

Parents' Perspectives on the National Curriculum in Bangladesh: Implications for Educational Reform

Shahnaz Parvin

Associate Professor

Department of English Language and Literature (DELL)

Premier University, Chittagong

&

Lamia Tasnim

Lecturer

Lighthouse International School, Dhaka

Abstract:

This research paper explores parents' perspectives on the new experiential learning-focused secondary curriculum in Bangladesh. The study is driven by how key stakeholders, especially parents, respond to the recent curriculum changes in Bangladesh. It employs a qualitative approach, using semi-structured interviews to examine parents' perceptions, concerns, and suggestions regarding the curriculum implemented in Bangladeshi schools. By gathering data from a diverse group of parents from various socioeconomic backgrounds, the research aims to develop a comprehensive understanding of parental attitudes toward the curriculum. The findings reveal different viewpoints among parents regarding the emphasis on practical skills, as well as concerns about assessment methods, teachers' preparedness, and alignment with students' future goals. Through an in-depth discussion of parents' perceptions of the new curriculum, this study contributes to the ongoing dialogue about educational policy and curriculum development in Bangladesh, offering new insights into family perceptions and involvement in educational change. The insights from this study may guide future research and assist policymakers, educators, and curriculum designers in refining and adapting the curriculum to better meet the evolving needs of students and society.

Keywords: Parental perception, New Curriculum, Bangladesh, post-truth

1. Introduction and Background:

In 2024, Bangladesh's new curriculum has become a major topic in the education sector. Many newspapers and social media platforms have shared exaggerated stories about this issue. This has caused widespread panic and sparked significant controversy among people from different backgrounds. As a result, we identified two main stakeholders directly affected by the new curriculum: students and parents. While much research focuses on students and teachers, parents, despite being important stakeholders, have largely been overlooked. Therefore, we decided to genuinely represent parents' voices and carefully analyze their opinions and perspectives about the new curriculum, along with the influence of external factors on their perceptions. This paper examines how parental attitudes influence the reception and potential success of the new curriculum in Bangladesh, as well as how post-truth narratives shape these perceptions.

1.2 Thesis Statement

In Bangladesh, the new national curriculum (2021), which emphasizes experiential learning, has faced criticism from educators, students, and society at large. Despite being key stakeholders in children's education, parents have not been widely involved in the curriculum revision and implementation process, which is unusual in Bangladesh. However, parental perceptions are essential for effectively revising and executing the curriculum in children's education. Parental opinions influence whether they accept or oppose changes, affecting how the new curriculum impacts students' learning, since parents, like teachers, directly care for the learners. The study highlights the importance of parental voice in the national debate on curriculum reform, aiming to foster a more inclusive dialogue among policymakers, educators, and families. It provides new insights into the challenges and opportunities of the curriculum, emphasizes teacher practices, and offers recommendations to encourage more effective collaboration between the education system and parents for the benefit of students.

1.3 Significance of the research

Research on parental perceptions of the current curriculum in Bangladesh remains largely unexplored, as parents rarely have the opportunity to share their views on academic subjects. To ensure the overall effectiveness of the

curriculum, we—researchers and educators—need a comprehensive perspective. In the educational ecosystem, parental perceptions are highly important. Personally, as educators, analyzing parental perceptions of the curriculum will help us better support students and parents as a whole, thereby improving teaching practices in the classroom and enhancing our professional development. More importantly, this research has significant national relevance. As the country faces both acceptance and criticism of the national curriculum, leading to widespread confusion, this study aims to understand the underlying causes and find broader solutions to address the shortcomings. Lastly, there is the global importance of this research. In a study on Filipino schools, it has been concluded, “While parents are one of the stakeholders of learners’ education, they do not participate in curriculum development even at the school level. This lack of parents’ participation negatively impacts teaching and learning and the future of learners.” (Irembere, 2021)

1.4. Research Questions: This study aims to address the following research questions:

- i. What are parents' opinions on the current curriculum in Bangladesh?
- ii. How can parents effectively support the implementation of the current curriculum in Bangladesh?

