and more. Teachers, mentors, and volunteers provide guidance, instruction, and resources to help students develop their hobbies and pursue their passions (Ziyn & Wogasso, 2017). Some schools offer recognition or awards for students who excel in their hobbies or demonstrate exceptional skills, dedication, and leadership (Anwar, 2010).

Life skill education is integrated into the curricular framework of schools in Ethiopia, aiming to equip students with essential skills for personal development, social interaction, and success in various aspects of life. It is integrated into social studies, health education, language and arts. The content of life skill education is delivered through interactive lessons, discussions, role-play, case studies, group activities, and experiential learning opportunities. Life skill education encompasses many skills and competencies essential for personal growth, social interaction, and adaptation to various life situations.

Life skills education in Ethiopian schools includes communication, critical thinking, problem-solving, decision-making, interpersonal, empathy, resilience, time management, and financial literacy. Learning areas and subjects are intended to contribute to learners' development of essential competencies and core life skills (FDRE, 2020). The curriculum framework sets expected outcomes for school education to develop positive self-esteem, self-awareness, self-confidence, and a sense of independence and responsibility, and after completing secondary education, can use life skills to improve the quality of personal and societal lives. Some schools set targets and benchmarks for students' acquisition of life skills, recognising the importance of these skills in preparing students for future academic, career, and social success (Centre for Evaluation and Development, 2017).

Teachers use rubrics or criteria-based assessment tools to evaluate students' proficiency in specific life skills and provide constructive feedback for improvement (Heath, 1982).

Moral, Social, and Cultural Education

At the pre-primary level, children acquire moral, social, and cultural education through working with fellow children with mutual love and care. At the primary level, the curriculum introduces learners to morally acceptable values and practices such as obedience, respect, sympathy, tolerance, empathy, and supporting others. Moral education is a specific subject at this level, for three periods per week, totalling 78 hours per year. In the middle level of general education, citizenship education is taught to help learners understand citizens' rights, duties, obligations, ethics, discipline, and multiculturalism. In grades 9 and 10, citizenship education emphasises more advanced concepts and practices of citizenship, including integrity, honesty, trustworthiness, loyalty, and appreciation of democratic values and governance. In grades 11 and 12, citizenship education is one of the subjects to be studied in the languages and social sciences area of career and technical education (FDRE, 2020).

The curriculum addresses contemporary social issues, such as gender equality, social justice, peacebuilding, and conflict resolution (Egne, 2014). Moral, social, and cultural education is delivered through various teaching-learning strategies to engage students and promote active participation. Strategies may include classroom discussions, debates, role-play, storytelling, case studies, multimedia presentations, community service projects, and field trips to cultural sites and institutions (Fenwick, 2011). Through engaging content, interactive teaching-learning strategies, and thoughtful assessment practices, Ethiopian schools strive to empower students with the knowledge, skills, and values needed to become responsible global citizens (Semela, 2014).

Peace and Happiness Education

Peace and happiness education is increasingly recognised as an essential component of the curriculum in Ethiopian schools. It promotes positive values, emotional well-being, and peaceful coexistence within society (Bélair, 2016). The curriculum should include peace education so learners can better understand what it takes to live a normal, peaceful, healthy, and proper life (FDRE, 2020).

Peace and happiness education in Ethiopian schools typically covers personal and social well-being, conflict resolution, and building harmonious relationships. Content usually includes understanding emotions, empathy, conflict resolution skills, communication skills, stress management, mindfulness, resilience, kindness, and compassion. Additionally, peace education explores themes related to human rights, social justice, diversity, tolerance, and non-violence.

For this purpose, the pedagogical approaches emphasise participatory and experiential learning methods that engage students actively in the learning process. Teachers are facilitators, creating safe and inclusive learning environments where students feel empowered to express themselves, share their experiences, and explore different perspectives. The assessment of learning of peace and happiness includes students' understanding, attitudes, and behaviours related to emotional well-being, conflict resolution, and interpersonal skills (Capistrano et al., 2022). Assessment methods include reflective journals, self-assessments, peer evaluations, presentations, projects, and case studies. Teachers assess students' ability to apply conflict resolution strategies, demonstrate empathy and cooperation, and contribute positively to a peaceful and inclusive classroom environment.

While peace and happiness education may not always be structured as a standalone credit programme, its importance is increasingly recognised within schools' performance frameworks. Schools integrate peace and happiness education outcomes into existing subject areas, such as social studies, life skills education, or moral education (Gopal & Collings, 2017).

Performance indicators related to peace and happiness education contribute to student's overall personal development and well-being metrics within the school's performance framework, reflecting their ability to cultivate positive relationships, manage emotions, and contribute to a peaceful and harmonious society (Higgins & Novelli, 2020). Through engaging content, participatory pedagogy, thoughtful assessment practices, and integration into performance frameworks, Ethiopian schools seek to empower students to become responsible global citizens committed to creating a more peaceful and happier world.

Summary and Conclusion

Ethiopia boasts diverse landscapes in the Horn of Africa, including the Great Rift Valley and the Simien Mountains. Home to over 80 ethnic groups and languages, the country emphasises multilingual education to preserve cultural heritage. Administrative divisions reflect this diversity, with nine regional states and two chartered cities. Despite rapid population growth and infrastructure deficiencies, Ethiopia maintains its rich cultural heritage and is a diplomatic hub, hosting the African Union headquarters. Economically, Ethiopia has grown in sectors beyond agriculture, yet GDP per capita remains low. Education is a priority, with efforts to address literacy disparities and promote equitable access. Historical resilience shapes Ethiopia's educational journey, with reforms focusing on decentralisation, curriculum development, and inclusivity. The education system comprises primary, secondary, and tertiary levels, focusing on competency-based learning and multilingualism. Teaching methods emphasise active learning and technology

integration, with community involvement enhancing cultural relevance. Assessment methods include formative and summative evaluations, with national examinations guiding educational pathways. Despite challenges, Ethiopia remains committed to improving education quality and accessibility for all its citizens.

In Ethiopia, efforts are ongoing to promote all-around development among learners, encompassing various aspects of education beyond academic achievement.

In Ethiopian schools, health and physical education are compulsory, focusing on physical fitness and healthy lifestyles. Skills education, including vocational training, is integrated to prepare students for future careers. Hobby development and life skills education are offered through extracurricular activities, promoting personal growth. Moral, social, and cultural education emphasises ethical values and cultural awareness. Peace and happiness education supports emotional well-being and conflict resolution. While implementation may vary, there is a push for holistic education to prepare students for success in diverse areas of life.

The Ethiopian school curriculum prioritises cognitive education, focusing on intellectual development and academic knowledge. There is a growing recognition of the importance of practical education. Affective and social education are marginalised, at best, by default, through a few lessons in social sciences, moral education, life skills, and peace education. Psychomotor education is expressed through health and physical education programmes.

Peace education is integrated into the curriculum, focusing on conflict resolution, empathy, and tolerance. Cultural diversity is celebrated, promoting intercultural understanding and respect. The curriculum emphasises ethical values like honesty and compassion, encouraging students to apply them in their interactions and contributions to society. Community engagement and service learning are promoted to foster civic responsibility.

Ethiopian school education uniquely emphasises multilingual education to accommodate the country's linguistic diversity. With over 80 different ethnic groups, the curriculum implements mother tongue-based multilingual education (MTB-MLE) in primary schools. This approach allows students to learn their native language before transitioning to Amharic and English. MTB-MLE preserves Ethiopia's linguistic and cultural heritage, enhances comprehension, and engages students in learning. It addresses linguistic barriers, particularly for marginalised communities, promoting inclusivity and celebrating Ethiopia's multicultural identity.

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5

Adopting Competency-Based Education: Kenya

S. P. Malhotra[6]

Abstract

Kenya has made significant progress in universalising basic education. The country's education policy aims to provide quality, accessibility, and equitable education, focusing on skills and competencies. The introduction of the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) and Digital Literacy Programme are major education reforms emphasising lifelong learning. The policy also addresses challenges in infrastructure, funding, and teacher shortages. Kenya has implemented various initiatives, including inclusivity, integrating technology, and strengthening technical and vocational education and training (TVET) institutions. Instructional practices prioritise learner-centred and experiential learning, and assessment methods have shifted towards continuous assessment and demonstrating competencies. The curriculum also includes health and physical education, skills education, life skills education, moral and cultural education, peace education, and happiness education. The education system in Kenya is evolving to provide a well-rounded education that prepares students for the challenges of the 21st century. However, the education system still faces inadequate infrastructure, teacher shortages, and sustainable financing challenges.

Keywords: Kenya, Competency-Based Curriculum, Learner-centered, Experiential Learning, Continuous Assessment, Vocational education

Introduction

Humans have inhabited Kenya for millions of years, as evidenced by the discovery of ancient, fossilised remains of hominids (Wayman, 2012). Kenya was under British colonial rule until it

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[6] Prince Paa-Kwesi Heto, a visiting professor at Soka University of America and the President of the INDIE Education Initiative reviewed this case and made very important comments and suggestions. I sincerely thank him for his time and suggestions.

gained independence in 1963. It was a protectorate of the British Empire since 1895 and subsequently colonised in 1920.

Kenya's total area is 580,650 sq km, a vast canvas of diverse landscapes, rich wildlife, and vibrant culture (WorldAtlas, 2023). Kenya's international border spans 3,446 km and is shared with Somalia to the east, Uganda to the west, Sudan to the northwest, Ethiopia to the north, and Tanzania to the south. (African Studies Center, n.d.a). Its coastline is about 536 km on the Indian Ocean. Its capital, Nairobi, is the largest city in Kenya. The country is divided into 47 counties for administrative purposes (WorldAtlas, 2023).

Kenya's population is expected to reach 56.20 million by 2024, with a growth rate of 1.98%, and there are 98.21 men for every 100 women (Statics Times, 2024). The life expectancy is 67.70 (Macrotrends, 2024a). The ethnic groups include Kikuyu people (about 19%); other major ethnic groups include the Luhya, Luo, Kalenjin, Kamba, Kisii and Meru (African Studies Center, n.d.b). Although the ethnic conflict has not yet caused a civil war, it is a significant issue in Kenya and one of the reasons for its porous security environment. The ethnic conflicts are primarily about landownership between the Kalenjin and Kikuyu communities and cattle in Samburu District. Despite minor ethnic conflicts, Kenya is a shining example of peaceful co-existence. "Northern Kenya has a long history of ethnic violence and marginalisation. However, terrorism, resource extraction and devolution are intensifying existing local conflicts and raising new challenges for the region's traditional forms of peacebuilding" (Conciliation Resources, n.d.). As of 2019, around 85.5% of the population identifies as Christian, 11% as Muslim, and the rest follow indigenous religions (US Department of State, 2022). The official languages of Kenya are English and Swahili (Kiswahili).

According to IMF (2024), Kenya's current GDP is 104 billion US Dollars with a growth rate of 5%, and GDP per capita stands at 1980 US Dollars. Kenya ranks 146th out of 196 in the HDI ranking (UNDP, 2024). Kenya is ranked 114 on the World Happiness Index with a point of 4.470 (Helliwell et al., 2024). Kenya's unemployment rate was 5.6% in 2023 (Statista, 2024a).

Kenya has done reasonably well in universalising basic education, with a GER of 105 per cent for both boys and girls, 82 per cent NER, and a 102 per cent completion rate in primary education (EPDC, 2018). The GER in lower secondary education is 82 per cent, with a transition rate of 99 per cent. As of 2022, there were 32,469 primary and 10,502 secondary schools in Kenya 2022. In 2022, the number of public and private secondary school students in Kenya was about 3.9 million (Statista, 2024b). Kenya's literacy rate for 2022 was 82.88% (Macrotrends, 2024b), and 3.5% is the proportion of the graduate population (2019).

Educational Policy

Progress and challenges have marked Kenya's policy development journey (Buchmann, 1999). It reflects the transition from a colonial past to an independent nation and the ongoing efforts to address social, economic, and governance issues. Kenya's education policy aims to provide quality, accessible, and equitable education, supporting holistic development and lifelong learning. The country's leadership envisioned transforming Kenya into a middle-income country by 2030 by industrialisation (NESC, 2007). For this purpose, education policy has introduced two reforms: one is to give all children a free and required basic education (Mukudi, 2004), and another is to align education with economic, technological, and societal needs (Fourie & Alt, 2000). Public participation and the role of civil society organisations have increasingly become a part of shaping policies and reforms in the country. One of Kenya's most prominent education reforms is the introduction of the Competency-based Curriculum (CBC), which replaces the 8+4+4 system to focus on skills and competencies (M'mboga Akala, 2021; Muricho & Chang'ach, 2013). Providing sanitary towels helps reduce absenteeism among girls by addressing menstrual hygiene needs.

Being guided by Vision 2030, Kenyan education policy addresses challenges in infrastructure, funding, and teacher shortages to ensure high-quality education for all. The policy encompasses several key initiatives designed to ensure universal access and improve the quality of education. The Free Primary Education (FPE) policy, launched in 2003, provides free education for all primary school children, ensuring that basic education is accessible to everyone. Building on this foundation, in 2008, the Free Day Secondary Education (FDSE) programme was launched to reduce the financial burden on parents and increase secondary school enrollment rates (International Bureau of Education, 2004).

Kenya has implemented several key policies and strategies to enhance the educational landscape further. These include promoting inclusivity and equity to ensure that marginalised and vulnerable groups, including specially needed children, have access to education. The Digital Literacy Program seeks to enhance learning by distributing digital devices to primary school students. The focus on teacher education and professional development aims to improve the quality of teacher training and promote continuous professional growth. Additionally, integrating information and communication technology (ICT) in education seeks to enhance learning and administrative efficiency. Strengthening technical and vocational education and training (TVET) institutions is another critical strategy to provide students with relevant skills for the job market (Hodgson & Spours, 2006).

Despite these efforts, the education system faces several challenges. Infrastructure remains a significant issue, particularly in rural areas, where classrooms, teaching materials, and other essential facilities are scarce. Ensuring sustainable financing for education through increased government budget allocation and partnerships with stakeholders is crucial to addressing these challenges. Furthermore, implementing quality assurance measures is necessary to improve educational outcomes, while tackling the teacher shortage is essential for maintaining optimal teacher-student ratios (Kavua, 2020).

Several key bodies oversee the education system's governance and administration. The Ministry of Education is responsible for policy formulation, implementation, and oversight. The Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) manages curriculum development and review, while the Kenya National Examinations Council (KNEC) oversees national examinations and assessments (MEST, 2008). The Teachers Service Commission (TSC) handles teacher recruitment, training, and deployment (Kibaara, 2023).

Recent initiatives have been introduced to address specific issues within the education system. School feeding programmes aim to improve attendance and performance, particularly in arid and semi-arid regions (Kibaara, 2023). Providing sanitary towels helps reduce absenteeism among girls by addressing menstrual hygiene needs. The Digital Literacy Programme also seeks to enhance learning by distributing digital devices to primary school students.

Structure of the Education System

With various post-independence reforms, the Kenyan education system transitioned from the 8+4+4 system to the 2+6+3+3+3 system under the CBC reform in 2017 (Figure 5.1.) (Hoadley, 2017).

This new system divides education into "2 years of Pre-Primary, six years of Primary, three years in Junior School, three years in Senior School and a minimum of 3 years at the University level" (Munavu, 2023, p. 22). Primary and secondary education is free, excluding pre-primary education.

Senior secondary education is not compulsory but a critical phase in the country's educational system, acting as a bridge between primary and tertiary education or vocational training. The education system aims to give students the information and skills they need to pursue higher education, vocational training, or enter the workforce. While gender disparities in education have decreased, there are still concerns about girls' access to education, particularly in rural and marginalised areas. Quality of education is also a serious issue in rural schools due to teacher shortages, lack of resources, and overcrowded classrooms (Munavu, 2023).
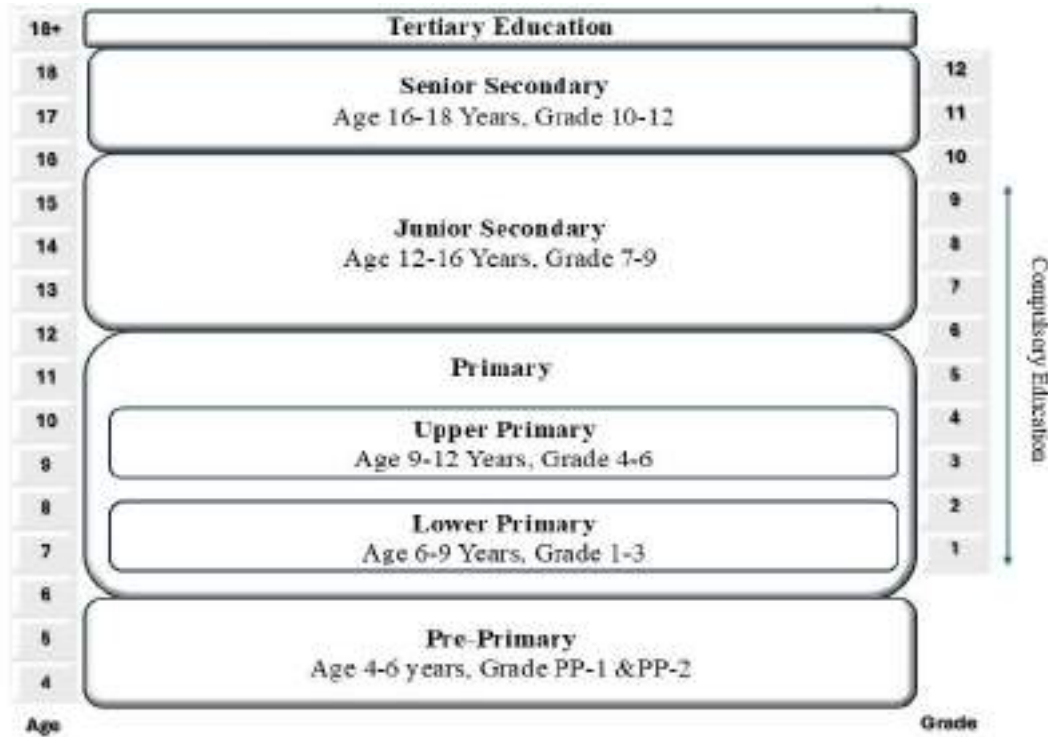
Figure 5.1 New School Education Structure of Kenya

Source: Bridge, 2023; Plainview Academy, 2023 (Adapted by author)

Curricular Framework

Kenya adopted its Constitution in 2010. The Constitution declared that all children have the right to basic education, and the state and parents must help and ensure that all children get that education. One of the early bird efforts in 2012 was to re-align the education sector to the Constitution "to have a globally competitive quality education, training and research for Kenya's sustainable development" (Republic of Kenya, 2012). Kenya periodically evaluated and monitored EFA's progress as a signatory to the Dakar Conference[7]. Subsequently, the National Stakeholder Forum considered the report and proposed the Post-2015 Education Agenda (MEST, 2014a). Kenya further created a national curriculum policy, post-2014 review, and revised it in 2019 (MEST, 2015b).

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[7] The period 2011-13 was reviewed in 2014 "To assess progress in achieving EFA goals; 2) To establish progress on the implementation of the EFA EDA recommendations; 3) To determine current educational challenges and identify the Post 2015 Education Agenda" (UNESCO, 2015, p.xi).

Kenya adopted the Basic Education Curriculum Framework (BECF) in 2017. The BECF adopted Competency-Based Education (CBE) in all school education grades. The BECF's vision and mission outline "the seven core competencies to be achieved by every learner in basic education are:

1. Communication and Collaboration
2. Self-efficacy
3. Critical Thinking and Problem Solving
4. Creativity and Imagination
5. Citizenship
6. Digital Literacy
7. Learning to Learn

The Framework seeks to develop these competencies so that all Kenyans can thrive in the 21st century" (KICD, 2017, p.21).

Further, the BECF documents argued that CBE has the strengths of being learner and competency-focused; it allows for local decision-making and in-depth study opportunities. It ensures a balance between formative and summative assessment. The digital programme utilises collaborative and co-development approaches and involves synchronous development. The BECF defines learning outcomes separately for the Early Years and Middle and Secondary Schools (Table 5.1.)

Table 5.1 Expected Learning Outcomes at Early Years of Education, Middle and Senior School

Early Years (Pre-primary 1 & 2 & Grades 1-3)	Middle School (Grades 4- 6, & 7 -9)	Senior School Ages 15-17; Grades 10,11,12
1. "Demonstrate basic literacy and numeracy skills for learning. 2. Communicate appropriately using verbal and/or non-verbal modes in various contexts. 3. Demonstrate appropriate etiquette in social relationships. 4. Apply creativity and critical thinking skills in problem-solving. 5. Explore the immediate environment for learning and enjoyment. 6. Practice hygiene, nutrition, sanitation, and safety skills to promote health and well-being.	1. "Apply literacy, numeracy skills and logical thinking appropriately in self-expression. 2. Communicate effectively in diverse contexts. 3. Demonstrate social skills and spiritual and moral values for peaceful co-existence. 4. Explore, manipulate, manage and conserve the environment effectively for learning and sustainable development. 5. Practice hygiene, appropriate sanitation and nutrition to promote health.	1. "Communicate effectively and utilise information and communication technology across varied contexts. 2. Apply mathematical, logical and critical thinking skills for problem-solving. 3. Apply basic research and scientific skills to manipulate the environment and solve problems. 4. Exploit individual talents for leisure, self-fulfillment, career growth, further education and training. 5. Uphold national, moral and religious values and apply them daily.

7. Demonstrate the acquisition of emotional, physical, spiritual, aesthetic and moral development for balanced living. 8. Demonstrate appreciation of the country's rich and diverse cultural heritage for harmonious co-existence. 9. Apply digital literacy skills for learning and enjoyment". (p. 29)	6. Demonstrate ethical behaviour and exhibit good citizenship as a civic responsibility. 7. Demonstrate appreciation of the country's rich and diverse cultural heritage for harmonious co-existence. 8. Manage pertinent and contemporary issues in society effectively. 9. Apply digital literacy skills appropriately for communication and learning". (p. 35)	6. Apply and promote health care strategies in day-to-day life. 7. Protect, preserve and improve the environment for sustainability. 8. Demonstrate active local and global citizenship for harmonious co-existence. 9. Demonstrate appreciation of diversity in people and cultures. 10. Manage pertinent and contemporary issues responsibly" (p. 52).

Note: Competency statements are reproduced verbatim for authenticity.

Source: KICD, 2017 (Adapted by author)

BECF recommends a wide range of subjects at different school education levels to facilitate the achievement of learning outcomes (Tables 5.2 and 5.3).

Table 5.2 Subjects for Lower Primary and Upper Primary Levels

Lower Primary	**Upper Primary**
1. Literacy 2. Kiswahili Language Activities/Kenya Sign Language for learners who are deaf 3. English Language Activities 4. Indigenous Language Activities 5. Mathematical Activities 6. Environmental Activities 7. Hygiene and Nutrition Activities 8. Religious Education Activities 9. Movement and Creative Activities	1. English 2. Kiswahili or Kenya Sign Language (for learners who are deaf) 3. Home Science 4. Agriculture 5. Science and Technology 6. Mathematics 7. Religious Education (CRE/IRE/HRE) 8. Creative Arts 9. Physical and Health Education 10. Social Studies **Optional:** Foreign Languages (Arabic, French, German, Mandarin)
NB: • ICT will be a learning tool in all areas. • Pertinent and contemporary issues will be mainstreamed in all Subjects.	NB • ICT will be cross-cutting in all subjects. • Pertinent and contemporary issues and life skills will be mainstreamed in all Subjects. • A pastoral programme of instruction will be conducted once a week.

Source: KICD, 2017 (Adapted by author)

Table 5.3 Core and Optional Subjects in Lower Secondary and Senior School Levels

Lower Secondary: 12 Core (Compulsory) Subjects	Senior School

1. English
2. Kiswahili or Kenyan Sign Language for learners who are deaf
3. Mathematics
4. Integrated Science
5. Health Education
6. Pre-Technical and Pre-Career Education
7. Social Studies
8. Religious Education – Christian, Islamic and Hindu Religious Education (learners to choose one)
9. Business Studies
10. Agriculture
11. Life Skills Education
12. Sports and Physical Education
	Learners must take two core subjects provided, irrespective of the pathway identified:
	   i. Community Service Learning
	   ii. Physical Education
	1. Arts and Sports Science Pathway:
	   The learner will be expected to learn core subjects and choose options in the Arts and Sports tracks. Life skills in this learning pathway will be adapted to suit the specific issues in each learning area.
	a. The Arts Core subjects i. Legal and Ethical Issues in Arts, and ii. Communication Skills
	   Optional Subjects
	   You must choose one of the performing arts, music, dance, theatre, or elocution.
	   Visual and Applied Arts - Fine Art, Applied Art, Time Based Media, Crafts
	b. Sports Science Core subjects
	   Core Subjects: Human Physiology, Anatomy and Nutrition, Sports Ethics

Optional Subjects: Learners are to choose a minimum of one or a maximum of two	
1. Visual Arts 2. Performing Arts 3. Home Science 4. Computer Science 5. Foreign Languages: German, French, Mandarin, and Arabic 6. Kenyan Sign Language 7. Indigenous Languages	i. Ball Games ii. Athletics iii. Indoor Games iv. Gymnastics v. Water Sports vi. Boxing vii. Martial Arts viii. Outdoor Pursuits ix. Advanced Physical Education

NB: ICT will be a delivery tool for all Subjects.

Source: KICD, 2017 (Adapted by author)

This BECF is designed to shift the focus from exam-based learning to a more holistic and skills-based approach (Kavua, 2020). The teaching-learning process also changed from a combination of lecture-style teaching, group discussions, and practical activities to an increased emphasis on student-centred and experiential learning. It emphasises building competencies and skills in learners from early childhood through secondary levels.

The CBC emphasises academic skills, life skills, values, and character development (Kavita, 2018). The CBC begins with Early Childhood Education. Learning in ECE is play-based and aims to develop foundational skills (Kilile et al., 2019). In the Primary School curriculum under CBC, the

emphasis is on developing competencies and skills rather than rote memorisation and examinations. Subjects include English, Kiswahili, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, Religious Education (CRE/IRE/HRE), Creative Arts, Physical and Health Education, and Life Skills (Waweru, 2018).

In junior secondary schools, the focus continues to be on developing competencies and skills. Students explore more specialised areas of interest. A broad range of subjects is offered, including selecting pathways based on students' interests and career goals. The senior secondary school allows students to specialised in subjects of their choice. The curriculum includes academic subjects and technical and vocational courses, catering to diverse career aspirations (Mutisya, 2019). The curriculum emphasises the importance of understanding and respecting Kenya's diverse cultures and heritage.

Secondary education starts at age fourteen. However, many rural students experience late admission because of a late start in primary school and a lack of educational facilities (Traveling to Kenya, 2013). In Kenya, high school education spans four years and aims to cater to students who finish at this level or progress to higher education. The required subjects for secondary school are grouped into five categories (Table 5.4):

Table 5.4 Group-wise Secondary School Subjects

Group 1	English, Mathematics, and Kiswahili
Group 2	Biology, Physics, Chemistry, Physical Sciences, and Biological Sciences
Group 3	History and Government, Geography, Christian Religious Education, Islamic Religious Education, Social Studies and Ethics, and Hindu-Islamic Education
Group 4	Home Science, Art and Design, Agriculture, Woodwork, Metalwork, Building Construction, Power Mechanics, Electricity, Drawing and Design, and Aviation Technology
Group 5	French, German, Arabic, Music, Accounting, Commerce, Economics, Typewriting and Office Practice

Source: Wosyanju, n.d.

"Students are required to take all three subjects in Group 1 and at least two subjects from Group 2. They are also required to select subjects in the other three remaining areas. The selection of subjects depends on what each of the individual schools offers. This is, in turn, dependent upon the resources and teachers available in the individual schools. At the end of the fourth year of secondary school, the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Examination (KCSE) is taken in the mandatory and elective subjects above to prepare for tertiary and higher education. The average grade is based on performance in the seven subjects. Where a candidate sits for more than seven subjects, the average grade is based on the best seven subjects. University admission is based on the best seven subjects and performance in particular subjects relevant to degree courses" (Wosyanju, n.d., p. 5).

BECF has received admiration, scepticism, and criticism from scholars. The tenor of intellectual discussion on the subject is best summarised by Heto et al. (2020): "BECF has progressive policies that are visionary; it might not yield the intended outcomes unless the authorities change some of the policies and implementation strategies" (p. 206).

Teaching Learning

Instructional practices in schools in Kenya have been evolving since the implementation of the CBC (Strugies, 2015). The CBC emphasises a learner-centred and skills-based approach to education. Instructional practices prioritise understanding students' unique needs, interests, and abilities. Teachers are encouraged to adapt their teaching methods to cater to individual learners (Koskei & Chepchumba, 2020). Since the CBC is designed to develop specific competencies and skills, instructional practices involve helping students acquire and demonstrate competencies, including critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, collaboration, and creativity (Ondimu, 2018). Activities, projects, and practical exercises are made to promote active learning. Students are engaged in hands-on learning experiences that encourage the exploration and application of knowledge.

Another significant feature is that the instructional practices integrate subjects, allowing students to see connections between different areas of knowledge. This interdisciplinary approach helps students apply their learning in real-life contexts. Collaborative learning experiences are encouraged by group work and teamwork to promote social skills and cooperation among students.

Technology is increasingly integrated into instructional practices. Many schools in Kenya have embraced digital learning tools and resources to enhance teaching and learning experiences (Maina & Rosemary, 2019; Njeru & Itegi, 2018, cited in Ntwiga & Mwangi, 2018). The process of instructional practices is designed to be inclusive, ensuring that students with disabilities and special needs have access to quality education.

Teachers receive training on inclusive teaching methods to cater to diverse learners. Teachers also receive training and professional development to adapt their instructional practices to the CBC. This includes workshops, seminars, and ongoing support to help educators implement the new curriculum effectively.

Learning Assessment

The CBC introduced a shift from the traditional examination-based assessment system towards a more holistic and continuous assessment approach (Ntwiga & Mwangi, 2018). The assessment is closely aligned with developing specific competencies and skills outlined in the curriculum.

Students are assessed based on their ability to demonstrate these competencies. Less emphasis is placed on high-stakes examinations. Instead, students are assessed continuously, with a focus on holistic development.

Continuous assessment is a central feature of the CBC, focusing on the ongoing evaluation of student's progress and performance throughout their learning journey. For this purpose, formative assessment techniques are widely used to monitor students' learning progress during instruction. These assessments help teachers adjust their teaching strategies to meet the needs of individual students. While the CBC reduces the emphasis on end-of-term or end-of-year summative assessments, they are still conducted to assess students' overall performance at specific stages of their education.

The assessment tools evaluate students' knowledge and ability to apply their learning in practical situations. These involve assessment of learning with the help of written tests, quizzes, projects, presentations, group discussions, practical assessments, and teacher observations. Efforts are also made to ensure that assessment practices are inclusive, accommodating the diverse needs of all students, including those with disabilities and special needs. Regular reporting and feedback mechanisms are in place to provide students and parents with information about their performance and progress (Mwarari et al., 2020). Feedback is usually constructive and aims to guide students' learning and development.

Secondary students are encouraged to engage in self-assessment, reflect on their learning, set goals, and monitor their progress. Project-based assessment is part of the learning assessment in secondary classes, where students complete extended projects or tasks. It evaluates their ability to apply knowledge and skills in real-world situations. In assessing the awarding of secondary education certificates, Kenya uses a 12-point scale (Table 5.5).

Table 5.5 Kenya Certificate of Secondary Examination (KCSE.) Grading System

Grade	A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-	E
Point	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1

Source: Wosyanju, n.d.

To complement the implementation of the changes suggested in CBC, emphasis has been placed on professional development for teachers. Teachers receive training during the professional development to implement the new assessment approach effectively. Assessment literacy is a key component of teacher training (Momanyi & Rop, 2019).

Health and Physical Education

Health and physical education are integral parts of the BECF. However, it appears in different forms and titles at different levels. Under the subheading Health and Physical Education, BECF states, "This subject is not integrated into another subject at upper primary level. Physical and health education aims to help the learner acquire the relevant knowledge, skills, and attitudes related to sports, games, physical fitness, and health. The learner will practice skills that promote lifelong health and fitness" (KICD, 2017, p.40). At the Lower Secondary Level, Sports and Physical Education is a core subject (Table 5.5). BECF claims that participation in sports helps relate to others and promotes social skills through movement experiences. At the Senior School Level, an interesting pathway is Arts and Sports Sciences. Please refer to Table 5.4 for core and optional sports science subjects.

PE curriculum content typically covers a range of activities, including physical fitness exercises and routines, sports and games such as soccer, volleyball, athletics, basketball, and aerobics and dance. Physical education also includes the importance of a healthy lifestyle, including regular exercise, nutrition, and the prevention of lifestyle-related diseases.

Schools are encouraged to have adequate facilities and equipment for physical education. This includes sports fields, playgrounds, gymnasiums, and sports equipment. Trained physical education instructors or teachers with knowledge and skills to teach various physical activities are responsible for delivering PE lessons. Efforts are made to ensure that physical education is inclusive and accommodates the diverse needs of all students, including those with disabilities and special needs.

Assessment in physical education is typically continuous and involves students' active participation in physical activities and sports. Formative assessment methods are used to evaluate students' progress and skills development. Many schools in Kenya offer sports and physical activity programmes, including inter-school competitions and tournaments. Kenya has a strong tradition of athletics and sports, and schools often participate in local, national, and international sports competitions. Talented athletes are identified and nurtured from a young age.

Skills Education

Skill education under the CBC focuses on competency-based learning, where students are assessed based on their ability to demonstrate specific skills and competencies in addition to theoretical knowledge. As an essential component of the education system, it aims to equip students with practical skills and competencies relevant to their future careers and personal development.

Skill education encompasses a wide range of areas, including, but not limited to, agriculture, home economics, computer studies, business studies, metalwork, woodwork, and electrical technology. Students can choose the skill areas that align with their interests and career goals. Efforts are made to ensure that skill education is inclusive and accessible to all students, including special-needs children.

Significant emphasis is placed on TVET programmes within the education system. TVET institutions offer a wide range of courses that provide students with hands-on, practical skills in various fields, such as carpentry, plumbing, electrical work, automotive technology, and agriculture. Entrepreneurship education is integrated into skill education programmes to encourage students to develop entrepreneurial skills and consider self-employment a viable career option. Some schools and TVET institutions collaborate with local industries and businesses to provide students with real-world exposure and internships.

UNESCO-UNIVOC reported that 15,700 students were enrolled in secondary vocational education. TVET in Kenya is considered a game changer, changing the mindset that devalues blue-collar jobs (Wakiaga, n.d.). The popularity is visible with massive changes in enrolment. In 2022, 5,62,500 students enrolled in TVET programmes (Statista, 2024c).

Hobby and Life Skills Education

While hobby development is not explicitly part of the curriculum, Schools in Kenya offer various activities that cater to multiple interests and hobbies. These activities include sports, arts and crafts, drama, music, debate, and science clubs. Many schools have clubs and societies dedicated to specific hobbies and interests. For example, schools may have photography clubs, gardening clubs, chess clubs, or coding clubs to provide a structured environment for students to pursue their hobbies and passions. With the increasing importance of technology, many schools have coding and technology clubs that teach students programming skills and provide a platform for exploring their interest in technology-related hobbies. Most schools often have clubs or programmes encouraging students to participate in community projects to give back to society. Workshops and training sessions are organised to help students develop their skills and interests. These workshops are led by teachers, guest instructors, or experts in their respective fields.

Life skills education is a core subject in lower secondary education (KICD, 2017); it equips "the learner with psychosocial competencies and interpersonal skills that would help him or her make informed decisions, solve problems, think creatively and critically, communicate effectively, build healthy relationships, empathise with others and manage his or her life healthily and productively" (KICD, 2017, p.47).

Kenya recognises that 'life skills and values education are as important as academic and technical skills for national development' (Maina, 2022). Further, teaching-learning materials are evaluated to ensure that messages about life skills and values in education are appropriately conveyed. The life skills curriculum comprises self-awareness, self-esteem, coping with emotions, managing stress, effective communication, assertiveness, peer pressure resistance, negotiation, nonviolent conflict resolution, creative thinking, and problem-solving.

However, several challenges exist in implementing life skills education, especially the teacher shortage, training for life skills education, and negative attitudes, despite the positive attitudes of students, as well as the quality of teaching and learning material (Abobu & Orodho, 2014). Scholars have emphasised retooling teachers with relevant instructional methods and providing appropriate quality learning materials (Waiganjo & Mwangi, 2018). Leonard et al. (2018) concluded, based on their field study in Kibwezi Sub-County of Makueni County, "that 57% of secondary schools did not have any teaching resources for life skills education and it was not taught, while the rest of schools had scanty resources and where it was timetabled it was only taught by willing teachers. The study concluded that Life Skill Education is not being taught as the Ministry of Education envisages. Therefore, learners were missing out on the benefits of this key subject" (Leonard et al., 2018, p. 32).

Moral, Social and Cultural Education

Promoting sound moral and religious values is one of the National Goals of Education. BECF exhorts that "education should promote the acquisition of national values as enshrined in the Kenya Constitution. It should be geared towards developing a self-disciplined and ethical citizen with sound moral and religious values" (KICD, 2017, p.11). Religious education, a compulsory programme at the primary and upper primary levels (refer to Table 5.5 and expected learning outcomes in Table 5.4), is the main medium of moral and value education.

Schools in Kenya emphasise Integrity, Love, Responsibility, Respect, Unity, Peace, Patriotism, and Social Justice. These values should be assessed throughout the year as students participate in learning activities within and outside the classrooms (Maina, 2022). Students are encouraged to respect and appreciate their peers' cultural, religious, ethnic, and background differences. Students learn about their own culture and the cultures of different ethnic groups in Kenya by studying the cultures, languages, traditions, and history of Kenya and Africa (Nasibi, 2015). Religious education (RE) is taught in Kenyan schools by exposing students to the study of different religions and their ethical teachings. Kenya has included anti-corruption education in the curriculum to address the issue of corruption in society, instil ethical values, and discourage corrupt practices.

Peace and Happiness Education

In 2008, Kenya introduced the Peace Education Programme to improve knowledge, skills, and values for peace (MEST, 2014b). This initiative aligns with the government's dedication to fostering peace and harmonious co-existence among Kenyans, as outlined in the social pillar of Kenya Vision 2030 (Rukaria & Wanjiku, 2020). Peace education is integrated into regular lessons rather than being a separate subject. Schools teach about peace through activities like sports and clubs, anti-

bullying programmes, and involving students in school decisions and community projects. Peace education also overlaps with other educational efforts, such as teaching life skills and helping with mental health. It teaches through hands-on activities and practical lessons (Ngigi, 2023).

Mary (2016) pointed out that teachers incorporate training principles into their teaching by promoting nonviolence, fairness, equality, and compassion among students. Their efforts are widely recognised, and the resources they provide are essential for developing students' skills in peace-making. Peace education provides knowledge and skills and shapes cultural values, social values, dispositions, norms, and attitudes, enhancing student cooperation and attitudes and decreasing dropout rates and violence (Arrey & Rosa, 2021). Efforts have been made to integrate peace education into the primary school curriculum, but there are still noticeable deficiencies, particularly in providing peace education at the school level (Mwamba, 2019).

Happiness education in Kenya is marginalised and not incorporated through the curriculum and/or subjects. The happiness index also drops compared to the previous year, i.e., 111 (in 2023) to 114 (in 2024) (The East African, 2024).

Summary and Conclusion

Kenya's school education is characterised by a dynamic and evolving landscape reflecting its commitment to providing quality education to its citizens. Kenya's policy development journey has seen significant progress and challenges, reflecting its transition from colonialism to independence and continuous efforts to tackle social, economic, and governance issues. Public participation and civil society organisations increasingly shape policies and reforms.

A prominent education reform is the introduction of the CBC in 2019, shifting focus from exam-based learning to a holistic, skills-based approach. The CBC emphasises learner-centred and experiential learning, developing competencies from early childhood through secondary levels. Teachers are trained to adapt to competency-based methods to enhance teaching quality. Despite the reliance on KCPE and KCSE exams, the government is committed to preparing students for 21st-century challenges. Initiatives like the Digital Literacy Programme and the expansion of TVET programmes aim to equip students with digital skills and practical job market competencies. The CBC, departing from the 8+4+4 system, integrates academic, life skills, values, and character development, promoting a learner-centred, inclusive, and flexible educational process that encourages active participation and critical thinking.

This shift towards fostering all-rounded development is evident in integrating various educational components into the curriculum. Health and physical education promote physical fitness and wellness through regular exercise. Skills education, emphasised by the CBC introduced in 2017,

includes practical skills and vocational training through TVET programmes, preparing students for diverse careers. Hobby development and life skills education are integral to the CBC, encouraging students to pursue personal interests and develop critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, and decision-making skills. Moral, social, and cultural education, embedded in subjects like religious education, social studies, and civic education, instils values of respect, responsibility, and ethical behaviour while fostering cultural appreciation. Although not explicitly labelled, peace education is promoted through peace education, conflict resolution, and emotional well-being programmes, enhancing students' emotional and psychological health.

The assessment system, traditionally focused on academic performance, is shifting towards a comprehensive approach with the CBC. The Kenya National Examinations Council (KNEC) now includes continuous assessment tests (CATs) and practical evaluations to consider students' performance in health, vocational skills, life skills, and other areas, ensuring a holistic development approach.

Kenya's school education system has historically emphasised cognitive education, focusing on academic achievements and intellectual development. However, there is a growing shift towards balancing cognitive, affective, social, and psychomotor education. Cognitive education remains crucial, emphasising knowledge acquisition, critical thinking, and problem-solving, traditionally measured through standardised exams and academic performance. However, Affective education, which involves the development of emotions, attitudes, and values, is increasingly integrated into the curriculum. Subjects like religious education, social studies, and civic education teach important values, while programmes on emotional well-being and peace education enhance effective learning. Social education is promoted through activities that develop social skills, teamwork, and community involvement. Social studies and civic education help students understand societal structures, and extracurricular activities enhance social interaction and development. Psychomotor education focuses on physical skills and activities. Health and physical education are integral to the curriculum, promoting physical fitness and coordination through various sports and activities.

While cognitive education has been a major focus in Kenya, the CBC is driving a shift towards a more balanced educational approach. This transformation ensures that students are not overburdened with cognitive demands and receive a well-rounded education, preparing them for life. Continuous assessment tests and practical evaluations measure student performance across these domains, ensuring a comprehensive evaluation of their abilities.

The Kenyan education reform initiative through BECF identifies six broad areas and contemporary issues (KICD, 2017). Global Citizenship, Education for Sustainable Development and Community Service Learning and Parental Engagement deserve special attention. Global Citizenship issue has

been further elaborated in terms of "Peace education, integrity, ethnic and racial relations, social cohesion, patriotism and good governance, human rights and responsibilities, child's rights, child care and protection, and gender issues in education. Environmental education, disaster risk reduction, safety and security education (small arms, human trafficking), financial literacy, poverty eradication, countering terrorism, extreme violence and radicalisation, gender issues and animal welfare" (KICD, 2017, p. 110; Munavu, 2023, p. 193) are the component issues of SDG. The inclusion of all such issues in the academic Framework is a promise for global peace and harmony.

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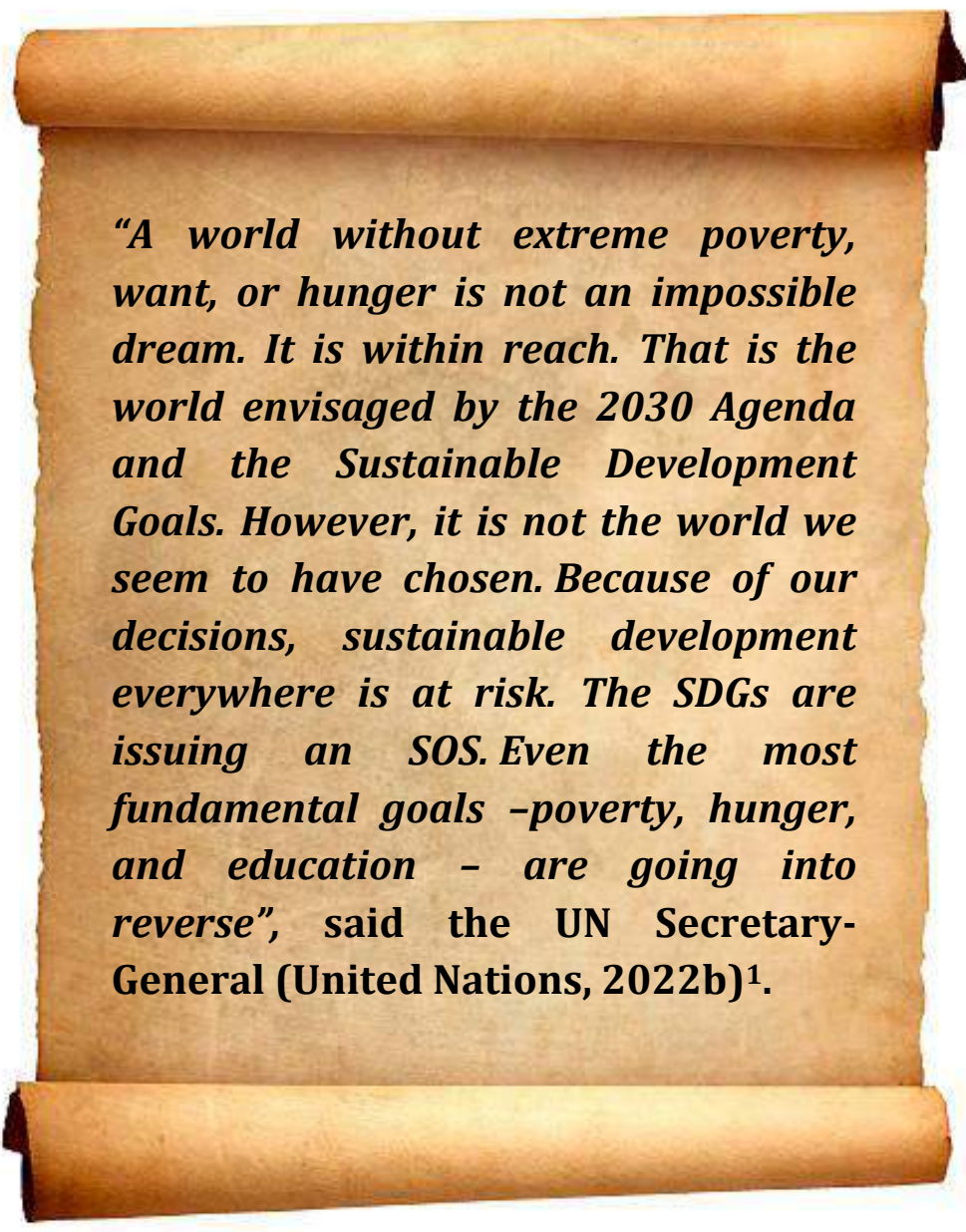
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"A world without extreme poverty, want, or hunger is not an impossible dream. It is within reach. That is the world envisaged by the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. However, it is not the world we seem to have chosen. Because of our decisions, sustainable development everywhere is at risk. The SDGs are issuing an SOS. Even the most fundamental goals –poverty, hunger, and education – are going into reverse", **said the UN Secretary-General (United Nations, 2022b)[1].**

[1.] United Nations (2022b, September 20). Secretary-General's address to the General Assembly. https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/speeches/2022-09-20/secretary-generals-address-the-general assembly

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From Tradition to Innovation: Libya

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Abstract

After independence in 1951, the government focused on expanding access to primary education and modernising the curriculum. During Gaddafi's rule, education was heavily influenced by his political ideology, emphasising loyalty to the regime. In recent years, Libya has faced political instability and conflicts, which have impacted the education system. Efforts have been made to improve education by arresting malpractices in exams and increasing the use of technology for learning. The Ministry of Education has collaborated with international organisations like USAID to bring Libya's education system up to international standards. However, political instability, lack of resources, and regional disparities continue to affect the quality and accessibility of education. The education system in Libya includes nine years of free and compulsory education, vocational education, and higher education. The revised curriculum focuses on promoting democratic values. However, there is a need for more emphasis on skills education, life skills, and peace education. The Libyan government is committed to improving the education system.

Keywords: *The Green Book, Arabization, Decentralisation, Jamahiriyi Society, Quranic Schools, Military Training.*

Introduction

Libya is situated in North Africa and is surrounded by the Mediterranean Sea to the north, Egypt to the east, Sudan to the southeast, Chad and Niger to the south, and Algeria and Tunisia to the west (Sidder, 2022). Libya has a land area spanning 1,759,540 km^2 and boasts a coastline that extends for 1,770 kilometres (Robertson & Essghaier, n.d.). It has a varied landscape, including vast deserts, coastal plains, and mountainous regions (Libya: Country Data and Statistics, n.d.). In the past, Libya comprises three regions: Tripolitania in the northwest, Cyrenaica in the east, and Fezzan in the

southwest (Brown et al., 2024). However, since 2007, the nation has been divided into 22 administrative regions or districts (Australian Government, 2018).

Libya gained independence from Italian rule in 1951 and established a monarchy led by King Idris. However, in 1969, Colonel Muammar Gaddafi led a coup and established a socialist and authoritarian regime. Gaddafi ruled Libya until 2011, when a widespread uprising known as the Libyan Civil War led to his downfall and eventual death. Following the conflict, Libya experienced political instability and divided into factions vying for control (Brown et al., 2024).

According to the World Bank (n.d.) data, Libya's population in 2022 was around 6,812,341. Out of this population, approximately 49.4% were female, and 50.6% were male. Libya's current population growth rate stands at 1.1%. The life expectancy for Libya in 2022 was 73.29 years (Macrotrends, n.d.). Many populations habited in the urban region along the Mediterranean coast, with Tripoli, the capital, being the largest city.

Libya has a diverse ethnic makeup, with Arab-Berber populations being the most significant group. There are also small populations of Tuareg and Tubu people in the southern desert regions. As of 2020, Islam is the major religion (96.6%) in Libya, with most followers being Sunni Muslims. Additionally, there are Christian (2.7%), Buddhist (<1%), Hindu (<1%), Jewish (<1%), folk religion (<1%), other (<1%), unaffiliated (<1%) (CIA, 2020). Standardised Arabic is the official language of Libya, although other Arabic dialects are also commonly spoken. English, Italian, and French are the most commonly used foreign languages (Libyan Heritage House, n.d.).

Libya's economy has historically relied on its vast oil reserves, which are among Africa's largest. However, after the civil war in 2011, political instability and conflict severely impacted oil production and exports, and the economy faced challenges in diversifying and rebuilding key infrastructure. Libya's GDP for 2022 has been calculated to be $45,752,336.04, and GDP per capita is estimated to be $6,716.1 (World Bank, n.d.). The country's GDP growth rate has been projected to decline by -1.2% annually. Furthermore, as per IOL-Modelled Estimates 2023, Libya's total (Age- 15+) unemployment rate stands at 20.5%, a significant concern for the country's economic stability. The World Happiness Report 2023 did not feature Libya. However, according to the 2021 report, Libya ranks as the 80th happiest country out of 146 (Helliwell et al., 2021). As per Human Development Report 2021-22, Libya ranked 104 out of 191 countries (UNDP, 2022a).

Under Gaddafi's rule, Libya invested heavily in education, providing free education at all levels. However, the quality of education varied, and after the Civil War, the education system faced disruptions and challenges due to the overall instability in the country. Libya boasts an impressive

overall literacy rate of 91% among individuals aged 15 and above (World Fact Book, n.d.). In 2015, the literacy rate was 91%: male 96.7% and female 85.6% (CIA, 2015). As of 2006, Libya's GER in secondary education was 101.6% (Knoema.com, 2023). Data on the percentage of people completing secondary education and graduation rates in Libya and PISA rankings are unavailable due to the country's political situation. As per the Libya Ministry of Education Human and Institutional Capacity Assessment Final Report (2019), around 1.6 million primary and secondary school students attend about 4,400 schools in the country. The teacher workforce in Libya comprises 450,000 individuals, of which 237,000 are actively teaching, and the rest, 163,000 teachers, are on standby and not currently teaching (USAID, 2019). There have been efforts to rebuild and improve the education system in recent years, but progress has been slow due to ongoing political and security issues.

Educational Policy

Libya's educational policy development has undergone several significant changes throughout its history. Before gaining independence in 1951, Libya was ruled by various foreign powers, including the Ottoman Empire and Italy. During this period, these colonial authorities limited and largely controlled education. After gaining independence from Italy in 1951, Libya began to develop its educational system. The government focused on expanding access to basic education and building primary schools nationwide. During this period, efforts were made to modernise the curriculum and provide teacher training.

In 1973, Muammar Gaddafi, the country's leader, published "The Green Book", which outlined his political philosophy and vision for Libya's society and education system. The "Education Revolution" was launched in the late 1970s, aiming to reform the education system to align with Gaddafi's political ideology. Emphasis on Arabization and Decentralisation: During the 1980s and 1990s, the Libyan government implemented policies to promote Arabization in education, encouraging the use of Arabic as the primary language of instruction. Additionally, efforts were made to decentralise education decision-making, giving regional and local educational authorities more autonomy. During Muammar Gaddafi's rule, education was heavily influenced by his ideological and political beliefs. The curriculum emphasised loyalty to the regime, and students were required to participate in activities promoting Gaddafi's principles. In 1980, Libya approved a new educational structure that significantly focused on technical subjects, humanities, Arabic language, and Koranic education. From 7th grade, English was introduced as a subject. This new system also allowed for the establishment of vocational and technical schools alongside traditional academic high schools (Libyaeducation.info, n.d.).

The Arab Spring uprising in 2011 led to the overthrow of Muammar Gaddafi's regime. Following the revolution, Libya faced significant political instability and conflicts, which affected the education system. The ongoing political and security challenges have hindered the development and implementation of consistent educational policies. In January 2014, the Libya Institute for Advanced Studies (2014) developed and launched 'Libya 2020 Vision: A Plan for Transformative Change by 2020'. In this plan, Human Development is one of four pillars. There are seven objectives under the Human Development pillar. These are (1) Educate youth to be future leaders, (2) Incentivise employment in the private sector, (3) Provide quality healthcare for all, (4) Caring for the Country, (5) Build strong and prosperous communities, (6) Preserve the natural environment, and (7) Rebuild national identity.

In April 2017, Dr Othman became the Minister of Education. He started working on various important issues, such as reducing the number of teachers, stopping cheating in exams, using more technology for learning, creating a human resources department, increasing the ratio of women in leadership positions, and making other changes to the education system. In August 2018, Dr Othman teamed up with USAID to get help making these changes and bringing Libya's education system up to international standards (USAID, 2019, p. 1). The Libya Ministry of Education, Human and Institutional Capacity Assessment Final Report (2019) states that the MOE needs a collaboratively developed strategic plan. Despite the efforts to improve education in Libya, challenges such as political instability, lack of resources, and regional disparities have continued to impact the quality and accessibility of education. Despite its current crisis, Libya still has hope (USAID, 2019, p. 6).

In summary, a few major educational policies are:

- Nine years of free and compulsory education are available from age 6 to 15. This is basic education, including the Arabic language, Islamic studies, math, science, social studies, and vocational training.
- After the nine years of compulsory education, students are assigned to either a vocational secondary programme (60%) or an academic secondary programme (40%) based on test scores and interests. Secondary education lasts three additional years (Hanley, 2001, p. 58).

- The curriculum during the Gaddafi regime from 1969-2011 singularly emphasised his political philosophy outlined in the Green Book[8] Students aged 9 to 18 were required to take "Jamahiriya studies" classes on the Green Book and Gaddafi's government.
- Libyan educational reforms focussed on improving quality, modernising curriculum, upgrading teacher training, and aligning education with the needs of the labour market (Elabbar, 2022). Strategies include developing a new education constitution, improving IT infrastructure, and increasing international collaboration.

Structure of the Education System

In 1980, Libya embraced a new Educational Structure to improve the country's education quality. Since then, the educational system has undergone minimal changes. Presently, the educational structure comprises two years of optional pre-school education, followed by nine years of primary education and 3 to 4 years of secondary education, depending on the area of specialisation (UKEssays, 2018).

Preschool education (kindergarten) in Libya is not compulsory and spans two years, beginning at four years. Compulsory basic education starts at age six and continues for nine years. This period is further fragmented into three cycles: 1-4 Grades, 5-6 Grades, and 7-9 Grades. Upon completing 9th Grade, students receive the Basic Education Certificate (UNESCO-IBE, 2007).

Several types of schools are available at the intermediate level, including general and specialised secondary schools, vocational training centres, sector-specific secondary schools, and institutes. Technical education schools typically last four years, while general secondary and vocational training schools last three years. Intermediate teacher-training institutes span five years. Upon completing their studies, students in these programmes receive the Secondary Education Certificate, except those in vocational training centres, which are awarded the Intermediate Training Diploma (UNESCO-IBE, 2007).

Vocational secondary education is delivered via intermediate vocational training centres that offer practical training. "Students who attend two to three-year programmes are awarded the Intermediate Training Diploma, which gives access to vocational training centres and institutes but not university studies. Vocational schools offer programmes for 44 vocations in seven major fields: electrical;

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[8] *Green Book* contains only three chapters - The Solution of the Problem of Democracy: The Authority of the People; The Solution of the Economic Problem: Socialism; and The Social Basis of the Third International Theory, published in 1975 by the World Green Book Center.

mechanical; carpentry, building and architectural; inclusive female vocations; service industry; agricultural; marine fishing" (Libyaeducation.info. n.d., para 12).
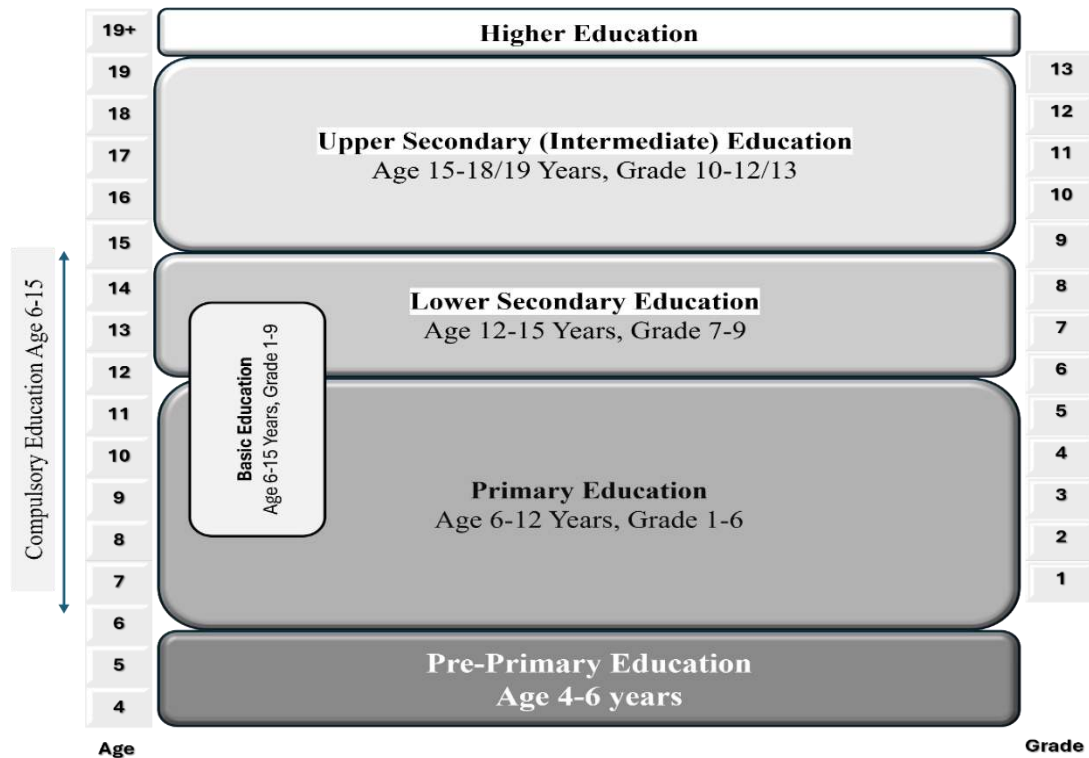
Figure 6.1 Education Structure of Libya

Source: Clark, 2004 & Tamtam et al., 2011 (Adapted by author)

Curricular Framework

"Libyan education has faced frequent complications for the past 47 years. These complications occurred because of political interference in education, unstable policy, and after Gaddafi's periods (conflicts)" (Elabbar, 2017, p. 1046). In 2011, the Libyan revolution resulted in the closure of all educational institutions. Unfortunately, this became a recurring issue, with subsequent closures occurring in 2014, 2018, and 2019, causing instability in the Libyan education system (Eyad, 2021). To this point, Libya has adhered to a curriculum and educational system established during the Gaddafi regime, which has remained in place for several years with minimal modifications. The basic and secondary education curricula were revised during the 1990s. The new curricula for grades four to six were implemented between 1998 and 2001 (UNESCO-IBE, 2007).

After the civil war in 2011, the education ministry initiated a process to restructure curricula. The new curricula and texts were introduced in January 2012 and have been in effect since then (Education in Libya, 2023). The primary focus of the new curricula was to eliminate any teachings associated with Gaddafi from the educational programme, especially the history (Reuters, 2012). According to Zayed (2020), "Curriculum, in Libya, refers to the textbook for each subject. While it is true that the curriculum has changed and developed over the past several decades, the curriculum still means the textbook. So, if someone mentions that the curriculum is changed regarding this or that aspect, they are saying that the textbook's content has changed" (p. 28).

The school year in Libya includes thirty-one weeks of instruction for kindergarten and basic education, 30 weeks for secondary education, and 35 weeks for higher education. The daily teaching schedule varies from four to six periods, with 25 to 36 periods per week. Each teaching period is 45 minutes long, regardless of the level (UNESCO-IBE, 2007).

Objectives of the school curriculum are:

1. "Instilling in the student a sense of self-esteem and confidence regarding his/her Arabic and Islamic identity and building his/her ability to communicate with other civilisations actively;

2. Opening the school and its curriculum to its immediate environment, as well as its national, regional and international environments;

3. Ensuring that educational programmes are diverse and encourage continuous self-learning;

4. Making sure that civil society is involved in setting and developing the curriculum and

5. Emphasising the importance of technical and vocational education" (UNESCO-IBE, 2007, p. 8).

Pre-primary

The pre-primary programme is not free in public schools, does not follow a specific educational curriculum, and does not have set hours for daily or weekly activities. However, the programme is flexible and can be adapted to meet the needs of children. The programme aims to achieve specific goals through different activities:

- "Provide a suitable climate for building the children's personality, create the conditions for developing their creative talents and skills and their independence, as well as help them build good relations with others;

- Guide the children's spontaneous activity and energy;

- Create and develop good habits and approaches;

- Kindle the children's love for reading and help them discover social and natural phenomena;

- Develop the children's learning abilities;

- Develop and improve the children's language and communication skills;

- Foster the emotional, moral and religious aspects of the children's development;

- Prepare the children for school" (UNESCO-IBE, 2007, p. 8)

Basic Education

Libya's educational system mandates nine years of Basic Education, consisting of 6 years of primary school and three years of initial secondary school.

Primary Education: Children receive primary education from grades I to VI, distributed over 4 and 2 years. First to third-grade students are given 20 hours of instruction per week, while fourth to sixth-grade receive 23 hours. The curriculum includes Arabic language, Koranic studies and Islamic morals, Jamahiriyi society, mathematics, sciences, history, geography, art, music, and physical education (Libyaeducation.info. n.d.). All subjects are compulsory, and students cannot choose their courses, nor can schools modify the curriculum. Arabic is the medium of instruction for all subjects (UNESCO-IBE, 2007).

Secondary Education

Secondary education spans grades 7 to 12 and is structured into a three-year compulsory basic phase followed by a three- to four-year intermediate phase.

Lower Secondary School provides education for students in grades 7 to 9. The curriculum comprises Arabic language, Koranic studies, Islamic morals, Jamahiriyi society[9], English, mathematics, history, geography, biology, chemistry, physics, technology principles, art, music, and physical education. Upon completing grade 9, students are granted a Basic Education Certificate (UNESCO-IBE, 2007). The allocation of weekly periods in each grade is given in Table 6.1.

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[9] "Jamahiriyi society" refers to a society influenced by the concept of Jamahiriya, which is an Arabic term that translates to "state of the people." This term was particularly associated with the political ideology of Muammar Gaddafi, who introduced the concept in his Green Book. Jamahiriya society was supposed to be a form of direct democracy in which the people themselves would govern and make decisions without the need for traditional representative institutions such as political parties. Gaddafi's interpretation of the Jamahiriya concept involved the creation of local People's Committees where citizens were supposed to participate directly in decision-making, and these committees would, in theory, feed into regional and national assemblies.

Upper Secondary Education is an important phase in the education system as it prepares students for university. In Libya, secondary education consists of two types of schools. The first type is General Secondary Schools, categorised into Arts and Science programmes that typically last for three years. The second type, Specialized Secondary Schools, was established in 1982 and offers specialised majors such as economics, biology, arts and media, engineering, and social sciences. The Specialized Secondary School programme lasts four years (Zayed, 2020). Upper secondary education spans grades 9 to 12 / 13.

The first-year curriculum for intermediate-level students, regardless of whether they attend general or specialised schools, is consistent across the board. Students are taught various subjects, including Islamic education, Arabic, English, politics, physics, chemistry, biology, mathematics, art, physical education, and military education. General Secondary School students can choose between two branches, literary and scientific. The literary branch offers history, geography, philosophy, and sociology, while the scientific branch focuses on physics, chemistry, biology, and mathematics. However, some subjects are common to both branches, such as religious education, Arabic, English, physical education, and military education. For those who attend specialised technical schools, the last two years of coursework are dedicated to a specific field of study. All students must pass the Final Exams to receive the Secondary Education Certificate at the programme's end. (Libyaeducation.info. n.d.). The weekly allocation of periods to different subjects is given in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1 Grade-wise Number of Weekly Periods

Subjects	First cycle			Second cycle			Third cycle		
	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX
Islamic Education	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	3	3
Arabic Language	8	8	8	7	7	7	6	6	6
English Language	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	4	4
Mathematics	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
Science	1	1	2	4	4	4	-	-	-
Biology	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2	2
Chemistry	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2	2
Physics	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2	2
The Jamahirian Society	-	-	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
History	-	-	-	1	1	2	2	2	2
Geography	-	-	-	1	1	1	2	2	2
Technology	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	1
Artistic Education	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Music	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Physical Education	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	2
Total weekly periods	**25**	**25**	**27**	**30**	**30**	**31**	**36**	**36**	**36**

Note: Each teaching period lasts 45 minutes
Source: UNESCO-IBE, 2007

Teaching Learning

The teaching and learning methods emphasised in the new curriculum include "(i) training learners to acquire the skills they will need for the twenty-first century; (ii) teaching scientific, vocational, social and cultural skills, rather than the more traditional focus on memorisation; and (iii) using the project, problem-solving, and scientific survey methods in teaching" (UNESCO-IBE, 2007, p. 8).

According to El Mezughi (2021), "the teaching methods currently used in most Libyan schools are predominantly derived from how the Holy Quran is taught in Quranic schools. For instance, all class activities and practices depend mainly on teachers and are strongly teacher-centred. Students cannot practice their skills and abilities, express their opinions, and effectively engage in learning" (El Mezughi, 2021, p. 15). In classrooms, students often exhibit passivity and remain quiet most of the time. They are anticipated to sit quietly, pay attention, and commit to memory the information they have been taught (Aldabbus, 2008).

Computers and related internet technologies are not widely used in Libyan classrooms. It is not solely the responsibility of the teachers. Institutions also share the blame for hastily investing in the latest technology innovations without considering the needs of both teachers and students (Abukhattala, 2016). According to Salem and Mohammadzadeh (2018), a hindrance to using ICT in Libyan schools is the impact of cultural and religious values and a shortage of English language proficiency.

Learning Assessment

After completing nine years of primary education, students receive the Basic Education Certificate. To progress to the next grade, students must achieve a minimum score of 50% in each subject. In Grades I-III, teachers assess students three times per academic year and issue evaluation cards. The first and second terms contribute 30% each to the overall assessment, while the final term contributes 40%. Students may face challenges with progression if they withdraw or have frequent absences (UNESCO-IBE, 2007).

Grades 4-9 students undergo two exams and a final written test at the end of each academic year. The school principal approves results for Grades IV-V, while the regional evaluation department director handles approval for Grades VI-VIII. To pass, except for Grades I-III, students must achieve a minimum grade in each subject and score at least 25% on the final exam. Those who fail the first session or miss the final exam with a valid excuse can attend a second session—failing two consecutive years in the same grade results in mandatory repetition. However, failing for two successive years allows promotion to the next year (grade advancement).

In Grade IX, students undergo two school-level terminal exams and one final terminal exam at the municipal level. Passing these exams results in receiving the Basic Education Certificate while failing subjects to the same procedures as students in Grades IV-VIII. Students failing for two consecutive years receive a certificate of completion for basic education. At the secondary level, the evaluation system is akin to that in basic education. However, there is no provision for 'posting' and certification for students failing two consecutive years. Students who complete their secondary education receive the Secondary Education Certificate, except those in vocational training centres who earn an Intermediate Training Diploma (UNESCO-IBE, 2007).

Table 6.2 Number of Weekly Periods per Subject in General Secondary Education

Subjects		Scientific		Literary	
	I	II	III	II	III
Islamic Education	2	2	2	2	2
Arabic Language	5	5	4	8	10
English Language	4	4	4	4	4
Mathematics	5	9	10	2	2
Physics	3	4	5	-	-
Biology	3	4	5	-	-
Chemistry	3	4	4	-	-
Social Studies	2	-	-	-	-
History	2	-	-	4	5
Geography	3	-	-	4	4
Sociology	-	-	-	3	3
Explanatory Study	-	-	-	3	3
Psychology	-	-	-	2	-
Political Awareness	1	1	1	1	1
Physical Education	2	2	2	2	2
Military Training	3	3	3	3	3
Total weekly periods	**38**	**38**	**40**	**38**	**39**

Note: Each teaching period lasts 45 minutes

Source: UNESCO-IBE, 2007

Health and Physical Education

Physical education is a crucial part of the Libyan school curriculum. The establishment of the Department of Physical Education within the Ministry of Education and the opening of an institute of Physical Education in Tripoli in 1960 made physical education an integral part of the curriculum (El Hinshiri, 1976, p. 84). As outlined in the curriculum section, students in Basic Education grades I-VI are allotted three periods per week, while those in grades VII-IX receive two. This emphasis on physical education continues at the general secondary level, where students in grades X-XII are given two classes per week, regardless of whether they are in the arts or science stream. Military training is also provided for secondary school students for three periods per week. This dedication

to physical education highlights Libyan schools' importance in promoting healthy and active lifestyles for their students. Physical education is also a credit programme for basic education in Libya.

Health education is not a standalone subject in the Libyan school curriculum but is integrated into other subjects or taught through specific programmes or initiatives. Health education concepts are integrated into biology, physical education, social studies, and religious education. According to a study by Soliman (2021) in Libya, "formal health education has little impact on personal hygiene, handwashing, oral and dental hygiene and bedwetting. In many families, unfortunately, some problems may persist until an advanced age, to as long as middle school" (Soliman, 2021, p.1). Another study by Elfituri and Sherif (2009) revealed "that lack of educational aid and materials and low priority for health education were the main barriers that should be overcome in order to improve services" (p. 92).

Skills Education

In the Libyan school system, especially in basic education, skills education is not considered a distinct or separate curriculum but an essential aspect of the overall educational programme. Artistic education is a crucial component of school education, encompassing various subjects related to visual arts, music, and other forms of creative expression. This education encourages students to work with their hands, paint, construct artefacts, and use hand tools, fostering their creativity and imagination. However, there is no separate agenda for instructional strategy and learning assessment of skills education, especially in basic education. This indicates the need for a more cohesive and integrated approach to skills education in Libyan basic education.

In Libya, vocational education is a formal education that aims to prepare individuals for the workforce by providing them with practical skills and vocational knowledge. Vocational institutions offer this education to students who have completed basic education. The institutions also train secondary and intermediate vocational education graduates to develop the practical skills needed to work as technicians. The National Board for Technical and Vocational Education, overseen by the Ministry of Education, is responsible for the vocational education system in Libya. In contrast, vocational training falls under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Labour and Rehabilitation (ETF, 2020, p. 20).

"Intermediate vocational training centres train students for various skills-based professions. Students who graduate from the two- to three-year programmes are awarded the Intermediate Training Diploma, which gives them access to vocational training centres and institutes but not university studies. Vocational schools offer programmes for 44 vocations in seven major fields: electrical, mechanical, carpentry, building and architectural, inclusive female vocations, service

industry, agricultural, and marine fishing. Official statistics suggest that 50-60 per cent of Libyan students graduating from the nine-year basic education cycle enrol in programmes offered at intermediate vocation training centres" (Clark, 2004).

Hobby and Life Skills Education

In the Libyan school education curriculum framework, there needs to be more emphasis on developing hobbies and life skills. However, it is important to note that art education and music, as mentioned above, are integral curriculum components. In basic education (grades 1-9), two weekly classes are designated for art education, and one class is designated for music. Through these classes, students are encouraged to explore and cultivate their interests and passions in various art forms and music genres. Students can develop important life skills such as critical thinking, creativity and self-expression by fostering a love for these creative pursuits.

Although the Ministry of Education (MoE) updated the standard curricula and textbooks in 2012, there is still a need to optimise the distribution and use of these materials. The education system in Libya needs to be better aligned with the labour markets, resulting in high unemployment rates despite relatively high rates of tertiary enrolment (Espeut et al., 2023).

Several programmes have been started to help young people in Libya develop life skills. UNICEF, the EU and other international organisations support these programmes. One programme, called "Shaping Futures in Ghat through Life Skills Education", is making a difference for teens in Ghat. It is not just a course but a journey of self-discovery and growth (United Nations Libya, 2024). UNICEF and the Ministry of Education organised a three-day workshop in Tripoli to plan how to teach life skills in Libya (Libya Update, 2024). UNICEF is working on a new plan for 2023-2025 that focuses on young people. They want to help young people affected by COVID-19, including those struggling to find work. UNICEF is also working with other organisations like the UNDP, Italian Cooperation (AICS), International Office of Migration (IOM), and World Food Programme (WFP) to help young people in Libya, especially in regions that have been neglected in the past (UNICEF Libya, 2023, p. 7).

Moral, Social and Cultural Education

In the Libyan education system, Moral, Social, and Cultural education are not separate subjects but are integrated into the basic education curriculum. Primary and secondary education in Libya teaches the Arabic language, Quranic studies, Islamic morals, and Jamahiriyi society. Quranic studies and Islamic morals focus on teaching students about Islamic ethics, values, and principles that guide their behaviour and decision-making. On the other hand, Jamahiriyi society emphasises understanding society, its structures, institutions, and dynamics, including topics such as civics,

politics, economics, and social issues. Students can appreciate their culture and heritage through Arabic language and religious studies while promoting understanding and respect for other cultures.

The International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) collaborated with Libya's Ministry of Education (MoE) to develop and execute a new civic education curriculum for students in grades four through nine. To achieve this, they organised a training initiative for teachers from all over Libya to prepare for the countrywide introduction of the new civic education curriculum (IFES, 2019).

"The curriculum is designed to instil democratic values and respect and acceptance of others in children at a young age. This will help them enter adulthood with these ideas already internalised, promoting greater awareness of civic responsibility and greater participation in civic and electoral processes. The curriculum covers topics such as equality in the family, citizenship values, children's rights, volunteering, and the rights of people with disabilities. Lessons are structured to include discussion sessions to ensure student involvement and input" (IFES, 2018, Para 2).

Peace and Happiness Education

Specific details about including peace and happiness education in the Libyan school education curriculum were unavailable. However, promoting peace, well-being, and happiness through education is a global trend that many countries are considering. The goal is to equip students with the skills and attitudes needed to create a more peaceful and harmonious society. Koranic studies and Islamic education are integral to school education in Libya. The Holy Quran has a strong emphasis on Peace. A study by Hadisaputra et al. (2021) "found that the values of peace education in the Qur'an were at least four, namely: 1) tolerance (tasāmuḥ), 2) polite dialogue; 3) cooperation (al-ta'āwun), and 4) forgiving (al-'afw)." Hence, though indirectly, peace and happiness education finds a place in Libyan school education. The purpose is Islamic education; peace as a philosophical component of Islam gets ingrained.

However, according to a study conducted by Espeut et al. (2023), violence against children in schools is a significant issue in Libya despite laws prohibiting corporal punishment. The prevalence of physical violence in schools is higher than that in homes, with teachers being the most common perpetrators. Additionally, peer violence is also a problem in the country. School environment and security issues are the main hindrances to peace and happiness in education.

"UNDP Libya is currently developing a peace education programme for elementary and high school curriculums in Libya, which teaches non-violent dialogues, debate strategies, and critical thinking skills. This will enable children to respond constructively to conflict by using the dialogue and debate problem-solving processes of negotiation, mediation, and consensus decision-making. It will

also enhance educators' role in actively modelling personal responsibility, self-discipline, curiosity, and joy of learning with critical thinking skills" (UNDP, 2022b, p.1).

Summary and Conclusion

The Libyan government issues policy statements outlining educational institutions' objectives. The educational curriculum is designed to encompass initiatives promoting students' ethical, cultural, intellectual, and physical development, aiming to prepare them for life's opportunities, responsibilities, and societal challenges. Despite prioritising educational improvement, Libyan educational programmes encounter challenges such as limited curricula, a shortage of qualified teachers, particularly Libyan educators, and a predominant focus on rote learning over reasoning, which is common in Arab education. However, education is universally free at all levels, and students receive a substantial stipend to support their studies (Alhmali, 2007).

In Libya's National Statement of Commitment (2022), the Ministry of Education highlighted several challenges affecting education in Libya. These challenges include the safety of students in schools, poor quality of facilities, weak education policy environment, and lack of a functional Education Management Information System (EMIS). Over the past ten years, there has been a decline in the quality of Libya's educational system. The absence of a comprehensive national education development plan has contributed to this deterioration. Furthermore, the lack of parent-teacher associations and community involvement mechanisms in schools has limited the opportunities for collaborative efforts between the Ministry of Education and local communities to address various issues within the school system (Espeut et al., 2023).

The Libyan education system emphasises religious education and cognitive education. Libya's political instability, reluctance to use the English language, and lack of global citizenship education are key barriers to nurturing peace-loving habits and the holistic development of students.

The MOE is committed to reviewing and implementing a Libyan National Curriculum as a benchmark for all schools. The educational programme aims to equip young individuals with the necessary knowledge, moral values, and practical life skills to navigate their academic journey with self-assurance and triumph. It has been tailored to cater to various student groups, including those with exceptional abilities and individuals with special educational needs and disabilities (Libya National Statement of Commitment, 2022).

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7

Multiculturalism in Action: Nigeria

Arghadip Paul

Abstract

The Nigerian education system has undergone several significant reforms since independence to address colonial legacies and meet national and global needs. Key initiatives, such as the National Policy on Education (NPE) 2013, different Ministerial Strategic Plans (MSP), and the National ICT policy in Education 2019, have focused on improving access, quality, inclusiveness, and system strengthening. The NPE 2013 emphasised the development of patriotic, moral, and skilled citizens through a structured education system that includes compulsory basic education and a post-basic career development programme. Technical and vocational education has been over-emphasized with aims towards massive industrial and economic development. However, Nigeria still suffers from curriculum overload, reluctance of teachers toward child-centric methods, and insufficient advanced technology and trained human resources. Despite efforts to integrate physical, health, and life skill education, issues like the lack of formal and organised peace and hobby education programs are critical gaps in the current system that hinder the development of effective student behaviour and society overall.

Keywords: NPE 2013, Ministerial Strategic Plan, Curriculum, ICT, Vocational Education

Introduction

The Federal Republic of Nigeria is a densely populated West African nation known for its cultural richness, abundant natural resources, and economic potential. It covers a land area of approximately 923,768 km^2 and is bordered by Cameroon and Chad (East), Benin (West), and Niger (North). Nigeria boasts a varied landscape featuring savannahs, rainforests, mountains, and an 853 km-long coastline along the Gulf of Guinea. Nigeria is the leading oil producer in Africa. The country comprises 36 states and a Federal Capital Territory (FCT) to facilitate governance and service delivery. The FCT in Abuja serves as Nigeria's political and administrative capital (CIA, 2024).

Nigeria's history is a complex mix of cultures, empires, and colonial powers. The Portuguese arrived in the late 15th century, and the transatlantic slave trade took a toll from the 16th to 18th centuries. British dominion began in the 19th century; it gained independence in 1960 after prolonged struggles. Political turmoil, military coups, and challenges like the rise of Boko Haram marked post-independence. Democracy was reinstated in 1999, but tensions and conflicts persisted (Falola & Heaton, 2008) till 2015.

Nigeria has a population of 218.5 million (103 males per 100 females), with a growth rate of 2.4% (World Bank, 2022). The population diversity is reflected in its various languages, religions, and ethnicities. Nigeria has more than 515 languages, making it a multilingual nation. The official language of Nigeria is English (Sewakpo, 1992). "Hausa 30%, Yoruba 15.5%, Igbo 15.2%, Fulani 6%, Tiv 2.4%, Kanuri/Beriberi 2.4%, Ibibio 1.8%, Ijaw/Izon 1.8%, other 24.9% (2018 est.)" are ethnic groups in Nigeria. Nigeria's major religious faiths are Islam (53%), Christianity (45.9%), African Traditional Religion and others (0.6%). The life expectancy was 62.2 years (CIA, 2024).

As of April 2024, the GDP is USD 252.74 billion, with a 3.3% annual growth rate, and the GDP per capita is USD 1,110. As of 2018, Nigeria's unemployment rate was 22.6% (IMF, 2024). As per the World Happiness Report, Nigeria ranked 118 with a 4.552 Happiness Index in 2022 (Helliwell, 2023). Nigeria ranked 161 with a 0.548 HDI score out of 193 countries (UNDP, 2024).

In 2021, the literacy rate in Nigeria was 77.62%, with a female literacy rate of 71.35% (Global Data, 2024). As of 2021, the GER at the primary level was 86.72, and 47.24 per cent at the Secondary Level (UNESCO-UIS, 2024). There is a considerable gender gap in junior and senior secondary levels. As of 2019, Nigeria had about 117,000 elementary schools and one million primary school teachers, including public and private schools (Sasu, 2022). In Nigeria, there were a total of 35,915,000 students attending primary and secondary schools in 2018. Of these students, 25,600,000, or 71%, were enrolled in primary education (EPDC, 2018).

Educational Policy

After independence, the Nigerian government overcame the colonial legacy in education. Curriculum Conferences were organised in 1969 and 1973 with participants from diverse sectors of Nigerian society, including voluntary organisations and external entities, to develop an education policy that would suit an independent Nigeria. Following this seminar and the feedback from various states and interest groups, the first Educational Policy was framed in 1977. This policy's 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and fifth editions were released in 1981, 1993, 2004, and 2007, respectively, in response to evolving social dynamics and educational demands. The need for a sixth edition arose in 2013 due to policy innovations and changes and the ongoing evolution of educational concepts at the global level (Mbachu & Hamilton-Ekeke, 2013).

Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC, 2013) introduced the Sixth Edition of the National Policy on Education in 2013 (NPE 2013). The goals of education, according to the NPE 2013, are:

i). "Development of the individual into a morally sound, patriotic and effective citizen;

ii). Total integration of the individual into the immediate community, the Nigerian society and the world;

iii). Provision for all citizens at all levels of education, within and outside the formal school system;

iv). Inculcation of national consciousness, values and unity; and

v). Developing appropriate skills, mental, physical and social abilities and competencies empowers the individual to live in and contribute positively to the society" (NERDC, 2013, pp. 1-2).

According to NPE 2013, Basic Education covers education for children aged 0—15 years: Early Child Care and Development Education (ECCDE- 0-4) and ten years of formal schooling. Private or social development sectors would provide the ECCDE. Education for children aged 5-6 is part of formal education. Basic education is compulsory, free, universal, and high quality. The programme comprises one year of pre-primary, six years of primary, and three years of junior secondary education. Basic education aims to equip children with essential knowledge and skills related to entrepreneurship, wealth generation, educational progress, and practical abilities to function in society effectively. Basic education also aims at developing a national consciousness of harmony irrespective of differences in endowment, colour, religion, ethnic, and socio-economic background and inculcating values for independent thinking, the dignity of labour and patriotism (NERDC, 2013). Notably, basic education policy promotes inclusiveness and quality in public education while recommending life skills education and education for harmonious living.

Children receive "Post-Basic Education and Career Development (PBECD) after passing the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) and Junior Arabic and Islamic Studies Certificate Examination (JAISCE). It includes senior secondary education, higher school, and continuing education given in Vocational Enterprise Institutions (VEIs) to either Basic Education graduates who are not proceeding to Senior Secondary Schools or Senior Secondary graduates who are not proceeding to the tertiary level to prepare them for the world of work, wealth creation and entrepreneurship" (NERDC, 2013, p.12).

The NPE 2013 aimed to align the Nigerian education system with global standards. It focused on key areas such as Open and Distance Education, Mathematics Education, Teacher Professionalism,

ICT integration, linguistic diversity promotion, French as a second official language, equal opportunities, and enhancing science, technical, and vocational education for better outcomes (Mbachu & Hamilton-Ekeke, 2013). Notably, the policy goals especially mention the dignity of labour, entrepreneurship and wealth creation, harmonious living, national unity and patriotism, and social relevance. These words represent the spirit of Nigerian education. Nigerian policy resilience is also evident with a separate ICT policy in education in 2019 (FME, 2019).

Nigeria has introduced the 4-year Ministerial Strategic Plan (MSP) for developing the education sector. MPS 2011-2015 has six major "focus areas:

1. Strengthening the Institutional Management of Education
2. Access and Equity
3. Standard and Quality Assurance
4. Teacher Education and Development
5. Technical and Vocational Education and Training
6. Funding, Partnerships and Resource Mobilization" (FME, 2012, p. 1).

The MSP 2016-2019 and MSP 2018-2022 focuses on three key areas: access, quality, and systems strengthening. It consists of ten pillars: out-of-school children; basic education; teacher education; capacity building and professional development; youth and adult literacy; curriculum and policy matters; technical and vocational education and training (TVET); ICT; library services in education; tertiary education; and education data and planning. Further, science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) have been added to TVET in MSP 2018-2022 (Abu-Ghaida & Lomme, 2016; FME, 2018).

National ICT policy in education was introduced in 2019 with the vision of creating universally accessible, empowering, inclusive, and enriching education. The policy has been articulated under several headings: human capital development, research and development, infrastructure, awareness and communication, financing and governance (NERDC, 2013).

Structure of the Educational System

The Nigerian education system has two primary components: basic and post-basic education and career development. Nigeria's educational structure involves six years of primary school, three years of junior secondary school, and three years of senior secondary school (6 + 3 + 3) (Figure 7.1). Attendance at a regionally accredited public or private school is mandatory for primary and junior secondary education. Junior secondary school comprises JSS1, JSS2, and JSS3, corresponding to the 7th, 8th, and 9th grades. The senior secondary school comprises SS1, SS2, and SS3, corresponding to the 10th, 11th, and 12th grades. Upon completing senior secondary school, students sit for one or more nationally accredited examinations to qualify for higher education. Post-

basic education and career development include upper secondary education, technical and vocational education and training (TVET).

Figure 7.1 Structure of the Education System in Nigeria

Source: NERDC, 2013; Staff, 2017 (Adapted by author)

Early Child Care Development and Education (ECCDE)
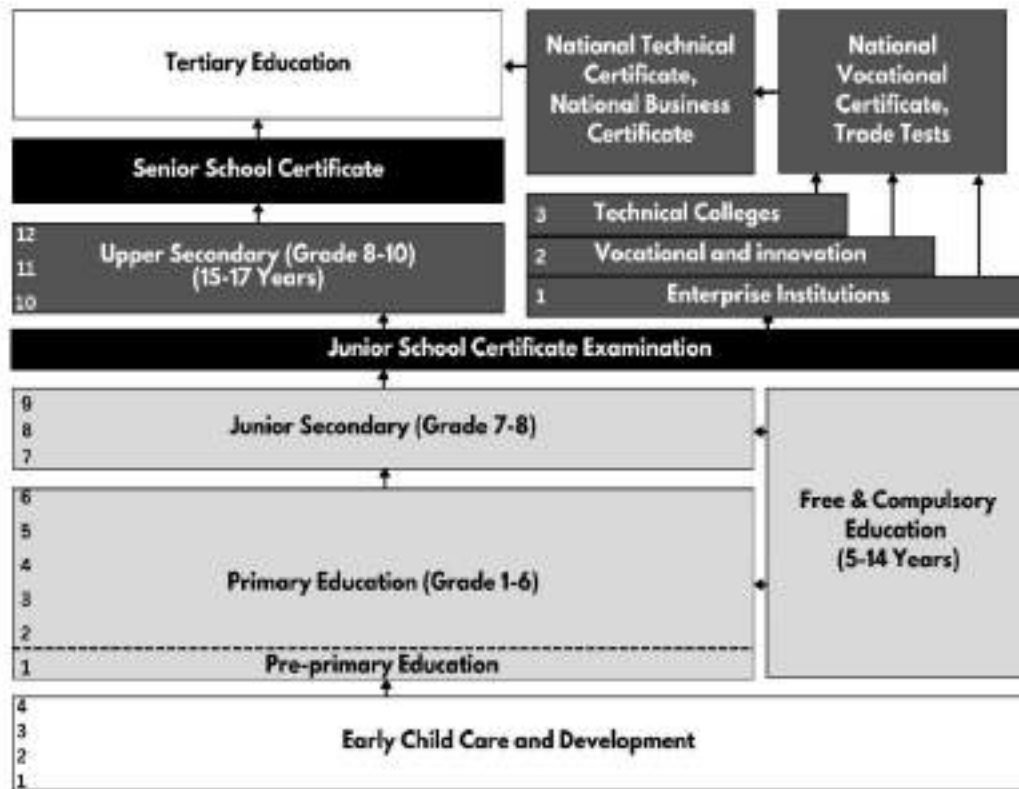
The ECCDE encompasses the one year before children enter pre-primary school. Children between the ages of 0 and 4 receive educational and developmental support in a creche or nursery. During this stage, children learn social and moral norms and values. They are encouraged to explore nature, the environment, art, and music and use toys to foster curiosity and creativity. Additionally, they develop a sense of cooperation, team spirit, and good habits related to health. Play teaches them the basics of numbers, letters, colours, shapes, and forms (NERDC, 2013).

Pre-Primary Education

Pre-primary education is one year before entry into primary education under basic education. This education is for children aged five to prepare them for primary education. In pre-primary education, the government ensures an ample supply of trained teachers, prepares and develops curriculum, maintains quality through oversight, and integrates pre-primary sections within public schools. Like the ECCDE, the programme helps students acquire social and moral norms and values. It fosters a spirit of inquiry and creativity through exploring nature, the environment, art, music, and toys. It also helps develop a sense of cooperation and team spirit and instils good habits, including promoting good health. Additionally, it teaches the basics of numbers, letters, colours, shapes, and forms through play. Pre-primary education prepares them for Primary education (NERDC, 2013).

Primary Education

Children aged 6-11 receive primary education in classes 1-6. The primary aim of elementary education is to impart enduring literacy, numeracy, and proficient communication abilities; lay a strong groundwork for logical, critical, and contemplative reasoning; foster love for one's country, equity, empathy, and national cohesion; instil societal and ethical standards and principles; cultivate the aptitude to adjust to evolving circumstances; and provide occasions for children to acquire practical life skills required to function effectively in society to the best of their capabilities. Upon finishing Grade 6 through continuous evaluation, students are conferred with the Primary School Leaving Certificate (NERDC, 2013).

Junior Secondary Education

Junior Secondary Education follows primary education and lasts for three years (ages 12 to 14), covering grades 7 to 9. The goals of junior secondary education include providing students with fundamental knowledge and skills for entrepreneurship and further education; nurturing patriotic individuals who can contribute to social development and fulfil their civic duties; instilling values and cultivating morally upright, independent thinkers who value hard work; and promoting national consciousness and peaceful coexistence regardless of differences in religion, ethnicity, or socio-economic background. Upon finishing ninth grade, students are awarded the Basic Education Certificate (BEC) and the Junior School Certificate. This certificate is granted based on their performance in the final exams conducted by the state governments of Nigeria (NERDC, 2013).

Senior Secondary Education

During the three years of senior secondary education (ages 15-17) covering grades 10 through 12, students must study four Compulsory Cross-Cutting Subjects and Fields of Studies. Regarding the Trade/Entrepreneurship subject, students must select one from a list of 34 options. Moreover, students can choose anywhere from two to five subjects from their preferred four fields of study, depending on their potential, interests, and capabilities. This implies that students must take a

minimum of eight and a maximum of nine subjects. Finally, upon completion of 12th grade, students will sit for the Senior School Certificate Examination (SSCE) (NERDC, 2013).

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET)

Technical and Vocational Education and Training is used as a comprehensive term referring to those aspects of the educational process involving, in addition to general education, the study of technologies and related science and the acquisition of practical skills, attitudes, understanding and knowledge relating to occupations in various sector of economic and social life. TVET shall cover the following: i. Technical, ii. Vocational Enterprise Institutions (VEIs) and iii. National Vocational Qualifications Framework (NVQF).

The goals of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) shall be to "provide trained manpower in the applied sciences, technology and business at craft, advanced craft and technical levels; provide the technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agricultural, commercial and economic development; and give training and impart the necessary skills to an individual for self-reliance" (NERDC, 2013, p. 16).

Curricular Framework

Primary education focuses on laying the foundation for literacy. Upon completion, students advance to junior secondary school, where they must pass the Junior Secondary Certification Exam in six core subjects to progress. The senior secondary level offers two tracks: academic and vocational. Students who complete their chosen track need to take the Senior Secondary Certification Exam, which leads to the award of the Senior Secondary Certificate. This certificate is a crucial milestone, opening doors to further education, vocational training, or entry into the workforce. The school level-wise detailed curricular structure is further discussed.

Early Child Care Development and Education (ECCDE)

Nigeria's ECCDE curriculum provides a holistic approach to early childhood education. It includes activities promoting young children's physical, social, cognitive, emotional, and language development. The curriculum typically covers play-based learning, early literacy and numeracy skills, social skills development, and health and nutrition education. It aims to create a solid foundation for children's future learning and development. The approach prepares children for formal schooling and fosters a lifelong love for learning. Additionally, incorporating play-based learning, early literacy and numeracy skills, social skills development, and health education in the curriculum reflects a comprehensive and child-centred approach to early childhood education in Nigeria (Viatonu et al., 2011).

Pre-Primary Education

The primary goal of pre-primary is to nurture and enhance the children's intellectual capabilities in their care (Ejieh, 2006). The curriculum includes teaching the alphabet, numbers, nursery rhymes, colouring, and story time. Basic reading, writing, and arithmetic skills may also be introduced at an introductory level. The main emphasis is on intellectual growth, with a significant portion of the schedule dedicated to tasks like learning the alphabet, memorising facts, information, rhymes, and short passages from English-language texts. Recreational and social activities, though not neglected, receive comparatively less attention.

Primary Education

The initial stage of primary education spans grades 1 through 3, while the subsequent stage encompasses grades 4 through 6. The first stage includes English studies, one Nigerian language, basic science and technology, mathematics, physical and health education, religion and national values, cultural and creative arts, and Arabic (optional). The second stage covers English studies, one Nigerian language, mathematics, basic science and technology, religion and national values, pre-vocational studies, French language, cultural and creative arts, and Arabic (optional) (NERDC, 2013).

Junior Secondary Education

The junior secondary education curriculum includes English Studies, one Nigerian Language, Basic Science and Technology, Mathematics, Physical and Health Education, Religion and National Values, Pre-Vocational Studies, French Language, Cultural and Creative Arts, Business Studies, and Arabic (optional) (NERDC, 2013).

Senior Secondary Education

The senior secondary education curriculum comprises four major fields of study and four compulsory cross-cutting subjects. The four major fields of study include Science and Mathematics, Technology, Humanities, and Business Studies. The "compulsory cross-cutting subjects: English Language, General Mathematics, Trade/Entrepreneurship, and Civic Education" (NERDC, 2013, p. 13).

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET)

The technical college curriculum includes five components: "general education courses, theory and related courses, workshop practice, industrial training/production work, and entrepreneurial training" for each trade. Vocational Enterprise Institutions cover various "vocational and craftsmanship areas, such as Adire and other indigenous fabric-making, artisans, apprenticeship,

etc." (NERDC, 2013, p. 18). The NVQF comprises six levels, from entry-level or unskilled employees to professional engineers and senior management positions (NERDC, 2013).

The specific curricular subjects are listed in Table 7.1.

Table 7.1 Subject Offered in Nigerian Schools

1. Primary Education	
Primary Education (Grade 1-3)	**Primary Education (Grade 4-6)**
A. English Studies B. One Nigerian Language C. Mathematics D. Basic Science and Technology: Basic Science, Basic Technology, Information Technology, and Physical and Health Education E. Religion and National Values: Christian Religious Studies, Islamic Studies, Social Studies, Civic Education, and Security Education F. Cultural and Creative G. Arabic (Optional)	A. English Studies B. One Nigerian Language C. Mathematics D. Basic Science and Technology: Basic Sciences, Basic Technology, and Information Technology E. Physical and Health Education F. Religion and National Values: Christian Religious Studies, Islamic Studies, Social Studies, Civic Education, and Security Education G. Pre—Vocational Studies: Home Economics and Agriculture H. French Language I. Cultural and Creative Arts J. Arabic (Optional)
2. Junior Secondary Education	
A. English Studies B. One Nigerian Language C. Mathematics D. Basic Science and Technology: Basic Science, Basic Technology, Information Technology, and Physical and Health Education	E. Religion and National Values: Christian Religious Studies, Islamic Studies, Social Studies, Civic Education, and Security Education F. Pre-Vocational Studies: Home Economics and Agriculture G. French Language H. Cultural and Creative I. Business Studies J. Arabic (optional)
3A. Senior Secondary Education (Four Fields of Studies)	
A. Science and Mathematics: Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Further Mathematics, Health Education, Agriculture, Physical Education, and Computer Studies B. Technology: Technical Drawing, General Metal Work, Basic Electricity, Electronics, Auto Mechanics, Building Construction, Woodwork, Home Management, Food and Nutrition	C. Humanities: Christian Religious Studies, Islamic Studies, Visual Arts, Music, History, Geography, Government, Economics. English Literature, French, Arabic, Any Nigerian Language with a Curriculum. D. Business Studies: Stores Management, Accounting, Commerce, Office Practice, Insurance
3B. Senior Secondary Education (Compulsory Cross-Cutting Subjects)	

A. English Language B. General Mathematics C. Civic Education D. Trade/Entrepreneurship Subject Auto Body Repair and Spray Painting, Auto Electrical Work, Auto Mechanical Work, Auto Parts Merchandising, Air Conditioning and Refrigeration, Welding and Fabrication Engineering, Craft Practice, Electrical Installation and Maintenance Work, Radio, TV and Electronic Servicing Block Laying, Brick Laying and Concrete Work, Painting and Decorating, Plumbing and Pipefitting, Machine Woodworking, Carpentry and Joinery, Furniture Making	Upholstery, Catering Craft Practice, Garment Making, Clothing and Textile, Dyeing and Bleaching, Printing Craft Practice, Cosmetology, Photography, Mining, Tourism, Leather Goods Manufacturing and Repair, Stenography, Data Processing, Store Keeping, Book Keeping, GSM Maintenance and Repairs, Animal Husbandry, Fishery, Marketing, Salesmanship

Source: NERDC, 2013

Teaching Learning

The NPE 2013 recommended implementing student-centric methodologies in the classroom - participatory, exploratory, experimental, and child-centred. In monolingual communities, the primary language of the immediate environment will be used as the main medium of instruction during the first three years of schooling. Starting from the fourth year, English will be gradually introduced as a medium of instruction.

The teacher-student ratio is 1:10 at the Crèche, 1:25 at nursery, 1:25 at pre-primary, 1:35 at primary, and 1:40 at junior secondary and post-basic education level (NERDC, 2013).

Empirical studies in the pedagogy of secondary schools in Nigeria revealed that most teachers rely on traditional instructional strategies, maintaining a teacher-dominated classroom environment where students have limited involvement in planning for their education (Adekunle Amosa et al., 2015). There are many challenges to the effectiveness of teaching-learning in Nigeria. These include a lack of training for teachers in using instructional strategies, the complexity of selecting and implementing appropriate instructional methods, and the potential limitations of large class sizes, which impede the effective implementation of student-centric instructional approaches (Amosa et al., 2015).

Curriculum Overload overwhelms teachers and students and hinders the quality of teaching and learning processes. Factors such as lack of facilities and materials, unfavourable attitudes towards innovation, fear and ignorance of change, and lack of knowledge, among others, pose threats to the successful implementation of contemporary methods. Teacher-centred methods with no activity for the learners make students passive listeners (Isa et al., 2020).

The study of Onyema (2019) showed that incorporating new technologies into the teaching and learning process is often limited by various challenges, including inconsistent power supply, lack of necessary skills, availability and accessibility issues, funding, inadequate professional development, and poor internet connectivity (Onyema, 2019). In 2019, the National Policy on ICT in Education was introduced to facilitate the teaching and learning processes. The policy focuses on human capital development, infrastructure, research and development, awareness, and communication. It emphasises education for change and includes a series of initiatives and strategies to integrate ICT into education. The impact of the policy is yet to be evaluated.

Learning Assessment

The NPE 2013 strongly emphasised using electronic testing systems to enhance the credibility of assessments and alleviate the challenges associated with traditional Paper Pencil Tests. The transition from primary to junior secondary levels involves a common entrance examination, with evaluations based on predetermined benchmarks. At the junior secondary level, the assessment is divided into 40% continuous assessment and 60% school examinations (NERDC, 2013).

Junior Secondary Education has two main examinations: the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) and the Junior Arabic and Islamic Studies Certificate Examination (JAISCE). Students have the option to choose between these two examinations. Upon completing senior secondary or post-basic education, statutory public examination bodies administer the Post-Basic Education Certificate Examination (PBECE). Certificates are awarded based on continuous assessment and national examination performance. Nigeria offers distinct certificate programmes, which include the West African Senior School Certificate (WASSC), Senior School Certificate (SSC), National Technical Certificate (NTC), National Business Certificate (NBC), National Vocational Certificate (NVC), and Senior Arabic and Islamic Studies Certificate (SAISC) (NERDC, 2013).

There is no national learning assessment programme in Nigeria that feeds directly into the educational planning cycle. However, there are ongoing efforts to change this. The assessment system is memory-based with delayed feedback. Teachers follow the age-old methods of assessment of learning. A new learning assessment for the end of primary school was proposed to the Minister of Education based on the 2016 International Institute of Educational Planning MOOC on learning assessments (UNESCO, 2016). However, its implementation is still not part of the teaching-learning system (Nwokeocha, 2017).

Health and Physical Education

Physical and health education in Nigeria is introduced at the beginning of school education and is mandatory for both primary and secondary levels. Physical and health education is compulsory in

primary school under basic science and technology, taught by specialised teachers. The government provides school health services and meals to support children's healthy development and promote retention at the basic education level. In post-basic education, health education is a distinct subject in the science and mathematics field.

Physical and health education is provided to junior secondary school students (aged 10 to 13) in Nigerian schools, typically two to three times a week as part of the curriculum. Each class has a maximum duration of 40 minutes. Despite its significance, the School Health Programme (SHP) has primarily stayed at the policy level with limited execution. Nigeria is significantly affected by severe health issues, meningitis and tuberculosis being common diseases among Nigerian children (Muhammad et al., 2017). The programme needs to be re-established or made stronger (Dania & Adebayo, 2019).

Skills Education

In NPE 2013, vocational and technical education for skills education encompasses studying technologies and related sciences and developing practical skills, attitudes, and knowledge related to various occupations in economic and social sectors. Vocational and technical education is divided into basic and post-basic levels in Nigeria. At the basic level, pre-vocational courses such as home economics and basic agriculture are integrated into general education. Technical and vocational courses are offered alongside general education at the post-basic level. The courses included are given in Table 7.1 above. Additionally, 34 trade or entrepreneurship subjects aim to develop semi-skilled human resources.

A parallel technical and vocational education system is run via technical colleges (Vocational Enterprise Institutions or VEIs). Students are admitted to such colleges after the Junior Secondary level. The admission process is flexible. Students can get admission to technical courses through aptitude tests and demonstrate a strong performance in mathematics and science. Exceptionally skilled students from artisan training centres may also be considered for admission. According to the NEP 2013, each state is encouraged to have at least one technical college offering advanced craft courses designed to train master artisans for supervisory roles in industry and teaching. The curricular activities within technical colleges "include computer trades, electrical/electronic trades, building trades, wood trades, hospitality trades, textile trades, printing trades, beauty culture trades, business trades and mechanical trades" (Goyol & Sunday, 2020, p.2).

Vocational and technical education faces several challenges in Nigeria despite clearly stated goals. Challenges are policy implementation, skills gap, insufficient facilities, outdated equipment, and inadequate funding, which hinder effective vocational education, curriculum relevance, and above all, perception and stigma attached to vocational education in society (Ubani et al., 2021)

Hobby and Life Skills Education

Developing Hobbies has gained increasing attention in recent years in schools due to the recognition of its importance in holistic development. Schools have integrated hobby and life skills education into the regular curriculum, ensuring students have dedicated time to explore and develop these skills alongside their academic studies.

In primary and junior secondary classes, students learn cultural and creative arts. In senior secondary classes, these courses are elective subjects under the Humanities. Moreover, in senior secondary classes, there is scope to learn diverse subjects under trade or entrepreneurship subjects linked to developing hobbies among the students, such as photography, tourism, furniture making, carpentry and joinery, catering craft practice, etc. Many schools offer extracurricular clubs and societies focused on hobbies. These clubs allow students to pursue their interests outside the classroom, interact with peers who share similar passions, and develop their skills in a supportive environment.

With the growing emphasis on entrepreneurship and innovation, Nigerian schools offer programmes or courses focused on creativity, critical thinking, problem-solving, etc. However, secondary education mainly emphasises the individual's cognitive skills development and does not provide sufficient opportunities to develop life skills. In practical terms, the senior secondary education curriculum appears to be short of practical opportunities for developing skills that could assist the individual in catering to his personal needs without much dependence on caregivers (Akpan & Udoh, 2022).

"The Nigerian adolescents get into life-threatening problems and take extreme steps such as violent acts, suicides, substance, drugs and alcoholism. Unprepared adolescents become so aggravated when they step into real life. There is an increase in the number of violence, political crisis, kidnapping, cultism, and young wastage. Nigerian adolescents need to be prepared at a very early stage with life skills and education regarding entrepreneurial skills and attributes. They have to be taught to imbibe life skills of problem-solving, decision making, self-awareness, critical thinking, interest and career option, adaptive and positive behaviour that enable the youth or adolescent to deal with demand and challenges of everyday life effectively" (Garba et al., 2021, p.174). Additionally, education on hobby development and life skills are not part of educational policy goals.

Moral, Social and Cultural Education

The NPE 2013 emphasised values that education should instil. These values include respect for individuals, faith in people's capacity to make rational decisions, the incorporation of moral and spiritual principles into human relationships, a sense of collective responsibility for the well-being of society, the promotion of the holistic development of children, and the acquisition of practical skills necessary for self-reliance. These values are directly related to morality. These policy

statements are designed to cultivate moral values in Nigerian citizens across various aspects of life. Religious studies also play a role in moral and value education when approached to teach good neighbourliness. While educational institutions in Nigeria offer these subjects, they must be taught in a manner that actively encourages the learning and application of moral principles to foster strong moral development within society.

Nigerian secondary schools face challenges related to student behaviour. Primary school pupils, in certain areas, are known to form and belong to cult groups. Routine fights break out in some secondary schools, preventing teachers from enforcing discipline effectively. Education, which should be a force for moral rectitude, sometimes struggles to maintain its integrity due to conflicts and disruptive behaviour (Njoku, 2015). Unfortunately, the overall level of morality within Nigerian educational institutions has not been consistently high, as evidenced by various incidents and reports. This may be attributed, at least in part, to broader societal issues, including fraud, bribery, corruption, sexual immorality, drug abuse, kidnapping, cultism, militancy, and other forms of terrorism, which are prevalent in the socio-political landscape (Nanbak, 2020).

Peace and Happiness Education

Nigerian schools have no formal peace education programme. The educational policy recognises education as a powerful tool for addressing developmental challenges and emphasises the importance of inculcating desirable peace norms among the youth. The absence of peace education in schools leaves a gap in equipping students with essential conflict resolution skills. Beyond formal classes, schools can organise peace-related workshops, seminars, and events. These activities will provide practical experiences and reinforce peace values (Atu, 2019).

Research has found that peace education is taught in Nigerian secondary schools through other subjects like Civic Education, Religion Studies, Citizenship Education, etc. (Olowo, 2016). Educating the Nomadic people is one of the Nigerian government's major steps in establishing peace. They, being marginalised inhabitants of Nigeria, often get involved in conflict and violent activities with farmers and other people. Under this scheme, Nomadic peoples are given primary education (the first six years of basic education) to bring them into the mainstream.

Summary and Conclusion

Nigeria is a culturally rich and resource-abundant country in West Africa, known for its complex history, political turmoil and economic challenges. The educational system is structured into four stages, with disparities in enrollment and a focus on vocational and technical education. Health challenges persist, particularly in child mortality and sexual health, despite efforts to integrate health education into schools. The curriculum emphasises cognitive education, but there are gaps in

addressing moral, social, and psychomotor aspects and peace education. Considering Nigeria's diverse challenges, there is a need for consistent policies and practices to ensure students' holistic development.

The all-round development of school students in Nigeria is still at the conceptual level only. Health and physical education are mentioned as part of the curriculum, particularly with the introduction of the National School Health policy in 2006. Skills education, especially vocational and technical education, is emphasised, but it is unclear if these programmes are compulsory and credit-bearing across all institutions. Education on hobby development and life skills should be introduced as an articulated component of the learning agenda for holistic development and focused attention.

Moral, social, and cultural education hold importance in Nigeria's NPE, but there is a gap between policy and practical implementation, suggesting inconsistencies in their inclusion and assessment. Although important, peace and happiness education is not formally integrated into the curriculum.

While efforts are being made to include these aspects in the education system, their implementation, compulsory status, and consideration in learner assessments vary across regions and institutions. Consistent policies and practices are needed to ensure holistic development and effectively assess learners' performance in these areas.

Nigeria's education system predominantly focuses on cognitive education, emphasising intellectual development and academic achievement. The challenge persists in balancing cognitive education with affective, social, and psychomotor education; implementing it has not been possible.

Efforts to integrate affective, social, and psychomotor education may vary across regions and educational institutions, potentially resulting in a lack of balance among these different aspects of education. However, the current state suggests ample room to improve this balance within the Nigerian education system.

Given Nigeria's history of conflict and ongoing issues such as terrorism, political unrest, and tribal conflicts, incorporating peace education into the curriculum could play a vital role in promoting a more harmonious society. Efforts to integrate peace education into subjects like civic education and religion studies are mentioned, but this integration has not been fully realised. Furthermore, the focus on cognitive education may overshadow the inclusion of peace education and other aspects of holistic development.

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8

Education as the Personal Growth Engine: South Africa

Suman Kalyan Panja

"Education is the great engine of personal development. Through education, the daughter of a peasant can become a doctor, a mineworker's son can become the mine's head, and a child of farm workers can become the president of a great nation."

– Nelson Mandela.

Abstract

South Africa has a distinctive landscape and is mineral-rich below ground. Primary education and secondary education are the two main categories of schooling. A national certification procedure is connected to secondary education. Both mandatory and optional subjective choices are in place. The entire system of education is multi-lingual. The use of integrated assessment methods is advised and practised in educational curricula. The school curriculum is linked to pre-vocational and vocational education. In South Africa, health and physical education are fundamental components of the curriculum. The curriculum of South African schools includes a variety of life skills instruction, except hobby education. Education for world peace and happiness is hardly mentioned. According to the research evidence, South Africa is far from reaching its potential for holistic development.

Keywords: South Africa, Education Information Policy, Action Plan to 2024, National Curriculum Statement, Schooling 2025, moral education

Introduction

Britain ruled South Africa for many years until independence on December 11, 1931. However, even after gaining independence, the British monarch remained the country's head of state. On May 31, 1961, South Africa declared itself a republic, breaking all formal ties with Great Britain and asserting its status as an independent nation (Marks, 2024).

South Africa, a nation that was once a victim of apartheid, stands as a testament to resilience and determination. The struggle for independence against colonial rule and apartheid, as depicted in Nelson Mandela's Long Walk to Freedom, is a powerful narrative of the nation's unwavering spirit. The official end of apartheid on 27 April 1994, after a series of negotiations from 4 May 1990 to 27 April 1994, marked a significant turning point. The African National Congress's rise to power on 27 April 1994, following the first democratic all-race election, is a powerful symbol of the nation's resilience, deserving utmost respect and admiration (Moldovan, 2020).

The Republic of South Africa is the southernmost African nation on the African Peninsula. The nation has 1,214,470 km^2 of land and 4620 km^2 of water. South Africa has 3,924 kilometres of coastline with cold water Atlantic on the west, warm Indian Ocean on the east, and Southern Ocean where the cold water of the Atlantic and warm water of the Indian Ocean meet (Molewa, 2015). South Africa's border length of 4,862 km is shared in the north by Namibia, Botswana, and Zimbabwe and to the east and northeast by Mozambique and Eswatini, respectively (WCE, 2024). South Africa's legislative and administrative centres are in Cape Town and Pretoria, respectively (The World Factbook, 2023).

As of the 2022 census, the total population was 62,027,503 people, with a 1.8% population growth rate from 2011 to 2022 (Department of Statistics South Africa, 2023); 96 males for every 100 females. About 69.5% of people live in cities (Worldometer, 2024). The average lifespan is 71 years. The ethnic composition is Black Africans, making up 81.4%, followed by Coloreds (8.2%), Whites (7.3%), Indian/Asian (2.7%), and Other (0.4%) (The World Factbook, 2023).

South Africa is an upper-middle-income country (United Nations, 2022). With an annual growth rate of 1.91% and a GDP per capita of USD13,500 US dollars, South Africa's GDP reached USD807.295 billion in 2022. The country's unemployment rate rose from 28.77% in 2021 to 28.84% in 2022 (The World Factbook, 2023). In 2022, with a 0.717 HDI value, South Africa ranked 110th in the UNDP Human Development Report (2024), 83 overall (happiness score of 5.422) on the Happiness Index, and 130 on the Global Peace Index.

The educational system in South Africa comprises primary, secondary, and higher education. (OECD, 2024). The overall literacy rate in South Africa in 2017 was 87%, with male literacy at 88% and females at 86% (Zua, 2021). As of 2021, the gross enrolment ratio (GER) for primary and secondary education was 98.12% and 111.80%, respectively, and the NER in primary and lower secondary education was 92.76% and 91.83%, respectively for both genders (UIS-UNESCO, 2023). There were 13.4 million students in 24,900 schools in South Africa (Statista, 2022), and 95% of those students attended public schools. South African school education has roughly 450,993 teachers. Out of 76 countries, South Africa ranks 75th in the 2015 PISA (OECD, 2015).

Educational Policy

South African educational policies have changed over time. Each policy overhaul emphasised multiple facets of education. Before 1953, many black individuals in South Africa attended schools by religious organisations. However, with the Bantu Education Act (No. 47) enactment in 1953, the government tightened its grip on these schools by decreasing financial support. This move prompted 'many churches to sell their schools to the government or cease operations' (K12 Academics, 2024).

In the 1960s, the number of schools available for black students in South Africa expanded; however, the curriculum was tailored to equip them for lower-skilled occupations. By the 1970s, 'per capita government spending on black education had plummeted to one-tenth of the amount allocated to white education' (K12 Academics, 2024). Consequently, black schools suffered from inadequate facilities, poorly trained teachers, and insufficient textbooks.

In 1974, the Minister of Bantu Education and Development issued the 'Afrikaans medium decree', which mandated that English and Afrikaans become compulsory languages of instruction in black secondary schools. According to this decree, physical science and practical subjects were taught in English, while mathematics and social sciences were taught in Afrikaans. Music and cultural subjects, however, continued to be taught in the learners' native languages (K12 Academics, 2024).

The National Policy for General Affairs Act (No. 76) of 1984 was intended to enhance education for black students in South Africa. However, it perpetuated the segregationist framework established by the Bantu education system (SAHO, 2023). Between 1984 and 1990, education became compulsory for all racial groups, albeit with varying age requirements and enforcement mechanisms. "School was compulsory for Whites from age seven to sixteen, for Asians and Coloureds from seven to fifteen, and for Blacks from age seven to thirteen (US Library of Congress) (Ocampo, 2004, p.1).

The apartheid government initiated reforms in the white education system in expectation of democratic changes. By 1991, white schools were mandated to adopt one of four 'Models': Model A- designated schools as fully private institutions; Model B- allowed state schools to admit Black students up to 50% of their total enrollment; Model C- schools received a state subsidy but were required to supplement their budget through fees and donations. They could also enrol Black students up to 50% of their total enrollment; Model D- schools were permitted to enrol an unlimited number of Black students (Meek & Meek, 2008).

In 1995, the 'White Paper on Education and Training' was released, outlining guidelines for education policy in South Africa. It emphasised that all South Africans should be able to develop their potential and contribute to society's development. It aimed to address historical inequalities.

The South African Schools Act 1996 standardised schools' structure, management, and financial support nationwide.

In 1997, the government implemented a new education system, Curriculum 2005, founded on outcomes-based education (OBE) (K12 Academics, 2024). However, by 2006, it became clear that OBE had not succeeded as anticipated and was quietly abandoned. In 2007, Curriculum 2005 was revised and reissued as the National Curriculum Statement Grades R-9. This updated version aimed to align with the country's social values articulated in the Constitution, emphasising the knowledge and skills imparted to students (Department of Education, 2007).

The South African Schools Act (SASA) of 1996 underwent amendments through the Education Laws Amendment Act of 2005 (Act 24 of 2005). This amendment empowered the designation of schools in economically disadvantaged regions as "no-fee schools". Furthermore, the Education Laws Amendment Act, 2007 (Act 31 of 2007) elaborated on the roles and duties assigned to school principals (GCIS, n.d.).

The Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) Act of 2000 (Act 52 of 2000) oversees ABET by regulating its framework. It mandates the creation, management, and financial backing of public adult learning centres, establishes guidelines for registering private adult learning centres and ensures quality assurance and enhancement within ABET (GCIS, n.d.).

The Education White Paper 6 on Inclusive Education (2001) sets out the Department of Basic Education's objective to achieve inclusive education throughout all educational stages by 2020. The Education Laws Amendment Act, 2002 (Act 50 of 2002) specifies that children can begin Grade 1 at age seven (GCIS, n.d.).

The National Education Information Policy (2004) aimed to improve the management of institutional data within education departments and ensure the availability of reliable national education statistics (Department of Education, 2007). In 2010, the national policy was established to create an equitable and supportive physical environment in teaching and learning. Its goal is to ensure that all students in South Africa have access to a sustainable and equitable physical teaching and learning environment, with future investments aligned accordingly. The Integrated School Health Policy, introduced in 2012, aimed to enhance and consolidate existing school health services (Department of Education, 2007).

Department of Education published the Government Gazette on 29th November 2013. Prime three objectives of the Gazette were "to provide minimum uniform norms and standards for public school infrastructure; to ensure that there is compliance with the minimum uniform norms and standards in the design and construction of new schools and additions, alterations and improvements to

schools which exist when these regulations are published; and to provide for timeframes within which school infrastructure backlogs must be eradicated" (Republic of South Africa, 2013, p. 6).

Furthermore, a well-organized action plan to enhance South Africa's basic education by 2025 represents innovative changes to the country's school educational policies and procedures (Parliamentary Monitoring Group, 2010).

The action plan for 2014 (towards the Resilience of Schooling 2025) was replaced by the action plan for 2019 (towards the Resilience of Schooling 2030). This plan comprises 27 goals. Goals 1 to 13 focus on the desired outcomes concerning learning and enrollment that the department aims to achieve, and Goals 14 to 27 outline the strategies and methods for achieving these outcomes. Five priority goals are marked with three stars to highlight their significance (GCIS, 2016).

In response to SDG 4, to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" (UN, 2015, p. 21), a 'Rural Education Policy' was drafted in 2017 to improve all provincial rural schools uniformly. This policy provides a framework for developing the unique circumstances of rural schools. It aims to be sustainable over time, improving access to education and quality, promoting equity, improving dropout rates and educational outcomes, inadequate resources, teacher shortages, and teacher absenteeism (DBE, 2017).

The Action Plan to 2024 (Towards the Realisation of Schooling 2030) aligns with the principles outlined in the 1996 Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, the National Development Plan, and various international and regional agreements. It emphasises the government's commitment to promoting social justice by ensuring equitable access, redress, efficiency, inclusivity, and quality education for all citizens.

Structure of the Education System

The South African school education system is organised into three stages: pre-primary (up to age 6), General Education and Training (GET) (6-15 years), and Further Education and Training (FET) (15-18 years) (Figure 8.1). Compulsory education starts at seven and continues for nine years until age 15.

Pre-primary

Pre-primary education in South Africa can be obtained from nursery schools, kindergarten schools, child care centres, crèche, and pre-school as a pre-grade (RA, n.d.). Preprimary education for children up to age six is optional in South Africa (StateUniversity, n.d.). This sector is predominantly dominated by the private sector, with limited availability due to insufficient provincial provision. Pre-primary education is neither free nor compulsory.

General Education and Training (GET)

General Education and Training includes Grades R to 9 (6-15 years) and is mandatory for all students. GET is divided into three phases (Western Cape Government, 2024).

The foundation phase provides compulsory foundational education for children aged 10 to 12, spanning grades 4 to 6. During this phase, students learn to read, write, and calculate in their native language while also beginning to acquire proficiency in another language (Southafrica education, n.d.).
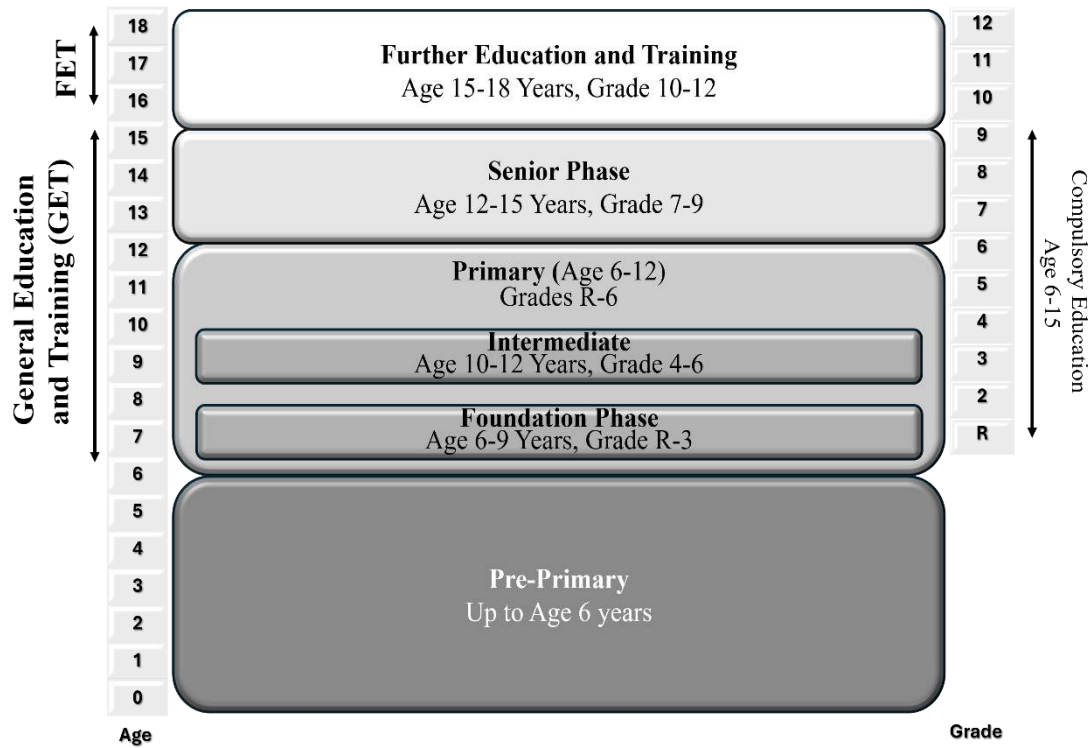

Figure 8.1 Structure of the South African Education System

Source: StateUniversity.com, n.d.; Southafricaeducation, n.d.; OECD, 2024 (Adapted by author)

The intermediate phase, offered at senior primary schools, focuses on education for children aged 9 to 12, spanning Grades 4 to 6. Students develop practical skills during this stage and build upon the foundational knowledge acquired in earlier years. History, Geography, and General Science are introduced, enriching their educational experience (Southafrica education, n.d.).

The senior phase is conducted at secondary schools, catering to students aged 12 to 15 across grades 7 to 9. This phase emphasises the arts, mathematics, technology, languages, natural sciences, and social sciences. After completing this phase, students achieve the 'General Education and Training Certificate' (Southafrica education, n.d.).

Further Education and Training (FET)

The FET takes place at senior secondary schools and lasts for three years. It serves students between 15 and 18 in Grades 10 to 12. Upon completion, students receive a Senior Certificate. The FET phase aligns with the National Qualifications Framework levels 2 to 4. To obtain the Senior Certificate, students must take public exams in at least six subjects (Southafrica education, n.d.).

Curricular Framework

"The first general aim of the CAPS curriculum is to ensure that children can apply knowledge and skills in ways that are meaningful to their own lives. The curriculum aims to provide knowledge in local contexts while still considering global imperatives. Knowledge, skills, and values are all worked on as part of the curriculum" (Twinkl, n.d., para 4).

The National Curriculum Statement Grades R-12 aims to develop learners with the following abilities and qualities:

- "Identify and solve problems and make decisions using critical and creative thinking;
- Work effectively as individuals and with others as members of a team;
- Organize and manage themselves and their activities responsibly and effectively;
- Collect, analyse, organise, and critically evaluate information;
- Communicate effectively using visual, symbolic, and/or language skills in various modes;
- Use science and technology effectively and critically, showing responsibility towards the environment and the health of others and
- Demonstrate understanding of the world as a set of related systems by recognising that problem-solving contexts do not exist in isolation" (Department of Basic Education, 2021a).

Different subjects are taught in different phases of the schooling. The pre-primary school curriculum focuses on language, mathematics, life skills, technology, arts, and culture.

The foundation phase curriculum consists of mathematics, life skills training, and one additional language in addition to the student's native language. Classroom instruction spans approximately 23 to 25 hours per week. Grade one introduces an additional official language.

In the lower secondary stage, students study six papers: social sciences, natural sciences and technology, mathematics, life skills training, and two languages. At this stage, students attend classes for 27.5 hours per week.

In the senior secondary phase, there are nine papers on home language, a second language, math, natural sciences, social sciences, technology, economic management sciences, life orientation, and

the arts. Four mandatory papers on home language, one other language, mathematics, life orientation, and three optional papers are listed as part of the FET phase. Students in grade 12 can receive a senior certificate after passing the required national exam. This phase comprises 27.5 hours of classroom time per week (Macha & Kadakia, 2017).

The policy document assigns specific weights to various disciplines when arranging a fixed number of weekly sessions. The classes of 6.0, 5.0, 6.0, 3.5, 3.0, and 4.0 hours per week, respectively, are allotted for lower secondary subjects such as home language, first additional language, mathematics, natural science and technology, social sciences, and life skills (van Staden et al., 2019). The seven math exercises per month in grade 9 and six language activities per month in grade 6 are covered by 53% of teachers nationwide, with a significant provincial variation. This is directly related to problems with time to a task, ineffective instructional leadership, and curriculum oversight and monitoring provided by district support (Spaull et al., 2016).

Integration occurs when instructors work together to interpret the National Curriculum Framework (NCF), choose themes, and select activities from six early learning development areas to include in their lesson plans. Natural, native, and artificial themes were utilised to compensate for the lack of instructional resources. Concerned instructors collaborate more closely to comprehend the goals of the NCF to satisfy young children's learning requirements and school preparation in early childhood care and education (Zama & Mashiya, 2022). Le Grange (2013) studied the intellectual history of curricular studies as an academic discipline. The study also explored the current state of curricular studies and the regional, national, and global factors influencing curricular research in South Africa. Additionally, the study examined the establishment of the South African Education Research Association (SAERA) in the post-apartheid era.

Teaching Learning

The government provided a comprehensive outline of how the teaching-learning process should be carried out. NCS recommended a variety of teaching-learning tactics, such as reading, writing, speaking, observing, autonomous and shared learning, group discussions, debates, interviews, role-playing, etc. Print media like textbooks, short stories, plays, novels, news articles, magazines, and posters are used as teaching-learning resources alongside ICT interventions such as radio or television broadcasts and audiovisual materials.

The vision framework, Schooling 2025, makes the following propositions:

- "Learners: Attend school on time every day and take their schoolwork seriously. They can access computers, a good meal, and sporting and cultural activities. They have respectful relationships with their friends and teachers.

- Teachers: Are confident, well-trained, and continually improving their capabilities. They are committed to giving learners the best possible education, thereby contributing to the nation's development. They enjoy job satisfaction because their conditions of service are decent and their pay comparable to that of other professions.

- Learning and teaching materials: These are abundant and of high quality. Learners and teachers know how to use computers in the school to access the information they need" (Parliamentary Monitoring Group, 2010, p. 2).

"In partnership with the Department of Communications and Digital Technologies, the DBE has identified 152 sites in 76 education districts to be equipped with virtual classroom infrastructure. Through this initiative, the Sector will fully embrace the digital revolution of remote learning. Districts can benefit through curriculum specialists' streamed lessons on digital platforms" (Department of Basic Education, 2021b, p. 9).

Mogashoa (2013) conducted a qualitative study investigating how teaching-learning policies are implemented. Members of the school management authority held divergent opinions on teaching and learning policies. Students face fewer learning challenges when taught in their mother tongue than in a second or third language. Lesson delivery needs to change from teacher-centric to learner-centric. The transformation of classroom practices by combining child-centred teaching and ICT was investigated. One of the key modules in the new national qualification programme for school principals in South Africa focuses on managing teaching and learning. Case studies of eight schools, primarily located in disadvantaged areas, illustrate that the management of teaching and learning often falls short. The current system does not adequately address the educational and social challenges faced by students and their communities (Bush et al., 2010).

Learning Assessment

The NQF recommended an integrated assessment strategy comprising formative and summative evaluation. The formative assessment process includes observation, immediate feedback, portfolios, simulations, workplace evaluation, and other components. Summative assessment is conducted through end-of-year oral exams and traditional paper-pencil (written) tests. The guidelines mention the credit system, with each credit denoting 10 hours of structured instruction (South African Qualifications Authority, 2000).

For each grade on each paper, NCS specifies a certain number of weekly interaction hours. For each grade, a fixed number of necessary formal assessments are meant to be completed each term. The NCS, similarly, creates a structure for each assessment paper for a specific grade. Formative evaluation receives 100% of the weightage at the foundation phase. The percentage of marks from

formative and summative assessments that go into the overall evaluation of a learner's performance in the intermediate and FET phases are 75% and 25%. In the senior phase, school-based assessments account for 40% of the marks, and year-end exams account for the remaining 60%. Report cards are given to each learner individually, and percentage marks in each subject are shown along with a competency comment on a seven-point rating system.

Lubisi & Murphy's (2002) main contention is that the residues of the past have significant influence over what, in the end, qualifies as "transformed" assessment practice under the current regime. The prevalence of a high-stakes summative discourse has slowed down. Quality assessment in South African schools gives educators an understanding of the standards and principles for learner assessment, which will assist them in creating and putting into practice solid, valuable learner assessment practices. These tactics will, therefore, support educational institutions' disciplinary goals and curriculum objectives (Reddy et al., 2015). The shift to an assessment for learning strategy has been hindered since 1994 because assessment policy has promoted a measurement-focused approach. This is partly driven by the unwavering dedication to using testing and exams in the classroom, together with internal and external national evaluations, as the primary benchmark for modifying instructional practices (Kanjee & Sayed, 2013).

Health and Physical Education

Health and physical education is part of the South African school curriculum. The policy mentions a structured curriculum, weekly instructional hours, teaching-learning methods, evaluation approaches, and the viability of credit transfer. Through a collaborative effort between the Department of Basic Education (DBE) and the Ministry of Health and Social Development, the Integrated School Health Programme (ISHP) was launched. All pupils in all school grades can access it fully. However, the ISHP is optional for students and not obligatory (Department of Basic Education, 2015).

Children are advised to engage for around one hour of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity (MVPA) daily to maintain their health and well-being. Students complete 35 minutes of in-class MVPA. Boys participate in in-school MVPA at a considerably higher rate than girls. As sedentary lifestyles become more prevalent, schools should play a key role in promoting physical activity (Walter, 2011). Materials for classroom-based interventions in physical activity and life orientation have been developed to be affordable and long-lasting.

Students participated in 45-215 minutes of MVPA during school hours every week, excluding lunchtime. Thus, a school-based physical activity intervention may improve students' participation during formal instruction and lunch breaks and have beneficial short-term impacts on their participation in physical activity (Naidoo & Coopoo, 2012). According to an anthropological study,

white children are more physically active than black children and are more inclined to participate in school physical education programmes (Mcveigh et al., 2007).

Skills Education

The Umalusi Council for Quality Assurance in General and Further Education and Training sets and monitors standards for general and further education and training in South Africa in accordance with the National Qualifications Framework Act 67 of 2008. Besides the National Senior Certificate (NSC), Umalusi is responsible for the National Technical Certificate (N3) and National Certificate Vocational (NCV) as per the provisions of the NQF. For NQF levels 1-4, Umalusi is in charge of the GET and FET qualification system. The occupational qualifications framework on NQF levels 1-8 is the responsibility of the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO).

A recession affected the South African economy from the middle of the 1970s through the 1980s. There was a significant increase in technical and vocational education to meet the skill shortages following the Soweto uprising and nationwide school boycott (Chisholm, 1983). The Department of National Education proposed that technology education be mandatory for the first nine years of pre-tertiary education and elective for the final three years. Results showed that if the "technological process" is the primary focus, technology education can significantly improve South African education since it can be transformative with high-quality instruction (Ankiewicz, 1995). The nation's curriculum improvements after apartheid were under scrutiny. It was mentioned that many technical and political skills are needed to implement ideas like OBE and the NCF 2005 at the macro, micro, systemic, and institutional levels. By considering both content and context, there is a need for realism and pragmatism in school reform (Cross et al., 2002). Skill development and education in South Africa is uneven and insufficient. While primary and secondary schooling is accessible to all, the quality varies widely between institutions. Higher education and vocational training are often prohibitively expensive, limiting access mostly to those who can afford it. Additionally, support for developing specialised skills is inadequate, further exacerbating disparities in opportunities for professional growth (Rhonda, 2023).

Hobby and Life Skills Education

The NCS stated that students' life skills education begins with the foundation phase and continues through the FET phase. The Department of Basic Education decided to introduce life skills education covering the following themes:

- "Relationships;
- Values, rights, culture and sexuality;
- Understanding gender;
- Violence and staying safe;
- Skills for health and well-being;
- The human body and development;
- Sexuality and sexual behaviour;
- Sexual and reproductive health.

The lesson plans are being tested in 1,572 schools across five provinces, including the Free State, Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, Mpumalanga and the Western Cape" (Business Tech, 2019).

However, the policy documents do not specify strategies for hobby development. Hobby development is possible only by coincidence through extracurricular activities and teaching-learning procedures.

Analyses of CAPS for life skills in the foundation phase (grade 3) indicate a lack of clarity in the curriculum's classification and the muddled epistemological orientations. When everyday knowledge is prioritised over the knowledge gained through different academic disciplines, the uniqueness of each field's focus gets lost. As a result, educators may be unable to teach students essential life skills or help them understand how the different components of a system are interconnected if they lack the language of the disciplines that support these skills (Dixon et al., 2018). HIV infections and learner pregnancies continued to be major problems in South African society. The DBE is 'testing new scripted lesson plans to address the issue and improve the "life skills" curriculum taught in the schools. Relationships, values, rights, and culture; gender awareness; violence and safety; health and wellness skills; the human body and development; sexuality and sexual behaviour; and sexual and reproductive health are topics covered in the new curriculum. Currently, 1,572 schools in five provinces of the country are testing the lesson plans (Business Tech, 2019).

Peace and Happiness Education

Peace and happiness education does not find a mention in the documents of the South African education policy, even though there was a great deal of ethnic violence and suffering during the apartheid era. The peace and happiness education is left to the individual. "Twenty-four years into

democracy, South Africa remains a country searching for peace. High levels of interpersonal, gender-based, and political violence, together with structural violence, continue to plague the country. Schools are sites of regular violent conflict, mirroring problems in the wider community. Despite this, peace education has not received priority attention" (John, 2018, p.1).

The African continent is continuously experiencing conflicts, such as the xenophobic attacks on black foreigners in South Africa, riots in Zimbabwe and Cameroon, and terror attacks in western and northern Africa and the Horn of Africa. Peace education from colonial times has perpetuated a Eurocentric perspective and has not resulted in lasting peace in Africa. It has been observed that individuals who are disconnected from their culture lack a sense of values and are more susceptible to their base instincts, which ultimately undermines peace. To truly achieve peace through peace education, it is necessary to implement institutional frameworks and reform curriculums to transform faculty members (Niyitunga, 2020). It is claimed that participatory art may be an ontological tool for peace education in South Africa (Harvey et al., 2021).

Moral, Social and Cultural Education

The need for moral, social, and cultural education is acutely felt in South Africa because it is a multiethnic and multilingual country with a conflict-ridden history. However, personal and social well-being is included in the school curriculum right from the foundation phase within the broad domain of life skills education (National Curriculum Statement, 2011).

Teachers must incorporate value education into their teaching and learning strategies (by DBE). The researchers continued to advocate the employment of appropriate rewards and penalties in the educational system to help pupils develop moral principles (Khathi et al., 2021). An empirical study investigated the integration of values education into the Senior Phase (Grades 7–9) Life Orientation (LO) curriculum in South Africa. Maphalala and Mpofu (2018) found that the school's LO curriculum integrated values eclectically using explicit, implicit, and critical approaches. Therefore, the school community was advised to maintain a diverse approach to values teaching that considers students' whole experiences. In South Africa, moral education has traditionally been valued highly by both parents and educators. A Christian philosophy of life has virtually always served as the foundation for moral education. Many passionate educators help students develop into loyal citizens of their nation by preparing them for life (Potgieter, 1980). The claims regarding the importance of moral, social, and cultural education in the South African school curriculum are marginally supported by solid research evidence.

Summary and Conclusion

South Africa's education system is divided into basic education, which includes primary and secondary education overseen by the Department of Basic Education (DBE), and higher education. The Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) supervises Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET), higher education institutions, and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges, previously known as FET colleges.

South Africa's educational policies underwent several changes. A white paper from the Ministry of Basic Education catalysed the policy revision 1995. Numerous acts then came into effect, including the Employment of Educators Act of 1998, the South African Standard for Principalship Act of 1996, the National Education Policy Act (NEPA) and South African Schools Act (SASA) of 1996, the Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) Act of 2000, the education white papers on Early childhood development (ECD) and inclusive education, the education laws amendment act of 2002 and 2005, the NQF 2008, the South African standard for principalship policy of 2015, and the action plan of 2019.

The basic and secondary education sectors comprise the South African educational system. Early childhood development is not included in the education phase. The age range is from infancy to four years. The learners' education may be formal or informal throughout this time. Most ordinary South African schools do not distinguish between bands and phases administratively. Most schools are categorised simply as either "primary" schools, encompassing grades R plus 1–7, or "secondary" schools, covering grades 8–12.

NCS provides instructions about the inclusion of subjects at each grade. The curriculum structure indicates the availability of multilingual education. Internal school assessments are given the required credit for inter-grade promotion up to grade 11. Only grade 12 students who pass the standardised national exam are eligible to acquire a senior certificate. To achieve the national senior certificate, learners must complete four mandatory subjects—two official languages, mathematics, and life orientation—and three electives. The real-world example demonstrated the delivery of subpart school education. ECD supports a collaborative learning approach that emphasises activity-based learning more.

The teaching-learning process incorporates reading, writing, speaking, observing, autonomous or shared learning, group discussions, debates, interviews, role-playing, disruptive caring pedagogy, technology-enhanced learning, and participatory action learning/experiential learning, all of which aim to develop the student's critical thinking and problem-solving abilities.

NQF offered an overview of the integrated assessment strategy, which considers formative and summative assessments. Assessment methods included traditional paper-and-pencil tests, oral exams, standardised national exams, and the possibility of credit transfer. NCS fixed weights for

formative and summative evaluation marks to evaluate student performance. Students' accomplishments are noted on report cards using a seven-point rating scale.

In South Africa, health and physical education are fundamental curriculum components. Regarding gender, there is a discrepancy between the policy and reality. The exercises include sit-and-reach tests, life orientation, physical education, and sit-ups. There is a racial imbalance in the participation of black and white students in school physical education programmes.

The government guidelines address education in pre-vocational and vocational skills. The country addressed the lack of skills among young people relating to the nationwide school boycott with the aid of technical and vocational education. The Department of National Education suggested making technology education a required subject for the first nine years of pre-tertiary education and an elective topic for the final three years. The importance of realism and pragmatism in school reform was urged to overcome the skill gap among children.

From the very start of the foundation phase, NCS proposed a set of guidelines for teaching life skills. There is no framework for implementing hobby education except for the creative arts. Instead, the co-curricular activities are left up to chance for the schools. Music instruction and autonomous science fair experiences positively impact school children's growth. Including hobby education in the school, curriculum is advocated to bridge the knowledge gap in government recommendations and promote enjoyable learning.

Even though there was a lot of racial violence and suffering during the apartheid era, there is no mention of peace education in educational policies. However, several South African scholars have argued for including peace education in peacebuilding (John, 2018).

The educational policy documents do not mention moral, social, or cultural education. However, personal and social well-being is covered by the broad category of life skills education. There is a technique for instilling moral values in secondary school students. Moral, social, and cultural education should be included in school curricula due to the context, history, and knowledge gap in education policy.

The NCS' recommendations are too ideal for actual implementation. The overall cognitive growth of students is hampered because of inadequate planning, infrastructure, management, and material resources. The ability of education to foster the qualities of a peace-loving, global citizen is limited, according to a study on inter-religious and interpersonal conflict (Ngabaza et al., 2016). The holistic development of students is still a distant dream. A complete evaluation by the stakeholders in South Africa is necessary, from policy development to their execution at all levels of school education.

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World of Learning (WoL) : Central Asia

Legend

- Kazakhstan
- Russia
- Turkey
- Turkmenistan
- Uzbekistan
- National Boundary

1 cm = 443 KM

9

Transformative Journey of School Education: Kazakhstan

Mrityunjoy Kaibarta

Abstract

The education infrastructure established during the Soviet era laid the groundwork for Kazakhstan's social and economic progress. The education system comprises pre-primary, primary, lower secondary, upper secondary or vocational, and post-secondary education. Attendance is mandatory from the last two years of pre-primary education until upper secondary school completion. Kazakhstan has enacted reforms, including a shift to a 12-year compulsory education system and a competency-based teaching approach. Efforts have also been made to enhance early childhood education and improve educational quality through teacher professional development. Student assessment includes external evaluations, national tests, and a criteria-based system. The curriculum promotes physical education and incorporates arts, music, and traditional Kazakh culture to preserve cultural heritage. Despite advancements, challenges persist, such as unequal access to resources between urban and rural areas and the need for improved teacher training and technology integration. Kazakhstan remains dedicated to delivering high-quality education for future readiness.

Introduction

Kazakhstan has a fascinating history that spans back to ancient times. Its lands were inhabited by nomadic tribes who played an important part in the Silk Road trade routes between Europe and Asia. Over the centuries, it was influenced by the Turkic Khaganate and the Mongol Empire. Later, in the 18th and 19th centuries, Kazakhstan became part of the Russian Empire. During Soviet times, the country was a key player in industry and agriculture. However, after the breakup of the Soviet

Union in 1991, Kazakhstan announced its independence, with Nursultan Nazarbayev assuming the role of its first president (Smith et al., 2024). Recently, the country has been dedicated to implementing political and economic reforms while also asserting its sovereignty on the global stage.

Kazakhstan, a large landlocked country (Worldatlas), is situated in Central Asia and Eastern Europe. Its northern border is shared with Russia, while it borders China to the east and Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan to the south. Additionally, it has a western border with the Caspian Sea. With an approximate land area of 2,724,902 kilometres^2, Kazakhstan is the ninth-largest country in the world (*Kazakhstan: Country Data and Statistics*, n.d.). The country's diverse landscape includes vast steppes, deserts, mountains, and the Caspian Sea. Kazakhstan has a continental climate characterised by hot summers and cold winters. Kazakhstan is comprised of fourteen regions, each further divided into sub-districts. In total, there are 170 districts. Notably, the cities of Baikonur, Shymkent, Almaty, and Astana are not considered part of any region. Each region is governed by its government, which is connected to the national government (Andreas, 2024).

The current population of Kazakhstan is 19,606,633, with a 1.08% growth rate (Worldometer, n.d.). The sex ratio in Kazakhstan in 2021 was 94.37 males per 100 females. According to Worldometer (n.d.), the life expectancy at birth in Kazakhstan is 70.4 years (females 73.9 years and males 66.6 years). Kazakhstan is ethnically diverse; "according to the results of the National Population Census of 2021, Kazakhs – 70.4%, Russians – 15.5%, Uzbeks – 3.2%, Ukrainians – 2%, Uyghurs – 1.5%, Germans – 1.2%, Tatars – 1.1%, Azerbaijanis – 0.8%, Koreans – 0.6%, Turks – 0.5%, Dungans – 0.4%, Belarusians – 0.4%, Tajiks – 0.3%, Kurds – 0.3%, Poles – 0.2%, Kyrgyz – 0.2%, Chechens – 0.2%, other nationalities –1.4%" (Republic of Kazakhstan, n.d., Para 9). Islam is the predominant religion in Kazakhstan, with a significant Muslim population. There are also Christian and other religious minorities. Kazakh and Russian are the official languages of Kazakhstan. Kazakh is the official "state" language, spoken by 64.4% of the population. On the other hand, Russian is known as the "language of interethnic communication" and is spoken in everyday business by 95% of the population (Hays, 2016, Para. 1).

Kazakhstan is rich in natural resources, including oil, minerals, natural gas and metals. Additionally, Kazakhstan has been developing its manufacturing, agriculture, and services sectors. Kazakhstan is strategically located and actively involved in international trade, especially with neighbouring countries. Transportation infrastructure development, such as the New Silk Road rail routes, has further boosted its trade connectivity. According to World Bank (n.d.) data, from 2022, Kazakhstan's GDP was $220.5 billion, and GDP per capita was USD 11,494.3, with a growth rate of 3.2%. Kazakhstan's unemployment rate for 2022 was 5.01% (Kazakhstan Unemployment Rate 1991-2023. n.d.). According to the World Happiness Index, Kazakhstan ranks 40th with a score of 6.23.

With an HDI of 0.811, Kazakhstan is one of the most highly developed economies by the UN definition (*Kazakhstan: Country Data and Statistics*, n.d.). With a score of 96.5, Kazakhstan stands at 73 in the quality-of-life index, reflecting the country's prosperity and high living standards.

In Kazakhstan, the Ministry of Education oversees the education system implemented at the local level. All students between the ages of 6 and 15 must attend school, while those between 16 and 18 have various pre-university educational options. In 2020, the adult literacy rate in Kazakhstan was 99.79%, with 99.81% for males and 99.78% for females (Countrymeters.info, n.d.). The net enrolment ratio for primary education in Kazakhstan is 99.08% for both genders, while the gross enrolment ratio is 100.32%. The net enrolment ratio for secondary education is 98.92%, and the gross enrolment ratio is 103.75%. The percentage of people completing secondary education and graduating are 98.3% and 34.08%, respectively (USAID, n.d.). According to the PISA 2018 report, Kazakhstan was ranked 62nd globally. At the beginning of the 2021/2022 academic year, Kazakhstan had 7,600 schools with a total enrolment of 3.6 million students (*Number of schools and number of students in Kazakhstan on the increase*, 2022).

Educational Policy

During the Soviet period, education in Kazakhstan improved significantly by eliminating illiteracy, introducing world and Russian culture, and fostering the development of science, industry, and agriculture. It also allowed women to participate in professional activities and secular education. The education infrastructure set up during this time became the foundation for the social and economic development of the country (Mynbayeva & Pogosian, 2014). The education system of Kazakhstan is based on the Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan (1995) and the National Law on Education (2007). The Law determines the objectives and principles of education, administrative structure, and system of public and private schools (OECD & The World Bank, 2015).

Mynbayeva and Pogosian (2014) categorised the reforms implemented in the school education system in Kazakhstan during the post-independence era into three distinct phases.

1. "1991-1995 – the stage of the crisis of the development of secondary education, with the reduction of budget on education. This stage ended in 1995 with the adoption of the new Constitution of Kazakhstan and the return to mandatory secondary education.

2. 1996-2006 – the stage of stabilisation of education development, with the preparation for the reforms and the transition to the 12-year school education.

3. 2007-present *(2013/14)* – the stage of the strategic development of secondary education, the implementation of reforms for transition to 12-year secondary education, the

introduction of a competence-based approach, and e-learning" (Mynbayeva & Pogosian, 2014, p. 159).

These phases were characterised by unique policy changes and approaches to improving the quality of education provided to students in the country.

The Kazakh Ministry of Education and Science unveiled plans to prolong the education cycle from 11 to 12 years in 2001 to bring the country's education system more in line with international standards. However, due to insufficient government funding, the introduction of the 12-year cycle faced multiple delays. In early 2021, the Ministry of Education and Science declared that the 12-year cycle would be gradually rolled out starting in 2023 (AllahMorad, 2021). While the nationwide implementation has been postponed, the 12-year cycle has undergone trials in a limited number of schools nationwide.

Between 2016 and 2019, Kazakhstan actively implemented the State Programme for Education and Science Development. One key goal of this programme was to encourage more children to participate in early childhood education and care (ECEC). To achieve this goal, the country has taken significant steps to increase the number of ECEC institutions, which has led to a rise in participation rates (OECD, 2018).

Furthermore, Kazakhstan is in the process of implementing a 12-year mandatory education system, commonly referred to as the "0+11" model. This model focuses on a more competence-based approach to teaching and learning, aiming to better prepare students for success in today's world. 2017 Kazakhstan updated the State Compulsory Standard (SCS) for Primary and General and Secondary Education to support this transition. Kazakhstan has also established evaluation criteria and developed curricula and programmes for primary and general secondary education as part of this update. These measures aim to ensure students receive a high-quality education that prepares them for a prosperous future (OECD, 2018).

Structure of the Education System

The Ministry of Education and Science (MES) sets and implements state policies on education, culture, public health, tourism, and sports. It also oversees the strategic planning and financing of the education system, including preparing education budgets (UNESCO-IBE, 2011).

The education system in Kazakhstan is divided into different stages. The first stage is pre-primary education for children ages 0 to 6. The second is primary education in grades 1 to 4. The third stage is lower secondary education, comprising grades 5 to 9. The fourth is the upper secondary or

vocational education stage, which includes grades 10, 11, and 12. Finally, post-secondary and tertiary education is available (OECD & The World Bank, 2015). The structure of education is provided in Figure 9.1.

School attendance is mandatory for children from the final two years of pre-primary education to upper secondary school completion. Education has been offered at no cost in public institutions in recent years.
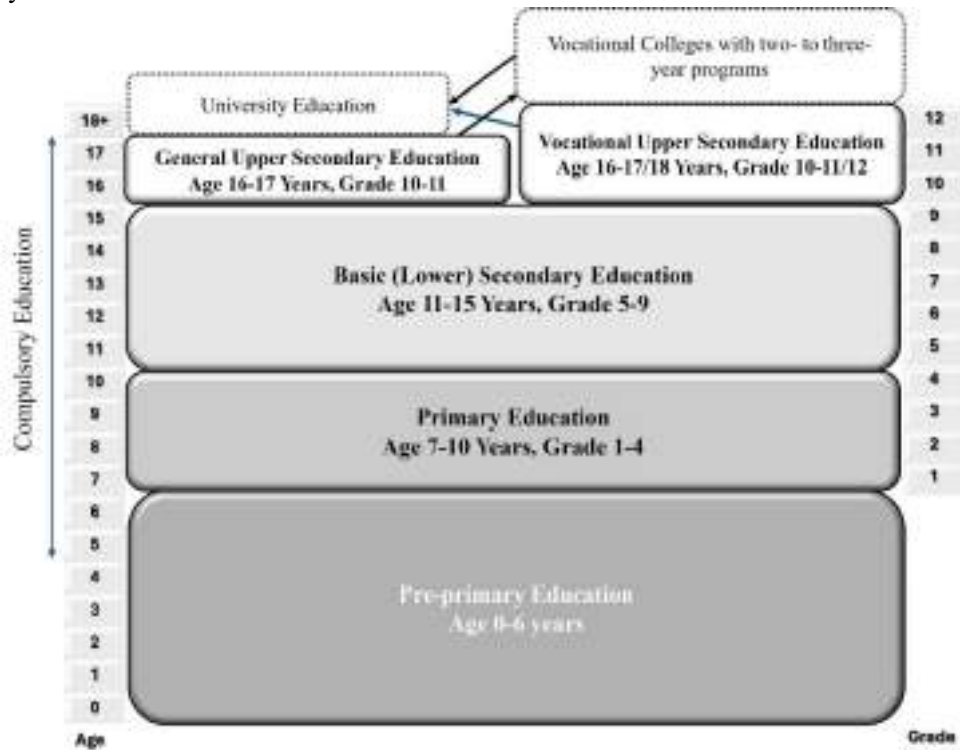

Figure 9.1 Structure of the Education System in Kazakhstan

Source: OECD & The World Bank, 2015 (Adapted by author)

Pre-primary Education

Early childhood care and education for children aged 0 to 6 are offered through a predominantly network of public pre-primary nurseries and kindergartens. It is a legal requirement, according to Article 23 of the Education Law, for children aged 5-6 to attend preschool education (UNESCO-IBE, 2011).

Primary Education

Students begin primary education at six or seven, consisting of a four-year programme that marks the initial phase of mandatory education. While entering school at six is feasible by passing entry assessments, most children begin at seven (UNESCO-IBE, 2011). Since primary and secondary education are obligatory, students can attend a public school without cost. Students are free to select the school they wish to attend, and preference is given to nearby residents (OECD & The World Bank, 2015).

Lower Secondary Education

The initial stage of Lower Secondary education commences at around 10 or 11 and lasts five years, covering Grades 5 through 9. In the case of the 12-year system, the lower secondary education lasts from grade 5 to 10 (AllahMorad, 2021). Some lower secondary school classes are situated on the same campus as the primary school (or higher secondary school) in the local area, while others may have a separate campus. Upon completing lower secondary education, students receive a certificate after passing the final examination.

Upper Secondary Education

After finishing lower secondary school, students can select one of three paths at the upper secondary school level.

- The General Education path spans two years, covering grades 10 and 11. This path is purely academic and is designed for students who intend to pursue further studies at the university level.

- There are two vocational paths: Initial and Secondary Vocational Education. The country's training schools offer the former and lycees, while colleges offer the latter (*Education in Kazakhstan*, n.d.).

Primary, lower, and upper secondary education can be pursued at a single establishment or at various ones (for example, starting with primary school and then transitioning to secondary school). Multiple secondary schools, magnet schools, specialised schools, gymnasiums, lyceums, and linguistic and technical gymnasiums have been established recently. Secondary vocational education is available at specialised vocational or technical schools, lyceums or colleges, and vocational schools.

Curricular Frameworks

According to the State Mandatory Education Standards (SMSE) outlined in the Education Law, general educational programmes establish the primary, basic-secondary, and general-secondary education content. These standards determine the curriculum, maximum academic workload, and the student's level of preparation (TIMSS & PIRLS, 2016). As part of the 2017 education reform, Kazakhstan plans to prioritise English as a foreign language and language of instruction for science, technology, and engineering subjects from kindergarten through upper secondary education (OECD, 2019).

"Kazakhstan's State Programme for Development of Education and Science 2020-2025 provides the framework within which the country pursues VET reform, including implementing the Kazakhstan Qualification Framework. Objectives of the Programme include improving permeability and lifelong learning orientation of the education and training system, modernising teachers' pre-service and in-service education, updating curricula, modernising VET providers' external and internal quality assurance, and expanding independent certification of VET graduates" (ETF, 2021, p. 4).

Kazakhstan's school and university year usually starts in September and ends in May or June. In Kazakhstan, Grade 1 students have 33 weeks of classes, while students in other grades have 34 weeks. Students have 24 to 39 weekly lessons, depending on their grade, and schools are open for classes six days a week. However, compared to most OECD countries, Kazakhstan has a shorter total instructional time in schools (OECD & The World Bank, 2015, p. 149).

Pre-primary

The ECEC settings in the country follow four government-approved curricula, namely "Algashky Kadam for 1-2 year-olds, Zerek Bala for three and 4-year-olds, Biz Mektepke Baramyz for five and 6-year-olds, and the State Programme for Preschool Preparation for children from the age of 5-7 in ECEC settings" (OECD, 2017, p. 1). Children at this stage develop their physical and mental abilities and prepare for primary school. This education level emphasises numeracy, literacy, drawing, writing, and music. (World Education Network, n.d.).

Primary

Kazakhstan's elementary or primary curriculum is designed to cover a diverse range of educational fields. The standard primary education curriculum emphasises nurturing children's reading, writing, numerical, language communication, and creative skills to prepare them for further academic pursuits. Primary education content is categorised into seven domains: Language and Literature,

Mathematics, Science, Humanities and Social Sciences, Arts, Technology, and Physical Education (TIMSS & PIRLS, 2016, pp. 3-4).

Lower Secondary

The subjects offered in the 12-year system are similar to those offered in the previous system. In Kazakhstan, lower secondary education is referred to as basic secondary education. The primary secondary education curriculum currently "includes arts, computer sciences, history, languages and literature, mathematics, natural sciences (such as physics, chemistry, biology, and geography), and physical education" (AllahMorad, 2021, p. 22).

Upper Secondary

The subjects taught in compulsory general secondary education include "algebra and the beginning of analysis, biology, chemistry, geography, geometry, the history of Kazakhstan, human society and the fundamentals of law, information technology, Kazakh or Russian language and literature, a foreign language (typically English), physics, and world history. Students in upper secondary education study a maximum of 39 hours per week. They are graded on a five-point scale, with 3 representing the minimum passing grade and 5, the highest" (AllahMorad, 2021, p. 22).

Since 2017, students in their final year of upper secondary education must take the final attestation or certification examination. This examination evaluates knowledge in four compulsory subjects: algebra and the beginning of the analysis, the history of Kazakhstan, Kazakh or Russian language, and native language and literature, along with an elective subject. After finishing their coursework and the examination, students are awarded the Certificate of General Secondary Education (AllahMorad, 2021).

Vocational Secondary

The vocational stream is chosen by students who enrol in specialised TVET colleges, which provide secondary and post-secondary TVET qualifications. Vocational secondary education programmes have a duration of three to four years, which is longer than general secondary education programmes. "TVET programmes are offered in more than 150 professions in agriculture, business, construction, education, health care, and industry, among others. As at other levels of the education system, MESRK controls the content and methodology of all TVET training programmes, developing State Compulsory Standards that define the subjects and curricula that can be taught throughout the country. Programmes typically contain a mix of practical, on-the-job training and theoretical coursework. Curricula are modular, allowing students to complete independent units in any order, and are intended to prepare students with the skills needed to enter the labour market" (AllahMorad, 2021, p. 26).

Teaching Learning

In recent years, Kazakhstan has undergone a significant transformation in its pedagogical approach, gradually shifting from a fundamentally subject-based model to a more competency-based one. This shift began in 2016, with private schools and the Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools (NIS) taking the lead in teaching high-order skills to their students. In 2017, the State Compulsory Standard (SCS) was updated to reflect this new approach, emphasising social and emotional skills like critical thinking and creativity and less on rote memorisation. Since 2016, updated textbooks have focused on competencies rather than simply memorising information, reflecting the country's commitment to providing students with a more holistic and well-rounded education (OECD, 2018, p.12).

ORLEU, Kazakhstan's National Skills Upgrading Centre, has offered professional development courses for teachers since 2011. These courses help teachers improve their professional qualifications, making them eligible for financial compensation and promotion.

Depending on their rank, teachers are required to attend seminars and workshops once every five years. The Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) funds these mandatory professional development activities. "There are five categories of teachers (previously four): teacher, teacher-moderator, teacher-expert, teacher-researcher and teachermaster). Teachers who want to upgrade their category must pass the national qualification test and undergo a stocktaking process" (OECD, 2019, p.415).

Like in many other nations, educational reform in Kazakhstan has been influenced by international practices and characterised by a dissemination model that flows from the centre to the periphery. One of the significant initiatives is the implementation of what is officially known as the Renewed Content of Education (RCE), which comprises a new skills-focused curriculum, a fresh assessment system for classrooms and schools (i.e., criteria-based assessment), new textbooks, and a new teacher professional training programme that supports "modern" teaching and learning approaches (e.g., collaborative learning and more project-based learning) (Yakavets et al., 2022, p.728).

Kazakhstan has recognised the importance of ICT and ICT literacy as crucial priorities for joining the international educational community at a governmental level, as stated in the State Programme of Education Development for the 2011-2020 years (MoESK, 2010). A programme has been developed to establish new school infrastructure, provide teacher training, and develop digital educational resources. The State Programme "Digital Kazakhstan" is being implemented to update the education system to align with international best practices (Nurgaliyeva et al., 2019, p. 2).

According to Mustafina's (2016) study, teachers have a positive attitude towards integrating technology in schools. However, the effectiveness of this implementation remains uncertain as

students reported that the use of technology during lessons was infrequent (Mustafina, 2016, p. 330).

According to Kurmangaliyev's (2021) report on technology integration in education, Kazakhstan's education system faces a significant digital gap between urban and rural education institutions. Rural schools suffer from a lack of adequate funding, which has resulted in poor quality internet and insufficient computer-to-student ratios. This digital gap has led to disparities in educational opportunities between urban and rural areas. Although most teachers recognise the potential benefits of integrating ICT into their classrooms, not all have had the opportunity to do so due to the lack of resources and support. Thus, addressing these funding and infrastructure challenges in rural schools is crucial for ensuring that all students in Kazakhstan have equal access to quality education opportunities.

Learning Assessment

The education system's performance is closely monitored in Kazakhstan using various tools. These tools measure the effectiveness of the State Programme for Education and Science Development 2016-2019. The External Assessment of Learning Achievements (EALA) and the Unified National Testing (UNT) are conducted to gauge the student's learning outcomes. International benchmarks like PISA, TIMSS and PIRLS have also been conducted (The World Bank, 2012, p.1)

As part of the 2016 educational reform, criteria-based assessment (CBA) substituted the five-point grading system (Turganalina, 2020). The EALA is conducted in Kazakhstan in grades 4, 9, and 11. Twenty per cent of sampled schools are chosen for this test, and the subjects include Kazakh and three others determined annually by MESRK. The results obtained are essential performance measures used in achieving national goals. Upon completion of grade 12, students must take a final exam for certification. This exam consists of five subjects, four compulsory and one elective. Another choice is the UNT, used for university entry and allocating state financial aid. This examination covers five subjects, with two of them being optional. In addition, there is a third possibility called the Complex Test (CT). This test provides an alternative path for gaining admittance to higher education and qualifying for state financial aid (OECD, 2018).

There is a growing worry that the present structure and methods for distributing and utilising assessment results do not adequately aid system assessment or contribute to the country's attainment of its educational objectives. Consequently, the Ministry is contemplating a plan to abolish the EALA and introduce a fresh nationwide gauge of student advancement, likely to be named Monitoring of Students Educational Achievements (MSEA) (OECD, 2020).

Kazakhstan adopted a criteria-based assessment system in schools, replacing traditional assessment methods. This shift has led to a new perspective on educational achievement evaluation methods

and technologies. As Kazakhstan's education undergoes modernisation, significant changes occur in schools' control and assessment activities, including goals, content, and technologies (Roza et al., 2020). The issue of assessment is one of the most pressing problems in both pedagogical theory and practice. Roza et al.'s (2020) study revealed that primary school teachers face difficulties applying the criteria-based assessment system in their practice, and they need professional training to apply this evaluation system.

Health and Physical Education

Physical education is an integral part of the school education curriculum of Kazakhstan. Kazakhstan's education system has allotted 102 hours annually for the Physical Culture subject, providing students with a comprehensive programme for physical development. The curriculum includes 19 hours for track and field athletics, 25 hours for sports games, 11 hours for ski training, and 17 hours for gymnastics. Moreover, students are expected to undergo 5 hours of swimming lessons per year. Additionally, a variable lesson with elements of ethno-pedagogy has been scheduled for 25 hours annually in Kazakhstan schools to provide students with a broader understanding of their cultural heritage.

The students' educational material learning effectiveness is measured by monitoring students' motor qualities and physical development, ensuring they receive a well-rounded education (Botagariyev et al., 2021, p. 862). Although the physical education curriculum focuses on the student's physical development, it does not include health education as a separate component. Physical culture is a credit-worthy programme fostering physical well-being, cultural awareness, and a love for movement and sports among students.

According to Botagariyev et al. (2016) study in Kazakhstan, "traditional class-lesson form of physical education, based on the standard, normative approach, no longer provides adequate compliance of pedagogical influences with the regularities related to the physical development of students; PE teachers working within the system adequately organise theoretical and practical activities of students, thus demonstrating ineffective teaching" (p. 3577).

Another study by Gurban et al. (2022) "showed that 71% of students are covered by intensive physical activity, which influenced the choice of a future profession, 23% -moderate PA, 6% - low PA. The data obtained indicate the relevance of introducing topics on promoting physical activity in teaching physical culture. Given the greater percentage of students from rural regions, considering the conditions of a rural and ungraded school becomes important" (Gurban et al., 2022, p. 38).

Skills Education

In Kazakhstan, prevocational skills are not taught separately. However, the curriculum includes technology, art, and physical education, crucial in developing essential motor skills. The art and physical education classes include hands-on activities encouraging students to construct artefacts and use hand tools. Upon completing nine years of primary and compulsory education, by age 15, students can pursue vocational training in their preferred trade and acquire skills education in that specific field. Students learn the skills they need to get a job through these TVET programmes (AllahMorad, 2021).

According to Article 17 of the Education Law, Technical and Professional Education (TPE) is essential to the secondary education system. The Ministry of Education and Science aims to train skilled technical and service professionals (OECD, 2014, p. 320).

Kazakhstan provides two types of vocational education: primary vocational education and secondary vocational education. Primary vocational education is mainly offered by vocational schools and Lyceums, concentrating more on vocational skills than technical ones. In contrast, secondary vocational institutions provide professional educational programmes. Students can receive secondary vocational education from colleges, which focus more on preparing students with higher level technical and professional skills (Mahmood & Baimukhamedova, 2013).

"The main purpose of specialised vocational schools and colleges is the training of skilled workers that is carried out in 160 fields. The specialists are trained according to state standards and educational plans and prepared based on the classification of secondary specialised education specialities. The specialities are established in the following areas: education, medicine, art and culture, restoration, jewellery, architecture, maintenance and reparation of telecommunications equipment and household appliances, plumbing, etc." (UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2012, p. 8).

Korkem et al. (2022) study revealed various barriers to studying at Technical and Vocational Education and Training Institutes, specifically for students with special educational needs (SEN). Such barriers are access problems, curriculum design, and choice of specialisations, while non-educational barriers are physical and architectural, attitudinal, and disability disclosure.

Hobby and Life Skills Education

In Kazakhstan's school education curriculum, hobby development is not explicitly mentioned. However, schools offer a variety of extracurricular activities and clubs for students to participate in, such as sports, arts, music, dance, science, and more. Students have the freedom to choose activities according to their interests and passions. Kazakhstan values its cultural heritage, and students engage in traditional cultural activities and arts programmes. This includes learning

traditional Kazakh instruments, dance, music, drawing, creative culture and more (UNESCO-IBE, 2011, p. 5), which can help them develop hobbies.

Life skills education is an essential component of the curriculum. The updated educational programmes aim to develop various skills in addition to subject knowledge and skills. These additional skills include functional and creative application of knowledge, critical thinking, research, Information and Communications Technology, different communication methods, working in groups and individually, problem-solving, and decision-making (TIMSS & PIRLS, 2016, p. 1). To teach students these skills, schools provide special classes or workshops. In Kazakhstan, civic education is given special emphasis, which includes teaching students about their rights and responsibilities as citizens and promoting civic engagement.

Moral, Social and Cultural Education

The government recognises the significance of moral, social, and cultural education in fostering responsible citizens and has integrated them into the national curriculum. Civic education is also integral to the curriculum to help students understand their citizenship responsibilities. This includes understanding the rule of law, democracy, and the importance of active participation in the community. These programmes aim to equip students with the skills and knowledge needed to become active members of society. A textbook for civic education was introduced in Kazakhstan in 2000 and has since been extensively circulated (USAID, 2003, p. 19).

In addition to the above, schools in Kazakhstan also aim to develop their students' social skills. This includes working in teams, resolving conflicts, and multiculturalism, essential for creating a harmonious and cooperative society. Social education encourages students to engage with their local communities, participate in community service, and become active members of society.

Since 2001, the Republic of Kazakhstan has developed the course "Self-knowledge" in spiritual-moral education. "The programme consists of several developmental activities and is focused on:

1. the principle of positivity, meaning the creation of supportive kindness, atmosphere and cooperation;

2. the principle of spirituality establishes a link between the higher values: goodness, beauty, health, happiness and a particular person, his inner world, the behaviour, and the meaning of life;

3. the principle of integrity and self-development, helping to build a positive future;

4. the principle of development and self-development, meaning the intensification of creative opportunities, the ability to self-knowledge and self-improvement;

5. the principle of individual approach, meaning the maximum consideration of each's mental identity and individual experience" (Abeuova et al., 2015, p.1).

This subject has significantly impacted the social-psychological characteristics of pupils' identities. According to research conducted by Aimaganbetova et al. (2016), pupils who studied the "Self-knowledge" subject exhibited higher levels of civic consciousness, patriotism, competence-based behaviour, self-assessment, and group unity. Indeed, "Self-knowledge" is crucial in shaping pupils' social and psychological characteristics (Aimaganbetova et al., 2016, Abstract).

Finally, Kazakhstan strongly emphasises preserving and promoting its cultural heritage. The school curriculum includes studying Kazakh history, traditions, and folklore, as well as the history and contributions of other ethnic groups in the country. Schools also offer classes in traditional Kazakh arts, music, dance, and literature, which helps to instil an appreciation for the country's cultural richness and diversity among the students.

Peace and Happiness Education

Although there is no clear indication that "peace and happiness education" is taught as a separate subject in the education system of Kazakhstan, schools have integrated it into their pedagogical processes and curricula. The teaching of values, ethics, civic education, traditional culture, and multiculturalism are all key components that contribute to fostering a culture of peace and happiness among students. By incorporating these elements into the education system, especially in "Self-knowledge", Kazakhstan proactively creates a more harmonious and joyful society.

The subject matter pertains to the Spiritual and Moral Education of Self-Cognition programme, which seeks to adopt a holistic approach towards human perception and identify universal values such as Truth, Love, Righteous Conduct, Inner Peace, and nonviolence. The principles of secular teachings on spirituality, namely Self-Cognition, emphasise humanistic orientation, human values, social interaction, national heritage, and nature conformity. The strategies employed in teaching "Self-knowledge" differ significantly from those used in other school lessons. The focus is on value-based education, personal-sense development, storytelling, and more (Mynbayeva et al., 2016, p. 154). Kazakhstan ranked 49th out of 165 countries in the 2022 Happiness and Life Satisfaction study (Sakenova, 2023).

Summary and Conclusion

Kazakhstan was a part of the Soviet Union before its independence. The period of Soviet rule had a positive impact on education in Kazakhstan. The current education system is based on the Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan (1995) and the National Law on Education (2007). The Ministry of Education and Science (MES) oversees the education system in Kazakhstan. Various strategies and planning documents, including the State Programme for Education Development in the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2011-2020 (SPED), ensure coherence and guide policy formation. Kazakhstan is transitioning to a 12-year compulsory education system called the "0+11" model. The State Programme for Education and Science Development for 2016-2019 aims to promote greater participation of children in early childhood education and care (ECEC). Students' performance is influenced by various factors, such as the language used for school instruction, which could be Kazakh or Russian. Additionally, the school's location, whether in an urban or rural area and the socio-economic background of both the students and the school impact students' academic achievements.

The education system in Kazakhstan consists of several stages. Pre-primary education is the initial stage for children aged 0 to 6. Primary education, which encompasses grades 1 to 4, is the next stage. Lower secondary education, covering grades 5 to 9, is the following stage. The fourth stage is upper secondary or vocational education, comprising grades 10, 11, and 12. Finally, post-secondary and tertiary education are available. Education is mandatory and provided free of charge from the last two years of pre-primary education until the culmination of upper secondary school.

Kazakhstan has developed a well-organized Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) system, and the academic year in schools and universities generally spans from September to May or June. Primary education emphasises numeracy, literacy, drawing, writing, and music. Lower secondary education includes computer sciences, history, arts, languages and literature, natural sciences, mathematics and physical education. Upper secondary education subjects are compulsory, and students have a maximum study load of 39 hours per week. Vocational secondary education programmes last three to four years compared to general secondary education programmes.

Although access to education and literacy rates in Kazakhstan are nearly universal, the quality of education has yet to reach a desirable level. Kazakhstan's education system offers a comprehensive programme for physical development, including track and field athletics, sports games, skiing, and gymnastics. However, health education is not a separate component of the physical education curriculum. Skills education is not taught separately in prevocational school, but technology, art, and physical education play a crucial role in developing basic motor skills. Students can pursue vocational training after nine years of compulsory education to acquire skills education in their preferred trade. Hobby development is not explicitly mentioned, but students are encouraged to participate in extracurricular activities according to their interests. Life skills education is an

important part of the curriculum, covering financial literacy, time management, communication skills, and problem-solving topics. Civic education is also emphasised, teaching students about their rights and responsibilities as citizens and promoting civic engagement.

The school system in Kazakhstan emphasises the importance of moral, social, and cultural education in fostering responsible citizens. The curriculum includes teaching values and ethics such as honesty, integrity, respect, and responsibility, as well as civic education to understand their responsibilities as citizens. Schools in Kazakhstan also aim to develop their students' social skills and engage with their local communities. The project "Self-knowledge" on moral-spiritual education significantly impacts the social-psychological characteristics of pupils' identity. Kazakhstan also places a strong emphasis on preserving and promoting its cultural heritage. Finally, teaching values, ethics, civic education, traditional culture, and multiculturalism foster a culture of peace and happiness among students.

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"Although Europe represents only about 8 per cent of the planet's landmass, from 1492 to 1914, Europeans conquered or colonised more than 80 per cent of the world. Being dominated for centuries has led to lingering inequality and long-lasting effects in many formerly colonised countries, including poverty and slow economic growth" (Stoller-Conrad, 2015, p. 1)[1]. **Britain, France, Portugal and Spain are the primary colonisers. Italy was a smaller partner.**

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10

Transforming Soviet Ideals to Modern Standards: Russia

Anamika Chauhan

Abstract

This chapter deals with educational development and reforms in Russia, the largest country in the world with an almost universal literacy rate. The Russian educational system is highly centralised, with the Ministry of Education and Science prescribing approximately 75% of the curriculum, while individual regions and schools determine at least 10%. However, there is currently a shift towards a more decentralised education system. The government has also increased funding for education and is working to improve teacher training. The country places a strong emphasis on STEM education and entrepreneurship. Russia provides 11 years of free and compulsory education. The approach to teaching and learning is transitioning from a teacher-focused model to a student-centred one. The Russian educational system extends beyond academics; it impressively balances cognitive, affective, social, and psychomotor education through experiential learning and skill-based programs. The curriculum framework mandates that physical education and sports be included as credit courses. However, health education is not integrated with physical education.

Keywords: Russia, STEM Education, Federal Law, State Education Standards, Digital tools, education quality assessment, Art Education, Vocational Education

Introduction

Russia was formerly recognised as the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (U.S.S.R) and was commonly called the Soviet Union. After the Russian Revolution, led by the communists, the Russian Republic was established. In 1922, it evolved into a Union Republic (Hosking et al., 2024). After the Soviet Union was disbanded in 1991, Russia and several other former Soviet republics

established the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). The CIS is a twelve-member coalition comprising Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan (NTI, 2007).

Russia has the largest land area of 17,098,242 km². It is divided into 85 federal subjects: 22 republics, nine krais, 46 oblasts, three federal cities, four autonomous okrugs, and one autonomous oblast (Taymaz, 2023). Finland, Norway, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Belarus, Ukraine, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, China, and North Korea are on the Russian borders. The country also has maritime boundaries with Sweden, Japan (via the Sea of Okhotsk), and the U.S. state of Alaska across the Bering Strait. Russia possesses the fourth lengthiest coastline globally, measuring 37,653 km (CIA, 2024).

Russia has a population of 143,957,079 (2024, Macrotrends) with a median age of 41.9 years and a growth rate of -0.49% (2024 est.). The gender composition is 46.51% male and 53.49% female. The life expectancy at birth is 67.4 years (male) and 77.4 years (female). The ethnic composition is 77.7% Russians and 22.3% others (including Tatars, Ukrainians, Bashkirs, Chechens, and Chuvash). The linguistic composition is 85.7% Russian and 24.3% other (including Tatar, Ukrainian, Bashkir, Chechen, and Chuvash) (CIA, 2024). Russian is the official language of Russia. There are 35 other official and 100 non-official languages (Sawe, 2017). According to a survey carried out by the independent Levada Center, 71 per cent of the respondents identified themselves as Orthodox Christians and 5 per cent as Muslims. Additionally, 15 per cent stated that they did not adhere to any religious faith. (U.S. Department of State, 2022).

On the development continuum, Russia is on the borderline. It is considered developed by some agencies, and developing by some others. Russia's GDP was $1.5 trillion in 2022. The GDP per capita in Russia is $10,200 in 2023, according to Trading Economics. The unemployment rate was estimated at 3.03 per cent in September 2023 (Federal State Statistics Service, 2023). The Russian Federation ranks 52nd in HDI out of 191 countries (UNDP, 2022), 70th on the Happiness Index in 2023 (Helliwell et al., 2024), and 158th on the Peace Index (IEP, 2023).

The literacy rate of Russia is more than 99.72%, with a marginal difference of 0.001% in favour of males. Russian schools have enrolled more than 17.3 million students – 7.5 million in primary grades and over 8.2 million in grades five to nine, 1.4 million in 10th or 11th grade as of 2021/2022 school year (Statista, 2023), and 264,000 children with mental disabilities. Russia has more than 70,000 schools (Facts and Details, 2016). Facts and Details also reported that there are some single-room, single-teacher rural schools as well. The NER at primary grades was 99.98 in 2019 (UNESCO-UIS, 2023).

Educational Policy

Compulsory schooling was enforced in 2007, requiring students to attend school until they reach 18 or complete Grade 11, whichever comes first (Vos et al., 2020). 'Primary general education, basic general education and general secondary education are compulsory levels of education'. Everybody can compete for secondary vocational education and higher education in state-funded institutions. Parents are responsible for ensuring children's general secondary education (Kobyakova, 2000).

The education system in Russia has undergone many reforms throughout its history. In the early days of the Russian Empire, education was primarily limited to the wealthy and the elite (Gill, 1969). However, after the Russian Revolution of 1917, the new Soviet government prioritised education. In 1918, the government adopted the universal, compulsory education policy for all children between 8 and 15 (Beck, 2020).

In the early Soviet years, the education system was highly centralised and focused on indoctrinating students with communist ideology (Holmes, 1991). However, in the 1950s and 1960s, there was a shift towards a more liberal approach to education. The curriculum was broadened to include more non-political subjects, giving students more freedom to express their ideas. Since the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991, the Russian education system encountered numerous challenges. The government cut funding for education, and many schools were forced to close. There was also a decline in the quality of education, as teachers were not paid well, and there was a shortage of textbooks and other resources (Medvedkov, 2006).

The Constitution of Russia, the National Doctrine of Education in the Russian Federation (Anonymous, 2001) till 2025, and the Law of Education (2012) are two pillars of Russian Education Policy. The main principles of the National Doctrine have been subsumed in the Laws.

Article 43 of the Constitution of the Russian Federation (Government of the Russian Federation, 2012), adopted on 12th December 1991, states:

1. "Everyone shall have the right to education.
2. General access to free preschool, secondary, and secondary vocational education in state and municipal educational institutions and enterprises shall be guaranteed.
3. Everyone shall have the right to receive free higher education in state and municipal educational institutions and enterprises on a competitive basis.
4. Basic general education shall be compulsory. Parents or guardians shall ensure that children receive a basic general education.

5. The Russian Federation shall establish federal State educational standards and support various forms of education and self-education" (Government of the Russian Federation, 2012).

The Federal Law of the Russian Federation of 29th December 2012 No. 273, 'On Education in the Russian Federation' (with the amendments entering into force on 01.09.2020) (NICA, 2020 stipulated the following objectives of education:

1. "Education must have a humanistic approach with human values as a priority;
2. Education must take the unity of the federal culture and educational space into consideration;
3. Education must be accessible to and adaptable for the effective development and training of all students and pupils;
4. Education must have a secular nature in the State and municipal education establishments; education must provide for the freedom of pluralism and
5. Education must have democratic values and recognise educational institutions' autonomy" (Vos et al., 2020, p. 2).

The Federal Law on Education is complemented by several other documents, including the National Education Standards, the National Curriculum, and the Teacher's Professional Standards. The National Education Standards set out the learning outcomes that students are expected to achieve at each level of education, and the Teacher's Professional Standards set out the professional knowledge and skills teachers are expected to have.

Another landmark is the introduction and implementation of the Federal State Education Standards (FSES). As stated by the FSES, educational materials outlined in the educational programme can be utilised by the institutions to ensure adherence to the content of the primary education programmes validated by the FSES (Mustafina & Biktagirova, 2016). The FSES has been mandated for the first grade starting in 2011, the fifth grade starting in 2015, and the overall secondary grades starting in 2020 (Vos et al., 2020).