1.5 Research Objectives:

The research objectives are organized as follows:

- I. To investigate parental attitudes and perceptions regarding Bangladesh's recently implemented curriculum changes, focusing on the pedagogical, economic, religious, and cultural challenges perceived for their children’s education.
- ii. To examine the factors influencing parental acceptance or resistance to the new curriculum in Bangladesh.
- iii. To identify possible challenges and solutions from the parents' viewpoint concerning the new curriculum.

2. Literature Review:

The education system in Bangladesh is recognized for having the lowest budget in the region. It is speculated that “The country allocates minimal resources to its education sector, with the implication that it relies heavily on the aid of foreign donors for improvement of education, including English language education” (Erling, 2017). Educationists and institutions involved in implementing the new curriculum appreciate its emphasis on competency-based education and the removal of examinations, but “students, guardians as well as many teachers are struggling to cope up with it due to the clarity regarding student performance and evaluation” (Hasan, 2023). Among the stakeholders, parents are crucial in the education process. Given this, our key themes for this research include parental perception and the new experiential learning-based curriculum in the post-truth era. This segment will discuss the definition of curriculum, the National Curriculum Framework 2021 (NCF-2021) of Bangladesh, parental perceptions of curriculum design worldwide, and the theory of Post-truth and its implications for parental perceptions.

2.1 What is Curriculum?

Marsh and Willis (2007) define curriculum as "the structure, content, and organization of teaching and learning experiences" (p. 6). It serves as a blueprint for educational experiences within a specific institution or program, guiding what is taught, how it is taught, and how learning is assessed.

According to Tyler (1949), the curriculum is not a static entity but rather a dynamic process that evolves. He suggests that curriculum development starts with clearly defined educational objectives, followed by the selection and organization of content and learning experiences to achieve those objectives. He states, "What educational purposes should the school seek to attain, what educational experiences can be provided that are likely to attain these purposes, and how can these educational experiences be effectively organized?" (p. 1).

Additionally, Eisner (2002) emphasizes the importance of viewing the curriculum as more than just a list of subjects or content to be covered. He argues that the curriculum should be regarded as a "plan for experience" (p. 4), highlighting the role of teachers in shaping students' learning experiences and promoting meaningful engagement with the material.

2.2 National Curriculum Framework 2021 (NCF-2021) of Bangladesh

The NCF-2021 is the culmination of a decades-long effort in our country to implement a competency-based curriculum. This curriculum aims to assess students' learning by helping them achieve specific competencies over time. The curriculum development process can be divided into five basic steps, which are outlined as follows:

- I. Needs Assessment
- ii. The Planning Session
- Iii. Content Development
- iv. Pilot Delivery and Revision
- v. The completed curriculum package.

The vision of the present curriculum is “to create an honest, moral, value-oriented, scientific-minded, confident, efficient, creative, and happy generation inspired by the spirit of the liberation war, who will uphold national history, tradition, and culture” (NCF-2021, p.13). Similar to other countries, Bangladesh's curriculum framework has also been developed around the concept of competency-based education. The meaning of ‘competency’ varies by country. In the context of Bangladesh, the current curriculum emphasizes learners' competencies, which are gained by acquiring relevant knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes.

2.3 Parental perceptions of curriculum design across the world

Regarding parental perception, Juliantra (2018) states that perception involves combining and organizing sensory data to become aware of our surroundings, including ourselves. He also discusses the various factors that influence perception, including individual circumstances, the characteristics of the perceived object, and contextual influences. Specifically, individual circumstances encompass factors intrinsic to the individual, such as needs, emotions, educational background, past experiences, socio-economic status, and other personal attributes. Next, by characteristics of the object of perception, we refer to the idea that the perception of an object is influenced by its relationship to the background and its proximity or similarity to it.

Ultimately, the perception of an event is influenced by the situational context, which encompasses factors such as time, location, lighting, temperature, and other environmental conditions, because “perception is important as it affects the adoption process of the teacher” (Juliantra, 2018, p. 3).

In a study, Li (2021) explores how Chinese parents perceive the influence of critical thinking and its pedagogy within the Chinese cultural context. Chinese parents strongly emphasize academic achievement and traditional subjects in their views on curriculum development. They highlight the cultural values placed on scholastic performance in Chinese society. They are also concerned about ‘success in exams’ as paramount for their children’s future, similar to parents’ concerns in Bangladesh.

Similar to Bangladesh, Indian parents also have limited opportunities to influence the reform or implementation of the national curriculum policy. However, some high-quality private schools form Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) or School Management Committees (SMCs), providing a platform for parents to give feedback on curriculum content and teaching methods (Kumar & Singh, 2020). They mainly help align the national curriculum with local and linguistic contexts.

In the United States, parents can participate both formally and informally in curriculum design as part of community engagement in education. Parents have opportunities to engage in school boards, parent-teacher associations (PTAs), and curriculum advisory committees to contribute at local and district levels (Epstein, 2018).

Finland promotes active parental participation in education policy (Sahlberg, 2015). Parents in Finland share their views on education through school-parent councils. The government supports phenomenon-based learning and student-centered approaches that focus on creativity, critical thinking, and interdisciplinary learning (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2016). Although final curriculum design is determined by national policymakers and educators, parents have opportunities to provide feedback on teaching methods and student well-being (Kuusela & Laine, 2019).

Parental perceptions of curriculum development differ significantly across countries and cultures. These viewpoints reflect broader social and cultural values, educational philosophies, and aspirations for future generations

worldwide. Such perceptions significantly influence the development of inclusive, relevant, and effective curricula that address the diverse needs of students worldwide.

2.4 Theory of Post-truth and Parental Perceptions

During Donald Trump's first term as president in 2017, the concept of "post-truth" gained significant attention worldwide. This term refers to a political culture where appeals to emotion and personal belief carry more weight than objective facts and evidence (Lewis, 2016). Many people found that Trump's communication style often involved exaggeration, falsehoods, and misleading statements, which contributed to the perception of a post-truth environment. He utilized social media, particularly Twitter, to convey his messages directly to his supporters without the traditional filtering of media correspondents. His tweets frequently bypassed fact-checking processes and reached millions of followers instantly, spreading misinformation and normalizing post-truth rhetoric.

The COVID-19 pandemic has created a fertile ground for the spread of misinformation and the rise of post-truth tendencies. Misinformation and disinformation encompass various aspects of the pandemic, including its origins, transmission, prevention measures, and treatment. The uncertainty surrounding the pandemic's outcome, combined with fear and the rapid flow of information, misinformation, and disinformation on social media platforms, has fueled unrest. As Lewis (2020) notes, "the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the spread of misinformation, with false claims about the virus and its origins circulating widely on social media platforms." This widespread dissemination of false information has caused psychological trauma and chaos for people during the pandemic.

The theory of post-truth, which gained significant attention in the 21st century, suggests that authentic and concrete facts and information are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotional and fabricated projections. This phenomenon has profoundly impacted society, including politics, media, and education. In the context of social media, where information spreads rapidly and often unchecked, the consequences of post-truth can be chaotic for

society; as Smith & Johnson (2020) state, “The proliferation of misinformation and the erosion of trust in traditional sources of knowledge have profound implications for educational policy and practice, necessitating a reevaluation of pedagogical approaches and curriculum design” (Smith & Johnson, 2020, p.47). It seems that amidst the social media puzzle, information, misinformation, and disinformation evolve synonymously. As Valladares (2021) finds, ‘Misinformation’ means the false information a person circulates and believes to be accurate. In contrast, ‘Disinformation’ is also false information, but the person who spreads it knows it is untrue. This indicates that disinformation is a deliberate lie created by malicious individuals to harm others, social groups, or institutions (Valladares, 2021, p. 1312).