Scholars have raised several issues about policies and policy implementation. A few of the issues are discrepancies in hours of co-official language learning in primary schools after the introduction of FSES (Mustafina & Biktagirova, 2016); the formation of a 'different form of sociality', the education society during the Soviet era (Andreev, 2013). Starodubtceva & Krivko (2015, p.209) considered the 2012 Law on Education as implementing a new pedagogical paradigm facilitating 'humanisation and differentiation of education, developing character and continuity of the curriculum' (Vos et al., 2020, p. 189). Russia is a multicultural society, and multicultural education

is a major issue in Russian education policy (Alexander, 2015). Kosaretsky et al. (2016, p. 1) pointed out that "the public policy of universal equality of educational opportunities …. was not provided with legal or organisational support. …the implemented components of the liberal and neoliberal approaches in educational administration led to the growth of educational inequality (by stratifying schools by their level of resource provision and the quality of educational outcomes). …This process has revealed the specifics of the Russian experience of neoliberal reforms in K–12 education and their adverse impact on educational inequality."

In 2012, it introduced a new national curriculum focusing on STEM subjects and entrepreneurship. The government has also increased education funding and is working to improve teacher training (Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation, 2012; Presidential Council for Strategic Development and National Projects, 2019).

Structure of the Education System

The Russian system consists of eleven years of schooling. The Federal Law of Education 2012, in Chapter 2, Article 10, specified the general education levels to constitute preschool education, primary general education, basic general education, secondary general education, and secondary vocational education (Figure 10.1).

Though compulsory schooling begins at 7, parents prefer to send their children to preschool to prepare them for basic education. Preschool usually starts at two and a half, but some preschools accept children as young as 18 months old. Since municipal preschools are heavily in demand and oversubscribed, many private international preschools have emerged (Expatica, 2024).

Education in Russia is free and compulsory for all children aged 7 to 17. It consists of primary general education (grades 1-4, ages 7-10), basic general education (grades 5-9, ages 11-15), and secondary general education (grades 10-11, ages 16-17). Students finish secondary general education at 17-18 (NICARM, 2017). Because of the 11-year mandatory education requirement, students who complete basic general education and opt for vocational school study general education subjects (similar to grades 10 and 11 but at a basic level) alongside vocational education subjects and skills (Kovaleva & Kuznetsova, 2016).

Secondary education has two categories, i.e., general and vocational. Secondary general education is designed to prepare students for university, whereas secondary vocational education is intended to prepare students for specific careers (OECD, 2020).
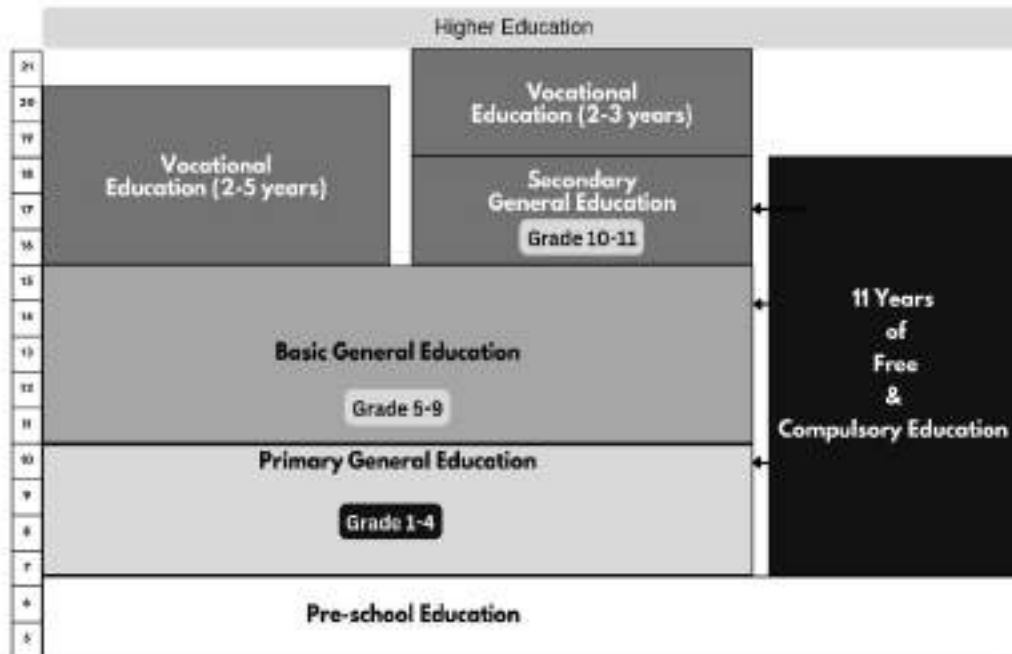
Figure 10.1 Structure of the Russian School Education System
Source: NICARM, 2017 (Adapted by authors)

Curricular Frameworks

Pre-primary Education

Various preschool programmes are available in Russia. The two most dominant trends are traditional and developmental approaches, though both aim at developing school readiness. The traditional approach is teacher-centric, limiting interaction between teacher and students and emphasising the transmission of knowledge and the development of desirable social behaviour.

The developmental approach emphasises how to learn rather than what to learn, child-child interaction, teacher-student partnership, and goodwill, where the teacher encourages initiatives of children to explore and investigate on their own (Nisskaya, 2018). Nissakaya's study revealed differential school readiness among children through developmental and traditional approaches. The development approach develops better school readiness – "they can ask for help, coordinate their creative intentions with peers, and empathise with them. Their self-consciousness is greater than that of their peers educated under the traditional approach. Also,

they demonstrate a greater voluntary readiness for school. Meanwhile, children who attended preschools with the traditional approach demonstrated a higher level of verbal-logical reasoning" (Nissakaya, 2018, p. 1).

General Education

The State Education Standards specify the compulsory subjects as well as study hours of students. The focus on compulsory subjects is on humanities such as Russian language and literature, social sciences, physical education, and natural science with emphasis on mathematics and technology. They study foreign languages, Russian history, world history, economic and social geography, law, political science, economics, etc., which form part of social sciences. Natural sciences include biology, physics, astronomy, chemistry, ecology, etc. Technology courses include drawing, home economics, sewing, cooking, metalwork, carpentry, etc. (NICARM, 2017). In secondary general education, students may learn specific profession-related skills.

Within the framework of state education standards, local authorities and schools can also frame a certain proportion of the curriculum. Schools can also design their curriculum to comply with the norms of the State Education Standards. Some school networks have developed advanced programmes aligned with the standard curriculum. These programmes are delivered through various methods, including utilising higher education instructors and resources to guide and support high school students in their advanced studies, providing specialised courses in specific subject areas, and offering comprehensive extracurricular programmes focused on achieving expertise in particular learning fields. (NICARM, 2017).

As mentioned above, the state education standards also stipulate the number of periods for each subject in primary, basic, and secondary general education, along with subjects and contents, with the requisite freedom for local authorities and schools to formulate a certain proportion of the curriculum (Tables 10.1, 10.2, and 10.3).

Table 10.1 Basic study plan for primary general education (years 1-4)

Content of Education	Hours Per Week for Each Year				
	I	II	III	IV	Total
Russian Language and Literature	9	9	8	8	34
Foreign language		2	2	2	6
Mathematics	4	4	4	4	16
Environmental Studies	2	2	2	2	8
Technology	1	1	2	2	6
Fine Arts and Music	2	2	2	2	8
Sports	2	2	2	2	8
Total (Max hours of study/week)	20	22	22	22	86

Source: NORRIC, 2005

Table 10.2 Basic study plan for basic general education (years 5-9)

Content of Education	Hours Per Week for Each Year					
	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	Total
Russian	210	210	140	105	70	735
Russian Literature	70	70	70	70	105	385
Foreign Language	105	105	105	105	105	525
Mathematics	175	175	175	175	175	875
Computer Science				35	70	105
History	70	70	70	70	70	350
Social Science (Economics and Law)		35	35	35	35	140
Geography		35	70	70	70	245
Nature Studies	70					70
Physics			70	70	70	210
Chemistry				70	70	140
Biology		35	70	70	70	245
Fine Arts and Music	70	70	70	35	35	280
Technology		70	70	70	35	245
Civics				35		35
Physical Education	70	70	70	70	70	350
Total	910	945	1015	1050	1015	4935
Variation, subjects set by school, region (6-day study week)	175	175	175	175	210	910
Max. hours of study	1085	1120	1190	1225	1225	5845

Source: *NORRIC, 2005*

Table 10.3 Basic Study Plan for Secondary General Education (years 10-11)

Subjects	Compulsory and elective subjects (2 years of study)	
	Basic Level	Profile
Russian Language	70*	120
Russian Literature	210*	350
Foreign Languages	210*	420
Mathematics	280*	420
History	140*	280
Sport	140*	280
Social science	70*	210
Economics	35*	140
Law	35*	140
Geography	70	120
Physics	140*	350
Chemistry	70*	210

Biology	70	210
Computer science	70	280
Art	70	210
Technology	70	280
Civics	35	140
Total	**Maximum 2100**	
Subjects set by region	140	
Subjects set by school	Min 280	
Total	**Up to 2520**	

*Non-variable Part (Compulsory Subjects)

Note: Years 10 and 11 are the profile teaching stage. Students can choose a profile (group of subjects) for advanced-level education. The compulsory subjects will be instructed at the basic level.

Source: NORRIC, 2005

Notably, the Ministry of Education prescribes an approximate curriculum of about 75 per cent and at least 10 per cent each by region and school. The number of hours per subject and per year may vary.

Except in preschool education, Russian is the medium of instruction in all accredited institutions. The principal language of instruction is Russian. However, as per the law of the land, citizens enjoy the right to ask to be taught in their native language 'within the range of other possibilities offered by the educational institutions' (Lazaretnaya, 2012).

Students take examinations and are certified at two levels – (a) a Certificate of Basic General Education after basic general education (grade 9) and (b) on completion of secondary general education (grade 11) get a Certificate of Secondary General Education (UNESCO-APNNIC, 2020). The Certificate of Basic Education entitles students to seek admission in secondary general education and /or technical and vocational education. Students, thus certified, have to take one year of additional training to become equivalent to secondary general graduates, explore secondary general education, and have the right to take Unified State Exams (USE) (USSEQ, n.d., p. 3). Public or private schools must undergo state accreditation procedures held by the local authorities. Accredited institutions are authorised to issue nationally recognised school leaving certificates.

The education system in Russia is constantly evolving, and the Federal Law on Education is periodically amended to reflect changes in society's needs. The most recent amendments were adopted in 2021. There is a strong focus on STEM education, a growing emphasis on lifelong learning, and a more decentralised education system.

Teaching Learning Process

Historically, Russian education has favoured a teacher-centred approach, with the teacher serving as the primary authority figure in the classroom. While this approach is changing to incorporate more student-centred methods, teachers still play a central role in imparting knowledge and guiding learning activities. Traditional didactic instruction, characterised by direct teaching and information dissemination by the teacher, remains prevalent in Russian classrooms, especially for foundational concepts and subjects.

In the early years after the Soviet Union's dissolution (1980-1990), Russian teachers embraced developmental learning principles to foster various student traits and skills that are now known as "21st-century skills." Humanistic pedagogy and collective learning gained significant traction among educators during this time, contributing to a nationwide community of innovative teachers and educators. These professionals outlined their shared goals and the key instructional and curricular methods of progressive education in their "Manifesto for the Pedagogy of Cooperation" (Froumin & Remorenko, 2020, pp. 237-238).

There is a growing recognition of the importance of interactive teaching methods such as group discussions, cooperative learning, and hands-on activities. Project-based learning approaches are gaining popularity in Russian schools as they encourage students to collaborate, investigate real-world problems, and develop solutions independently (Froumin & Remorenko, 2020).

Russian schools are implementing digital tools and resources to enrich the teaching and learning experiences as technology in education is rising. Students in Russia have been learning IT in classrooms since 1986; thus, integrating digital educational programmes, internet resources, and email is becoming increasingly common in pedagogical practices. Russian teachers have gained a lot of practical teaching experience with ICT. Though ICT classes are primarily conducted in secondary schools (12-16 years), primary school students are exposed to the fundamentals of computer literacy. The Russian Federal Education Agency encourages schools to create an educational curriculum for educating students about computer technology. In line with federal recommendations, ICT should be integrated into the syllabus starting from the 2nd grade (Intel, 2009).

Due to the recognition of the importance of establishing a proper relationship between the participants of the educational process, new teaching formats are emerging in Russian school education. Additionally, electronic resources and technologies are becoming increasingly prominent in training effective approaches to information processing (textual and non-textual) (Andreeva et al., 2020). Russian schools combine traditional teaching practices and modern

pedagogical approaches to create a dynamic learning environment that fosters academic excellence, critical thinking, and holistic development. By embracing innovation while maintaining the fundamental principles of education, Russian educators are continuously adapting and evolving to meet the changing needs of students in the 21st century, ensuring a bright future for education in Russia.

Learning Assessment

Assessments are utilised by the Russian Federation in education to aid the learning process and achieve new education outcomes demanded by schools. The educational achievement assessment system measures subject and meta-subject results. In recent years, a significant emphasis has been placed on evaluating students' functional literacy. A regional quality assessment system is presently under development in all regions of the Russian Federation. In addition to national examinations and federal and regional works, every primary, basic, or secondary school may conduct an exam on any subject (Kovaleva et al., 2021, p. 9).

Monitoring students' knowledge at different levels of school education and the prompt identification and resolution of problems in the school education system in terms of subjects, schools, and regions is made possible by the All-Russia unified system of education quality assessment. The national examination conducted at the end of 11th grade is the first and most important procedure introduced within the framework of this system. This exam, known as the Unified State Examination (USE), has been compulsory for all school leavers since 2009. The State Final Certification of the 9th grades (SFC-9) is the second important procedure of the education quality assessment system. The Main State Examination (BSE) is the main form of this certification. The National Study of Education Quality (NSEQ) and All-Russian Testing is used to conduct intermediate assessments of students in different subjects and grades (USSEQ, n.d., p. 3).

"Formative and summative assessments are conducted to ensure compliance of student achievement with the curriculum requirements and to diagnose students' progress. The school chooses the timing and form of assessment. Sometimes, the assessment results are used for teacher or school accreditation. Generally, the summative assessment for each school subject takes place at the end of each school year. Assessment formats include oral examinations, short answers, extended responses, essay questions, and multiple-choice tests. Schools usually use individual tests made by teachers, locally developed tests, or tests developed centrally and published as special supplementary materials" (Kovaleva et al., 2021, p. 11).

Health and Physical Education

The curriculum framework section observed that physical education and sports are mandatory in the Russian education curriculum and are credit courses. However, health education is not combined with physical education. Two hours per week are allocated for sports in Primary General Education (Grades I-IV) and 350 hours for physical education in basic general education (Grades V-IX). Physical education classes are compulsory three days per week, from 1st to 11th grade in Russia. There are schools in Russia solely dedicated to sports, called Gymnasia. Such schools prioritise sports over general education classes. Given the variety of schools in Russia, it can be challenging to establish a PE curriculum (Bastuga, 2019).

Since 2019, two projects have been put in place by the Federal Government of the Russian Federation: "Strengthening Public Health" and "Sport is the Norm of Life". These projects encourage citizens to adopt a healthier lifestyle, including healthy eating habits, increasing physical activity, and reducing alcohol, tobacco, and nicotine-containing products. In 2020, the government of the Russian Federation (2020) developed a Strategy for the Development of Physical Culture and Sport in the country, which seeks to establish a coordinated State policy on physical activity and sports at the federal, regional, and municipal levels. The Strategy's goal is to promote and cultivate a culture and values of healthy living as the basis for society's sustainable development and the population's quality of life. The Strategy is based on intersectoral and cross-sectoral cooperation and the coordination and consolidation of activities between federal and regional executive authorities, local authorities, civil society, scientific and educational expert organisations, and nongovernmental organisations throughout the Russian Federation.

Skills Education

There is no separate provision for skills education in the Russian school education curriculum. Skills are developed through academic and cocurricular subjects (World Bank, 2020). Art education is an important part of the school curriculum in Russia, from primary to secondary general education. Students get to learn and experience different types of art, such as music, visual arts, and performing arts. This helps them to be creative, express themselves, and appreciate their culture. Physical education is also an essential part of the school curriculum in Russia. Students participate in sports such as gymnastics, swimming, and track and field. This helps them to stay healthy and fit, and it also teaches them teamwork and discipline.

Technology and computer science are also integral to the Russian school education curriculum. Developing computing and digital skills in young children is necessary to thrive in this 21st century. In addition to traditional academic subjects, teachers in Russian schools also focus on teaching students important soft skills, such as communication, teamwork, leadership, empathy, and respect

for diversity. These skills are essential for students to succeed in school and life. The Ministry of Education in Russia provides guidelines for what should be taught in schools, but schools and teachers have some flexibility in teaching these skills. This allows schools to tailor their curriculum to the needs of their students.

The education system includes both secondary-level and post-secondary vocational programmes. These programmes are mainly taught at institutions called technikums and colleges. "Basic vocational programmes at the secondary level are entered based on the Certificate of Basic Secondary Education (grade 9) and are between one and four years long. Programmes focus on applied training but may also cover the general secondary education curriculum. Students who have completed general upper-secondary education can enrol in shortened versions of these programmes, typically one to 1.5 years. The final credential is the Diplom o Nachalnom Professionalnom Obrazovanii (Diploma of Vocational Education). It gives access to higher-level vocational education programmes and specialised employment, mostly in blue-collar occupations, such as carpentry, tailoring, cookery, or automotive technology" (Potapova, 2017).

Hobby and Life Skills Education

Hobby development is not a separate subject of the Russian education system. However, art education has always been important to the Russian education system. In primary school, students are introduced to various art forms, such as drawing, painting, and music (Aristova & Rivchun, 2019). In secondary school, students can take more specialised art courses, such as sculpture, photography, or design. In addition to art education, Russian schools also offer a variety of extracurricular activities that can help students develop their hobbies. These activities include sports clubs, drama clubs, and music ensembles. These activities allow students to learn new skills, meet new people, and have fun. Some of the most popular hobbies among Russian students are music, art, sports, reading, and writing. These hobbies allow students to express themselves creatively, learn new skills, and stay active and healthy.

The Russian school education curriculum does not include a separate course or subject specifically focused on developing life skills. Instead, these essential skills are integrated into the teaching and learning across various academic and extracurricular subjects such as civics, technology, arts, computer science, and foreign languages. As per the Russian State Educational Standards, teachers are responsible for imparting literacy skills and fostering their students' all-round personality development. However, the practical implementation of these standards shows that the school system is predominantly oriented towards academic achievement and may not consistently priorities the recognition and support of each student's strengths (Shults & Bessarabova, 2018).

Peace and Happiness Education

The issue of peace and international understanding as a means of peacebuilding has evolved from the Czarist, Marxist, and Leninist Soviet Union to the dismantling of Soviet Russia into the formation of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). The emphasis has been on international understanding as a measure of peace education and peacebuilding (Voskresenskaya, 1994). For international understanding, cooperation, and peace, the emphasis was on cooperation between the workers and the oppressed worldwide.

Peace and happiness education needs to be explicitly integrated into the curriculum in Russian schools. "PISA 2018 revealed that in Russia, 37% of students reported being bullied at least a few times a month compared to 23% on average across OECD countries" (OECD, 2021, p. 6). However, there is a growing recognition of the importance of promoting emotional well-being and positive social relationships among students. Schools in Russia often aim to create a supportive and inclusive environment that contributes to students' overall well-being. This is done through social and emotional learning (SEL) programmes, which teach students emotional regulation, self-awareness, empathy, and conflict-resolution skills. Schools in Moscow strongly 'focus on social and emotional skills and follow the government's guidelines for incorporating social and emotional learning across all levels of education' (OECD, 2021, p. 6). Schools also encourage students to participate in community service activities and civic engagement.

Peace and happiness education is necessary to develop the skills to build positive relationships, resolve conflicts peacefully, and contribute to a more just and equitable society. It can also help students cope with stress and adversity and build resilience. There are challenges to peace and happiness education, such as the need for a national curriculum for SEL and a shortage of trained teachers.

Moral, Social and Cultural Education

Moral education in Russia is a widely discoursed theme that includes neo-Kantism (Vladimirov & Lebedeva, 2021) and religious education (Ozhiganova, 2019). Moral, social, and cultural education is an important aspect of school education in Russia. Schools teach students about moral values, social skills, and cultural understanding to foster their holistic development and active participation in society. This is done through various methods, such as values education, social skills training, and cultural awareness programmes. Civic education is included in the grade VIII curriculum. Schools also encourage students to participate in extracurricular activities that promote these values, such as community service and leadership programmes. Moral, social, and cultural education equips students with the skills necessary to be responsible citizens, coexist peacefully with others, and contribute positively to society. It also helps

students develop a sense of identity and belonging while fostering an appreciation for the richness of human culture.

Summary and Conclusion

Russia has a population of 143,957,079 million (as estimated in 2024) and, geographically, is the largest country in the world. The literacy rate in Russia is almost universal. The Russian educational system is a well-structured and comprehensive framework that aims to provide students with an all-round and demanding learning experience. The Russian educational system is sectioned into different stages, starting with preschool and going up to primary, middle, high school, and higher secondary education. Each level has unique goals and objectives, progressively ensuring knowledge and skills develop. The Russian educational system is highly centralised, with the Ministry of Education and Science setting the curriculum and standards for all schools.

The curriculum is designed to include a range of subjects, such as core, elective, and optional courses. The primary focus of the education system is to develop foundational skills, critical thinking, practical knowledge, problem-solving abilities, and interdisciplinary learning, which will equip students for further education and the workforce. The system greatly emphasises core subjects like Russian, mathematics, and sciences, with a special emphasis on STEM education and extracurricular activities. The STEM education programme is noteworthy for preparing students for technical fields and innovation. Extracurricular activities complement academic learning, while vocational education options cater to diverse career paths. The Russian education system aims to equip students with the necessary skills and competencies to thrive in an ever-evolving global landscape. The Ministry of Education prescribes an approximate curriculum of about 75 per cent, and at least 10 per cent decided each by region and school.

There are school networks that offer advanced programmes based on the Basic curriculum and offered more than one way, such as through schools where higher education teachers and facilities are utilised to tutor and mentor senior grade students, offering advanced courses in selected disciplines, and with well-developed out-of-school programmes giving mastery in certain learning domains (NICARM, 2017). The way teaching and learning occur is shifting from teacher-focused to student-focused. It is now widely recognised that interactive teaching methods, such as group discussions, cooperative learning, hands-on activities, and Project-based learning approaches, are crucial. Electronic resources, ICT, and technologies are increasingly becoming popular and have been incorporated into teaching-learning.

In Russia, schools use formative and summative assessments to evaluate students' progress. Assessment tools include short-answer, oral examinations, multiple-choice tests and extended-response or essay questions. Schools utilise tests created by teachers, locally developed tests, or centrally published supplementary materials.

The Russian education system prioritises the development of various skills by incorporating art, physical education, and skill-building programmes. There is an emphasis on cognitive education. The emphasis on developing hobbies, life skills, peace, and happiness education needs consideration for all-round development in the academic domain. The efforts to balance cognitive, affective, social, and psychomotor education through experiential learning and skill-based programmes are impressive. The unique approach of integrating skill-building courses into the curriculum and considering them for assessment is a forward-thinking one that recognises the importance of holistic education for the overall growth of students.

To summarise, the strong emphasis on foundation subjects like mathematics, science, literature, rigorous examination, and assessment can lead to cognitive challenges and overload. Maybe this cognitive challenge help the development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Nonetheless, Russian education provides opportunities for students to participate in co-curricular activities, sports, arts and cultural events, vocational training, and practical skills education, which are integrated into the curriculum to facilitate holistic development. Notwithstanding the cognitive load, Russian education actively promotes a holistic learning experience for students' development.

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Comparative Education

"The French scholar, Marc-Antoine Jullien (1775-1848), is regarded as the father of the modern science of comparative education for his work, Plan and Preliminary Views for Work in Comparative Education (1816-17). Jullien's original manuscript was written in French in 1816–1817 and was not published as a book during his lifetime. The English translation, titled "Plan and Preliminary Views for a Work on Comparative Education," was first published by Columbia University, New York, in 1964, edited and translated by Fraser.

Comparative education as a subject of serious study emerged in the modern era between the two world wars. Two foundational books were Isaac Kendal's Comparative Education (1933) and Nicholas Hans' Comparative Education, published in 1949.

However, the elements of comparative education can be traced back to travelers' tales. Marco Polo's story is well known. Plato compared Greek and Spartan education and recommended incorporating elements of Spartan physical education into Greek education. Scholars have classified the developments in comparative education into several phases, from travelers' tales to the phase of heterogeneity in the 1990s. Throughout the evolution of the discipline, the purpose of comparative education has also changed and developed. The major purposes include the description of education in different countries, interpretation, explanation, and evaluation of the system, as well as the application of knowledge in educational planning, constructing the fields of educational studies, and furthering philanthropic ideals, such as serving and improving the state of humanity (Wolhuter, 2021)" (Mukhopadhyay, 2025).

11

Challenges of Implementing Democratic-Secular and Inclusive Education: Turkey

Khaleda Gani Dutt
Mina Sedem

Abstract

At the crossroads of Asia and Europe, Turkey has the 19th largest global economy with a GDP of $906 billion. Despite its efforts, the Turkish Government has not successfully involved citizens in the education policy-making process, resulting in a lack of stakeholder participation, which hinders the implementation of necessary reforms. This case study provides an overview of Turkey's education system and emphasises the need to democratise and modernise the educational system. It suggests that focusing on education reforms related to human rights, citizenship, and democracy, which underpin secularism and inclusive education, is invaluable in creating an educational environment that encourages diversity and offers equal educational opportunities.

Keywords: Turkey, inclusive education, sustainable education, secular education, global citizenship

Introduction

Turkey, also called 'Türkiye', occupies a unique geographic position in Asia and partly in Europe. The total area of Turkey is 780,000 km^2, and the coastline is 8372 km (Columbia University, n.d.). Several countries and water bodies border Turkey. To the north is the Black Sea, while Armenia and Georgia are to the northeast. Azerbaijan and Iran are to the east, and Iraq and Syria are to the southeast. The Mediterranean and Aegean Seas are to the southwest and west, and to the northwest are Greece and Bulgaria. Turkey has 81 administrative provinces and seven geographical regions (Eurydice, 2022).

"The modern Turkish republic, founded in 1923 after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, is a nationalist, secular, parliamentary democracy. After a period of one-party rule under its founder, Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk), and his successor, Turkish governments since the 1950s have been produced by multiparty elections based on universal adult suffrage" (Dewdney et al., 2023, Para 5).

The last 2016 Address-Based Census results stated the population is 82,003,882, with the male and female populations being 50.2 per cent and 49.8 per cent, respectively (Eurydice, 2022). The population growth rate of Turkey is 0.67 per cent as of 2022 (World Fact Book, 2022). According to the Turkish Constitution, all individuals residing in Turkey are regarded as "Turkish" regardless of their ethnicity, race, or religion. Turkey is home to various ethnic groups, including Kurds, Armenians, Jews, Circassians, Georgians, Laz, and Greeks (Britannica, 2024). Most Turkish citizens follow the Muslim religion (99.8%), and a small percentage follow Christianity and Judaism (World Fact Book, 2022). The current life expectancy for Turkey in 2024 is 78.67 years (Macrotrends, 2024).

The 19th largest economy in the world is Turkey, with a GDP of approximately USD 906 billion. In 2022, the economy grew at the rate of 5.6 per cent. Turkey's GDP per capita for 2022 was $10,616 (Macrotrends, 2024). Turkey's Human Development Index (HDI) for 2019 stood at 0.820, placing the country in the very high human development category, ranking 54th out of 189 countries and territories. From 1990 to 2019, Turkey's Gross National Income (GNI) per capita witnessed a substantial increase of approximately 121.4 per cent (UNDP, 2020). Turkey has been 147th out of 163 countries in the Global Peace Index 2023 (Institute for Economics & Peace, 2023). The average quality of life index is 4.9, lower than the OECD average 6.7 (OECD, 2023a). Per the World Happiness Report 2023, Turkey is ranked 106 with a score of 4.614 (Helliwell et al., 2023, p. 34).

According to the World Bank, Turkey's GER for primary education was 103% in 2021 (Trading Economics, 2024). The NER at the primary, lower and upper secondary schools was 93.2%, 89.8% and 89.7%, respectively, in the educational year 2021/22 (Turkstat, 2022). The literacy rate for people aged six and over was 97.6 per cent in 2022. The literacy rate for women was 95.9 per cent; for men, it was 99.3 per cent (Turkstat, 2023). Despite the increase in schooling facilities, Turkish students performed below the OECD average in reading, mathematics, and science (OECD, 2023b) in the PISA 2022 assessment. According to the report released by the OECD, Turkey ranked 31 out of 37 OECD countries in the PISA (Ülkar, 2019). In the academic year of 2022/23, over 5.5 million students in Turkey were enrolled in public primary schools, and approximately 349 thousand students were enrolled in private primary schools. The number of students enrolled in public schools was 5,186,811. In the 2022/2023 school year, there were approximately 199,000 teachers in general upper secondary schools in Turkey (Dierks, 2023). As of 2023, there were over 23 thousand public and 2,070 private primary schools (Dierks, 2024).

Educational Policy

In 1923, following the establishment of the Turkish Republic, the government implemented a series of reforms aimed at modernising the nation and fostering a unified national identity among diverse ethnic groups. These reforms were focused on education, which involved centralising the education system under the Ministry of Education. As part of this restructuring, religious schools were closed, and new secular schools were established. At the beginning of the Republic, Turkey's literacy rate was below 10 per cent. However, by 2010, the adult literacy rate had significantly risen to 89%, reaching 96% among men and 81% among women (UNESCO, 2010). "The transition to the 4 + 4 + 4 education system was made with the amendment of the law numbered 6287 published in the official newspaper on April 11, 2012" (Turkeli & Namli, 2024, p. 99).

Since 2010, Turkey has been exploring the implementation of pre-primary education, intending to boost enrollment in early childhood education and care (ECEC). However, according to the World Bank (2013), initial feasibility pilots conducted in high-participation areas exacerbated inequalities. Consequently, new service models were introduced to target underserved communities. For instance, "the Summer Pre-School program offers free education and nutrition to those aged 60-66 months from low socio-economic or immigrant backgrounds. The Central Nursery Classrooms for Bussed Education offers supervised transportation to ECEC settings from rural areas, and Itinerant Teaching (2017) sees ECEC staff transported to work in remote villages. Financial incentives are also in place (see "Funding"). The Inclusive Early Childhood Project for Children with Disabilities (2019), aiming to strengthen access and staff capacity, operated pilots in 90 schools, providing educational material, teacher training and community awareness raising; early assessments indicate increases in enrolment and attendance. Turkey's Education Vision 2023 (2019) commits to compulsory ECEC for 5-year-olds from 2023" (OECD, 2020, p. 9), further emphasising the government's dedication to expanding early childhood education across the country (Ministry of National Education, 2023).

Primary school education in Turkey encompasses children between 69 months and 10 years old, and the General Directorate of Basic Education oversees it under the Ministry of National Education. Early childhood education has also been made compulsory for students in special education programmes. This holistic approach ensures that all children, including those with special educational needs, have access to foundational education early through their primary years (Eurydice, 2023a).

In 2018, Turkey announced its 2023 Education Vision policy, which seeks to prepare individuals with technological and humanities competencies while nurturing a passion for science, culture, curiosity, and moral values. Recognising challenges related to education quality and accessibility,

the policy prioritises qualitative enhancements over quantitative expansions. The vision emphasises the holistic design of all educational components as an integrated ecosystem. It aims to establish a coherent relationship among goals, structure, and behaviours within the educational system. This approach acknowledges and accommodates the diverse learning needs of individual students across all levels of education. Emphasis is placed on fostering age-appropriate identity development and ensuring that learning experiences are relevant and applicable to various aspects of life, thereby reducing redundancy in educational content (Eurydice, 2023b).

According to Nohl and Somel's (2020) study, "Turkey stands at the crossroads of nationalism versus minority rights and secularism versus Islam. These have been ongoing issues, most apparently in the discussions on allowing mother-tongue education (especially Kurdish) and opening and closing imam and preacher schools. The variant poor quality of education has occasionally been a point of contention and catalysed competition between schools, teachers, and pupils. The growing competitive character of Turkish education was accompanied by great social inequalities between gender and class positions and between geographical regions" (Nohl & Somel, 2020, Para 2).

Zayim-Kurtay et al. (2023) specified that the education system in Turkey faces several issues, such as overgeneralisation, overpopulation, and change inflation. As a result, the system's ability to demonstrate Citizen-centered policymaking in education is fundamentally undermined. Although the government has attempted to involve citizens in education policymaking, it has failed at every step. Consequently, this results in a lack of stakeholder participation in some steps and illusory stakeholder involvement in others.

Kesik and Beycioglu (2022) revealed that while inclusive education is crucial for improving enrollment rates, current policies and practices primarily focus on mere integration rather than genuine inclusivity. Although there have been efforts to include students facing disadvantages due to disabilities, ethnicity, and refugee status, the Turkish education system still falls short of being truly inclusive and equitable. Further actions are recommended to guarantee that every student has equitable opportunities to receive a good education and access supportive learning settings, no matter their background or situation.

Structure of the Education System

Turkey's education system consists of early childhood education, primary and lower secondary education, upper secondary education, and higher education. The initial phase involves four years of primary school, four years of secondary school, and finally, four years of high school (Figure 11.1).

Early Childhood Education: In Turkey, early childhood education begins in nursery and daycare centres for children aged 0-36 months. Pre-school education is compulsory and begins for children between 45 and 68 months old who must enrol in kindergarten. Children aged 69-71 months whose primary school enrollment has been delayed by one year and who did not attend pre-school the previous year are prioritised for enrollment in pre-school education institutions (Eurydice, 2023a).

Primary Education: Primary school education covers children between 69 months and 10 years old. It consists of different programmes, with a four-year (1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th grade) compulsory choice of religious secondary schools (Eurydice, 2023a).

Secondary education: Secondary education, offered through general and religious schools, caters to children aged 10 to 14 (5th to 8th grade). Elective courses are selected based on students' preferences to enhance middle school students' capabilities for their subsequent high school education in secondary or religious high schools (Eurydice, 2023a).

High School Education: Since 2012, upper secondary education in Turkey has been mandatory and starts at a relatively young age, around 13.5 years old. This phase spans four years (9th through 12th grade). Turkey offers various school types at this level, including general and vocational schools, both selective and non-selective. The first two years follow a standardised curriculum, and successful completion of any four-year programme results in a school-leaving certificate that qualifies students for tertiary education admissions (OECD, 2020).

At the upper secondary level, compulsory education can also be completed in Open Education High School, managed by the General Directorate of Lifelong Learning. The Ministry of National Education is responsible for providing education in Turkey. Different general directorates operate at different levels and in different types of schools (World Education Network, 2024). The Ministry of National Education in Turkey oversees education, with various directorates operating schools at different levels and types (Cin et al., 2018). Vocational and Technical Secondary Education is at least four years of compulsory education, which provides students with the professional skills and abilities to prepare them for a professional life (Eurydice, 2023a).
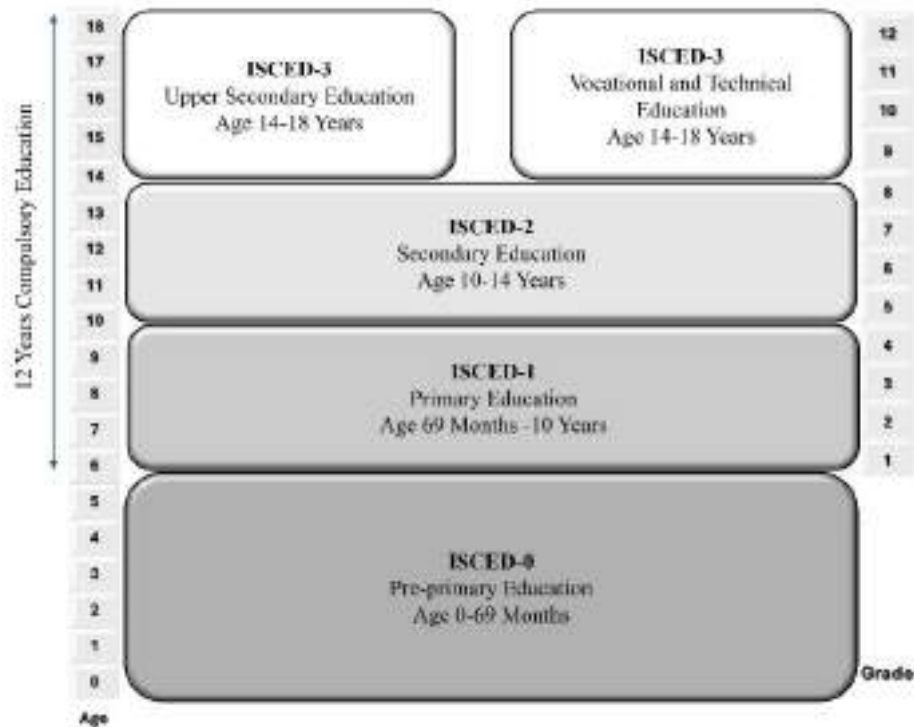
Figure 11.1 General Structure of the Turkish Education System

Source: Eurydice, 2023a (Adapted by authors)

Curricular Framework

Turkey established its National Qualifications Framework (NQF), which comprises eight levels and includes all qualifications and certificates. The Turkish Qualifications Framework (TQF) level descriptors outline the expected learning outcomes, incorporating knowledge, skills, and competence domains. The Ministry of National Education (MoNE) is responsible for developing qualifications and has recently launched a curriculum reform in secondary education (UNESCO, 2021).

Education is compulsory for 12 years in Turkey. The Ministry of National Education (MoNE) is responsible for developing the curriculum, but it has been a controversial issue in Turkey, leading to societal polarisation. Every ruling party has modified the curriculum to align with its ideology. This issue involves various factors such as gender, multilingualism, multiculturalism, etc.

Unfortunately, the curriculum does not encompass all cultural and minority groups, religions, and beliefs. Currently, the curriculum focuses on "values education" with a religious background and does not include minorities. It is problematic regarding gender, religion, social class, region, and ethnicity (UNESCO, 2021).

Primary Education

Turkish primary education curricula were revised in 2017, including primary school (grades 1–4) and middle school (grades 5–8) courses. The required courses in primary education are life sciences (grade 1-3); games and physical activities (1-4); traffic safety, human rights, citizenship, and democracy (grade 4); Turkish, mathematics, visual arts, music (grade 1-8); a foreign language (grade 2-8); science (grade 3-8); social studies (grade 4-7); religious culture and morality (grade 4-8); physical education and sports (grade 5-8); information technology and software (grade 5-6); technology and design (grade 7-8); Turkish republic revolution history and Kemalism, guidance and career planning (grade 8). Moreover, there are four class hours of free activities for first graders and two for second and third graders (Aktürkoğlu, 2019).

Secondary Education

During their 9th grade, students follow a core curriculum that includes "Mathematics, biology, religious education and ethics, chemistry, history, foreign language, philosophy, visual arts and music, health, geography, physics, military science, health, Turkish language and literature, traffic and first aid, and physical education. There are common courses and electives in grades 10, 11 and 12. Elective courses: Turkish literature, modern Turkish and world history, history, language and expression, foreign language, chemistry, mathematics, logic, psychology, geometry, second foreign language, biology, sociology, and physics" (World Education Network, 2024, Secondary Education).

General Secondary Education

At Turkish general secondary schools, all pupils study the same subjects in their first year. In the second year, students must choose a major from several streams, such as Arts, Natural Sciences, Foreign Languages and Mathematics, Social Sciences, Literature, and Mathematics. After finishing general secondary education, students receive a secondary school diploma called Lise Diplomasi. This credential enables students to take university entrance exams (World Education Network, 2024).

In Turkey, the Ministry of National Education sets the dates for school terms. These dates are generally the same across the country, but private schools may have different schedules. The school year spans nine months, commencing in September and concluding in June, followed by a 3-month

summer vacation. Primary and secondary schools must have a minimum of 180 school days. The school year is divided into two semesters in Turkey. The first semester takes place from September to January and the second from February to June, with a 2-week break in February (World Education Network, 2024). School hours are from 8:30 AM to 4:30 PM, Monday to Friday, with a 1-hour lunch break during the day. Students attend school for 35 to 40 hours per week (Eurydice, 2023c).

Children with Disabilities

The Ministry of Education is committed to inclusivity by offering special education for children with disabilities at all K-12 levels. These children are classified into eight distinct groups, each with unique needs, including mental disabilities, visual and hearing impairments, long-term illnesses, orthopaedic issues, gifted and talented abilities, adaptation difficulties, and speech impairments. In addition, preparatory classes are available for these children before the start of primary education (World Education Network, 2024).

Weightage to different subjects and the allocation of periods per week for each level are Turkish Language and Literature-7 hours, Religious Culture and Ethics- 2 hours, History-2 hours, Geography-2 hours, Mathematics-6 hours, Physics-2 hours, Chemistry - 2 hours, Biology- 2 hours, First Foreign Language - 4 hours, Second Foreign Language-2 hours, Physical Education and Sports/Visual Arts/Music-2 hours, and Health Information and Traffic Culture-1 hour (Eurydice, 2023a).

The existing curriculum fails to adequately represent diverse groups of learners, including multilingual (Başdemir, 2012), multicultural, and of different genders (Cin et al., 2018). Despite the responsibility for preparing the curriculum falling with MoNE, it currently excludes many cultural and minority groups, religions, sects, and beliefs. However, this has resulted in controversy and division within Turkish society, as each ruling party has incorporated its ideology into the curriculum. There is a heavy emphasis on "values education" with a religious education background, exacerbating the exclusivity issue for minorities based on factors such as gender, religion, class, region, and ethnicity. No curricula or programmes exist for learners at risk of exclusion based on ethnicity or language, except for Special Needs Education (Sen, 2022; Türk, 2015)

Teaching Learning

The Tenth Development Plan implemented in Turkey (2014-2018) prioritises enhancing skills as one of its three main objectives, stressing the importance of aligning the education system with the labour market requirements. This includes shifting towards a less focused curriculum on exams, establishing a transition system that considers students' interests and abilities, and implementing a

standards-based evaluation framework that places a central emphasis on student learning. The three priorities in the strategic plans are access to education, quality of education and training and improving institutional capacity (OECD i-Library, 2019).

Turkey used educational technology to ensure K-12 education continuity during the pandemic. The Education Information Network or Eğitim Bilişim Ağı (EBA) facilitated the widespread transition to remote learning in Turkey. Television also played a crucial role in distance education, collaborating with the Turkish Radio and Television Corporation (TRT). TRT EBA TV Primary School, TRT EBA TV Secondary School, and TRT EBA TV High School have six designated channels to broadcast educational content. The objective was to allow students to access missed lectures through the official websites of EBA or TRT, enhancing their learning opportunities remotely (Magic Box, 2021). The post-Covid situation has transformed teaching-learning, with technology playing an invaluable role in transmitting education and development. Ata et al. (2021) explored that teachers use various approaches, such as whole language, literature-based instruction, balanced instruction, and curriculum materials and textbooks. Additionally, teachers find social media platforms and professional organisations helpful in enhancing their understanding of technology integration for teaching literacy skills.

Learning Assessment

In Turkey, students' academic performance in primary school's first, second, and third grades is measured through participation in class activities. However, academic performance is assessed in the fourth grade using exam scores and course activities. In middle school, students' academic performance is evaluated based on exam scores, participation in course activities, and project work scores. Middle school students must complete at least one project individually, in groups, or with the teacher's guidance. Furthermore, primary school, fourth grade, and middle school students are expected to take two exams for courses with three or fewer weekly class hours and three exams with more than three class hours weekly. Exams may cover various question types as determined by the teacher (Aktürkoğlu, 2019).

Since the OECD Review in 2007, Turkey has made significant strides to enhance the integrity and quality of national examinations. These efforts have included the implementation of a unified, centralised examination administered by the ministry for the transition from Elementary Schools to Secondary Schools Examination (Temel Eğitimden Ortaöğretime Geçiş Sistemi, TEOG).

The reform curriculum introduced in 2006 has prompted teachers to adopt formative and performance-based assessments, aligning with a student-centred, competency-driven approach to education. National regulations now restrict teachers' reliance on summative assessments in early primary grades and multiple-choice assessments in later grades. This encourages a broader spectrum

of assessment methods that emphasise their role in supporting learning (Kitchen et al., 2019). Turkey has also unveiled significant changes during this period, including reforms to national high school and tertiary placement exams to leverage assessments to enhance learning outcomes and equity. Plans for teacher appraisal modifications have been announced, while school evaluations have been temporarily halted pending major reforms. While these changes indicate a positive direction in many aspects and are being implemented swiftly in some areas, questions remain about their practical implementation (Kitchen et al., 2019).

The 2019 Turkish Course Curriculum underscores the importance of continuous and process-oriented assessment and evaluation practices. According to Kahtali and Cehlik (2020), educators frequently employ open-ended questions as supplementary assessment tools to gauge advanced knowledge and skills. Tools like concept maps, project studies, and word association tests are favoured for assessing student performance in Turkish courses and other educational domains. However, the study reveals that around 60% of teachers seldom utilise assessment tools designed to measure students' attitudes, indicating a relative neglect of performance-based evaluation methods.

Health and Physical Education

Physical education (PE) is integral to the Turkish school education curriculum. Middle and high school students in Turkey receive physical education classes from specialised PE instructors. However, in primary schools, these classes are conducted by regular classroom teachers rather than PE specialists. Upon completing high school, students take the national higher education entrance exam. Those who achieve a passing score and wish to pursue physical education teaching can then opt to take special talent exams administered by universities. Each university sets a quota, and successful candidates are admitted to a four-year undergraduate programme. This programme encompasses practical and theoretical education across various sports disciplines and educational sciences, including teaching methodologies, educational psychology, physical education, and sports sociology (Kitchen et al., 2019). Graduates from these programmes earn the title of Physical Education Teacher. They are qualified to work in schools and various sports centres, with comprehensive training in practical sports instruction and educational theory.

In Turkey, the structure and objectives of physical education classes vary across different school levels. In middle and high schools, PE classes are held for two weekly class hours, contributing to a total curriculum load of 30 to 40 hours per week. Conversely, primary schools feature a curriculum component called Game and Physical Activities. For students in the first three grades, the mandated weekly allocation by the ministry is five class hours, reduced to two hours for fourth graders. The overarching goals of PE classes in Turkish primary and middle schools are centred on developing

movement competence, promoting active and healthy living skills, fostering autonomy, and enhancing social thinking skills. The curriculum introduces students to various sports disciplines and encourages participation in sports competitions starting from the latter part of middle school. In high school, the focus shifts towards ensuring students grasp the significance of physical education, effectively utilise their free time for sports activities, engage in collaborative sports competitions, and adopt healthy and active lifestyles (Bozoğlu & Göktür, 2016).

Skills Education

Skills Education is not an articulated agenda of the Turkish school education curriculum. Students' skills development is a byproduct of the Arts and Physical education curriculum and the teaching-learning process. However, the Turkish government has emphasised vocational education from higher secondary education. The Ministry of National Education (MoNE) in Turkey works with UNICEF to provide support to strengthen the capacities of coordinator teachers and guidance counsellors who regularly interact with children at the Vocational Education Centers. The Ministry of Education collaborates closely with the private sector in the technical and vocational areas. Children enrolled in a Vocational Education Centre must find a workplace to practice, sharpen their skills, and complete their education (Ulkuer, 2021).

According to the results of the PIACC survey, Turkey faces a dual challenge: while there is a need to enhance the quantity of skills, there is an equally critical need to improve the quality of skills. Additionally, the survey highlights that the low returns on skills underscore institutional challenges related to the structure of labour demand. Issues such as insufficient incentives within firms may hinder the development of workers' skills and discourage investments in skill enhancement (Kavuncu & Polat, 2019).

Hobby and Life Skills Education

The Turkish school education curriculum has no separate courses on students' hobbies and life skills development. "The Basic Philosophy of the Curriculum outlines qualities that all curricula should inculcate in students, such as problem-solving; decision making; critical and creative thinking skills; acquiring green consciousness and an aesthetic point of view; being responsible and self-confident; and living in harmony with himself/herself and society; internalising national and international values; and being happy" (Aktürkoğlu, 2019, p. 3). All these skills and ideologies serve as life skills.

Hobby development is not explicitly mentioned in the curriculum, but there are ample opportunities for students to develop their hobbies through co-curricular activities like music and the various arts.

Moral, Social and Cultural Education

There is no separate programme or subject in the name of moral, social and cultural education in the Turkish school education curriculum. However, moral, social and cultural education is integral to the Turkish school education curriculum. These are provided to the students through religious culture and morality courses (grades 4-8) as well as human rights, citizenship, and democracy courses (grade 4). Civics and Human Rights Education is a compulsory course in the Turkish Primary education curriculum. Traffic and First Aid is a compulsory Turkish secondary education curriculum course. From 1998-99, civics and human rights education (CHRE) was introduced as a compulsory subject in primary schools' seventh and eighth grades curriculum. Further, most teachers believe that courses are ineffective primarily because they are focused on providing information rather than fostering effective learning outcomes (Kepenekci, 2005).

In Turkish school education curricula, value education is not included as a separate programme or a learning tool, unit, subject, etc. According to a study by Demirgüneş and Özcan (2022), "The root values included in the curriculum of Republic of Turkey, Ministry of National Education (MoNE) (1ˢᵗ-8ᵗʰ Grades) are as follows: justice, friendship, honesty, self-control, patience, respect, love, responsibility, patriotism, and helpfulness" (p. 3).

Turkey's Education Vision for 2023 aims to foster a holistic understanding of knowledge and morality centred on complete human development. The vision includes integrating all children's social, sports, and cultural activities into e-portfolios. To monitor and improve children's social and educational skills, measurement and evaluation units will be established across all provinces, extending from classroom and school levels to the central administration of the Ministry of National Education. Data collected from these portfolios will inform necessary evaluations for each student. Furthermore, mechanisms will be implemented at ministry, provincial, district, and school levels to provide academic, social, and physical support to students, aligning with the comprehensive goals of the Education Vision (Ministry of National Education, 2023).

Peace and Happiness Education

Peace and Happiness education is not explicitly on the agenda of school education curricula. The 2023 Education Vision of Turkey "is to raise science-loving, skilled, and ethical individuals who take an interest in culture and are willing to use present and future skills for the well-being of humanity" (Ministry of National Education, 2023, p. 7).

The concept of peace is "still a very important value in the Turkish Revolution History and Kemalism course curriculum, with the maxim 'Peace at Home, Peace in the World'" (Coşkun, 2023, p. 122). In the study by Coşkun (2023), eighth-grade students associated the concept of peace with Turkey's foreign policy, emphasising peace in the country more than peace in the world. Teachers are significant in peace education with families, school administration and the Ministry of National Education. Teachers identified that being tolerant and democratic is the most important quality for peace education, often influenced by stress-related consequences (Demir, 2011).

The research by Özel and Yurtsever (2023) explored the disparities between the curriculum and the integration of peace education elements within English classrooms in Turkey. According to students and teachers involved in the study, there was a notable lack of awareness regarding including peace education components, despite the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) adopting descriptors and perspectives aligned with the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). The teacher highlighted concerns that the school's and families' cultural norms and values may not be conducive to effectively implementing peace education activities, particularly those focused on diversity and communication skills. This cultural context significantly contributed to the gap in integrating peace education within the curriculum.

Summary and Conclusion

Turkey has a population of more than eighty-two million people and is located partly in Asia and Europe. It is an upper-middle-class income country and the 19th largest economy in the world, with a GDP of roughly $906 billion. Turkey is a nationalist, secular, parliamentary democracy. Most of the population follows the Muslim religion. As of 2022, Turkey's literacy rate was 95.9%. 2023 Education Vision is Turkey's latest education policy. Turkey follows a 4 + 4 + 4 education system from 2012. Turkey's education system consists of several stages: early childhood education, primary and lower secondary education, upper secondary education, and higher education. The initial phase involves four years of primary school, four years of secondary school, and finally, four years of high school.

Turkey established its National Qualifications Framework (NQF), which comprises eight levels and includes all qualifications and certificates. The Turkish Qualifications Framework (TQF) level descriptors outline the expected learning outcomes, incorporating the domains of Knowledge, Skills, and Competence. Turkish teaching-learning practices follow a combination of lecture and ICT-integrated methods. Technology integration in education and the teaching-learning process is of emphasis in Turkey. The Turkish government has encouraged teachers to implement formative and performance-based assessments, aligning with a student-centred, competency-based approach

to education. The 2019 Turkish Course Curriculum underscores the importance of continuous and process-oriented assessment and evaluation activities.

Turkish school education curriculum focuses on students' all-round development. Physical, moral, social and cultural education is integral to the primary education curriculum. Skills Education is not an articulated agenda of the Turkish school education curriculum, but the Turkish government has emphasised vocational education from higher secondary education. Life skills education has no special status in the core curriculum; it develops in students through other subject teachings and educational processes. Moral, social and cultural education are emphasised in the Turkish school education curriculum. Religious culture and morality courses (grades 4-8), human rights, citizenship, democracy (grades 4) and Civics and Human Rights Education are compulsory in the Turkish Primary education curriculum. Traffic and First Aid is a compulsory Turkish secondary education curriculum course. Peace and Happiness education is not explicitly mentioned in Turkish school education curricula.

Although the Turkish school education curriculum aims at the all-round development of students, it emphasises their cognitive domain while neglecting their affective and psychomotor domains. A perfect aspect of the Turkish primary education curriculum is the introduction of courses on guidance and career planning from the eighth grade, which will help guide the students in their future and help them succeed in their personal lives. Also, a course on human rights, citizenship, and democracy and another course on traffic safety in the fourth-grade curriculum can be quite helpful in developing a sense of social responsibility and duty in students. However, these courses should be a credit course subject to assessment.

Several research studies suggest that the education system in Turkey is not fully adapted to the principles of inclusive education. The system often fails to include individuals from different religious or ethnic backgrounds. To establish an inclusive education system, it is crucial to cultivate positive attitudes among teachers and other stakeholders towards diversity. These studies emphasise the importance of creating an environment that celebrates diversity and provides equal opportunities to all students (UNESCO, 2021).

In Turkey, stability and continuity in national education policies are much needed. National education policies and actions put into practice without a plan and infrastructure create social problems in the education system. Although the same party has been in power for the past 13 years, the frequent change of several ministers in the National Ministry of Education has disjointed the system. While effective school systems are being implemented in the West, Turkey still struggles with maintaining education in a cumbersome structure, which will only hinder progress. Education is a vital issue that needs to be regulated and carried out without being influenced by daily political

concerns and populist approaches. Unstable and unscientifically based changes undermine students and the country's future (Aygun, 2015; Cin et al., 2018).

The main challenge identified in the Turkish education system is that the primary goal of education is preparing for examinations and not providing students with knowledge that prepares them for employability (Öztekin-Bayır & Tekel, 2021). OECD (2023c) report highlights that the country has made important progress in increasing access to education from early childhood to upper secondary and tertiary education. There has also been a concerted effort to develop the quality of education offered. The progress is evident in maintaining formal enrolments in education even when confronted by the global COVID-19 pandemic. Despite the progress, some important challenges remain, such as ensuring greater equity in student outcomes with large performance gaps showcased in PISA 2018 and comparatively lower levels of academic inclusiveness combined with a high degree of ability grouping within schools. Furthermore, the urban-rural gap remains at school levels, and many youths continue to leave education before they graduate. In addition, the arrival of Syrian refugees has emphasised the need for education to rethink how to integrate them into the Turkish system better.

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12

Towards Internationalisation of Education: Turkmenistan

Mrityunjoy Kaibarta

Abstract

Enacted in 2009, the Turkmenistan Education Law established free and compulsory public education through secondary school and reestablished higher education degrees. In 2012, a 12-year secondary education program was introduced to standardise the education system and facilitate students' admission to foreign universities. The most recent education law, implemented in 2021 and amended in 2023, defines state education policy principles, emphasising equal rights, universal values, national culture, civic consciousness, and patriotism. The education system encompasses preschool, primary, lower secondary, and upper secondary education, with a curriculum prioritising academic subjects, co-curricular activities, and skills development. Teaching methods include lectures, textbooks, exams, and technology integration. Assessment involves formative and summative evaluations, culminating in the State Examination for School Leaving Certificate. While the curriculum includes health, physical, and moral education, peace and happiness education is not addressed. Ongoing reforms aim to enhance educational quality, though challenges persist, such as limited opportunities for youth and cultural barriers for women.

Introduction

In 1991, Turkmenistan gained independence from the Soviet Union, a significant milestone in its history. On December 12, 1995, the UN General Assembly recognised Turkmenistan as a permanently neutral state. This status, achieved with unanimous support from its 185 member

States, is a testament to Turkmenistan's commitment to peace and non-interference in the affairs of other nations (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan, 2022).

Turkmenistan, located in Central Asia, shares its land borders with the Caspian Sea to the west, Iran and Afghanistan to the south, Uzbekistan to the northeast, and Kazakhstan to the northwest. The total area of Turkmenistan is 491,210 kilometres^2 (Britannica, 2000). The country's longest border with the Caspian Sea stretches for 1,786 kilometres and offers breathtaking views. The terrain of Turkmenistan is diverse, consisting of hills, low mountains, and vast deserts. About 70% of the country's area is covered by the Karakum Desert. Turkmenistan is divided into five provinces – Ahal, Balkan, Dashoguz, Lebap and Mary and the capital city, Ashgabat, an administrative and territorial unit with province-wide powers (velayat). Each province is divided into districts. There are 43 districts in Turkmenistan (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan, 2022)

With a population of 6.5 million, Turkmenistan is Asia's 35th most populous country; there are 96.97 males for every 100 females in Turkmenistan in 2021. The country has a population growth rate of 0.95%. The life expectancy at birth for males in Turkmenistan is 66 years, while for females is 73 years (UNFPA, 2023). Turkmenistan's ethnic composition is predominantly Turkmen, accounting for 85% of the population, followed by Uzbek at 5%, Russian at 4%, and other ethnic groups at 6%. The religious composition of Turkmenistan is mostly Muslim (93%). The remaining religious groups include 6.4% Christians, <1% each for Buddhists, Jews, followers of folk religions, and other unspecified religions. Regarding linguistic composition, Turkmen is the official language of Turkmenistan, spoken by 72% of the population. Russian is the second most commonly spoken language, accounting for 12% of the population, followed by Uzbek at 9% and other languages at 7% (CIA, 2024).

Turkmenistan, a predominantly desert country, boasts an extensive agriculture system in irrigated areas alongside vast oil and gas resources. The country's two major crops are cotton and wheat, which are grown on a large scale. Based on official data from the World Bank (n.d.), Turkmenistan's GDP was valued at US$56.54 billion in 2022, with a growth rate of 1.7%. The country's GDP per Capita stood at US$14,740.01. Turkmenistan's unemployment rate for 2022 was 5.02% (Macrotrends, n.d.). Although Turkmenistan was not included in the World Happiness Report of 2023, it was ranked 97th with a score of 5.066 in the 2021 report (Helliwell et al., 2021). In 2021, Turkmenistan's HDI of 0.745 positioned the country in the High Human Development category at 91st rank out of 191 countries (UNDP, 2022). However, the loss due to inequality (16.9%) lowers the HDI to 0.619 (United Nations Turkmenistan, 2022a).

The literacy rate in Turkmenistan was 99.7%. The male literacy rate was 99.8 per cent, and the female literacy rate was 99.6% (Macrotrends, n.d.). According to UNESCO (2022), Turkmenistan's GER and NER were 110.28% and 99.47% at the primary level and 95.70% and 82.74% at the secondary level, respectively. Turkmenistan maintains a universal primary education system, with high rates of 99% for completion of lower secondary school and 97% for upper secondary school. The percentage of out-of-school children in Turkmenistan remains consistently low, at around 1% across all levels of education. (UNICEF, 2021a). There are 1882 schools in Turkmenistan with 1.5 million students (Chynybaeva, 2023). At the start of the 2020/2021 school year, 83.4 thousand teachers worked in the country's public education schools.

Educational Policy

The Ministry of Education in Turkmenistan oversees the entire national education system, from preschool to higher education. The Cabinet of Ministers regulates and issues regulatory legal acts for licensing education and vocational training, oversees the quality of education through state control, and accredits educational institutions. This responsibility is outlined in the 2013 education law, amended in 2017 (UNESCO, 2023).

The President of the Republic approved the Law on Education in Turkmenistan on October 15, 1993, which established the basic education principles and outlined the organisation and management of the country's education system. According to Article 13 of the 1993 Law, state educational institutions provide a free nine-year general education programme that is compulsory for all. "By the President's Resolution on Improvement of the Education System No. PP-4610 of 15 February 2007, and Resolution on Improvement of Work of the Educational Institutions No. 8465 of 4 March 2007, the duration of free and compulsory education was extended again from nine to ten years, and the two-year compulsory work placement after graduation from secondary education that was previously introduced has been abolished" (UNESCO-IBE, 2011, p. 3).

"A new Education Law came into effect in August 2009. Under this Law, public education remains free of charge and compulsory through secondary school. Six levels of education are defined: preschool, elementary, secondary, vocational studies, university, and postgraduate or professional studies. The law re-established higher and professional education degrees through evening and correspondence courses" (UNESCO-IBE, 2011, p. 3). Turkmenistan introduced the 12-year secondary education programme in 2012, which was implemented in the 2013/2014 academic year. This initiative aims to standardise the Turkmen education system in line with global standards and, in principle, enable Turkmen students to seek admission to foreign universities (Horak, 2013).

Another education law (No. 391-IV) was enacted on May 4, 2013. "This Law regulates the legal basis of public relations in the field of education, defines the basic principles of state policy of education, as well as the goals, objectives, functions of the education system and the procedure for managing its activities (Chapter 1)."[10]. In 2017, Turkmenistan implemented a Digital Education Development Policy to improve the quality of digital education services and facilitate lifelong learning for all (UNESCO, 2021). The latest law on education took effect on June 5, 2021, which was amended on 30/06/2023. The 2021 law on education describes State education policy as guided by the following principles:

i. The State education policy in Turkmenistan is guided by a set of key principles, each reflecting a fundamental aspect of the country's educational vision. These principles are:

ii. Education should prioritise universal values, the well-being of individuals, and the free development of personality.

iii. Education should strongly connect with Turkmenistan's history, national culture, and traditions.

iv. Education should promote civic consciousness, patriotism, diligence, respect for human rights and freedoms, and love for nature, family, and country.

v. All citizens of Turkmenistan should have access to all types of educational services the state provides.

vi. Every Turkmenistan citizen should be obliged to receive general secondary education, and preschool children must be prepared for school. Both should be provided free of charge in state educational institutions.

vii. Education should be continuous and successive at all levels.

viii. Education should be high quality throughout an individual's life and meet modern requirements.

ix. Education should have various forms and institutions, including types, ownership patterns, and methods.

x. The education system should be integrated with science and production and interact with the education systems of other countries.

xi. The state education system should be secular and separate from religious organisations.

xii. Education should have a strong social role.

xiii. Education should be managed according to international standards and practices.

xiv. The management of educational institutions should be democratic and provide the rights of teachers, students, parents, and minor students to participate in decision-making.

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[10] https://wwwex.ilo.org/dyn/natlex2/natlex2/files/download/96265/TRKM%20education.pdf This part was translated from Russian to English through Google Translator.

xv.   The education system should not restrict or eliminate competition.

xvi.   The education system should employ highly skilled teaching staff (CIS. Legislation, n.d.a, Article 3).

Structure of the Education System

Turkmenistan has a 12-year general school education system. The Law of Turkmenistan of June 5, 2021, about education (as amended on 03-06-2023) mentions that educational programmes are subdivided into general and professional education.

"General education programmes are directed to the acquisition of knowledge, abilities, skills and competence promoting forming of the general culture of the personality, its adaptation to life in society, a continuation of training at the subsequent level of general secondary education, creation of conditions for the conscious choice of professional educational programmes. General education programs are:

i.   preschool education;

ii.   primary education;

iii. main secondary education;

iv.   senior secondary education" (CIS. Legislation, n.d.a, Article 8).

In Turkmenistan, early childhood care and education (ECCE) includes children aged one to six years. ECCE has two categories: early development and preschool education for children aged one to five and preschool education for children aged five to six before they begin primary education. Before starting primary education, children should complete one year of preschool education. ECCE is provided in various institutions, such as nurseries, kindergartens, preschools, and family settings (UNESCO, 2023).

The official primary school entrance age in Turkmenistan is six. Primary education lasts four years, starting at six and ending at 9. Lower secondary education lasts six years, starting at ten and ending at 15. Upper secondary education lasts two years, starting at 16 and ending at 17 (Education Policy and Data Centre, 2018). Turkmenistan's education structure, including age and grade level, is provided in Figure 12.1.
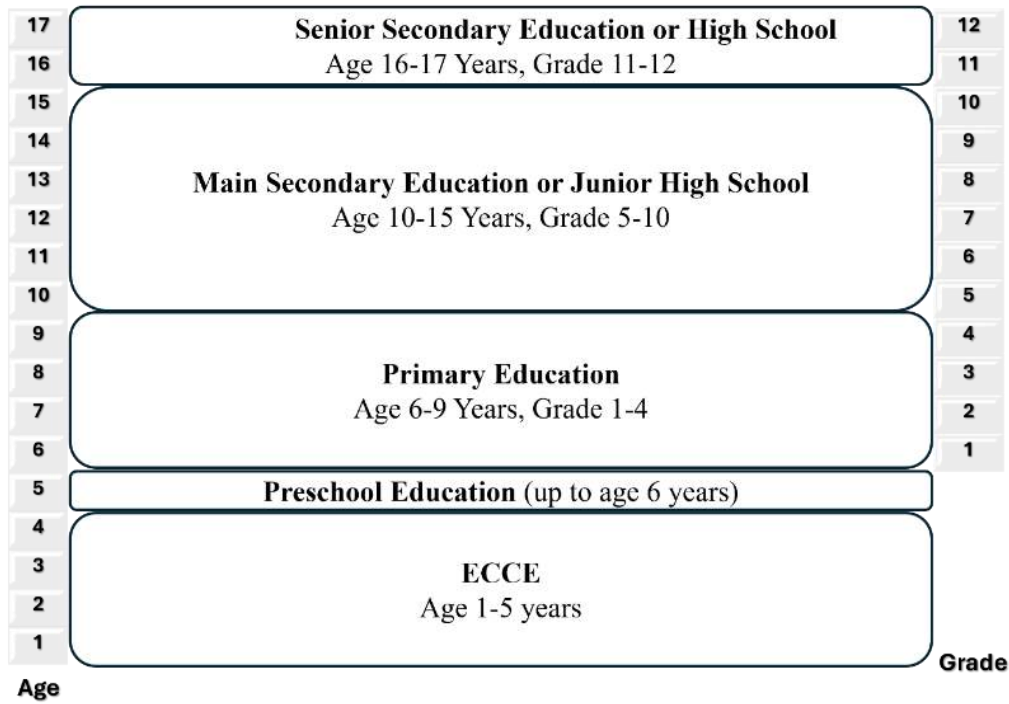
Figure 12.1 School Education Structure of Turkmenistan

Source: Education Policy and Data Centre, 2018; Gozel, 2021 (Adapted by author)

Curricular Framework

Until the death of former President Saparmurat Niyazov in 2006, "his book, "Ruhnama" was the mandatory – and only – academic book…He decreed that all Turkmen people must follow all the book's principles to the letter. He also had the Turkmen imams give the book an equal status with the Koran, the Bible, and the Torah. The Rukhnama became the main subject of the country's education system. Students from junior high through college had to memorise passages from the book" (Humanium, 2019, Para 4).

Turkmenistan's schools have a standardised curriculum. There is slight variation among school districts in the country. All pre-primary schools must follow the state's educational standards. General secondary education, which includes primary, basic and general secondary education stages, aims to acquire an individual's knowledge, skills and abilities, form a general culture, adapt learners to society, and create conditions for thoughtful selection of professional education programmes. General secondary education is compulsory, and everyone has the right to receive it free of charge in public educational institutions (President of Turkmenistan, 2019).

Preschool establishments must adhere to state educational guidelines, execute curricula, and utilise appropriate instructional approaches tailored to children's age, developmental level, and health status (UNESCO, 2023). Preschool learning encompasses the following elements: the surrounding world, language improvement, mathematics, manual skills, fine arts, physical training, singing and music, and fiction.

"In the senior and preparatory groups (excluding the subjects mentioned above), reading and writing are taught, and three languages are learned: Turkmen (native), Russian (native), and foreign. Teachers with special education teach languages in the specific subject language for sixteen hours per week. Teaching each of the languages mentioned in the senior and preparatory groups requires seventy hours annually (two lessons per week). Special programmes for the language subjects have been developed" (UNESCO-IBE, 2011).

The main objective of primary education is for children to learn the principles of grammar, reading, and cultural discourse. Primary education includes Turkmen language and literature, Russian language, Mathematics, History, Art Education, Music, and Physical and Practical training.

The Law on Education (amended in 2017) mandates that all educational institutions must use the Turkmen language as their primary medium of instruction (UNESCO, 2023). The Turkmen government places particular emphasis on the development of early childhood education. To enhance literacy and numeracy rates, various initiatives have been taken to activate the operations of Parent Educational Centers. These centres cater to children who do not attend preschools, providing parents with methodological and consultative support to prepare their children for schooling at home. Additionally, these centres offer services to improve parental expertise (UNESCO, 2019).

The secondary education curriculum includes Turkmen language and literature, Russian language, History, the Policy of independence, the Constitution of Turkmenistan, Mathematics, Computer studies, Technical Drawing, Geography, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Astronomy, Art Education, Music, Physical Training, Handicrafts and Practical Training. New disciplines, including Ecology, the Basis of Economics, the Culture of Behaviour, the Cultural Heritage of Turkmenistan, Information and Communication, Innovative Technologies, Modeling and Graphics, and several new foreign languages, were added to secondary school curricula to respond to the needs of modern society (UNESCO, 2019, p. 27).

The government of Turkmenistan offers educational materials to schools. For example, the Turkmen State Publishing Service has published numerous textbooks and produced educational aids for universities and schools in Turkmen and Russian languages for the 2022-2023 academic year.

As per the report of Turkmenistan Golden Age newspaper (2022), "the alphabet '*Harpl̷yk*' and copybooks for first-graders, the textbook on the native language "Ene dili" and workbooks in English for second-graders, the textbook on the basics of life *Ẏaşaẏyş-durmuş salary* for fourth-graders are intended for primary school students of the general education system. Among the textbooks in various subjects that are studied in secondary school are 'Himiẏa'(Chemistry) for grade 8; Physics, Chemistry, Biology and Economic and Social Geography for grade 9; and Fundamentals of Modern Technologies, Geometry and Informatics for grade 10. By the new academic year, textbooks of Persian and Arabic for the 8th grade, German for the 9th grade and French for the 10th grade of Turkmen-teaching schools have been published. For students in the 9th grade with the Russian language of instruction, the textbook of the Turkmen language, "Türkmen dili", is intended" (Rejepova, 2022a, para 3-4).

Electronic teaching aids and textbooks were created alongside printed publications as part of the effort to develop the Digital Education System in Turkmenistan. This step represents a further advancement towards achieving this goal.

Teaching Learning

Turkmenistan's education system employs a mix of traditional and modern approaches. Lectures, textbooks and exams remain the country's most commonly used teaching methods, with teachers being students' primary source of information. Turkmenistan Child-Friendly School Initiative: Evaluation Report (2014) says that child-centred active teaching and learning practices are implemented in Turkmen schools (Munce, 2014). Recently, a concerted effort has been made to incorporate technology into the education system. This includes using computers, multimedia resources and online platforms for learning.

Turkmenistan's Digital Education Policy of 2017 aims to improve the quality of digital educational services and promote lifelong learning for all. The policy outlines a phased approach to creating a single network that connects all educational institutions. It also promotes using electronic academic diaries, class registers, and reports in general education institutions. As a result of these efforts, all schools now have electronic schedules and lesson notes available. Additionally, 97.8% of general education institutions have classrooms equipped with interactive multimedia equipment (UNESCO, 2021). Modern technologies and interactive teaching methods are being integrated into the educational process.

UNICEF and the Government of Turkmenistan Country Programme of Cooperation 2021-2025 (2021a) found that "Transitioning to a 12-year compulsory education system allowed Turkmenistan

to make decisive steps to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Teachers need additional skills and knowledge on child and adolescent development and interactive methodologies that consider the learning needs of all girls and boys, including those with disabilities. Curricula and teaching methods need to be further improved, including enhanced digital learning opportunities, to support the development of necessary skills to prepare children for the demands of the modern society and economy" (UNICEF, 2021b, p. 2).

Learning Assessment

In Turkmenistan, a combination of formative and summative assessments is commonly used. Formative assessments take place throughout the learning process to offer continuous feedback. In contrast, summative assessments are administered at the end of a period of instruction to evaluate students' overall understanding and performance. "Teachers evaluate students' achievement by reviewing their written work and through oral questioning. Based on their performance, an assessment is made about the degree of subject mastery and achievement of the set of objectives. Teachers also organise Olympiads (competitions) and written and oral examinations – all of which help determine the student's progress. By analysing the results, conclusions can be reached concerning the degree of a student's subject mastery and an assessment of the student's ability level" (UNESCO-IBE, 2011, p. 10).

After completing secondary education, students participate in the State Examination for School Leaving Certificate called the Certificate of Secondary Education. The *Bakalavr* is presented to students after four years of post-secondary study (Foley, 2023).

Tests and examinations are the most frequently used methods to evaluate students. Completing these assessments is necessary to advance to the next year/level of studies. To proceed with further state exams or defend a diploma or degree thesis, students must initially pass a mandatory state exam in Social Science on Ruhnama (Tempus, 2012, p. 7). Turkmenistan does not participate in global assessments such as PISA or TIMSS (Clement & Kataeva, 2018).

Health and Physical Education

In Turkmenistan, health and physical education are important parts of the school curriculum. Physical training is included as a subject and taught for two periods per week in every grade (UNESCO-IBE, 2011), for 90 minutes per week (UNESCO, 2014). Health education is not integrated with physical education.

"President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov signed the Decree "On Renaming the National Institute of Sports and Tourism of Turkmenistan to the Turkmen State Institute of Physical Culture and

Sports," initiating its reorganisation in order to develop further mass physical education and sport of the high achievements, improve the training methods for high-level specialists, masters of sports, qualified trainers" (Educational Policy of Turkmenistan, 2020, para 1).

A separate law (No. 260-IV) about physical culture and sports came into effect on August 22, 2020, and was amended on June 03, 2023. "The purpose of this Law is the creation of the legal base and necessary conditions for effective use of opportunities of physical culture and sport for forming, in the Turkmen society, healthy lifestyle of the population, the satisfaction of the need of citizens of Turkmenistan for regular training with physical culture and sport, useful carrying out leisure, and also for strengthening of their health and prevention of diseases" (CIS. Legislation, n.d.b, Article 3).

"Turkmenistan: The Golden Age" reports that schools in Turkmenistan would now include a dedicated day for physical education in the new academic year to promote a healthy lifestyle among students. Students would start their day every Saturday with a collective morning exercise session before their regular classes. In addition, there will be training sessions and competitions in various sports and active games after classes (Turkmenportal, 2020, para 1-2).

In November and December of 2023, the WHO Country Office conducted a series of health education classes on immunisation and healthy lifestyles in schools across Turkmenistan in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Medical Industry and the Ministry of Education of Turkmenistan. The purpose of these additional educational sessions was to increase children's awareness of infectious diseases and their impact on health and to assist them in taking preventive measures and sharing their healthy lifestyle attitudes and confidence in the safety and efficacy of vaccines with their families and friends. Throughout Turkmenistan, children were taught a variety of essential health topics, ranging from proper hand washing to more complex subjects such as the immune system, vaccination, and the prevention of infectious diseases.

The interactive sessions also introduced school children to Immune Portal, a digital game created by WHO for secondary school students. This educational game reinforces knowledge about the immune system and healthy living. WHO provided memorable gifts to students who participated in the interactive sessions (United Nations Turkmenistan, 2024).

Skills Education

The Law of Turkmenistan about Education (2021), in article 8.3, states that general education programmes help individuals acquire knowledge, skills, and competence to develop a general cultural understanding and adapt to society. They also prepare students for further education at the

secondary level and create conditions for making informed choices about professional educational programmes (CIS. Legislation, n.d.a, Article 8).

The Pre-primary education curriculum includes manual skills, fine arts, and physical training. The Primary education curriculum includes Art Education, Physical training, and Practical training, whereas the secondary education curriculum includes Technical Drawing, Art Education, Physical training, Handicrafts, and Practical training. The curriculum focuses on developing gross motor skills through physical training and fine motor skills through subjects like Art Education, Practical training, Technical Drawing, and making handicrafts (UNESCO-IBE, 2011, Pp. 8-10). It is unclear whether these subjects are credit programmes and how they are assessed. The primary vocational schools and professional education institutions offer short-term courses to enhance employability by improving existing skills and acquiring new ones. Special facilities are available to disadvantaged students (UNESCO, 2021, p. 11).

Both state and non-state institutions offer initial and secondary vocational and higher education. Generally, initial vocational education requires payment of fees. The majority of secondary vocational and higher education is offered free of charge. Only a tiny proportion of non-state educational institutions offer educational services to students who pay fees (ETF, 2012, p. 15).

Hobby and Life Skills Education

School education is designed with a multifaceted curriculum that promotes the development of well-rounded students. While the school curriculum does not explicitly prioritise hobby development, it is a natural byproduct of the syllabus's diverse range of subjects and extracurricular activities. Turkmenistan's school education curriculum encompasses various co-curricular activities and supporting subjects catering to different interests and talents. These subjects include manual skills, fine arts, singing, music, fiction, art education, physical training, practical training, technical drawing, astronomy, handicrafts, the cultural heritage of Turkmenistan, modelling, and graphics (UNESCO-IBE, 2011, pp. 8-10)

Through these subjects, students are exposed to various hobbies they can explore and develop independently, which ultimately helps their personal growth and development.

In 2007, Turkmenistan's secondary schools introduced Basics of Life Skills. This subject is compulsory for students from grades 1 to 10 and covers a curriculum of 34 hours per academic year. The primary objective of this programme is to promote knowledge, skills, and attitudes related to various aspects of life. Reproductive health and gender equality are topics covered in grades 7 to 10. In 2013, the government revised the Law on State Youth Policy (Rejepova, 2022b) to ensure

youth participation, access to youth-friendly reproductive health services, HIV and AIDS prevention, and volunteerism (UNFPA, n.d.).

The primary objective of the round table was to establish a forum for discussing the updated version of Turkmenistan's "On State Youth Policy" law, dated September 1, 2022. This law outlines the critical areas of state youth policy and aims to enhance state support in safeguarding the rights and freedoms of young people and fostering their holistic development. The amendments to the law create favourable conditions for the comprehensive support of youth development and introduce new directions and responsibilities for state institutions, society, and international organisations (United Nations Turkmenistan, 2022b, para 2).

ICT skills have become essential life skills. According to a UNICEF (2021) report, Turkmenistan has achieved a universal literacy rate for youth aged 15 to 24. However, only 35% of the youth in the same age group possess at least one ICT skill.

Moral, Social and Cultural Education

The Law of Turkmenistan on Education (2021), in Article 3, is based on principles that reflect the country's moral, social, and cultural outlook. These principles include equal rights for every individual to fully develop their abilities and talents, a humanistic approach to education that prioritises universal values, the life and health of individuals, and the free development of personality. Additionally, the law emphasises the importance of education's connection to the Turkmenistan people's history, national culture, and traditions. Finally, the law requires the education system to instil civic consciousness and patriotism, promote diligence, respect for human rights and freedoms, and love for nature, family, and the homeland (CIS. Legislation, n.d.a, Article 3).

In Turkmenistan, the education system places a strong emphasis on the study of the Turkmen language and literature. Starting from grade 1, students must take Turkmen language and literature as a credit course. In addition to this, the secondary education curriculum includes a variety of subjects that are geared towards developing students' moral, social, and cultural sense. These subjects include the policy of independence, the Constitution of Turkmenistan, the Culture of Behaviour, the Cultural Heritage of Turkmenistan, and several foreign languages. By offering such a diverse set of subjects, the education system in Turkmenistan aims to provide students with a well-rounded education that prepares them for success in the modern world.

Peace and Happiness Education

Turkmenistan does not enjoy an excellent reputation for openness and non-oppressiveness. According to Human Rights Watch (2021, Para 1), "Turkmenistan continued to be one of the

world's most oppressive and closed countries...authorities failed to address the impact of the country's multi-year economic crisis on people's food security and other basic needs".

The government in Turkmenistan is known for its oppressive policies and has a record of poor Human Rights. In 2024, the infant mortality rate in Turkmenistan stands at 38.869 deaths per 1000 live births (Macrotrends, 2024), primarily attributed to malnutrition, inadequate healthcare, domestic abuse, and poor hygiene. Approximately half of Turkmenistan's population lives below the poverty threshold (Humanium, 2019). With a Global Peace index of 2.116, Turkmenistan ranks 104 out of 163 countries. (IEP, 2022).

The government in Turkmenistan prohibits any independent civil society expression. Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are only allowed if registered, but the process is very cumbersome. International human rights NGOs are not permitted to operate in the country. Activists always face the risk of government retaliation. Turkmenistan has 'one of the worst media freedom records' globally. The state tightly controls or owns all print and electronic media. Authorities regularly suppress independent voices and harshly retaliate against Turkmen citizens who report to foreign media outlets (Human Rights Watch, 2021).

Turkmenistan's school curriculum does not provide peace and happiness education. Peace education, if provided, is only provided by default through subject learning and a few clauses, such as the secular nature of education and recognition of social roles of education; elimination of competition as enshrined in Article 3.8 in the Law of Turkmenistan on Education (2021).

Summary and Conclusion

Turkmenistan is a small desert country with a population of 6.5 million. Most of the population is Islamic and speaks the Turkmenian language. The country's economy is based on vast oil and gas reserves and agriculture, with a GDP per capita of USD 14,740.01. Turkmenistan has achieved universal literacy and has a low unemployment rate of 5.02%.

Since 1993, the Turkmenistan government has taken various measures to develop education. The latest education law was enacted on June 5, 2021, and was amended on June 30, 2023. In 2017, Turkmenistan implemented a Digital Education Development Policy to improve the quality of digital education services and facilitate lifelong learning for all (UNESCO, 2021).

Turkmenistan has established a robust national education system that guarantees every citizen's right to free, fair, and high-quality education at the primary and secondary levels, which are compulsory, according to the country's constitution and education law. In recent years, Turkmenistan's education system has been consistently undergoing reforms to update the facilities, resources, and teaching methodologies of its educational institutions, create a high-tech learning

environment, implement the latest information technologies in education, optimise the school network, and innovate and expand the market of educational services.

The school education system in Turkmenistan comprises preschool, primary, lower secondary and upper secondary education. The curriculum emphasises academic subjects such as Turkmen language and literature, Russian language, history, mathematics, computer studies, geography, biology, chemistry, physics, and astronomy. Besides academic subjects, there is also an emphasis on co-curricular activities like art education, music, physical training, handicrafts, practical training, technical drawing, etc., to develop knowledge about the motherland. The secondary education curriculum also includes subjects like the policy of independence and the Constitution of Turkmenistan. The government of Turkmenistan supplies printed and e-version textbooks and other materials.

Child-centred active teaching and learning practices have been implemented in Turkmen schools, and there is an effort to incorporate technology into the education system. This includes using computers, multimedia resources, and online platforms for learning. Teachers require more expertise and understanding in child and adolescent development and interactive approaches, including digital skills (UNICEF, 2021b).

As per the Turkmenistan Law on Education (Article 40), the government commits to covering all the costs of education and living expenses for orphans and children without parents or guardians until they reach 24 years of age. This includes those enrolled in vocational education institutions (UNESCO, 2021).

The country's education system is undergoing reforms aimed at enhancing the quality of education and providing the best possible learning experience for students. The reforms also aim to introduce international standards and develop the IT infrastructure. Today, all schools nationwide have access to basic amenities such as sanitation facilities and power supply. Remarkably, 99% of all schools have been equipped with computers for educational purposes, representing significant progress (UNESCO, 2019, 2021).

The education system in Turkmenistan aims to foster well-rounded student development. However, it is observed that the cognitive domain seems to receive greater emphasis, while the affective, social, and psychomotor domains remain relatively neglected. In order to address this issue, the school curriculum includes various co-curricular activities such as art education, music, physical training, handicrafts, practical training, technical drawing, and more. These subjects aim to develop the students' health, skills, hobbies, life skills, morality, and social and cultural awareness. However, developing hobbies, morality, and social education is not an articulated agenda of the curriculum framework. Instead, these aspects are developed as a byproduct of the co-curricular activities.

"Although Turkmenistan ranks 'high' on the Human Development Index, a closer look at the index reveals poor outcomes in health, education and standard of living. Turkmenistan has the lowest life expectancy in Central Asia…Youth in Turkmenistan have limited educational prospects as only 3 out of 10 secondary school graduates continue their education at tertiary level" (Progres, 2024a, Para 1).

"The government spending in Turkmenistan is insufficient to improve education and health outcomes for Turkmen people. Citizens in Turkmenistan carry the burden of the financial costs associated with education and healthcare. This puts them at greater financial risk and inhibits their ability to afford essential services. Meanwhile, the lack of detailed and reliable spending data and disaggregated outcomes in education and health makes it difficult to objectively measure the impact of government spending" (Progres, 2024b, Para 1).

In Turkmenistan, many young women feel discouraged from completing higher education because they are culturally expected to get married by the age of 20 or 21. Over the past decade, the percentage of women attending higher education has decreased (Heale, 2019). It is worth noting that the education system in Turkmenistan lacks provisions for creating a peaceful and happy student.

Turkmenistan is reforming its education system to align with global standards. As part of these efforts, the country has included various foreign languages in school education, and its collaboration with UNESCO and UNICEF regarding policy-making and implementation is commendable. According to a study conducted by Progres (2024a), "It is time that the government of Turkmenistan prioritises the development of its people, the country's most valuable but underutilised asset" (Para 1).

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13

Revitalising Education after Independence: Uzbekistan

Mrityunjoy Kaibarta

Abstract

The education system in Uzbekistan has undergone significant reforms since its independence in 1991, focusing on improving the quality of education and aligning it with international standards. The curriculum focuses on developing critical thinking, problem-solving, and practical skills. The government has introduced a new curriculum, digitised the education system, increased investment in teacher training, and developed partnerships with international universities. The education system consists of nine years of compulsory and two years of general and vocational education. Assessment practices include a combination of written examinations, oral tests, presentations, projects, and practical demonstrations. Physical and health education are integral to the curriculum, focusing on developing students' physical and mental well-being. Sports, arts, and cultural activities are also emphasised to foster personal development and teamwork. The education system in Uzbekistan aims to equip students with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in the 21st century; despite the government's commitment to quality improvement in education, infrastructure development and international collaborations must improve.

Keywords: Law on Education, Education Sector Plan (ESP) 2019-2023, Multi-literacy, National Learning Assessment System, Trade-based skill development

Introduction

Uzbekistan became an independent country after the decomposition of Soviet Union in 1991. It is a doubly landlocked nation located in Central Asia, covering a total area of 447,400 km^2 (WorldData.info, n.d.) It borders Kazakhstan to the north, Kyrgyzstan to the northeast, Tajikistan to the southeast, Afghanistan to the south, and Turkmenistan to the southwest. One of the most striking

features of Uzbekistan is its diverse terrain, which includes enchanting deserts, majestic mountains, and picturesque rivers and lakes. Tashkent's capital city is the country's largest economic and cultural centre. Other major cities include Samarkand, Bukhara, and Namangan. Among the most significant rivers in Uzbekistan are the Amu Darya and Syr Darya, both critical water sources for the region. Uzbekistan comprises 12 regions, an autonomous republic (Karakalpakstan), and an independent city (Tashkent) (Tashkent Medical Academy, n.d.).

As of 2024, the total population is about 36,799,756; 18,525,011 male, and 18,274,745 female (Kun. UZ, 2024a). The population of Uzbekistan mainly consists of ethnic Uzbeks, who form the majority. Other significant ethnic groups include Tajiks, Karakalpaks, Russians, Kazakhs, and various smaller communities (Advantour, n.d.). Most of the population in Uzbekistan practices Islam, predominantly the Sunnis. Nevertheless, there are small communities of other religious groups, such as Christians, Jews, and others (U.S. Mission Uzbekistan, 2023). The official language of Uzbekistan is Uzbek, which is part of the Turkic language family. Russian is also widely spoken and used for administrative and business purposes. Other languages in Uzbekistan include Tajik, Karakalpak, Kazakh, and Kyrgyz, among others (Aminov et al., 2010).

Since 1991, Uzbekistan has been undergoing economic transformation and various reforms. In 2022, its total and per capita GDP were US$80.4 billion and US$2,254.95, respectively, with an annual growth rate of 6% (The World Bank, n.d.a). The Uzbek government has introduced various economic reforms to attract foreign investment and encourage the growth of the private sector. However, the country is not without its challenges. High unemployment rates, limited access to financing for businesses, and the persistent issue of corruption are hurdles that Uzbekistan is working to overcome. According to the Global Education Monitoring Report Team et al. (2022), Uzbekistan allocates the highest government expenditures to the education sector, accounting for 20.5% of public expenditures and 4.9% of the national GDP. Uzbekistan ranked 47 in the World Happiness Report 2024 (Helliwell, 2024). With 0.727 HDI, Uzbekistan rank 106 on the Human Development Index (UNDP, 2024).

The literacy rate in Uzbekistan reached 99.99% in 2021 (UNESCO, 2023a). As of 2023, Uzbekistan's GER and NER for primary stand at 94.34% and 96.04%, and for upper secondary, 66.42% and 74.35%, respectively (UNESCO-UIS, 2024). The government aims to improve the international recognition of Uzbek diplomas and foster collaboration with foreign educational institutions.

At the beginning of the 2022-2023 academic year, there were 10,522 educational institutions for general education (Kun. UZ, 2023). As of 2021, the number of teachers in Uzbekistan was 664,771, including higher education (Kun. UZ, 2021). Uzbekistan has 6,284,000 primary and secondary

education pupils (Education Policy and Data Center, 2018). Uzbekistan's results in the 2022 PISA assessment were notably lower. Uzbekistan scored 364 points in mathematics compared to the average of 472. In reading, the country scored 336 points in contrast to the average of 476 points; in science, Uzbekistan scored 355 points compared to 485 points (Kun. UZ, 2024b).

Educational Policy

The education system in Uzbekistan is governed by two ministries - the Ministry of Preschool and School Education and the Ministry of Higher and Secondary Specialized Education (GPE, n.d.). The education system in Uzbekistan has undergone significant reforms since its independence in 1991 to improve its quality and align it with international standards. Adopting the Law on Education on July 2, 1992, was the country's first step towards educational reforms. "This law was further improved in the Law 'On Amendments and Supplements to the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan 'On Education' adopted on May 7, 1993" (Abdullayevna, 2022, p. 2951). "The priority of the sphere of education in the social-economic and spiritual-cultural development of the country was stated in this law. The main directions of educational policy, structure and system of administration, and rights and obligations of participants of education were defined in this document" (Akobirov, 2017, p. 55).

Implementing the *National Programme on Capacity Building* in 1996 brought about significant reforms in the education sector, affecting all stages of education (Eshchanov et al., 2019). In 1997, the Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan enacted the Law "On Education," which consisted of 34 articles and the National Personnel Training Programme. This legislation established a solid foundation for developing a mature generation in Uzbekistan by expanding reforms within the education system (Abdullayevna, 2022). The *On Education* law of 1997 in Uzbekistan only underwent minor revisions in 2007. However, the country has implemented several reforms and provisions in the education sector through different decrees and resolutions since then (UNICEF, 2018). These reforms focus on updating curricula, enhancing teacher training, introducing modern teaching methods, and promoting research and innovation in education. The government aims to improve the international recognition of Uzbek diplomas and foster collaboration with foreign educational institutions.