This literature review further explores the diverse impact on Bangladesh's education system, particularly regarding the new curriculum introduced in 2023. Suhrawardy (2024) mentioned in the Dhaka Tribune that implementing a new curriculum in Bangladesh marks a shift away from the traditional examination-focused approach to learning. The gradual rollout of this curriculum, scheduled to begin in 2023, has sparked significant interest and discussion about its impact on the education sector. She referred to an experience involving a Bangla teacher discussing the intricacies of the new curriculum. One of the parents addressed questions about how assessments are conducted, explaining that various assignments, projects, group work, and presentations are used to evaluate students' progress. Subject division starts in class 11 and continues in a unified manner through class 10 (Suhrawardy, 2024). This highlights the crucial role of parental perceptions in shaping public opinion and discourse about the curriculum. The review draws from scholarly articles to illuminate the challenges posed by these perceptions, which often reflect the time-bound context of a post-truth environment. It also highlights the challenge of discerning the reality of Bangladesh's education system under the new curriculum.

The new curriculum faces significant criticism due to its departure from traditional learning, which is “characterized by repetition and memorization of the literary-grammatical content of prescribed textbooks” (Jeyaraj, 2019, p. 43), to experiential language. Various linguists have referred to this using different terms, such as John Dewey (1983) coining “learning by doing.”

Wolfe and Byrne (1975) calling it “experience-based learning,” and Kolb (1984) stating that “knowledge is created through the transformation of experience” (Jeyaraj, 2019, p. 45; Lewis & Williams, 1994, pp. 240-241). It is widely acknowledged that many parents in Bangladesh are unaware of the teaching and learning processes that undergo constant changes each year to adapt to the evolving needs of the times.

3. Research Methodology

This research examines the influence of parental perceptions on the implementation of Bangladesh's new curriculum. Accordingly, we have adopted a constructivist approach for our study, considering the following definition: Honebein (1996) describes the constructivist philosophical paradigm as an approach that posits that individuals form their comprehension and knowledge of the world by actively engaging with experiences and contemplating them. Thus, in-depth interviews will serve as the primary method for data collection, allowing us to gain insights into parents' thoughts and their influence on implementing and analyzing the new curriculum.

3.1 Research Design

This study will employ a qualitative research design, utilizing in-depth interviews to collect rich and detailed information from participants for thematic analysis and discussion. Qualitative research is particularly suited for exploring complex phenomena and gaining an in-depth understanding of the perspectives and experiences of parents with school-aged children.

3.2 Sampling:

Convenience sampling was utilized to select participants based on their availability or accessibility. Our goal was to choose a sample from a homogeneous group, ensuring that all parents shared similar experiences in implementing the new curriculum. After many parents opted out of participation, we continued with the convenience sampling method due to time constraints related to dissertation writing. Initially, we intended to select parents from our local area for interviews. From this approach, we conducted five interviews across various locations within Dhaka city. However, many

declined to participate, and as individuals, they did not give consent. To effectively operationalize the research, we consulted with the principal of a school and a college, who allowed us to engage with parents as they picked up their children. He organized the session and asked parents if they would like to participate in the interview. No parent was obligated to attend the assigned interview time, which was set at their convenience.

We aimed to conduct in-depth interviews with the participants. Therefore, the sample size was determined based on their data availability, which indicated that it was sufficient to address the research questions. A sample of 10 participants was selected to contribute to the study. Five were chosen from the middle school section, specifically parents of students in grades 7 to 9, while the others were randomly selected from the school.

In the luminescence of the research design, data collection was completed in two segments by two of us. Our data collection method included qualitative data in the form of interviews, which served as our sole primary data source. The interviews, which lasted between 30 and 45 minutes, addressed most of our queries.