On February 7, 2017, the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan adopted the Action Strategy for the five priority areas of development for 2017-2021. "The main goal of the Action Strategy was to radically increase the effectiveness of reforms, create conditions for the comprehensive and rapid development of the state and society, modernise the country and liberalise all spheres of life" (Tulyakov, 2022, para 2). In priority area 4, education was identified as a key sub-area for development. The priorities included enhancing the lifelong education system, expanding access to

high-quality educational services, and training highly qualified personnel to meet the contemporary needs of the labour market. "The development of improving the competitiveness of education in the country on the national and international labour markets were also included in the Concept of Integrated Socio-Economic Development of the Republic of Uzbekistan until 2030" (Tulanovan, 2021, p. 69). The Ministry of Preschool Education (MDE) was also created in 2017, and since then, Preschool Education has been in the limelight of the education sector.

The Ministry of Preschool and School Education has demonstrated its commitment to the education sector by adopting the significant second education sector plan for 2019-2023 in 2018 (GOU, 2019). This comprehensive plan, developed with inputs from various divisions of the Ministry of Public Education (MOPE), Ministry of Preschool Education (MOPSE), and other line ministries and international development partners, sets the stage for the subsequent reforms. "The 2019-23 ESP has an overall vision that reflects the recent reforms introduced by the Government of Uzbekistan and is consistent with its national development strategy 2017-2021" (GPE, n.d., para 4).

Additionally, modern textbooks created by domestic and foreign authors would be fully implemented in school education (The Ministry of Public Education of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2022). This achievement is a promising step towards a brighter future for the education sector in Uzbekistan. UNESCO (2023b) appreciated and flagged following major reforms introduced by President Shavkat Mirziyoyev in recent years.

1. New Curriculum: The government has introduced a new curriculum that is not only designed to improve the quality of education but also to prepare students for the job market. This forward-thinking curriculum focuses on critical thinking, problem-solving, and practical skills, ensuring that students are equipped for the challenges of the future.

2. Digitalisation: The government has launched an ambitious programme to digitise the education system, including developing online platforms for learning and assessments.

3. Teacher Training: The government has increased investment in teacher training, including retraining existing teachers and recruiting new ones. The aim is to improve the quality of teaching and ensure that teachers are equipped to deliver the new curriculum.

4. Infrastructure Development: The government has invested in developing school infrastructure, including constructing new schools and renovating existing ones.

5. International Partnerships: The government has developed partnerships with leading international universities to promote exchange programmes and joint research initiatives. This has helped to improve the quality of education in Uzbekistan and increase opportunities for students to study abroad.

6. Focus on Early Childhood Education: The government has emphasised early childhood education more, recognising the importance of early learning in a child's development.

7. Access to Education: The government has expanded educational access, especially for girls and children from disadvantaged backgrounds. This effort includes providing scholarships, school transportation, and various forms of support to ensure every child can receive a quality education (UNESCO, 2023b).

Overall, these reforms aim to modernise the education system in Uzbekistan and ensure that students are equipped with the skills they need to succeed in the 21st century.

Structure of the Education System

The Uzbek school education system consists of two phases. The first phase includes nine years of compulsory education, and the second phase offers two years of general and vocational education. The nine-year compulsory general secondary education (GSE) is divided into four years of primary education and five years of lower secondary education. The two-year secondary education, covering grades 10 and 11, provides general and specialised secondary education. Upon successful completion, students are awarded a Certificate of Complete Secondary Education.

The education system starts with optional pre-primary education for children up to five years old. According to the CES Chair of Education Systems (2021), starting from the 2021-22 session, an additional year (the sixth year) has been added, making one year of pre-primary education mandatory. Children who reach the age of seven are automatically advanced to primary school, which is now part of the general secondary education (GSE) track.

Until 2017, compulsory education in Uzbekistan consisted of nine years, which included four years of primary school (grades 1-4) and five years of lower secondary school (grades 5-9). The new education reform has added two more years, increasing overall school attendance to eleven years, with the addition of grades 10 and 11. There is no mandatory examination upon completing the primary school phase. Students who have completed primary and lower secondary school (grades 1-9) can choose one of three modalities for upper secondary education (CES Chair of Education Systems, 2021) (Figure 13.1).

1. "Under the first modality, the two additional years of compulsory education are used for vocational training to ensure that students acquire practical training and skills. The same GSE schools that teach grades 1–9 offer these programmes. Students enter the labour market after completing the GSE standard of 11 years.

2. Depending on the specialisation, the second modality includes 11 years of GSE, with an additional half a year to two years in a vocational college. This professional education at the upper secondary level helps students acquire relevant skills used in the labour market in more complex positions.

3. The third modality is for students who wish to pursue an academic career. These students can leave GSE after nine years and instead attend two years of general education at an academic lyceum for grades 10 and 11. Upon completing the two years of general education, students can enter higher education" (CES Chair of Education Systems, 2021, p. 16).
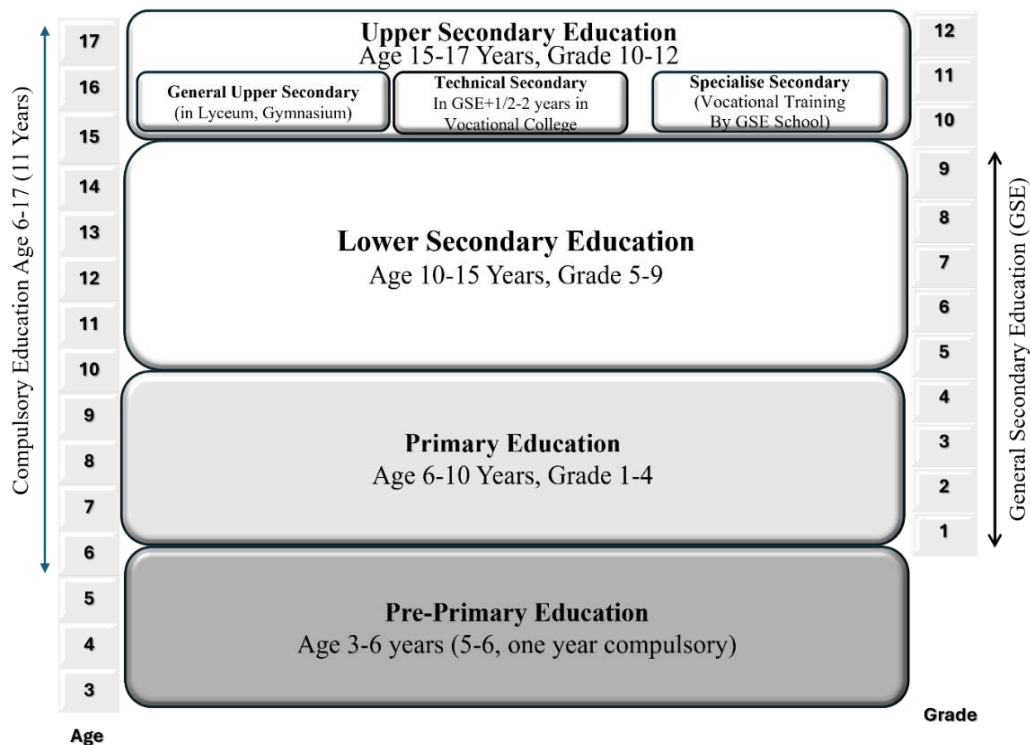
Figure 13.1 School Education Structure of Uzbekistan

Source: Scholaro database, n.d.; CES Chair of Education Systems, 2021 (Drawn by author)

Curricular Frameworks

The new national curriculum is rooted in Uzbekistan's Education Sector Plan (ESP) 2019-2023 (GOU, 2019). This recommended that the new curriculum focus "on 21st-century skills, soft skills (including personal development and employability), and higher order thinking skills. The new

curriculum must also reduce the content load to a manageable level to ensure that there is sufficient quality time for teachers to cover the full curriculum within each academic year adequately and for students to understand new concepts and develop higher-order thinking skills appropriate for the country's modern economy and changing society needs. However, it must be noted that a reduction in content need not necessarily mean reduced instructional time. The aim should be balancing the content, quality, and nature of tasks to be carried out in classrooms to an optimal level. The approach should be shifted from a content-driven current curriculum to a more competency-based learning approach" (GOU, 2019, p. 82).

Preschool education focuses on developing social, cognitive, and motor skills through play-based activities. The primary education curriculum includes Uzbek language, mathematics, natural sciences, social sciences, foreign languages, physical education, music, and arts. The secondary education curriculum includes various subjects, including literature, history, physics, chemistry, biology, geography, foreign languages, and social sciences (Table 13.1). Vocational education is available for students who want to acquire practical skills and enter the workforce directly after completing their education. It includes technical and vocational schools that offer specialised training in various fields, such as engineering, agriculture, healthcare, and services.

Table 13.1 Content of School Subjects in the General Secondary Cycle

Grades 1-4	Grades 5-11	
• Native language (Uzbek, Karakalpak, Russian, Kazakh, Tajik, Kyrgyz, Turkmen) • Uzbek/Russian (as second language) • Foreign language • Reading • Mathematics • "The world" (Grades 1-2), "Nature" (Grades 3-4) • Musical culture • Fine arts • Ethics • Arts and Crafts • Physical education	• Native language and literature (Uzbek, Karakalpak, Russian, Kazakh, Tajik, Kyrgyz, Turkmen) • Official language (Uzbek language in schools where tuition is in minority languages) • Foreign language (English, German, French) • History • Foundations of the state and law • Basics of economic knowledge • Mathematics • Computer Science • Physics and Astronomy	• Chemistry • Biology • Geography Sense of Motherland • The idea of national independence and the basis of spirituality (morality) • Fine arts • Musical culture • Drawing • Domestic and Industrial Arts • Physical education • Job training

Source: GOU, 2019

The national curriculum is a comprehensive framework encompassing the essential knowledge and skills students need to master across 22 different disciplines. Considering International Experiences and Psychological and Sanitary Norms, age-based weekly norms have been established to ensure students can effectively absorb the curriculum. These norms have been adjusted to gradually reduce

the study load, with measures identified to decrease the weekly study hours. Since 2019, the weekly study load for all classes has been reduced from 339 hours to 314 hours. Over 11 years, the total study hours are 10,655 (The Ministry of Public Education of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2021).

The curriculum includes topics relevant to international research and new educational approaches, focusing on providing practice-oriented topics to students. A clear goal has been established for each subject, focusing on the skills students need to develop to thrive in the 21st-century workplace. For example, the curriculum emphasises developing oral and written communication skills through the mother tongue, logical thinking and problem-solving through mathematics, research skills in the natural sciences, and the ability to compare historical periods and events. The curriculum also focuses on informatics, emphasising the preparation of "user-generated digital content" (The Ministry of Public Education of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2021).

Overall, the national curriculum is designed to ensure that students are equipped with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in the modern world while providing a clear and comprehensive framework for teachers to use as they educate the next generation of learners.

Teaching Learning

The academic year in Uzbekistan begins in September on the first working day of the month and concludes in June for secondary schools and in July for higher education institutions (Fayllar.org, 2023).

The President takes practical measures to make Uzbekistan's teaching profession the most prestigious and respected. Teachers should specialise in at least two subjects. Traditional pairs are as follows: language/literature, math/physics, chemistry/biology, English/German (or French as a second foreign language), and history/geography. Another source of teachers comes from the professional community, like engineers who teach drafting and accountants who teach mathematics. Professionals in vocational schools teach their specialities (Uzbekistan, 2002).

"Teaching methods in the national curriculum are based on the development of cognitive, positive behavioural and socio-emotional, critical and creative thinking, multi-literacy (reading, non-literacy, information technology literacy and media literacy), teamwork in each subject area" (The Ministry of Public Education of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2021). The teaching-learning approach has transitioned from a content-driven curriculum to a more competency-based learning approach. Teaching methods in Uzbekistan's schools typically involve a combination of traditional lecturing, teacher-led discussions, group work, and individual assignments.

The Education Sector Plan (ESP) of Uzbekistan 2019-2023 recommended 'wider use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) as a powerful pedagogic tool as well as tool and management' (GOU, 2019, p. 97).

Most Uzbek primary schools are not equipped with up-to-date devices, so teaching methods still rely on traditional handbooks and materials provided by the Ministry of Public Education of the Republic of Uzbekistan (Shaturaev, 2014). However, the education system has gradually shifted towards more student-centred and interactive approaches to enhance critical thinking, problem-solving, and creativity. Uzbekistan has been working on integrating technology into the education system. Many schools have computer labs, and efforts have been made to provide access to online learning platforms and digital learning resources.

The New National Curriculum, developed in 2020-21, emphasises teaching methods like project-based learning, student-centred learning based on individual interest and ability, collaborative learning, independent learning, and play supporting students' independent activities (The Ministry of Public Education of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2021).

Pre-primary teachers use play-based activities to improve engagement with children. Alternative school models were introduced for pre-primary education. "More children are getting access to preschool education in Uzbekistan. Alternative school models are being introduced, like a bus with a teacher that arrives in some remote villages every morning, empowering children to make their own choices about how they learn" (Polonskaya, 2021, para 1). The child-centred teaching method is used for preschool children, where they can choose their way to learn. "ICT has not been integrated into the strategic planning of Uzbekistan's oldest smart school. Teachers employed ICT in the classroom not according to a specific plan, but about temporal circumstances and the like" (Egamberdievich et al., 2019, p. 2).

Learning Assessment

Assessment practices include a combination of written examinations, oral tests, presentations, projects, and practical demonstrations. The purpose of assessments is to evaluate students' understanding of the subject matter and their ability to apply knowledge and skills. Examinations are conducted at the end of each semester or academic year. Teachers grade oral answers during lessons and test papers. The grading system of Uzbekistan is numerical. The grading system uses the highest grade of 5 (excellent = A), followed by 4 (good = B), 3 (satisfactory = C), and 2 (unsatisfactory = F). The grade of 1 is not used. Final grades are determined based on test scores, papers, attendance, and class participation (Fayllar.org, 2023).

The Education Sector Plan (ESP) of Uzbekistan 2019-2023 statement on the Assessment system said, "The country needs to prepare activities for three specific types of assessments: (a) reviewing and revising classroom assessment systems in line with the competency-based approach – including the use of summative and formative assessments and in a continuous and comprehensive framework; (b) prepare for enhancing or establishing a National Learning Assessment System (NAS) in the country and carrying out system level sample surveys on learning using internationally accepted testing techniques; and (c) prepare for participating in international learning assessments like Programme for International Students Assessment (PISA) and Trends in Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS). In doing each of these, staff capacity building in specialised areas is extremely important" (GOU, 2019, p. 104).

Standardised tests and multiple-choice tests are rare (GOU, 2019). The grades are calculated by taking an average at the quarter's or semester's end. Written or oral exams are given at the end of the year. After completing secondary school, a certificate or diploma is awarded. The first certificate is given for finishing the compulsory ninth grade, after which individuals can attend any school (Uzbekistan, 2018). As mentioned earlier, after completing the eleventh grade, students are awarded the Certificate of Complete Secondary Education, also known as the attestation repost or certificate of maturity. Graduates of technical colleges receive a diploma that is legally equivalent to the certificate and qualifies them in technical fields (Azkurs.org, 2022).

Health and Physical Education

Uzbekistan's mandatory K-12 Physical Education curriculum includes various sports that may improve students' health and wellness. Team sports (such as football, basketball, soccer and volleyball), individual sports (track and field and cross country), and leisure activities (walking, cycling and swimming) are all a part of Uzbekistan's general school physical education programme (Ruzmatovich & G'ayratjon ogle, 2023). Sixty-eight hours annually are devoted to physical education. For example, the 8th-grade physical education programme includes gymnastics (12 hours), athletics (16 hours), competitions in two different sports, football (12 hours), and struggle (6 hours). Additionally, 2 hours per week are allocated to chess, considered a mental sport, as part of the required physical education curriculum (Ruzmatovich & G'ayratjon o'g'li, 2023).

In Uzbekistan, the health education programme was launched in secondary schools in 2002, but implementation was uneven. Since then, several initiatives have been taken to expand this. The curriculum has been revised, and a pool of teachers has been prepared to present it (UNFPA, 2014).

Health education is integral to the curriculum, covering nutrition, personal hygiene, reproductive health, disease prevention, mental health, and substance abuse prevention. It aims to educate students about healthy lifestyle choices, develop their awareness of health-related issues, and equip them with essential knowledge and skills to make informed decisions. Uzbekistan's schools also

organise awareness campaigns and health and physical well-being events. These initiatives may include health fairs, sports tournaments, fitness challenges, and workshops conducted by health professionals to raise awareness about specific health topics.

Skills Education

There is no special course or subject in skills education up to 9th grade, but basic skills are developed among students through the teaching-learning process. Pre-primary and primary education includes drawing, writing, counting, playing games, and making artefacts. The curriculum emphasises a competency-based approach, interdisciplinary integration, and inter-class coherence, developing students' critical thinking, problem-solving, and collaborative working skills.

The Uzbekistan Government emphasises trade-based skill development after 9th grade to fulfil the labour market's needs. From 2020-2021, after completing 9th grade, students may continue their compulsory education in grades 10 and 11, move to a professional school for two years of combined academic and trades training, or move to an academic lyceum. On completion, they will have the opportunity to transition to further vocational education and training, to higher education, or to the labour market (ADB, 2022).

In 2000, TVET was established as a distinct education subsector in Uzbekistan. Most financing and delivery for TVET comes from the public sector, with additional support from various development partners. According to a 2022 study conducted by ADB, there is a discrepancy between the number of graduates in various fields of study and the number of jobs available for specialised secondary school and higher education graduates (ADB, 2022).

Hobby and Life Skills Education

Schools in Uzbekistan emphasise extracurricular activities, including sports, arts, cultural events, and clubs. These activities aim to foster students' personal development, teamwork, and leadership skills and provide opportunities for self-expression and creativity. Teaching learning methods follow the Finnish interdisciplinary approach and collaborative learning. "Studying a topic in multiple disciplines makes educational content more interesting and useful for students. For example, in water, it is possible to simultaneously strengthen the student's knowledge of biology, geography and physics" (The Ministry of Public Education of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2021). Through collaborative learning, students develop a few life skills, such as teamwork, communication, and socialisation.

As articulated in the agenda, the curriculum in Uzbekistan does not include hobby development and life skills education. While these skills are undoubtedly valuable in shaping a well-rounded individual, they are left to incidental learning and occur through teaching-learning practices and co-

curricular activities by default. Students must rely on extracurricular activities and personal interests to develop these skills.

Moral, Social and Cultural Education

Uzbekistan is a multi-ethnic and multicultural country, and schools promote multicultural education to foster understanding, tolerance, and respect for different cultures and ethnicities. This includes celebrating cultural diversity, learning about different traditions, and promoting intercultural dialogue. Religion or religious education has not been taught as a distinct course at public or private schools in Uzbekistan. In contrast, public schools provide limited insight into the world's religions as part of their moral courses (Khalilova, n.d.).

In Uzbekistan, elementary school students are taught Odobnoma (adab or manners), which is equally important as other subjects. Abdugafurova (2018) stated that this course is included in the state curriculum and is allocated thirty-four hours of teaching every academic year. Students receive one hour of instruction each week, which amounts to 136 hours of Odobnoma instruction between grade and fourth grade. Each grade level has a special textbook designed for it, which serves as a means of enculturation. These textbooks help in developing a framework of moral judgment through critical reasoning. It is worth noting that Odobnoma was renamed Vatan Tuyghusi (Patriotism) in the fifth grade and later transformed into Milliy Istiqlol G'oyasi (The Ideology of National Independence) in the sixth and seventh grades. In later years of study, the course further develops into Milliy Istiqlol G'oyasi va Ma'naviyat va Ma'rifat Asoslari (The Ideology of National Independence and Basics of Inner Consciousness and Knowledge). This course is an important tool for instilling a sense of patriotism and moral values in students, contributing to their overall development. (Abdugafurova, 2018).

Peace and Happiness Education

According to the World Happiness Report 2024, Uzbekistan has secured the 47th position. Although peace and happiness education is not explicitly included in the country's school curriculum, it is still an inherent aspect of Uzbekistan's education system. This is because the country's educational reform has been influenced by several UN agencies, such as UNESCO and UNICEF, since its independence. As a result, peace and happiness education is a natural byproduct of the Uzbek education system.

The National Curriculum Framework (NCF) addresses gender and social sensitivity. The Ministry of Public Education of the Republic of Uzbekistan has integrated the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime's (UNODC) Zorbs video series into the primary school curriculum. The Zorbs series is designed as an engaging and educational tool featuring animated videos that cover topics such as peace, justice, human rights, and gender. These educational materials help build resilience

in children and equip them with essential skills like conflict resolution, critical thinking, empathy, and teamwork (UNDOC, n.d.).

According to Vision of Humanity (2022), "Uzbekistan recorded the largest improvement in Positive Peace of all countries assessed over the past decade. The country's Positive Peace Index improved by 0.422 points from 2009 to 2020, or 10.9 per cent over the period" (Pandit, 2022, Para 1). The nation made progress in all aspects and foundations of Positive Peace, with significant improvements, especially in the Free Flow of Information, Good Relations with Neighbours, and Equitable Distribution of Resources. Despite being substantial, these changes are starting from a relatively low point, as Uzbekistan is still placed 100th out of the 163 countries evaluated in the Positive Peace Index 2022 (Pandit, 2022)

Summary and Conclusion

The Ministry of Preschool and School Education in Uzbekistan has adopted the second education sector plan for 2019-2023, which reflects recent reforms and is consistent with the national development strategy. The National Programme for the Development of Public Education in 2022-2026 aims to implement the National Curriculum and fully apply modern textbooks. Major reforms introduced by President Shavkat Mirziyoyev include a new curriculum, digitalisation, teacher training, infrastructure development, international partnerships, a focus on early childhood education, and increased access to education.

Formal education in Uzbekistan is divided into three levels: pre-primary, general secondary, and higher education. The education system begins with optional preschool for children aged zero to five, and compulsory preschool education has been added. The new education reform has added two more years to increase overall school attendance to eleven years, with the addition of grades 10 and 11. Students can choose one of three modalities under the new reformed 11-year GSE school model, including vocational training, professional education, or an academic lyceum.

Overall, Uzbekistan's education system prioritises the all-round development of children. In 2018, with support from UNICEF, the Ministry of Preschool Education (MOPSE) revised the Early Learning Development Standards (ELDS) and developed a new preschool curriculum called "ilk Kadam" (meaning "First Step" in Uzbek language). This competency-based curriculum aims to provide children with a holistic development approach by addressing their social, emotional, physical, cognitive, and linguistic competencies, preparing them for formal education. The revised ELDS consists of statements outlining the minimum expectations for the development, knowledge, and skills of preschool children aged 0-7 (Sankar, 2021, p. 44).

In Uzbekistan, physical education is integral to the school education curriculum and a credit course. The education system places a significant emphasis on skill and vocational education. This is evident in the country's prioritisation of programmes that develop practical skills and knowledge in various fields. Through its educational initiatives, Uzbekistan aims to equip its citizens with the necessary competencies to succeed in their chosen careers and contribute to the growth and development of their communities. Hobby development and life skills education are provided through incidental learning. Moral, social and cultural education is part of the curriculum and provides equal emphasis as other academic subjects. There is no course or subject on developing peace and happiness education. Since its independence, several UN agencies, such as UNESCO and UNICEF, have influenced the country's educational reform. As a result, peace and happiness education is a natural byproduct of the Uzbek education system.

It is also true that the academic domain is still given significant importance. Nevertheless, there is a ray of hope in including various UN agencies in the educational planning process and the attempt to globalise the education system. As a result, there has been a growing emphasis on global citizenship education, which seeks to foster a sense of belonging to a global community and promote intercultural understanding among students. This is a positive step towards creating a more inclusive and globally aware education system in Uzbekistan.

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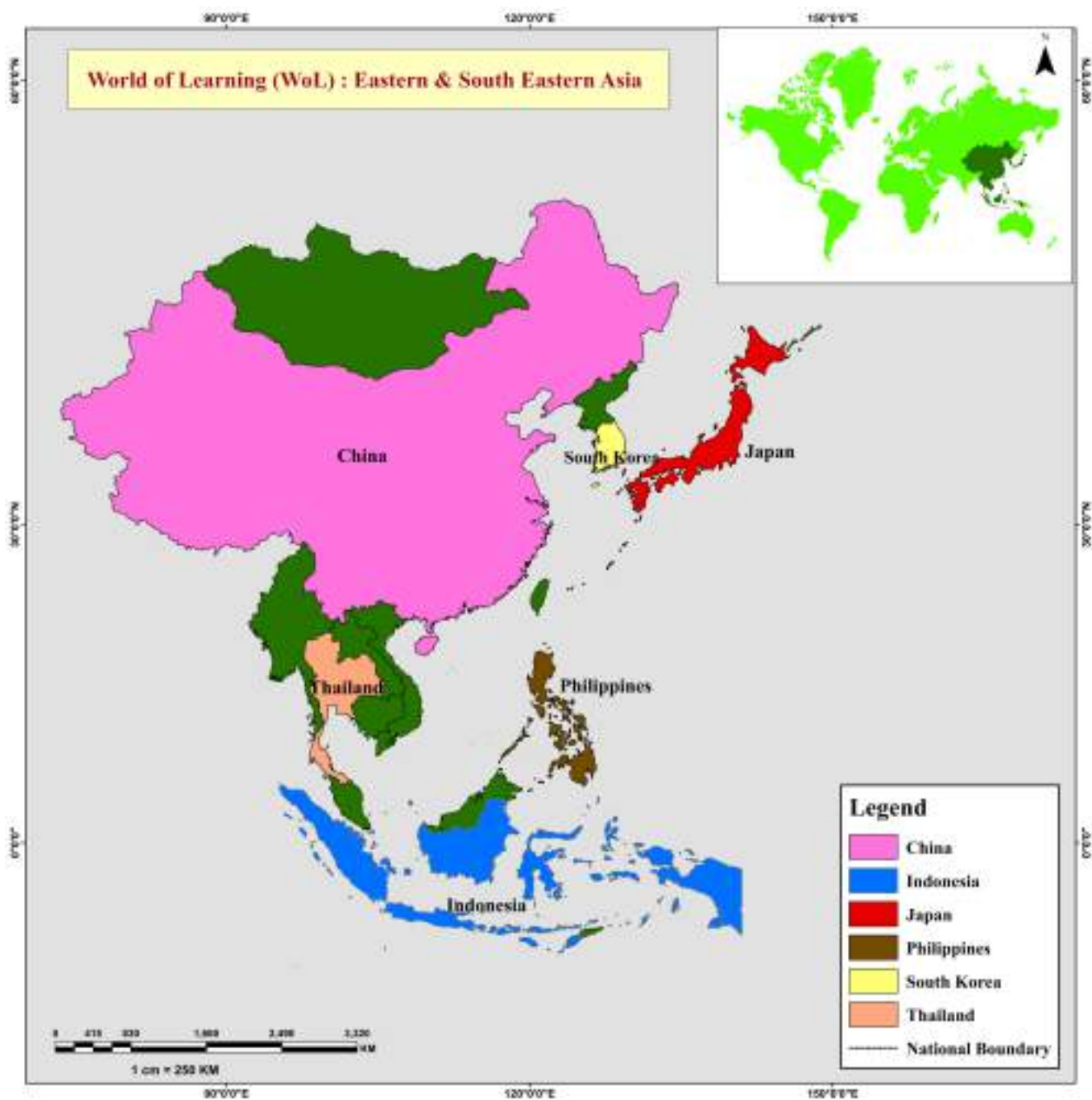
14

High Quality of Education for a Better Future: P. R. China

Meng Hong Wei
Peng Li Ping

Abstract

The chapter analyses national education policies from different historical points of national development. The consistent and focused policies built a solid foundation for education development in China. Under the guidance of these policies, China has developed and renewed the national curriculum to meet the changing demands of national development in different historical periods. Within the national curriculum, Physical Education and Moral Education have been viewed as the key to realising the all-round development of children and adolescents and the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.

To understand the world's developing situation and the challenges facing human development, peace, cooperation, and win-win are the trends of the times. Peace and development remain the themes of the times. These contents are embodied in the courses of morality and rule of law, ideology and politics, history, geography, Chinese, etc.

Keywords: China, Double Reduction Policy, Smart Education of China, PRC Educational Law, Modernization of Education, Vocational Education Reforms, Education for International Understanding

Introduction

The People's Republic of China (hereafter "China") is the largest developing country with one of the most extended histories of civilisations worldwide. "China is a socialist state governed by a people's democratic dictatorship led by the working class and based on an alliance of workers and peasants. The socialist system is the fundamental system of the People's Republic of China. Leadership by the Communist Party of China is the defining feature of socialism with Chinese characteristics" (The National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China, 2018, p.4).

China is located east of Asia, on the west coast of the Pacific Ocean. China's total land area is 9,596,960 km² (Forbes India, 2024), with a land border of 22,800 kilometres. China has more than 18,000 kilometres of coastline, with the Bohai Sea, Yellow Sea, East China Sea and South China Sea bordering it from north to south. China comprises 34 provincial-level administrative regions, 23 provinces, five autonomous regions, four municipalities directly under the Central Government, and two particular administrative regions. The capital of China is Beijing. (Geeks for Geeks, 2024).

According to the Seventh National Population Census (2020), China has a total population of approximately 1.411 billion - 51.24% males and 48.76% females (State Statistics Bureau, 2021) and a population growth rate of 0.00 (World Bank, 2022). The life expectancy is 78.08 years (World Bank, 2021). There are 56 ethnics, including Han. The national standard language is Mandarin and standard Chinese characters. There are five major religions: Buddhism, Taoism, Islam, Catholicism and Christianity (The State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China, 2018).

China is an upper middle-income country with a GDP of USD 17.96 trillion and a 3% GDP growth rate (World Bank, 2023). Per capita GDP is USD12,720.2. China spends 10.5% of government expenditure on education (3.3% of the GDP in 2021). In 2022, public expenditure on education in China amounted to around 4.01 per cent of national GDP. Unemployment in China is 4.9% of the total labour force. According to the World Happiness Report, China ranked 64th based on the 2020 and 2021 surveys (Helliwell et al., 2023). China ranked 79th on HDI in 2021 (UNDP, 2022).

China is a fully literate country with 100% literacy among 15-24-year-olds and 97% among 15 and above. China has by far the most extensive school education system, educating nearly 291 million students through an estimated 0.5 million schools of different kinds in 2021. Besides the state schools, China has a total of 185,700 non-state schools. Details of the Number of schools, students, teachers and GER are given in the following table (Table 14.1).

Table 14.1 Levels-wise Schools, Students in China and GER/NER

Levels	No of Schools	No of Students	GER/NER	No of Teachers
Kindergarten	294,800	48,052,100	88.1%	3,191,000
Primary	154,300	17,825,800	100.17% (GER)	6,600,800
Junior High	52,900	17,954,400	Data Not available	3,971,100
Senior High	14,600	26,050,300	89.45% (GER)	2,028,300

Source: MOE, 2022a; UNESCO-UIS, 2022 (Adapted by authors)

Educational Policy

Since its foundation, the Chinese government have prioritised education for national development and set out the fundamental direction of China's education policy. That is, "a country prospers when education is strong, and a country prospers when education is strong. Building a strong

education country is a strategic precursor to building a strong modern socialist country in all respects; it is an effective way to promote common prosperity for all people… and it is a basic project for comprehensively promoting the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation through Chinese-style modernisation. Accelerating building a strong, educated country will support the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation" (Xinhua News Agency, 2023).

Building the Chinese nation through Chinese-style modernisation is a long process. Table 14.2 summarises the national education policies at the different historical points of the national development.

Table 14.2 Summary of the National Conference on Education and Relevant Policy Documents

Year held	No	General policy issued	The document issued by the Party and/or State Council	
			The document	**Date**
1949	1	Education serves national construction and is open to workers and peasants.	Decision on Reforming the School System	1951
			Interim Regulations for Primary Schools (Draft) and Interim Regulations for Secondary Schools (Draft	1952
1958	2	"The Party's educational policy is that education serves the politics of the proletariat and integrates education with productive Labour."	Instructions of the CPC Central Committee and The State Council on Education	1958
1971	3	Negate the achievements since the founding of China	No	
1978	4	Education is to serve the realisation of the four modernisations. Enhance the standard of education and elevate scientific and cultural instruction. Schools must actively reinforce revolutionary regulations and conduct and nurture a new generation with socialist awareness.		
1985	5	Implement a nine-year compulsory education step-by-step The localities and the state were tasked with advancing basic education by the prevailing national circumstances.	Decision of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on the reform of the education system	1985
			Compulsory Education Law	1986

Year held	No	General policy issued	The document issued by the Party and/or State Council	
			The document	Date
		Mobilised the enthusiasm of the localities for the development of basic education, and the localities simultaneously relied on the masses to run education.		
1994	6	The emphasis on the development of an education strategy has been made clear. The "two foundations" have genuinely shifted from a goal to a nationwide initiative and have taken precedence in China's educational efforts.	The Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and The State Council issued the Outline of China's Education Reform and Development	1993
1999	7	Comprehensively promote quality education	Decision of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and The State Council on Deepening Educational Reform and Comprehensively Promoting Quality Education	1999
			The Decision of The State Council on the Reform and Development of Basic Education》 has made major reforms to the management system of rural basic education and put forward that the management of rural compulsory education is "mainly in the county".	2001
			The Notice of The State Council on Deepening the Reform of the Funding Guarantee Mechanism for Rural Compulsory Education proposes establishing a funding guarantee mechanism for rural compulsory education divided into projects and shared proportionally between the central and local governments.	2005
			The Compulsory Education Law was revised. The principle of free compulsory education has been clarified through laws.	2006
			Rural boarding school construction project, "Two exemptions and one supplement" project, Modern distance education projects in rural primary and secondary schools, "special post plan" for rural	2000-

Year held	No	General policy issued	The document issued by the Party and/or State Council	
			The document	**Date**
			teachers and other policies	
2010	8	China will realise the grand blueprint of education modernisation in the next ten years.	Outline of the National Medium- and Long-Term Plan for Education Reform and Development (2010-2020)	2010
			Several opinions on comprehensively promoting the reform and development of integrating urban and rural compulsory education in counties and ten initiatives, such as eliminating large class sizes, were subsequently introduced.	2016
			Supervision and Evaluation Measures for the Quality and Balanced Development of County Compulsory Education.	2017
2018	9	Education is "the great plan of the country and the Party." Highlighting the fostering of ethical, mental, physical, artistic, and labour competencies for the comprehensive development of socialist constructors and heirs; The purpose of education is to support the people, the governance of the Communist Party of China, the strengthening and advancement of the Chinese socialist system, and the progress and opening up of socialist modernisation.	Education Modernization in China 2035.	2018
			Implementation Plan for Accelerating the Modernization of Education (2018- 2022).	2018
			National Vocational Education Reform Implementation Plan	2018
			Overall Plan for Deepening the Reform of Educational Evaluation in the New Era.	2020
			Opinions on Further Reducing the Burden of Homework and Off-Campus Training for Students in Compulsory Education.	2021

Source: China Education Daily, 2019, Sep 4 & 26 (Adapted by authors)

The most significant impact of the World Conference on Education for All in 1990 has been the sense of urgency, motive force, and vitality generated by the conference on the national programs of implementing 9-year compulsory schooling and eradicating illiteracy among young and middle-aged adults in China. "The Outline of China's Education Reform and Development" issued by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and The State Council very well reflected the Chinese responses to the international concerns in the national education policies. After 2015, China has firmly committed to implementing SDG 4 and other SDGs since adopting the 2030 Agenda.

China has formulated the national-level action framework and integrated SDG 4 into medium-term and long-term development strategies such as China's Education Modernization 2035 and the 14th Five-Year Plan for education development.

Table 14.2 mainly focuses on the policies issued by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council. In addition to these main policies, the Ministry of Education has issued policies regarding school management, curriculum, teaching, assessment, and so on, which we will mention in the following sections.

Structure of the Education System

The Chinese Education system comprises the following stages (Figure 14.1):

- A three-year pre-primary education program is provided for children aged 3-6.
- Nine years of Compulsory education starts for children at age 6 or 7. It is divided into six years of study in a primary school and three years in a secondary school. In some areas, students may study for five years in a primary school and four years in a secondary school.
- Upper secondary education lasts for three years. There are two ways: senior high secondary schools and secondary vocational schools.
- Higher education includes diploma courses/non-diploma courses. Higher academic education is divided into junior college, undergraduate, and postgraduate. Regarding study duration, junior college, undergraduate, postgraduate, and doctoral education lasts 2-3 years, 4 - 5 years, 2 - 3 years, and 3 - 4 years, respectively. The academic degree program in China awards bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees. Master's and doctoral degrees can be divided into academic and professional degrees. Non-academic/degree mainly refers to training and education provided by institutions of higher learning and other higher education institutions, including distance learning.
- Vocational education is divided into secondary and higher vocational education. Secondary vocational education is provided as an integral part of secondary education (including technical schools). Higher vocational education is implemented as an integral part of higher education by higher vocational schools at or above the junior college, undergraduate, and higher education levels, as well as regular undergraduate colleges and universities.

- Adult vocational training covers pre-employment training, on-the-job training, re-employment training, and other forms of vocational training.
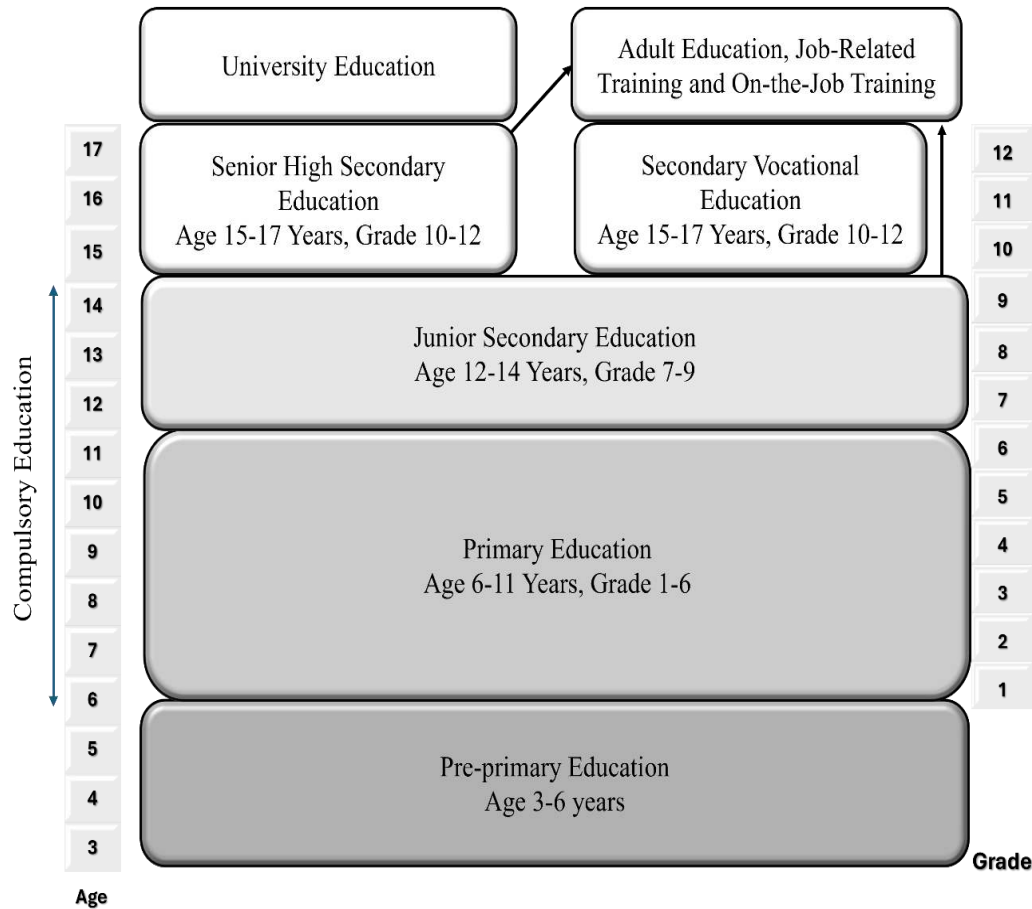
Figure 14.1 The Structure of the Education and Training System in China
Source: Hongwei, 2018 (Adapted by authors)

The PRC Constitution and the PRC Educational Law establish legal regulations for the Chinese educational administrative system, as shown in Figure 14.2.

China's governmental system has five levels: central government, provincial government, prefectural and municipal government, county government, and township government. Compulsory education is under the leadership of the State Council, coordinated and implemented by the provincial governments, autonomous regions, and municipalities directly under the central government, and managed by the people's governments at the county level.

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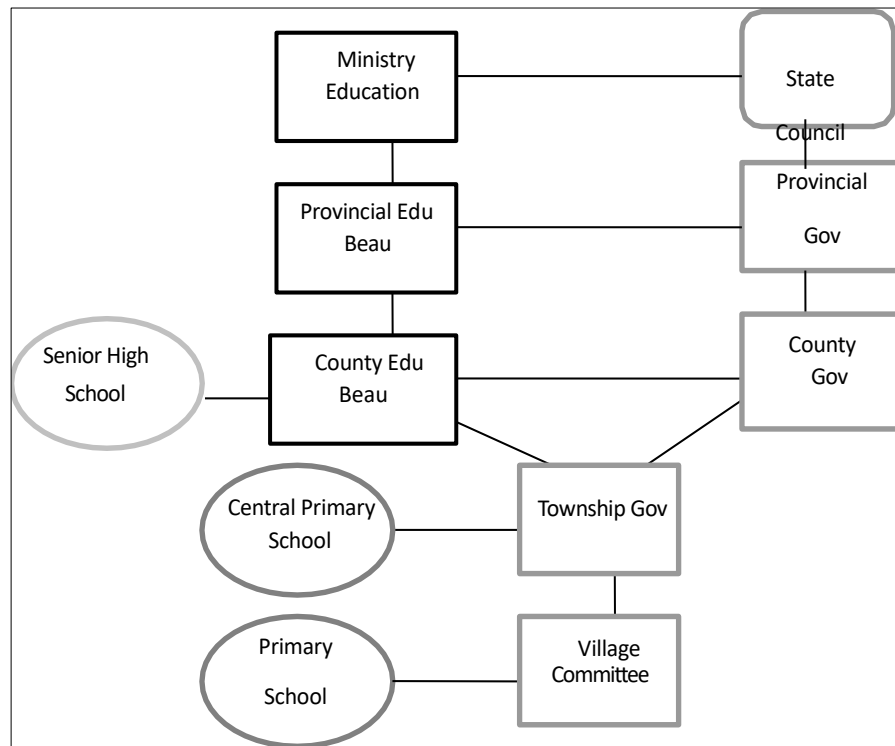
Figure 14.2 The Administrative System of Education in China
Source: MOE, 2000

Curricular Framework

MOE released the "General Senior High School Curriculum Programme" and the revised curriculum and standards for 16 compulsory subjects in 2017 and 2022, respectively (MOE 2017a, 2022a).

The national curriculum framework in China includes three categories: national, local, and school-based curriculum. The national curriculum is the main body that lays a common foundation; local and school-based curricula are expanded and supplemented, considering local differences.

The overall planning of the provincial education administrative department determines the development of the main body related to the local curriculum. The department fully uses educational resources with local characteristics, pays attention to the good use of excellent traditional Chinese cultural resources and revolutionary traditional resources, strengthens practice, experience, and selectivity, and promotes students' knowing their hometown, cultivating feelings

of family and country, and forging a strong sense of community of the Chinese nation.

The school's curriculum is arranged and designed according to its tradition and objectives. It maximises the benefits of distinct educational and instructional resources to meet students' specific learning requirements through various curriculum formats. As a rule, students independently select school-based courses.

Compulsory Education Curriculum

The nine-year compulsory education curriculum has always been arranged according to the "6 - 3" or the "5 - 4" school system. The subjects by grade are shown in Table 14.3.

Table 14.3 Category, Subject and Grade of Compulsory Education

Category	Subject	Grade
National	Ethics and the Rule of Law	1-9
	Chinese	1-9
	Math	1-9
	Foreign Languages (English, Japanese, Russian）	1-9
	History, Geography	7-9
	Science	1-6
	Physics, Chemistry, Biology (or Science)	7-9
	Information Technology	3-8
	Physical Education & Health	1-9
	Arts	1-9
	labour	1-9
	Comprehensive Practical Activities	1-9
Provincial	Designed by the provincial education administrative department	
School-based	Designed by school	

Note: This table is arranged according to the "6 - 3" school system, and the "5 - 4" school system can be determined by reference.

Source: MOE, 2022b

In areas where the "5 - 4" school system is implemented; Geography can be offered from Grade 6. English is offered in primary school, starting from Grade 3. Junior middle school offers foreign languages, which can be selected from English, Japanese, Russian, and others.

Art is offered in Grades 1 to 9. Grades 1 to 2 include singing, music, modelling, and art. Grades 3 to 7 focus on music and art and integrate dance, drama (including traditional Chinese opera), film and television (including digital media art), etc. Grades 8 to 9 include music, art, dance, drama (including traditional Chinese opera), film and television (including digital media arts), etc.

Students choose at least two subjects to study. Subject and grade-wise allocated teaching periods are given in Table 14.4.

Table 14.4 The Distribution of Teaching Periods by Subjects and Grades

Category	Grades									Total（%）
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
National	Ethics and the Rule of Law									6% ⌣8%
	Chinese									20%⌣22%
	Math									13%⌣15%
			Foreign Language							6%⌣8%
							History, Geography			3% ⌣4%
	Science						Physics, Chemistry, Biology (or Science)			8%⌣10%
Provincial			Information Technology							1% ⌣3%
	Physical Education & Health									10%⌣11%
	Arts									9%⌣11%
	Labour									14%⌣18%
	Comprehensive Practical Activities									
	by the provincial education administrative department									
School-based	By school									
weekly	26	26	30	30	30	30	34	34	34	
Total	**910**	**910**	**1050**	**1050**	**1050**	**1050**	**1190**	**1190**	**1122**	**9522**

Note: This table is arranged according to the "6 - 3" school system, and the "5 - 4" school system can be determined by reference.

Source: MOE, 2022b

General Senior High School Curriculum

The general senior high school curriculum comprises mandatory courses, optional mandatory courses, and elective courses.

To meet students' overall development needs and require all students' attendance, and for their individualised development and the College Entrance Examinations, the mandatory and optional mandatory courses were developed at the national level, respectively. Students who plan to participate in the National College Entrance Examinations must select courses of related subjects within the required elective courses; other students must also select some required elective courses to meet the credit requirements for graduation.

The schools plan the elective courses according to their situations so students can select

autonomously. Some elective courses are planned by the state, aiming to expand, improve, or integrate knowledge based on the mandatory and optional mandatory courses; individual schools design other elective courses to meet the diverse needs of their students, the demands of local social, economic and cultural development, and the requirements for strengthening the unique features of the schools.

The content of the required courses is, in principle, designed to fit into a semester or an academic year. In contrast, the content of the required elective and elective courses is generally designed into modules. Modules are relatively independent, but they also need to follow the inherent logic of each subject. The teaching time of modules is decided according to actual needs, but generally, it should be multiple(s) of 18 class hours.

Foreign Languages include English, Japanese, Russian, German, French, and Spanish. Schools choose the first foreign language course according to their needs and are encouraged to create the conditions for a second language course.

Technology refers to Information Technology and General Technology, and the content of their required courses is designed into modules that count for three credits.

Arts can be replaced with Music and Fine Arts. Schools have the freedom to make decisions. The required Physical Education and Health courses are designed for all three senior high school years.

Comprehensive Practical Activities comprise research-based learning, social practice, and voluntary service. Schools organise these activities through investigations, surveys, social service, career experience, etc.

Teaching Learning

The Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and The State Council issued the "Opinions on Deepening Education and Teaching Reform and Comprehensively Improving the Quality of Compulsory Education" on June 23, 2019 (Xinhua News Agency, 2019). It emphasised that paying attention to heuristic, interactive, inquiry-based teaching and attention to guide students to think, ask questions, and independently explore.

Following this, the "Revised National Curriculum for Compulsory Education" encourages teachers to adopt more interactive and student-centred teaching methods to stimulate students' motivation for learning, develop students' attitudes and capacities for mastering and using knowledge in solving real-life problems, and shift the role of the student from a passive receiver to an active explorer in the learning process.

In the teaching guide part of the new curriculum, the following issues were highlighted:

- Emphasising learner-centred and personalised learning.

- Focus on "learning by doing" and enhance students' ability to understand the real world and solve real problems.

- Pay attention to the organic integration of knowledge learning and value education and fully exploit each teaching activity's educational values.

- Explore unit teaching and carry out theme-based, project-based learning.

Project-based learning is now recognised as a powerful approach to improving learning at the compulsory level. Shanghai municipality has set a series of objectives for 2023-2026, and project-based learning will be fully implemented in all Shanghai schools at the compulsory education stage (Shanghai Municipality Education Commission, 2023).

Since 2000, China has implemented several projects to improve education infrastructure and resources, particularly with ICT. The Distance Education in Rural Areas (DERA) and the high-speed brand Networks for schools were launched to enhance the quality and efficacy of basic education in rural areas.

The Chinese government has invested in developing national e-learning platforms and digital resources to enhance accessibility and quality of education. It enables online learning, especially during disruptions like the COVID-19 pandemic.

Rolled out in 2020, Smart Education of China is an all-encompassing platform implemented by the National Center for Educational Technology of China that hosts a wide range of curriculum-aligned learning resources for basic education, vocational education and higher education. With 13.15 million registered users, the platform was pivotal in facilitating large-scale distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic (UNESCO, 2023).

To promote students' all-round development and reduce the overload of their work, the General Office of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the General Office of the State Council announced the "Opinions on Further Reducing the Burden of Homework and Off-campus Training for Students in Compulsory Education" (China Law Translate 2021). In brief, it is also called the "Double Reduction Policy."

Learning Assessment

In October 2020, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and The State Council issued the Overall Plan for Deepening the Reform of Educational Evaluation in the New Era (from now on referred to as the 'Overall Plan') (Xinhua News Agency, 2020). The Overall Plan covers many fields and categories of educational evaluation, as well as the practice of student evaluation

in teachers' daily practice, which has been neglected in the past. It emphasises process evaluation, advocates "student academic review", and especially emphasises "resolutely changing the practice of labelling students with scores". The underlying idea is to use evaluation to promote students' learning. It is in line with the concept of "formative evaluation".

Except for the term examinations at schools, the two most important public examinations in the Chinese education system are the SAT and the ACT. They are Zhongkao and Gaokao.

Zhongkao is a summative assessment of the 9-year compulsory education in China and, at the same time, the entrance examination to senior high school. This includes secondary skill schools, vocational and technical high schools, and common senior high schools.

Gaokao is the university entrance examination. It is a nationally coordinated, nationally or provincially organised examination, and the results serve as the basis for students' enrollment in universities. The Gaokao is one of the highly competitive and standardised examinations.

Many examinations for occupational certification are conducted under the leadership of the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security.

A Basic Education Quality Monitoring Center was established at Beijing Normal University under the supervision of the Ministry of Education in 2015. The Center was tasked with monitoring "the performance of primary school students in academic, art and sports subjects, to assess the progress of compulsory education, particularly the implementation of curricula standards and policies across the country, and inform policy-making to improve the quality of education" (Yin, 2021, pp. 396-409).

Health and Physical Education

Physical Education (PE) is compulsory for all students from the first year of primary school to the second year of college. An integrated "Physical Education and Health" curriculum is a nationally required course at compulsory and senior high schools. It is recognised as an important way to realise the all-round development of children and adolescents. It has important practical and long-term significance for promoting students' active participation in sports, forming a healthy lifestyle, perfecting personality quality, promoting social civilisation and progress, building a healthy China and realising the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation (MOE, 2017b, 2022c).

Compulsory education takes physical exercise as the main means, the relevant knowledge, skills and methods as the main learning content, with basic fitness, practical and comprehensive characteristics, and develops students' core competencies and improves students' physical and mental health as the main purpose. The basic elements include fundamental motor skills, athletics, games, gymnastics, martial arts, and other traditional sports.

From 2001 to 2011, 'Health Education' was included in the Physical Education Curriculum for Standards (Grades 1–6) and Physical Education and Health Curriculum for Standards (Grades 7–12), a deliberate effort by MoE to enhance integration between education and health disciplines.

Health education at both levels includes healthy behaviour and lifestyle, growth and development, adolescent health care, mental health, disease prevention and response to public health emergencies, safety emergencies, and risk aversion, mainly to help students gradually develop healthy and safe behaviour habits and life attitudes.

The academic achievement standards were designed at both levels. The evaluation and examination judge and evaluate the core competencies developed through the course learning according to the standards by systematically collecting students' in-class learning attitude and performance, after-class physical exercise, situation and effect, health behaviour and other information.

Skills Education

At the compulsory education level, hands-on activities, artefact construction, hand tools use, trades, and financial education are integrated into the national curriculum in courses such as Arts and Science, particularly in Labour.

The Labour course was designed in the 2022 national compulsory education curriculum. It uses various activities as the carrier to organise students' participation in daily life labour, production labour, and service labour, allowing students to practice, experience, and temper their will and cultivate their' correct labour values and good labour skills' (MOE, 2022d).

The purpose of the course is not just to learn the skills. In selecting daily life labour and public welfare labour content, attention is paid to training students in self-care and self-reliance and cultivating students' sense of social responsibility. The content of the course also takes the excellent traditional Chinese culture, the spirit of artisans, and the seasonal and regional industrial characteristics into account. To some extent, the content should introduce new technology, new craft and other modern labour content.

The course emphasises students' direct experience and engagement, pays attention to hands-on practice, the use of hand and brain, the integration of knowledge and action, and the integration of learning and innovation, advocates "learning by doing", and stimulates students' initiative, enthusiasm and creativity in participating in labour.

Secondary vocational high schools provide professional skills training besides general high school education.

The Ministry of Human Resources and Security is responsible for adult skills training. When

trainers complete the training, they are certified in specific skills.

Hobby and Life Skills Education

Since the founds of the People's Republic of China, the policy for education has been specified as "Education must serve the socialist modernisation drive, be integrated with productive labour, and train builders and successors of the socialist cause who are all-round developed in moral, intellectual and physical and aesthetics aspects" (China Education Daily, 2019).

Besides the formal curriculum of arts, music and physical education, a wide range of extracurricular activities such as sports, music, dance, art, reading, writing, scientific and technological innovation, STEM, speech, debate, martial arts, volunteer work, drama, and chess are organised by school, community and also the special training institutions. These activities are usually held after school or during weekends and holidays. By participating in these activities, children acquire specific knowledge and abilities and develop general competencies such as communication, teamwork, leadership, creativity, and social responsibility, as well as explore their interests and potential.

In 2019, "The Opinions on Deepening Education and Teaching Reform and Comprehensively Improving the Quality of Compulsory Education" and "Guiding Opinions on Promoting the Reform of Education Methods in Ordinary High Schools in the New Era" were issued by the CPC Central Committee and The State Council and the General Office of the State Council respectively emphasised the importance of the extracurricular activities for the student's all-round development (SOHU, 2019).

Moral, Social and Cultural Education

The "Ethics and the Rule of Law" and "Ideology and Political Education" in Grades 1 – 9 and 10 - 12 are components of China's national curriculum, respectively, to provide a structured and comprehensive education that addresses the moral, ideological, and historical aspects of students' development (Mańkowska, 2019). These courses are the main provisions to strengthen moral education and cultivate people. However, to achieve this goal, all national compulsory and high school education courses include moral, value, and attitude education.

The Ethics and Rule of Law course includes moral education, life safety and health education, rule of law education, Chinese traditional culture, revolutionary traditional education, and education on national conditions.

The ideologies and political education include political identity, moral accomplishment, the concept of the rule of law, sound personality, and a sense of responsibility. The course integrates national security education, life safety and health education, labour education, information literacy education, financial literacy education, and other related topics. The courses highlight the traditional

virtues of the Chinese nation, revolutionary tradition and the rule of law education.

The curriculum has been modified to adapt to changing educational needs and societal demands. The moral education curriculum in China incorporates traditional Chinese culture and virtues into its content to instil a sense of cultural awareness and appreciation among learners.

Peace and Happiness Education

To understand the world development situation and the challenges facing human development, peace, development, cooperation, and win-win are the trends of the times, and peace and development remain the themes of the times. It is important to recognise that China cannot develop without the world, and the world needs China for prosperity. Understand the significance of building a community with a shared future for humanity. These contents are embodied in the courses of morality and rule of law, ideology and politics, history, geography, Chinese, etc.

The research report 'Chinese Students' Development Core Competencies defined "international understanding" as having global awareness and an open mind, understanding the progress of human civilisation and the development of the world, being able to respect the diversity and differences of multi-cultures in the world, and actively participate in cross-cultural exchanges; focus on the global challenges facing humanity and understand the connotation and value of the community of shared future for humanity (Baidu, 2017).

The need to "strengthen education for international understanding" was first emphasised in the national education development plan, and subsequently, the importance of international understanding education was emphasised many times.

The local education authorities are actively introducing diversified education policies with international understanding. For example, in 2012, the Education Commission of Zibo City in Shandong Province issued the Guiding Opinions on implementing International Understanding Education in Primary and Secondary Schools (Center for China and Globalization; Beijing Royal Charity Foundation; Research Institute of International Education South-South Cooperation, 2019).

International understanding of education in primary and secondary schools is mainly conducted through subjects such as language, history, geography, politics, and physical education, taught daily and through special courses and thematic activities. Schools set the courses as compulsory or elective courses outside the regular teaching subjects and hours to achieve the goal of international understanding of education.

Practical activities are also important for schools to implement international understanding education.

Summary and Conclusion

Since founding the People's Republic of China, education has always remained one of the

country's important development strategies. Although at different stages of national development, the policy focuses on expanding access to improving the conditions of teaching and learning and quality and equity, putting education as a national development priority is consistent.

To fully implement the Party's educational policy and guide students towards clear developmental pathways, the high school curriculum was reformed in 2017, and the compulsory education curriculum was revised in 2022. These changes concretised the Party's educational policy into core competencies that each curriculum should focus on, aiming to cultivate values, essential character, and key abilities in students. The courses in the revised curriculum formed a solid base for implementing the all-round development of the new generation.

The results and impacts of implementing national educational policy, including the national curriculum, have been monitored and evaluated by a national compulsory education quality monitoring project since 2015. Chinese, mathematics, physics, moral education, physical education, and art education were included in quality monitoring. English, labour skills education, and mental health will be added with a three-year monitoring cycle after 2021 (MOE, 2021)

The monitoring results showed that around 80% of students in the fourth and eighth grades had reached the medium or higher proficiency level in Chinese, mathematics, and science, and the overall proportion of excellent students increased slightly from 2015 to 2020.

The first China Compulsory Education Quality Oversight Report covering 2015-2017 was released in 2018 (MOE, 2018). The press releases highlighted areas of strength in the system but also highlighted priority areas for improvement:

- overemphasis on academic achievement,
- a lack of emphasis on art education and sports,
- a lack of opportunities for students to develop practical and hands-on skills, including opportunities to carry out experiments and develop critical thinking skills in science classes and
- heavy homework loads.

Primary and secondary school students have long been affected by the heavy homework burden, which greatly impacts their healthy growth and thus restraining the effectiveness of educational reform and development.

China issued the Opinions on Further Reducing Students' Homework and Off-campus Training Burden in Compulsory Education Stage in July 2021 to address this.

The "double reduction" policy has two overall objectives. The first objective is to improve the quality of school education, teaching, and service, optimise student assignments, ensure that schools' off-campus service primarily meets students' needs, and shift the primary learning site

back to schools. The other objective is to regulate off-campus training institutions, eliminate non-compliant operations in academic training, and curb the expansion of off-campus training institutions.

In the government report, Premier Li Qiang reiterated that the Chinese government would give priority to education development, accelerate the modernisation of education, strengthen the foundation for people's happiness and strengthen the foundation for national prosperity. He called upon people to remember the following text:

"Fully execute the strategy of revitalising the nation through science and education, reinforce the fundamental pillars for high-quality advancement, and create and implement the blueprint for establishing China as an educational leader. To fulfil the essential duty of fostering moral values. We will hasten the high-quality and equitable progress of mandatory education and the fusion of urban and rural areas, enhance the facilities of boarding schools in rural areas, continue to further the "dual reduction" policy, advance the inclusive development of early childhood education, and fortify the establishment of regular high schools at the county level. The major focal points for the Chinese government in 2024 were also underscored: drafting the education development framework, actively promoting digital education, and assembling a cadre of top-notch professional educators (Qiang, 2024).

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15

From Prototype to Emancipated School Education: Indonesia

Minara Yeasmin

Abstract

This chapter critically examines Indonesia's educational policies, structures, and academic frameworks. The important stages of evolution are the Old Order (1945-1966) and the New Order (!966 to 1998), Eras, and decentralisation since 2001. Indonesian adopted a 6+3+3 structure: six years of primary education for children aged 6 to 12 years old (1st grade to 6th grade); three years of Junior high school for the age group 12 to 14 years (7th grade to 9th grade); and three years of Senior high school (Grade X to XII). Nine years of schooling in primary and junior high is compulsory. Pre-schooling is optional. Indonesia has shown its adaptability by repeatedly changing its school curriculum to suit the needs of the time. Pancasila and religious education are the two cornerstones of Indonesian education. The Indonesian government chose a cell phone-based approach to ensure its education program is accessible to the general public. Despite various provisions for physical, socio-cultural and moral development, intellectual development takes precedence over others.

Keywords: Indonesia, Old Order, New Order, Pancasila, Cell phone-based education, Religious education.

Introduction

Indonesia's journey to independence is a remarkable testament to the resilience and determination of its people. The country's declaration as an independent republic on August 17, 1945, and the subsequent official recognition of its hard-fought freedom on December 27, 1949, mark significant milestones (NAA, n.d.). The first direct presidential election in 2004 was a historic moment for the nation (Sebastian, 2004). Indonesia's diverse population, a harmonious blend of cultures and traditions, is a source of immense pride. While most of the population lives in harmony, it is important to acknowledge that sectarian discontent and violence continue to pose challenges in some areas, fostering a sense of empathy and understanding.

Indonesia, a Southeast Asian and Oceania country, boasts unique geographical features that are sure to intrigue and fascinate. "Indonesia is an archipelago between the Pacific and the Indian Ocean. The land has a total area of 1,913,580 km² (738,837 mi²) and a total coastline of 54,716 km (33,998.9 mi)" (WorldData.info, 2024, Para 1). It shares land borders with Papua New Guinea, East Timor, and eastern Malaysia, as well as maritime borders with several countries. The country's area is highly unstable, leading to the formation of numerous volcanoes and frequent earthquakes. "Indonesian administrative system divided into 38 regions; there are five regions that have the status of special regions, namely the Special Capital Region of Jakarta, Aceh, West Papua, Papua, and the Special Region of Yogyakarta" (Mustajab, 2022, p. 282).

As of 2023, with an annual growth rate of 0.70%, Indonesia's population is 277,534,122 (World Bank Group, 2023a), of which 50.30% are male and 49.70% are female (World Bank Group, 2023b). Java Island, about 7% of Indonesia's total area, is home to 56.10% of the population (Cabinet Secretariat of the Republic of Indonesia, 2021). "Indonesia has more than 300 distinct ethnic and linguistic groups, although the largest and most dominant in politics are the Javanese at over 40% of the population. Most Indonesians are descended from Austronesian-speaking people. Another major ethnic group is the Melanesians, who live in the eastern part of the country. Other major ethnic groups include Sundanese (15.5%), Malay (2.27%), Madurese (3.03%)" and others (World Population Review, 2024, Demographics).

"There are more than 700 languages spoken in Indonesia. Bahasa Indonesia, a form of Malay, is the official language used mostly in education, media, commerce, and administration. Most people in Indonesia speak other languages as their primary language" (World Population Review, 2024). Other languages include Javanese, Sundanese, Madurese, Betawi, Malay, and others. Regarding religious faith, 87% of Indonesians are Muslims, and about 10% are Christians. The country's other official religions are Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism (World Population Review, 2024). The life expectancy at birth in Indonesia in 2019 was 73.3 years (WHO Data, 2019).

Currently, the per capita GDP of Indonesia is USD5510 and USD1540 billion for the whole country, with a growth rate of 5%. Indonesia's unemployment rate was approximately 5.2% (IMF, 2024). Indonesia has a 20-year development plan began in 2005 and will continue until 2025. The final phase of this 20-year vision focuses on improving Indonesia's economy by enhancing its human capital and competitiveness in the global market (The World Bank, 2023). According to the latest data of the Human Development Index, with an HDI value of 0.731, Indonesia ranked 112 out of 193 countries and territories worldwide (UNDP, 2023). In the World Happiness Report, with a value of 5.277 points, Indonesia ranked 84 (Helliwell et al., 2023).

As of 2020, Indonesia has an adult literacy rate of 96% (male 97.45% and female 94.55%) (Statista, 2024). The education system in Indonesia is the fourth largest in the world. It includes over 50 million students, 3 million teachers, and 250,000 schools (Indonesia Youth Foundation, 2021). In 2022, the net enrolment rate for primary, lower secondary, and higher secondary was 98.79%,

94.66%, and 81.85%, and the gross enrolment ratio for primary, lower secondary, and higher secondary was 100.65%, 100.76%, and 97.09% (UNESCO-UIS, 2024). On the contrary, tertiary education participation is relatively low (36.31%). Indonesia scored an average rank of 63 in PISA 2022. They received a score of 366 in Mathematics, 359 in Reading, and 383 in Science (OECD, 2023)

Educational Policy

Since the early years of Indonesia's independence from 1945 to 1966 (Old Order era), the education system underwent significant changes influenced by the unstable socio-political conditions of the time. The Old Order era was segmented into two distinct periods: one was from 1945 to 1950, and the second one was from 1950 to 1966 (Fadli & Kumalasari, 2019). From 1945 to 1950, the education system in Indonesia was primarily characterised by its basic nature, with the People's School representing the lowest level of education available. From 1950 to 1966, there was a significant development in which every Indonesian citizen had the right to receive an education, regardless of their social status.

Indonesian education experienced substantial advancement during the New Order era from 1966 to 1998 because it focused on achieving equitable development across regions and remote areas in Indonesia (Sukmayadi & Yahya, 2020). Education during this period was structured around Pancasila education, religious education, and civic education (Noviningtyas & Pandin, 2021). Pancasila's five basic values are belief in the One God, development of humanity, bringing unity, focusing on democratic life, creating wisdom of thought and ensuring social justice for everyone (Suratno, 2014). "Religious education was integrated into the state school system from 1975 until today to build equality between religious and secular educational institutions. In 1984, the government established a six-year compulsory education policy, and in the following decade, the length of compulsory study was increased to nine years (Supardan, 2008). The government realised that education is essential to human capital investment. Thus, since the 1990s, the Indonesian government has continuously improved the education quality and access to education and up-scaled the role of education in promoting the nation's economic development" (Sukmayadi & Yahya, 2020, p. 222).

In 2001, the Indonesian government decentralised education management to the district level. The main objective of this move was to promote school autonomy, which was expected to improve the quality of education provision. The idea was based on a 1998 report by the World Bank that identified factors that hindered education reform in the country. The Law of National Education System (No. 20/2003) was enacted to provide a framework for standardising the education system at the national level. The enactment of this law marked a significant historical milestone by replacing and thereby ending the centralised era of national education established by National Education Law Number 2 of 1989 (Idrus & Muhammad, 2023). This law covers various aspects of

education, including school management, financial support for education, curriculum, and teacher professionalism (Suratno, 2014).

Indonesia has changed its curriculum multiple times since its independence, including in 1947, 1952, 1962, 1968, 1975, 1984, 1994, 2004, 2006, and 2013. "The most recently implemented curriculum is the 2013 curriculum of K-13. In this curriculum, there are four educational standards amended by Indonesian Government Regulation No. 32/2013: 1) the standard of content, 2) the standard of graduate competency, 3) the standard of process, and 4) the standard of evaluation" (Mukminin et al., 2019, p. 60). This educational program is created to tackle the difficulties of schooling during the 4.0 industrial revolution. It integrates literacy, knowledge, skills, attitudes, and technology mastery (Fajri & Andarwulan, 2023).

Romlah et al. (2023) stated that "the implementation of the free education policy has a direct and significant effect on equitable access to educational services; the implementation of the free education policy has a direct and significant effect on improving the quality of learning; the implementation of the free education policy indirectly affects the improvement of the quality of learning; and the implementation of equitable access to educational services has a direct and significant effect on improving the quality of learning" (p. 19).

Structure of the Education System

The Ministry of Education and Culture supervises most educational institutions in Indonesia, but the responsibility of Islamic schools, known as madrasah, falls under the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Indonesia's schools are divided into government-run (negeri) and privately owned (swasta). Education in Indonesia is compulsory for 12 years, and the education system follows a 6+3+3 pattern, where students spend six years in elementary school, three years in junior high school, and three more years in senior high school. Pre-school before primary school is optional (Indonesia Youth Foundation, 2021). Pre-school begins at the age of 3 years. Most elementary schools are government-controlled.

Primary education in Indonesia is known as Sekolah Dasar (SD) and is intended for children aged between 6 and 11 years old and grades 1 to 6. Students spend six years in primary school, although some institutions offer an accelerated learning program that enables high-performing students to complete the level in only five years (Indonesia Youth Foundation, 2021).

Three years of schooling from 7th to 9th Grade is a junior high school called Sekolah Menengah Pertama (SMP) in Indonesia. It is compulsory. The age group between 12 and 14 years comes under this phase of the education system.

Indonesian students who graduate from SMP can continue to senior high school, known as Sekolah Menengah Atas (SMA) or vocational school Sekolah Menengah Kejuruan (SMK). Both of these levels of education take three years to complete. Students can choose from Natural Science, Social Science, or Language during senior high. Vocational school offers several fields of study, including technology and engineering, health, arts, crafts and tourism, information and communication technologies, agro-business and agro-technology, and business management. Additionally, students can choose to attend religious schools (madrasah) (Indonesia Youth Foundation, 2021). The details of the structure of the Indonesian school education system are given in Figure 15.1.

Figure 15.1 Structure of the Education System of Indonesia
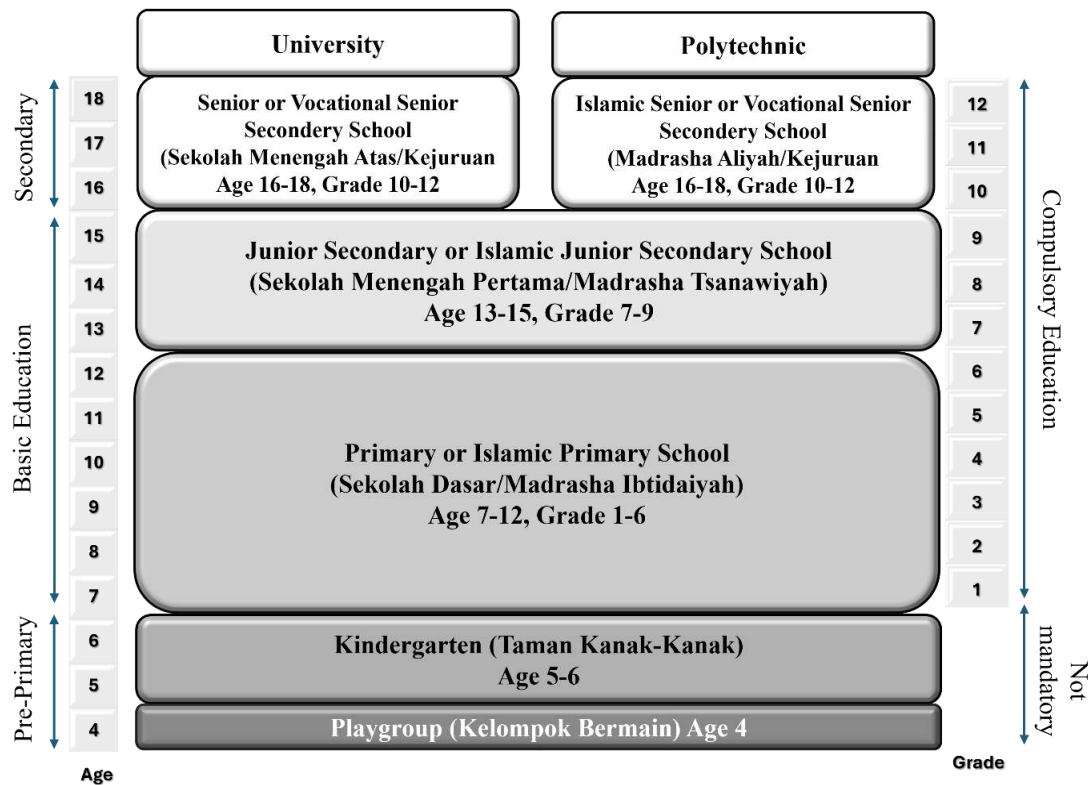
Source: Hariyanto & Koehler, 2017 (Adapted by author)

Curricular Framework

Indonesia's school education curriculum has undergone several changes and amendments since gaining independence. The last two curriculum reforms took place in 2004 and 2013. The 2004 curriculum, known as *Kurikulum Berbasis Kompetensi*, allowed schools to create a syllabus that meets their needs. This reform "focuses on developing the ability to perform tasks according to

established performance standards, enabling learners to feel the results of mastery over a particular set of competencies" (Oktavia et al., 2023, p. 112).

The K-13 curriculum, introduced in 2013, was built upon the 2004 Curriculum Based on Competence (KBK) and the 2006 School Unit Level Curriculum (KTSP). This curriculum aims to develop various competencies and achieve specific learning objectives, which can be observed through the learners' behaviour and skills as a measure of success. The primary goal of the K-13 curriculum is to produce productive, creative, innovative, and emotionally intelligent Indonesian citizens through a comprehensive evaluation of attitudes, skills, and knowledge. (Oktavia et al., 2023).

In early 2022, MoECRT introduced the 'Kurikulum Merdeka' (Emancipated Curriculum/ Freedom Curriculum) as part of the government's initiatives to address the learning setbacks experienced during the pandemic (MoECRT, 2022). The new curriculum is designed to focus on essential materials and character development and improve learners' competence. "The main characteristic of this curriculum that supports the restoration of learning is:

- Study-based projects for developing soft skills and characters fit the profile of a Pancasila student.
- Focus on essential materials so there is sufficient time for profound learning of basic competencies such as literacy and numeration.
- The flexibility for teachers to do differentiated learning according to the learner's ability and adjust to the local context and content Project" (Oktavia et al., 2023, p. 114).

In 2013, the curriculum development objectives aimed to prepare the Indonesian people to lead fulfilling lives as productive, creative, innovative, and empathetic individuals and citizens who can contribute to society, the nation, and the state. The curriculum was designed to meet national and local needs, focusing on mutual support and empowerment, in line with the motto of unity in diversity and the spirit of brotherhood and solidarity (MoEC, 2016).

Primary and Junior High School Education

Basic education includes six years of primary and three years of junior high school education. Basic education is required to cover the following subjects in its curriculum: "Pancasila education, religious education, citizenship, Indonesian language, reading and writing, mathematics (including arithmetic), introduction to science and technology, geography, national and general history, art and craft, physical and health education, drawing, and English language. The mentioned courses are not the formal title of the subjects, but rather the field of study, the basic material presented to form personality and ability instilled and developed through basic education" (Embassy of The Republic

of Indonesia to The United Kingdom, Ireland, and IMO, 2018). Primary school subjects with learning hours are presented in Tables 15.1 and 15.2.

Table15.1 Primary School Subjects with Learning Hours

Subjects		Learning Hours per Week					
		I	II	III	IV	V	VI
Group A							
1.	Religious and Moral Education	4	4	4	4	4	4
2.	Citizenship Education	5	5	5	5	5	5
3.	Indonesian Language	8	9	10	7	7	7
4.	Mathematics	5	6	6	6	6	6
5.	Physical Science	-	-	-	3	3	3
6.	Social Science	-	-	-	3	3	3
Group B							
1.	Crafts, Arts and Culture	4	4	4	5	5	5
2.	Sports and Health	4	4	4	4	4	4
Total		30	32	34	36	36	36

Source: MoEC, 2016

Table15.2 Junior High School Subjects with Learning Hours

Subjects		Learning Hours per Week		
		VII	VIII	IX
Group A				
1.	Religious and Moral Education	3	3	3
2.	Citizenship Education	3	3	3
3.	Indonesian Language	6	6	6
4.	Mathematics	5	5	5
5.	Physical Science	5	5	5
6.	Social Science	4	4	4
7.	English Language	4	4	4
Group B				
1.	Arts and Culture (Including Local Content)	3	3	3
2.	Sports and Health (Including Local Content)	3	3	3
3.	A Craft (Including Local Content)	2	2	2
Total		38	38	38

Source: MoEC, 2016

Secondary Education

Secondary education, also known as senior high school, covers a variety of fields, including general, vocational, religious, official, and special education. General secondary education focuses on expanding knowledge and skill development, while vocational secondary education prepares students for specific occupations and employment. Religious secondary education focuses on teaching the respective religions, while officials' secondary education focuses on improving government officials' abilities. Lastly, special secondary education is intended for students with physical and/or mental disabilities and challenges for further education or professional development.

General secondary education is provided at general secondary schools and Madrasah Aliyah (Islamic secondary schools) to increase students' knowledge and prepare them for higher education. The goal is to help students develop in line with advances in knowledge, technology, and art and to enhance their abilities to become contributing members of society through meaningful relationships with their social, cultural, and natural surroundings. On the other hand, vocational secondary education is offered at vocational secondary schools, which provide educational programs tailored to meet the employment needs of specific occupations. The secondary vocational education program comprises six groups: the Agricultural and Forestry Group, the Technological and Industrial Group, the Business and Management Group, the Social Welfare Group, the Tourism Group, and the Art and Crafts Group.

"General secondary education is undertaken in general and Madrasah Aliyah (Islamic secondary schools). The objectives of general secondary education are to (1) increase the knowledge of students so that they may progress to higher education levels and develop themselves in line with advances in knowledge, technology and art, and (2) increase the ability of students to become contributing members of society, through developing useful mutual relationships with their social, cultural and natural surroundings." On the other hand, "Vocational secondary education is carried out in vocational secondary schools, which run educational programs adjusted to employment needs for certain occupations. The secondary vocational education program consists of six groups, namely: (1) the Agricultural and Forestry Group, (2) the Technological and Industrial Group, (3) the Business and Management Group, (4) the Social Welfare Group, (5) the Tourism Group, and (6) the Art and Crafts Group" (Embassy of The Republic of Indonesia to The United Kingdom, Ireland, and IMO, 2018).

The organising classes in General secondary education are divided into two groups: class X is a mandatory program that all students follow, and classes XI and XII are program specialisations (majors), which consist of three programs: specialisation in Mathematics and Science, specialisation in Social, and specialisation in English (Table 15.3 & 15.4).

Table15.3 General Secondary Education (Grade X) Subjects with Learning Hours

Subjects	Learning Hours per Week		
	X	XI	XII
Group A (Compulsory)			
1. Religious and Moral Education	3	3	3
2. Citizenship Education	2	2	2
3. Indonesian Language	4	4	4
4. Mathematics	4	4	4
5. Indonesian History	2	2	2
6. English Language	2	2	2
Group B (Compulsory)			
7. Arts and Culture (Including Local Content)	2	2	2
8. Sports and Health (Including Local Content)	3	3	3
9. A Craft (Including Local Content)	2	2	2
The number of hours of group lessons per week A and B	2	2	2
Group C (Interest group)			
Mata Pelajaran Peminatan Akademik (SMA/MA)	18	20	20
The number of lessons to be taken per week	44	46	46

Source: *MoEC, 2016*

Table15.4 General Secondary Education (Grade XI & XII) Subjects with Learning Hours

Subjects	Learning Hours per Week		
	X	XI	XII
Group A and B (Compulsory)	24	24	24
Group C (Interest group)			
The interest in mathematics and natural sciences			
I 1 Mathematics	3	4	4
2 Biology	3	4	4
3 Physics	3	4	4
4 Chemistry	3	4	4
Perminatan Iimu-Iimu Sosial			
II 1 Geography	3	4	4
2 History	3	4	4
3 Sociology	3	4	4
4 Economics	3	4	4
The interest, the science of language and culture			
III 1 Indonesian Language and Literature	3	4	4
2 English Language and Literature	3	4	4
3 Language and Other Foreign Literature	3	4	4

	4	Anthropology	3	4	4
Elective subjects and the deepening interest					
Selection of the deepening interest			6	4	4
The number of available lessons per week			66	76	76
The number of lessons to be taken per week			42	44	44

Source: MoEC, 2016

Teaching Learning

The 2006 KTSP curriculum development paradigm allows for broad autonomy of each educational unit and encourages society's participation in promoting the potential to teach in schools. This autonomy is intended to allow schools and teachers to manage resources, funding, and learning resources according to the needs of others while being more sensitive to local needs (Oktavia et al., 2023). The Merdeka Learning Curriculum has been designed to cater to students' interests and talents. This curriculum allows teachers to provide students with learning opportunities based on their abilities, and students are not required to experience the same learning process. The Merdeka Curriculum's implementation may vary according to the local context and school conditions. The curriculum was introduced only to Grade X in the 2022-2023 academic year. One of the primary challenges is the requirement for students to use Android mobile phones for learning, which may not be feasible for all students (Fajri & Andarwulan, 2023).

Zuhdi (2015) conducted a study identifying three common features of conventional Indonesian classrooms that hinder students from learning efficiently and achieving their full academic potential. The first feature is the high number of students present in each classroom. The second feature is the unidirectional teaching approach, where lecturing is the most favoured method, leaving students with minimal opportunities to respond to their teachers' statements. The third feature is the emphasis on memorisation-based learning, which is not only limited to religious education but also extends to other subjects, including mathematics, science, and social sciences (Zuhdi, 2015).

The Indonesian government chose a cell phone-based approach to ensure that its education program, Merdeka Belajar, is accessible to the general public. The government distributes laptops to schools that lack the necessary information and communications technology infrastructure to support this initiative further. The Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (MoECRT) has introduced several technology platforms to aid in this program. These "include Platform Merdeka Mengajar (PMM), Rapor Pendidikan, ARKAS, and SIPLah. Platform Merdeka Mengajar is a one-stop enablement and upskilling solution for teachers. Rapor Pendidikan showcases the schools' assessment results in the form of key learning indicators along with root cause analysis, school planning and improvement recommendations. ARKAS offers streamlined budgeting, planning, and

reporting processes for the government's funds. It is best used together with SIPLah, a procurement platform that connects schools with nine different e-commerce partners to allow for a better reach and wider selection of products" (Wang et al., 2023, p. 3).

Currently, Indonesia conducts UNBK (Computer-Based National Examination), which increases quality, simplifies the system, and reduces the cost of the National Examination. Many start-ups are popping up in the education sector in Indonesia. Compared to many countries, the growth is low but steady. Quipper School, Harukaedu, Ruangguru, Kelase, and Zenius Education are among Indonesia's top five education start-ups.

Technology integration in the teaching-learning process has been observed over the past two decades; technology integration has always been encouraged in Indonesia to build innovation and foster the development of students through technology-integrated creative methods. The Kurikulum Merdeka (Emancipated Curriculum) highlights the crucial role of technology in fostering active student engagement, personalised learning, and flexible educational approaches. Students are urged to actively employ digital tools and resources for research, information gathering, data analysis, and presenting their findings. This may entail accessing online databases, digital libraries, simulation software, and multimedia creation tools (UNESCO, 2023). Wang et al. (2023) study found a positive impact of technology integration in education. "The tools, including Platform Merdeka Mengajar (PMM), Rapor Pendidikan, ARKAS, and SIPLah, have demonstrated promising intermediate results in enhancing teacher enablement and improving the education environment" (Wang et al., 2023, p. 33).

Learning Assessment

The Indonesian curriculum for 2006 focused on assessing learning outcomes. Hence, the 2013 curriculum has set a goal to prioritise using formative assessment. The new curriculum introduces various formative assessment techniques, such as teacher journals and observations, self-assessment, peer assessment, project-based assessment, and portfolios (Puda & Ashton, 2022).

In 2020, the Ministry of Education and Culture implemented the National Assessment Policy to enhance the quality of the evaluation system. This policy replaced national and standard school exams, representing a significant educational assessment shift. The National Assessment comprises three components: Minimum Competency Assessment (AKM), Character Survey, and Learning Environment Survey (Cabinet Secretariat of the Republic of Indonesia, 2020).

According to a 2015 study by Astuti Azis, junior high school teachers believed that assessment serves the dual purpose of improving teaching and learning and demonstrating the accountability

of both students and schools. These teachers did not believe the assessment was irrelevant (Azis, 2015).

According to the study by Saefurrohman and Ahmad (2019), the portfolio method is mostly used for monthly assessment with 50.94%. Filling gaps and short answers are used for weekly assessment with 49.06%. In addition, teachers use the self-assessment method to identify strengths and weaknesses and monitor their learning. Moreover, performance assessment was widely used for the development of teaching-learning. Finally, multiple-choice and essay-type tests were administered to measure students' learning outcomes (Saefurrohman & Ahmad, 2019).

Health and Physical Education

Health and Physical Education forms a part of the Indonesian school curriculum. Health and fitness education is integrated within this subject syllabus. Physical education is mandatory in primary and secondary education (Rawashdeh et al., 2021). Primary, junior high, and secondary schools allot four, three, and three weekly sports and health education periods. Physical education enhances physical fitness and involves acquiring knowledge through physical activities that encourage emotional intelligence, sportsmanship, the development of healthy and active living habits, and improving motor skills (Raibowo & Nopiyanto, 2020).

In collaboration with the Ministries of Religious Affairs (MoRA), Health (MOH), and Internal Affairs (now called Home Affairs), the Usaha Keeshatan Sekolah (UKS) School Health Program was developed. UKS was designed to increase excellence in education to develop student learning achievement by incorporating a supportive and healthy school atmosphere, healthy life skills of students, awareness of health to prevent and cure diseases, and the development of students' positive attitudes. Besides health services at schools, health education and a healthy school environment are significant for the School Health Program.

One or more UKS teachers and the headmaster observe UKS activities at the school level. The school can also conduct UKS activities in collaboration with health centre staff. The standard for the health program (UKS Program) is set by the central level, with provided guidelines and expected outcomes.

Skills Education

No specific skill development program or course is available at the basic education level in Indonesia. However, basic motor skills are developed through arts and crafts, health and sports, and teaching and learning practices. Students are offered various trade-based skill development subjects from secondary education or Grade X.

Foundational skills (literacy and numeracy) are introduced at pre-primary school as core skills. According to UNICEF, Indonesia's school education system aims to develop transferable skills through curriculum design for the personal empowerment of the students. Soft skills and social skills are encouraged for adolescents through moral education to maximise their potential in their personal and professional lives (Nambiar et al., 2019).

In Indonesia, TVET, i.e. Technical and Vocational Education and Training, is implemented in three levels - training centres for short vocational courses, Secondary school level (for three and four years), and higher education (for more than three years). From the upper secondary level, TVET education begins with a duration of 3 to 4 years. After completing these programs (SMK-Plus), a D1 degree is awarded to the students. It enables them to access TVET at D2.

Tertiary-level vocational education continues with a duration of 1 to 5 years. According to the Higher Education Act, many tertiary institutions offer vocational programmes like advanced schools, community colleges, universities, and academies. SMK enables students to pursue further higher studies at Polytechnics (Politeknik). After SMK, students can enrol in Diploma Certificates (DI-DIV) (three years). As per students' interest, they can continue to the specialised degree to Specialist I and Specialist II. These are under the control of MoRTHE, i.e., the Ministry of Technology and Higher Education and the Ministry of Research.

Hobby and Life Skills Education

The Indonesian school curriculum has no special programme or subject specifically focused on students' hobby development and life skills education. However, students can participate in arts, crafts, and sports. While the national curriculum does not explicitly mention hobbies, it does provide flexibility for schools and teachers to adapt content to local contexts. Schools often organise extracurricular clubs where students can explore their interests and hobbies. These clubs cover various activities, from arts and sports to science and technology.

Citizenship and religious education are compulsory subjects in primary and secondary education. These subjects also develop some soft life skills.

MoNE (The Ministry of National Education) in Indonesia has been supported by UNICEF since 1997 for implementing Life Skills Education (LSE) to promote healthy living in several schools and provinces of Indonesia. In addition, with the support of the International Red Cross, the Indonesian Red Cross took the initiative to implement LSE to prevent HIV/AIDS through a program for developing activities in peer groups to encourage healthy sexual practices (Surjadi, 2004). The details of healthy living content organised by grade level in education are listed in Table 15.5.

Table 15.5 Content Details of Healthy Living Programme in Education

Elementary School	Junior High School	Senior High School
1. Nutrition knowledge 2. Healthy environment 3. Clean and healthy living 4. Active living 5. Avoiding harmful practices 6. Responsible young person 7. Dangers of smoking to health 8. Drugs and other harmful agents	1. Reproductive health 2. Adverse health effects of smoking 3. Narcotic, alcohol and psychoactive agents 4. Consumptive behaviour, planning for the future 5. Social care - toward a caring society	1. Gender and child rights 2. Reproductive health, preparation for marriage 3. Health as an investment for work, forming healthy households 4. Smoking and narcotics 5. Adolescent lifestyle 6. STD and HIV/AIDS

Source: Surjadi, 2004

Moral, Social and Cultural Education

Moral, Social and Cultural education is crucial to the Indonesian school curriculum. Basic and secondary education includes two compulsory subjects: Religious and Moral Education and Citizenship Education. Primary schools have four learning hours per week for Religious and Moral education, while Junior high and secondary schools have three learning hours per week. Citizenship education is allotted five learning hours per week for primary schools, three for Junior high schools, and two for secondary schools. Novasyari (2021) stated, "The New curriculum is expected to improve the quality of learners in Indonesia and can be one of the solutions to the moral problems among students. In the 2013 curriculum, cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects will become the means of assessment" (Novasyari, 2023, p.8).

The Ministry of Education and Culture emphasised teachers' role in instilling the value of tolerance and honesty in students. Teachers play critical roles in developing cultural peace with people and maintaining equilibrium with nature. Multicultural education policy highlights the importance of early adaptation (hybridisation), which can be integrated with the knowledge and wisdom of local people and culture in the 21st Century (Noor & Sugito, 2019).

Peace and Happiness Education

In Indonesia's classroom, peace education fosters skills, attitudes, and knowledge through a cooperative approach and participatory learning methods, utilising the environment as a learning resource. It emphasises cultivating tolerance, fostering peer relationships, and nurturing a sense of respect among students. Peace education employs dialogue and exploration models tailored to specific topics, involving teachers and students in collaborative learning (Wahyudin, 2018). The Ministry of Education and Culture (MoEC) in Indonesia has undertaken numerous initiatives to

revise the curriculum in both primary and secondary schools, focusing on integrating peace education to fulfil the requirements of implementing sustainable development goals (SDGs) (Wahyudin, 2018).

Indonesia is currently working on the successful implementation of the 2013 Curriculum. While efforts towards peace education and global citizenship education are still developing, there have been initiatives to introduce globalisation into the curriculum. This includes teaching and learning about multiculturalism and promoting peaceful coexistence within the classroom environment (Wahyudin, 2018). The Indonesian population is facing growing challenges related to conflict. Consequently, there is a pressing requirement for peace education initiatives to foster a harmonious societal environment (Umar et al., 2019). "From the school, it is hoped that conducive community conditions will emerge for efforts to develop peaceful values" (Djamil, 2022). "Indonesia's education vision is towards global education and peace education, but peace education in Indonesia does not yet have a clear platform" (Ilfiandra et al., 2023, p. 25).

Summary and Conclusion

Indonesia is an independent republic in Southeast Asia and Oceania with a population of over 270 million. The official language is Bahasa Indonesia, and most of the population is Muslim. The country's largest ethnic group is the Javanese. The country has a 20-year development plan to improve its economy and human capital. The adult literacy rate is 96%, and the education system is the fourth largest in the world. Indonesia's constitution ensures equal opportunities for education since the country gained independence in 1945. The government has implemented policies to promote universal education and instil a sense of nationalism through the Pancasila principle. Education management was decentralised in 2001 to promote school autonomy, but the education system still performs poorly. The Ministry of Education and Culture regulates the Indonesian national education system, and the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the Ministry of Research, Technology, and Higher Education govern higher education.

The country has changed its educational curriculum multiple times since independence, with the most recent being the K-13 curriculum, which incorporates the Merdeka Learning Curriculum designed to address the challenges of education in the era of the 4.0 industrial revolution.

Education in Indonesia is compulsory for 12 years. It follows a 6+3+3 pattern, where students spend six years in elementary school, three in junior high school, and three more years in senior high school. Pre-school before primary school is optional and begins at the age of 3 years. Elementary, junior high, and senior high school are known as Sekolah Dasar (SD), Sekolah Menengah Pertama (SMP), and Sekolah Menengah Atas (SMA) respectively. Students can also attend vocational or religious schools (madrasah).

One of Indonesia's most significant educational issues is the non-attendance of many students. According to the World Bank's 2022 report, 3.45 million Indonesian children are not attending school due to factors such as poverty, child labour, unequal access to education, and geographic disparities. Furthermore, it has been discovered that almost half of Indonesia's school-age children are female, indicating a dire need to address inequalities and ensure that more girls have access to high-quality education (MM, 2023).

Indonesia follows a national curriculum framework that outlines the essential knowledge, skills, and values students should acquire at each educational level. The curriculum, K-13, introduced in 2013, emphasises holistic development, including cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects. K-13 focuses on competencies rather than rote memorisation. It aims to nurture critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills. Besides academics, co-curricular activities are equally important in the Indonesian Education System. Pancsila is one of the major features of instilling moral values in children. It is compulsory at the primary level. After primary school, junior high school bridges the gap between primary and senior high school. Moral character building is given utmost importance at junior high school, too. However, from Senior high school, students can choose professional courses.

Health and life skill education are part of the curriculum, but proper implementation requires clear teacher guidelines. The practice of physical education at every level of school education is not observed in the Indonesian school education system. Professional and skill education have high value in the school education system. They are assessed through examination, and credits are awarded based on performance.

The incorporation of technology in the education system needs improvement. It is crucial to link many strategic points in the education system for acceleration of the system, not just utilising modern technology but also understanding the role of each stakeholder, as well as challenges, risks, and impacts for present and future generations. A systematic and harmonised integration of health, life skills and technology in the prevailing education system is the need of the hour. Teachers, parents and schools play major roles in the character-building of the students. Hence, the synthesis of technology and the traditional education system can be shaped by a systematic arrangement of resources and processes more resourcefully to emphasise the overall development of children. This policy provides an opportunity for the students to build leadership qualities to represent the world, through which they can compete globally and lead as future leaders of Asia.

The curricular framework mentions integrating various developments through the school curriculum, but proper implementation is not in practice due to a lack of guidelines. As a result, from junior high school, the curriculum is loaded with subjects related to students' cognitive development. The school curriculum focuses on vocational training of the students to prepare them

for professional life. Besides ICT and vocational courses, physical, health, and peace-making education must be inculcated in the school education system for the overall development of the children.

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16
Zest for Whole Life Education: Japan

Shivangi Gupta

Abstract

Japan, a developed country with a 99% literacy rate, is more focused on the holistic development of its students than mere academic rote learning. This chapter analyses Japanese school education's educational policies, structures and academic frameworks. Japan emphasises the overall development of the academic, physical, emotive, and moral qualities among the students. The recent educational reforms of the country, referred to as 'Zest for Life', primarily focus on the transformation from the twentieth to twenty-first-century paradigm parallel to the industry or market demand. The Japanese government ensures free and equal access to education for each of the children (elementary and lower secondary education is free, compulsory, and a basic right). Though there is no specific course structure for hobbies and life-skill education, the school curricula include life-skill or survival skills, skill training, hobby development, and moral education among the students. However, the 51st rank (out of 143 countries) in the Happiness index may indicate that school culture is dominated by exam-oriented rigorous hard work and perseverance among the students, foregoing the joy of learning.

Keywords: Japan, Zest for Life, MEXT, Integrated vocational education, peace education, survival skills

Introduction

In 1945, Japan demonstrated remarkable resilience after surrendering in World War II, a war that ended with the US dropping atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki (History.com Editors, 2023). Under foreign occupation for seven years, the country underwent significant economic and political changes. It transitioned from being ruled by an Emperor to becoming a democratic,

constitutional monarchy (Japan Rail Pass, n.d.). This period of transformation saw Japan emerge as a modern, industrialised nation, a testament to its resilience and adaptability (Szczepanski, 2021).

Japan, an island country in the North Pacific Ocean, is a part of East Asia. Japan comprises four major islands (ordered in decreasing size): Honshu, Hokkaido, Kyushu, Shikoku, and many other smaller islands (Web Japan, n.d.). The land area of Japan is about 377,974 km² (Statistics Bureau, 2022). Japan is almost surrounded by the ocean or the different countries' islands. In the west, it is surrounded by the Sea of Japan (East Sea), which separates it from eastern shores of South and North Korea and southeastern Siberia; in the north, by La Perouse (Sōya) Strait and by the Sea of Okhotsk; to the northeast by the southern Kuril Islands; to the east and south by the Pacific; and to the southwest by the East China Sea, which separates it from China (Toyoda et al., 2024). It shares its maritime borders with China, North Korea, South Korea, the Philippines, Russia, the Northern Mariana Islands (United States), and Taiwan (Nations Online, n.d.). Japan is administratively divided into eight regions and 47 prefectures. The eight regions and their respective number of prefectures are Hokkaido (1 prefecture), Tohoku (6 prefectures), Kanto (7 prefectures), Chubu (9 prefectures), Kinki (7 prefectures), Chugoku (5 prefectures), Shikoku (4 prefectures), and Kyushu-Okinawa (8 prefectures) (Web Japan, 2020).

As of February 2024, Japan's total population was 125.20 million, with a female population of 64.2 million and 61 million males (Statista, 2024). The gender ratio in Japan in 2024 is 94.51 males per 100 females (StatisticsTimes, 2024). Moreover, its life expectancy at birth is 84.4 years (UNDP, 2022). The Population growth rate in 2024 is projected at -0.54%, the 16th lowest among the countries and dependent territories (Statistics Times, 2024). Japan's religious composition is a unique blend of Shinto, Japan's oldest religion, Buddhism, and Confucianism, each contributing to the country's rich cultural tapestry. While having minimal influence in Japan, Christianity has not overshadowed the emergence of 'new religions' during the 19th and 20th centuries, which have become significant in Japanese religious practices today (Watt, 2003).

As of 2024, Japan's GDP is 411 trillion USD, with 0.9% annual growth. The per capita GDP is 33,140 USD (IMF, 2024). Japan ranks 24th out of 193 countries in the HDI ranking. In the happiness index, Japan ranked 51st among all 143 countries of the world (Ying-tzu & Hsien, 2024).

The literacy rate in Japan is 99%. Around 13,000 kindergartens, 21,000 elementary, 10,500 lower secondary, and 5,000 upper secondary schools are present nationwide (MEXT, 2013). Japan ranked 3rd in the PISA ranking (Yomiuri Shimbun, 2023). Statista (2024) reported that 6,049,685 students attend elementary schools; 3,177,508 lower secondary schools; 2,918,501 upper secondary schools;

843,280 Integrated centres for ECEC; 841,824 Kindergarten; 151,362 Schools for Special Needs Education; 76,045 Compulsory Education Schools, and 33,817 Secondary schools (Statista, 2024).

Educational Policy

The constitution of Japan ensures that education is an equal right for every citizen. It stated, "All people shall have the right to receive an equal education corresponding to their ability, as provided by law. The people shall be obligated to have all boys and girls under their protection receive ordinary education as provided for by law. Such compulsory education shall be free" (Article 26) (MEXT, n.d.a). The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology governs the education and education-related policies.

In Japan, after the Meiji Restoration (1867) 1871, Japan's first Ministry of Education was constituted to develop a national education system (Notehelfer et al., 2024). This national system ensures that every child in Japan gets a quality elementary education. In 1984, Japan formed an Ad Hoc Council on Education, the "starting point of the reform" in the education sector. That Council presented a report that urged "Japan to shift its focus from standardised, conventional rote learning towards learning that would help children develop the flexible and independent mindsets needed to think, judge, and take responsibility for their actions" (Yamanaka & Suzuki 2020, p-82). Japan's educational reforms are part of its transition from the 20th century to the 21st-century industry. Yamanaka and Suzuki (2020) remarked, "This education reform covers all aspects of education, that is, contents, teachers, facilities, school management system, educational administration system and fundamental laws" (p.81). Its educational policy was reformed every ten years by MEXT based on the country's contemporary requirements.

The first decadal reform was done in the 1990s, implemented from 1992 to 1994, and emphasised the importance of 'viewing children's academic performance from a new perspective'. Further, the second decadal reform occurred in the 2000s and stated that children in the twenty-first century must acquire a zest for life. The third decadal reform appeared in the 2010s, in which "the content of the textbooks had declined by 30% compared to the previous one" (Yamanaka & Suzuki, 2020, p.91) to develop the "zest for life" (holistic development). Lastly, in the recent reform in the 2020s, three integrated pillars: 'skills and knowledge', 'the ability to think, judge and express oneself', and the 'the motivation to learn and a sense of humanity' in its national curriculum (Yamanaka & Suzuki, 2020). The content of textbooks declined by 30% compared to the previous one.

In Japan, presently, there is a 6+3+3 school education system, which comprises six years of compulsory elementary education, three years of junior high school (lower secondary) education, and three years of high school (upper secondary) education (KWPF, 2015). As mentioned above, the central theme is an integration of the three pillars in its education system such as 'skills and

knowledge', 'the ability to think, judge and express oneself', and 'the motivation to learn and a sense of humanity' with the aim of 'what students will be able to do and how can they learn?' (Yamanaka & Suzuki, 2020). Along with this, the Japanese education system also implemented the following reforms in its education system:

- "Starting in 2020, Japan designated English as a formal subject starting from the fifth grade, a change from the previous policy, which began at the junior high school level. The policy also emphasises practical English reading and writing abilities" (International Trade Administration, 2020).

- "The MEXT aims to foster younger generations' greater critical thinking and problem-solving abilities. Starting in 2020, computer programming education became mandatory in elementary schools" (International Trade Administration, 2020).

- "The current standardised university entrance exam only assesses English reading and listening comprehension levels. ….. The MEXT originally planned to introduce private sector-developed English test models in 2020 to add listening and speaking tests to the existing reading and writing skill measurements" (International Trade Administration, 2020).

Structure of the Education System

Japanese education system comprises pre-primary, primary, secondary (lower secondary and upper secondary), and higher education (Figure 16.1).

Pre-primary Education

Pre-primary education comprises Kindergarten Education (also called Yochien) and Integrated Centers for Early Childhood Education and Care (Yohorenkeigata Ninteikodomoen), meaning kindergarten and nursery education (MEXT, n.d.a). The childcare centres (Hoikuen) or the integrated centres provide full-day programs to children from birth to age 6. The kindergartens (Youchien) offer half-day programs for children aged 3 to 6 (NCEE, 2024).

Enrollment is nearly as high as or higher than the OECD average: as of 2018, 83 per cent of three-year-olds, 96 per cent of four-year-olds, and 97 per cent of five-year-olds in Japan were enrolled in kindergartens.

The enrollment ratio in pre-primary education is higher or higher in Japan than the OECD average. "As of 2018, 83% of three-year-olds, 96% of four-year-olds, and 97% of five-year-olds in Japan were enrolled in kindergartens, compared with the OECD averages of 69%, 85%, and 99%, respectively" (NCEE, 2018). Additionally, both education centres employ teachers with at least two

years of the degree, share many curricular elements, and emphasise child-centred activities and play (NCEE, 2024).

Pre-primary education in Japan is intended for child-centred education, following hands-off policies. It is based on the 'whole person education' principle, emphasising social and emotional development, friendship, and responsibility. In Japanese pre-primary education, students or "children learn social skills through playing while teachers create optimal environments for their development and monitor their activities" (Das, 2019, P.2).
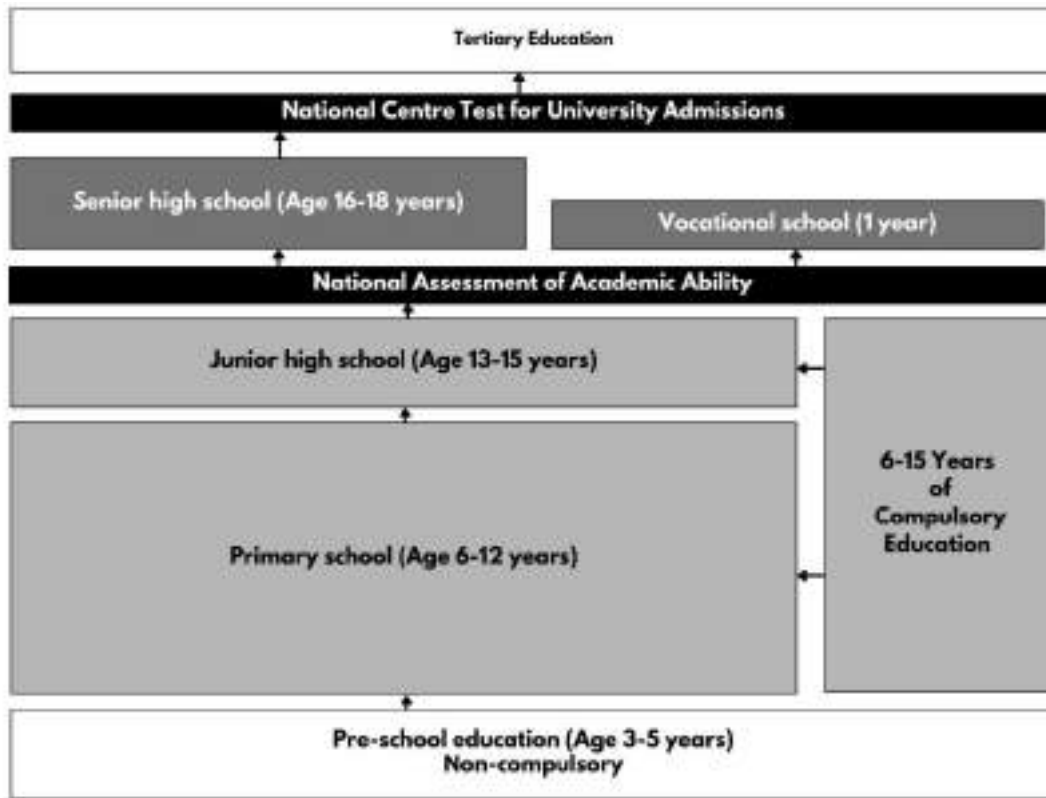
Figure 16.1 Structure of the Japanese Education System
Source: Mukhopadhyay & Kundu, 2023 (Adapted by author)

Primary or Elementary and Lower Secondary Education

Primary and lower secondary education in Japan is compulsory for children between 6 and 15 years of age. The primary education (also called *Shogakko*) is of the six grades (from 1 to 6), while the lower secondary education (*Chugakko*) is in the 7th to 9th grades. Elementary education aims to give children between the ages of 6 and 12 primary general education suited to their mental and physical

development (MEXT, n.d.a). Compulsory primary and lower secondary education are free in public schools (where only the tuition is free). However, in private schools, the cost is significantly higher. In public schools, teaching is done in the Japanese language, while in private schools, students can take courses in English (Futures Abroad, 2024).

"The primary goal of compulsory education is to enhance students' … abilities and develop a basis for their social independence and basic abilities as citizens of the nation". For that, the Japanese government provide high-quality education for all and ensures the foundation of compulsory education by offering equal opportunities, guaranteeing minimum standards, and providing free education (MEXT, n.d.b).

Upper Secondary Education

After completing primary and lower secondary education, students must pass the national entrance examination to enter the upper secondary grades in Japan. Though upper secondary education is voluntary, the enrollment rate is 99% in upper secondary education (Futures Abroad, 2024). Upper secondary education (Koto-gakko) comprises three years, from grade 10 to grade 12 (for students aged 16 to 18). In the upper secondary level, students also learn the same subjects as primary education, but here, teaching becomes more intense with each grade level.

Along with the full-day course, the system also offers part-time and correspondence courses at the upper secondary level. These courses facilitate young workers' flexible pursuit of upper secondary studies. All these courses lead to an upper secondary education certificate (MEXT, n.d.a). The Japanese education system also provides the opportunity for adult and life-long learning.

The curricular courses are categorised into general, specialised, and integrated. General courses are designed for students who want to pursue higher education and those entering the workforce without a specific vocational skill. The secondary vocational pathways are unclear in Japan (Nakayasu, 2016). The specialised courses are for students who choose a particular vocational area. Lastly, the integrated courses, introduced in 1994, offer "a wide variety of subject areas and subjects from both the general and the specialised courses, to 'satisfy students' diverse interests, abilities and aptitudes, future career plans, etc." (MEXT, n.d.a).

The Japanese education system also provides special education and schooling facilities to comparatively severely disabled children. These 'Schools for Special Needs Education' (Tokubetsu-Shien-gakko) provide education suited to their educational needs. This kind of school comprises four levels: kindergarten, elementary, lower secondary, and upper secondary (elementary and lower secondary are also compulsory for them). "Special classes are small classes for children with mild disabilities that may be integrated into regular elementary and lower secondary schools. It may also be opened as a branch class in a hospital for sick children" (MEXT, n.d.a). In 2017, the redesigned

Japanese educational system emphasised a shared curriculum and teaching students with learning challenges in a typical classroom environment in an inclusive environment (Cho & Park, 2024).

Curricular Framework

The Japanese curriculum comprises pre-primary, primary or elementary, lower secondary, and upper secondary education. The curriculum reform of 2013 centred around the subject areas. However, it aimed to 'develop cross-curricular competencies such as problem-solving, creativity, and good learning habits' (NCEE, 2024).

Pre-primary Education

The preschool curriculum framework aims at the initial growth of children in education and learning and develops respect for family, school, and teachers. Pre-primary education also intends 'to develop healthy minds and bodies through play and group-oriented environments' (GIIS, n.d.). As mentioned in the table, kindergarten kids are also expected to clean their classrooms first and do group activities with their fellow mates, which develops basic moral and cultural education among the children. The Japanese education system emphasises hands-on activity, play-based learning, and exploration among children. Table 16.1 shows the one-day activity timetable of the preschool Japanese students.

Table 16.1 Timetable of a Day at a Pre-school in Japan

Activity	Time or hours of the school
Arrival of Teachers at Pre-school	8:00~8:30
Arrival of Students at Preschool	8:30~9:00
Morning Play Period	9:00~10:00
Cleanup and setting up the Room	10:00~10:15
Morning Greetings	10:15~10:30
1st Group Activity period	10:30~11:15
2nd Group Activity period	11:15~12:00
School Lunch	12:00~12:30
Play	12:30~1:15
Cleanup Campaign and Setting up	1:15~1:45
End of School Hours	1:45

Source: Das, 2019

Primary Education

The six-year elementary schooling period is compulsory for students as curriculum prescribed by the national school curriculum outlined by the MEXT. The elementary school curriculum encompasses various subjects, including Japanese language, social studies, arithmetic, science, living environment studies and home economics. Notably, music, arts and handicrafts, and physical education receive significant emphasis during this stage. The National Course of Study (NCS) precisely regulates the overall objectives of each subject and the content for each school year. While the NCS provides a framework, individual classroom teachers retain the flexibility to determine specific instructional details. The curricular framework of primary education (from grades 1st to 6) is discussed in Table 16.2.

Table 16.2 Subject-wise Annual Standard School Hours

Category		1st Grade	2nd Grade	3rd Grade	4th Grade	5th Grade	6th Grade
Subjects	Japanese language	306 (9)	315 (9)	245 (7)	245(7)	175 (5)	175 (5)
	Social studies	-	-	70 (2)	90 (2.6)	100	105 (5)
	Arithmetic	136 (4)	175 (5)	175 (5)	175 (5)	175 (5)	175 (5)
	Science	-	-	90 (2.6)	105 (3)	105 (3)	105 (3)
	Living environment studies	102 (3)	105 (3)	-	-	-	-
	Music	68 (2)	70 (2)	60 (1.7)	60 (1.7)	50 (1.4)	50 (1.4)
	Arts and handicrafts	68 (2)	70 (2)	60 (1.7)	60 (1.7)	50 (1.4)	50 (1.4)
	Home economics	-	-	-	-	60 (1.7)	55 (1.6)
	Physical education	102 (3)	105 (3)	105 (3)	105 (3)	90 (2.6)	90 (2.6)
Moral education		34 (1)	35 (1)	35 (1)	35 (1)	35 (1)	35 (1)
Special activities		34 (1)	35 (1)	35 (1)	35 (1)	35 (1)	35 (1)
Period for integrated studies		-	-	70 (2)	70 (2)	70 (2)	70 (2)
Foreign language activities		-	-	-	-	35 (1)	35 (1)
Total school hours		**850 (25)**	**910 (26)**	**945 (27)**	**980 (28)**	**980 (28)**	**980 8)**

Note: In bracket the weekly school hours

Lower Secondary Education

Secondary education comprises lower and upper secondary education, in which lower secondary is also part of compulsory education. The lower secondary curriculum subjects include Japanese, social studies, mathematics, science, music, fine arts, health and physical education, technology, and home economics. Additionally, moral education, special activities, and integrated studies are prescribed in the curriculum. Especially in private schools, religion is provided as a course of study. The detailed curriculum framework of lower secondary education in Japan is discussed in Table 16.3.

Table 16.3 Curriculum Framework of Lower Secondary Education

Field	Subjects	Further Details
Core or requisite subjects	Japanese	including brush and pen calligraphy
	Social studies	Fields of geography, history, and civics
	Mathematics	Fields of algebra and geometry
	Science	First field (physics, chemistry), second field (biology, geosciences)
	Music	including instrument playing
	Fine Arts	
	Health and Physical Education	Field of physicals, field of health
	Technology and Home Economics	Field of technology, field of home economics English language
Elective Subjects	Japanese, social studies, mathematics, science, music, fine arts, health and physical education, technology/home economics, foreign language, and other specifically essential subjects	
Moral education		
Special activities		Class activities, pupils' council activity, school event
Integrated Studies		
Religion		At private schools only

Source: *NIER, n.d.b*

In lower secondary education, along with all these subjects, students are also taught cleaning (the classrooms, special classrooms, gymnasiums, corridors, lavatories, and other common facilities), handling school events such as entrance ceremonies, field trips, athletic meets, cultural festivals, excursions, and commencement ceremonies etc. Even for certain club activities, the national-level competition is held in the Japanese education system (NIER, n.d.b). The extracurricular activities of the lower secondary education are tabulated in Table 16.4.

Table 16.4 Extracurricular Activities at the Lower Secondary Education in Japan

Cleaning	The cleanup covers classrooms, special classrooms, gymnasiums, corridors, lavatories, and other common facilities.
Handling school events	Entrance ceremonies, field trips, athletic meets/sports days (Undokai), cultural festivals, excursions, and commencement ceremonies are common.
Athletic club activities	Swimming, track and field, gymnastics, rhythmic gymnastics, baseball, basketball, volleyball, Judo, Kendo, soccer, Ping-Pong, skiing, Sumo, handball, softball, etc.
Cultural club activities	Brass band, broadcasting, Shogi (Japanese chess), Go, computer, chorus, Rakugo (comic monologue), traditional arts, local history, scientific experiments, fine arts, creative works, etc.

Source: *NIER, n.d.b*

Upper Secondary Education

"Provide higher general education and specialised education according to students' mental and physical development on the foundation of the lower secondary education" (School Education Act Article 50).

Japan's upper secondary education system tends to "provide higher general and specialised education according to students' mental and physical development on the foundation of lower secondary education (School Education Act Article 50)" (NIER, n.d.c, p.1). As mentioned, the Japanese education system offers three courses: general, specialised (former vocational), and integrated (Table 16.5).

Table 16.5 Three Course Subjects of Upper Secondary Education

Courses	Subjects
General	Japanese language, English, Science, Math, History, Civics, geography, Politics and economics, physical education, world history, music, fine arts, homemaking, crafts, and a foreign language

Specialised	These courses are classified into agriculture, industry, commerce, fishery, home economics, nursing, science-mathematics, physical education, music, art, and English.
Integrated	• Core or compulsory courses (likewise general and specified): Japanese language, mathematics, world history, physical education, health, general home economics, industrial societies and human beings (in the first year). Physical education, health, general home economics and basic information (in second year). • Compulsory Elective Courses (must select one of any three)- civics, science, and arts (in the first year). History, geography and science (in second year).

Source: NIER, n.d.c

Teaching Learning

"A Japanese classroom is not just a place to study; it is a place where you live too…It is written in the law that education is to develop students' personalities, and I agree with that" (Crehan, 2016, p. 67). The government recommends 'active learning' in classrooms to maximise students' academic performance through a proactive attitude toward learning. Active learning will advance student competencies. Bjork (2015) mentioned, "Teachers were encouraged to experiment with instructional strategies that were better aligned with the "new abilities" MEXT was promoting (para 6)". Otherwise, rote memorisation does not help information discussion, evaluation, and analysis.

In this context, MEXT (2002) stated that in classroom situations, "experiential learning such as experiences with nature, experiences in everyday life, observations, experiments, field trips and research, and problem-solving approaches to learning should be actively applied" (MEXT, 2002). Japanese education system followed the 'active-learning' method for teaching from the 1990s, which used methods like collaborative learning and problem-based learning (Ito, 2017). This methodology is becoming popular now. There is a growing demand for generic skills such as cognitive, ethical and social capabilities, cultural refinement, knowledge, and experience (Waniek & Nae, 2017).

Japan integrated technology into its teaching-learning process. Japan is also moving towards integrating AI (Artificial Intelligence) into the teaching and learning processes. To make its mark on the future "technological singularity" (the moment at which AI considerably surpasses human intelligence), which is expected to occur by the 2040s, Japan has been strategically implementing AI technology in the school curriculum and pedagogy (Solez et al., 2013).

Japan performed better than the OECD countries in PISA because of its active and cooperative learning methodology of learning and teaching (Lestari et al., 2019). The active learning method is organised around three themes: motivation to learn and apply learning to life, acquisition of knowledge and technical skills, and skills to think, make judgments, and express oneself. Japanese teachers spend, besides teaching, a substantial amount of time planning lessons, working with peers,

counselling students, meeting with parents, and leading extracurricular activities, such as sports and cultural club activities (NCEE, 2024). The role of teachers in Japanese schools is not just teaching students; they teach them how to learn new activities, perform group activities, etc.; The emphasis is on "how to learn" instead of teaching them the textbooks.

Learning Assessment

In the Japanese education system, assessment is flexible for compulsory education. Teachers primarily assess students using self-developed tests and other student works. Teachers are also expected to visit students' homes periodically, build relationships with their families, and attend sporting events and other extracurriculars to support students. Further, the assessment for individual students is more or less consistent across his/her school education period (NCEE, 2018). However, admission to upper secondary education requires passing a national entrance examination, a significant milestone.

Japan also conducts a national assessment, the National Assessment of Academic Ability (NAAA), for admissions of students in grades 6 and 9. It assesses them in five fields- Japanese language, foreign language, math, science, and social studies. From 2017 onwards, the test was modified to assess "critical thinking, judgment, and expression, with constructed response items as well as multiple choice and an expanded English language writing and speaking skills section" instead of rote learning or memorisation of the knowledge (NCEE, 2024).

Health and Physical Education

Health and physical education are compulsory core subjects in the primary and lower secondary education curriculum. It was first accepted as a formal lower and upper-secondary education subject in 1949, after the Second World War (Sakuma, 1978). In Japanese culture, body and mind are viewed from a holistic perspective, and to ensure holistic development, physical education has been kept as a compulsory subject in the Japanese education system (Nakai & Metzler, 2005). It is also a compulsory core subject in the Japanese school education curriculum (primary, lower, and upper secondary levels). The fundamental outcomes of health and physical education in Japanese school programs are:

- "democratic physical education,
- culture-oriented physical education,
- fitness-oriented physical education,
- physical education as preparation for lifelong sport participation, and
- physical education for mind and body" (Nakai & Metzler, 2005, p.18).

These goals determine the learning outcomes of health and physical education.

Considering the given fundamental outcomes of health and physical education and the holistic development perspective of the Japanese culture, it can be assumed that health and physical education will lead to the development of team spirit, group activity spirit, physical fitness, health awareness, etc., among Japanese students. Table 16.6 presents the allocation of school hours to health and physical education in the Japanese school education system.

Table 16.6 Allocated School Hours Corresponding to Levels of Education

Levels of education	Allocated school hours
Elementary and lower secondary grades	90 hours per year
Lower secondary grades	270 hours for three years (222 for physical education and 48 for health education)
Upper secondary grades	315 to 350 hours (245 to 280 for physical education and 70 hours for health education)

Source: Nakai & Metzler, 2005

Further, the allocation of instructional hours also reveals that the Japanese government emphasised physical education (e.g., sports and games-related activities) more than health education (e.g., health awareness and health-conscious behaviour.

Skills Education

Skill education and training are provided to students from the beginning of their education (preschool education). For example, a complete compulsory credit course is taught in primary and lower secondary education, named 'Home Economics' and 'Arts and Handicrafts'. The course content of home economics (that has been taught at the primary level) "hold holistic perspectives regarding personal and family life; this includes life planning, family relations, partnerships, child development, elderly issues, food, clothing, shelter, economy, environment, and consumer citizenship" (The Japan Association of Home Economics Education Website). Further, the course content of arts and handicraft education consists of "drawing (painting), sculpture, design, craft, and art appreciation" (or the aesthetic education) (Naoe, 2003, p. 101). The updated curriculum's 'Zest for Life' component encompasses skills and capabilities such as thinking, making decisions, and expressing oneself to solve problems (MEXT, n.d.d).

In addition, Japanese education also provides vocational training at its upper secondary level for students who wish to enter the job market after their school education or after further vocational

training. Table 16.7 refers to a broad vocational education category taught at the upper secondary level.

Table16.7 Educational Contents of Vocational Education

Field	Educational Content
Industry	Information processing, IT, game, CG, automobile maintenance, railway technology, machine, electric, electronic technology, building, civil engineering, etc.
Agriculture	Agriculture, horticulture, animal husbandry, landscaping, biotechnology, chemistry/biology, protection and preservation of the natural environment, etc.
Medical	Nursing, dental hygiene, dental laboratory, clinical examination, physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech hearing, judo reduction, emergency life-saving, etc.
Hygiene	Barber, beauty, makeup, esthe, nutrition, cooking, confectionery, bakery, etc.
Education / social welfare	child care, early childhood education, nursing care welfare, social welfare, mental health welfare, etc.
Commercial Practice	Business, accounting, bookkeeping, travel, tourism, hotel, accounting, management, hospital administration, public security, security, etc.
Clothing / Home Family	Fashion design, fashion business, Japanese dressmaking, knitting/handicrafts, etc.
Culture	Music, video, broadcast, theatre, movies, photography, manga, foreign languages, civil servants, sports, health, animals, etc.

Source: *JES, n.d.*

Hobby and Life Skills Education

MEXT claims that lifelong learning includes formal education through schools and social programs and learning acquired from hobbies, recreational activities, volunteer work, sports, and cultural pursuits (Ogden, 2010). Further, Ogden (2010) stated that the highest number (22%) of students followed their hobbies and interests, such as music, fine arts, flower arrangement, dance, and calligraphy (Ogden, 2010).

In the Japanese education system, though no specific courses were designed, particularly life-skill education, the students ultimately learn life-skills through schooling. Japanese elementary schools teach students essential life skills such as proper handwashing, teeth brushing, food handling, and cleaning techniques. There is also a significant stress on etiquette, including the correct way to greet others, to the extent that students are expected to greet strangers they encounter on the street. Further, all schools have swimming pools, and learning to swim is considered a fundamental life skill (IKI, 2020). Teaching children life skills is as essential as academics to make them more independent and confident as adults (Melin, 2024).

Group activities, handling school events and participating in club activities also help develop group cooperation and survival skills among the students. The compulsory courses in home economics,

arts and handicrafts, and fine arts at the elementary and upper secondary education levels ensure the students' like-skill learning and hobby development. Japan's Education Cooperation Policy 2011-2015 supported life skills education such as disaster risk education and mine risk education to empower people to protect students' lives and communities from threats (Government of Japan, 2010).

Moral, Social and Cultural Education

Moral education is a compulsory and credit course in primary and lower secondary education. The current Fundamental Law of Education (2006, No.120) emphasises the importance of fostering morality and ethics within formal school education, outlining the significance and role of moral education (MEXT, n.d.c).

Moral education lessons are structured around four key perspectives, represented by distinct pillars that teachers utilise to guide student instruction:

1. "About the self: people are independent, they do what they can do themselves, and live moderately.

2. In relationships with other people, people know the importance of courtesy and communicating honestly.

3. About relationships with nature and sublime things: People are moved by the magnificence and wonder of nature and feel the importance of nature and living things.

4. About groups and society: People keep promises, follow rules, and have a sense of public duty" (NIER, 2013, p. 4).

Since 2002, MEXT has offered Kokoro no Noto, or "Notebook for the Heart," a collection of free supplementary learning materials comprising worksheets. These materials promote moral education grounded in the four pillars mentioned earlier. In 2011, each topic within the Notebook became available for download. The Notebook is tailored to each compulsory school grade from one to nine, considering children's developmental stages (NIER, 2013).

According to Article 2 of the Social Education Act in Japan, social education encompasses adult education, community education, and educational activities for children and youth outside formal school settings (MEXT, 2010). The purpose of the Social Education Law is to delineate the roles and responsibilities of both central and local governments concerning social education (NIER, 2011). The Children's Comprehensive After School Plan 2014 is a joint initiative between MEXT (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology) and MHLW (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare) to ensure safe and enriching environments for children after school hours. In

social education, lifelong learning projects have been expanded to promote the active social involvement of older individuals within each community (Matsuda, 2021).

The Japanese education system is structured to emphasise and uphold fundamental cultural values such as obedience, cooperation, loyalty, and conformity to group norms (Iuspa, 2013).

Peace and Happiness Education

Japan initiated peace education to address the violence against its states. "The Hiroshima Municipal Board of Education distributed its first official guidelines for teaching peace education to elementary, junior high and senior high schools in 1968" (Hara, 2012, p.10). Earlier, peace education integrated with 'moral science' and was introduced as a compulsory subject during the Meiji period (1868-1912). In Japan, peace education is taught as an independent subject and integrated across various subjects, such as social studies and Japanese literature. Additionally, students have learned about peace education during school excursions to Hiroshima and Nagasaki since the 1980s (Murakami, 2007, as referred to in Hara, 2012). The stress of peace education has shifted from anti-war education to multicultural education, human rights education, and environmental education in the last two decades as globalisation has progressed (Nakamura, 2006). In 2002, a peace club for junior and high school students was started to help students understand the impact of the atomic bombing and the significance of peace. Peace study programs are carried out through lectures in Hiroshima schools to provide insight into the reality of atomic bombing and efforts to eliminate nuclear weapons (Wijegoonawardana, 2021).

Summary and Conclusion

The 'Zest for Life' aptly represents the spirit of Japanese educational reforms. It is a meaningful blend of academic, physical, emotive, and moral qualities that help develop characters with empathy, self-control, service-mindedness, peace-loving, and cooperation.

Japan focuses on the holistic development of the students instead of emphasising only academic learning through textbooks or rote learning. Its educational reforms are intended to transform from the twentieth to twenty-first-century paradigm. It also parallels the industry or market demand to catch up with the Western world. In that process of catching up, 99% of the literacy rate in the country was achieved. Japan ensures that every citizen has free and equal access to education. Accordingly, elementary and lower secondary education is free, compulsory, and a basic right of the country's children.

Japan follows the 6+3+3 structure of school education (six years of primary education, three years of lower secondary education, and lastly, three years of upper secondary education). The pre-school and upper secondary education are voluntary, but the primary and lower secondary education is

compulsory and free for the students in the country. There were also 'Schools for Special Needs Education' for the severely differently abled students with similar school structures (pre-school, primary, lower secondary and upper secondary). Japanese education policy emphasised the student-centric approach to learning and holistic development among students; it included innovative co-curricular activities such as cleaning classrooms and schools, preparing lunch for fellow mates, handling school events and ceremonies, hands-on activities, group learning, team management, group cooperation, etc. Also, the system included the 'home-economics' and 'arts and handicrafts' and 'music' courses as compulsory credit courses.

There are no specific courses on hobbies and life-skill education, skills education, or moral, social, or cultural education. The curricular structure includes life-skill or survival skills, skill training, hobby development, and moral education among the students. The Japanese students are trained in cleaning, cooking, handling family relations, respecting each other, moral education, group cooperation, team spirit, aesthetic education, critical thinking, etc., reflecting their life specification, skills and moral education. Further, vocational education provides professional training to students who wish to continue in the skill-based training field as their profession or career.

Teachers in OECD member countries spend more time on their students than the average time teachers spend in other countries. However, much of this time is dedicated to tasks other than direct instruction, such as planning lessons, collaborating with colleagues, providing student counselling, meeting with parents, and leading extracurricular activities like sports and cultural clubs. The learning assessment process is also flexible and relatively easier. Teachers assess their students up to the compulsory years of education at the school level only by preparing the school-based tests independently. However, to get admission to upper secondary education, students must qualify for the national entrance examination, which is the 'first major gateway' of the examination. Students must qualify for one national university entrance examination for university entrance.

Although Japanese students perform way better in PISA evaluation (3rd rank in PISA ranking), the country achieved a 99% literacy rate and 24th rank in HDI among 193 countries. However, the happiness index ranks 51st out of 143 countries. "The Japanese education system is exam-oriented and rigorous, following hard work and perseverance principles. This often diminishes the importance of non-scholastic activities such as hobbies, life skills, and moral, social and cultural education. These activities may be overshadowed by the pressure from "tiger mothers" and "Juku" classes) (Alomari, et al., 2019).

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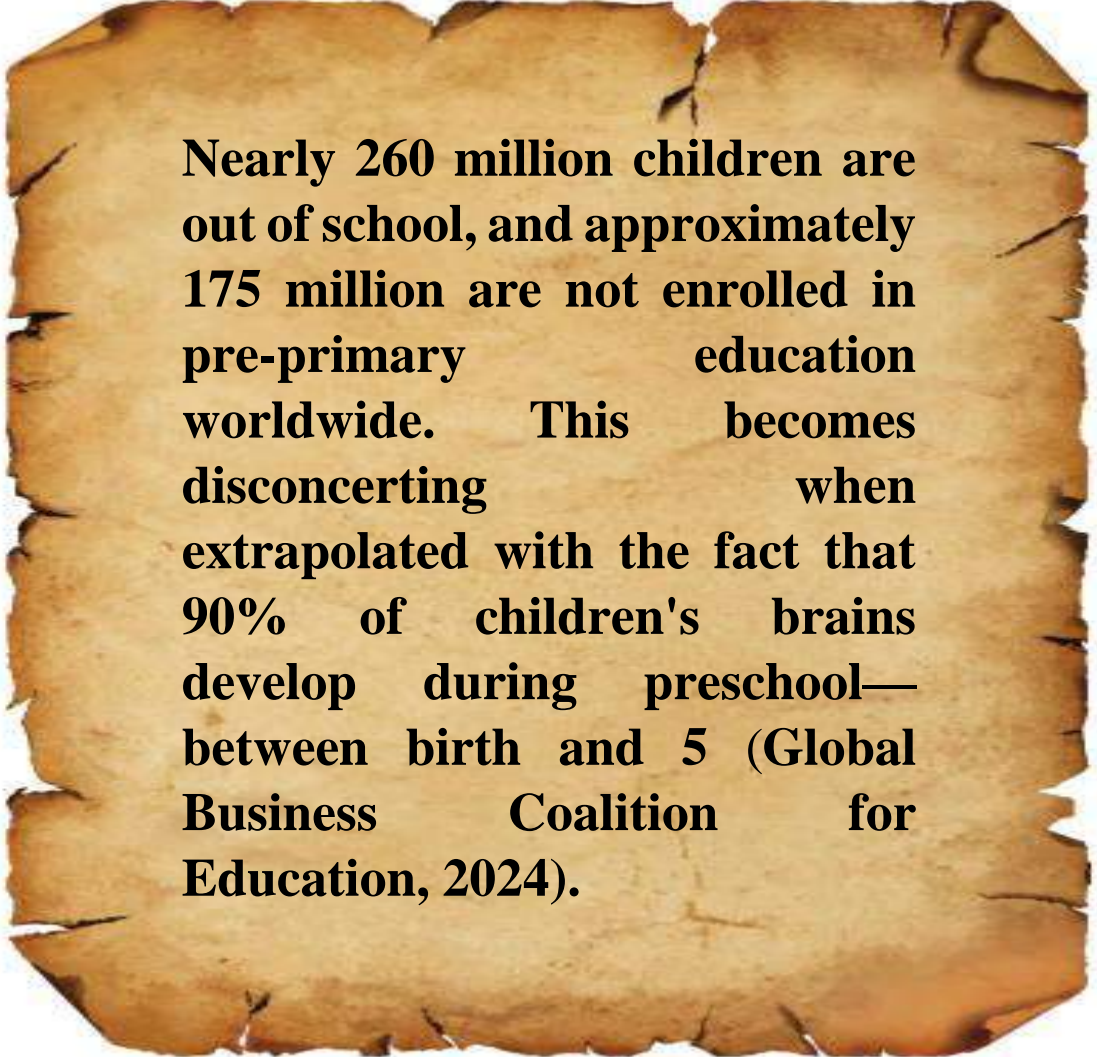
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Nearly 260 million children are out of school, and approximately 175 million are not enrolled in pre-primary education worldwide. This becomes disconcerting when extrapolated with the fact that 90% of children's brains develop during preschool—between birth and 5 (Global Business Coalition for Education, 2024).

17

Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education: Philippines

Arunima Naithani

Abstract

In 2022, the Philippines launched the Basic Education Development Plan 2030, a long-term blueprint for primary education aligned with the SDG-2030. The country provides 13 years of free and compulsory education, with a curricular framework that defines specific standards and competencies for each grade level. This framework includes special programs for diverse learners, including Indigenous peoples and students with special needs. The Department of Education (DepEd) has introduced the 'Digital Rise' Program to enhance teaching through ICT tools. Assessment methods include Collaborative Formative and Summative Assessments, though many students prefer a distribution of grades across multiple assessments rather than relying heavily on final exams. Physical education and health are mandatory, emphasising "Move to Learn, Learn to Move." Additionally, the DepEd's National Policy Framework promotes a culture of peace in schools, ensuring the protection and rights of learners and staff in conflict situations while fostering education for peace and citizenship.

Keywords: Philippines, Education Act of 2013, Technology and Livelihood Education, Digital Rise Program, Exit Assessments, Zones of Peace, Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education

Introduction

The Republic of the Philippines has a remarkably long colonisation history by Spain for over 300 years and later by the United States until its independence in 1946. One of the eleven Southeast Asian (SEA) countries, its picturesque physiography is surrounded by more than 7,000 islands and islets, which makes it a popular tourist destination and the largest archipelago on the world record. Its 36,289 km coastline (5th longest in the world) shares boundaries with Malaysia and Indonesia. Its total 300,000 km² land area is bestowed with a biodiversity hotspot (*megadiverse*) famous for

its high level of endemism in its flora and fauna (OECD, 2019). The Philippines has a democratic republic with a presidential system of government. Its regional territories (71), provinces (81), cities (146) and municipalities and villages act as political subdivisions.

As of 2022, the Philippines has a population of 111.8 million, with an annual population growth of 1.30%. 49.8% of the Philippines' population is female, while 50.2% is male (Macrotrends, 2024). Life expectancy at birth is 66.4 years (2021) for both genders (WHO, 2024). As of 2022, the gender ratio of males per 100 females is 108 (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2024). With a unique blend of rich culture, traditions, ethnicity, and language diversity, nearly 175 ethnically diverse groups have more than 100 indigenous languages (Eberhard et al., 2024). The Philippines has two official languages, i.e., Filipino and English. The Philippines is known for being Asia's sole predominantly Christian country. Over 86% of its population identifies as Roman Catholic, with 6% adhering to local Christian sects, 4% practising Islam as a minority, and another 2% belonging to a diverse array of Protestant denominations. The remaining 2% follow Indigenous belief systems and customs (Miller, n.d.).

The country also has the fastest-growing economy, with a GDP of US $471.52 billion, which continues to grow at the rate of 6.2% with a GDP per capita of US $4130 (IMF, 2024). Its large young population mostly drives its consumer demand and labour market, as the country's unemployment rate dropped to 4.5% this year (Gonzales, 2023). According to the UNDP report, the Philippines achieved an HDI score of 0.699 and was placed 116th out of 191 nations in 2021 (UNDP, 2024). Further, according to Helliwell et al. (2021), the Philippines is ranked 61st in the world and second happiest in SEA. The country still grapples with a significant and persistent issue of poverty (WENR, 2018).

The total literacy rate is 97% - females 97.1%, and males 96.8% (Census of Population and Housing, 2023). The NER in primary, lower secondary and upper secondary education is 91%, 88% and 78%, respectively (UNFPA, 2023). The Educational attainment for the population above 25 years who (at least) completed post-secondary in the Philippines was only 30.4 (World Bank, 2023); meanwhile, only 23.4% had reached or completed college levels (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2023). The Philippines' school education system comprises 43,090 purely elementary (K to 6), 7,570 purely junior higher secondary and senior higher secondary schools, 3,547 purely K-12 schools, 3,110 purely K-10 schools, 1,755 purely junior secondary schools, 1,357 purely senior higher secondary schools (DepEd, 2022a). According to the Department of Education (DepEd), 22.8 million students were enrolled for SY 2023-2024. There were 876,842 teachers - 514.099 in elementary, 288,687 in Junior High, and 74,056 in senior secondary schools (DepEd, 2022b). In the 2018 PISA assessment, the Philippines' student performance in science ranked second lowest among participating countries (World Bank, 2020).

Educational Policy

The Department of Education (DepEd) of the Republic of the Philippines outlines that the evolution of the country's educational system has passed through various stages, beginning before the Spanish colonisation and American and Japanese colonisation (Rocse, 2006). "Before the Philippines attained complete independence in 1946, the country's education system was patterned on the systems of Spain and the US countries, which colonised and governed the country for more than three hundred years. However, after independence, the country's educational system has constantly undergone reform" (K12 Academics, n.d., para 1).

Republic Act No. 10533, also known as the 'Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013', is the country's current education policy. It is a major K–12 educational reform. Most of these reforms were adopted in the early 2000s to improve declining educational standards.

All children must attend 'one year of kindergarten, six years of elementary education, four years of junior high school, and two years of senior high school for 13 years of free and compulsory education' (Costes & Hechanova, 2021). The Department of Education and the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013 are responsible for quality basic education by improving the learning environment and promoting safe and nurturing schools (Republic of the Philippines, 2013).

Implementing the new curriculum in the educational policy under the K-12 program supports the development of lifelong learners and makes them competent, creative, and compassionate citizens. Abragan (2022) highlighted the initial challenges for teachers in implementing the K-12 curriculum. This approach ensures that learning is continuous and smooth, gradually enhancing proficiency by incorporating multilingual education rooted in the learner's native language to promote the national language and culture while developing the students' global competence and communication skills. Under the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013, the program aims to develop 21st-century skills and prepare them for higher education, employment, and entrepreneurship (Republic of the Philippines, 2013).

Further, it also recognises the diversity of learners, as the Philippines Constitution (1987) has mandated the application of human rights principles at all educational levels. The 'Instituting a Policy of Inclusion and Services for Learners with Disabilities in Support of Inclusive Education Act' (Republic of the Philippines, 2022) ensures learners with disabilities access to 'quality, accessible and inclusive education'. The law also directs the establishment of 'Inclusive Learning Resource Centers for Learners with Disabilities (ILRC) in all cities and municipalities (Republic of the Philippines, 2022). The 21st-century teachers are adopting continuing professional education, inclusion policies, and instructional innovations and activities to promote inclusivity (Macabenta et al., 2023). In order to end discrimination based on gender, sexual orientation, and gender identity,

the 'Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report, 2020 of UNESCO and DepEd has called for a new 'gender-responsive' basic education policy with revised curricula that features themes like bullying, discrimination, etc. (UNESCO, 2020).

In 2022, Basic Education Development Plan 2030 was launched as the Philippines' long-term plan for formal education (and non-formal education) from kindergarten to high school (5 to 18 years old). It shall serve as a blueprint for the country's basic education, aligned with SDG-2030, to identify prevailing and emergent issues and challenges along with participation, completion, quality, and delivery concerns (Department of Education of the Philippines et al., 2022).

Structure of the Education System

The Philippine education system covers both formal and non-formal education. Formal education is a progression of academic schooling from elementary (grade school) to secondary (high school) and tertiary levels (TVET and higher education).

Pre-school education is optional for children aged 3 to 5 and is governed by the Early Childhood Care and Development Council (ECCD).

The management of the Philippine education system is established as a tri-focalised structure (1994/1995), a three-layered system composed of basic, technical-vocational and higher education with three different agencies responsible for each layer.

As mentioned, the refocused Department of Education (DepED; Republic Act 9155 of 2001), headed by a Cabinet Secretary for the *basic school education system,* follows the 6+4+4 years pattern, in which students have to complete six years of primary/elementary education, four years of junior high school, and four years of senior high school before they can enter higher education (De Guzman, 2003).

Under the Trifocalization of Education Management (1994), the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA Act of 1994; RA No. 7796) and the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) (Higher Education Act of 1994; RA No. 7722) were established as the main educational bodies (Abaja & Lavadia, 2018).

The TESDA offers vocational education at the school level through various technical-vocational-livelihood (TVL) tracks and strands in junior and senior high school. Students can choose from different TVL specialisations, such as agri-fishery arts, information and communication technology, industrial arts, and home economics (TESDA, 2016).
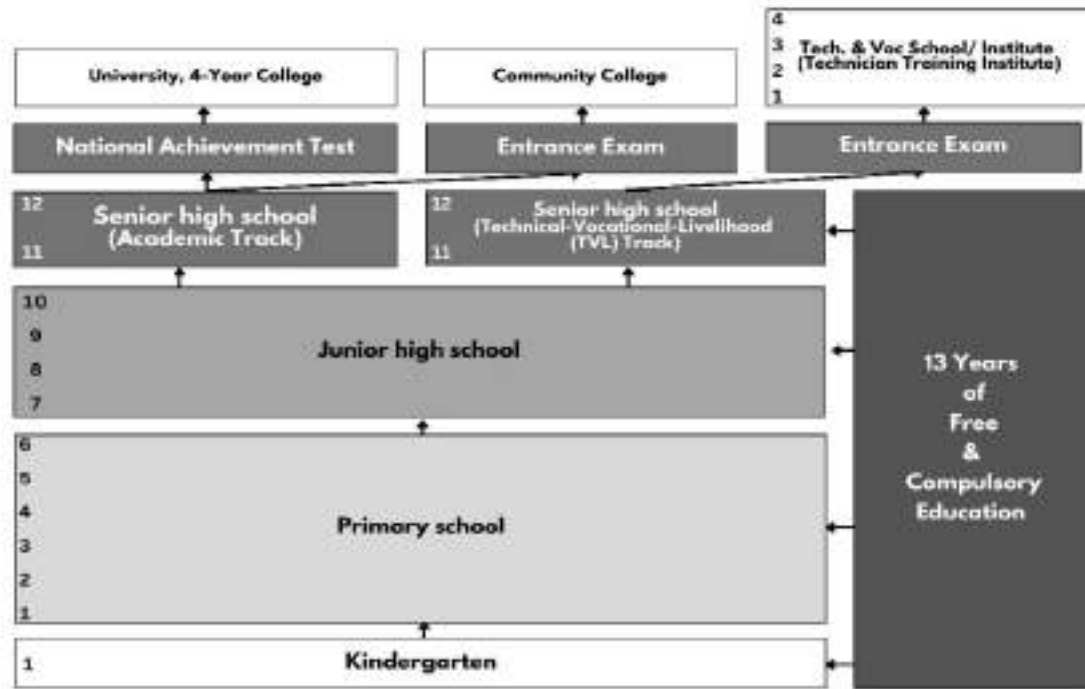
Figure 17.1 Structure of the School Education System in the Philippines
Source: Seonkyung, 2016; WENR, 2018 (Adapted by author)

Curricular Framework

Kindergarten Education: To achieve the Education for All (EFA) goals, the state makes kindergarten 'the first stage of compulsory and mandatory formal education' for all Filipino children (Republic of the Philippines, 2012). The policy directs kindergarten education at five years of age as an entry stage to basic education so children can begin schooling and gradually adapt to formal education.

The Kindergarten Curriculum Framework (KCF) draws from the principles and goals of the 'K to 12 Philippine Basic Education Curriculum Framework', which depicts the developmental tasks and milestones of 5/6-year-olds. Similarly, KCF is aligned with the general principles of the National Early Learning Framework (NELF) to effectively promote young children's physical, social, emotional and intellectual development, including values formation, so they will be ready for school. In this stage, the children learn the alphabet, numbers, shapes, and colours through games, play-based activities, songs, and dances in their Mother Tongue. "Most students have plateaued at a level where they have minimal, very basic reading comprehension skills in the school Mother

Tongue, and most students need a great deal more time than the curriculum currently allows to learn to read with comprehension in just one language" (Cheng et al., 2020, pp. 93-94). The three main components of KCF include 'Developmental Domains, Learning Areas, and Curricular Themes', which the educators adopt to guide and develop young children holistically (DepEd, 2012).

Elementary Education (Grade 1-6)

The curricular framework for primary education in the Philippines is based on the goals and principles of the 'K to 12 Basic Education Program'. As noted, it covers six years of primary education to provide sufficient time to master concepts and skills. The weightage or allocation of periods per week for primary education is 30 hours, with different allotments for each subject depending on the grade level. At this level, subjects are Filipino, English, Mathematics, Science, Social studies, Personnel Education, Music, Arts, Physical Education, Health, Home and economic education (DepEd, 2016a).

Core Subjects (K-12)

The core subjects of the K to 12 Basic Education curriculum include – Mother Tongue, Filipino, English, Mathematics, Science, *Araling Panlipunan* (Social Studies), *Edukasyon sa Pagpapakatao* (EsP), Music, Arts, Physical Education, Health, *Edukasyong Pantahanan at Pangkabuhayan* (EPP), Technology and Livelihood Education (TLE; starts from Grade 7th). These subjects are integrated into a thematic and experiential curriculum based on the learners' interests and needs (DepEd, 2016b).

This curriculum incorporates the principles of *Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education* (MTB-MLE), which is salient under the implementation of the 'Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013' (Republic of the Philippines, 2013). For formal and non-formal education, MTB-MLE uses the learners' first language (mother tongue) as the medium of early schooling from kindergarten to Grade 3. Cultivating a solid foundation in their mother tongue, the program gradually introduces additional languages, Filippino and English, to meet the global context from Grade 3 onwards.

The English language curriculum under the K-12 is known as the 'Language Arts and Multiliteracies Curriculum'. It is aligned with the 'Language and Literacy Domains' core, including listening, speaking, reading, writing and viewing (DepEd, 2016c).

Mathematics from K-10 is a skill subject that emphasises the development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills. It covers various topics, including numbers, measurement, number sense, geometry, algebra, patterns, statistics, and probability (DepEd, 2016d).

The K to 12 Curriculum integrates science content and processes. It progressively introduces more advanced concepts and skills from life sciences, chemistry, physics, and earth sciences. The science

standards across different grade levels emphasise a strong connection between science, technology, and the preservation of cultural heritage (DepEd, 2016e). "The Music and the Arts curricula focus on the learner as a recipient of the knowledge, skills, and values necessary for artistic expression and cultural literacy" (DepEd, 2016f, p. 2). The K to 12 Physical Education Curriculum under the Enhanced Basic Education Act, 2013 "includes value, knowledge, skills and experiences in physical activity participation in order to achieve and maintain health-related fitness (HRF), as well as optimise health and optimise health" (DepEd, 2016g, p. 2).

Junior high school (Grade 7-10) students experience an enriched, context-based, spiralling learning curriculum over four years. The Junior High School to Senior High School curricular framework aims to equip students with "concepts and skills, develop lifelong learners, and prepare graduates for tertiary education, middle-level skills development, employment, and entrepreneurship" (Educators' Files, 2019, Para 2).

The Technology and Livelihood Education (TLE) and Technical-Vocational-Livelihood (TVL) Track specialisations may be taken by students between Grades 7 to 8 and 9 to 12, respectively. TLE in Junior High School is exploratory at Grades 7 and 8, which provides opportunities for students to explore from a maximum of 4 TLE mini-courses for each level. The exploratory subjects agri-fishery arts, home economics, information and communications technology (ICT) and industrial arts, taken during Grades 7 to 8, are at 40 hours per quarter (DepEd, 2016b). This course "taught five basic competencies common to all TLE courses. Learners may earn the Certificate of Competency (COC) in Grade 9 and the National Certificate I/II (NC I/II) in Grades 9 and 10. The learner may take the Technical-Vocational-Livelihood Track in Grades 11 and 12 to continue the TLE specialisation in Grades 9 and 10. This enables him to get an NC II" (Andaya, 2016, p. 22). Students found the contents of technology and livelihood education programmes to be very good. Their progress in work skills is highly commendable, and there is a clear correlation between the effectiveness of technology and livelihood education programs and the enhancement of work skills (Jacolbia, 2016).

Senior High (Grades 11-12)

The Philippines education system also highlights that the subjects students undertake in Grades 11 and 12 are fundamental for their choice of career track. Senior High School (SHS) subjects fall under the core curriculum, applied track, and specialised subjects. Each senior high school student can choose applied track subjects and specialisations based on aptitude, interests, and school capacity (Fuente, 2022).

Senior High School includes several fundamental learning areas in its core curriculum. Additionally, it offers specific tracks akin to college courses, categorised into four disciplines: Academic,

Technical-Vocational-Livelihood (with highly specialised subjects with TESDA qualifications), Sports and Arts and Design (GOVPH, 2017). As noted, Grades 11 and 12 have around 31 total subjects (15 core subjects and 16 track subjects, which include seven contextualised and nine specialisation subjects). Each subject will have 80 hours per semester, a total of 2,480. At the same time, physical education and health have a total of 20 hours per semester for four semesters (Cruz, 2014).

"The core curriculum has seven Learning Areas: Languages, Literature, Communication, Mathematics, Philosophy, Natural Sciences, and Social Sciences" (GOVPH, 2017). In addition, current content from some General Education subjects is embedded in the SHS curriculum.

DepEd (2016b) mentioned the following subjects:

- "Oral Communication
- Reading and Writing
- Komunikasyon at Pananaliksik sa Wika at Kulturang Pilipino
- Pagbasa at Pagsusuri ng Iba't-Ibang Teksto Tungo sa Pananaliksik
- 21st Century Literature from the Philippines and the World
- Contemporary Philippine Arts from the Regions
- Media and Information Literacy
- General Math
- Statistics and Probability
- Earth and Life Science
- Physical Science
- Introduction to the Philosophy of the Human Person
- Physical Education and Health
- Personal Development
- Understanding Culture, Society and Politics
- Earth Science (taken instead of Earth and Life Science for those in the STEM Strand)
- Disaster Readiness and Risk Reduction (taken instead of Physical Science for those in the STEM Strand)"

The Academic track includes subjects from:

1. Academic: Accountancy, Business, Management (ABM); Humanities, Social Sciences (HUMSS); and Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics (STEM).

2. Technical vocational livelihood (with highly specialised subjects and TESDA qualifications) includes several options in Agri-Fishing, Home Economics, ICT, Industrial Arts, and TVL maritime.

3. Sports

4. Arts and Design (Llego, n.d.a).

Some of the special features of the curricular framework offer specific standards and competencies that define what students ought to comprehend and be able to accomplish at every grade level and learning area. It also has special curriculum programs that cater to the needs of different learners, such as indigenous peoples, students learning in Madrasah, and those with special needs (DepEd, n.d). Andaya, the director of DepEd, unveiled the features of the 2022 version of the K-12 curriculum, which focuses on – 'big ideas and articulation of the 21st Century Skills Framework, redefines the interplay among languages in the Philippines, and emphasises the development and mastery of foundational skills and competencies, among others' (DepEd, 2022c, para 8).

Teaching Learning

The Philippines K-12 school Education system, as per the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013, is based on learner-centeredness, constructivism, inquiry-based, reflective, collaborative, and integrative pedagogical approaches. The policy is also inclusive and culturally sensitive to the Department of Education. It allows schools to customise, adapt, and improve the curriculum based on their specific social contexts. Furthermore, it promotes and facilitates the creation and development of local teaching materials, which will be available in regional and division education units (Republic of the Philippines, 2022).

The DepEd has also created the Digital Rise Program through the Philippine Development Plan 2017 to 2022 to provide a well-crafted ICT framework and the appropriate tools for teaching and learning experiences. Recognising the potential benefits of integrating ICTs in education systems and addressing the challenges in digital learning and educational technology, the program is an "educational framework anchors to the infrastructure, software, and capacity building of learners and teachers in technology" (Daily Guardian, May 12, 2022).

The Digital Rise Program has three major components, according to the report presented by ICTs. The first component is *Digital Literacy*, where the K to 12 curriculum is updated to include productivity tools incorporated grade-wise, such as basic programming skills for Grade 7 learners and multimedia concepts, video editing, or graphic design from Grades 8 to 10. Vocational skills are also included for Senior High School students, e.g., computer servicing, technical drafting, etc.

"Through its second component, ICT Assisted Teaching, DepEd aims to provide teachers with equipment, software content, and skills for daily classroom teaching. The program also envisions providing each teacher and classroom with laptops, smart TVs, and lapel speakers. Lastly, the ICT Assisted Learning for learners component of the program aims to grant access and adaptability through DepEd Learning Management System (DLMS) and synchronous blended learning" (Manila Bulletin, 2022).

Learning Assessment

In the Philippines, assessment measures learners' progress in attaining learning standards and 21st-century skills. The Philippines' K to 12 Basic Education Program adopts a 'standards- and competency-based grading system' as instructed in the curriculum guides (DepEd, 2015).

Learners are assessed in the classroom through Individual Formative Assessment (check-up quizzes, written exercises, performances, models and presentations) and Summative Assessment (written work, performance tasks and quarterly assessment), including Collaborative Formative and Summative Assessment where learners participate in group activities and support one another. Students disapprove of the final examination as it weighs heavily on their grades. Instead, they prefer graded assessments and their overall grade is distributed among multiple assessments (Lean, 2022, p. 18).

In addition, the 'national assessment of student learning' is an integral part of DepEd's assessment framework. It administers the Early Language, Literacy, and Numeracy Assessment (ELLNA) for grade-3 learners as a key stage test to see if kids meet the learning standards in the early stages of schooling. In grades 6, 10 and 12, the department conducts Exit Assessments to determine learners' learning standards of the elementary, Junior and Senior High School curriculum. It also administers Career Assessment in Grade 9 to measure learners' skills, aptitude and occupational interests for further guidance. "The Accreditation and Equivalency Tests (A&E Tests) are nationally administered tests that aim to measure the competencies and life skills of those who have not attended or finished the formal elementary or secondary education. … The Philippine Education Placement Test (PEPT) is a nationally administered assessment for learners in special circumstances. The result of this assessment will allow these learners to a) access or resume schooling and/or b) obtain certification of completion by grade level in the DepEd formal system" (DepEd Tambayan, 2016).

Health and Physical Education

In the Philippines' education system, physical education and health are mandatory subjects for all

school years. They are part of the core curriculum integrated under the K-12 Enhanced Basic Education Act (2013).

Anchored on the principle "Move to Learn, Learn to Move" in the PE curriculum, fitness and movement education is the core to achieving lifelong health and fitness for learners. The five learning strands of the program include body management, movement skills, rhythms and dance, games and sports and physical fitness. It features different topics and activities for each grade level from 1 to 10 to promote fitness and sustain an active lifestyle for the learners, school, and community. Accordingly, health strands are seamlessly integrated into the PE curriculum for senior high school as a course and core subject titled *Health Optimizing Physical Education*. It includes exercises for fitness, sports, individual, dual and team sports, and aquatic and mountaineering activities.

Further, the PE curriculum for grades 1-6, 7-10 and 11-12 are given a weightage of 40, 60, and 120 minutes/week, respectively (K to 12 Curriculum Guide Physical Education, 2016d). Cruz (2022) found that the physical education activities provided by the school were adequate and matched the students' preferences. Additionally, physical activities are diversified but lean towards traditional forms.

Health Education emphasises fostering positive health attitudes and essential skills to attain a high quality of life. The health curriculum develops health literacy competencies among students to achieve lifelong health and wellness for Filipino learners. From K to 10 grade, health education covers the 'physical, mental, emotional, as well as the social, moral and spiritual dimensions of holistic health' of learners. Its core content areas include injury prevention, safety and first aid, nutrition, prevention and control of diseases and disorders, substance use and abuse, and community, family and personal health, which cultivate skills and essential knowledge to enhance overall well-being (DepEd, 2016h).

Skills Education

Skills education is an inherent part of the education system in the Philippines that holistically develops 21st-century skills. As emphasised, basic education aims to provide the school-age population and young adults with 'skills, knowledge, and values' to make them 'caring, self-reliant, productive and patriotic citizens' (Republic of the Philippines, 2013).

The Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) serves as the leading authority that provides skills development to the Philippines's human resources through Technical

and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions (Republic of the Philippines, 1994). Oliquino's (2019) study found that TVET students are moderately competent in 21st-century skills, e.g., "occupational health and safety, life-long learning and career development, communication, information technology, entrepreneurship, critical thinking and problem-solving, collaboration and teamwork, learning and innovation, and environmental literacy" (Oliqiono, 2019, p. 153) implying that students can apply their skills in simple situations.

The increasing population in recent years has led to the rise of vocational educational institutions. The TVETs in the Philippines are classified into school-based, centre-based, community-based, and enterprise-based TVETs (Wu et al., 2019) and are mostly private schools. It is a 'competency-based education and training system strategically designed to meet labour-market demand and provide unskilled Filipinos opportunities for decent employment and personal advancement' (ASEAN, 2021, p. 38). School-based programs run by TESDA-administered schools offer post-secondary education and training. There are 57 private schools: 19 are agricultural schools, seven are fishery schools, and 31 are trade schools (TESDA, 2018).

One special feature of skills education in the Philippines is the *laddered* education system, which allows learners to move seamlessly and progressively across different levels (from Tech-Voc to college, and vice-versa) of training and higher education (Republic of the Philippines, 2004). After completing the TVET course, students can earn credits or units to be credited to a higher education degree program in a related field. Similarly, a learner who finishes a senior high school specialised subject can earn a Certificate of Competency or a National Certificate Level (I/II/III) that can be used for employment or further training. It also provides courses in high school and post-secondary schools, as well as for out-of-school youth and adults.

Hobby and Life Skills Education

Hobby development is not an explicitly articulated agenda of the K-12 education system. Vice President and Education Secretary Sara Duterte recently announced, "We will release a department order that would detail what co-curricular and academic activities are allowed to be conducted this year; we are prohibiting extra-curricular activities" (Philippine Daily Inquirer, September 9, 2022). However, the curriculum offers opportunities for students to pursue their interests and talents in various fields, such as arts, sports, music and technology.

Schools support hobby development through extra-curricular activities and clubs (sports teams, music bands, theatre groups, art clubs, science clubs, journalism clubs, and student councils). The Department of Education is establishing guidelines for managing out-of-school activities for co-curricular and extra-curricular for both public and private schools (DepEd, 2017). Such activities and opportunities for students to explore their passions and talents outside the formal curriculum also develop their physical, social, emotional, and intellectual skills.

Starting in 2010, the nonprofit group 10ThousandWindows (10TW) has been working with the survivors of violence and exploitation, helping them with "career counselling, soft skills training, formal and non-formal secondary school and college scholarships and academic support, employment counselling, employer engagement and network building, education regarding labour rights, work immersion opportunities, and crisis intervention" (Honeyman et al., 2022, p. 135).

Senior High School curriculum also integrates the arts and design track as part of the four tracks offered for students interested in pursuing careers in the arts, design and creative industries. "The curriculum boasts of a comprehensive approach to the discipline, as it includes the following: 1) the creative industries (arts and design appreciation and production, and performing arts), 2) physical and personal development in the arts, 3) developing Filipino identity in the arts, 4) integrating the elements and principles of an organisation in the arts, 5) leadership and management in different arts fields, 6) apprenticeship and exploration of different arts fields (media arts and visual arts, literary arts, dance, music, theatre), 7) work immersion/ research/ career advocacy/ culminating activity (i.e. exhibit for arts production/performing arts production)" (Soberano-Samodio, 2016, p. 70).

Moral, Social and Cultural Education

The Philippine Cultural Education Program (PCEP) is the cultural arm of the National Commission on Culture and the Arts (NCCA), which coordinates and designs several initiatives and projects to make cultural education accessible to students, teachers, and the public. With over 110 ethnic groups in more than 7,000 islands, PCEP seeks to develop among Filipinos a 'greater awareness, understanding, and appreciation of their culture and arts, towards the evolution of a consciousness that will improve the quality of their lives' (Philippines Cultural Education Program, 2017). It promotes 'cultural education as the core of teaching and learning, and governance towards inclusive growth and sustainable development' (National Commission for Culture and the Arts, 2020). It also supports the culture-based instructional design and the mother tongue-based multilingual education in the K-12 curriculum. Further, since 2013, the PCEP has been organising the 'DIWANG: Sagisag Kultura ng Filipinas' Competition to promote the symbols of Filipino culture and identity, its appreciation and dissemination (Uy, 2021).

Peace and Happiness Education

The school-going children largely suffer due to the effects of armed conflicts taking place in several regions every year. The institutionalisation of Peace Education in the Basic Education Curriculum (DepEd, 2008) and DepEd's "National Policy Framework on Learners and Schools as Zones of Peace is anchored on the concept of a just and comprehensive peace as laid down in EO No. 3, s. 2001, and defines and operationalises the concept of Learners and Schools as Zones of Peace

(LSZOP)"(Llego, n.d.b). This policy protects students and schools during armed conflicts. The curriculum and content of this policy are based on the principles of human rights, peace education (concepts, skills and values), child protection, gender sensitivity, cultural diversity and disaster risk reduction. It also provides guidelines for implementing, monitoring and evaluating the LSZOP initiative (5 components). The policy is aligned with the K to 12 Basic Education Program and the Alternative Learning System (ALS) Curriculum to reach out-of-school children. The policy framework ensures a culture of peace in schools and the protection of learners and school personnel and their rights, welfare and safety in the case of armed conflict situations.

The policy aims to strengthen efforts in peace-building through education with the incorporation of three building blocks that are:

1. Education for Peace – Peace Promoting and Conflict Sensitive Education
2. Peace for Education – Peace Building, including Conflict Prevention and Peacemaking
3. Crisis Management – Education in Emergencies (EiE) (DepEd, 2019).

Oppenheimer and Kuipers (2009) claimed that "10-year-old Filipino children's understanding of peace and war, and strategies to attain peace, do not differ in any important way from peers elsewhere. Differences present concern primarily the themes of peace and war, rather than the actual level of understanding" (p. 253).

Summary and Conclusion

Goal 4 of the SDGs, i.e., quality education, aims to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" (UNESCO, 2017, p-6). The Philippines' basic education system is one of the largest in Southeast Asia, catering to approximately 27 million students and employing 1.2 million public and private school teachers (Ocampo & Buenviaje, 2022). "For this purpose, the State shall create a functional basic education system that will develop productive and responsible citizens equipped with the essential competencies, skills and values for life-long learning and employment" (Republic of the Philippines, 2013, section 2). The comprehensive reform of the Philippine K-12 basic education system 'aims to produce Filipino graduates who are holistically-developed with 21st-century skills prepared for higher education, middle-level skills development, employment, and entrepreneurship' (SEAMEO & INNOTECH, 2012).

The Basic Education Act 2013 aims to give students the skills, knowledge, and values they need to become caring, self-reliant, productive, and patriotic citizens. Article 14 Section 2 of the Philippine Constitution (1987) mandates the enrichment, maintenance, and support of a comprehensive,

sufficient, and integrated education system relevant to the people's and society's needs. In particular, under the Constitutional aims of education, the role of educational institutions is defined in section 3 sub. Part (2): "They shall inculcate patriotism and nationalism, foster love of humanity, respect for human rights, appreciation of the role of national heroes in the historical development of the country, teach the rights and duties of citizenship, strengthen ethical and spiritual values, develop moral character and personal discipline, encourage critical and creative thinking, broaden scientific and technological knowledge, and promote vocational efficiency".

The Philippine Education for All 2015 National Action Plan, formulated in 2006, aims to ensure that all individuals achieve basic competencies, thereby attaining functional literacy. Functional literacy encompasses a comprehensive range of skills and competencies—cognitive, emotional, and behavioural—that empower individuals to live and work as dignified human beings, realise their potential, make informed decisions, and function adeptly in society, both locally and globally. This aims to enhance their quality of life and contribute positively to societal improvement (UNESCO, 2011).

Further, in the Philippines Education Act (2013) global awareness and creative thinking skills are emphasised: "It is hereby declared the policy of the State that every graduate of basic education shall be an empowered individual who has learned, through a program that is rooted on sound educational principles and geared towards excellence, the foundations for learning throughout life, the competence to engage in work and be productive, the ability to coexist in fruitful harmony with local and global communities, the capability to engage in autonomous, creative, and critical thinking, and the capacity and willingness to transform others and one's self" (Republic of the Philippines, 2013).

Moreover, in the Philippines, Education policies and programmes have been developed to promote the 'Learning on Live Together' program in three areas: education for peace, citizenship education, and life skills education. Global Citizenship Education is integrated into the K-12 curriculum through the programme, highlighting effective communication skills, media and information literacy, and values education. Further, "the Department of Education Philippines partnered with the Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation (HSBC) and the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) Philippines, launched Project Eco-Kids to educate public elementary school students about climate change and practical solutions they can adopt in their daily lives to help address it" (Said & Hanafiah, 2021, p. 33).

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18

A Model of Excellence and Innovation: South Korea

Anita Rastogi[11]

Abstract

South Korea secured the fifth position in the 2022 PISA rankings, showcasing its commitment to academic excellence. Early childhood education is not compulsory, whereas elementary and middle schools are compulsory. The curriculum fosters personal growth, nurtures skills for self-sufficiency, and encourages qualities essential for responsible citizenship under the humanitarian ideal of Hongik Ingan. The revised 2022 curriculum focuses on AI Education Content Criteria 2021 to promote AI-based teaching and learning and AI-related courses for all grade levels. However, the exclusive emphasis on academic performance resulted in less focus on health and physical fitness and electives from K-12. To address this, the Ministry of Education has increased physical education hours in lower and middle grades, including PE in 'pleasant life' subjects and music and art, with students required to take ten credits of PE classes starting in 2025. Vocational high schools provide practical education and training opportunities to ensure job readiness after graduation, with 18% of upper-secondary students choosing VET programmes.

Keywords: South Korea (Korea), Educated Koreans, AI-based teaching, Education Policy Plan, Nuri Curriculum, Public Online Schools, Meister Schools, digital textbooks

Introduction

The Republic of Korea (Korea, henceforth 'Korea') is an economically prosperous nation in the Korean Peninsula. It shares its borders with North Korea to the north, the Yellow Sea to the west, the Sea of Japan (East Sea) to the east, and the Korea Strait to the south. South Korea makes up about 45% of the peninsula's land area. (Yu, 2024) and a total area of 100,363 square kilometres (BBC, 2023). South Korea boasts a coastline stretching 2,413 kilometres, bordering three seas.

South Korea has 17 administrative divisions: 9 provinces (do), six metropolitan cities (gwangyeoksi), one special city (teugbyeolsi), and one special self-governing city (teukbyeoljachisi) (CIA, 2024).

With a population of 51741963 (2024), Korea maintains a gender ratio of 99.502 men for every 100 women and a population growth rate of -0.09% (Statistics Times, 2024). The nation is facing the challenge of an increasingly elderly demographic. However, the reassuring fact is that the life expectancy at birth is a remarkable 83.4 years (CIA, 2024). South Korea is highly homogenous in terms of ethnicity, with over 99% of South Koreans identifying as ethnically Korean. The largest group of ethnic minorities in South Korea is the Chinese, followed by Japan and the USA, though a relatively small community (Cataliotti & Muscato, 2023). In South Korea in 2023, about 51% of people did not follow any faith. Another 20% were Protestant, 17% were Buddhist, 11% were Catholic, and 2% were other (Yoon, 2024). The official language of South Korea is Korean. However, Japanese, English, and Mandarin are widely used and comprehended. (Keystone Team, 2024).

Korea, a developed nation and a prominent player in its region, impresses with its economic prowess. According to the IMF, as of 2024, the Republic of Korea's GDP stands at a staggering $1.76 thousand billion, and its per capita GDP is an impressive $34.16 thousand, with a growth rate of 2.3%. The country's current unemployment rate is a modest 3% (IMF, 2024). Korea ranked 52nd out of 143 countries in the Happiness Index globally (Helliwell et al., 2024). Similarly, Korea is 19th on HDI, with a value of 0.929 (UNDP, 2024).

The educational system in South Korea adheres to a 6-3-3-4 framework. According to UNESCO, adult literacy rates are at 98.8%. While the male literacy rate is 99.2%, for females, it is 98.4% (Country economy, n.d.). As of 2022, the Republic of Korea's GER and NER for primary stand at 99.03% and 98.92%, and for upper secondary, 96.20% and 95.70%, respectively (UNESCO-UIS, 2024). In the PISA 2022 assessment, South Korean students achieved an average score of 527 in Math, 515 in Reading, and 528 in Science (OECD, 2023). They secured the fifth position with an impressive overall PISA score of 523 (Data Pandas, n.d.). As of 2023, South Korea had 20261 public, private, and national schools, with 11,467,579 students and 533,649 teachers (MoE, n.d.). The educational system exhibits high competitiveness, with stringent standards and challenging entrance examinations. Korea consistently demonstrates high performance in international standardised assessments.

Educational Policy

'Taehak', founded in 372 during the Goguyreo era, is the earliest form of formal education. The pupils' moral development was the centrepiece of the curriculum. Modern Korea built its education system from scratch, exclusively after the Korean War (1950-53). Sorenson, in 2004, expressed, "status today is mostly achieved rather than inherited, and amount of education is a determinant of status independent of its contribution to economic success" (Thompson, 2018, p. 6).

The remarkable motto of Korean education is shared human prosperity and 'contributing to the overall benefit of humankind' (Yoo [et al., 2023]). Accordingly, MoE (2015) defines the attributes of a Korean- educated person as a "self-directed, creative and cultured person who builds a self-identity and explores a career and life based on holistic growth who discovers something novel using diverse challenges and ideas based upon basic abilities; appreciates and promotes the culture of humankind based on cultural literacies and an understanding of diverse values; and lives in harmony with others" (MOE, 2015, p.1).

The curriculum was revised in 2015 to develop '*Educated Koreans'* with Self-management, Knowledge/ information processing, Creative thinking, Aesthetic-emotional, Communication, and Civic competencies (Kim & Eom, 2017, pp.5-6). Elementary, middle, and high school education goals reflect these competencies (Table 18.1).

The 2015 curriculum differed from the previous format by combining science and liberal arts to help students blend learning from both fields and become more creative and integrative learners. This approach stemmed from the belief that solely focusing on one subject could limit students' ability to think creatively. Convergence education takes a step further by incorporating scientific concepts into social science subjects and integrating social science concepts into scientific subjects (UNESCO, 2017). Some notable changes included reducing the academic workload, enhancing practical education, and 'emphasising practical skills such as problem-solving, communication, and collaboration' (MOE, 2015). Additionally, there was a focus on moral education centred on honesty, integrity, and social responsibility. The reforms aimed to nurture creativity and innovation while developing global competency (MOE, 2015)

The latest is the 2021 Education Policy Plan, which proposes to improve education quality through a series of interventions, notably digital transformation, strengthening the teaching profession, enhancing civic education, endorsing gender equality and diversity, and fostering creativity and entrepreneurship.

Table 18.1 Goals of Different Levels of Korean Education

Elementary School	Middle School	High School
Build self-esteem, cultivate sound lifestyles, and discover dreams through diverselearning experiences.	Build self-esteem based on a balanced development of mind and body and actively explore life and career pathways through diverse experiences and knowledge.	Acquire a matured self-identity and moral character, gain knowledge and skills suitable for career plans, and develop foundational dispositions to be lifelong learners.
Develop basic abilities to identify and solve problems in learning and daily living and cultivate imagination to approach these problems from new perspectives.	Cultivate a challenge-seeking spirit and creative thinking capabilities based on basic abilities and problem-solving skills needed for learning and daily living.	Solve problems creatively by integrating knowledge and experiences from various fields and develop abilities to cope actively with new situations.
Foster an ability to enjoy various cultural activities and appreciate nature's beauty and happiness daily.	Develop attitudes to understand and appreciate diverse cultures in Korea and other countries based on experiences in one's surrounding community.	Develop qualities and attitudes for contributing to creating new cultures based on literacies in the humanities, society, science and technology, and an understanding of diverse cultures.
Abide by orders and rules, and develop attitudes to help and care for one another based upon a spirit of cooperation.	Develop qualities and attitudes as democratic citizens who respect and communicate with others based on a sense of community.	Develop qualities and attitudes of a democratic citizen connected to the global society and fulfil the ethics of caring and sharing based upon a sense of responsibility to the national community.

Source: Mukhopadhyay & Kundu, 2023

The government initiated the incorporation of ICT education in December 1997. The fourth stage of integrating ICT into education commenced in 2010. The National Education Information System (NEIS) was established in 2011 to promote innovative education (Bansal & Mishra, 2018). The 2021 Education Policy Plan demonstrates South Korea's commitment to improving the quality of education for young Koreans to meet the demands of a rapidly changing world. The recent amendment occurred in 2022 and will be gradually extended until 2025.

Structure of the Education System

The school education system comprises three years of early childhood education, six years of elementary education, and three years of middle and high school (Figure 18.1). The three years of early childhood education are non-compulsory, whereas elementary and middle schools are compulsory (MoE, 2023).

Though optional, over '95% of children in the 3-5 age bracket attend preschool' (Korea Institute of Child Care and Education, 2019). There are both public and privately run preschools. Kindergartens run by the MoE and childcare facilities run by the Ministry of Health and Welfare make up the dual system for early childhood education. Korea has three kinds of kindergartens: public, corporate, and private. There are supposed to be 8,562 kindergartens across the country in 2022. Parents participate in unique activities planned by teachers, usually once a semester. Parents' participation is compulsory (Lee, 2015).
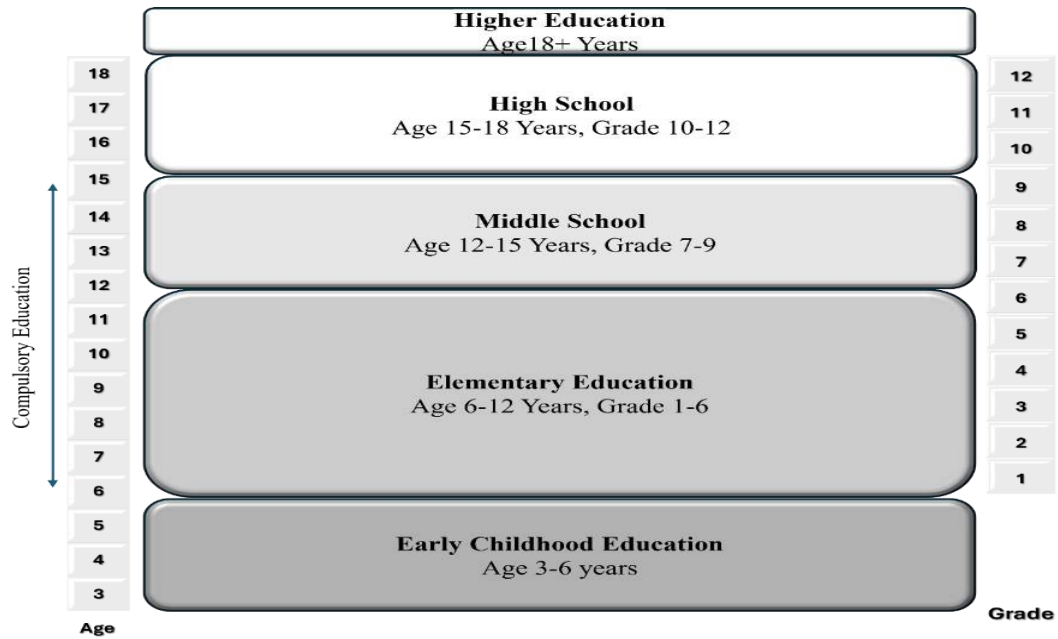
Figure 18.1 Structure of the Education System in Korea
Source: MoE, 2023 (Adapted by author)

According to the 1948 Constitution, elementary education is compulsory and free of charge. It lays down the foundation with a basic comprehension of the subjects learned in secondary school. There are 6,163 primary schools across the country (2022), including 73 private ones (MoE, 2023)

In 2022, there were 633 private and 2,625 public middle schools. Since the government eliminated the middle school entrance exam in 1971, students are assigned to middle schools based on a lottery, with preference given to those in the neighbourhood. Middle school enrollment was 98.2% in 2022 (MoE, 2023).

Entrance to high school is based on middle school completion or passing a prerequisite exam and assessment that awards equal credit. There are various types of high schools, including regular, vocational, autonomous, special-purpose, and high schools for gifted children. High school

enrolment reached 94.5% in 2022. The percentage of students who have transferred from high schools to study in higher education institutions as of 2022 is 73.3%, the highest in the world (MoE, 2023).

Vocational education starts in high school - specialised at Meister High School. Specialised high schools make up about 80% of the 583 vocational high schools, with 464 open now. Meister High Schools, founded in 2010, foster Meisters, or technical experts, to meet industry demands (MoE, 2023).

Curricular Framework

Korean education is designed to enable all citizens to lead dignified lives, contribute to developing a democratic state, and promote the realisation of a vision of common human prosperity. It aims to foster personal growth, nurture skills for self-sufficiency, and encourage qualities essential for responsible citizenship under the humanitarian ideal of Hongik Ingan (MoE, 2015).

The 2022 revised curriculum defines students as 'self-directed individuals with inclusiveness and creativity'. It also outlines six core competencies for students to navigate the challenges of the future society, which include self-management, knowledge-information processing, creative thinking, collaborative communication, and community competency (MoE, 2023).

Preschool Education

The National Kindergarten Curriculum has undergone 11 revisions since 1969. The curriculum, which targets 3- to 5-year-old kids in kindergarten or 0 to 5-year-old kids in childcare centres, was renamed in 2012: 'Nuri Curriculum'. The five main components of the Nuri Curriculum are communication, social interaction, art experience, and nature adventure. To assist young children in establishing healthy growth for the mind and body through play and laying the groundwork for positive character and democratic citizenship, the 2019 edition highlights diversity and autonomy within on-site curricula (MoE, 2023).

Primary Schools

The elementary school curriculum's field of study includes subjects (or subject groupings) and Creative Experiential Activities. The subjects (or subject groupings) to be taught are Korean Language, Social Studies/Moral Education, Mathematics, Science/Practical Arts, Physical Education, Arts (Music/Art), and English. In the case of grades 1 and 2, subjects consist of Korean Language, Mathematics, and combined subjects of Moral Life, Inquiring Life, and Pleasant Life. Regarding Creative Experiential Activities, students are exposed to "optional activities, club

activities, community services, and career-related activities". At this level, Safe life should be included in the creative experiential activities, offering genuine experiential activities (MoE, 2015).

Forty minutes of teaching make up one instructional hour. However, this time can be changed depending on the seasonality and weather, the level of student development, the type of material to be learned, the setting of the school, and other factors. Based on 34 weeks of instruction per year, the number of instructional hours for two years is divided among each grade level and subject (or subject cluster). The minimum number of instructional hours per grade ranges from 1,744 to 2,176. According to the National Curriculum for Primary and Secondary Schools (2015), practical arts instructional hours are specifically for science/practical arts courses in grades 5 and 6.

Middle Schools

In middle school education, the focus shifts to the development of essential skills for learning and everyday life, as well as the cultivation of moral character and the qualities of a democratic citizen, building on the achievements of elementary school education. The curriculum for middle school includes academic subjects or groups along with Creative Experiential Activities. Subjects (or subject clusters) to be taught are Korean Language, Social Studies (including History)/Moral Education, Mathematics, Science/Technology, Home Economics/Informatics, Physical Education, Arts (Music/Art), English, and Elective Subjects. Some elective courses include classical Chinese, Environmental Education, Daily Foreign Languages (German, French, Spanish, Chinese, Japanese, Russian, Arabic, and Vietnamese), Health Education, and Career and occupations. Creative Experiential Activities include discretionary activities, club activities, community services, and career-related activities (MoE, 2015).

One instructional hour consists of forty-five minutes of teaching. The total number of instructional hours over three years, based on 34 weeks of instruction per year, represents the time allotment for each subject or subject cluster. This total teaching time is the bare minimum required for three years. The standard instructional hours allocated for informatics are 34 (MoE, 2015).

High School

The high school curriculum comprises subjects (or academic groups) and Creative Experiential Activities. Both general and niche disciplines are covered in the curriculum. The four categories of general subjects are Foundation, Inquiry, Physical Education/Arts, and Life/Liberal Arts. Korean language, mathematics, English, Korean history, social studies (including history/moral education), physical education, arts, technology/home economics, foreign language, classical Chinese, and liberal arts are among the subjects (or topic clusters) offered. Korean Language, Math, English, Korean History, Integrated Social Studies, and Integrated Science (including Science Laboratory

Experiments) are among the subjects that are often taught. Both general and elective courses about careers are considered elective courses (MoE, 2015).

Specialised subjects I and II are examples of specialised subjects. The specialised subjects are science, physical education, the arts, foreign languages, and international studies. The National Competency Standards define specified subjects-II as Management/Finance, Public Health/Public Welfare, Design/Cultural Contents, Beauty Treatment/Tourism/Leisure, Food Cooking, Construction, Machinery, Materials, Chemical engineering, Textile/Clothing, Electric/ Electronic, Information/Communications, Food Processing, Printing/Publishing/Crafts, Environment/ Safety, Agriculture/Fishing & Maritime, and Ship Operations. Discretionary, club, volunteer work, and career-related activities are examples of creative experiential activities (MoE, 2015).

Unit Allocation in General High Schools

These include Autonomous High Schools and High Schools for Special Purposes (excluding High Schools Customized to Industrial Needs). Fifty minutes of instruction for 17 classes equals one unit, and fifty minutes make up one instructional hour. Common course units may be lowered by up to two units. However, Korean history must be covered over more than six units and two semesters (MoE, 2015).

Common course units may be lowered by up to two units. High schools with special purposes and autonomous private high schools are encouraged to assign more than five units to the arts subjects (or topic clusters) and more than 12 units to the life/liberal arts. Korean history must cover at least six units and span over two semesters. Science laboratory experiments must be conducted without reducing the predetermined units. However, depending on the school's needs, this course may be flexibly implemented in high schools focusing on science, physical education, and the arts. The total number of units taken for the foundation cannot be more than half of those taken throughout the three years of high school (MoE, 2015).

High School Credit System

The MoE is taking proactive steps to diversify school models to satisfy students' various requirements and strengthen school capacity to guarantee students' freedom of choice in education. One programme is the high school credit system, in which every student chooses and completes courses in line with their aptitudes and career plans. Multiple other schools can create a collaborative curriculum that is taught online or in person if the school cannot offer the courses. With the full adoption of the high school credit system in 2025, personalised education for individual students will be further emphasised (MoE, 2023).

Public Online Schools

For the stable high school credit system implementation, the MoE, working with the Metropolitan and Provincial Offices of Education, intends to construct public online schools beginning with four regions. All interested students may now enrol in relevant courses online at a new institution offering autonomous studies (MoE, 2023).

Teaching Learning

Korea requires the subject-area achievement standards to be followed in teaching and learning. The teaching-learning process should assist students in achieving genuine understandings of big ideas and key concepts in subjects, avoid rote memorisation of discrete knowledge, strengthen the spectrum and extent of big ideas and key concepts, and develop integrative thinking abilities. Teaching-learning should encourage students to participate in class and express their opinions actively; allow them to apply what they learn in the classroom to real-world situations; and promote self-directed learning by giving them plenty of opportunities 'to solve problems collaboratively in small groups in addition to individual learning' (MoE, 2015). The Ministry also specified learning environment attributes, like a collaboration between students and teachers and among students, student-centred learning with provisions for adaptive learning with supplemental services to prevent academic inadequacies, and security against accidents when students utilise apparatus, tools, machines, and chemicals during experiments or hands-on training.

Teaching-learning is technology integrated into Korean schools. According to the 2018 TALIS (Survey), 53 per cent of lower-secondary teachers reported that they regularly or always allowed students to use ICT for projects or class work. More than half (59%) of the teachers reported using ICT for instruction. The majority (71 per cent) of teachers believed they could promote student learning through the use of digital technology (such as computers, tablets, and smart boards) 'quite a bit' or 'a lot' (OECD, 2020).

The MoE intends that by 2025, paper-based textbooks will increasingly give way to AI-driven courseware (like digital textbooks). The Edutech Promotion Plan will be developed, and testbeds for AI, VR, and AR for problem-solving in schools will be expanded. The EdutechSoftlab, currently in Gyeonggi, Gwangju, and Daegu, will spread nationwide. To help schools strengthen their capabilities, Korea plans to alter classroom curriculum and increase school autonomy dramatically.

Classroom Innovation Plan that encourages project—and debate-based classes and lessons using AI and Edutech. These classroom changes will also influence evaluations along with teacher training programmes to aid teachers in better adjusting to new techniques (MoE, 2023).

There are currently 134 types of digital textbooks encompassing social studies, science, and English for pupils in elementary school (grades 3–6), middle school (grades 1–3), and high school (English) (Kim & Yu, 2019). The Korean government has improved 'wireless network connections and providing teacher training in digital pedagogy' to strengthen its digital learning infrastructure. The government would install GiGAWiFi networks in 380,000 elementary, middle, and high school classrooms (MoE, 2021).

In the 2022 Revised Curriculum, the government created the AI Education Content Criteria 2021 to promote AI-related courses for elementary, middle, and high school classes.

Math Explorers, a math assistance programme for primary school pupils, is the first instance of AI utilised in education. Since then, more AI-based educational technologies have been implemented, including Book Fruits, a reading assistance program used in conjunction with the 'One Book per Semester' initiative, and an AI-based English speaking practice system for children in 3-6 grades. Since September 2020, over 1,000 in-service teachers have been chosen to enrol in the master's programme at graduate schools of education and become specialists in AI convergence education (MoE, 2021).

Learning Assessment

In Korea, schools create assessment plans based on their yearly educational plans. The plans include testing periods, subjects, criteria for grading, and how results will be reported. Teachers grade essay-style and descriptive answer questions; the grading results are reviewed to ensure fairness. Assessment results are recorded in students' school records, determining student placement and eligibility for admission to certain schools. Metropolitan and Provincial offices diagnose learning problems and assess teaching-learning processes. Primary and middle school students take the Subject Learning Diagnostic Test to assess their academic success levels and receive appropriate education to develop fundamental academic skills. As a standardised evaluation tool that enhances school assessment practice, it is also meant to be utilised in this manner (Kim et al., 2010, cited in Ra et al., 2019).

Korea emphasises helping students reflect and raise their level of learning. To ensure consistency between teaching and assessment, emphases are on the alignment of content and skills with achievement criteria, all students meeting the learning objectives through assessing both the learning process and results, ensuring fair assessments of students' emotional and cognitive skills, using discipline appropriate assessment rubrics and methods; using various types of assessment tools; implementing criteria referenced school-based evaluation; and using competency units in practicum (MoE, 2015).

Student assessments are conducted at the national, regional, and school levels. National initiatives focus on improving education quality and effectiveness. Since 1998, the annual National Assessment of Educational Achievement (NAEA) has enabled tracking and enhancing student performance and school systems. The PISA and TIMSS results indicate that Korea is one of the top-performing countries.

The NAEA constructs academic achievement assessments for the Korean language, social studies, mathematics, science, and English. Based on their performance on the NAEA tests, students are divided into four accomplishment levels for each topic: advanced, proficient, basic, and below-basic. In addition, school progress indexes based on NAEA results have been created to monitor the annual growth in academic attainment at each school level (Kim et al., 2010, as cited in Ra et al., 2019).

The evaluation system uses exams and oral presentations; peer evaluations and group discussions receive the least preference. Performance assessment types were preferred in secondary courses less often than elementary classes. Teachers chose standardised tests because they provided accurate and measurable marks on students' comprehension and knowledge (Kim et al., 2020).

Maths teachers in Korea use formative assessment as a diagnostic tool. Based on the initial formative assessment results, teachers assign questions to gauge students' proficiency in answering supplementary or advanced process problems. The 7th-grade curriculum strongly emphasises students' aptitude and is student-centred (Abdullah et al., 2020).

Health and Physical Education

Students are required to study health and physical fitness from kindergarten through grade 10; in grades 11 and 12, they can take it as an elective. (Lee & Cho, 2014). The Korea Institute of Curriculum and Evaluation (KICE) in 2018, as reported by Hankyoreh on September 13, 2022, 'PE classes start in the third year of elementary school in South Korea' (Kang-su, 2022).

Due to the heavy emphasis on academic performance linked to college entrance, physical and health education does not receive the emphasis and recognition it deserves; adolescent students are addicted to the internet (Schwartzman, 2012). Lee and Cho (2014) reported that very few students attend physical education classes daily. The participation ranges from about 2 per cent in secondary to 8 per cent in middle and less than 4 per cent in elementary grades. In senior grades, where it is elective, students skip physical education.

PE instructors train students in the same sports as soccer and basketball; also, they are demotivated due to the unfriendly environment for health and physical education (Cho et al., 2023). Teachers also allow students to use the physical education time for academic studies.

Many students are physically inactive and unfit daily (MoE, 2021). The MoE reported that in 2022, 16.6% of students who took the physical test scored in the lowest two tiers of the Physical Activity Promotion System (PAPS) (Jung-Woo & Yoon, 2023).

The Korean government is aware of and concerned about this issue. While several initiatives have been taken to reduce cognitive load and stress, the Korean National Curriculum for Physical Education (KNCPE) has been reformed several times to make it more effective (Lee & Cho, 2014).

The 6th-grade students demonstrated increased proficiency in seeking and disseminating health information. Their participation in the Empowered, Active, Doer (LEAD) Programme project led them to expand their physical activity beyond regular physical education classes (Baek & Lee, 2019). According to the '2016 School Sports Club Activities Satisfaction Survey' (MoE, 2016), the satisfaction rate among participating students exceeded 80%, with students reporting positive personality changes and enhanced peer relationships. Lee et al. (2023) reported from their study on playfulness, physical self-efficacy, and school happiness that the '0th-period physical education class' had a significant effect on physical self-efficacy.

Jung-Woo and Yoon (2023) reported that the MoE has increased physical education hours in lower and middle grades, including PE in 'pleasant life' subjects and music and art. Further, the students will be required to take ten credits of PE classes starting in 2025.

Skills Education

Vocational education, which develops skills among students to meet market needs, is duly emphasised in Korea (MoE, 2015). To better prepare students with the skills needed in the world of work, the curriculum of specialised vocational high schools is being restructured. As per the government press release, the 2022 Revised National Curriculum for Primary, secondary and Special Schools, Labour Rights and Occupational Safety, and Digital and Vocational Life are included in addition to the already successful vocational life. Newly established base courses include Software, Chemistry (Bio), Energy, Firefighting, Smart City and Smart Factory, the prime areas in vocational education.

As of April 2021, 16.86% of all high school students were enrolled in vocational programmes at 583 high schools or roughly 24.54% of all high schools. Vocational high schools 'focus on providing practical education and training opportunities to ensure their students are job-ready after graduation' (MoE, 2021, p. 31). They provide programmes in 17 subject areas, including business management, finance, mechanics, agriculture, fishery, and marine life. For instance, 100 schools have had departments reorganised annually since 2016 in response to changes in the industrial structure.

In 2010, a vocational high school called Meister Schools was established, inspired by the German system for training master craftspeople. This initiative aimed to enhance the attractiveness and recognition of vocational education among young Koreans (Jones, 2013). Meister schools emphasise learning market demand-driven specific trades and crafts. The Korean government provides full scholarships for students attending Meister schools. These schools have enhanced the status of vocational education (OECD, 2016). Meister Schools' autonomy to adapt its curriculum to industry needs is key to its success. The quality of education is comparable to that of junior colleges (Hahm, 2014). Due to their success, Korea expanded the Meister Schools network from 21 schools in 2010 to 40 schools in 2015, with plans to increase the number to 50 schools.

By establishing a collaborative curriculum with specialised high schools and sharing resources like equipment and infrastructure, Meister High Schools' best practices will, on the one hand, be introduced to local schools. On the other hand, joint training centres for cutting-edge technologies will be constructed at the Metropolitan and Provincial Offices of Education level to establish an environment for vocational education that promotes talents in cutting-edge domains with a digital foundation. Vocational Education Innovation Zones has established its curriculum to tap the potential of school students to meet the demands of local industries and escalate their development (MoE, 2023).

In Korea, 18% of all upper-secondary students choose VET programmes; 44% of upper-secondary vocational graduates get engineering, manufacturing, and construction certificates. All upper secondary vocational students in Korea are enrolled in programmes that allow direct entry into higher education.

Korea has made significant efforts to train Koreans to lead the future. Nonetheless, the stigma associated with vocational education will take a long time to eradicate (Teng, 2023).

Moral, Social and Cultural Education

Moral character building finds an important place in Korean education – "to improve human rights education in the school system through a strong moral education, helping children and young people to acquire a set of beliefs and values regarding right and wrong. These beliefs guide their intentions, attitudes and behaviours towards others and their environment" (Lee, 2000, p.11).

The moral education curriculum for 3-6 grade students strongly emphasises internalising fundamental moral habits. The primary objective shifts towards fostering a deeper comprehension of moral values and norms, moral thinking, and judgement abilities during the 7-10 grades. In the 11th and 12th grades, students study Ethics in Modern Life, Ethics and Thought, and Traditional

Ethics. The curriculum integrates a range of positive constructs, including honesty, care, unity, peace, love for one's country and fellow citizens, affection, and appreciation for nature.

MoE (2017) promoted several programmes, such as Happy Trip with Character GPS (a Game-play story), Building and Living in a Harmonious Community, and the Empathy Class for Parents and Children.

Korea is a homogeneous society with 99 per cent Koreans. Despite its homogeneity, the relevance of multicultural education has been necessitated due to Korean aspiration to be globally competitive and "*Multicultural education in Korea, as a solution to minority disintegration and underachievement in schooling, thus has served as a reform movement in education for students from multicultural families*" (Jahng & Lee, 2013, p. 295).

MoE (2015) recommended:

- "Provide support for returnees from overseas and students with multicultural backgrounds;

- In the case of implementing classrooms for students with multicultural backgrounds, schools may adjust this curriculum or adopt a Korean as a Second Language curriculum;

- The following cross-curricular themes should be incorporated into the entire educational program, including Multicultural Education;

- Further, as a sound preparation, German, French, Spanish, Chinese, Japanese, Russian, Arabic, and Vietnamese education has been introduced under Daily Foreign Languages in middle schools and foreign languages in high schools" (MoE, 2015, p.32).

However, Kim and Kim (2012) found that even after several years, multicultural students are generally excluded from Korean schools. There were gaps between school practices and government policies on multicultural education (Kim, 2020).

Hobby and Life Skills Education

Hobby development is not an agenda of Korean education, though there are enough opportunities for hobby development through co-curricular activities. The National Curriculum for Primary and Secondary Schools (2015) introduced various subjects, including Design/Cultural Content, Beauty Treatment/Tourism/Leisure, Cooking, Textile/Clothing, Crafts, and others. Then, there are various forms of creative Experiential Activities, such as discretionary activities, club activities, community services, and career-related activities, such as school sports club activities.

In 2020, the MoE initiated the School Space Innovation Project to achieve a harmonious balance between learning, recreation, and leisure within educational institutions.

The National Curriculum for Primary and Secondary Schools (2015) outlines a set of specific competencies and skills intended to be fostered throughout the educational journey.

- "Self-management skills to lead one's life with self-identity and confidence based on basic abilities and qualifications necessary for life and career.
- Knowledge-information processing skills to utilise knowledge and information from diverse fields to solve problems.
- Creative thinking skills to discover something novel by integrating knowledge, skills, and experiences from diverse professional fields based on broad foundational knowledge.
- Aesthetic-emotional skills to find and appreciate the meanings and values of life based on an empathetic understanding of others and cultural sensitivities.
- Communication skills to respectfully listen to the opinions of others and effectively express one's thoughts and feelings in diverse situations.
- Civic competency skills to actively participate in improving the community with values and attitudes required to be a member of local, national, and global communities" (Park, 2021, p. 33).

There are, however, policy gaps. The revised national curriculum of 2015 and 2022 has emphasised digital competencies significantly while overlooking the significance of other essential soft skills in everyday life. A life skills-based sexuality education program was developed to help increase sexuality education and interpersonal skills among adolescent learners in elementary schools (Lee & Lee, 2019). Substantial correlations were found between autonomy, competence, and relatedness; life skills; and subjective well-being. Life skills mediated the three fundamental psychological requirements and subjective well-being. A key step in this direction is the expansion of positive youth development. In contrast to competence and relatedness, which heavily relied on the culture and ethnicity of that society, autonomy fostered life skills differently (Bae et al., 2021).

Peace and Happiness Education

Despite being one of the few nations in the world where the 'right to pursue happiness' is included in the Constitution, the OECD (2013) reported Korea to have the most significant proportion of unhappy schoolchildren. The nation's educational achievements have had severe adverse consequences on the well-being and mental health of students due to intense competition, long study hours, and high suicide rates (Sellar et al., 2017; Waldow et al., 2014). The government implemented the Peace and Happiness Education policy, Nuri curriculum, Free Semester without

conventional lectures and paper-pencil tests, student clubs, character education, a STEAM-based curriculum (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics), software education, physical education, violence-free school environments, students' career planning, the development of regional universities, and the fostering of a meritocratic society, and many more.

The relationship between education fever and happiness is irrelevant when considering the detrimental effects of education fever on Koreans who did not achieve good academic standing or higher socioeconomic positions in Korean society (Lee, 2017).

Summary and Conclusion

Though faced with criticism, the emphasis on academic attainment and competitiveness improved literacy rates and overall academic achievements, including in PISA and TALIS. The focus, discipline, and diligence fostered an intense competition with increased stress and mental health challenges among students. Park and Chung (2013) revealed a positive correlation between academic stress and school violence with the prevalence of depression, as well as the occurrence of suicidal ideation, planning, and attempts among Korean adolescents (as cited in Donnelly et al., 2023).

There is a correlation between factors such as school size, student-teacher ratio, academic achievements, and the dropout rate in Korea (Kim et al., 2018). The prevalence of private tutoring and its accompanying financial implications for families have contributed to the perpetuation of educational inequality. Furthermore, the exclusive emphasis on academic excellence overlooks the significance of nurturing creativity, critical thinking, and holistic growth.

The Korean government has implemented various modifications to promote inclusivity and diversity within the curriculum, including introducing the Nuri Curriculum at the preschool level.

Nine years of education, 6 to 15, is mandatory in Korea. Once students reach high school and beyond, they can select an educational trajectory that aligns with their intended career path. A diverse range of vocational courses are provided to suit students' abilities and interests.

The Korean education places significant emphasis on digital competencies. Educators are increasingly incorporating AI-based textbooks and smart classrooms. Standardised and non-standardised tests are utilised in teaching, learning, and assessment. However, relying on standardised tests has compelled students to conform to international benchmarks.

Health and physical education are curriculum components, though researchers found the scope of health and physical education is relatively narrow, primarily focusing on physical exercise. The revised curriculum (2022) places importance on art education.

To familiarise international students with Korean culture, the Korean government support research on Korean Studies with scholarships. In response to the detrimental impact of the pandemic on the psychological, social, and academic well-being of students, the Korean government implemented the Comprehensive Plan for Recovery of Education in July 2021. Such response-driven educational reform in Korea strongly connects to the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

To address the issue of school violence in Korean educational institutions and foster peace education, the Korean government initiated the Comprehensive Plan to Eradicate School Violence in 2023.

Korea has done well; multiple student assessment organisations have duly validated it. However, the Korean education system raises several humanitarian issues. Though Korean students consistently rank high on the PISA and other tests, they experience significant cognitive burdens. The development of the affective domain tends to be overlooked. There has been limited implementation of specific measures to enhance students' mental well-being.

The scope of physical education is often confined to a narrow focus on physical exercise and the development of physical strength. Implementing initiatives such as 'one sport for one student' in schools has been observed to cater primarily to students who do not excel academically. This segregates students into academic achievers facing continuous performance pressure and those who do not, who are overlooked and receive inadequate support for improving academic performance.

Systematic changes within the education system must be implemented, considering various parameters contributing to the child's holistic development. Nevertheless, whether the Korean government is willing to emphasise all these parameters equally continues.

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The crisis is equating schooling with education and education with cognitive development alone. Bloom's cognitive taxonomy is widely referred to and adopted, yet the affective and psychomotor domain taxonomies are not. The SOLO Taxonomy (Biggs & Collis, 1982), David Merrill's Component Display Theory (Merrill, 1983), Gagne's Eight Conditions of Learning, Bloom's revised taxonomy (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001), and Robert Kozma's four-tier Knowledge Ladder, which comprises primary education, acquiring, deepening, and creating knowledge, emphasise cognition and higher-order cognition. (Mukhopadhyay, et al., 2025)

19

Bridging Tradition and Modernity: Thailand

Mrinal Mukherjee

Abstract

Thailand is the South East Asian country with the 20th largest population. The Ministry of Education is the authority for school and vocational education. Major policy reforms include the National Education Plan 2002-2016 and the 'Long-Term Policy and Strategy' for ECE -2007–2016. Mandatory free education for 15 years was introduced in 2009. Twelve Thai Values and military education was introduced in 2014, and the National Scheme of Education -2017- 2036. The 'Education Sandbox Act' was introduced in 2019. A specific credit structure and assessment framework for mainstream and vocational education in school focuses on moral, social and cultural education. Thai school education still faces challenges regarding quality issues about learning outcomes and performances of the OECD and ASEAN average. Teacher's qualifications were standardised but lacked the requisite skills, impacting the quality of school education.

Keywords: National Education Plan 2002-2016, ECE -2007–2016, Education Sandbox Act, Vocational Education, National Reform Council, Thai Values

Introduction

Thailand, a constitutional monarchy and a unitary country, is a land of diverse regions. It shares borders with Burma to the west and north, Laos and Cambodia to the east, and the Gulf of Thailand to the south. Peninsular Thailand extends south and borders Malaysia, the Andaman Sea, and the Gulf of Thailand. The country covers 513,115 km2 (Khedari et al., 2002) and has a total coastline of 3,219 km (World Data.info, 2024).

The country is divided into four regions—northern, southern, northeastern, and central, each with its unique characteristics further subdivided into 75 provinces (changwat) and two special regions - the bustling Bangkok metropolitan area and the vibrant Pattaya (Shsir-Rosenfield, 2020). Bangkok, located in the country's most developed and heavily populated Central area (Arnold et

al., 1977), is a melting pot of cultures and influences. Thailand has tropical monsoon and savannah climates. Tropical cyclones rain heavily in August and October (Khedari et al., 2002).

Thailand, the 20th largest population nation, is home to 72 million people (Prasartkul et al., 2019), with a gender ratio of 98 males per 100 females. The population growth rate was 0.2% in 2021, and the life expectancy for Thailand in 2024 is 77.92 years. Ethnically, Thailand is relatively homogeneous – 97.5% are 'Thais', 1.5% are Burmese, and all others account for only 1% of the population. According to UNPFA (2024), 15% of the population is under 15, 68% is 15-64, and 17% is older than 65. However, Thailand faces significant demographic challenges due to a dramatic fall in birth rates and a growing ageing population. These trends necessitate changes in demographic policies, including fertility, retirement age, and labour force participation (Prasartkul et al., 2019).

Thailand's economy is a beacon of stability in the region, classified as an upper-middle-income country. With an estimated GDP of USD 548.89 billion in 2024 and a per capita GDP of USD 7810, the country's economy is stable and on a steady growth trajectory, with a growth rate of 2.7% (IMF, 2024). This steady growth and structural improvements have created millions of employment opportunities and helped reduce poverty from 58% in 1990 to 6.8% in 2020. The current unemployment rate is a mere 1.1% (IMF, 2024). Thailand's HDI is 0.803, which is high, ranking 66th worldwide (UNDP, 2024). Its Global Happiness rank is 58th (Helliwell et al., 2024).

Thailand's adult literacy rate, as reported by UNESCO in 2021, is 94.1%. The literacy rate for males is 95.5%, while for females, it is 92.8% (Countryeconomy, n.d.). As of 2023, the GER in primary education is 99.68% for both genders combined and 108.13% in upper secondary education. In Thailand, The NER in primary grades is 97.70% and 97.75 in upper secondary education (UNESCO-UIS, 2024). The student transition rate to secondary school is 97% (Education Policy and Data Center, 2018). In the 2022 academic year, there were about 12.64 million students in Thailand. During the same time, the country had around 801,000 teachers and 37,520 schools (Statista Research Department, 2024).

Educational Policy

Since May 2019, the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research, and Innovation (MHESI) has been overseeing higher education, while the Ministry of Education (MOE) has been the authority over school and vocational education, and the 20th century witnessed significant transformations in education policy. In the last two decades, several planning documents from the Thai government have effectively highlighted the importance of implementing new and ambitious educational priorities (MoE, 1996; ONEC, 1998a, both cited in Hallinger et al., 2000).

Policymakers and educators urgently need to implement educational innovations that foster economic competitiveness and national culture preservation (Hallinger et al., 2000).

The current national educational objectives emphasise the development of technological competencies, effective communication, collaborative cooperation, practical application of English language skills, social consciousness, and cultivating a lifelong learning mindset (MoE, 1996; ONEC, 1998a).

The MoE oversees educational policy formulation in Thailand through the Office of the National Education Commission and the National Economic and Social Development Board. In 1996, the MoE implemented the Educational Reform for Thailand and the Basic and Occupational Education and Training (BOET) projects. The primary objective was ensuring universal access to 12 years of free education for every student (ONEC, 1998b).

Thailand is committed to fulfilling the right to education for all children, as required by different laws and regulations. The 1999 Education Act (ONEC, 1999) guaranteed quality education for all students without discrimination. Following the 1999 National Education Act, the 2002-2016 National Education Plan promoted equity and quality in education and improved the quality of life of Thai citizens.

The National Education Act B.E. 2542 (1999) and Amendments (Second National Education Act B.E. 2545 (2002) classify education as formal, non-formal, and informal, with primary and higher education levels (Office of the National Education Commission, 2003). Educational criteria and a quality assurance system must be developed. Nine years of Basic Education comprising six years of elementary and three years of lower secondary education is free and compulsory in public schools. Further, three years of preschool and upper secondary education are free but not mandatory (Michael, 2018).

In 2010, Thailand adopted UNICEF-supported Early Childhood Learning Development Standards (ELDS) to measure children's knowledge and activity levels from 0 to 5. The 2014-2015 Global Competitiveness Report reveals that Thailand struggles to compete regionally and globally. Thailand has strong primary education enrollment; however, its education system is ranked lower than most ASEAN nations (Schwab, 2014).

In 2017, Thailand's prime leader, Prayut Chan-o-cha, claimed that school reform was urgently needed (The Economist, 2017). After the May 2014 military coup, Prayut ordered schools to display twelve *Thai values* (Khaosod English, 2015). In addition, the military administration established a *land defender battalion* scheme to educate uniformed four- and five-year-olds to exercise. In this initiative, military personnel demonstrated military activities to children and instructed them on 12 values related to patriotism, including love for the country, religions, and the Thai monarchy.

By Section 27 of the 2014 Interim Constitution, the National Reform Council proposed improvements in 11 domains. Therefore, education reform must be constructive (Office of the Education Council, 2017). Major reforms include:

a. Learning reform to fix academic class hours to make learning fun.
b. Decentralising administrative and educational management
c. Reforming teachers and educational personnel to address contemporary challenges.
d. Educational opportunity and quality reform.
e. Workforce production to boost competitiveness
f. ICT infrastructure reform for better teaching and learning management

Since 2016, the MoE's National Scheme of Education B.E. 2560-2579 (2017-2036) outlines a long-term plan for efficient education and administration to ensure equal educational opportunities, enhance quality and standards, encourage education for forthcoming careers that align with the economy and innovation-driven society, and establish a supportive learning environment.

The Education Sandbox Act[12], which became effective on April 30, 2019, aims to ensure quality education. In this context, the reformation of educational administration focuses on enhancing effective learning through the evolution of concepts, methods, processes, teaching materials, and new management approaches.

The budgetary emphasis on education reflects substantial and consistent financial investments in Thailand's education system. Over the past decade, Thailand has consistently allocated 20% of the government budget to education (Vandeweyer et al., 2021). The NESD Plan 9 (2002-2006) prioritised enhancing the number of vocationally skilled workers. The government launched an incentive programme like the Income Contingency Loan (ICL) to fund higher and vocational education students for study, but the impact was not impressive. The tenth NESD plan (2007-2011) acknowledged that the nation's labour force lacked the necessary quantity and quality due to shortcomings in the vocational education system (Government of Thailand, n.d.)

The major policy initiatives for the 21st century are:

1. The 1999 Education Act
2. *Second National Education Act B.E. 2545 (2002), which is an Amendments* The 1999 Education Act
3. National Education Plan -2002-2016
4. Pre-primary education was introduced in 2004 and became free of charge in 2009.

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[12] The Education Sandbox is an innovative concept with a focus on reform of the way the government undertakes reforms. Similarly, "the government should create an education sandbox to answer the urgent demand for quality education with innovative and evidence-based policy" (Pittayapongsakorn, 2018, Para 14).

5. Cabinet declaration in 2005 reaffirmed the right to education for all children, including non-Thai children living in the land of Thailand –a journey towards greater inclusivity.

6. MoE, Thailand. Long-Term Policy and Strategy for Early Childhood Care and Development (0-5 Age Group) 2007–2016

7. MoE declaration regarding extending mandatory free education from 12 to 15 years in 2009.

8. Adoption of Early Childhood Learning Development Standards (ELDS) with the support of the UNICEF in 2010

9. Under the MoE, the National Reform Council proposed reforms in 11 fields in 2014 that emphatically highlighted '12 -Thai Values' and the introduction of military education.

10. MoE, National Scheme of Education B.E. 2560-2579 (2017- 2036) published in 2016

11. Education Sandbox Act, 2019

12. Like other SEA countries, Thailand also responded in affirmation to adapt online, digital hybrid learning with appropriate technology in navigating the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Structure of the Education System

The Thai MoE guides and regulates preschool to senior high school education. Free basic education for 15 years is a constitutional commitment (UNICEF, 2023). State schools offer two years of kindergarten (ANUBAN) for 3–4-year-olds and one year of preschool for 5-year-olds. Nearly everyone attends pre-primary school. Six-year-olds start basic education. The constitution recognised alternative education and family as educational institutions. The 2004 Ministerial Regulation No. 3 on the right to basic education by the family covers homeschooling. Homeschoolers must be assessed annually before applying (Engchun et al., 2018).

The basic education system of Thailand includes six years of elementary school (Prathom I to Prathom VI) for 6–11-year-olds and three years of lower secondary (Mattayom I to Mattayom III). Public schools are free through grade 9 (Figure 19.1).

Elementary school sessions last seven hours daily and up to 1,000 hours yearly. Three upper secondary schools - general, vocational, and comprehensive - offer academic and vocational programmes. There is a provision for three years of free upper-secondary education, including general and vocational streams, in the vernacular language Mattayom IV to Mattayom VI for 15–17-year-olds, but this is optional. After nine years of compulsory basic education, academic students usually want to go to universities, while vocational students work or study higher vocational courses.

Basic Education		Stage	Legal Status	Grade/levels		Age
B A S I C E D U C A T I O N	**F R E E E D U C A T I O N**	**EARLY CHILDHOOD (KINDERGARTEN)**	OPTIONAL	Variable in nature in region to region but for 2 years it is typically ANUBAN and then pre-school studies.		3
						4
						5
		ELEMENTARY	COMPULSORY	Prathom-I		6
				Prathom-II		7
				Prathom-III		8
				Prathom-IV		9
				Prathom-V		10
				Prathom-VI		11
		LOWER SECONDARY	COMPULSORY	Mattayom-I		12
				Mattayom-II		13
				Mattayom-III		14
		UPPER/SENIOR SECONDARY	OPTIONAL	**GENERAL**	**VOCATIONAL**	15
				Mattayom-IV	Vocational certification of 3-Years programme (LOWER VOCATIONAL PROGRAM)	
				Mattayom-V		16
				Mattayom-VI		17

Figure 19.1 Structure of the Education System in Thailand
Source: OECD/UNESCO, 2016

The government funds public schools. Non-public schools are of two categories: private schools run for profit and fee-paying non-profit schools. Charitable organisations, mainly Catholic diocesan and other religious organisations, run non-profit elementary and secondary schools (Chanupakara, 2013). Sub-district schools in rural areas provide preschool, kindergarten, and elementary classes, while urban district town schools offer all classes from kindergarten to age 15 and separate secondary schools for ages 13–18. According to recent trends, at least 75% of primary school students move on to upper secondary at 16–18 (OECD/UNESCO, 2016).

Curricular Framework

The MoE began testing the Basic Education Curriculum 2001 in pilot and network schools in 2002. "Consequently, the Office of the Basic Education Commission (OBEC), under close supervision of the Basic Education Commission Board, revised the Basic Education Curriculum 2001 in order to prepare the subsequent Basic Education Core Curriculum 2008" (MoE, 2008, Preface), which encompasses essential disciplines such as Thai language, science, mathematics, social studies, religion and culture, health and physical education, arts, careers and technology, and foreign languages (MoE, 2008). "Thailand shifted its content-based curriculum to a modern standards-based approach describing what students should know and be able to do in each subject. The new curriculum is intended to support more learner-centred teaching strategies rather than focus on information retention" (OECD/UNESCO, 2016, p. 15).

In doing so, OBEC benefited from the outcomes of the studies and the data and information provided in the Tenth National Economic and Social Development Plan (2007-2011).

Preschool Education

The MoE has adopted the Long-Term Policy and Strategy for Early Childhood Care and Development (0-5 Age Group) 2007–2016 as a comprehensive framework and an integral part of Thai children's early childhood development. Thailand offers non-compulsory preschool for children aged 3–6. Early childhood development institutions include daycare centres, child development centres, initial care centres for disabled or special needs children, and religious or other agencies' early childhood development centres.

The Ministry of Public Health, Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, and Thai Health Promotion Foundation coordinate with The Office of the Education Council. Further, "the National Strategic Plan for Early Childhood Development (Newborn to Pre-First Graders) by the Government Policy 2012–2016 which includes the following strategies:

Strategy 1: Essential services for the development of the full potential of all children;
Strategy 2: Iodine and early childhood development;
Strategy 3: Early childhood rearing; and
Strategy 4: Mechanisms for early childhood development" (Office of the Education Council, 2017, p. 89)

The curriculum covers:

1. Two stages of preschool education: 0-3 and 3-5 years of age.
2. Morality and ethics linked with religion are included as core components.
3. Health Education.
4. Learning through the mother language.
5. Learning through activity and play in the classroom and outdoor engagement.

Coordinating different agencies is essential to managing and monitoring early childhood education. Apart from engagement with play and outdoor activities, health education with food supplements and medication is also promoted through such curriculum. The Private Education Commission and local administration wings have been engaged to monitor this program to ensure the targeted national childhood education standard.

Compulsory Primary and Lower Secondary Education

Six primary and three years of lower secondary education is compulsory. The Office of the Basic Education Commission published the Basic Education Curriculum Framework to develop students' essential abilities to their fullest potential (OBEC, 2021). "There are 11 essential components: (1) Fundamentals of curriculum development; (2) Vision; (3) Curriculum principles; (4) Curriculum Objectives; (5) Desirable characteristics; (6) Six core competencies and ten competency levels; (7) Learning areas; (8) Relationship between core competencies with the content of seven learning areas (in the 1st-grade level); (9) the structure of the study time; (10) the learning management approach and assessment; and (11) curriculum management guidelines. The six key competencies are self-management, higher-order thinking, communication, collaboration and teamwork, active citizenship, and sustainability with nature and science" (Sripa, 2022, p. 188).

Thai, English, mathematics, arts, health and physical education, social studies, and science and natural systems are Level 1 subjects. This core curriculum started in 2009 for selected grades and was gradually implemented for all grades from 2012.

At age six, children enter elementary school and take eight courses. English is taught countrywide from grade one, even though Thai is the primary language of instruction. The Certificate of Primary Education is awarded after sixth grade. Students must finish primary school to attend secondary school. School starts at 8 a.m. and ends at 4 p.m. However, each school can determine its hours.

Optional Upper Secondary Education

The fundamental track curriculum includes essential courses, compulsory elective courses, a selection of elective courses, and extracurricular activities. Each subject allows students to earn specific credits (Table 19.1). Since 2012, students have been required to attain 41 credits for the core subjects. Upon completing the sixth year, students receive the Certificate of Secondary Education or Matayom 6 (M6) after passing the final exam O-NET (Michael, 2018).

Thailand has also developed a system of non-formal education that is more flexible than the traditional school system. These schools are more open to adapting to the needs of the students. As a pattern, it has been observed that these non-formal schools take in kids who are not doing well in normal school, letting them finish primary school. This system also organises general and vocational programs for adults with flexibility in the schedule of classes (Michael, 2018).

Table 19.1 Credit System for Upper Secondary Education

Subjects	Credits	Accumulated Credits
Thai language, mathematics, natural sciences, and foreign languages;	4×6	24
art, health and physical education, career and technology	3×3	09
Social studies, religion and culture.	4×2	08
Additional subjects		36 or 41
Total		77 or 82

Source: Michael, 2018

Vocational Education

Vocational education was first prioritised in Thailand in 1898 to adapt the effective practice of trade and agricultural skills. Three major key policy issues on vocational education discussed between 1992 and 2014 were (1) "increasing the vocationally skilled workforce, (2) the role of private vocational providers, and (3) collaboration between vocational providers and industry" (Chalapati & Chalapati, 2019, p.1).

The Vocational Education Commission manages vocational institutions. Students may opt for Technical and Vocational Education (TVE) at the senior high school level (Chalapati & Chalapati, 2019). Less than forty per cent of students get admitted to TVE (Office of the Vocational Education Commission, 2017). TVE has a three-level curricular structure (Table 19.2).

Table 19.2 The Curricular Structure of Technical and Vocational Education

Programme	Level
The Certificate in Vocational Education (*Por Wor Chor*)	Upper secondary
The Technical Diploma (*Por Wor Sor*)	After school-leaving age
The Higher Diploma	University Bachelor's degree

Source: Author

Dual Vocational Training (DVT) is a response to the shortage of skilled labour in Thai industries. In collaboration with Germany, DVT was introduced "to bring about structural change by training organisations and developing occupational skills to make the initial vocational education practice-oriented and relevant to the needs of companies" (German Cooperation, 2019, Para 1). DVT *certificate* and *diploma* programmes spend more than half the semester on practical training on the job. The three-year certificate level for skilled workers is for 15-year-olds who have completed Matthayom 3 (Grade 9), and the two-year diploma technician level is for 12th-graders with the Certificate of Vocational Education.

Teaching Learning

Thailand has a diverse culture, history, and religion. Buddhist, Indian, and Western traditions shape Thai education. The government has consistently tried to improve teaching and learning to satisfy society's needs and ongoing global demands. To modernise and globalise Thai education, the 1999 National Education Act restructured and decentralised educational administration to promote student-centred learning, lifelong learning, and quality assurance (Rukspollmuang & Fry, 2022).

Teaching pedagogy prioritises students' needs, interests, abilities, and preferences over the curriculum. Thus, constructivist learning encourages students to take more responsibility for learning, explore their inquiries and problems, collaborate with peers, and reflect on their progress and outcomes. The pedagogy incorporates project-based, inquiry-based, cooperative, problem-based, and experiential learning through field trips, simulations, role-playing, games, and service learning. Teachers utilise autonomy-support and controlling methods to motivate and improve learning (Vibulphol, 2016).

Thailand focuses on preparing learners for the 4.0 digital economy (Rukspollmuang & Fry, 2022) through innovation, creativity, critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, cooperation, and digital literacy for learning STEM skills (OECD/UNESCO, 2016). Teaching STEM in primary and secondary education can also influence children in the 21st-century workforce, which can satisfy the needs of business and industry in a complex and technology-driven economy (British Council, 2023). Thai education includes alternative schooling. The pedagogical process is also associated with student-centred learning outcomes, the cultivation of 21st-century skills, engagement with the community, and the promotion of environmental awareness. Furthermore, these educational approaches give students greater autonomy and agency in their learning experiences while minimising reliance on traditional evaluation methods such as tests and grades.

To create a knowledge society with a vision of *Smart Thailand* 2011, the Thai government launched the One Tablet Per Child (OTPC) programme to improve education for urban and rural children in compulsory education (Panjaburee & Srisawasdi, 2018). Teachers should build the finest learning activities and innovations to deliver learning materials effectively. Thus, digital technologies are used as a mindtool with unique pedagogical capabilities to turn conventional learning into a creative learning environment where every learner is prioritised with equal learning opportunities (EduBright, 2018). Educational institutions must also build curricula to adapt to national education policy and its required conditions to improve learning outcomes. Ubiquitous learning (Panjaburee & Srisawasdi, 2018), e-learning (Quigley, 2011), blended learning (Wongwuttiwat et al., 2020), and online learning (Talimbekas & Arifani, 2022) are also digital learning methods in Thailand.

Tech-enabled learning peaked during the COVID-19 pandemic. Thai schools implemented online, blended, and e-learning to continue teaching and learning remotely (Talimbekas & Arifani, 2022). DLIT (Digital Learning Innovation Transformation), launched by the MoE, provides access to digital resources and tools for teachers and students, including e-books, e-content, e-assessment, e-library, and online courses and training for teachers to build their ICT skills and pedagogies (UNICEF, 2020).

Learning Assessment

Thailand follows a complex educational assessment system, incorporating various quality assurance and quality control processes to improve the existing assessment methods. In 2008, Thailand introduced a framework for assessment in the Basic Education Core Curriculum (BECC) rooted in the broad expectations for student outcomes in the 1999 National Education Act B.E. 2542 (NEA). The current assessment framework measures the learners' capacity and development at four levels: classroom- continuous assessment, school-annual or semester-based assessment, local level, or educational service area (ESA)-assessment through standard examination paper or instruments, and the national level- conducting national level tests at different grades.

Teachers were given importance in the classroom, school, and local assessment levels. The school-level assessment is continuous and includes formative and summative assessments. The OECD/UNESCO (2016) report mentioned that the BECC provided schools with the authority to make their criteria for students' assessments. Hence, educators play a crucial role in recognising, creating, and implementing evaluation methods in their classrooms according to established standards and criteria. When doing so, they receive support from their schools, local ESA, central organisations, and other entities like the Institute for the Promotion of Teaching Science and Technology (IPST).

The National Institute of Educational Testing Service (NIETS) conducts large-scale national-level assessment tests. NIETS deploys various testing methods incorporating different tools to assess educational standards. Ordinary National Educational Test (O-NET) is administered to every final grade learner of compulsory schooling, like primary level (P6), lower secondary level at Grades 9 (M3), and upper secondary of grade 12 (M6) (NIETS, 2015 cited in OECD/UNESCO, 2016). These tests are conducted as a census, not on any sample. The O-NET results are also part of the teacher evaluations for their career advancement and policy recommendations. NIETS shares its data with the schools, higher authorities, and researchers (e.g., Quality Learning Foundation and the World Bank) who can verify the national performance, find existing lacunae, and analyse the trends in learning outcomes. A few national-level tests have also been conducted regularly by NIEHS (Table 19.3).

Health and Physical Education

The MoE considers health and physical education essential for K -12 students to develop physical and mental well-being. The Thai government reviewed the school curriculum in 1978-79, focusing on five disciplines: character development and physical education. The curriculum reviews were also made in 2001, 2008, and 2011. The 2008 curriculum had a health and physical education element that all learners studied and were assessed. "The learning area of health and physical education includes the following bodies of knowledge:

- Human Growth and Development,
- Life and Family,
- Movement, Physical Exercise, Games, Thai and International Sports,
- Health-Strengthening Capacity and Disease Prevention, and
- Safety in Life" (MoE, 2008, p. 201).

"The Ministry of Education of Thailand also combined student outcomes for health and physical education. These operate differently at each grade level" (Nampai, 2015, p. 26). Eight student outcomes were prescribed for Grades 1-3, and ten outcomes for Grades 4-6 (MoE, 2008).

Ministry of Education mandates and combines physical education and health education. The national curriculum clearly states the maximum class time for physical education/health education per academic year: 80 hours for 1-9 grades and 120 hours for 10-12 grades (MoE, 2008). However, in practice, schools typically provide <60 minutes of physical education/per week (Amornsriwatanakul et al., 2021). Five policies directly or indirectly relate to promoting physical activity in schools. Physical education and standard sports facilities are two policies compulsory for all schools. On the other hand, the active learning policy, the voluntary implementation of sharing school sports facilities with the community after school hours, and the Health Promoting Schools project are all in place (Amornsriwatanakul et al., 2022).

Table 19.3 Different Level Tests

Test Name	Grades	Curriculum	Subjects/ Knowledge Domains
O-NET	6 (P6), 9 (M3), and 12(M6)	Basic Education Core Curriculum B.E 2551 (A.D. 2008)	Thai language, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, Religion and Culture, and Foreign languages
V-NET	3rd year Vocational Certificate (Certificate of Vocational Education: CVE.3) & Higher Vocational Certificate (HVC.2)	Vocational Certificate Curriculum-2002 for the former), & Higher Vocational Certificate Curriculum- 2002 (for the latter).	Fundamental Abilities, Learning Abilities, and Occupational Abilities.
I-NET	Final year of study at primary, lower or upper secondary Islamic education level	Islamic Studies Curriculum B.E. 2546 (A.D. 2003) and Common Core Islamic Studies Curriculum B.E. 2551 (A.D.2008)	Al-Quran Explanations, Words from the Prophet, The Principles of Faith, Religion Commandments, Islamic History, Islamic Ethics, Bahasa Melayu, and Arabic Language
B-NET	Lower Secondary (M3) Education and Upper Secondary Education(M6)	Common Phrapariyattithamma (Monks' School) Curriculum B.E. 2544 (A.D.2001	Buddha's History and Dharma, Vinaya (the rules of conduct governing the daily affairs within the Sangha - the community of ordained monks and ordained nuns.) and Pali Language.
N-NET	Non-Formal Primary Education, Lower Secondary Education, and Upper Secondary Education.	Non-Formal Education curriculum of the year 2008	Learning Skills, Basic Knowledge, Occupations Skills, Life Skills, and Social Development Skills.

Source: NIETS, 2023

Skills Education

The 2008 Basic Education Core Curriculum provides students with essential knowledge and fundamental skills to support their educational and professional development. This curriculum has grouped the knowledge and skills into eight subject areas. The Promotion of Non-Formal and Informal Education Act, 2008 emphasises various aspects, including improving skills among Thai individuals to ensure both personal well-being and the sustainable progress of the nation. The Thai National Government (MoE) 'Basic and Occupational Education and Training (BOET)' project was initiated with the sponsorship of the UNDP. This basic occupational model includes skills relevant to the labour market's needs. To empower the entire system for promoting skill education created scope for student exchange programmes with some selected countries. In 2014, Thailand focused on six major reform issues, with strengthening competitiveness through improved skill development being one of them. The Ministry of Education has expanded educational opportunities in four areas,

including opportunities to enhance skills through activity-based learning in projects. Office of the Education Council (2017) states, "Formal, non-formal, informal education and intensive training provide basic, general and specialised skills and are key strategies to enhance competencies, quality and productivity of the workforce as well as to improve quality of life in the 21st century"(p.147).

The preschool education curriculum prioritises learning through classroom activity, play, and outdoor engagement. It is intended to promote various skills from an early stage of learning. Core competencies and competency levels specified in primary and lower secondary education (OBEC, 2021) accommodate skills components like occupation-related technology applications linked with future vocations.

Skill education at school has been brought under the Technical and Vocational Education (TVE) umbrella, managed by the Vocation Education Authority. Technical and Vocational Education and Training begins at the upper secondary level. It follows the 2013 Curriculum for the Certificate of Vocational Education at lower certificate levels and the 2014 Curriculum for Diploma of Vocational Education at associate degree level (Michael, 2018). These curricula are created to meet the needs of skilled workforce production in response to technological advancements. Office of Vocational Education Commission "arranges teaching-learning programs that prepare learners for semi-skilled, skilled, technical, and technological work at the standards required by the labour market and that support occupations" (MoE, 2015, p. 31).

The curriculum document needs guidance on adjusting such skill components; hence, teachers must address skills education more clearly. Despite all the efforts, Thailand failed to reach the desired level of inculcating skills education. Still, the percentage of students adopting vocational education needs to be improved compared to the job market demands. Only about 35% of school students are enrolled in vocational programs. This is less than the average of other countries in the OECD, which is 37%. The Thai government wants to increase the number of students in vocational programs compared to regular education students. Their goal is to have a ratio of 60 vocational students to 40 regular education students (MoE, 2013).

Hobby and Life Skills Education

The concept of 'Life skills' has been included in Thailand's primary curriculum since 2001, alongside fundamental skills, as essential competencies for Thai students. In 2008, 'Life Skills' gained further prominence when OBEC, in partnership with UNICEF and Right to Play Thailand, established the 'Life Skills Framework in Education' (Buasuwan et al., n.d.). Subsequently, the 'Life Skills: The 21st Century Teacher Manual' was developed in 2017. "To better prepare its young Thai learners to meet the global challenges and the demands of the 21st century, the (OBEC) has initiated a project called 'Skills Framework Development for Basic Education' in partnership with UNICEF and the Faculty of Education, Kasetsart University" (Buasuwan et al., n.d.).

Thai initiatives include a countrywide network of agencies involved in life skill education and its incorporation into school education. In contrast, limitations include difficulties in changing traditional teaching methods, lack of support and compassion from parents and continued emphasis only on the academic output from schooling. Thai sex education, which is part of life skill education, rests on the bedrock of the traditional values of heterosexuality and patriarchy. "Instead of encouraging safe sex, Thai education overwhelmingly tells school girls to remain virgins until they are ready to form a family. In extreme cases, some textbooks categorise masturbation as deviant behaviour and recommend meditation to suppress sexual needs. Apart from its rampant gender discrimination, Thai sex education has failed to decrease Thailand's notoriously high teenage pregnancy rate" (Prachatai, 2016).

Moral, Social and Cultural Education

Thailand has prioritised critical thinking in educational curriculums and has proposed numerous strategies for incorporating morality into its education system. Morality has been included in Thailand's government policies. The 12th National Economic and Social Development Plan (2017-2021) encourages Thai people to uphold higher moral standards (Office of Prime Minister, 2017). The 1999 National Education Act requires Thai teachers at all levels to teach students about morality (Office of National Education Commission, 2002, cited in Prommak, 2020).

Moral education should be emphasised from the perspectives of personal and societal development. Research indicates that morality in Thai people appears to have decreased in modern times (Bangkok Post, 2012).

It has been argued that "Thai morality is shaped not only by Thai culture but also by Thai Buddhism, the country's national religion. Thai moral aspects influenced by Thai culture include, for example, obedience, harmony, and seniority. Those affected by Thai Buddhism are primarily related to observing the Five Precepts (Sila 5) in Buddhism" (Prommak, 2020, p. 2044). The MoE focuses on developing learners' knowledge, morality, decent life quality, and societal happiness. They perceived that intelligent and moral Thai students would be able to contribute to society and solve the country's problems (EduBright, 2018). In Thailand NEA 1999, the National Plan of Education, Religion, Arts and Culture (2002-2013) and the Core Curriculum of Basic Education 2008, moral education is important in human development, citizenship building, and solving socio-political problems. Core Curriculum of Basic Education 2008 lists the activities for different levels of school education in fostering morality (Table 19.4).

Table 19.4 Grade-wise Learning Components of Moral, Social and Cultural Education

Grades	Components of learning
Grade 6 graduates	Fundamental concepts about religion, ethics, Principles of Buddhism, art, culture and creativity to promote home environment, democracy, moral and cultural upbringing
Grade 9 graduates	Philosophies of life and religion, World affairs through comparative studies of Thailand, Peaceful coexistence, Essential skills of a critical thinker
Grade 12 graduates	Foreign language to increase awareness and understanding, awareness of national cultural heritage, ecological understanding, intellectual freedom and tolerance, Thai wisdom, pride and Thai Nationalism, Thai tradition, culture and environment, Good and responsible citizenship

Source: MoE, 2008 (Adapted by author)

Peace and Happiness Education

The Thai National Commission for UNESCO and the MoE, Thailand, agreed to coordinate in initiating the programme of a happy school project in 2018 as a pilot project (UNESCO, 2021). This educational programme promotes happiness in schools through enhanced learner well-being and holistic development. It addresses the undervalued non-cognitive skills and transversal competencies, such as communication, creativity, collaboration, leadership, and respect for diversity. The project aligns well with SDG 4. According to the definition, Thailand's idea of happiness is equivalent to suk or mii suk in Thai, which refers to being happy, content, healthy, and comfortable (Royal Institute Dictionary, 2011).

"These cultivated qualities of wisdom, morality, and happiness, based on trisikha and yoniso manasikhara, are consistent with Thai tradition and with the mission of the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security of Thailand (2018). This idea is based on the Eighth National Economic and Social Development Plan (1997-2001)" (Mukdaprasert & Chalauisaeng, 2021, p. 116). It is important to adopt this method to unlock human potential in every aspect to attain wisdom, ethics, and contentment. Teachers' capacity building through the NTLT programme will result in a sustainable Thai education reform process. (Mukdaprasert & Chalauisaeng, 2021) toward well-being, culminating in happiness.

Summary and Conclusion

Education policy reforms have been instrumental in transforming Thailand from an agrarian-based nation into a middle-income country. Further reforms have focused on curriculum, student assessment, the teaching workforce, and the use of technology to move beyond the middle-income trap by building a highly skilled workforce for the competitive climate of the growing ASEAN economic community. The government of Thailand allocates a substantial portion of its annual budget to education. According to a UNESCO and UIS report (2015), public expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP has gradually increased.

Thailand has ensured the right to quality education for all children from 3 to 14 years of age. Further, all children with due prequalification have the right to pursue free upper secondary education up to the age of 16 years. On gender parity in education, female NERs are high across all levels of education. However, the dropout rate for girls at the primary and secondary levels was higher than that of boys (OECD/UNESCO, 2016).

The nine-year compulsory education from 5 to 14 comprises nine-year elementary and three-year lower secondary schooling. Elementary education curriculum includes basic language, mathematics, science, social studies, arts, and health and physical education skills. Lower secondary education aims to empower students to navigate either pursuing academic or vocational education at the upper secondary levels. Besides the traditional subjects, career and technology were also a major focus.

The three-year upper secondary education for the age group 14 to 17 is non-compulsory and offered in general and vocational streams. The general stream curriculum prepares students for higher formal education, and the vocational stream prepares students for the job market.

Health and physical education are core subjects that help children develop good physical and mental health. 'Life skills' have, in fact, long been introduced in the country's core curriculum, including activities that familiarise them with traditional practices of vocation and livelihood. The educational programme promotes school happiness through enhanced learner well-being and holistic development. It addresses the undervalued non-cognitive skills and transversal competencies, such as communication, creativity, collaboration, leadership, and respect for diversity. The moral education curriculum in Thailand combines Thai culture and Buddhism. Moral aspects influenced by Thai culture include obedience, harmony, and seniority to promote the home environment, democracy, and moral and cultural upbringing. Such moral education is designed to promote citizenship education.

The MoE introduced several learning-teaching innovations. However, the country still has a large percentage of underachievers compared to the OECD average (OECD, 2019). Rural areas lack qualified teachers. Public and private schools differ in education standards. Public school teachers face more competition and pressure from private schools that offer better salaries, benefits, and working conditions (Boonyatus, 2022). Thus, educating the next generation for 21st-century learning might require continuous professional development and support for teachers and school administrators using digital tools and pedagogies.

In order to successfully monitor and improve student learning and guarantee the quality of its national-level assessments, Thai educational systems must use various assessment tools and techniques. Enhancing teacher training and support in assessment, empowering policymakers to use

assessment data for decision-making, extending the scope of student assessments by creating school- and district-based assessments, and reducing reliance on national assessments are some potential ways to strengthen the assessment system.

Thailand changed the curriculum from content-based to standards-based, with desired learning outcomes in each subject. However, the lack of empowerment of teachers and institutions at the grassroots hinders the adoption of new approaches. Though Thailand has developed a system of standardised national assessments, such systems do not align with the aims of educational reforms towards achieving quality learning outcomes.

Thailand has implemented hardware-focused initiatives that have met with only mixed success. The overall capacity of students and teachers to engage in technology is lower than the global standard. Teachers' qualifications were standardised but did not ensure they achieved the requisite skills.

Thailand is one country where peace and happiness education finds a place, though primarily indirectly through social and emotional learning. The curriculum includes physical education, values and moral education, life skills and skills education. Depending upon the quality of implementation, all-round development of students is a fair possibility. However, emphasis on cognitive development remains dominant, though, with a competency-based curriculum, the cognitive load may be rationalised. Education reforms in Thailand have been inspired by global comparability and competitiveness. It is not easy to conclude whether this 'competitiveness' is healthy for developing as global citizens.

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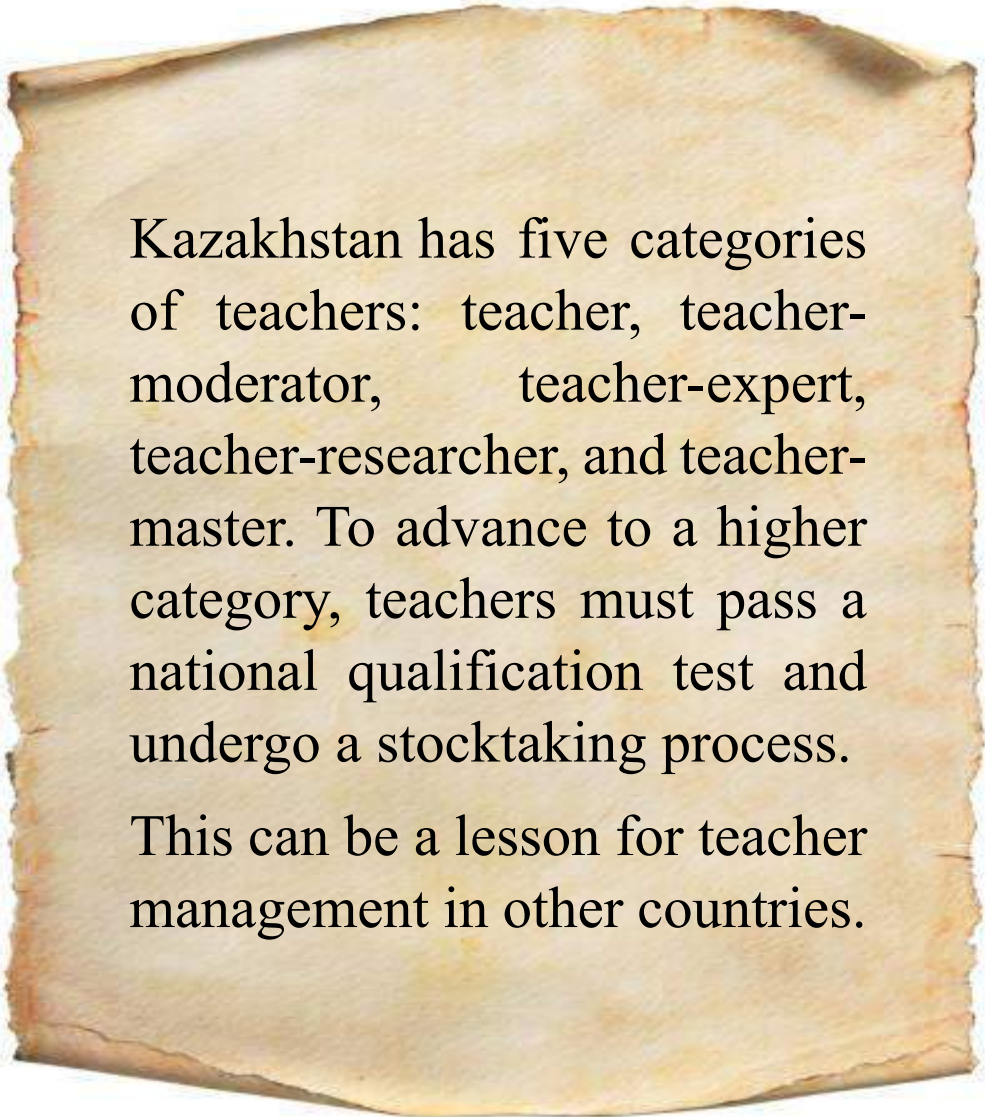
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Back to Content

Kazakhstan has five categories of teachers: teacher, teacher-moderator, teacher-expert, teacher-researcher, and teacher-master. To advance to a higher category, teachers must pass a national qualification test and undergo a stocktaking process.

This can be a lesson for teacher management in other countries.

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World of Learning (WoL) : Southern Asia

Pakistan

India

Bangladesh

Sri Lanka

Malaysia

Singapore

Legend

- Bangladesh
- India
- Malaysia
- Pakistan
- Singapore
- Sri Lanka
- - - - National Boundary

1 cm = 100 KM

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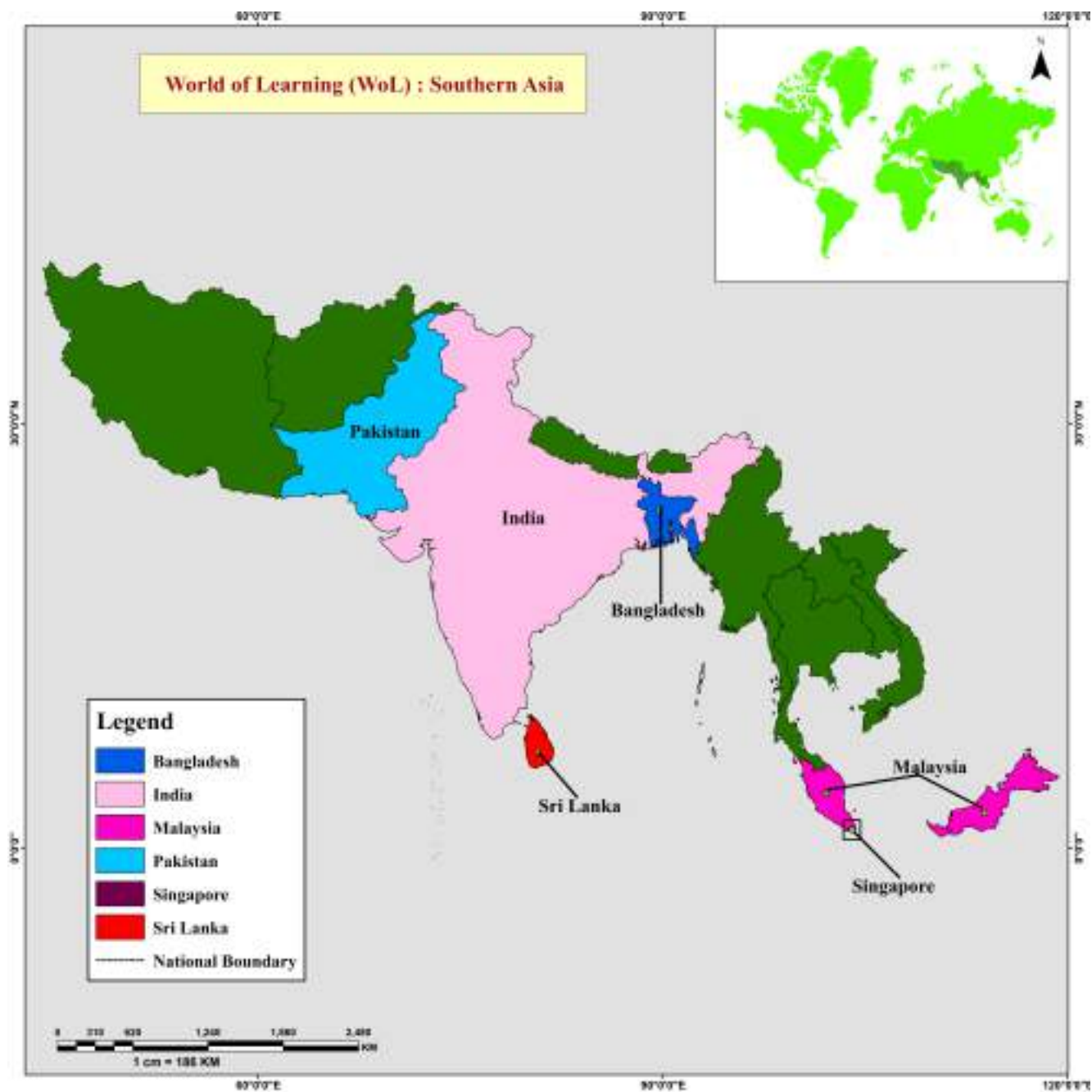
Revitalizing Education for Progress: Bangladesh

Marmar Mukhopadhyay
Shivangi Gupta

Abstract

Bangladesh has done quite well in education since its independence in 1971. It has created an extensive network of primary and secondary schools, and Madrashas is enhancing access and equity in education. This chapter presents a critical analysis of policy reforms through several commissions in 1974, 1976, 1988, and 2003, as well as national educational policies in 2003 and 2010 and the restructuring of school education up to higher secondary level (grade 12). However, compulsory education remained only up to grade eight. The chapter also referred to the National Curriculum Framework 2021, its goal for physical, mental, emotional, intellectual, linguistic, aesthetic and overall learner development, and curricular structure at different levels focusing on 'objective learning outcomes'. Bangladesh maintains public examinations at the end of 8, 10, and 12 grades, adopting a 50:50 ratio between formative and summative assessments. Bangladesh schools offer opportunities for co-curricular activities that nurture health and physical development, hobbies, life skills, etc. Inadequate learning environments, overcrowded classrooms, and teacher quality are Bangladesh's main challenges to achieving universal quality education for all.

Keywords: National Educational Policy, National Curriculum Framework, public examinations, BRAC schools, Nalanda, Prevocational skills education

Introduction

Bangladesh was part of undivided India until 1947 and part of Pakistan before gaining independence in 1971. It is a fluvial delta plain in South Asia with a total landmass of 147,570 square kilometres. The country shares a 4,246-kilometer border with India and Myanmar, 93.9% with India and approximately 6.1% with Myanmar. Bangladesh also has a coastline of over 580 kilometres along the Bay of Bengal to the south. Bangladesh has six main administrative units or

divisions: Barisal, Chittagong, Dhaka, Khulna, Rajshahi, and Sylhet. These areas comprise 64 districts (Zilas), divided into 462 upazilas and 34 thanas (Banglapedia, 2021).

According to the Bangladesh Population and Housing Census 2022, the total population of Bangladesh is 165,158,616, with a growth rate of 1.22%. The sex ratio of the country is 98 males per 100 females, as per the 2022 census. Most of the people in Bangladesh follow Islam (91.04%). There are also Hindus (7.95%), Buddhists (0.61%) and others. Bangladesh is highly homogenous in terms of ethnicity; most of the population is Bengalee (BBS, 2022). According to the 2022 census, the country's ethnic minority is 1% of the total population. These include different tribal groups such as Santhal, the Khasi, the Garo, and the Hajang (Husain et al., 2024). In Bangladesh, 98% of people speak Bangla, the official language, but about 39 other languages are also spoken. Some regions of the country have Indigenous languages, and various foreign and immigrant languages are spoken (World Population Review, 2024). In Bangladesh, life expectancy at birth was 73.1 years in 2021 (WHO, 2024).

Bangladesh's GDP is 455,16 billion USD, with a 5.7% (2024) annual growth rate, while the per capita GDP is 2,650 USD (IMF, 2024). Bangladesh's unemployment rate for 2022 was 4.27% (Macrotrends, 2024). Bangladesh's HDI is 0.670, ranking 129th out of 193 countries (UNDP, 2024). *Bangladesh ranks 129th out of 143 countries in the* World Happiness Index 2024 (Helliwell et al., 2024).

The literacy rate (7 years and above) is 74.66%—76.56% for males and 72.82% for females (BBS, 2022). As of 2021, Bangladesh's GER and NER for primary stood at 105.72% and 97.42% (Monitoring and Evaluation Division, 2021), and as of 2022, GER and NER for upper secondary stood at 62.20% and 79.01%, respectively (UNESCO-UIS, 2024). The total number of schools, students, and teachers is provided in the following table (Table 20.1).

Table 20.1 Number of Institutions, Teachers and Students in 2018

Type of Institution	Institutions	Teachers	Students
Primary	134147	685400	71338100
Secondary	20465	234165	10478100
Madarasha	9303	113761	2453364

Source: BBS, 2020 (Adapted by authors)

Educational Policy

Prior to the British education system (before the 18th century), there were 100,000 Indigenous schools under the Indigenous education system, which was discovered by the "Survey of Indigenous Education in Bengal" (1835-38) by 'William Adam (Mousumi & Kusakabe, 2021). In such an

Indigenous education system, only the upper castes were allowed; the poor and lower caste people were deprived of education. Later, around the 18th century, the Britishers and their education policy shaped its modern education system. (Mousumi & Kusakabe, 2021).

After its independence in 1971, there have been several policy initiatives, such as the Bangladesh Education Commissions (1974, 1976, 1988 and 2003), the National Curriculum Committee (1991), and the National Education Policy (2000 and 2010) (Benglapedia, 2021). The goals of National Education Policy 2000 were to develop non-sectarianism, brotherhood, and mutual understanding among the students; English set as the medium of instruction for kindergartens; curriculum and all text material used in kindergarten translated into English; and along with Bangla, English could be medium of instruction from the secondary level (Class 7). The National Education Policy 2010 has been implemented and practised in Bangladesh for the contemporary period. The National Curricular Framework 2021 (NCF 2021) has been drafted and planned to be implemented from 2023 onwards.

In Bangladesh, the school education system comprises one year of preprimary education, five years of primary education (grades 1-5), three years of junior secondary education (6- 8), two years of secondary education (9-10), and two years of higher secondary education (11-12). Primary and junior secondary education (up to grade 8th) is compulsory and fully funded by the government.

The primary aim of the National Education Policy 2010 is to cultivate human values among the students and make them "rational and intellectually accomplished human beings with ethical perceptions, who have respect for their religion as well as for others' faith" (MOE, 2010, p. 8). The major reforms that have been made in the education policy are as follows:

- Free universal primary education was extended up to 8th grade.
- The common core compulsory curriculum included Bangla, English, mathematics, science, Bangladesh studies, and IT for all the streams and their additional stream-based subjects to be taught (multiple delivery modes with common core curriculum).
- Along with technical and vocational education, some skill training activities should be provided per the graded national skill standards designed to meet skill needs in domestic and overseas employment markets and equip students with technical and scientific knowledge.
- To eliminate illiteracy, adult and non-formal education was proposed to complement the 'literacy campaign'.
- Emphasis on English writing and speaking from the very beginning of primary education

- The student assessment should be based on "public examinations and continuous evaluation by teachers, assessing cognitive, affective and reasoning domains". The primary objective was to discourage rote learning among the students.

Structure of the Education System

Bangladesh's school education is structured into pre-primary, primary, and secondary levels. Secondary education is split into junior secondary, secondary, and higher secondary levels (Figure 20.1).
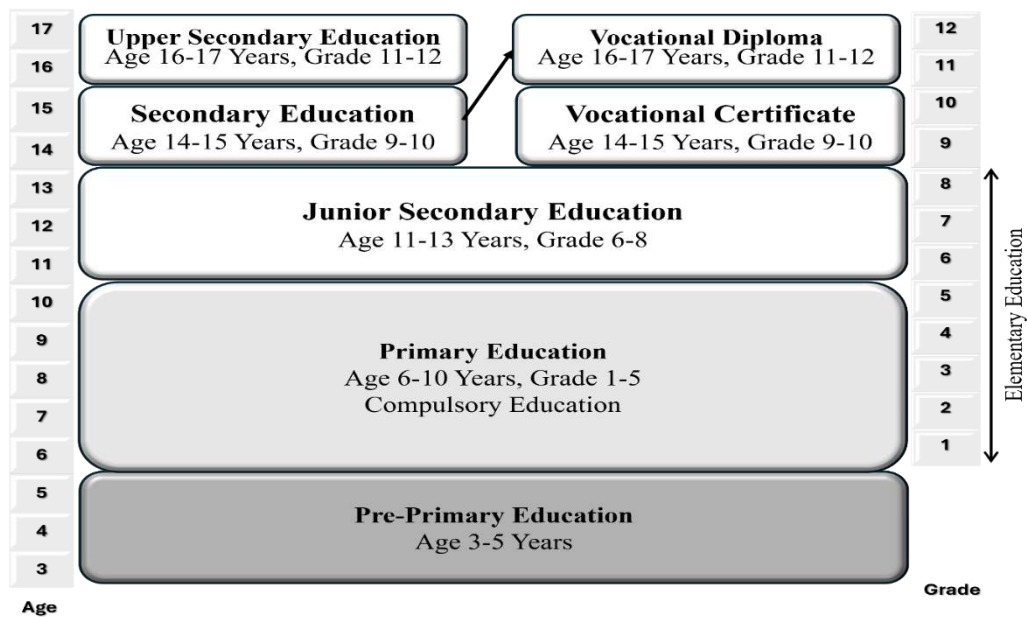
Figure 20.1 School Education Structure of Bangladesh

Source: National Curriculum 2012 (Adapted by authors)

Pre-primary education aims to create an environment conducive to the growth of universal human dispositions like the senses of endless wonder, infinite curiosity, and joy before formal education training begins. It is mostly for children aged between 3 and 5. In Bangladesh, the 'baby class' is a pre-primary education arrangement attached to primary school.

Primary education aims to provide equal opportunities, ensuring access to education for all children, regardless of ethnicity, socio-economic status, physical or mental challenges (all kinds of disabled children), or geographical location. It is the constitutional responsibility of the state (MOE, 2010)

Secondary Education comprises junior secondary (grades 6 to 8), secondary (grades 9 and 10), and higher secondary (grades 11 and 12). There are three streams in secondary education - humanities, science, and business education. To enter higher secondary education, all students must pass the first public examination, the Secondary School Certificate (SSC), after 10th grade. Further, at the end of the 12th grade, all the students must pass the Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) examination to enter higher education.

Vocational education institutes like Polytechnics provide students with higher secondary and intermediate-level education.

Curricular Framework

In Bangladesh, the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB), a wing of the Ministry of Education, is responsible for curriculum development, production, and distribution of textbooks at primary, secondary, and higher secondary levels. NCTB developed the National Curriculum Framework 2021 (NCF2021). NCF2021 stated, "The universal objectives include the physical, mental, emotional, intellectual, linguistic, aesthetic and overall development of the learner—which is important at all levels of education" (NCTB, 2021, p.32).

Bangladesh adopted a Competency-based Curriculum. "A theme-based and interdisciplinary approach has been adopted to enable learners to acquire the core competencies set out in the curriculum and the competencies of the learning areas in its continuity, but at the same time not to increase the content pressure" (NCTB, 2021, pp.33-34). Four essential elements of competencies are knowledge, skills, attitudes and values. NCF2021 also defines ten core competencies. These are abilities to express one's opinions respectfully and creatively, make logical and beneficial decisions for all by considering various aspects of an issue, embrace one's own culture and traditions while respecting diversity, solve problems with participation of all involved, adapting to a changing world while maintaining cooperation and harmony, contributing to society through creativity and innovation, maintaining healthy and safe relationships, preparing for disasters, using mathematical and scientific skills to solve problems, and engaging in the welfare of nature and humanity through moral virtues and integrity. (NCTB, 2021, p. 26). The NCF 2021 covers pre-primary, primary or elementary, and secondary education.

Pre-Primary Education

Pre-primary education does not have classified and compartmentalised subjects. Though it formally began in public schools in 2001, it expanded after the National Education Policy 2010. Nonetheless, as of 2022, only about 36 per cent of the children of the concerned age group attend pre-primary schools.

The main purpose of pre-primary education is to nurture 'spontaneous vigour, spirit, and natural inquisitiveness and curiosity'. It also aims to develop school readiness—the ability to transition from the familiar home environment to the formal school setting. This transition is achieved by involving children in joyful activities through pictures, colours, attractive manipulatives, models, rhymes, songs, games, handiwork, etc. These activities also facilitate the child's overall development.

Preprimary schooling includes certain learning areas which integrate the subject areas: language and communication, mathematics and reasoning, life and livelihood, social and global citizenship, environment and climate, science and technology, digital technology, physical and mental health and well-being, religion, values and ethics, and arts and culture.

The World Bank Report (Bhatta et al., 2022) indicated that the gross enrollment ratio (GER) in preprimary education increased from 24.7 per cent in 2011 to 40.3 per cent in 2017; however, the GER is below average compared to other South Asian nations. There are gender, socio-economic, and regional (read as geographic locations) disparities in enrollment. The one-year pre-primary education programme is largely academic, though global evidence is that a play-based approach leads to better child development outcomes. However, the new curriculum is trying to match the global trends and sound practices. There is a shortage of trained and qualified teachers for pre-primary education.

Primary Education

Primary education aims to help students acquire basic skills such as reading, writing, and counting, which can be used to gain various competencies and continue self-learning at the next level (NCF 2021, p.32). The curriculum is organised around the following subjects: Bangla, English, Mathematics, Science, History and Social Science, Wellbeing, Religious Studies, and Art and Culture.

Textbooks are designed to focus on developing students' cognitive, functional, personal, and ethical competencies. These competencies help enhance language skills, creativity, and social and physical environments. They also aim to instil ethical and moral values, develop a humanitarian attitude, foster patriotism, encourage rational thinking, and familiarise students with Science and Information Technology (Mousumi & Kusakabe, 2021).

Secondary Education

The NCF2021 mentioned that as learners progress through their education, they will continue to develop their knowledge and skills at the secondary level. They will focus on strengthening basic skills while acquiring various social skills and attitudes through socialisation. This will help them

gradually become active members of society. As they enter upper secondary education and beyond, they will take on more specialised areas of study to prepare for their chosen profession (NCTB, 2021).

Secondary education in Bangladesh is divided into junior secondary, secondary, and higher secondary grades. The prescribed subjects for grades 6 to 10 are Bangla, English, Mathematics, Science, History and Social Science, Digital Technology, Life and Livelihood, Wellbeing, Religious Studies, and Art and Culture. Learning Areas remain the same throughout the school years.

The NCF has adopted main subjects and theme-based subjects, integrating multiple subjects. NCF2021 claims, "History and Social Sciences is a core subject, where history, economics, politics, and geography have been integrated. Similarly, learning competencies in physical sciences, biology, and geology have been integrated into the subject of science. Language education includes listening, speaking, reading, writing, and alternative communication skills" (NCTB, 2021. p.35).

In Grades 11 and 12, three-fourths of the total weightage would be allocated for specialised subjects and one-fourth for compulsory subjects. These subjects will have a combination of competencies in different learning areas.

NCF2021 refers to the BANBEIS2019 report revealing a 38% dropout after grade 6 and 20% before completing grade 12. NCF recommended occupational courses under Life and Livelihood education in grades 9 and 10. At the end of the 10th grade, students can choose either technical and vocational education (TVET) or continue in secondary education. The Polytechnics provide technical or vocational education and training to the students after passing the SSC examination. These diploma courses are mostly in engineering, marine technology, nursing, allied health fields, agriculture, or hospitality. However, technical and vocational education courses are much less popular than the general stream courses in the country, as less than nine per cent of all upper-secondary students were enrolled in vocational programs in 2017, according to UNESCO (Trines, 2019). Further, TVET tends to be viewed as a 'second-class education' due to poorly educated teachers, funding shortages, and poor employment prospects for the graduates (Trines, 2019).

An important aspect of NCF2021 is the modernisation and coordination of the Madrasah Education stream with other streams. NEP2010 recommended consolidation and modernisation of Madrasah education, which has a long history of religious education in Bangladesh. In the Madrasah stream, learning areas and subjects at different levels remain the same. Additional learning areas are Islamic Studies – Ibtedai for grades 1 to 5 and Dakhil for grades 6 to 8 and 9-10. The study subjects are Quran Majid and Tajweed, Hadith Sharif, Arabic, Aqeedah and Fiqh, and History of Islam.

The total number of working days is 185 in a year. The learning hours vary from 500 hours in preprimary to 1150 per year in 11 and 12 grades. From 1st to 3rd grades, learning hours are 630; for 4th and 5th grades, 840 hours; 6th to 8th, 1030 hours; and 1100 hours for grades 9 and 10. Interestingly, NCF2021 refers to learning hours in OECD countries while allocating learning hours to different grade levels, though it does not replicate the same norm. The learning hours in OECD countries are relatively less than those in Bangladesh. An elaborate exercise allocates learning hours to different learning areas and subjects.

At pre-primary and primary levels, competencies in Digital Technology are acquired through other subjects, and competencies in Life and Livelihood are acquired through History, Social Sciences, and well-being. The time allotted for Digital Technology and Life and Livelihood is not shown separately. In early school, more time is spent learning language, mathematics, arts, and culture. At the primary level, 56% of learning time is for Bangla, math, arts, and culture. At the secondary level, 45% of learning time is for English, history, social science, and science.

In Grades 11 and 12, students spend 25% of their total learning time on compulsory subjects, while the remaining 75% are dedicated to three specialised elective subjects. The educational institutions also allocate separate time for an optional applied subject under its management. The total learning time is specified for each level, and the institution may use this time per its needs. This time will also be used to acquire competencies in subjects and learning areas that emphasise out-of-school contexts. (NCTB, 2021, p.74).

The curriculum reform is ambitious. The outcomes depend upon the implementation. Researchers found huge gaps in the implementation of the 2012 curriculum. The study revealed that the teachers were unaware of the curriculum expectations; most teachers applied only two or three techniques of the participatory approach; the prescribed 218 class days were not followed; the class routine prescribed in the 2012 curriculum was not followed; and schools did not adhere to the proper Continuous Assessment practices (Riad & Poddar, 2015). A couple of years from now, the studies may reveal the state of implementation of NCF2021 and the challenges.

There are several criticisms and apprehensions about the NCF2021, extensively debated by the Bangladesh Educationist in print and non-print media, such as the Daily Sun (2021, 20 September), Prothom Alo (2021, 21 September), Daily Observer (2023, 20 July), Daily Star (2023, 13 October), and others. Firstly, curriculum reform is not linked to the educational policy, as the last education policy was enacted in 2010. It does not consider the demands of the fourth industrial revolution; making textbooks to achieve the goals of the NCF is a major challenge. There is a mismatch between a significant emphasis on science and the number of teachers (usually two) in the schools (Hassan & Dey, 2021). Major challenges include enhancing teachers' skills, school effectiveness, and

rationalising the class sizes. Students per teacher (teacher: pupil ratio) is far higher than the prescribed norm due to teacher shortage.

Teaching Learning

The National Education Policy (2010) and The National Curriculum (2012) mainly focused on the 'objective learning outcome' rather than factual learning. The teaching methods are supposed to develop students' creative thinking, problem-solving, and decision-making skills (National Education Policy, 2010). The National Curriculum (2012) recommended using various pedagogic approaches such as question and answer, group-based cooperative learning, learning through investigation, and demonstration. Notably, these pedagogical recommendations succeed in a detailed analysis of learning theories, focusing finally on Constructivist pedagogies.

However, studies revealed that students are neither motivated nor curious. Teachers in public schools use traditional methods and are not very concerned about quality teaching-learning compared to schools run by the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC). In BRAC schools, teachers were found to be caring and work with target-oriented lesson plans (Numan & Islam, 2020). Firdousi (2018) found, "Nalanda is different than the other schools in Bangladesh in terms of parents' motivation about school curriculum and sufficiency of teachers' knowledge on joyful learning/child-friendly learning. Teachers showed particular strength in teaching-learning strategies, using materials and assessments. Nalanda also strongly supports teacher training. In conclusion, The Nalanda School in Dhaka was found appropriate for the requirements of Child-friendly education" (Ferdousi, 2018, p. 436).

Hunter and Zaman's (2022) reflection on English Language instruction is: "Bangladesh produces its textbooks and coursebooks for English *(that)* have been designed increasingly to reflect the goals of a communicative language teaching approach. Nevertheless, some materials-related issues persist, with a lack of clear progression between levels, a teachers' book for the national coursebook, and insufficient training to use materials effectively. The effect of high-stakes public examinations on learning represents perhaps the most significant challenge to effective English teaching in schools. Important English examinations lack a listening and speaking component. As teaching narrows towards preparation for these exams, classroom work focuses increasingly on reading, writing and grammar" (Hunter & Zaman, 2022. p.11).

There is a shift in the recommendations for instructional practices in NCF 2021. There is a detailed reference to Experiential learning. The instructional strategies up to grade three will be play, activity-based and exploratory learning. In grades 4 and 5, the emphasis will be on learning through exploration and problem-solving, as well as play and activity-based learning. The instructional methodologies in grades 6 to 8 will focus on experiential learning to nurture higher-order thinking.

Higher classes emphasise structured experiential learning – a combination of hands-on learning, project and problem-based learning, collaborative and exploratory learning, self-regulated learning, and online learning. Blending online learning with other face-to-face pedagogies at the school level is worth noting.

Learning Assessment

The 2010 National Education Policy discouraged rote learning. Each grade has a public exam to promote students to the next level. At the end of 10th grade, there is a public exam, SSC, for entering higher secondary school. However, the present system is exam-driven, without emphasising higher-order cognition, affective, and reasoning domains or developing problem-solving skills and creativity among students (Mousumi & Kusakabe, 2021).

The NCTB (2012) recommended continuous assessment based on classwork, homework, investigative work, and class tests with 10, 5, and 5 marks, respectively. The academic calendar is divided into two six-month terms. There are two summative assessments each year. Class promotion considers the marks in continuous assessment and the two summative assessments. The terminal and public examinations will be based on creative and multiple-choice questions. NCTB (2012) recommended using MCQs to assess "all four spheres of thinking skills (such as cognition 40%, comprehension 30%, application 20%, and higher skills 10%)" (NCTB, 2012, p. 29). For secondary education, the Bangladesh government introduced school-based assessment (SBA) and creative questions (CQs) for summative assessment.

In a qualitative content analysis, Rahman et al. (2021) identified numerous gaps and challenges associated with implementing School-Based Assessment (SBA). "These are teachers' insufficient orientation towards SBA, teachers' negative attitude towards SBA, teachers' heavy workloads, large class size, large contents of syllabus, no reflection of the marks of SBA in public examinations, lack of honesty and fairness in teachers, lack of validity and reliability of SBA as an assessment tool, poor socioeconomic conditions of teachers, and the absence of monitoring and supervision by concerned authorities" (Rahman et al., 2021, p. 1). Another study by Bhatta and Sharma (2019) found uneven and stagnant learning outcomes at the primary level, with better performance noted at lower-order cognitive tasks than higher-order thinking. A 2015 achievement survey (LASI) indicated a moderate improvement in overall student performance from Grade 6 to Grade 8 in Bangla, English, and Mathematics, with varying levels across subjects and grades. Some Grade 8 students were performing below the national mean of Grade 6, indicating a potential learning gap of at least two years (DSHE, 2016, p.15). The overall results over the different cycles are stable, with minor changes. For example, there was a dip in the Bangla score of Grade 5 in 2017 compared to 2013 and 2015. Learning levels in 2022 show a slight improvement.

There are three public examinations: the Junior School Examination (JSE) at the end of grade 8, the Secondary School Certificate (SSC) at the end of grade 10, and the Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) after grade 12. The competencies for the public examinations at the end of grade 10 are calculated using a 50:50 ratio of formative and summative assessments. The results of HSC are calculated based on combined performance in grades 11 and 12.

The National Curriculum Framework 2021 emphasises real-time formative assessment (through assignments, project-based tasks, and practical and hands-on tasks at higher grades), reducing reliance on summative assessments, promoting self, peer, and group assessments, and validating competency assessments. Specific weightage ratios for different grade levels and assessment types highlight a comprehensive approach to evaluation. Elaborating on the emphasis on real-time formative assessment, the weightage in preprimary till grade 3 is cent per cent (no summative assessment). For grades 4 to 8, 60: 40 is the ratio between real-time formative and summative assessment, and that for 9 and 10 is 50: 50. At grades 11 and 12, for compulsory subjects, the ratio is 30:70, but for electives, it is 100:00.

Initiated by the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (MoPME) in 2006, the National Student Assessment (NSA) evaluates Bangla and Mathematics skills for grades 3 and 5 while collecting data on gender, geography, and socio-economic status. The seventh cycle of NSA in 2022 included 28,752 grade 3 and 25,480 grade 5 students, maintaining overall stability in results with minor fluctuations. Despite a dip in Grade 5 Bangla scores in 2017, 2022 scores slightly improved over 2017 (Directorate of Primary Education. 2023).

Limited research on the effectiveness of the National Curriculum 2012 impedes making assumptions about the effectiveness of the National Curriculum 2021 recommendations. Rahman et al. (2021) mention that poor preparedness and negative attitudes warrant further investigation.

Health and Physical Education

The National Curriculum of 2012 included Physical Education, Health Science, and Sports as compulsory subjects with a weightage of 50 marks in examinations from 6-10 (NCTB, 2012). NCTB allocated two periods a week. NCTB (2013) published a textbook, Physical Education, Health Science and Sports, for Grades nine and ten. The ten chapters covered Physical Education for a Healthy Life, Physical Fitness, Mental Health and Fatigue, Health Science and Health Service, Nutrition for Health, Drug Addiction and AIDS, Puberty and Reproductive Health, Team games, Athletics and Swimming, The Accidents during Games (NCTB, 2013, Contents). Games recommended were Football, Cricket, Hockey, Basketball, Volleyball, Handball, Kabadi and Badminton.

The NCF 2021 included Physical and Mental Health and Well-Being as a learning area for primary and grades 6-10. However, there is no subject titled Health and Physical Education, nor is there any time allocated to sports, games, and health education. Physical well-being is mentioned in the conceptualisation of the subject.

Generally speaking, Sports and Physical Education, despite the policy recommendations (NCTB, 2012), were found to be a lower priority in school education (Hasan, 2023; Rumayan Hasan et al., 2020; Khan et al., 2018). The major reason for this situation is the lack of understanding of the importance of physical education, and performance in physical education does not add to grades. Poor parental enthusiasm and support are also considered responsible (Hasan, 2023; Rumayan Hasan et al., 2020). A survey in Bangladesh showed that over 80% of children and youth have sedentary lifestyles and spend less than two hours daily on recreational activities. Only 40% of 13-17-year-olds were physically active for at least one hour daily, regardless of gender. Only 41.1% of students in that age group used active transport to or from school (Khan et al., 2018)

Pervez and Haque (2020) argued for collaborative efforts by state and non-state organisations like NGOs based on evidence of contributions to health care, education, and life expectancy.

Skills Education

Bangladesh has recognised the importance of integrating prevocational skills education into its school curriculum to better prepare students for the challenges of the modern workforce. The main goal of prevocational education is to give students the practical skills and information they will need in specific fields, fostering a smoother transition from school to work. Prevocational education finds a place in grades 6-8 to develop a sense of dignity of manual labour and preparedness for vocational education. Career education figures in the NCF2012 for grades 6-8 and 9-10.

National Education Policy 2010 recommended that after completing eight years of junior secondary education, students may opt for academic, based on merit, and vocational streams for the remaining four years of school education (for more details, please refer to MOE, 2010).

NCF 2021 stipulated that there will be one vocational course under the Life and Livelihood subject in Grades 9-10 in general and Madrasah education streams to equip students, on completion of grade 10, to take up self-employment or to take up employment as per the demands of the employment market – service, agriculture and industrial sectors. Further, NCF2021 mentioned that new occupations will be designed according to the evolving demands of the employment market.

The UNICEF study (Dewan & Sarkar, 2017) found that only nine per cent of schools offer vocational courses, the curriculum is not revised to match the demands of the changing economy,

and only ten per cent of students reported that they learn skills useful for finding a job. Employers prefer work experience over vocational education.

Bangladesh has taken noteworthy steps to integrate prevocational skills education into its schools, recognising the significance of preparing students for the workforce. However, attitudinal deficiency among students, employers, and society is a major challenge for ensuring the success and sustainability of prevocational skills education in Bangladesh schools.

Hobby and Life Skills Education

Bangladesh's school education system had no specific hobby and life skills education courses. However, there are enough opportunities to develop hobbies through sports, physical education, and arts and cultural education. NEP2010 mentions the acquisition of life skills as one of the goals in primary education, though it is silent at the secondary education level. There is a strong emphasis on English language skills– listening, reading, writing, and speaking as life skills. NCF 2021 recommends life skills education in clusters of *skills for learning to learn* - critical and creative thinking, problem-solving*; personal empowerment skills* - self-management, decision making, communication; *practical and social skills* - life and livelihood, global citizenship and cooperation; and *foundational skills* – literacy and numeracy, change literacy, and digital literacy (NCTB, 2021, p. 24). Life skills education will likely be integrated into language and communication, digital technology, environment and climate, social and global citizenship, life and livelihood, and arts and culture. Since NCF2021 is to be implemented from 2023 onwards, the impact of life skills education is still in the wombs of the future.

Moral, Social, and Cultural Education

One of the stated aims of primary education of Bangladesh National Education Policy 2010 is "to help the students inculcate moral and spiritual values like the idea of justice, sense of duty, discipline and etiquettes, non-communalism, human rights, accommodative attitudes toward corporate living, curiosity, friendliness and perseverance, and to encourage them to acquire scientific, cultural and human values and to shun superstitions" (MoE, 2010, p. 12). Religion and moral education are studied in grades 6-8 and 9-10 in NCF 2012. The NCF 2021 recommended the inculcation of honesty, enthusiasm and initiative, non-communalism, aesthetics, positivity, humanity and responsibility (p.21). NEP 2010 recommended the introduction of Scouts and Girl Guides and Bangladesh National Cadet Corps (BNCC) to develop adolescents into self-respecting, autonomous, honest, ethical, enterprising, mindful, and productive members of society. One important moral and value education medium in schools is religious education, including Islam, Hinduism, and Christianity. The values, ethics, and human qualities are supposed to be developed among the students through the curricular framework and co-curricular activities (Karim & Billah, 2021).

Peace and Happiness Education

Happiness and peace education do not figure in the scheme of Bangladesh school education, though elements of peace education are strewn around the curriculum in a rather disjointed manner (Amer, 2021). However, there is a serious interest in peace education in Bangladesh, as the conversations in media and journal articles indicate. The Education Minister of the Delhi Government, who pioneered happiness education, was invited to Bangladesh by the Education Minister of the Bangladesh Government. Islam (2018) argued that religious education does not equal studying peace and conflict. Peace education includes the study of "peace, peacebuilding, harmony, social justice, coexistence education, conflict, conflict management, resolution, human rights, human security and environmental sustainability" (Islam, 2018, Para 5).

Munmun's (2023) study pointed out that the English for Today textbook includes a peace chapter. Students read elements of peace as part of their syllabus without understanding the implications of their practical application. The teachers either skip these topics or fail to draw the students' attention to the issue of peace education. Munmun concluded that the real purpose of peace education is missing in higher secondary curricula due to policy gaps. As the instructional processes concentrate on covering the syllabus for examination, grades and results, implied peace education gets lost (Sheesh, 2021). Sheesh contends that this exam-focused education can harm the psychological development of students; it also forbids teachers from taking risks with innovation.

Bangladesh ranks 93 out of 163 countries on the Global Peace Index (as of 2018). Given Bangladesh's peace and happiness index, it may be worthwhile to introduce peace and happiness education as a formal course of study in schools. UNESCO's peace education model and the Delhi Government's Happiness Curriculum can be examined for developing a peace and happiness curriculum in Bangladesh.

Summary and Conclusion

Bangladesh gained its independence in 1971. Since then, several efforts have been made to revitalise education for national development. It is one of the better-performing countries in terms of GDP growth. Its school education system comprises 126,615 primary and 27,116 secondary schools. More than 93,000 primary schools offer preprimary education. The NER for primary education among boys and girls are 97.37% and 98.25% respectively, while for the secondary education level, it is 80.62% for girls and 62.89% for boys.

Since the first Bangladesh Education Commission in 1974, there have been several policy initiatives. Recent initiatives are National Education Policy 2010, National Curriculum 2012, and National Curriculum Framework 2021, beginning implementation in 2023. There are several

dynamic policies, such as the introduction of competency-based education and concept of learning areas, compulsory preprimary education, compulsory education up to grade 8; prevocational education in 9-10 and 11-12; inclusion of religious education – Islam, Hinduism and Christianity, values and moral education, career, and art and culture education. There have been recommendations on constructivist instructional approaches and an emphasis on real-time formative assessment at all levels. However, research indicates a wide gap between the policy intents and outcomes. Teachers' attitudes and skills are a major challenge for the reforms. The Daily Star reported on 3 January 2024 that a government's latest educational statistical report indicates that 40.29 per cent of the secondary students dropped out last year, with 19.11 per cent leaving at class VIII alone.

There are direct or indirect provisions for health and physical education, hobby and life skills education, skills and prevocational education, moral and values education, and peace education. However, because of the high emphasis on examinations, grades, and results, these aspects of education are often neglected. Neither students nor parents appreciate their importance. Besides the lack of teachers' training, skills and competence, they work under pressure of academic performance – syllabus completion skipping the desirable aspects of the curriculum. The lofty goal of all-round development remains a dream. Cognitive development, which is also lower-order cognition, dominates the learning scenario, pushing affective, social, and psychomotor development to the back burner.

An exciting feature of Bangladesh policy initiatives is the use of OECD norms and averages as reference points, references to global research on teaching, learning, and assessment, and the introduction of Bangladesh and Global studies in grades 6-8 and 9-10. There is a serious effort to rise above local traditional practices to prepare students for the global future.

Overall, Bangladesh has initiated dynamic policy initiatives. It is too early to assume the outcomes, as the implementation of the NCF2021 is just beginning. However, based on previous experience of policy impact, Bangladesh needs to invest much more in teacher management, especially capacity development, rationalising the teacher-student ratio, and technology integration, as well as improving the learning environment in schools to achieve the policy goals.

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21
Educating the Millions: India[13]

Marmar Mukhopadhyay
Madhu Parhar

Abstract

The Indian education system operates under a unique framework, with national policies serving as guiding principles rather than binding regulations. Education is in the concurrent list of the Constitution; rights and responsibilities are shared by union and state governments. This chapter deals with reforms in educational policies, curricular frameworks, teaching-learning processes, learning assessment and other school education-associated issues. India enacted national policies in 1968, 1986 and 2020. The fundamental policy is free and compulsory education from 6-14. Preschool education is free but not compulsory. India follows the 5+3+2+2 structure of school education. There are 52 boards and councils of school education in India, including a Central Board. Every board formulates its curriculum framework. National curriculum frameworks formulated in 1975, 1988, 2000, 2005, and 2023 are guidelines implemented by the Central Board. India follows a subject-based curriculum with a public examination at the end of classes 10 and 12. Indian school education largely remains examination-oriented.

Keywords: National Policy on Education, National Curriculum Framework, Kothari Commission, Happiness Curriculum, CCE

Introduction

Hominid activity in the Indian subcontinent, as noted by Mark (2012), dates back over 250,000 years, making it one of the earliest inhabited regions on the planet. Mark further challenges historical assumptions, arguing that 'significant human activity was already underway in India by the Holocene Period (about 10,000 years ago)', predating many earlier works in Egypt and Mesopotamia, establishing India as the oldest civilisation on the Earth. This rich history of human

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[13] I acknowledge with thanks the inputs provided by Dr Puneet Rahi and Dr Arnab Kundu

civilisation, despite being interrupted for nearly a thousand years by invasions, occupation, and colonisation, stands as a testament to the indomitable spirit of India's people.

The British colonial rule, with its policy of creating 'Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals…', disconnected Indians from their cultural and civilisational roots.

Ross (2019) rightly argues that the 'past is still present'. "The laws, economic structures and cultural basis for European colonialism did not disappear when nations gained independence in the mid-20th century" (Ross, 2019, p. 1). Colonialism begins with decivilising the colonisers (Crispin, 2000), and it operates through extreme violence to subjugate the colonised. Centuries of colonial rule leave behind the colonial mindset that perpetrates neo-native colonialism, subjugating many by few, creating and steadily widening the inequality" (Oxfam International, 2024).

India is a 'prisoner of geography' (Marshall, 2015). It is surrounded by the mighty Himalayas in the north, the Arabian Sea in the west, the Indian Ocean to the south, and the Bay of Bengal in the east, which gives it a distinct geographical identity (GOI, 2020). It has a land area of 32,87,263 km^2, including island territories stretching from the Himalayas to the tropical rain forests of the south (MHA, n.d.). Its land border and coastlines are 15,106.7 km and 7,516.6 km, respectively. Sharing its borders with Bangladesh, China, Pakistan, Nepal, Myanmar, Bhutan, and Afghanistan, India's geography has significantly influenced its history and culture.

The population of India was 1,417 million in 2023, with a growth rate of 0.81% (2023); there are 1,020 females per 1,000 males. The life expectancy is 70.19%. India is a multilingual, multireligious, multicultural country, a melting pot of cultures and traditions. According to the eighth schedule of the Indian Constitution, as many as 22 are official languages; millions speak each language. Hindi and English are the official (national) languages recognised for official communications. The country has 28 states and 8 Union territories (know India: Official Portal of Government of India). Each state is further divided into regions, districts, blocks and panchayats for administrative purposes.

India is the largest lower-middle-income country and one of the world's fastest-growing economies. Its GDP is $4.113 trillion (2024 est) with a growth rate of 7.2% (Forbes India), and the per capita GDP is $ 2730 (IMF, 2024). Its unemployment rate is 7.2% (O'Neill, 2024a). India ranks 134th in HDI (UNDP, 2024) and 126th on the Peace Index (Vision of Humanity, 2023).

India's literacy rate is 76.32 per cent (O'Neill, 2024b). The GER and NER at different levels of school education are 103.4 and 88.6%, respectively, for primary; 100.1 and 90.5% in elementary education, respectively; 79.6 and 47.9% at the secondary level; and 57.6 and 34.2% at the higher secondary levels (MoE, 2022). India has 1,509,136 schools comprising 774,742 primary, 442,928

upper primary, 151,946 secondary, and 139,520 higher secondary schools (MoE, 2022). The school system educates 27 million students at higher secondary, 39 million at secondary, 66 million at upper primary, 122 million at primary, and 10.6 million at pre-primary levels.

Educational Policy

India inherited a rickety education system in 1947, with a 19% literacy rate, 42.6% GER in primary and 12.7% in elementary grades (1950-51), and a high dropout rate. The dropout rate was nearly 64.9% by the end of primary grades and 78.3% by the end of elementary in 1961-62, even after 13 years of independence. The growth since independence has been significant.

Indian Constitution (1950) contained the first policy statement: "The State shall endeavour to provide, within a period of ten years from the commencement of this Constitution, for free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of fourteen years". The Constitution was later amended, and this provision was split into Article 21A and Article 45:

"21A: Right to education: State shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of six to fourteen years in such manner as the State may, by law, determine" (GOI, 1950 as reprinted in 2024 p.11).

"45: Provision for early childhood care and education to children below the age of six years-The State shall endeavour to provide early childhood care and education for all children until they complete the age of six years" (GOI, 1950, as reprinted in 2024, p.23).

Further, the Constitution also placed education on the concurrent list (Article 25 of the Seventh Schedule), a shared responsibility of the union and state governments with certain exceptions of institutions of National Importance.

The recommendations of government-appointed committees and commissions shaped Indian policies in the early years. The Radhakrishnan Commission (1948) dealt with higher education, and the Mudaliar Commission (1952-53) dealt with secondary education. The Kothari Commission (1964-66) comprehensively dealt with all levels of education and recommended twelve years of schooling, introducing higher secondary education in India. Kothari Commission Report ushered in the modern Indian education system and inspired and informed the first National Education Policy (NEP1968).

A few of the important recommendations of NEP1968 were the fulfilment of the Constitutional commitment to free and compulsory education, proactive teacher management, promotion of regional languages as medium of instruction, equal educational opportunity for all with a special

focus on children from underprivileged homes, production of quality textbooks and reference books, science and mathematics, work experience and vocational education, etc.

Another initiative to frame a new educational policy was launched in 1979. However, the government fell before the draft could be adopted.

The second National Policy on Education (NPE) was formulated in 1985-86. Unlike the 1968 policy, which used the Kothari Commission Report as its basis, the NEP1986 created a diagnostic document, Challenge of Education, identifying achievements, failures, and missed opportunities. The document was widely discussed and debated nationwide, and recommendations were sought. Based on the findings of the consultative, diagnostic exercises, the NPE 1986 was formulated. Some of the major recommendations of NPE1986 were: universal enrolment and retention of children up to 14 years and quality improvement; sports and physical education up to grade 10; implementation of 'three languages' formula; introduction of open education; ICT integration in education, education of children with special talents and aptitude; delinking degrees from the jobs; improving the evaluation system; policy review after every five years; involvement of non-government sector in education and introduction of 'Indian Education Service' as an all India service. NPE1986 stressed the 'child-centred approach' in education and equalising educational opportunities for the weaker sections of society, such as women and tribal communities.

The NPE 1986 was followed by a Plan of Action (POA), unique in Indian educational policymaking. The POA led to the formulation of several centrally sponsored schemes and funding shared between the union and state governments. A few of them are the National Program of Mid-Day Meal (MDM), Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), National Means-cum-Merit Scholarship Scheme, Strengthening of Teachers Training Institutions (DIETs, CTEs and IASEs), Setting up of 6000 Model Schools at Block level, Adult Education and Skill Development Program, Information and Communication Technology, National Mission in Education through ICT, expanding and strengthening polytechnic education, Post-Matric Scholarship and Book Banks for SC and ST Students, etc.

The government launched *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* (Education for All Campaign) in 2001 to universalise free and compulsory elementary education time-bound. It made education a fundamental right for all children aged 6-14 through the 86th Constitutional Amendment in 2002 and RTE in 2009.

The NPE 1986 was reviewed in 1990 by the Acharya Ramamurthy Committee. Besides, the MHRD commissioned an evaluation of Centrally Sponsored Schemes, like OBB, DIET, Educational Technology, etc. CABE approved the Universalisation of Secondary Education policy in 2005,

which led to the CSS, Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA). Later, the MHRD approved the ICT in Education Policy in 2012.

The NDA government formulated the third National Education Policy (NEP) (2018-2020) and launched on 29th July 2020. Some of the key recommendations are increased focus on ECCE, foundational literacy and numeracy of every child by grade 2, flexible and multidisciplinary, no silos for subject selections, shift from rote to competency-based learning, redesign of assessment to test core capacities, promotion of regional languages and mother tongue, continuous professional development, inclusion from all backgrounds, including disabilities, integrating technology at all levels, resource sharing, collaborative learning, effective utilisation of infrastructure, etc.

NPE1986 recommended creating vocational education for the disabled, reorienting teacher training to address the education of people with disabilities, and encouraging NGOs to support this education. NEP2020 confirmed 'complete consonance with the provisions of the RPWD Act 2016', which ensure the equal participation of children with disabilities in ECCE and the schooling system.

A few important challenges in implementing NEP2020 are inadequate funding, infrastructure for ECCE and public schools, availability of quality learning materials and textbooks, teacher upgradation, poor ICT facilities and digital divide, poor stakeholder involvement, and coordination between different levels and organisations.

As education is on the concurrent list, states are empowered to formulate state educational policies. All NPEs and NEPs recommended that states adapt national policies to suit their educational development needs. Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, West Bengal, and Kerala formulated state education policies post-NEP 2020. Several states also formulated their visions and educational policies in the late 1990s.

Since the implementation of NEP 2020 (without any implementational blueprint in the public domain) has just begun and the new NCF 2023 has yet to be implemented, this analysis will largely depend upon the NEP1986 and NCF 2005.

Notably, the compulsory education guaranteed by the Constitution for up to 14 years has been curtailed to eight years – 6 to 14. NEP2020 maintained the same status, though, in 2005, CABE recommended ten years of universal education. NEP2020 missed a significant opportunity to transform Indian education by raising the bar of compulsory education from 14 to 18 in two phases – up to 10 by 2025 and 18 by 2030 - to fulfil the ambition of developed India by 2047.

Structure of the Education System

The structure of Indian school education has evolved from 10 years of schooling (4+4+2) to 8 years of common schooling followed by three years of streamed education in schools (5+3+3) (MOE, 1953) to twelve years of schooling (5+3+2+2) comprising ten years of common schooling followed by two years of specialised stream-based education (MOE, 1966).

Indian nonformal preschool education for 3-6-year-olds began with the introduction of the Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) by the Government of India in 1975[14]. In 2013, the Government of India adopted the National Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Policy. A National ECCE Curriculum Framework and Quality Standards were also developed (UNICEF, n.d.).

While maintaining the existing organisational structure of schooling, (3+)5+3+2+2, NEP 2020 proposed a pedagogical and curricular reorganisation linking three-year preschool with the first two years of primary education and called it foundational learning. The remaining three years of primary education will be treated as preparatory. The primary education will be followed by three years of middle and four years of secondary education. However, according to NCF2023, the last four years will continue to be 2+2 with board examinations after grades 10 and 12 (NCERT, 2023, p 83).

Despite the proposed new pedagogical and curricular structure of 5+3+3+4, since the first two years of primary schooling remain with primary schools and ECCE with the Anganvadis, the organisational structure will continue to be (3+)5+3+2+2 as earlier (Figure 21.1).

Indian public schools operate under dual management—administrative management by the state Departments of Education and academic administration by the state boards of education. The administrative management of centrally sponsored schools, like KVs, JNVs, NIOS, and others, is managed by an executive committee with nominees of the Ministry of Human Resource Development/ Education. All schools have a local managing committee formed under the rules prescribed by the concerned central or state governments.

Centrally funded schools, e.g. KVs, JNVs, and others (usually K-12), are affiliated with the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE). NIOS administers open schooling throughout India. Private schools are affiliated with CBSE, ICSE, IGCSE, IBO, and state boards in certain states. State schools are affiliated with state boards of education. There are nearly 52 state school boards. There are State Textbook Boards and SCERTs that support the academic management of schools.

In the K-12 segment, private schools make a big contribution to increasing the percentage of enrolment and enhancing the standard and quality of school education. Currently, nearly 25% of schools in India are private, accounting for a 40% share in enrolment (FICCI, 2014). Homeschooling is legal but a less explored and much-debated option.

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[14] ICDS stated, "The early learning component of the ICDS is a significant input for providing a sound foundation for cumulative lifelong learning and development. It also contributes to the universalisation of primary education by providing the child with the necessary preparation for primary schooling".

There are 15,697 Industrial Training Institutes (ITI) in India. These institutes offer trade courses to students who complete 8, 10 and 12 years of education. The first vocational education is available at the end of compulsory education in grade 8.
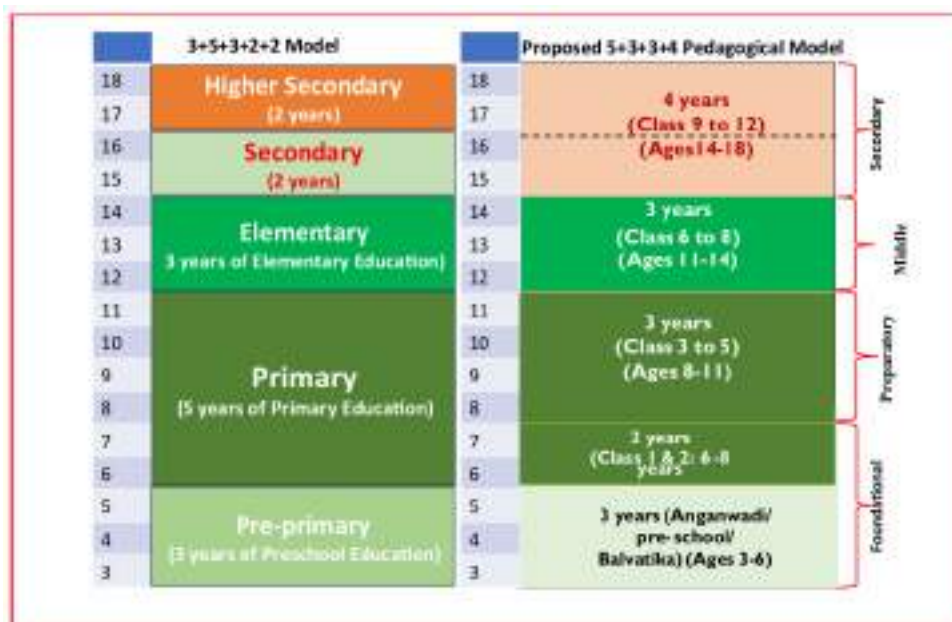
Figure 21.1 Structure of the School Education System in India[15]
Source: Authors

Curricular Framework

Defining the curriculum framework is the domain of Boards of School Education. Hence, India does not have a common curriculum for school education. The apex expert institution, NCERT, frames the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) from time to time (1975, 1988, 2000, 2005, and 2023) more as a guideline. Since the discussion on more than 55 curriculum frameworks prescribed by different boards is impossible, the discussion will be limited to NCF. The NCF 2023 was released in August 2023 and is yet to be implemented. Till such time, NCF 2005 remains valid.

Five major guiding principles of the NCF 2005 include:

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[15] NEP2020 recommended four years of Secondary Stage (Grades 9-12) in two phases, i.e., 9 and 10 in the first and 11 and 12 in the second (MOE, 2020, p.11). NCF 2023 mentioned, "Students must clear 8 Board examinations at end of Grade 10" (NCERT, 2023, p.54). Thus, board examinations at the end of the 10th and 12th will continue with some qualitative changes.

1. "Connecting learning to real-life examples outside school,

2. Ensuring that learning shifts away from the rote methods,

3. Enhancing the curriculum so that it goes beyond textbooks,

4. Making examination more flexible and integrative with school life,

5. Nurturing an overriding identity informed by caring concerns within the democratic polity of the country" (NCERT, 2005, p viii).

These are based on and in continuation of the previous policy frameworks. It sought a major shift from the earlier teaching-learning approaches, following the international trends at all stages of schooling to make it more

- "Learner centric, flexible process
- Learner autonomy
- Facilitates, supports and encourages learning
- Active participation in learning
- Learning in the wider social context
- Knowledge as it evolves and is created
- Multidisciplinary, educational focus
- Multiple and divergent exposure
- Multifarious, continuous" (NCERT, 2005, p. 110).

The vision of NEP 2020 is to create "an education system that contributes to the development of an equitable and vibrant knowledge society". Education can achieve this by developing "good human beings capable of rational thought and action, possessing compassion and empathy, courage and resilience, scientific temper and creative imagination, with sound ethical moorings and values" (MOE, 2020). Accordingly, the five aims of NCF2023 are: "Rational Thought and Independent Thinking/Autonomy, Health and well-being, Democratic and Community Participation, Economic Participation, and Cultural Participation" (MOE, 2020, p. 48).

Preschool Curriculum

The three curriculum goals stated in NCF2005 are that children have good health and well-being, become effective communicators, become involved learners, and connect with their immediate environment. Later, in 2013 and 2019, NCERT published 'The Preschool Curriculum', setting different skill sets, a pedagogical process, and outcomes for each of the three age levels (Tables 21.1).

Table 21.1 Goals and Skills Development in ECCE

Goals	Skills
Good Health and Well-being	• caring, sharing, collaboration, compassion and respect for other's feelings and rights • healthy habits, hygiene, sanitation, and awareness for self-protection. • gross motor skills (walking, running, jumping) and fine motor skills (eye-hand coordination in threading, tearing, pasting, scribbling, drawing, colouring, and printing).
Effective Communication	• Talking and listening, • Emergent reading (pretend reading and word recognition), • Emergent writing (Eye-hand Coordination), • Exposure to second language,
Involved learner and environmental awareness	• Sensory skills: Sight, Sound, Touch, Smell, and Taste, • Cognitive Skills: Observation, Identification, Retention, Matching, Classification, Patterns, Sequential Thinking, Creative Thinking, Critical Thinking, Problem Solving, Reasoning, Curiosity, Experimentation, Exploration, • Concept Formation: Colours, shapes, distance, measurement - length, weight, height, time, spatial sense, One-to-one correspondence, • Number Sense: count and tell how many, numeral recognition, sense of order, counting ahead of a number up to 10), • Environmental Concepts: Natural-animals, fruits, vegetables, food; Physical - water, air, season, sun, moon, day, and night; Social - myself, family, transport, festival, community helpers, etc.), • Technology use.

Source: NCERT, 2019 (Adapted by authors)

Elementary School Curriculum

Eight years of compulsory elementary education is divided into primary education (grades 1 to 4/5) and upper primary or elementary education (grades 5/6 to 8). The national curriculum recommended:

- A local or regional language,
- English,
- Mathematics,
- Art of healthy and productive living,
- Environmental studies,

- An integrated subject, including sciences and social sciences, is introduced as an additional subject in grade 3.

The upper primary curriculum includes subjects like:

- Three languages (mother tongue, English, and a modern Indian language, typically Hindi),
- Mathematics,
- Science and technology,
- Social sciences,
- Work education and arts,
- Health and physical education,
- One skill subject from a list of 11 subjects (Artificial Intelligence, Handicrafts, Information Technology, Mass Media, Coding, Data Science (for grade 8 only), etc).

Secondary School Curriculum

Secondary education, grades 9-10, is accessible to those who complete elementary education. The secondary school curriculum comprises three languages (Vernacular, English, and Hindi): Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, and Physical Education.

CBSE and a few state boards offer options to elect a vocational or skill subject in addition to the standard academic curriculum. Music, Painting, Home Science, National Cadet Crops (NCC), Computers, Elements of business, Bookkeeping or accountancy are the elective academic subjects, and one from a list of 39 skill subjects, e.g., Taxation, Cost Accounting, Office Procedures and practices, Shorthand (Hindi/English), Air-conditioning and refrigeration, Medical Diagnostics, Textile Design, Salesmanship, Business Administration, Food Nutrition and dietetics, etc. Students can choose health and physical education, work experience, or art education for internal assessment. The medium of instruction is either English or Hindi (for schools under the CBSE), and the mother tongue or English for schools under state boards. There is much variation among the state Boards' practices.

Higher Secondary Curriculum

At the higher secondary stage, students are streamed into vocational and academic streams. The latter is subdivided into three streams: science, humanities, and commerce. Admission into the higher secondary level is competitive based on the subject and overall scores in the 10th Board examinations.

Students perusing the general academic stream generally pursue higher academic education in colleges. Across India, higher secondary curricula are almost the same except for a few variations in subject requirements for different school boards. The curriculum comprises seven major learning areas: Languages, Humanities, Mathematics, Sciences, Skill Subjects, and co-scholastic areas - General Studies, Health and Physical Education, and work experience (Table 21.2).

The NCF 2023 calls for establishing competency-based learning within and outside the classrooms, focusing on inclusivity and promoting multiculturalism. The framework recommends the study of languages, mathematics, computational thinking, sciences, social sciences, arts, interdisciplinary areas, physical education, well-being, and vocational education. The emphasis is on an integrated approach to learning with a belief that every child can learn naturally. NCF2023 recommends time allocation with a 5-minute break between the periods (NCERT, 2023).

Table 21.2 Higher Secondary School Curriculum (Academic stream)

Stream	Group	Subjects
Language	L	Two languages, one of which must be English or Hindi.
Academic electives	A (Humanities)	Any three subjects from the list (i.e., Geography, History, Economics, Home Science, Sociology, Fine Arts, Political Science, Fashion Studies, and related subjects). Humanities include learning history and culture, geographical environment, global institutions, constitutional values and norms, politics, economy, interpersonal and societal interactions, civic responsibilities, and incorporating the learning mentioned above).
Academic electives	A (Science)	Any three from the list (i.e., mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, engineering, and computer science).
Academic electives	A (Commerce)	Any three subjects from the list (i.e., accounting, business studies, management, or computer applications).
Skill electives	S	List of 38 subjects
Compulsory subject	General	General Studies
Compulsory subject	General	Health & Physical Education/ Work experience
The subject of Internal Assessment	General	Anyone from the three (i.e., Health and Physical Education, Work Experience, General Studies).

Source: CBSE, 2021

Teaching Learning

There are three different stories of teaching-learning in Indian schools. These are dreamy mandates

and recommendations of NEPs and NCFs, ground realities in most public and private schools, and rays of hope in islands of quality.

The mandate of NCF 2005 for all levels is teaching to construct 'knowledge by connecting new ideas to existing knowledge' based on the materials/activities presented to them. Teachers are expected to link the students' knowledge with the practical world. '*Intelligent guessing*' has been encouraged as a valid pedagogic tool because today's *net generation* is advanced and can pre-apprehend and articulate what the teacher will introduce in his/her lessons. *Joyful learning* is the tagline of the entire elementary school. *Critical pedagogy* has been stressed, allowing one to reflect critically on political, social, economic, and moral issues.

The secondary and higher secondary curriculums stressed constructivist learning, physical and emotional well-being, social awareness, and the development of essential skills for 21st-century living through thematic or multidisciplinary approaches.

The grassroots realities largely remain unaltered. "In most schools, the teaching-learning process was teacher-centred, with students remaining passive most of the time. Most students' time-on-task tended to be on mechanical activities of choral repetition and copying" (UNICEF, n.d., p. 98). T^he roaring shadow classrooms – private tuition and coaching centres – are the fallout of poor classroom practices. A recent statistic shows that more than 90% of students at all levels take private tuition (Mintbook, 2019). Another survey revealed that more than 75% opted for it, according to a report by the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO). Studies on the status of classroom processes are negligible.

ASER (2023) found that "About 25% of this age group (14-18) still cannot read a Std II level text fluently in their regional language. More than half struggle with division (3-digit by 1-digit) problems. Only 43.3% of 14-18-year-olds can do such problems correctly. This skill is usually expected in Std III/IV. A little over half can read sentences in English (57.3%). Of those who can read sentences in English, almost three-quarters can tell their meanings (73.5%)" (ASER, 2023, p.2).

Some of the major factors for the situation are large, overcrowded classrooms, poor learning environments, including lack of ICT facilities, heavy curriculum and teacher workload and absenteeism (Azim Premji University, 2017; Boli, 2017; Kremer et al., 2005; Muralidharan et al.,

2017), single-teacher schools (7.8%)[16]. Teachers' lack of employability skills (Mukhopadhyay et al., 2015), unfavourable teacher attitudes, and weak academic leadership prevent the implementation of recommended interactive and constructivist methods.

The rays of hope are well-endowed, often expensive, private schools and schools like KVs and JNVs that the Government of India funds. The classrooms are well-equipped with ICT facilities and Internet connectivity (almost exclusively in urban areas), and teachers are frequently updated, mentored and monitored. Open access resources on the SWAYAM Prabha platform have opened new opportunities for teachers willing to integrate technology into education. However, many Indian classrooms shy away from technology integration and suffer from poor ICT infrastructure (Sharma, 2021). Varanasi et al. (2019) reported the outcomes of the Meghshala project on how teachers reconfigure the teaching-learning process – reconfiguring teaching-learning material, lesson plans, and content delivery to improve the classroom process. However, participating teachers also mentioned that ensuring timely curriculum coverage is their prime concern and responsibility. There are a few other such experiments in public schools.

Much of the policy and NCF ambitions to develop critical and creative thinking, problem-solving, life skills development, etc., are pedagogy-dependent. With large, overcrowded classrooms, poor learning environments and classroom facilities, and infrequent and ineffective teacher upgrades, the aims may largely remain unfulfilled.

Learning Assessment

Indian school education is highly exam-centric. The most critical focus is examination results, which guide the teaching-learning process of the heavy curriculum. Hence, teaching is assessment-focused, not learning outcomes-focused. The extensive spread of shadow classrooms is primarily to help children prepare for the examinations.

School assessments are conducted through in-school tests and board exams. Students face school examinations from grades 1-12, which are subdivided into summative and formative tests. The formative diagnostic exams are held regularly during an academic year, and summative examinations are taken at the end of a school year.

To facilitate the universalisation of elementary education, the government introduced the No-detention Policy till the completion of grade VIII with the primary intention of arresting stagnation and dropout and facilitating learning and assessment through alternative continuous and comprehensive assessment. Because of its dynamic and unconventional nature, the no-detention

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[16] https://www.education.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/parliament_annexure_en/LSUQ4178-en.pdf (Parliament Question)

policy faced criticism from educational conservatives and some vested interest groups that monetise failures and detention through coaching and private tuition. The government scrapped the no-detention policy in 2019.

Another dynamic innovation in learning assessment was the extension of CCE up to 10th grade and 12th grade in a few schools as an alternative to conventional board examinations by the CBSE. Several state boards also adopted the CCE at the grade 10th level. Later, it was scrapped in 2017 despite evidence of its matching or higher effectiveness as a means of learning assessment. However, UNICEF (2016) concluded that the Teaching-learning process is not conducive to CCE: "CCE cannot work successfully if the teaching-learning process is not student-centred, equity-focused and learning-oriented" (UNICEF, 2016, p.98).

Board exams are held yearly for students at the end of grades 10 and 12. NCF2023 also recommended the same practice. These are highly competitive, as the scores decide students' entry into higher education institutions. Boards of school education do not use standardised tests for school leaving examinations. They depend upon teacher-made tests with certain quality assurance mechanisms, such as moderation, developing marking schemes, etc. Several Boards, including CBSE, use a combination of MCQs and essay-type tests.

NCERT conducts Pan-India National Achievement Surveys (NAS) at the end of classes 3, 5, 8 and 10 studying in State Govt. schools, Govt. Aided schools, Private Unaided and Central Govt. schools. NAS does not provide scores for individual students/schools. NAS 2021 conducted Language, Mathematics, and Environmental Studies tests for classes 3 and 5; Language, Mathematics, Science, and Social Science for class 8; and Modern Indian Language, Mathematics, Science, Social Science and English for class 10 (MOE, n.d.).

Health and Physical Education

Physical education and sports are very popular in Indian schools. They are an integral part of the school experience for children of all grades. Physical education is compulsory in schools, with one or two weekly periods.

 Most public secondary schools have provisions for physical education instructors, though not specialist athletics and games teachers, like those in private schools. The state governments and central agencies encourage sports and games through interschool athletics and sports and games competitions. The "Subroto Cup International Football Tournament is a prestigious international inter-school football tournament"[17] held annually in New Delhi since 1960.

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[17] https://www.subrotocup.in/

NEP 1986 stated (article 8.20), "Sports and physical education are an integral part of the learning process and will be included in the evaluation of performance. A nation-wide infrastructure for physical education, sports and games will be built into the educational edifice" (MHRD, 1986, p. 26). NEP2020 repeatedly mentioned the importance of physical education. NCF 2023, clubbing physical education with well-being, recommended schools to provide physical education classes for all stages, adequate resources, equal importance and status to the subject to ensure equal opportunity for all students, teach cooperation and teamwork through physical education, ensure healthy competition and use it to explore personal capacities and limits (p. 420-422) without mentioning the source of funding for physical education. Since the public schools are poorly funded, they are unlikely to be able to provide the recommended facilities.

Health education is largely missing from the school education scheme. NEP2020 clubs health with nutrition and the need for health checkups. Health education as an item of learning is still missing. A few states have school health programmes.

However, since the focus is on academic performance, physical education, sports, and games do not enjoy the same status. As a result, all students do not take an active interest in physical education and are not encouraged by their parents. For example, like other school subjects, physical education is compulsory, but performance in this area does not count for intergrade promotion or figure in the marksheet.

Besides, most schools face difficulty following the PHE syllabus due to its intensity, shortage of resources, and specialist sports teachers. English-medium private schools have better physical education, sports, and games provisions. Centrally sponsored schools like Kendriya Vidyalayas and Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas have much better provisions for physical education.[18] Physical education is unlikely to receive the importance it deserves as long as it is not a credit programme.

Skills Education

India has a huge skill gap, resulting in low productivity and quality. To bridge the alarming skill gap, the government of India set up the National Skill Development Corporation in 2008. On the other hand, there is a long history of policies on vocational education from the British period till contemporary times. Strong recommendations for introducing vocational education are found in the Hunter Commission Report of 1882, the Sapru Committee Report of (for UP) 1934, and the Abbot-Wood Report 1936-37.

The Mudaliar Commission recommended the constitution of an Interministerial Board of Vocational Education. The Education Commission (1964-66) recommended the 'vocationalisation of

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[18] Response to Parliament Question by Minister of State for School Education on 18 December 2023. https://sansad.in/getFile/loksabhaquestions/annex/1714/AU2463.pdf?source=pqals

secondary education'. The NPE 1968, followed by the NCF 1975, recommended introducing work experience as a source of learning and making it the central feature of school education at all levels (NCERT, 1975, p.4).

NPE 1986 recommended the introduction of vocational education, which is crucial in the proposed educational reorganisation to enhance individual employabïlity, reduce the mismatch between the demand and supply of skilled workforce, and provide alternatives for those not interested in pursuing higher education (MHRD, 1986, p. 13).

The NEP2020 carried forward the legacy of NPE1986. It recommended beginning vocational exposure at middle and secondary schools to ensure that every child learns at least one vocation and is exposed to several more. Further, "Vocational education will be integrated into the educational offerings of all secondary schools in a phased manner over the next decade. Towards this, secondary schools will also collaborate with ITIs, polytechnics, local industry, etc. Skill labs will also be set up and created in the schools in a hub and spoke model, which will allow other schools to use the facility (MOE, 2020, p. 44)."

 Besides the policy initiatives, there have been several programme initiatives. Under the Samagra Shiksha scheme, vocational education is provided to students from Class 9 onwards. The Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Vocational Secondary & Higher Secondary Education (CSS for VHSE) promote vocational education in secondary and higher secondary schools across India for students in Classes IX to XII covering agriculture, business and commerce, engineering and technology, health and paramedics, home science, hospitality, and tourism; the Scheme is being implemented in more than 20,000 schools (2021) in India. The NIOS also offers more than 70 vocational courses through distant mode.

However, "according to the latest data available, only about 5 per cent of students in India are enrolled in vocational courses. The lack of infrastructure and trained teachers, the absence of industry-academia linkages, and unfavourable attitudes towards vocational education are some of the major reasons for the low coverage of vocational education in India" (Mehta 2023, para 5).

Hobby and Life Skills Education

"Hobby", as a word, does not figure in NPE 1986, 2020, and NCF 2023, though hobbies are life-enriching. However, schools offer plenty of cocurricular activities—the opportunity for hobby development. However, schools serve primarily as a platform to demonstrate skills that students learn at home or with private tutors at the parents' instance.

Life skills education was not mentioned in NPE1986. The NEP2020 passingly mentions under 'Principles of this Policy, on page 5, "Life skills such as communication, cooperation, teamwork,

and resilience", relating it to fitness on page 12, and critical life skills including "financial literacy, digital literacy, commercial skills, health care and awareness, child care and education, and family welfare on page 51 in the context of Adult Education and Lifelong Learning (MoE, 2020, p.51). NCF 2023 mentions teaching life skills through sports and storytelling. Thus, life skills education is still not a serious educational agenda in Indian schools, although many life skills overlap with employability soft skills.

While introducing CCE in 2010, CBSE introduced life skills education and assessment. With the scrapping of CCE in 2017, a formal agenda of life skills education was also scrapped. Several education service providers fill this policy and programme gap by offering life skills education and training, mostly benefitting students of elite private schools. The absence of life skills education as a learning agenda in Indian education is the primary reason for the large-scale unemployability among youth employment seekers.

Moral, Social, and Cultural Education

Kothari Commission (1964-66) stressed the importance of moral education and inculcation of social responsibility. The NCF 1975 included in its charter 'Character Building and Human Values'. The emphasis was on the learner finding 'the right road for his self-actualisation and encouraging him to follow it' for ethical development, inculcating the values, attitudes and skills such as human rights, justice, tolerance, cooperation, social responsibility, non-violence and respect for cultural diversity, etc. required for living in harmony with oneself and with others (NCERT, 1975).

NEP 2020 recommended the development of character and desirable social and human values to function as responsible citizens: ethical reasoning, traditional Indian values and all basic human and Constitutional values such as *service, nonviolence, cleanliness, truth, work sans expectation of results, peace,* respect for elders, etc. NCF2023 proposed developing values through complete integration into learning standards, pedagogical processes, and school and classroom culture. At this point, no separate time, class, or subject is being proposed for value education (NCERT, 2023)

India is pluralistic, multicultural, multilingual, multireligious, and multiethnic. Secular education is the Constitutional mandate. However, no special effort is made to provide multicultural education. Students learn the cultures and cultural practices of the concerned state and linguistic groups through events and episodes in the school and the community. NEP2020 emphasises the importance of education rooted in Indian ethos, cultures, and indigenous knowledge.

Peace and Happiness Education

In the 2023 Global Peace Index (GPI), India ranks 126th. Ranking in peace index cannot be disassociated with peace education. NCF2005 dedicates a special place to 'Education for Peace (Article 3.8), arguing in favour of the introduction of peace education in early school grades: "Education for peace seeks to nurture ethical development, inculcating the values, attitudes and

skills required for living in harmony with oneself and others, including nature (NCERT, 2005, p.61). It suggests certain activities for peace education, such as:

- "Set up special clubs and reading rooms in schools that concentrate on peace news and events violating social justice and equality norms.
- Compile a list of documentaries and feature films that promote the values of justice and peace. Screen them occasionally in schools.
- Co-opt the media as a stakeholder in education for peace. Invite influential journalists and editors to address children. Ask for space in newspapers and journals for children's views to be published at least once a month.
- Celebrate the cultural and religious diversity of India in schools.
- Organise programmes to promote respect and responsibility towards women" (NCERT, 2005, p.62).

Nonetheless, there is no evidence of peace education following the recommendations in NCF2005. Generally speaking, Indian school campuses are peaceful; there are no major or large-scale incidences of campus violence. However, stray bullying events, especially in elite private schools, are not unknown. The NEP2020 and NCF2023 are silent on Education for Peace, though both the documents mention the word 'peace' in the context of Yoga and peace as a value.

Happiness education does not find a place in Indian school education. The only exception is the introduction of the Happiness Curriculum by the Government of Delhi in 2030 schools (SCERT, 2019). It discusses the triads of momentary happiness through the senses, deeper happiness through harmony in feelings, and sustainable happiness through learning and awareness. The happiness curriculum comprises ten modules split into three units: Exploring Happiness through Learning and Awareness, Experiencing Happiness in Relationships through Feelings, and Happiness through Active Participation. However, we have not come across any empirical study on its effectiveness.

Summary and Conclusion

The recommendations of committees and commissions guided the initial years of Indian educational reforms. The three formal Indian education policies were enacted in 1968, 1986, and 2020. All three national policies reiterated the constitutional commitment to free and compulsory education, changing "up to 14 years" to 6- 8 years, thereby removing post-natal and preschool education outside the scope of free and compulsory education. Further, despite the recommendations of the CABE of Universal Secondary Education in 2005, coverage was retained up to grade 8.

The NCFs' proposed curriculum reforms are advisory. The State Boards prescribe and modify the curriculum from time to time. The school curriculum is heavy and mind-wasting. NPE2020

recommended reducing the curriculum to the essential core; NCERT and the Government of West Bengal initiated the process of reducing the curriculum.

The teaching-learning process continues to be primarily teacher-centric. SWAYAM Prabha provides opportunities for teachers to use innovative learning material. Learning assessment has been reformed to include a combination of formative and summative assessments and different test items.

Physical education is practised in all schools. Since it is not a qualifying examination item, it remains virtually optional for many students. Hobby and life skills education, value and peace education, and skills education, except for some indirect learning opportunities through school activities, are still not articulated in the education agenda. NEPs recommend skills/vocational education. However, only about 5 per cent of students opt for vocational courses at the school level.

An articulate agenda for all-round development is needed—the policy and provision gaps limit schooling to academic development. Further, a heavy curriculum and conventional teaching-learning process preparatory to examination promote rote learning without enhancing conceptual complexity, critical and creative thinking, problem-solving, and physical, emotional, social, and moral development, except by default.

Indian educational policies are futuristic and dreamy but must be rooted in grassroots realities. Despite the commitment to SDG4, which calls for 'inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all', the current state of the Indian education system falls short. Learning efficiency and outcomes depend significantly on the learning environment. Temperature, sound, light, space for movement, colour, carbon dioxide, noise, smell, humidity, flooring, electrical wiring, computers, and the Internet (Heppell, 2020; Mitra, 2020). Furnishing – fixed multi-seater benches versus easily movable single occupancy desks or clean floors where students can be easily organised in rows, columns and circles (groups) adds value to the learning environment. The necessary school ambience for quality education is missing in the 1.5 million primary and 0.3 million secondary schools. These schools must be equipped at least at the level of KVs and JNVs and mission-based private schools like Ramkrishna Mission, DAVs, BVBs, etc.

To realise the goal of foundational learning, pedagogical restructuring must be complemented by structural reforms, such as integrating Anganvadis with primary schools, as done in Tamil Nadu.

Only 4.5% of the Indian population are graduates (Census, 2011), compared to 40.68% in the OECD countries. To achieve the vision of a developed nation by 2047, India must significantly increase its graduate population. School education needs massive investment to generate a qualitatively large and robust higher education constituency. The policy commitment of 6% of GDP and actual allocation of less than 4% must change. India needs an actual allocation of a minimum of 8% of

GDP to compensate for the accumulated resource deficit. The limited outreach of telecommunication or cable networks further exacerbates the problem, depriving large rural areas of the Internet facilities necessary for quality education.

Independent India has done very well educating the millions in a multireligious, multicultural, multilingual democracy. However, to achieve the policy goals, education must be prioritised in practice.

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National Philosophy Shaping Education: Malaysia

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Abstract

The Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013–2025 aims to transform the education system through 11 key shifts for sustainable transformation by 2025. This chapter critically examines policy and curricular reforms, including pedagogy and learning assessment. The curriculum design emphasises six key aspects: communication, spirituality and values, self-skills, humanities, physical and aesthetic development, and STEM education. It also emphasises developing 21st-century skills and higher-order thinking skills. Teachers have been trained for problem-based and task-based teaching-learning processes. School-based assessments have been introduced as a holistic evaluation method, addressing students' intellectual, emotional, physical, and spiritual aspects. Physical and Health Education emphasise movement skills and healthy lifestyle practices. To build a disciplined, cultured, and united society, Muslim students study Islamic Studies, while non-Muslim students study moral education. However, despite the comprehensive nature of the curriculum, there is currently no specific curriculum on peace and happiness education.

Keywords: Malaysia, Education Blueprint, Key Shifts, Technology Leveraging, STEM Education, Islamic Studies.

Introduction

Malaysia gained independence on 31 August 1957, with its capital in Kuala Lumpur. It consists of 13 states and three federated territories. Its land area is 329,900 km2 and borders Thailand, Singapore, Indonesia, and Brunei. Malaysia operates under the federated constitutional monarchy

and upholds Bahasa Malaysia as its official language, with English as its second language. Islam is its official religion, and other religions can be freely practiced.

The Malaysian population is estimated to be around 33.38 million, with a population growth rate of 0.2 per cent. The number of children under 18 is approximately 9.13 million (27.4 per cent) of the total population. (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2023). The gender composition is 17.46 million (52.3 per cent) males and 15.92 (47.7 per cent) females. The population's life expectancy at birth is 71.3 years for males and 75.8 years for females. Of its total population, the Malay population is estimated to be 21.3 million (63.8 per cent) people, the Chinese to be around 6.9 million (20.7 per cent) people, the Indian population around 2 million (6 per cent), while the other ethnicities are around 0.2 million (0.6 per cent). Non-citizens make up around 2.9 million (8.7 per cent) people.

The Malaysian Economy is the fifth largest in Southeast Asia and the 36th largest in the world in terms of GDP (Malaysia 2024); GDP is USD 445.52 billion (2024: IMF) with a growth rate of 4.4 per cent. The per capita GDP is USD 13,310. The 2021 Global Competitiveness Report ranked Malaysia's economy as the 25th most competitive country globally. GDP growth is 5.6 per cent, ranking 36, and GDP per capita ranks 67th (nominal; 2023) and 55th (PPP; 2023). The Malaysian economy is doing well.

Malaysia ranked 55th on the World Happiness Index 2023 with a score of 6.012. As per World Data (2024), it ranks 49th among 130 countries in the quality of life ranking. Among the seven factors considered for the estimation of QLI, the safety factor is reported as 95 per cent and political stability as 74 per cent.

The Malaysian school education system comprises estimated 5,857 preschools and 8169 preschool teachers mentoring 186,298 preschoolers; 7,723 primary schools with 2,804,405 students and 236,313 primary teachers; and 2,296 secondary schools with 2,281,775 students and 176,407 secondary teachers. According to Quick Facts (MOE, 2023), Malaysian Educational Statistics, the 2022 enrolment rate for primary school is 98.67 per cent (3 million); lower secondary is 95.29 per cent (1.4 million); upper secondary is 90.65 per cent (0.85 million), and post-secondary is 17.28 per cent (0.16 million). Its primary school completion rate is 99.34 per cent, and 96.16 per cent for secondary school (2022) (WEN, n.d.).

Educational Policy

The Malaysian education system was governed by the Education Act 1961 (Act 43) before its amendment in 1996 (Act 550), which outlines the role of the national curriculum and prescribed public examinations from preschool, primary, secondary, special needs, technical and vocational

and higher education. The act mandates the government to provide free education to all students from kindergarten to pre-university. It makes formal education of primary education (Year 1 to Year 6) mandatory for all children between 7 and 12 years old. The Universities and University Colleges Act 1971 and the Private Higher Education Institutions Act 1996 are the two other major education policies.

"The Malaysian school curriculum is committed to developing the child holistically in intellectual, spiritual, emotional, and physical dimensions, as reflected in the National Education Philosophy (MOE, 2013, p.E-5)". The National Education Philosophy for Malaysia, written in 1988 and revised in 1996, describe the Ministry's and Government's vision of education as: "Education in Malaysia is an ongoing effort towards further developing the potential of individuals in a holistic and integrated manner, to produce intellectually, spiritually, emotionally and physically balanced and harmonious individuals based on a firm belief in and devotion to God. Such an effort is designed to produce Malaysian citizens who are knowledgeable and competent, who possess high moral standards, and who are responsible and capable of achieving a high level of personal well-being as well as being able to contribute to the harmony and betterment of the family, the society and the nation at large" (MOE, 2013, p.E-6).

The National Education Policy outlines the policies and provides guidelines to carry out the national philosophy of education, its vision, mission, and objectives for education, and the national language, national curriculum, and other aspects of education for Malaysia. It also provides guidelines on the operationalisation of the different levels of education for the different types of institutions currently under Malaysia's national education system, which includes national schools, national vernacular schools, religious schools, technical and vocational schools and many more. Malaysia's education policies have changed over the last 60 years, adapting to the country's evolving national landscape and external influences.

The latest education policy introduced by the Ministry of Education of Malaysia is The Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025 (Pre-school to Post-Secondary Education) and Malaysia Education Blueprint 2015–2025 (Higher Education) together provide a quick but sustainable transformation of the education system up to the year 2025. These blueprints are an extension of the National Education Policy and drive the aspirations of Malaysia's education system as it strives to build citizens who will be ready to face the future. The objectives of the Malaysia Education Blueprint are threefold:

1. Understanding the current performance and challenges of the Malaysian education system, with a focus on improving access to education, raising standards (quality), closing achievement gaps (equity), fostering unity amongst students, and maximising system efficiency;

2. Establishing a clear vision and aspirations for individual students and the education system as a whole over the next 13 years; and

3. Outlining a comprehensive transformation programme for the system, including key changes to the Ministry, will allow it to meet new demands and rising expectations and ignite and support overall civil service transformation (MOE, 2013, p.E3).

The five outcomes that this Blueprint aspires for the Malaysian education system are access, quality, equity, unity, and efficiency (MOE, 2013, p.E14-16):

- Access: 100% enrolment across all levels from preschool to upper secondary by 2020.
- Quality: Top third of countries in international assessments such as PISA and TIMSS in 15 years.
- Equity: 50% reduction in achievement gaps (urban-rural, socio-economic and gender) by 2020.
- Unity: An education system that gives children shared values and experiences by embracing diversity.
- Efficiency: A system which maximises student outcomes within the current budget (MoE, 2013, p. E-15)

The Blueprint based its student aspirations on the vision of a balanced education as its foundation according to the National Education Philosophy. It also aimed to develop a refined articulation of specific skills and attributes students need to thrive in tomorrow's economy and globalised world. The desired students' attributes derived were as follows (MOE, 2013, p.E16-18):

- Knowledge
- Thinking Skills
- Leadership Skills
- Bilingual Proficiency
- Ethics and Spirituality
- National Identity

The Ministry identified 11 shifts that must occur to meet the aspirations listed above. The 11 shifts are:

1. "Provide equal access to quality education of an international standard.
2. Ensure every child is proficient in Bahasa Malaysia and the English language and is encouraged to learn an additional language.
3. Develop values-driven Malaysians.
4. Transform teaching into the profession of choice.

5.   Ensure high-performing school leaders in every school.

6.   Empower JPNs, PPDs, and schools to customise solutions based on need.

7.   Leverage ICT to scale up quality learning across Malaysia.

8.   Transform Ministry delivery capabilities and capacity.

9.   Partner with parents, community, and private sector at scale.

10.   Maximise student outcomes for every Ringgit.

11.   Increase transparency for direct public accountability" (MOE, 2013, p.E19-20).

With these Shifts, the outcome and impact of the transformational journey are expected to be observable by 2025 on various stakeholders. Students from all backgrounds will develop knowledge and skills in a conducive learning environment to remain competitive internationally. Teachers will also enjoy improved career prospects and satisfaction through enhanced professional development and a fair evaluation process to foster effective facilitation of student outcomes. School leaders will also receive adequate support and training to empower them to lead effective change within their schools. Ministry officials will transition to become effective leaders of change that promotes meritocracy. Finally, parents will experience transparency in communication about their children's education, which will foster a collaborative partnership with their children's schools to support their children's learning journey.

However, the impacts remain to be seen. As listed in the Malaysia Education Blueprint (MOE, 2013, p.E38), the transformation journey was to happen over 13 years in three waves.

- Wave 1 (2013-2015) was to focus on turning around the system by supporting teachers and focusing on core skills;
- Wave 2 (2016-2020) was to accelerate the system's improvement, and
- Wave 3 (2021-2025) was to move towards excellence with increased operational flexibility.

The key outcomes listed in Wave 3 included Malaysia's performance on TIMSS and PISA in the top third of systems, Maintaining or improving enrolment, Maintaining or improving the urban-rural gap, and reducing the socio-economic and gender gaps by 50 per cent. However, the recent PISA 2022 results released by the OECD in 2023 saw Malaysia's results drop compared to PISA 2018 in all three areas of mathematics, reading, and science. (OECD, 2023). The average scores in mathematics were below the scores observed in 2012, whereas in reading and science, the 2022 results drop reversed gains observed between 2012 and 2018, and mean scores returned close, in 2022, to those observed ten years earlier. Based on the results presented by PISA 2022, girls performed better than boys in mathematics by 10 points and 31 points in reading. More boys struggled academically than girls, with 63 per cent falling below par in mathematics compared to

only 55 per cent of girls, whereas 66 per cent of boys struggled in reading compared to only 50 per cent of girls. However, the percentage of top achievers in mathematics is similar for both genders (1 per cent for each). Despite worldwide fluctuations, mathematics performance among Malaysian boys and girls remained steady between 2012 and 2022.

The Education Act of 1996 (Commissioner of Law Revision, 2006) Opened provisions for private and international schools to be run by private entities. After completing their primary education at a Chinese national-type primary school, some students opt for a Chinese Independent High School for their secondary education, embarking on a six-year journey split into junior and senior middle stages, akin to systems in mainland China and Taiwan. During the senior middle stage, students select specialised tracks like Science or Art/Commerce, culminating in the Unified Examination Certificate (UEC) at the end of each stage. Certain schools offer an additional senior middle year for those pursuing the government's Sijil Tinggi Pelajaran Malaysia (STPM), akin to A-levels. Aligned with government schools, the academic year consists of two semesters, with exams concluding each semester. Student progression hinges on their annual academic performance, with potential repercussions for failing to meet promotion criteria, including repeating the year or, after consecutive failures, facing dismissal—unlike in government schools, where promotion occurs automatically regardless of academic standing.

Numerous students in Malaysia opt for international schools, often enrolling from Year 7 onwards, considering that the public secondary education system is predominantly conducted in Bahasa Malaysia. At the same time, most universities and colleges deliver lectures in English. Many parents aspire for their children to pursue an international education, and immersing them in an English-medium environment prepares them for this. International schools in Malaysia offer a range of curriculums, including the Cambridge International Curriculum (UK), the Australian Curriculum (Western Australia), the Canadian Curriculum (Ontario), and the IB Curriculum (Switzerland). Due to age arrangements, many students from international schools enter university at the age of 17.

Structure of the Education System

Malaysia's national education system starts at nursery and daycare centres for children 0 to 4 years old using the Permata Curriculum. Kindergarten starts at five and lasts two years, following the Kurikulum Standard Prasekolah Kebangsaan (KSPK) or National Standard Preschool Curriculum. Formal education starts with primary education and is compulsory under the Education Act 1961; non-enrollment results in punitive measures of fining parents.

Primary education in Malaysia begins at seven and lasts six years, from Standard 1 to 6. Standards 1 to 3 are classified as Level One; 4 to 6 are Level Two, following the Kurikulum Standard Sekolah Rendah (KSSR) or National Primary School Standard Curriculum. It then moves on to lower secondary education, called Form 1 to 3 for 13-15-year-olds, before proceeding to upper secondary for 16 and 17-year-olds. At the upper secondary stage, students can choose between academic, technical/vocation and religious streams for Form 4 and 5 following the Kurikulum Standard Sekolah Menengah (KSSM) or National Secondary School Standard Curriculum. Figure 22.1 below summarises Malaysia's national school education system.
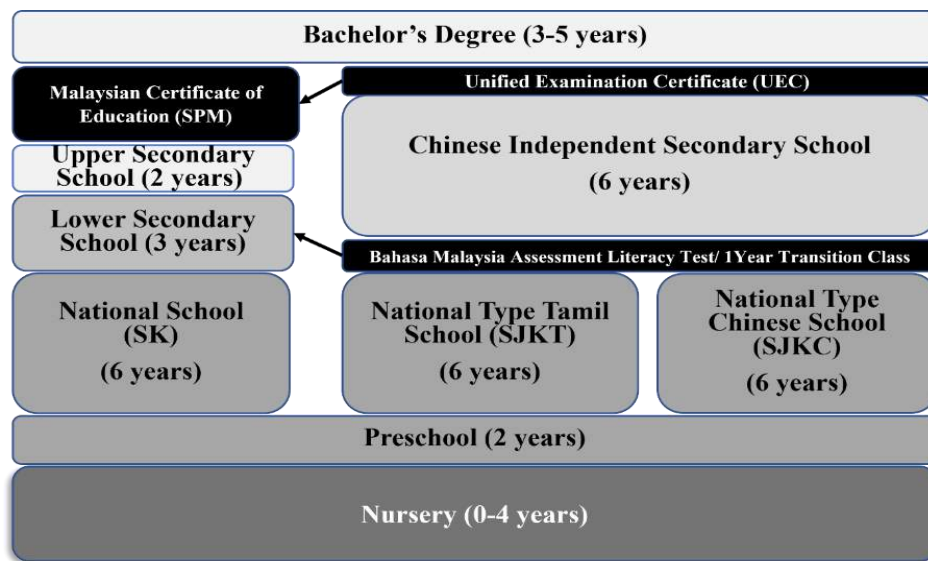
*Note: This diagram does not include all awards or study pathways.

Figure 22.1 Structure of the Education System in Malaysia

Source: WENR, 2023 (Adapted by authors)

Post-secondary education starts at 18 years. Students can choose Form 6, Matriculation, or Foundation studies in pre-university before moving up to higher education, which universities, college universities, polytechnics, and community colleges offer. The age groups might differ if students were to enrol in private learning institutions.

Curricular Framework

MOE introduced the Kurikulum Standard Sekolah Rendah (KSSR: standard curriculum for primary education)) to replace Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Rendah (KBSR) in 2010 and Kurikulum Standard Sekolah Menengah (KSSM) to replace Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah

Menengah/Secondary School Integrated Curriculum (KBSM/SSIC) in 2017. One of the main reasons for introducing the KSSR curriculum was the poor performance in TIMSS and PISA. KSSR is developed from standards-based statements. Each statement includes content and learning standards for students to achieve at specific periods and levels of schooling. The Content Standards specifically cover what students should know and be able to do during school time, including all aspects of knowledge, skills, and values. Learning Standards describe the criteria or quality measurement of learning and achievement that can be used for each content standard. The table below compares the differences between the KSSR and KBSR curricula (Table 22.1).

Table 22.1 Difference between KSSR and KBSR, and KSSM and KBSM

KSSR	KBSR
Curriculum design is based on six stems: 1. Communication; 2. Spiritual, attitude and values; 3. Self-skills; 4. Humanities; 5. Physical and aesthetical development; 6. Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM)	Curriculum design is based on three areas: 1. Communication; 2. Man and his environment; 3. Self-development of the individual
Curriculum materials: Curriculum standard documents	Curriculum materials: Study Syllabus
Design of the curriculum: Modular	Design of the curriculum: Linear
Organisation of the Curriculum: Level I (Year 1, 2 & 3) - Basic core modules, thematic core modules and elective modules Level II (Year 4, 5 & 6) – Core and elective subjects	Organisation of the Curriculum: Level I (Year 1, 2 & 3) - Core, compulsory and additional subjects Level II (Year 4, 5 & 6) - Core, compulsory and additional subjects
The elements of creativity and Innovation, entrepreneurial, information technology and communication	Elements of analytical and creative thinking skills
Focus: 4M (Reading, Writing, Counting and Reasoning)	Focus: 3M (Reading, Writing and Counting)
KSSM	KBSM
Curriculum design is based on six stems: Communication; Spiritual, attitude and values; Self-skills; Humanities;	Curriculum design is based on three areas: Communication; Man and his environment; Self-development of the individual

Physical and aesthetic development; Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM)	
Curriculum materials: Curriculum standard documents	Curriculum materials: Study Syllabus
Design of the curriculum: Modular	Design of the curriculum: Linear
Time Allocation: Allocated according to minutes in a week	Time Allocation: Allocated according to hours in a year
More focused towards 21st Century Skills and Higher Order Thinking Skills	More focused towards critical and creative thinking, strategic thinking and Student Developmental Learning Guide
Focus: Reading, Writing, Counting, Language Art and Grammar	Focus: 3M (Reading, Writing and Counting)

Source: Mohd Nor et al., 2017 (Adapted by authors)

Malay and English are compulsory subjects in all schools. All schools use the same syllabus for non-language subjects regardless of the medium of instruction. Teaching the Chinese language is compulsory in SJK(C), and teaching the Tamil language is compulsory in SJK(T), as submitted to Sunway Education Group Student Paper.

The general subjects taught at national primary schools are Malay, English, Mathematics, Science, Local Studies, Civics and Citizenship Education, and Religious Education.

At the secondary level, students take core compulsory subjects such as Bahasa Malaysia, English, Science, History, Geography, and Mathematics. After sitting for the PT3 examination, students can choose to enter the following streams: Arts, Science, or Vocational.

In lower secondary, each period is 30 minutes. The number of periods allocated to each subject varies.

Teaching Learning

The KSSR and KSSM curriculum emphasises creativity and innovation, entrepreneurial skills, information technology and communication, 21st-century skills, and higher-order thinking skills. Teachers were sent for problem-based and task-based learning training to meet these objectives.

Science, Mathematics, Bahasa Malaysia, and English subjects are highly emphasised in the KSSR and KSSM curricula. For certification, Bahasa Malaysia and History are compulsory in SPM to create a strong national identity. However, various reports indicated the gap in achieving the

objectives of the blueprint. Many schools still need more technological facilities. Due to economic reasons, low internet access and access to technological tools like smartphones, laptops and tablets were evident during the COVID-19 pandemic. (Lee, 2020). The gap in technology literacy and the lack of access to ICT made teaching and learning hard, especially in rural and urban poor communities (Selvanathan et al., 2023)

The Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013–2025 (Pre-school to Post-Secondary Education) lists 11 shifts, mentioned earlier, that need to be executed to bring change to education in Malaysia.

With the Malaysia Education Blueprint (2013-2025) running at its third wave and the recommended teaching and learning practices being facilitated by the Malaysian Ministry of Education, studies presented by researchers show a striking paradox. Despite the Blueprints' emphasis on nurturing students' critical thinking skills and attempts to introduce more problem-solving and thought-provoking questions in exams, many teachers continue to use textbook-based teaching methods (Julie and Matt, 2021; Tee et al., 2018; Tiew & Abdullah, 2022). Students may need help to experience critical thinking or explore deeper concepts in the classroom. Additionally, there needs to be more evidence to suggest that teachers use assessment as a learning tool. Interestingly, this trend does not vary much between teachers with different experience levels. Hence, Malaysian classrooms are characterised by uniformity, which is not a positive teaching practice.

Learning Assessment

With the introduction of KSSR and KSSM, the traditional summative assessment of KBSR and KBSM was also slowly removed. Public examinations like the Primary School Achievement Test or Ujian Pencapaian Sekolah Rendah (UPSR) were entirely abolished in 2021, and Lower Secondary Assessment or Penilaian Menengah Rendah (PMR) was replaced with the Form 3 Assessment or Pentaksiran Tingkatan 3 (PT3) in 2014 before being completely removed in 2022. In place was the implementation of the School-Based Assessment or Pentaksiran Berasaskan Sekolah (PBS), which can evaluate and give feedback to students more regularly, like during and after classroom activities (Thambusamy & Elier, 2013). PBS is a holistic assessment method that considers the student's intellectual, emotional, physical and spiritual aspects while evaluating the curriculum's cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains. It aims to develop a more balanced and well-rounded workforce while decreasing the reliance on public examinations. Some examples of PBS activities were quizzes, assignments, case studies and forums. PBS started in 2011 for Year 1 pupils under the KSSR syllabus and in 2017 for Form 1 students under the KSSM syllabus. Performance standards were used to assess specific learning standards in each subject topic using a six-point mastery level scale that determines what learners are expected to achieve. Higher-order thinking elements were also embedded in the KSSR and KSSM standards documents, where the

content standards and learning standards were written explicitly into the standards documents for all subjects at all levels (Mohd Nor et al., 2017). The public examinations retained were the Malaysian Certificate of Education or Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) and the Malaysian Higher School Certificate or Sijil Tinggi Persekolahan Malaysia (STPM).

For higher education, the Malaysian Government established the Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA) in 2007 under the Malaysian Qualifications Agency Act 2007 to implement the Malaysian Qualifications Framework (MQF) for quality assurance of all academic programmes offered by all public and private higher education providers. It also serves as a reference point for all national qualifications regarding criteria and standards. MQA monitors and oversees quality assurance practices for all public and private higher education providers in Malaysia.

The school-based assessment for primary schools was introduced in 2011 and for lower secondary schools in 2012. Students will be assessed using the band system based on their skills, abilities, talents, and potential, with Band 1 being the lowest and Band 6 being the highest (Othman et al., 2013). Students are not evaluated based on their academic results in examinations but on their participation, involvement and achievement in various sports activities at school, district, state, national and international levels. The results will contribute to their overall performance assessment when proceeding to the upper levels.

Health and Physical Education

The New Primary School Curriculum for Physical Education and the International Standards for Physical Education and Sports for School Children by the International Council for Health, Physical Education, Recreational-Sports, and Dance (ICHPER-SD) informs the physical education curriculum for primary schools.

The curriculum content retains the psychomotor, cognitive, and affective domains. The Skills Module consists of Aspects 1 to 5, which are Aspect 1, Motor skills (psychomotor), Aspect 2, Application of Knowledge in Movement (cognitive), Aspect 3, Fitness for Health Improvement (psychomotor), Aspect 4, Application of Knowledge to Enhance Fitness (cognitive), and Aspect 5 Sportsmanship (affective) (Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia, 2015b). The minimum time allocated for health and physical education is 48 hours per year, with health education 16 hours and physical education 32 hours (Zakaria & Mazalan, 2024).

Similarly, the Secondary School Standard Curriculum for Physical Education and Health Education in Malaysia is a subject that emphasises learning based on movement skills and healthy lifestyle practices through the psychomotor, cognitive, and affective domains. The Secondary School Standard Curriculum for Physical Education and Health Education is formulated based on the

National Education Philosophy, which aims to produce a balanced generation of physical, emotional, spiritual, intellectual, and social development. The development of this curriculum is in line with the National Sports Policy. It considers policies recommended by international bodies such as UNESCO, WHO, and the International Council for Health, Physical Education, Recreation - Sports, and Dance (ICHPER-SD) (Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia, 2015a). The minimum time allocated for health and physical education at the secondary school level is 64 hours per year, with health education at 16 hours and physical education at 48 hours (Zakaria & Mazalan, 2024). School sports activities include table tennis, badminton, basketball, volleyball, hockey, archery, rugby, and many more.

Overall, the Health Education Curriculum focuses on Skills-Based Health Education, encompassing psychosocial competency skills that enable students to maintain a healthy lifestyle through the acquisition of information, the formation of attitudes or habits, skills that include moral values, diverse learning experiences, and an emphasis on participatory methods (Li et al., 2023). For Health Education in both primary and secondary schools, the curriculum consists of reproductive and social health education (75 per cent), nutrition (15 per cent), and first aid (10 per cent).

Skills Education

In meeting the global industry demands, the government has greatly emphasised TVET (Technical Vocational Education and Training) to develop competent graduates with both academic knowledge and practical skills. TVET receives prominence in the 11th and 12th Malaysian Plans (2016-2020 and 2021-2025, respectively). Besides, the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Higher Education, Ministry of Human Resources and government bodies have launched various initiatives to enhance the TVET ecosystem, such as capacity planning, recruitment and training, and curriculum development. In Malaysia, one of the primary institutions responsible for vocational education is the Department of Polytechnic and Community College Education under the Ministry of Higher Education. Polytechnics and community colleges offer vocational programmes covering various fields, including engineering, business, hospitality, and information technology (Subramaniam & Abdul Aziz, 2023).

The TVET programmes conducted by the secondary technical schools (Sekolah Menengah Teknik) cater to students interested in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) subjects. The study duration is two years, Form 4 and 5. Students can specialise in civil engineering, electrical and electronics engineering, mechanical engineering, commerce, and agriculture. Higher education institutions in Malaysia are given the autonomy to design their own TVET programmes, covering the stipulated body of knowledge, including Personal Traits and Professionalism, Teaching,

Learning and Training, Technical and Innovation, and Workplace Industry Engagement. As for the assessment, institutions are encouraged to use various methods appropriate for measuring learning outcomes and competencies (Table 22.2).

Table 22.2 Recommended Assessment Methods

Assessment per cent	Assessment per cent	Assessment per cent		Suggested Assessment Methods	Suggested/ Appropriate Assessors
		Theory	Practical		
50-100	0-50	30-50	50-70	• Observation • Demonstration • Presentation • Practical Assessment • Written Test • Portfolio/logbook Laboratory Report • Interview/Oral Test • Project	• TVET Providers • Industry • Professional bodies • External verifiers appointed by programme owners/accreditation bodies

Source: Malaysian Qualifications Agency, 2021

The Ministry of Education recognised that it is not enough for the TVET to produce quality human capital. It is much more. According to Mustapha (2017), issues related to TVET include negative perception of TVET, the governance body, the TVET framework, competency of teaching staff, job mismatch, not being driven by industry, limited allocation, and uncompetitive salary for TVET graduates. To further enhance the TVET ecosystem in Malaysia, the Malaysian Board of Technologists (MBOT) is set up to upgrade the professional path of TVET graduates. The TVET providers must also work closely with industry players and professional bodies to strengthen the links, widen opportunities for vocational education, and redesign the TVET curriculum to be industry-driven. In addition, there have been other efforts to align TVET under one coherent framework, such as the Code of Practice for TVET Programme Accreditation (COPTPA), which aims to improve the quality of all TVET programmes, encompassing skills, vocational or technical programmes (Subramaniam & Abdul Aziz, 2023).

Hobby and Life Skills Education

With the directive and support from the Ministry of Education, schools in Malaysia generally have very well-established systems of developing students' hobbies and talents through extracurricular activities both within and outside of schools. Coaches are engaged in professionally training the students with the right skills so that the students will not only enjoy their hobbies but also perform and compete in competitions. Creativity, leadership skills, and a sense of discipline can be fostered

by appropriately developing the students' hobbies and talents. Hobby development plays a significant role in the holistic education of students in Malaysia, contributing to their personal growth and well-roundedness, which is highly emphasised in the National Philosophy of Education (NPE), in line with Vision 2020 that calls for developing the potential of individuals in a holistic and integrated manner (Ismail & Hassan, 2009).

The concept of offering credits for hobby development is still in its infancy in Malaysia. However, there is a growing recognition of giving formal credits to enhance students' academic profiles, especially when attempting to enrol in high-performing institutions or applying for scholarships. Besides, certificates or awards will be issued for outstanding contributions to extracurricular activities to motivate students to delve deeper into their chosen hobbies. This initiative aligns with the global trend towards recognising the importance of soft skills, well-rounded personalities, and academic achievements. Malaysia's education system increasingly acknowledges the significance of nurturing diverse talents, reflected in the emphasis on extracurricular activities and participation in international competitions.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), life skills are abilities for adaptive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life (UNICEF, 2005). Life skills education in Malaysia is yet to be formalised and institutionalised. The concepts and values are embedded as an integral part of various subjects in schools. To emphasise its importance, "Life Skills" could be introduced as a standalone subject to train children and adolescents to reason and improve their mental and behavioural health. The core topics may include critical thinking, reasoning, decision-making and communication skills. It is hoped that steps to implement life skills education will be implemented soon to nurture a new generation equipped to deal with problems in daily life.

Moral, Social and Cultural Education

Moral Education in Malaysia emphasises the spiritual, humanitarian, and social aspects of the individual's development in a diversified population. Noble values inherited in Malaysian society, based on the various religions, traditions, and cultures of different ethnicities, are advocated (De Asildo & Yasin, 2021). In primary and secondary schools in Malaysia, the Moral Education curriculum consistently prioritises values related to spirituality, humanity, society, and culture to create a peaceful and harmonious society. It caters primarily to the non-Muslim cohort of students, while Muslim students take Islamic Studies. The values emphasised in both Moral Education and Islamic Studies are in the same vein. They are derived from religions, traditions, and cultures of various ethnicities that align with universal moral values. The allocation of time for Moral Education subjects in primary schools varies according to the types of schools (Table 22.3).

For lower secondary schools, the minimum time allocation for Moral Education subjects is the same for all public schools. There are 64 hours per year, with an additional 32 hours for activities outside the teaching and learning hours. As for upper secondary schools, no additional activities are required outside the teaching and learning hours. The allocated time should be a minimum of 64 hours per year. Moral education is a standalone subject; students are assessed using formative and summative assessments.

Table 22.3 Time Allocation for Moral Education in Primary Schools

Types of Primary Schools in Malaysia			
Year	National School	National Type Chinese	National Type Tamil
Year 1 – 3	minimum 96 hours per year	minimum 64 hours per year	minimum 64 hours per year
Year 4 – 6	minimum 96 hours per year	minimum 80 hours per year	minimum 80 hours per year

Source: MOE, 2019b

Besides, multicultural education is deeply rooted in the country's diverse ethnic and cultural landscape. Vernacular schools that provide education primarily in languages other than Bahasa Malaysia are constitutional, and their use of Tamil and Chinese is legally protected.

Peace and Happiness Education

In a multi-ethnic and multicultural country like Malaysia, tolerance is essential to ensure peace and happiness. To embrace this diversity, holistic education and inclusivity have been seamlessly embedded in the curriculum since independence. There is no specific formal curriculum on "peace and happiness education" in Malaysia. However, the values related to peace and happiness are the primary focus enshrined in the Malaysia Constitution, the national ideology statement, and the National Education Philosophy (NEP). The aspiration to build an inclusive society without race, religion, and cultural discrimination is aligned with the United Nations' SDGs (sustainable development goals) towards Education 2030. The education model in Malaysia inevitably accepts the core fact of embracing diversity in the social demographic profiles of different communities by including these values in almost all subjects. The government of Malaysia has been striving to promote education for peaceful co-existence (Ishak, 2009) to sustain a happy and harmonious nation.

While the explicit inclusion of "peace and happiness education" may not be present, the broader emphasis on character education covers aspects that contribute to a harmonious and fulfilling life (Calp, 2020). Though "peace and happiness education" has not been structured and accredited as a standalone credit programme, the education system may one day evolve to include a more explicit focus on peace, happiness and well-being.

Summary and Conclusion

The Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013–2025 (Pre-school to Post-Secondary Education) and Malaysia Education Blueprint 2015–2025 (Higher Education) outline a swift yet sustainable transformation of the education system until 2025. The 2013–2025 Blueprint, focusing on pre-school to post-secondary education, identifies 11 shifts in the Malaysian education landscape.

Among these goals are ensuring proficiency in Bahasa Malaysia and English for every child and leveraging ICT to scale up the quality of learning across Malaysia. This shift involves providing schools with internet access and resources for virtual learning. However, many schools still need more technological facilities.

The curriculum design comprises six aspects: communication, spirituality, attitude, and values; self-skills; humanities; physical and aesthetic development; and Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM). It also focuses on 21st-century skills and higher-order thinking skills.

School-based assessment has been introduced as a holistic evaluation method. It addresses students' intellectual, emotional, physical, and spiritual aspects while assessing the curriculum's cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. Performance standards are utilised to assess specific Learning Standards in each subject, employing a six-point mastery level scale to determine learners' expected achievements.

Physical Education and Health Education emphasise learning based on movement skills and healthy lifestyle practices through the psychomotor, cognitive, and affective domains. There is also an emphasis on TVET (Technical Vocational Education and Training) to develop competent graduates with academic knowledge and practical skills. Well-established systems for developing students' hobbies and talents through extracurricular activities, both within and outside of schools, are in place. However, giving credit for hobby development is still in its infancy in Malaysia. Certificates or awards are issued for outstanding contributions to extracurricular activities to motivate students to delve deeper into their chosen hobbies.

To build a disciplined, cultured, and united society, Muslim students study Islamic Studies, while non-Muslim students are taught moral education and are assessed. The curriculum in Moral Education prioritises values related to spirituality, humanity, society, and culture, aiming to create a peaceful and harmonious society. According to the education minister, the 2027 school curriculum will include character education (Rajaendram, 2023).

While there is no specific curriculum on peace and happiness education, the values of peace and happiness are the primary focus, enshrined in the Malaysia Constitution, the national ideology statement, and the National Education Philosophy (NEP). However, it can be asserted that Malaysia

is a peaceful country, considering its ranking as 55 on the World Happiness Index (WHI) 2023 Report and its quality of life ranking reported as 49 among 130 countries.

From the discussion detailed above, the school curriculum provides for the all-round development of students, including cognitive and non-cognitive subjects. The assessment of students of non-cognitive subjects is done, and students with good performance are provided with certificates, which enhances their chances of entry to good schools. A minimum pass in the non-cognitive subjects is essential for promotion. There is a need to work out strategies to assess the teacher training inputs and their ability to impart the content of non-cognitive subjects.

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23

Comprehensive Education Reforms: Pakistan

S. P. Malhotra[19]

Abstract

Pakistan has significantly enhanced access to basic education since its independence in 1947 despite several challenges. This chapter examines several policy enactments and reforms from 1959 through 2021, guaranteeing the right to free and compulsory education under the Benazir Income Support Program and spelling out the goals and spelling out the goals as character building through Taleem, Tarbiyya, and Tazkyya. Further, NEP 2021 recommended a Single National Curriculum and National Education Assessment System. The National Curriculum elaborates on educational objectives at different levels while recommending the subjects and their relative weight to different subjects and activities. Teaching learning continues to be teacher-centric without any notable technology integration. The NCF 2019 set Minimum National Standards for Quality Education in Pakistan. Co-curricular activities provide opportunities for physical education, life skills development, etc. Islamic religious education lays the foundation of peace education and character building. Lack of infrastructure, teacher shortages, societal barriers, and poor funding provision (1.77 per cent of the GDP) are significant challenges in implementing worthwhile policy recommendations and achieving policy goals.

Keywords: National Education Policy, National Curriculum Framework, National Standards for Quality Education, Character Education, National Education Assessment System

Introduction

The Islamic Republic of Pakistan emerged as a separate independent nation in 1947. Pakistan, with a land area of 796,095 km² shares its 3323-kilometer borders with India (2912 km) (DAWN, 2009) to the east, Afghanistan (2670 km) and Iran (959 km) to the west, and China (438 km) to the north

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Pakistan's geography ranges from the towering peaks of the Himalayas in the north to the arid plains of Sindh and Baluchistan in the south. The Indus River, one of the longest rivers in the world, flows through much of the country, playing a crucial role in its agriculture and irrigation systems. Indus Valley is one of the earliest cradles of civilisation.

The Population of Pakistan in 2023 was approximately 241.5 million with a population growth rate of 2.55% (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics October 20, 2023) - 49.6 per cent female and 50.4 per cent male. Islam is the dominant religion in Pakistan, comprising Sunni (85-90 per cent) and Shia Muslims (10-15 per cent) (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics 2019). The ethnic composition is Punjabi 44.7%, Pashtun (Pathan) 15.4%, Sindhi 14.1%, Saraiki 8.4%, Muhajirs 7.6%, Balochi 3.6%, others 6.3% (CIA, n.d.). Urdu is the official language, but Punjabi, Pashto, Sindhi Saraiki, Balochi, Hindko, Brahui, and a few other languages are also spoken in Pakistan.

Pakistan's economy is a mixture of agriculture, manufacturing, and services; agriculture remains vital. The per capita GDP is 1407 USD (World Bank Group, 2023). The GDP is 338.24 billion, growing at 2% annually (IMF, 2024) Pakistan's economy faces inflation, fiscal deficits, and energy shortages. On the Happiness Index, Pakistan ranks 108th out of 137 and 161st among 191 countries, respectively.

According to the Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement (PSLM) Survey 2023-2024, the population's literacy rate is 62.8%, 73.4% male and 51.9% female (Finance Division, 2024, p. 166). The number of schools and enrollment data available for 2020-21 (Table 23.1).

Table 23.1 Number of Schools and Enrolment

School Level	No. of schools (Public: Private)	Student enrolment (Public: Private)	Gender Ratio
Primary	144,586 (87:13 per cent)	20.078 mn (64:36 per cent)	
Middle	47,182 (34:66 per cent)	7.325 mn (34: 66 per cent)	
High	34,210 (44: 56 per cent)	3.779 mn (69:31 per cent)	57:43 (M: F)
Higher Secondary	7,102 (40:60 per cent)	2.293 mn (70:30 per cent)	55:45 (M: F)

Source: Pakistan Institute of Education, 2023

Educational Policy

The Constitution of Pakistan (Art. 25) places a legal obligation on the State to provide free and compulsory education to children between the ages of 5 and 16. Pakistan has taken several educational policy initiatives since its independence. Starting with the All-Pakistan Education Conference in 1947, there have been initiatives in 1959 (Commission on National Education),

National Education Policies in 1972(-80), 1978, 1992, 1998(-2010), 2009, 2017, and 2021. However, "all these policies, conferences and commission reports were not fully implemented in letter and spirit; some have not even seen the light of the day" (Abdul Ghaffar, 2018).

The Education Policy of 1959 laid the foundation for expanding primary and secondary education, emphasising a national curriculum. NPE 1972-80: Free and universal to class X in two phases: free education for all up to class 8 from October 1, 1972, and free education to class IX and X in all schools from October 1, 1979. NPE 1978, during the Martial Law regime, pronounced its aims, emphasising Islamic education and Pakistan's Nationhood. NPE 1998-2010, aimed at improving access to quality education. Before the completion of the period, the Government appointed a committee to review the 1998 NPE as it was not producing the desired results. This led to another NEP in 2009 reiterating the state's commitment to universalising school education while adding Islamic Education. The Right to Free and Compulsory Education Act (RTE) was enacted at the federal level in 2012. The Federal Government enacted another NEP in 2017 (GOP, 2017).

The NEP2017 recommended character building through Taleem (Seek, Use and Evaluate Knowledge), Tarbiyya (Social, Technical, Moral and Ethical Training) and Tazkyya (Purification of Soul), promoting and fostering Pakistani nationhood on the principles of Unity, Faith and Discipline; Holistic Development of the Child; comprehensive Early Childhood Education and Development (3-5 years) assigning priority to 4 – 5 years age group; universal enrolment, completion and achievement on set standards and competencies of primary education (Grade 1-5); expansion of elementary (level 6-8) education through both formal and non-formal education; and expansion of secondary education through formal and distance learning programmes; and introduction of technical and vocational education in non-formal middle schools, and reintroduction of technical education stream in selected high schools and intermediate colleges to prepare vocational and technical human capital.

Furthermore, Pakistan's policy includes partnerships such as the Punjab Education Foundation and the Adopt-a-School Program, which support low-cost private and adopted public schools to improve infrastructure and deliver quality education, often focusing on marginalized communities. Benazir Income Support Program employ conditional cash transfers to incentivise school attendance among low-income families, particularly impacting girls' enrollment. Community-driven models like the Balochistan Education Project and Parwaan ECE Program empower local stakeholders to establish and manage schools, promoting local engagement and addressing specific educational needs (Farooq et al., 2022). These collaborative approaches strengthen education access and quality across various regions and communities, supporting NEP's goals of inclusivity and broad-based educational development (UNICEF, n.d.).

The *Single National Curriculum* (SNC) has been the significant recommendation of NEP2021 to standardise and improve the curriculum at the national level. There is a growing emphasis on vocational and technical education and establishing vocational training centres and technical education institutions. The Madrasas are being modernised to balance religious and secular education to produce well-rounded graduates. A cash transfer scheme under the 'Benazir Income Support Program' has been recommended to improve girls' enrollment. Similarly, financial support to underprivileged students has been advocated to promote their school attendance. The National Education Assessment System (NEAS) has been established to evaluate the performance of educational institutions.

However, effective implementation of the policies has been a significant challenge due to the Lack of infrastructure, teacher shortages, and societal barriers hindering the policy goals and RTE rights (Malik, 2011; Tahira Bibi, 2018). Weak professional standards of teachers (Khan & Islam, 2015) and non-inclusion of professional standards in the scheme of things (Khizar et al., 2019) are also responsible.

The standard policy themes across the NEPs are universalising school education, Islamic education focussing on character building, including girls and deprived communities, and expanding post-primary education. The problem, as pointed out by the research studies and official evaluation (2005), is the implementation of policies. The government seemed to adopt rewriting policies repeatedly as the solution. Further, poor infrastructure, teacher shortage, and the absence of continuous teacher development are due to a shortage of funds. The Economic Survey of Pakistan 2021-22 has pointed out that only 1.77 per cent of GDP was spent on education (Abbasi, 2022). Moreover, the target of 4% may still be inadequate due to accumulated resource deficiency in education since independence.

Structure of the Education System

The formal school education system in Pakistan is a five-tier system comprising pre-primary or early childhood education, primary, middle, secondary and higher secondary (Figure 23.1):

- Early childhood education for 3-6-year-olds is a school preparatory programme.

- Primary education, grades 1 to 5 for children up to 10;

- Middle school education, grades 6 to 8 are for children in the age group 11-13;

- Secondary education comprises grades 9 and 10; at the end of grade 10, students take the board examinations conducted by provincial education boards; and

- Higher secondary education in grades 11 and 12; at the end of grade 12, students appear for board examinations and need to qualify for university admissions

Vocational education finds a place of importance in school education for holistic development while bridging the skills gaps for economic development. Students can opt for vocational or technical education after completing their matriculation (10th-grade) examinations, leading to diplomas, certificates, and other vocational qualifications. Students can pursue vocational subjects such as agriculture, health, engineering, and information technology while continuing to study traditional subjects like mathematics, science, and language. Specialised technical schools and colleges are offering vocational education.

Vocational education is administered by the Provincial Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) sector. The National Vocational and Technical Training Commission (NAVTTC) is a key government body responsible for overseeing and regulating TVET programs in the country.
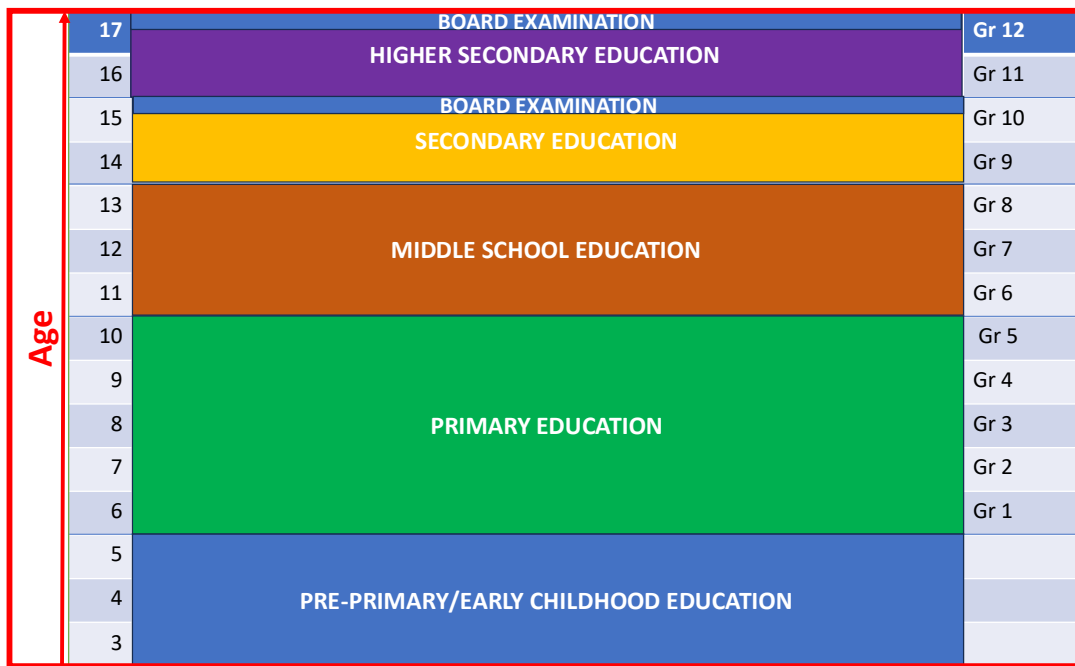
Figure 23.1 *School Education System in Pakistan*

Source: Author

Curricular Framework

Early childhood education in Pakistan is a school readiness programme focusing on preparatory activities and socialisation. Kindergartens provide education for 4-6-year-olds. Madrasas expose children to religious education. The curriculum often includes Basic literacy and numeracy skills, social and emotional development, early exposure to Urdu, English, and other regional languages,

followed by art, music, and physical activities. Quality and standards of early childhood education vary widely, with some programs being well-structured and others not so well. Non-governmental organisations and private schools are significant in providing early childhood education in Pakistan, especially in urban areas.

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2021 emphasised several key areas, including increasing access to quality education, promoting curriculum development, enhancing teacher training, and improving the assessment and examination system covering various stages of education, from primary to higher secondary levels. The National Curriculum has developed a broad framework for the subjects and content to be taught nationwide. The basic objectives of school education as per the National Curriculum are promoting national identity, equality, access, critical thinking, integrating technology into the learning process and relevance to real life. It also defines the aims and objectives of different levels of school education (Table 23.2). Pakistan's policy on digital innovations includes initiatives like Taleemabad and TeleSchool, which aim to make accessible, curriculum-aligned educational content available through mobile apps and television, particularly benefiting students in underserved areas. Platforms like the Knowledge Platform further contribute by offering digital tools and teacher training, with a specific focus on supporting government schools.

The core subjects in the national curriculum are Urdu, English, mathematics, science, social studies, and Islamic studies (for Muslim students). For non-Muslim students, alternatives to Islamic studies are offered. It also outlines learning objectives, competencies, and desired outcomes for each subject at different grade levels (Farooq et al., 2022).

Table 23.2 Objectives of Different Levels of School Education

Primary Education	Middle Education	Secondary Education
• Develop foundational literacy and numeracy skills. • Encourage moral and ethical values. • Promote an understanding of basic science and general knowledge. • Foster creative and critical thinking. • Build a strong foundation in Urdu and English language skills. • Promote basic computer literacy.	• Develop skills in critical thinking and problem-solving. • Introduce students to a wider range of subjects to help them make informed choices for their future. • Promote physical education and health awareness. • Continue to emphasise moral and ethical values. • Enhance computer literacy and digital skills	• Prepare students for higher education or vocational training. • Deepen knowledge in selected subjects based on students' interests and career goals. • Foster research and analytical skills. • Encourage civic responsibility and community engagement. • Promote proficiency in Urdu, English, and other languages as applicable. • Develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills for independent learning. • Provide career and vocational guidance.

Source: GOP, 2023

The National Curriculum of Pakistan (NCP, 2023) outlines curricular goals for primary, middle, and secondary education. These goals are general guidelines, and specific details differ based on the educational policies of each province and region in the country.

The subjects at different levels and the allocation of time/periods per week for each level vary depending on the specific school system and the curriculum. Generally, the time allocation for different subjects and levels in Pakistan's education system follows a pattern (Table 23.3).

The primary education curriculum includes Urdu, English, mathematics, science, social studies, and Islamic studies (for Muslim students). The middle school curriculum builds upon primary education. At the end of the grade 8 level, students are assessed by provincial education boards or other relevant authorities (Amir et al., 2020).

The secondary school curriculum is more specialised, and students choose subjects based on their interests and career aspirations. Common subject choices include sciences, humanities, and commerce. At the end of grade 10, students appear for board examinations conducted by provincial education boards. The results of these exams are crucial for future educational and career paths.

Table 23.3 Subjects and Time Allocation in Different Levels of Education

Primary		Middle		Secondary and Higher Secondary	
Subjects	Periods per week	Subjects	Period per week	Subjects	Periods per week
Language (Urdu/English)	4-5	Language (Urdu/English)	4-5	Language (Urdu/English)	4-5
Mathematics	4-5	Mathematics	4-5	Mathematics	4-5
Science	2-3	Science	3-4	Science (Physics, Chemistry, Biology)	5-6
Social Studies	2-3	Social Studies	3-4	Social Studies	4-5
Islamic Studies	2-3	Islamic Studies	2-3	Islamic Studies	2-3
Physical Education	1-2	Physical Education	1-2	Physical Education	1-2
Art & Craft	1-2	Art & Craft	1-2	Art & Craft	-
Computer Studies	1-2	Computer Studies	2-3	Computer Studies	2-3

Note: Specialized subjects at the higher secondary stage, e.g., economics, business studies, fine arts, etc., vary based on track and subject choice.

Source: OECD, 2019

Higher secondary students continue to study their subjects in grade 10, preparing them for higher education or vocational training. At the end of grade 12, students appear for board examinations. The common subject streams include sciences, humanities, and commerce (Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training—MFEPT, 2023).

The schools operate five days a week, from Monday to Friday. The school hours vary depending on the specific school, level of education, and regional regulations. However, the general school hours for most schools in Pakistan are 6 to 7 hours a day, usually from 8 am to 2 pm for grades 1-8 and 8.30 am to 2.30 pm for grades 9-12 (OECD, 2019)

The curriculum for school education is developed and regulated by provincial education boards. Each province has its education department responsible for curriculum development and implementation. For example, the Punjab Curriculum and Textbook Board (PCTB) and the Sindh Textbook Board (STBB) in Sindh develop and regulate curriculum for schools in their respective provinces. There are similarities with the national curriculum, but there can be variations to accommodate regional and cultural differences (Carvalho et al., 2022).

The curriculum framework differs in private schools, which offer the Cambridge curriculum for the International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE), Oxford International AQA Examinations, Pearson Edexcel, and International Baccalaureate. However, Islamic studies are compulsory in all these schools.

The curriculum transaction is largely textbook-centered, with teachers and students relying heavily on the content provided in official textbooks. Teachers follow the prescribed curriculum closely. That is why there is an emphasis on memorisation. Curriculum authorities in each province develop and publish textbooks based on the approved curriculum (Jamil, 2009). Schools use these textbooks for instruction. The NEP-2021 has emphasised using technology in education to enhance learning outcomes. Initiatives include providing schools with computer labs, internet access, and e-learning resources (Nazeer & Khan, 2021).

Provincial education boards conduct public examinations at the end of primary, middle, and secondary education. Performance in these examinations is critical for students' academic progression. There are efforts to reform examinations to reduce the emphasis on rote learning and encourage critical thinking and problem-solving skills (Fancy & Razaq, 2017).

Teaching Learning

The National Curriculum Framework (MFEPT, 2019) recommended that teachers follow interactive lectures with audio-video resources, discussion, cooperative learning, and inquiry-based learning methods. Furthermore, the NCF 2019 devoted a complete chapter to the Learning Environment, classifying it into physical and psychological. The NCF flags the need for Visual and acoustical comfort in the learning environment, sanitation and drinking water, electricity, school health, safety and security, playgrounds, libraries, and science and computer laboratories as some of the infrastructure norms.

Instructional practices are mostly teacher-centred. Teachers often deliver lectures to the entire class and rely heavily on textbooks. Students are expected to take notes, memorise the content, and reproduce the information for examinations. Rote learning is common, particularly for subjects like mathematics and science, wherein students are expected to memorise facts, formulas, and definitions, which are then reproduced in examinations. Homework and assignments are also common. The 'Listen to Learn' may not be a choice, but it is the only viable option in overcrowded classrooms. There may be some practical work or experiments in science and technical subjects, but laboratory facilities and equipment availability varies widely among schools.

Technology-enabled learning or teaching is not part of the instructional or assessment process for various reasons (Sidra & Khan, 2015). Some schools, especially in urban areas, have started integrating technology into teaching. This includes using computers, digital content, and online resources to enhance the learning experience (Ali et al., 2023). Research suggests that blended learning models, combining both traditional and online learning, can effectively address some of the challenges related to technology integration, especially in areas with limited resources (Irum et al., 2022). While exploring the internet and social media use, Ahmed (2016) found that school teachers spent time implementing social media in their classrooms for academic purposes. Teachers used these forums for self-education and to interact with like-minded people. The findings of Tariq et al. (2012) pointed out that social media like Facebook, LinkedIn, Orkut, and Twitter are negatively affecting education as well as the lives of students; therefore, they need to be discouraged in the regular teaching-learning process.

Learning Assessment

Based on the 'Minimum National Standards for Quality Education in Pakistan', the NCF 2019 made 15-point suggestions and recommendations - nine and six suggestions, expressed as 'may', indicating desirability. Some important recommendations are aligning assessment with curriculum, establishing a standardised assessment process in public examination, learning outcome-based student assessment, and using digital tools to improve efficiency and accountability. Recommendations and suggestions primarily focus on systemic change, not specific innovative assessment practices for schools and teachers.

Contemporary research indicates that the system strongly emphasises high-stakes examinations like board exams (Khattak, 2012). As a result, instructions often focus on preparing students for these exams, often at the expense of developing critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Formative assessment practices, such as class discussions, group projects, and practical experiments, are less common (Ghafoor & Farooq, 1994).

Formal board exams are conducted by provincial education boards (held at the end of each academic year for specific grade levels (Kamrani, 2011). The results determine students' promotions to the next grade or their eligibility for higher education. In addition to board exams, continuous assessment methods are used to evaluate students' performance throughout the academic year (Khan, 2011). These assessments usually include class tests, quizzes, assignments, and homework. Some schools and educational institutions in Pakistan use standardised tests to measure students' academic achievement for placement or diagnostic purposes.

Assessments are closely aligned with the national or provincial curriculum. The content of exams is based on the curriculum prescribed by the relevant education board (Rind & Malik, 2019). In subjects like science, students are assessed for hands-on skills, ability to conduct experiments, and application of scientific principles. In some subjects, particularly languages, oral examinations assess students' speaking and communication skills (Ali et al., 2016). Pakistan uses a grading system to assess students' performance. The grading scale varies between educational boards.

The National Testing Service (NTS) conducts standardised tests for university admissions and job recruitment. These tests assess students' readiness for higher education (Government of Pakistan - GOP, 2007).

Serious discussions and efforts are underway to reform the assessment system in Pakistan to move away from heavy reliance on rote memorisation and high-stakes exams (Rind & Malik, 2019). Reforms aim to promote holistic assessment practices that emphasise critical thinking, problem-solving, and practical skills. Additionally, formative assessment practices are encouraged to provide teachers with insights into students' learning needs and progress (Rehmani, 2012).

Health and Physical Education

While implementing physical education programs varies among schools, physical education is compulsory at the primary and secondary levels. These classes are led by physical education teachers trained in sports and physical activities. The curriculum of physical education is designed to provide students with a well-rounded education in physical fitness, sports, and health with various physical activities, such as athletics, team sports (e.g., cricket, soccer), individual sports (e.g., tennis, badminton), gymnastics, and exercises to improve flexibility, strength, and endurance (Kamal & Khan, 2014). In some cases, physical and health education is included in examinations and grading, and students are evaluated on their performance in physical activities, sports, and theoretical knowledge related to health and fitness (Ali et al., 2014).

In addition to physical activities, physical education classes also include health education components like exposure to tenets of a healthy lifestyle, nutrition, hygiene, and the benefits of regular exercise. Though Physical education is inclusive and accessible to all students, regardless of gender, some schools have separate physical education classes for girls and boys. Basic sports equipment is often available for students in physical education classes (Almas et al., 2020). There are efforts to ensure all students have access to quality physical education and sports opportunities (Ali et al., 2014).

Hobby and Life Skill Education

Encouraging students to explore their interests and passions beyond the core academic subjects is a part of the personal growth programme in schools in Pakistan. Many schools offer a range of extracurricular activities to cater to students' diverse interests, with activities like membership in clubs, societies, and teams dedicated to hobbies such as art, music, drama, sports, science, literature, and more (Rafiullah & Khan, 2017). Also, Artistic pursuits, including drawing, painting, sculpture, and crafts, are often part of school co-curricular activities. Many schools have music and performing arts programs allowing students to learn to play musical instruments, sing, act, and participate in drama productions or musical performances. Students interested in writing, poetry, and literature often have opportunities to join literary clubs. Some schools offer specialised hobby classes covering various interests, from photography to gardening. School competitions include art exhibitions, music concerts, sports tournaments, and science fairs, where students can showcase their talents and achievements (Ashfaq, 2021).

Another important component of the school curriculum in Pakistan is life skill education. While it is not a standalone subject, life skills are integrated into the curriculum as part of other subjects, such as social studies, moral education, and health education. The topics related to communication, problem-solving, decision-making, and conflict resolution are included in these subjects. Some schools organise workshops or training sessions focused on life skills. These workshops cover various topics, including time management, financial literacy, stress management, ethical values, and gender sensitisation. Since life skill education is not part of the curriculum, these are not evaluated or graded for students' report cards.

Skills Education

Skill education in schools in Pakistan is being prioritised, considering the job market's needs and empowering students with practical skills that can lead to meaningful employment and entrepreneurship opportunities (Afzal, 2022). It is critical to preparing students for a competitive and dynamic global economy (UNESCO, 2011). The key aspect of skill education in schools is vocational education programmes that provide students with hands-on training and skills in

carpentry, electrical work, plumbing, welding, and automobile mechanics. Institutes of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) enrol students in TVET programs to expose them to skills such as information technology, electronics, refrigeration and air conditioning, and more (ILO, 2019). Home economics programs for girls provide them with training in practical skills related to household management, cooking, sewing, and childcare. Some schools incorporate entrepreneurship education into their curricula. Students learn about business concepts, planning, and management to foster entrepreneurial skills (Arif & Saqib, 2003). The government of Pakistan has launched various initiatives to promote skill education, including the Prime Minister's Kamyab Jawan Program, which includes skill development and training opportunities for youth in various skills like computer literacy and soft skills, with training in the field as a part of the programme. Certifications in such skills enhance the value of the acquired skills (Pirzada et al., 2023).

Moral, Social and Cultural Education

Moral and cultural education are stressed in schools. Character building through Taleem, Tarbiyya, and Tazkyya has been recommended. Islamic Studies is compulsory, and the Quran and Hadith are taught in the curriculum. Ethics and moral values are seen from the angle of the Islamic system (Mohammed, 1999).

Cultural education aims to preserve and promote the country's diverse cultural heritage (Alqaseem, 2012). Students learn about Pakistan's history, languages, traditions, music, art, and festivals. Urdu literature and poetry are part of the curriculum. In addition to Urdu, regional languages like Punjabi, Sindhi, Pashto, and Balochi have also been promoted.

Students can also learn and perform traditional music, dance, and Pakistani art forms, such as truck art, pottery, and calligraphy. Secondary students are involved in community service activities that promote cultural understanding and moral values. Other school activities include visits to cultural sites, cultural exchange programmes, holiday celebrations, etc. While there are variations in how moral and cultural education is implemented across different schools and regions, it remains integral to the country's education system (Javed et al., 2021).

Peace and Happiness Education

Peace and happiness education is not a formal part of the school curriculum in Pakistan. However, efforts to promote peace, happiness, and the well-being of students are gradually gaining attention in the country's educational landscape (Ahmed, 2016a). While no specific subject or course is dedicated to peace and happiness education, the principles of social and emotional learning, conflict resolution, and values education are integrated into existing subjects, such as moral education, ethics, and social studies. Some non-governmental organisations (NGOs), schools, and community

initiatives in Pakistan focus on peace education and conflict resolution programs, often targeting young people and schools. These NGOs collaborate with schools to introduce peace and happiness education. The objective of such initiatives and programs is to foster a positive and harmonious school environment that contributes to the holistic development of students.

Summary and Conclusion

The Pakistan school education program focuses on early childhood education, equitable learning pathways, and school-community linkages. The education system in Pakistan is divided into six levels: preschool (3-5 years), primary (years 1-5), middle (years 6-8), secondary (years 9 and 10, leading to the Secondary School Certificate or SSC), intermediate (years 11 and 12, leading to a Higher Secondary School Certificate or HSSC), and university programs. The country faces a serious challenge to ensure all children, particularly the most disadvantaged, attend, stay, and learn in school. An estimated 22.8 million children aged 5-16 are out of school (UNICEF, n.d.). Disparities based on gender, socioeconomic status, and geographically distant locations are significant.

The school curriculum is designed to provide a well-rounded education that includes academic disciplines and subjects such as health and physical education, skills education, hobby development and life skills education, moral, social, and cultural education, and peace and happiness education. The region and the schools decide the exact curriculum, although Urdu and Islamic Studies are usually featured in all schools.

The National Curriculum of Pakistan (NCP) covers all four aspects of a quality curriculum, including standards, textbooks, teacher training, and examination reforms. It has been designed to equip young people with knowledge, creativity, critical thinking, and leadership skills to make the right choices for themselves and their country and play a responsible role as global citizens.

Pakistani school education covers Global Citizenship Education in the curriculum in a limited way. Per Islamic ideals, it emphasises spiritual values of kindness, honesty, and empathy. The whole school education programme is committed to memorisation, and the examination system is far from formative assessment.

While the school education system in Pakistan aims to nurture peace-loving, happy global citizenship attributes, much still needs to be done regarding the curriculum's coverage of global citizenship education. To achieve the desired goal of equitable access, happiness education, global citizenship, and quality education, the country will have to overcome the challenges of gaps in service provision, socio-cultural barriers, supply-related issues, inadequate financing, and limited policy enforcement at different levels.

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Categories of Educational Policies

Educational policies can be categorised into four categories: poetic, prosaic, Just-in-Time (JIT) or Resilient, and non-articulated or hidden policies.

- ❖ Poetic policies, typically observed in developing countries, are metaphysical and dreamy, lacking the necessary political will as evidenced by inadequate funding and poorly planned and monitored implementation strategies. For example, when a country aspires to be a knowledge superpower but commits to only six to eight years of compulsory education and allocates around 2 to 3 per cent of GDP, the policy is poetic.
- ❖ Prosaic policies consist of need-based statements that align with financial allocations and management competencies.
- ❖ Developed countries usually formulate JIT or resilient policies to maintain their lead and global competitiveness by instituting specific goal-oriented policies.

Several countries adopt 20- or 25-year plans divided into clusters of four and five-year development initiatives through interlinked and interdependent interventions. Singapore's four-phase Master Plan for ICT integration in education serves as a notable example (Mukhopadhyay, 2021).

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Learn for Life: Singapore

Marmar Mukhopadhyay
Bidhan Gantait

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Abstract

Within less than five decades of independence in 1965, Singapore rapidly developed from a low-income economy to a developed country with one of the highest per capita GDPs in the world. Its highest investment has been in education, health, public services, and infrastructure. This chapter deals with educational reforms in Singapore that have been instrumental in its phenomenal growth and development. Quality of education ranked it at the top of the PISA ranking. This chapter analyses policies and schemes like 'Thinking Schools, Learning Nation' (TSLN), 'Joy of Learning' and 'Learn for Life', channels ensuring freedom to learn and optimise the talents with provision for the gifted, individualised education, personalised curriculum, and technology-integrated education. The chapter also analyses its elitism due to the predominance of performance in examination focusing on the cognitive aspect of education warranting large-scale private tuition practices and at the cost of all-round development despite the provision of health and physical education, co-curricular activities, life skills education, character and citizenship education.

Keywords: Singapore, Individualised Education, Health Promotion, iTEACH, Parent-Child Activity Book, Programme for Active Learning, Thinking Schools, Learning Nation, Folk Pedagogy

Introduction

Singapore is a city-state at the southern tip of the Malay Peninsula, approximately 137 kilometres north of the Equator (Ho et al., 2024). Singapore has a total land area of 753 km², and its main island spans approximately 49 km from east to west and 28 km from north to south, with a coastline of 228 km (DoS, 2024a). Indonesia borders Singapore to the south, while Singapore shares maritime

boundaries with Thailand and Vietnam. The Strait of Malacca borders Singapore to the west, the Singapore Strait to the south, the South China Sea to the east, and the Straits of Johor to the north. It comprises one main island, 63 satellite islands and islets, and one outlying islet. The country is divided into 28 districts (Teo, 2021). Geographically, Singapore can be divided into three major areas: the central hilly region, the western undulating region, and the eastern coastal region (DoS, 2024b).

In 2024, the population is 6,028,459, with an annual growth rate of 0.87%., comprising 3,013,630 males and 3,014,829 females (CIA, 2024). The gender ratio is 109.46 males for every 100 females (Global Data, 2024). Singapore recognises four official languages: English, Mandarin Chinese, Malay, and Tamil. English is the primary medium for administration, commerce, industry and school (Ho [et al., 2024]). According to 2023, the four major ethnic communities are Chinese (74%), Malay (13.5%), Indian (9%), and others (3.5%). Singapore is a multi-religious country, with Buddhists (31.1%), Muslims (15.6%), Christians (18.9%), Hindus (5%), others and none religions (20.6%), and Taoists (8.8%) coexisting harmoniously. The life expectancy in 2023 at birth was 83.0 years (DoS, 2024).

The GDP is 525.23 billion USD, with an annual growth rate of 2.1%, and the GDP per capita is 88,450 USD (IMF, 2024). Overall unemployment declined from its peak of 3.6% in October 2020 to approximately the pre-pandemic level of 2.2% in March 2022 (IMF, 2022). The city country ranked 30th out of 143 countries on the happiness index (Mujibah, 2024). Singapore holds ninth position with a high HDI score of 0.949 and 6th in the quality-of-life index (American Club, 2024).

The literacy rate of those above 15 is 97.1%, with 95.8% of females and 98.5% of males (World Bank Group, 2023). In 2021, the GER was 99.87 for primary education, 100.23 for lower secondary, 105.91 for upper secondary, and 103.04 for secondary education. The NER for the same year was 99.35 for primary education, 99.55 for lower secondary, and 98.60 for upper secondary (UNESCO-UIS, 2024). Singapore outperformed and topped the PISA ranking in 2022 with a 560 overall score (Data Pandas, 2023). In 2022, Singapore's education system comprised 180 primary schools, with 228,093 students and 15,491 teachers; 136 secondary schools, with 143,865 students and 11,430 teachers; and 16 mixed-level schools (comprising primary and secondary schools and secondary and junior college schools) with 35,609 students and 2,858 teachers (MoE, 2023a).

Educational Policy

Educational policy in Singapore is the story of evolution and resilience in responding to crises and challenges of the future. Since its Independence in 1965, Singapore has focused on human capacity development as the lever of growth of the city-state. Singapore's emphasis is on the education of all citizens of all ages. The trend of policy shift has been from structure to pedagogical

modernisation, from centrally controlled curricular framework to freedom to learn, and from school and college-age learning to life-long learning for reskilling the population to stay globally competitive. The remarkable developments in Singapore, including education, are the result of a strategic national development plan (Poon et al., 2017).

Singapore's educational development has gone through five phases: survival-driven (1965-1978), efficiency-driven (1978-1997), ability-based, aspiration-driven (1997-2011), student-centric values-driven reforms (2011-2019), and learn for life (2020-present) phase (Kwek et al., 2023). Each phase responded to social, economic, and political demands and built on the gains of the previous phase. "The five phases of educational policy reforms have seen gradual systemic shifts in four key aspects: (a) from top-down government control toward more bottom-up initiatives and increasing school autonomy for curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment; (b) from centralised direction to increasingly ecological whole-of-system innovations; (c) from teacher-proof instructional strategies to increasingly learner-centric pedagogies; and (d) from creating school access to focusing on instructional quality. Policies are layered upon one another to move the system in these desired directions" (Kwek et al., 2023, p. 2).

From 2020, 'Learn for Life' has been introduced. The Singapore Ministry of Education has shifted from solely prioritising academic achievements to fostering students' connections, collaboration, creativity, and adaptability skills. This shift is reflected in the introduction of the initiative. There is also an emphasis on enhancing teaching methods, values, and socio-emotional competencies, pushing schools to prepare students for life beyond exams (Kwek et al., 2023). The 'Learn for Life' movement is further advanced through two key initiatives: 'Refreshing our Curriculum' and 'Skills Future for Educators'. To strengthen 'Refreshing our Curriculum', Singapore is introducing Character and Citizenship Education 2021, strengthening Digital Literacy, and focusing on understanding Asia. 'Skills Future for Educators' focuses on enhancing teachers' professional development in six key areas: assessment literacy, differentiated instruction, inquiry-based learning, e-pedagogy, character and citizenship education, and support for special educational needs (MoE, 2020).

Singapore's policy emphasises the holistic development of students. The policy goal is achieved through a series of enabling policy interventions:

1. Create coherence by facilitating discussions on cultural norms and regulatory environments.
2. Develop social and educational infrastructure that supports collaborative instruction and reform.
3. Balance system-wide conventions with local discretion to foster innovation and encourage reform.

4. Distribute leadership to enhance educator and student agency.
5. Support the effective use of educational infrastructure through professional learning and ongoing monitoring of practice and performance to ensure continuous improvement.
6. Integrate these elements to align educational infrastructure with everyday classroom practices and enhance overall instructional quality (Datnow et al., 2022).

In 2022, the government spent 13.28% of its annual budget on education, a 0.22% increase from 2021 (Macrotrends, 2024).

Structure of the Education System

Singapore's school education comprises three years of pre-school, six years of primary education, and four years of secondary education, which are extendable by one year in the case of secondary normal and technical education (Figure 24.1).
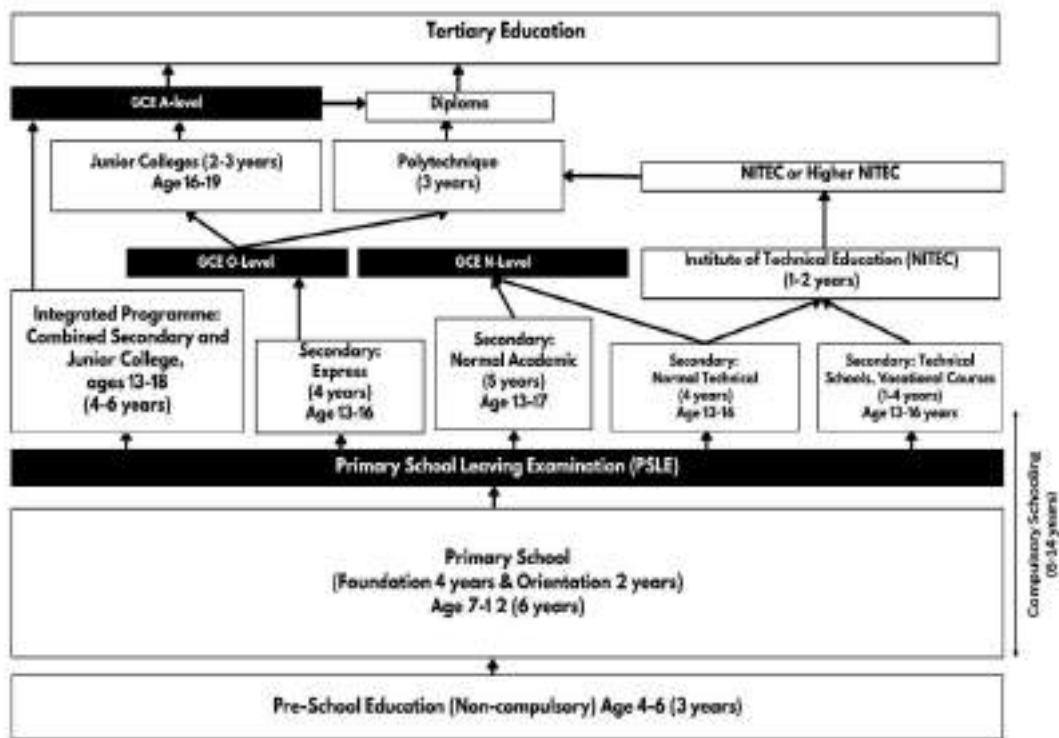
Figure 24.1 Structure of the Education System in Singapore

Source: EduGatorSense, 2013 (Adapted by authors)

Pre-school education provides three years of kindergarten for children ages four to six. The three years are commonly called Nursery, Kindergarten-1 (K1) and Kindergarten-2 (K2), respectively.

Adding play schools increases the duration to four years. Pre-school education focuses on interacting with peers to prepare for formal primary education. Learning activities include the development of confidence, social skills and a good foundation of literacy and numeracy (MoE, 2022a).

Pre-schooling is not compulsory in Singapore. About 1600 childcare centres and 300 pre-schools are run by the private sector but registered with the Early Childhood Development Agency. An estimated 92% of Singapore children in the age group three to six years will have been enrolled in pre-schools in 2021 (Han, 2023).

The 6-year compulsory primary education comprises four years of foundational education followed by two years of orientation or subject-based learning. At the end of six years of primary education, the Ministry of Education administers a nationalised Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE). All students must appear in this examination.

Based on the PSLE results, students are streamed into either the Express (G3), Normal Academic (G2), or Normal Technical (G1) streams, with provision for special and private education courses. Streaming will be abolished from 2024. All PSLE graduates will use a subject-based branding format (Mokhtar, 2020). The last batch of secondary 4 and 5 will pass out in 2024 and 2025, respectively.

After finishing their GCE-O level, students in Singapore have several options for further education. They can attend a two-year pre-university program at a junior college or a centralised institution (3 years), which will prepare them for the GCE A-level examination. Alternatively, they can enrol in a three-year diploma program at a polytechnic, where they can study practice-oriented courses such as engineering, nursing, maritime studies, and more (Education Destination, 2023). Besides, there are special assistance plans, and gifted and integrated education programmes. University admission relies on how well students perform in the Singapore-Cambridge GCE A-level examination (Mukhopadhyay & Kundu).

Curricular Framework

Pre-school Curriculum

The Nurturing Early Learners (NEL) Framework (2022b) sets the policies and benchmarks for preschool education in Singapore. Teaching and learning are guided by the iTEACH principles: *i*ntegrated approach to learning, *T*eachers as facilitators of learning, *E*ngaging children in learning through purposeful play, *A*uthentic learning through quality interaction, *C*hildren as constructors of knowledge, and *H*olistic development (MoE, 2017) (Figure 24.2).

iTEACH provides high-quality early childhood education based on principles that recognise children as joyful, curious, and competent learners in a multicultural community. Core values include respect, responsibility, care, and honesty. The curriculum fosters social-emotional competencies like self-awareness and responsible decision-making and promotes learning dispositions such as perseverance and curiosity. Key learning areas include creative expression, world discovery, health and motor skills, language and literacy, and numeracy (MoE, 2022b). The learning outcomes and goals for each iTEACH learning area have been further discussed (Table 24.1).
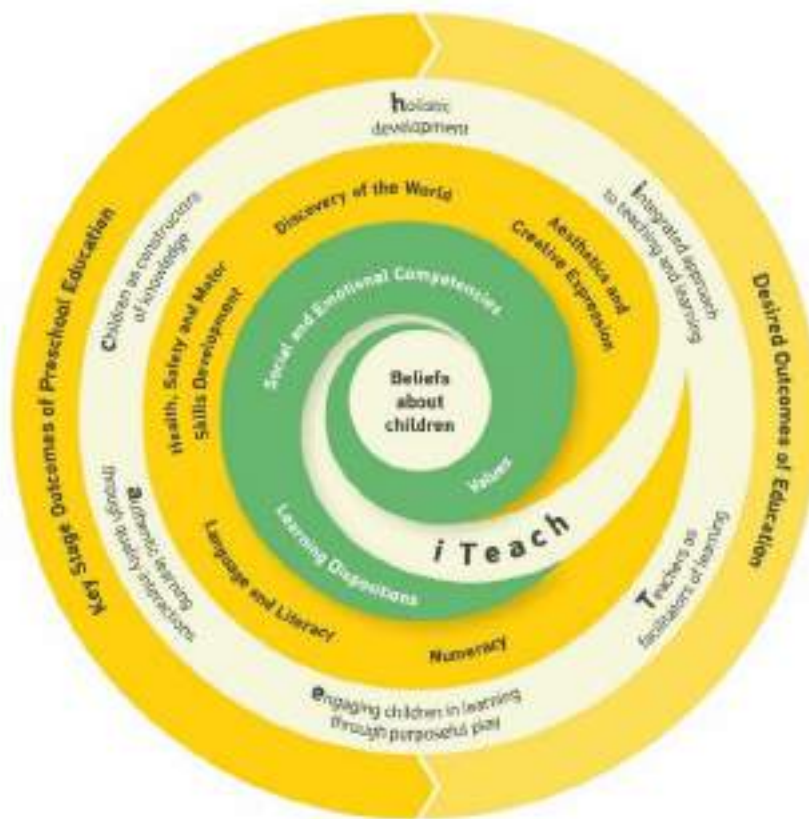
Figure 24.2 Singapore's NEL Framework: iTEACH

Source: MoE, 2023b

Table 24.1 Learning Areas and Goals of the NEL Programme in Singapore

Learning Area	Learning Goals
Aesthetics and Creative Expression	• Enjoy art, music, and movement activities. • Express ideas and feelings through art, music, and movement. • Appreciate art, music, and movement.
Discovery of the World - People and Cultures, Places and Spaces, Time and Events, Natural and Built Environment, and inventions and Technology	• Show curiosity and an interest in the world they live in • Use essential process skills to make sense of the world around them • Develop a sense of responsibility, care and respect for the world around them
Health, Safety and Motor Skill Development – Locomotor skills, non-locomotor skills, Manipulative skills, Space Awareness, Effort awareness, Relationship Awareness	• Develop healthy habits and safety awareness at home, in school and public places • Enjoy participating in a variety of physical activities • Demonstrate control, coordination and balance in gross motor activities • Demonstrate control and coordination in fine motor activities
Language and Literacy: English Book awareness, Print awareness, Alphabetic knowledge, Word recognition and emergent reading skills, and Comprehension skills	• Listen for enjoyment and information • Speak with confidence to convey meaning and to communicate with others • Read with enjoyment and understanding • Use symbols, letter-like shapes, letters and words with invented and conventional spelling to communicate ideas and information
Language and Literacy: Mother Tongue: Communication, Culture and Connection	• Enjoy and show an interest in learning the Mother Tongue Language • Develop foundational language and literacy skills in Mother Tongue Language • Develop an awareness of their local ethnic culture
Numeracy	• Enjoy learning and using numeracy concepts and skills in daily experiences • Understand relationships and patterns • Develop counting skills and number sense • Understand basic shapes and spatial concepts
Social and Emotional Development	• Develop an awareness of personal identity Development • Manage emotions and behaviours • Show respect for diversity • Communicate, interact, and build relationships with others • Take responsibility for their actions

Source: *MoE, 2022b (Adapted by authors)*

Primary School Curriculum

Ministry of Education, Government of Singapore, mentioned, "the primary school curriculum aims to provide all children with learning opportunities that recognise their strengths and develop their full potential" (MoE, 2021a, p. 1). The uniqueness of the primary school curriculum is the variety of alternatives to suit the child's propensities and interests. Three primary focus areas are subject-based learning, knowledge, skills and character development. Subject-based learning includes English, mother tongue (Chinese, Malay, and Tamil), mathematics, science, art, music, physical education, social studies, and character and citizenship education.

The most important departure is the introduction of subject-based banding, which is meant to 'provide all children with learning opportunities that recognise their strengths and develop their full potential' (MoE, 2023c). In Subject-based banding (SBB), a learner can take a combination of subjects at standard and foundation levels based on choice-based strength. In SBB, there are several options. Students who pass three subjects will be offered standard English Language and Mother Tongue Language, Mathematics and Science. Those who pass in all four subjects and do well in Mother Tongue Language can opt for Higher Mother Tongue Language. Students who pass in two subjects (or less) can opt for one of the five options: four standard subjects, three standard subjects, one foundation subject, two standard subjects, two foundation subjects, one standard subject, three foundation subjects, and four foundation subjects.

The Ministry also clarifies that taking foundation-level subjects is not disadvantageous. On the contrary, such options will strengthen the foundations and better prepare students for progression to secondary school. SSB provides an opportunity to maximise the potential of every child (MoE, 2021b). Knowledge and skills are to be developed through subject-based learning and project work. Character development has been proposed to be achieved through Character and Citizenship Education and Co-curricular Activities (MoE, 2021a). In 2021, the ministry introduced an updated character and citizenship education curriculum, 2021 focusing on mental health and cyber-wellness and establishing peer support structures within every school.

The primary education curriculum prepares children to develop 21st-century Century Competencies, like being confident people, self-directed learners, active contributors, and concerned citizens in a diverse, digitally rich, globalised world (MoE, 2023d). Singapore offers individualised enriched curriculum opportunities for primary students who qualify as gifted. As soon as a child enters Primary 1, their parents receive a copy of the 'Parent-Child Activity Book', a resource designed to help parents support their child's transition from Pre-school to Primary school (MoE, 2023e).

Secondary School Curriculum

At the secondary level, students are streamed into three courses. The selection process for secondary school streams is based on academic performance in the PSLE, with the Express stream having the most stringent cut-off, followed by Normal (Academic) and then Normal (Technical) streams (Table 24.2). Secondary education courses vary according to streams and program type.

Table 24.2 Curricular Areas of Three Streams of Secondary Education

Course Name	Express	Normal Academic	Normal Technical
Duration	**Four years**	**4-5 years**	**Four years**
Subjects at lower secondary	• English Language • Mother Tongue Languages • Mathematics • Science • Character and Citizenship Education • Humanities, such as Geography, History, and Literature in English • Design and Technology • Food and Consumer Education • Physical Education • Art • Music • Project Work	• English Language • Mother Tongue Languages • Mathematics • Science • Character and Citizenship Education • Humanities, such as Geography, History, and Literature in English • Design and Technology • Food and Consumer Education • Physical Education • Art • Music • Project Work	• English Language • Mother Tongue Languages • Mathematics • Science • Character and Citizenship Education • Social Studies • Computer Applications • Design and Technology • Food and Consumer Education • Physical Education • Art • Music • Project Work
Compulsory subjects at upper secondary	• English Language, • Mother Tongue Language, • Mathematics, • Science, • Humanities (with Social Studies)	• English Language, • Mother Tongue Language, • Mathematics, • Science, • Humanities (with Social Studies)	• English Language, • Mother Tongue Language, • Mathematics, • Science, • Humanities (with Social Studies)
Certifications offered	GCE O-Level (Secondary 4)	• Secondary 4: GCE N(A)-Level and/or GCE O-Level (for subjects offered at O-Level) • Secondary 5: GCE O-Level	• GCE N(T)-Level (Secondary 4) • GCE N(A)-Level (Secondary 4) for subjects offered at N(A)-Level • GCE O-Level (Secondary 4) for subjects offered at O-Level
Next educational level	Junior college, Millennia Institute, polytechnic, or	• After N-Level: • Normal (Academic) at Secondary 5 for GCE O-Level examination	The Nitec Programme is offered by the

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| | Institute of Technical Education (ITE) | • Polytechnic through the Polytechnic Foundation Programme (PFP)

• Nitec Programme offered by the Institute of Technical Education (ITE) or

• Higher Nitec Programme via the Direct-Entry Scheme to Polytechnic Programme (DPP) offered by the Institute of Technical Education (ITE)

• After O-Level:

• Junior college, Millennia Institute, polytechnic, or Institute of Technical Education (ITE) | Institute of Technical Education (ITE).

Or

Normal (Academic) at Secondary 4, if eligible |

Source: MoE, 2020b (Adapted by author)

Co-curricular activities (CCAs) are mandatory for all students in all secondary schools. They are graded based on the LEAPS scoring system (Leadership, Enrichment, Achievement, Participation, Service) and other achievements throughout the four years of high school (Liem et al., 2020).

Beginning in 2024, one cohort of secondary technical, academic, and express courses will be phased out. "Full SBB will be implemented in our secondary education system. Secondary One students in 120 secondary schools will benefit from the Full SBB experience, which provides greater customisation and flexibility for each student's learning" (MoE, 2023f).

Teaching Learning

Singapore, along with a few other Asian countries like China, Japan, Taiwan, South Korea, and Hong Kong, has occupied the top positions on the PISA ranking list and generated serious debate about the teaching-learning process in these countries, pushing traditional toppers below. This has raised questions about the Western pedagogical models.

Teaching at the pre-school level follows the iTeach principles. The MoE introduced three guiding principles for the ICT-enabled teaching-learning process for preschool education: "the use of ICT should complement children's learning experiences and be developmentally appropriate, the use of ICT should be facilitated and guided by teachers, the use of ICT should be carefully considered to ensure the safety and well-being of children" (MoE, 2017, p. 7). At the primary level, specific approaches in teaching-learning include learning support programmes for primary one students and gifted education for intellectually gifted students identified through a primary three screening. Emphasis on bilingualism

(English and mother tongue) and creative teaching strategies enrich education. Primary 1 and 2 students can participate in hands-on and experiential learning through Sports and Games, Outdoor Education, Visual Arts, and Performing Arts during curriculum time with the Programme for Active Learning (PAL) (MoE, 2022e).

In a publication, *Our Teachers*, MoE (2023g) clarifies the teaching profession – teachers' pledge, Singapore teaching practice and pedagogical practices. Teachers take the pledge, "We will

- be true to our mission to bring out the best in our students.
- be exemplary in the discharge of our duties and responsibilities.
- guide our students to be good and useful citizens of Singapore.
- continue to learn and pass on the love of learning to our students.
- win the trust, support and co-operation of parents and the community to enable us to achieve our mission" (MoE, 2023g).

The document explains the pedagogical practices in a self-explanatory visual (Figure 24.3)

There are two different descriptions of teaching-learning in Singapore. One version states that the "Thinking Schools, Learning Nation" (TSLN) vision continues to guide today's education system. Recent initiatives like "Joy of Learning" and "Learn for Life" have been introduced under the TSLN framework (Ng, 2020). The other version of teaching-learning is: "In general, classroom instruction in Singapore is highly scripted and uniform across all levels and subjects. Teaching is coherent, fit-for-purpose and pragmatic, drawing on a range of pedagogical traditions, both Eastern and Western" (Hogan, 2014, para 4). Teaching learning is designed to fit the purpose of examination performance. Teachers also share the "folk pedagogy", equating teaching with talking and listening with learning in a centralised hierarchical and bureaucratic culture and summative assessment. Hogan (2014) further states that teachers make limited use of effective teaching practices supported by contemporary educational research for developing conceptual skills of learning to learn.

Learning Assessment

In Singapore, teachers continuously assess students at all educational levels, using informal evaluations based on daily classroom activities. At the end of primary school, all students sit for the Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE) in English, math, science, and their mother tongue. Students take these exams at varying levels based on their studies in years five and six. In 2021, the PSLE scoring system was updated to grade students on individual performance rather than comparative ranking, translating scores into achievement-level tiers. These tiers help determine students' lower secondary education streams and school placements. Students list up to six preferred secondary schools, which select students mainly based on PSLE rankings. However, up to 20% of places can be offered through direct school admission based on talents in academics, sports, or co-curricular activities, independent of

PSLE results (NCEE, 2024). The Ministry of Education assists in placing students who are not accepted into their preferred schools.
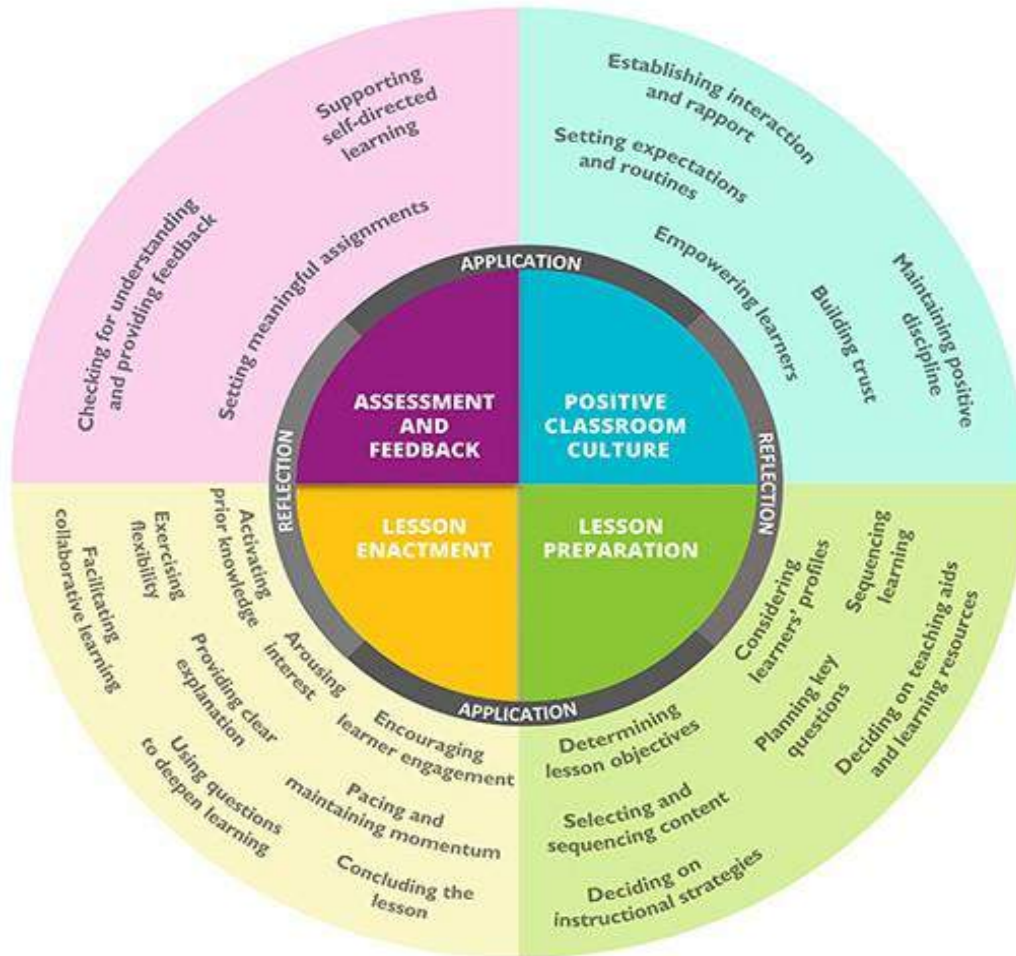
Figure 24.3 The Pedagogical Practices in Singapore
Source: MoE, 2023g

In secondary school, students take exams based on their academic band. After four years, students in the express program take O-level exams, while those in the Normal (Technical) program take N-level exams. Normal (Academic) students can take N-level exams after four years or O-level exams after five years. Those aspiring to attend university take A-level exams after two additional years of study (Table 24.3) (NCEE, 2024).

Table 24.3 National Examination System of Singapore

End of grade 6	End of grade 10			End of grade 12
PSLE	GCE N(T)-Level	GCE N(A)- Level	GCE O-Level	GCE A-Level
National Examinations:				
• Designed in alignment with the objectives of the national curriculum.				
• Used to place students in the next stage of their education.				
• Used to maintain standards and for benchmarking purposes.				

Source: MoE, 2013 (Adapted by authors)

However, the learning environment remains primarily focused on exams and driven by traditional assessments. Some studies indicate that Singapore teachers are moving towards Assessment for Learning – using better feedback mechanisms to help students learn better (Shin, 2020). There have been several efforts to include more authentic, open-ended assessment tasks (Koh & Luke, 2009) through 'Primary Education Review and Implementation' (PERI), 'Strategies for Active and Independent Learning' (SAIL), 'Strategies for Effective Engagement and Development' (SEED), and 'Science Practical Assessment' (SPA) (Koh et al., 2012). "In Singapore, they use quantitative classroom assessments, like traditional pen and paper quizzes and exams, to assess what their students have learned and report the result of the assessment as a grade or qualification" (Smartick, 2024).

From 2027, the N and O-level exams will be replaced by the Singapore-Cambridge Secondary Education Certificate (SEC), offering a more comprehensive assessment. Students can extend their secondary education by another year to pursue more challenging courses (NCEE, 2024).

Health and Physical Education

Singapore has a robust health promotion programme in schools offered by the National Health Promotion Board. There is a Healthy Meals programme in schools. Schools receive Healthy Pre-school Accreditation based on their extensive health promotion practices for pre-schoolers, parents, and staff. For primary schools, the emphasis is on Creating a Supportive Environment through Nutrition (Healthy Meals in Schools Programme), physical activity (Active Youth programme), Mental Health, Tobacco Control, Integrated Health and several other programmes. These programmes of Creating a Supportive Environment continue for secondary education with the addition of STI/HIV prevention, Integrated Health and other programmes. The health education programme also covers educators and parents (HPB, 2023).

In 2014, the Ministry of Education (MoE) introduced a new physical education syllabus, replacing the previous one. This new syllabus outlined learning outcomes for each grade level and established six overarching goals applicable to all grades (MoE, 2016, p. 6), which include:

"Goal 1: Acquire various movement skills to participate in physical activities.

Goal 2: Understand and apply movement concepts, principles and strategies in various physical activities.

Goal 3: Demonstrate safe practices concerning themselves, others, and the environment during physical and daily activities.

Goal 4: Display positive personal and social behaviour across different experiences.

Goal 5: Acquire and maintain health-enhancing fitness through regular participation in physical activities.

Goal 6: Enjoy and value the benefits of a physically active and healthy life" (MoE, 2016, p. 6).

In primary school, students develop fundamental movement skills and concepts, enhancing their efficiency, effectiveness, and versatility. They practice and transfer these skills across seven learning areas: Athletics, Dance, Games and Sports, Gymnastics, Outdoor Education, Physical Health and Fitness, and Swimming, becoming competent movers (MoE, 2016). In secondary school, students apply their knowledge and skills to specialise in physical health and fitness, outdoor education, and physical activities in real-world settings, ultimately becoming confident performers by the end of their secondary education (MoE, 2016). Although health and physical education are adequately provided in schools in Singapore, sports are not considered a popular career choice for students.

Skills Education

MoE (2023d) provided a four-layered Framework for 21st-Century Competencies and Student Outcomes. In the first orbit, the competencies are Self-Awareness, Self-Management, Responsible Decision-Making, Social Awareness, and Relationship Management. The second orbit competencies and outcomes are Critical, Adaptive and Inventive Thinking, Communication, Collaboration and Information Skills, and Civic, Global and Cross-Cultural Literacy. These 21st-century competencies are designed to create self-directed learners, active contributors, concerned citizens and confident persons.

There is a common belief that vocational education and training (VET) is only meant for students who are not academically strong. However, Singapore has recently taken specific measures to change this negative perception (Varaprasad, 2022). The polytechnics and ITE courses have been upgraded with state-of-the-art facilities and modern infrastructure. The courses are designed in collaboration with businesses to meet their specific needs (Hui, 2011). Despite these efforts, the general population still does not view these courses with the same level of respect as they do for traditional academic paths such as A-levels.

MoE (2022c) mentioned that in prevocational education for Special Education Schools, "SPED TLSs will be developed for all seven Learning Domains of the SPED curriculum. They are i) Communication and Language, ii) Numeracy, iii) Social-Emotional Learning, iv) Daily Living Skills, v) Arts, vi) Physical Education and vii) Vocational Education. The TLSs for Daily Living Skills and Visual Arts were launched in 2021, and the remaining TLSs will be released progressively over the next few years."

Hobby and Life Skills Education

Secondary schools offer specialised programs to support students' interests and talents better. The Applied Learning Programme (ALP) and the Learning for Life Programme (LLP) enhance core academic and student development initiatives. These programs provide students with additional opportunities to pursue their passions while fostering the development of 21st Century Competencies (21CC) by applying classroom knowledge to real-world situations and gaining life skills in genuine contexts (MoE, n.d.).

Cocurricular activities (CCA) are mandatory in all secondary schools and provide opportunities for developing hobbies that enrich life. Singapore strongly emphasises developing soft skills and competencies among its students for a better future. Singapore has introduced a four-layered 'Framework for 21st Century Competencies and Student Outcomes', focusing on core values such as social-emotional and global competencies. Guided by this framework, schools aim to nurture students and help them evolve into confident individuals, self-directed learners, active contributors, and concerned citizens.

The Ministry of Education (MoE) and the polytechnics/ITE have worked together to establish a comprehensive Life Skills framework, which includes ten essential skills to help students navigate the transition to work and adulthood. The polytechnics and ITE are updating curricula to ensure all students acquire proficiency in these ten life skills (MoE, n.d.).

Koh and Camiré (2015) pointed out that certain life skills are crucial for youth to succeed in our rapidly changing world in the 21st century. Their study highlighted the need for policymakers, school leaders, teachers, and coaches to identify and define the most essential life skills and values within their specific contexts. They should also clearly outline the desired outcomes they aim to achieve through their sports programs (Koh & Camiré, 2015, p. 250).

Moral, Social, and Cultural Education

Schools provide an integrated moral and social education to meet students' holistic development needs (MoE, n.d.). The moral education textbooks used in primary schools in Singapore serve as a valuable reference for developing similar textbooks in the country (Zhao & He, 2021). One of the

learning outcomes is to 'act with integrity and make responsible decisions that uphold moral principles' of the Character and Citizenship Education (MoE, 2012). Singapore takes great pride in maintaining harmony among its diverse ethnic, racial, and religious groups. This multiculturalism is reflected in the country's education system (Folli, 2024), where English is the medium of instruction, but Mother Tongue Language learning is equally emphasised (MoE, 2023h). Compulsory CCAs, particularly team games, bring students from different ethnic groups together.

Additionally, Students from diverse ethnic backgrounds attend the same schools and are taught by teachers from various backgrounds, including new immigrants from countries such as China and India. Schools organise activities like Racial Harmony Day to promote cross-cultural understanding, where students dress in ethnic costumes, sample different foods, and learn about other cultures and their heritage (National Library Board, 2024). The Ministry of Education will continue to support students in staying connected to Singaporean heritage and culture. Simultaneously, they aim to equip students with the knowledge, cross-cultural skills, and global awareness necessary to succeed in an increasingly diverse and interconnected world (MoE, 2023i).

Peace and Happiness Education

Singapore is ranked the 6th most peaceful country in the world and the 25th happiest on the Happiness Index. However, the Home Affairs Minister stated that race-related and religious conflicts in Singapore doubled in 2020 compared to 2018. This is a serious concern, especially for a small population like Singapore, as it may impact sustainable development (Suwannarat, 2021).

Education promotes peace and stability among students to achieve harmony under Character and Citizenship Education (MoE, 2012). Singapore does not have a formal peace education or a Happiness Curriculum. However, the happiness and peace index shows that education significantly impacts developing students as active contributors and concerned citizens. Singapore could consider examining the UNESCO framework for Peace Education.

Summary and Conclusion

A unique blend of historical, institutional, and cultural factors has shaped Singapore's education system. It is centralised, multicultural, and well-funded, with a prescribed national curriculum. The system is also flexible and led by experts.

Individualist education is given high priority starting from the primary level. Gifted students are offered an enriched and personalised curriculum, with particular attention to ensuring quality support. However, the intense pressure to excel, driven by a competitive culture and materialistic pursuits, has led to an unhealthy emphasis on effortful learning, known as 'Kiasuism'. This has resulted in the rise of private tuition outside of schools, a meritocracy that can be fatal, and a nationwide obsession with test-taking.

Singapore's education is dominated by academic learning and examination performance. It is skewed towards cognitive development. The emphasis on examination performance and widespread practice of private tuition - more than 60% of high school, 80% of primary school-age students, and 40% of pre-schoolers receiving private education (Clycq et al., 2014) also emphasises rote learning.

However, Singapore school education has provisions for health education promoted by the Health Promotion Board, physical education broadly under CCA, life skills education under the 21st Century Framework, and moral, social, and cultural education through character and citizenship education. The school curriculum has no articulated policy or practice of prevocational skills and peace and happiness education. The vocational skills are taught at post-secondary polytechnic education.

Singapore is an interesting case of the wide gap between government intention and practices at the ground zero level. CCA is compulsory and credited with other academic subjects. A mid-day school meal is a nutritional practice. The rest are intentions. Because of over-emphasis on academic performance and schooling tuned to purpose, the all-round development of students is still a dream. It is tuned to exam performance, a good job and secure life.

Because of the burden of cognitive load, there is an imbalance of education in affective, social and psychomotor domains. Singapore has a very high rate of youth suicide (Suwannarat, 2021). Stressfulness is also indicated in the PISA-related survey (OECD, 2019). The craze for better grades has produced elitism, greed, selfishness, and inconsiderate behaviour. Some students in the top streams look down on those who have yet to make it, believing their success to be all their making and not recognising the help they received from tutors and parents. This has been described as 'we are a tyranny of the capable and the clever' (Crehan, 2016, p. 109). However, the government is aware of and concerned about this elitism and the tension among students, staff, and parents. The government has taken several innovative measures to ease the situation and make education joyful and effective.

Singapore scores high on peace and happiness indices. Despite occasional ethnic and religious conflicts, as reported in the Parliament and by the Press, Singaporeans are generally peace-loving. Singapore's education can be strengthened by introducing peace and happiness education into the school curriculum. Singapore can benefit from the UNESCO frameworks for Building Peace through Education (2008) and Peace Education: A Framework for Teacher Education (2005). Also, the government can collaborate with the Delhi Government on the Happiness Curriculum.

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Sustainable Transformation of Education: Sri Lanka

Abhishek Kumar Singh

Abstract

Sri Lanka's education system has witnessed significant transformations through policy reforms to enhance access, quality, and relevance. Despite its rich cultural heritage, colonial influence, and a history marked by conflict, the nation continues to strive for educational excellence. This paper provides a comprehensive analysis of Sri Lanka's educational landscape, particularly emphasising the National Education Policy Framework (2023-2033). This framework is pivotal in modernising the system, with key focus areas including digital transformation, STEAM integration, and life skills education. The study also delves into persistent challenges such as urban-rural disparities, resource constraints, and the necessity for continuous teacher training. However, the paper also highlights a beacon of hope- the crucial role of moral, social, and peace education in fostering societal cohesion in a post-conflict context. By reviewing policy documents and socio-economic indicators, the study offers valuable insights into the evolving education system, identifying gaps that must be addressed for sustainable development and equitable access for all.

*Keywords***:** Sri Lanka, Education Policy Framework, White Paper, 3H theme, Technology inclusion, National Assessment Framework

Introduction

Sri Lanka is an island country located southwest of the Bay of Bengal, off the southern coast of India. It is officially known as the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka. "In 1948, after nearly 150 years of British rule, Sri Lanka became an independent country, and it was admitted to the United Nations seven years later" (Peiris & Arasaratnam, 2024, Para 4). In 1972, the country changed its name, Ceylon, to Sri Lanka. The total area of Sri Lanka is 65610 sq km, with a coastline

of 1340 km. Srilanka is divided into nine provinces: Central, Eastern, North Central, Northern, North Western, Sabaragamuwa, Southern, Uva, and Western (WFB, 2024). It shares maritime boundaries with the Maldives to the south and India to the north. The Gulf of Mannar and the Palk Strait separates the country from India. The country is characterised by its beautiful beaches, lush green vegetation, ancient monuments, and various cuisines.

Sri Lanka has a population of about 22 million (Macrotrends, 2024) – with females making up 51.9%. The population growth rate is a steady 0.1 per cent, with approximately 18.19 per cent residing in urban areas. The majority of the people are Sinhalese (74.9%), followed by Sri Lankan Tamils (11.2%), Sri Lankan Moors (9.2%), Indian Tamils (4.2%) and others (0.5%). The religious landscape is equally diverse, with the majority following Buddhism (70.2%), followed by Hinduism (12.6%), Islam (9.7%), Christianity (7.4%) and others (0.05%) (2012 est.). Sinhala and Tamil are the official and national languages (WFB, 2024), adding to the country's rich cultural tapestry. The average life expectancy is 77 years (Lancet, 2023).

People in Sri Lanka mainly depend on agriculture for their livelihood, though the economic activities are diverse and are based on agriculture, mining, fishing, manufacturing, and tourism. In recent years, remittances received from overseas Sri Lankans have significantly contributed to the country's foreign exchange reserve. As of 2022, the country's GDP was 74.85 billion U.S. dollars, with a negative growth rate of -7.8% and GDP per capita was 3,340 USD. *The unemployment rate for 2022 was 5.3% (IMF, 2024).* Sri Lanka ranked 78th out of 193 countries (with a score of 0.780) in HDI (UNDP, 2024) and 128th in the World Happiness Index (Helliwell et al., 2024).

As of 2019, the literacy rate in Sri Lanka for individuals aged 15 and above is 92.3%, with 93% for males and 91.6% for females (WFB, 2024). Sri Lanka's GER and NER, in 2021, for primary, stood at 96.87% and 96.78%, and for upper secondary, 85.04% and 85.94%, respectively (UNESCO-UIS, 2024). Sri Lanka's robust school education system consists of 10,146 government schools serving 4,048,937 students at different levels, with the support of 241,054 teachers (MOE, 2021a). However, challenges include educational disparities between urban and rural areas, professional training needs, and financial resources. Sri Lanka ranked 90th out of 170 countries on the Gender Inequality Index (UNDP, 2023).

Educational Policy

The Sri Lankan education system has undergone numerous changes in the last 74 years. It has adopted the free education policy since October 1945 (Ranepura, 2021)**.** Every individual in the nation has the right to receive tuition-free education until they reach the university level. It ensures inclusive education, creating productive, caring, patriotic citizens and offering lifelong learning opportunities to all (Pallegedara & Sisira Kumara, 2020). It "recognised that education is

fundamental for achieving full human potential, developing an equitable society, and promoting national harmony and development" (MoE, 2022, p. 3). Proposals for general education reforms 2022-2032 envisioned Sri Lankan "schools to be places of learning where students will lay the foundation for realising their dreams and become partners of the nation's dream of becoming a strong and sustainable socio-economic system" (MoE, 2022, p. 2). Its mission is "To develop and manage physical, human, knowledge, and informational resources of the system of education in order to build our schools as places of learning where students connect their aptitudes and passions with career opportunities and decisions, and where the guidance, inspiration and resources needed to support these decisions are provided" (MoE, 2022, p. 2).

1961, the government took over denominational colleges and schools to establish a national education system. In 1972, mega curriculum reform was introduced by the Curriculum Development Centre (CDC). It resulted in changes to both the structure and content of education. Education structure was 5+4+2+1, i.e., primary (5 years), junior secondary (4 years), Senior Secondary (2 years) and pre-university education (1 year). "Attempt to make secondary education content more applied by adding a mandatory pre-vocational course at the junior secondary level. The reforms also sought to distance Sri Lanka from the British education system by renaming Ordinary level (O-level) and Advanced level (A-level) secondary examinations and "localising" the content. This education reform, however, was discontinued after five years" (D'Souza & Moore, 2017).

In 1981, the "White Paper on Education" was introduced for resource and facility sharing through the School "clusters" methodology, with one main school responsible for teaching and pulling their resources with secondary or lower schools (Little, 2010). Education policy changed with the change of government. The newly elected government brought up the White Paper reform of 1981 to introduce significant changes in education and the school curriculum. As a result, the structure of education had changed to 5+3+3+2, i.e., primary education (5 years), junior secondary education (3 years), Senior Secondary (3 years) and pre-university education (2 years). Life Skills subjects at the junior secondary level and technical subjects at the senior secondary level were replaced by Pre-vocational education I and II (Nawastheen, 2019).

The 1997 education reform had two objectives: to provide access and equity in education and improve education quality. The "four-pronged strategy" involved modernising curricula, textbooks, and teaching methodology, distributing funds to improve school facilities, and providing management training to school principals. The reforms also involved revising exams to bring them on par with developed countries" (D'Souza & Moore, 2017).

In 2023, a National Education Policy Framework (2023-2033) (NEPF) was developed and introduced with the goal of "sustainably enhancing the access, quality, relevance and digital transformation of the education system through systemic changes to the teaching, learning and credentialing; governance; and investments and resources domains to expedite economic and social development" (MOE, 2023, p. 5).

NEPF (2023-2033) recommended that "existing provisions for early childhood education shall be optimised through partnerships and provisions shall be made to ensure access for economically disadvantaged families" (p.28). The previous policy, NEPF 2020-2030, recommends six strategic interventions in Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE):

- All children around 3 to 5 years old should have access to at least a year of affordable ECCE.

- All ECCE programmes should aim to support holistic development.

- Quality of structure and processes should be maintained.

- Benchmarking and quality assurance outcomes should match with international benchmarks.

- Adequate, equitable and sustainable funding should be ensured.

- Ensured legal and regulatory framework (NEC, 2023).

The policy statement of NEPF 2023-2033 recommended that:

- Six key areas for preschool learning will be aesthetics and creative activities, discovery of the world, language and literacy, motor skills development, numeracy, and social and emotional development.

- English will be the medium of instruction. Proficiency in Sinhala, Tamil, English, numeracy, and digital literacy is essential.

- The curriculum piloted in 2023 will be lighter and more meaningful, with less stressful examinations and valid school-based assessments. Students should also learn about data literacy, artificial intelligence, its societal impacts, privacy, security, fairness, accountability, and transparency issues related to data use, entrepreneurship, financial literacy, volunteerism, and other functional skills and attitudes. Environmental protection, sustainable development, climate change adaptation, and risk management shall be integrated into learning streams. All children should learn Sri Lanka's history, culture, values, and ethnic and religious richness. Religious education should be included in 'Religions and Values'.

- Skills electives will be introduced at the Senior Secondary level. Relevant Skills Councils will develop standards and curricula in skills education and development. National curricula shall be standardised against suitable international benchmarks.

- Blended Learning, STEAM, Mindfulness Learning, and other 21st-century approaches shall be integrated into all classrooms (MoE, 2023, pp. 16-30).

NEPF 2023-2033 mentioned the stage-wise expected learning outcomes:

- Primary: Basic life skills

- Junior Secondary: Foundation for life

- Senior Secondary-I: Foundation for career readiness

- Senior Secondary-II: Foundation for academic, vocational, and professional life.

In secondary education, students can select from various subjects in either academic or skills tracks, enabling them to pursue multiple pathways towards professional or vocational life. Further, NEPF 2023-2033 mentioned that to reduce the unskilled population and build employability, "Sri Lanka shall ensure a seamless array of education and training opportunities for all learners."

The NEPF 2023-2033 stated that inclusive learning approaches are supported to benefit students with special needs. Continuous training is provided to teachers across all educational sectors to enhance their capacity to deliver inclusive education. Additionally, integrating technologies like artificial intelligence is promoted to facilitate personalised and inclusive learning experiences.

Structure of the Education System

The Sri Lankan education system consists of primary, junior secondary, senior secondary, upper senior secondary (collegiate level), and higher education (Figure 25.1). Sri Lanka offers thirteen years of schooling, from 5 to 18. Schooling is compulsory for children from 5 to 14 years of age. The first level is the primary Stage—grades 1-5. The concept of neighbourhood schooling guides admission to public primary schools, both mixed and mono-gender schools.

At the Junior Secondary Level (grades 6-9), students learn first and second language, English, religion, mathematics, science, history, civics, geography, health, practical technology, and aesthetic subjects. At the end of the Senior Secondary Level (10-11 grades), students take the Ordinary Level Examination (GCE O/L), and at the end of the Upper Senior Secondary (grades 12 and 13), conclude with the Advanced Level Examination (GCE A/L).

The majority of these schools are Government schools. Students can choose subject streams like combined mathematics, biology, commerce, and technology at the collegiate level. University admission is competitive; only a small percentage of students can enter tertiary education. Private higher education institutions provide alternative opportunities for higher education through private and international schools, as well as semi-government institutions. There are 30 special schools.

Sri Lanka's secondary enrolment rate is 99 per cent. However, it sharply drops to 21 per cent at the tertiary level.
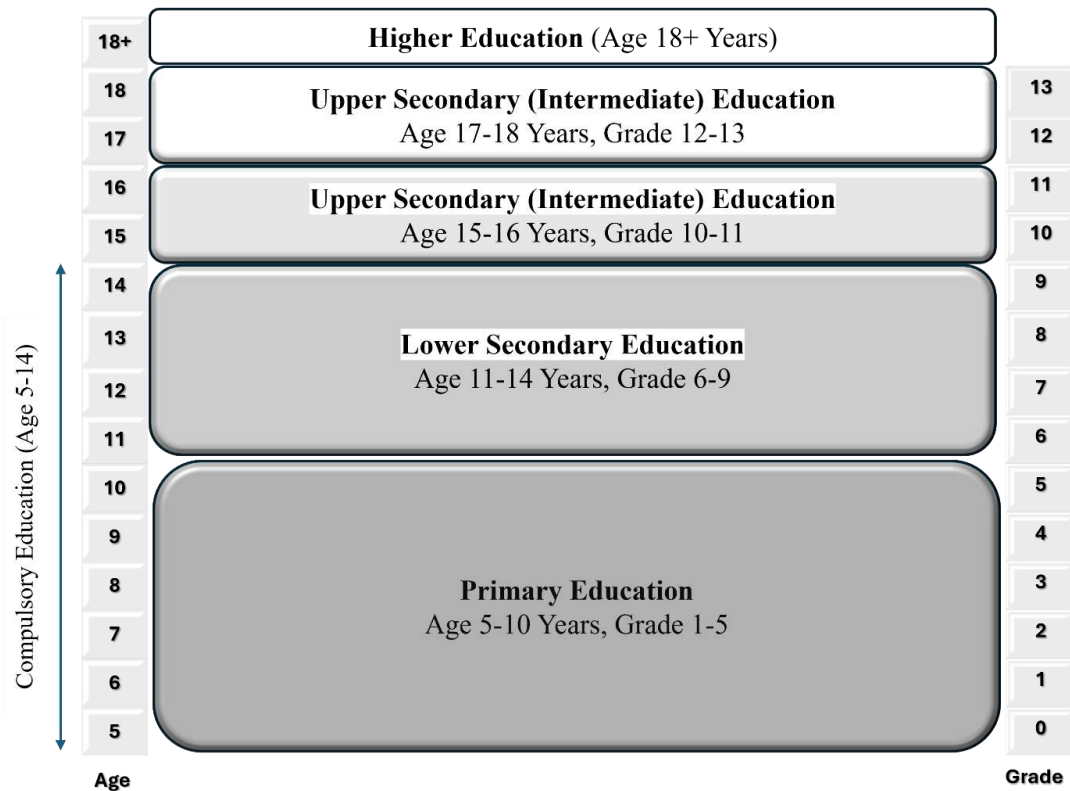
Figure 25.1 School Education Structure of Sri Lanka

Source: World Bank, 2005 (Adapted by author)

Curricular Framework

The curriculum was designed with the 3H theme: "Head, Heart, and Hand" (Nawastheen, 2019). The main objective of Sri Lanka's general education system is to establish a basis for developing individuals who are ready to tackle the challenges of the 21st century and beyond, as well as to play a part in the country's sustainable national development and peace-building efforts. Traditional,

political, social, religious, and economic factors influence contemporary education systems and curriculum development (MOE, 2020)**.**

Each phase is designed for a smooth transition into the next, ensuring students develop comprehensive skills that prepare them for future academic challenges and professional opportunities and has defined objectives (Ministry of Education, 2020)

1. Primary Education (Grades 1-5): Purpose: This stage focuses on providing education that imparts basic life skills. These foundational years introduce students to basic academic concepts and social skills necessary for daily life and further education.

2. Junior Secondary Education (Grades 6-9): Purpose: This phase serves as the foundation for life, building upon the skills learned in primary education. It typically includes more complex subjects and prepares students for higher levels of education.

3. Senior Secondary Education Phase 1 (Grades 10-11): Purpose: During these two years, the focus is on laying the groundwork for career readiness. This often involves more specialised courses, whether vocational or academic, to prepare students for specific career paths or further education.

4. Senior Secondary Education Phase 2 (Grades 12-13): Purpose: This stage prepares students for academic and professional life. It typically includes advanced coursework crucial for higher education or professional qualifications.

The curricular framework of the Sri Lankan education system comprises a diverse range of subjects:

1. Languages: Sri Lanka recognises Sinhala and Tamil as official languages. Both languages and English are required subjects, and they are taught to ensure that students are proficient in multiple languages. The official languages of instruction in government institutions are Sinhala and Tamil. Typically, Sinhala children study in a Sinhala medium, and Tamil children study in a Tamil medium. Muslim children may choose to study in either Arabic or English (Nawastheen, 2019).

2. Mathematics and Sciences: Students study mathematics, biology, chemistry, and physics throughout their secondary and postsecondary education. These subjects are prerequisites for further medicine, engineering, and scientific research studies.

3. Social Studies: Students learn history, geography, and citizenship education.

4. Arts and Aesthetics: Visual arts, music, drama, and dance are essential components of the curriculum, fostering students' creative expression and art appreciation.

5. Commerce and Business Studies: Students can select courses such as accounting, economics, and business studies to prepare for careers in finance, management, and entrepreneurship.

6. Technology and Vocational Studies: Technical subjects, including information technology, engineering technology, and vocational studies, equip students interested in trades and technical professions with practical skills.

Structure of the School Curriculum

According to NCF 2020, the Following learning areas or subjects would be learned in Sri Lankan schools (Table 25.1).

Grade 11 concludes with the award of the GCE O-Level examination. For the GCE O/L Examination, students must take nine subjects. To advance to GCE A/L grade 1, they must pass at least six subjects with a minimum of C in three subjects, including science, maths, and their mother tongue. The education system values cultural diversity and encourages students to maintain their linguistic heritage by including the mother tongue as a required subject.

Based on their GCE O-Level results, students can continue their Combined Mathematics, Biology, Commerce, and Technology studies at the phase two senior secondary education level.

In the A/L class, students can choose one of three primary streams: arts, science, or commerce. Students have to study three main subjects under each combination. In addition to those three subjects, they must study a General English Paper. Students with good results in this exam can enter state universities. If not, they can continue their education at a private university or any other institution. Social science (Economics, Geography, Logic, Political science, Psychology, etc.) and Humanities (Language, Culture, Drama, history, and classical studies) courses are available for the arts. This flexibility in subject choice allows students to pursue their interests and strengths, preparing them for a wide range of career paths in the future.

Two primary disciplines are Bioscience and Physical Science for science students. Bioscience students study biology, physics, and chemistry, while physical science students study mathematics, physics, chemistry, etc. There are a few elective courses, such as agriculture, Zoology, and double mathematics. Students of commerce choose accounting, business, economics, and entrepreneurship courses. Once students have chosen their field, they must take English and General Knowledge as mandatory subjects. These compulsory subjects give students essential communication skills and a broad understanding of various topics.

Table 25.1 Stage-wise Learning Areas

Early Childhood and Primary Education (ECPE)	Junior Secondary	Senior Secondary
1. "Mother tongue Language 2. English language 3. Second National Languages 4. Mathematics 5. Elementary Science and Environmental Related Activities 6. Religious and Value Education 7. Integrated Aesthetics Education 8. Health and Physical Education 9. Co-Curricular Activities, Assembly and Interval" (p. 27)	1. "Mother tongue and Literacy skills 2. English Language 3. Second National Language 4. Mathematics for Life 5. Science for Life 6. Religion and Value Education 7. Health and Physical Education 8. Information Technology 9. Geography and Global Studies 10. History 11. Civic Education 12. Commerce and Entrepreneurship Education 13. Aesthetic Education 14. Technology for Life" (p. 29)	1. "Mother Tongue and Literature 2. English language 3. Mathematics for life 4. Science for life 5. History and Social Sciences 6. Religion and value education 7. Health and Physical Education 8. GIT 9. Aesthetics Education 10. Language performance (Mother tongue, 2nd National Language &English)" (p. 33)

Source: MoE, 2020

All students must study their native language, a second language (English), mathematics, science, history, and religion. Students may select three subjects from the optional list, such as civics, arts, dance, commerce, entrepreneurship, agriculture, etc., providing them with diverse interests and skills to explore. The education system encourages students to pursue their passions and develop well-rounded individuals by allowing them to choose from various subjects. There are differential weightages to different subjects at different levels (Table 25.2).

The National Education Policy Framework (NEPF) for 2023-2033 (MOE, 2023) aims to revolutionise educational processes, improve administrative efficiency, and maximise resource utilisation by implementing comprehensive policy declarations in Teaching, Learning and Credentialling, Governance, and Investments and Resources. This ambitious framework is based on inclusion, quality, and relevance ideals. It aims to establish a robust educational system that can adapt to technological improvements and changing socio-economic needs. The NEPF aspires to provide a well-organized and adaptable educational setting to give Sri Lankan students the essential abilities to succeed in an interconnected world. This will significantly contribute to the nation's long-term growth and prosperity.

Table 25.2 Weightage to Different Subjects – Weekly Periods for Each Level

Subjects	Hours per week		
	Primary	**Junior Secondary**	**Senior Secondary**
Mother tongue Language	5.00	5.00	5.00
English Language	0.30	3.00	3.30
Second National Language	0.30	1.00	1.00
Mathematics	3.30	5.00	5.00
Religious and Value Education	1.15	2.00	2.00
Elementary Science and ERA	4.30	5.00	7.00
Integrated Aesthetic Education	1.00	1.30	1.30
Health and Physical Education	1.40	2.05	2.05
Co-Curricular Activities, Assembly and Interval	3.20	2.55	2.55
Total	**22. 30**	**27.30**	**30.00**

Note: Integers after the decimal are the number of minutes, e.g., 1.30 means one hour and 30 minutes

Source: MOE, 2020

Teaching Learning

The NEPF aims to shift from rote learning to a comprehensive, unified approach to education. It supports blended learning, STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics), and mindfulness, promoting critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills. The NEPF also advocates for national curriculum standardisation to match global standards, ensuring the education system remains competitive and adaptable.

Sri Lanka government encouraged and supported action research by teachers. It was found that the teachers are competent in solving teaching-learning problems with innovative methods and strategies, and students benefitted in coping with daily classroom activities (Lekamge & Thilakeratne, 2019)

Technology inclusion in classrooms is also gradually gaining momentum. According to (MOE, 2021a), as ICT and AI use is increasingly spreading to all working areas, students need to understand the ethical use of ICTs. In Sri Lanka, technological development has also influenced school education. Effective use of ICT and E-learning is a potent instrument for reshaping the teaching-learning process (Uhomoibhi, 2006). A comparative study found that access to

technology, E-Learning in the Context of Sri Lankan Education, E-Learning as a Self-Learning Mechanism, Teacher and Student Knowledge on E-Learning, and Teacher-Student Relationship affect online education in Sri Lankan secondary education (Ellapola, 2022).

Gamage (2020) flagged the challenges in implementing the master plan without corresponding changes to Sri Lanka's largely examination-driven education system. Under these conditions, ICT will be tested on paper instead of as a tool for lifelong learning and for working and living in a technology-driven world (Gamage, 2020).

Learning Assessment

Sri Lanka developed a comprehensive philosophy and plan for modernising student assessment (Figure 25.2).

The Department of Examinations appoints and trains assessment panels for the GCE O and A levels to improve the credibility of school-based assessments overseen by the Provincial Boards of Education. These committees operate under the direction of provincial education boards.

The Department of Examination makes detailed plans in consultation with the relevant authorities at the field level. The assessment committees are also responsible for assessing language and aesthetic performances and IT skills and introducing measures to include such performance-based skills in the student profile. Additionally, the assessment committees collaborate with educators and experts in the respective fields to ensure the assessments align with current educational standards and best practices. They regularly review and update the assessment criteria to adapt to evolving needs and educational advancements. This comprehensive approach aims to enhance the overall quality and effectiveness of school-based assessments, providing students with a well-rounded evaluation of their skills and abilities. Significant differences exist in education achievement between provinces and schools in the country. This has raised concerns about academic performance disparities. Schools with fewer resources, mostly attended by students from rural areas, are falling behind schools with more resources in terms of academic success (MOE, 2016; World Bank, 2005).

The primary education evaluation is a school-based Assessment with integrated learning units and formative and continuous assessment. The Department of Examinations nominated panels evaluate linguistic, aesthetic, and IT abilities, incorporating these skills into student profiles.

The Department of Examination administers a summative assessment of students' minimal learning outcomes. The proposed curriculum focuses on an authentic learning system, with the GCE (ordinary level) aiming for minimal proficiency in various subjects. After the advanced level phase, a public examination would be created, and a National Assessment Framework would be designed.
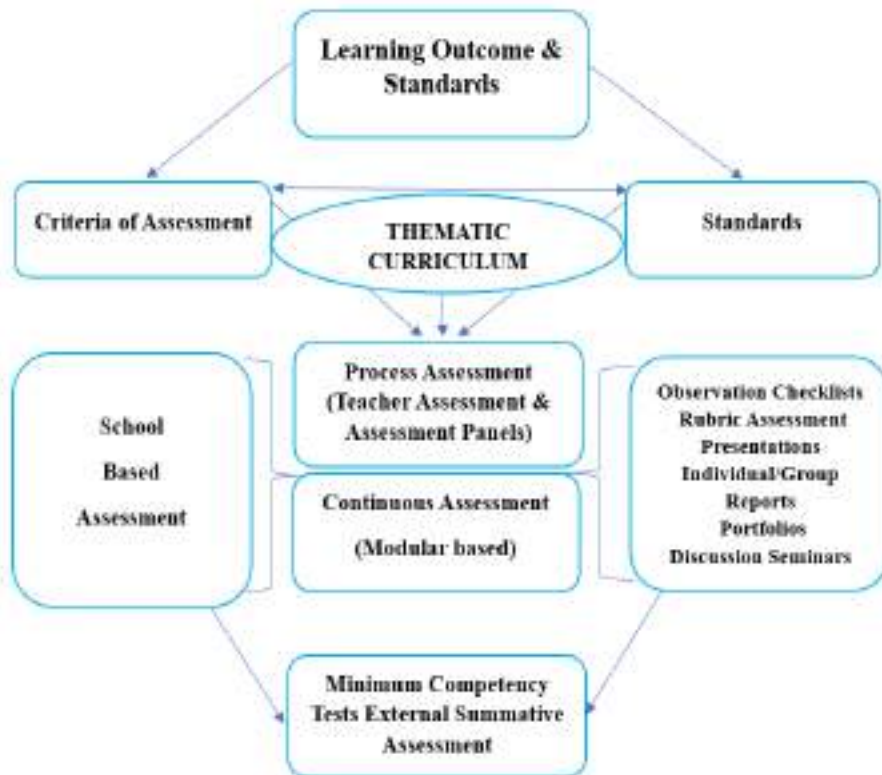
Figure 25.2 National Assessment Philosophy
Source: MOE, 2020

The National Assessment Framework (NAF) is a collaboration between the Department of Examinations, NIE, and the Ministry of Education. It aims to establish a learning assessment procedure for national education curriculum outcomes to improve the learning and teaching process and form a student profile.

Under the GCE (O-Level) phase of the Senior Secondary curriculum, an Essential Compulsory Learning package will continue to ensure that each student attains a minimum level of competency in the prescribed subjects. The Department of Examination will also devise and administer a public exam after the GCE (A-Level) phase (ADB, 2017).

In Sri Lanka, the National Institute of Education (NIE) and the Monitoring Learning Achievement Project of UNESCO conducted the first national assessment for fifth-graders in 1994. National assessment was bolstered by establishing the National Education Research and Evaluation Centre (NEREC) at the University of Colombo with World Bank funding. The NEREC has administered the fourth-grade assessment since 2003. Since 2008, the World Bank has supported the development of assessment capacity at the Open University, which administered a grade 10 assessment in 2009 (Department for International Development of the United Kingdom, 2011).

Health and Physical Education

Health and Physical Education in Sri Lanka promotes students' well-being and physical development. The subjects include nutrition, hygiene, fitness, and sports. Through Health and Physical Education, students learn the importance of leading a healthy lifestyle and participating in physical activities to enhance their physical capabilities (Wickramasinghe et al., 2019). This subject also instils values such as teamwork, discipline, and sportsmanship. Health and Physical Education equips students with the knowledge and skills to maintain a healthy lifestyle and engage in physical activities for a balanced and productive life (Sallis et al., 2012). To achieve this goal, health and physical education is implemented as a compulsory subject for grades 6 through 9 and as a basket subject for grades 10 and 11.

"In this regard, the pupils are provided direction in

- The study and protection of their wonderful body
- The acquisition of happiness and satisfaction
- Getting to know their needs
- Safeguarding personal health
- Developing their looks
- Maintaining the emotional balance
- Working cooperatively with peers
- Facing challenges encountered in life positively and successfully
- Achieving well-being through respect for moral values
- Spending leisure effectively
- making life effective and efficient" (Health & Physical Education Unit, 2016, p. x).

Skills Education

The TVET policy was enacted and approved by the President in 2010. It aimed to ensure a quality TVET provision to improve employability and meet local and international skills demands. A

particular focus was on including disadvantaged groups through incentives like scholarships and subsidised access to programs (TVEC, 2020).

The focus is on developing information technology, hospitality, tourism, and construction skills. Furthermore, initiatives like apprenticeship programs and partnerships with private companies have been established to provide practical training. Several studies and initiatives highlight the efforts to bridge the gap between education and industry. Here are some key findings and resources:

1. Sri Lanka has made significant progress in reforming TVET systems to better align with industry needs, which is crucial for economic growth and reducing unemployment among educated youth (Dundar et al., 2014).
2. The development of TVET institutions in Sri Lanka shows a unique trajectory, often in contrast to international donor priorities, highlighting a more autonomous evolution focused on addressing local economic and educational needs (Maurer, 2012).
3. TVET in Sri Lanka significantly influences students' entrepreneurial intentions, emphasising the role of TVET in fostering a more innovative and self-sufficient workforce (Perera & Nishantha, 2020).
4. The pandemic accelerated the adoption of online learning in TVET sectors, reflecting the educational system's resilience and adaptability in continuing education despite challenges in practical training and digital access (Hayashi et al., 2021).

These studies and reports showcase Sri Lanka's commitment to enhancing skill education through various initiatives, aligning vocational training with market needs, and adapting to new challenges like the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure continuous educational opportunities.

Hobby and Life Skills Education

Life skills include knowledge, attitudes, and psychomotor skills essential for effective work and employment engagement, benefiting the person, the broader community, and the nation (UNDP, 1988). The WHO initially recognised the need for life skills education in 1993 (WHO, 1994). Sri Lanka included life skills as a distinct topic in its secondary curriculum in 1997. The Life Competencies Programmes (LCP) implemented a comprehensive curriculum that was successfully integrated into several secondary schools in Sri Lanka. The management of LCP is overseen by the Social Science Department and coordinated with the Science and Health and Physical Education Departments. LCP training was provided for teachers (four days) and In-Service Advisors (for five days). UNICEF assisted a youth radio program in Sri Lanka that promotes education focused on life skills (Munshi & Guha, 2014, p.97).

Replacing technical subjects with a new subject called Life Skills is recommended at the junior secondary level. The purpose is to achieve the following objectives:

- Introduce students to the world of work and instil a positive attitude towards it.
- Teach domestic skills appropriate for their age group, enabling students to become familiar with and proficient in using common tools and appliances.
- Provide pre-vocational skills and develop proficiency in simple skills relevant to various occupations.
- Offer an activity-based subject that allows non-academically oriented students to engage in meaningful learning activities in which they can excel. At the senior secondary level, it is important to focus on Life Skills while offering a range of elective technical topics to allow for some specialisation (UNDP, 1988).

The Life Skills Assessment instrument (LSAT –Q1, Q2) was created by combining the teachers' (Q3) and parents' (Q4) assessment instruments. The 21st Century framework is a guide to the foundational literacies, competencies, and character qualities. Students require 16 skills for the 21st century (Figure 25.3):

Fundamental Literacies: How students apply core skills to everyday tasks	Competencies: How students approach complex challenges	Character Quality: How students approach their challenging environment
- Literacy - Numeracy - Scientific Literacy - ICT Literacy - Financial Literacy - Cultural and Civic Literacy	- Critical thinking and Problem Solving - Creativity - Communication - Collaboration	- Curiosity - Initiative - Persistence/Grits - Adaptability - Leadership - Social and Cultural Awareness

Figure 25.3 16 Twenty-first-century Skills

Source: Taguma et al., 2018

Moral, Social, and Cultural Education

The primary objective of the Moral, Social, and Cultural Education program in Sri Lanka is to cultivate persons who possess strong moral principles, adept in social abilities, and have a keen understanding of other cultures (MOE, 2020). The objective is to enhance pupils' comprehension of ethical principles, societal obligations, and cultural variety. The government's education strategy is guided by the principle of "A productive Citizen and a happy family," which prioritises the government's role in human resource development.

The National Education Policy 1997 acknowledged the need to cultivate values and social skills to foster the growth of responsible and ethical individuals. Consequently, the Ministry of Education introduced Moral, Social, and Cultural Education programmes in schools to cultivate moral values among pupils, including honesty, integrity, respect, and compassion. These programmes foster moral conduct and motivate pupils to exercise accountability in decision-making.

The curriculum fosters social skills such as effective communication, collaboration, understanding others' perspectives, and conflict resolution. The objective is to provide a constructive and all-encompassing educational setting that fosters amicable interactions between students and educators.

The curriculum facilitates the development of pupils' understanding and appreciation for other cultures. Students are urged to learn about their cultural heritage and the cultural traditions of other societies.

Learning moral values (i.e. found in moral learning and behaviour) involves a circular journey. It commences with attitudes, which amalgamate to form values. These values subsequently guide moral judgments, and through steadfast adherence to these judgments, discipline is cultivated. The learning acquired through discipline contributes to developing one's life philosophy (Fernando, 2024).

The Moral Value Promotion Programme aims to achieve its goals by establishing well-organized and robust Moral Value Committees. The Grade Moral Value Promotion Committee promotes moral values and executes programmes relevant to moral growth for each grade (MOE, 2021b). Since years of civil war, the government has focused on national integration and multiculturalism. The Education Publication Department (EPD) produces national textbooks and promotes social cohesion and multi-ethnic understanding.

Peace and Happiness Education

Decades-long military conflict in Sri Lanka was often referred to as a civil war as well as an ethnic conflict. Following Sri Lanka's separation from the British Empire, a violent war resulted from attempts to modify the country's democratic system. After the formal conclusion of the conflict in 2009, initiatives toward rebuilding and reconciliation—which may include peace education—came back into prominence (Wagner, 2017).

The policy and its presentation are structured around seven strategic areas to foster social cohesion and peace. These areas include curriculum, teacher education, second national language, co-curriculum, school culture, and integration models. These components are interconnected to create synergy. Research and a focused research strategy encompass these elements. Supporting them is a

management strategy and structure, along with a monitoring and evaluation system that assesses the effectiveness and impact of the strategic areas (Millawithanachchi, 2020).

Given the importance of education in achieving national objectives, the Ministry of Education established a dedicated unit, which is currently known as the Social Cohesion and Peace Education Unit (UNAOC, 2023). Peace education, via promoting connections and leveraging indigenous perspectives, may have a good influence on all societal levels, but especially on the middle class. Building peace requires these organisations to coordinate effectively with one another.

Summary and Conclusion

Sri Lanka's education system is robust and well-developed, offering free education from elementary to university since 1945. The education system comprises primary, junior, senior, secondary and collegiate (upper senior secondary) levels. The reforms prioritised enhancing accessibility and quality and connecting the curriculum with practical and vocational requirements. Primary and junior secondary education offers a curriculum that equips students with fundamental abilities, prepares them for future professions, and assures their preparedness for academic and professional challenges. The reforms have modified the curriculum's content and structure to improve the educational landscape's ability to adapt to economic and social demands.

The schools provide education in languages, mathematics, sciences, social studies, arts, commerce, technology, and vocational studies. The government aims to enhance TVET to narrow the disparity between educational qualifications and industrial demands, cultivating a more proficient workforce.

Over the years, the government has enacted substantial changes to ensure equal access to education and improve the quality of educational attainment. The system follows a well-defined curricular structure that advances from fundamental life skills in early school to more intricate academic and vocational training in higher education stages.

Sri Lanka's educational reforms prioritise incorporating new technology and pedagogical methodologies, including e-learning and STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics), to guarantee that students are adequately equipped to tackle current difficulties. Moreover, the emphasis on moral, social, and peace education underscores the system's agenda in fostering societal values and unity, a crucial aspect in a heterogeneous society that has seen civil turmoil.

Sri Lanka emphasises the holistic development of students via a wide range of academic and non-academic activities. Health and physical education are mandatory for students in grades 6-9.

Additionally, there is a strong emphasis on skills education, explicitly targeting practical skills in demand in industries such as IT, hospitality, tourism, and construction. The "PATHS to Change" project aims to improve teenagers' resilience by providing them with moral, social, and cultural education via civic education, life skills, health science, religion, and ethics. These courses foster social cohesiveness, empathy, respect, and cultural knowledge and are likely considered when evaluating students' overall growth.

The curriculum includes peace education to prepare people for active social involvement and develop skills for democratic engagement, decision-making, and peaceful coexistence. This curriculum component focuses on cultivating a friendly and inclusive educational setting, which is crucial for promoting a peaceful society.

The Sri Lankan education system is structured to harmonise cognitive, emotive, social, and psychomotor aspects to reduce the potential strain on pupils caused by excessive cognitive load. Education focuses on promoting cognitive development via the study of challenging academic disciplines. The school system effectively integrates moral, social, and cultural education to cultivate empathy, respect, and cultural awareness, promoting emotional and ethical growth. Social education is included in the curriculum via collective endeavours, athletic pursuits, and educational initiatives within the school setting, fostering collaboration, fair play, and interpersonal engagement. Education in peace and happiness fosters social cohesiveness and comprehension among students from all backgrounds. Psychomotor skills are developed through mandatory physical education courses.

The school system in Sri Lanka seeks to cultivate traits of peace-loving global citizenship through Peace education and moral, social, and cultural education. The National Education Policy Framework 2020-2030 visions a transformation of Sri Lankan education with a long-term perspective to cope with the challenges of globalisation.

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The World of Learning: Lessons from 52 Countries

The World of Learning (WoL) is a unique, never-before study comparing educational reforms in 52 countries. Largest of its kind in the world.

In today's world, the urgency for a transformative educational paradigm is paramount, given the pressing challenges of climate change, conflict, and global inequality. **The World of Learning (WoL)** project addresses this need by documenting educational reforms across 52 countries, aiming to cultivate a new generation of global citizens.

Drawing from UNESCO reports and the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), WoL identifies effective educational practices and compiles insights from over 40 experts into a comprehensive knowledge repository.

This initiative focuses on key elements such as educational policies, curriculum design, teaching methodologies, and assessments, strongly emphasising moral education and global citizenship. It showcases innovative strategies from the Global South that reclaim educational narratives post-colonialism while integrating perspectives from both developed and developing nations.

WoL serves as a vital resource for policymakers and educators seeking to modernize education systems to meet the demands of a connected world. With 52 case studies and over 2,500 references, it offers extensive opportunities for comparative education research.

Looking ahead, WoL plans to co-create **Education 5.0 for Global Peace and Harmony,** reimagining education to foster a more inclusive and peaceful future.

Key themes Covered: Policy Reforms, 21st-Century Schooling, Curricular Reforms, Teaching-Learning and Learning Assessment Reforms, Physical, Moral and Life Skills Education. All-round Development, Global Citizenship and Peace Education

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