3.3 Instrumentations

Semi-structured, in-depth interviews with participants have been conducted as the primary method of data collection in this study. It has been challenging to help the parents understand the importance of their perceptions, as these are essential for gathering primary data regarding the new curriculum for this research. Initially, they needed more time to prepare for the interview sessions. Subsequently, they had to realize that the study aimed to learn about their views on the curriculum issue that concerned them. In-depth interviews allow for flexible and open-ended exploration of participants' perspectives, experiences, and insights related to the research topic.

All interviews have been audio-recorded with the participant's consent to ensure accurate data preservation and extraction. The data has been stored centrally in a secure file storage system. Detailed notes were also taken during the interviews to supplement the audio recordings and capture non-verbal cues and contextual information.

4. Data Analysis

Thematic analysis, being a widely used tool for analyzing qualitative data (Braun, 2012), has been our primary choice for data analysis in this research. We processed the data through the phases of Immersion, Analysis, and Interpretation. The data collected from interviews and questionnaires have been systematically structured and juxtaposed to clarify predetermined research inquiries across various overarching themes and sub-themes. We transcribed the audio recordings and interview notes verbatim and analyzed them using a thematic analysis approach. This process involved identifying the categories of parents' resistant and supportive gestures concerning the interview questions and discussion points to develop a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. The thematic analysis is discussed in detail in the findings.

While the interview responses were initially recorded in a mix of Bangla and English, the data were subsequently translated into English and transcribed.

Once the thematic analysis is identified, the data is examined to discover commonalities, differences, and relationships among the themes, as well as to formulate future recommendations. In our effort to interpret the findings, we synthesize the data to create a coherent narrative that addresses the research objectives.

5. Ethical Considerations

Regarding ethical considerations, to the best of our knowledge, no participant or informant experienced harm, and we carefully avoided any breaches of confidentiality, misuse of information, or introduction of bias. Initially, we encountered challenges in protecting the collected data due to limitations in storage media and reliance on shared folders. However, this issue was later resolved. Furthermore, managing confidential data posed significant challenges throughout the process.

5.1 Informed Consent: Before participating in the study, participants received thorough information about the research objectives, procedures, risks, and benefits. The consent form, available in both English and Bangla,

was signed by all participants, who also retained the right to withdraw from the study at any time.

5.2 Confidentiality: Participants were assured that their confidentiality would be strictly maintained, all data would be anonymized, and pseudonyms would be assigned to protect their identities.

6. Data Analysis and Findings:

Our research findings were multifaceted, complex, and engaging. The parents expressed a variety of concerns and questions. They also proposed several solutions to the challenges students and parents face regarding the new curriculum in Bangladesh. To elaborate, we categorized our findings into different themes. These findings generally stem from analyzing data collected during the research process. The following results interpret the research questions to fulfill the research objectives. The significance of the research results can be established if the outcomes are disseminated to education policymakers after publication in a reputable journal, thereby contributing to existing knowledge and its potential implications for theory, policy, or practice in the relevant field of study. The data interpretation below indicates broader parental resistance and lesser acceptance. The data on parental perceptions suggest that the study reveals significant parental resistance to various pedagogical, economic, religious, and cultural factors. The discussions regarding these resistances clarify the current stance on curriculum implementation. According to the parents' perceptions, there are ample reasons for this resistance, and as post-truth era implications arise, their reactions intensify.

Based on the thematic analysis, the data collected from parents have been divided into the following categories that address the research questions:

1. Pedagogical Resistance
2. Economic Resistance
3. Religious Resistance
4. Cultural Resistance

The level of importance regulates the resistance. The parental perceptions are similar. Parents raised various concerns and questions from their viewpoints. They even proposed several solutions for the problems that students and parents encounter with the new curriculum in Bangladesh. However, all

parents agree on some points, while only a few guardians concur. Below is a detailed explanation of the study.

6.1 Pedagogical Resistance

Regarding the “Curriculum and Parental Perception” question, about whether they are aware of the ‘curriculum’ or the ‘new curriculum of Bangladesh,’ most parents remained silent and looked at each other. Then one of them, Pulok by name (pseudonym), replied:

“We do not have a clear idea about the curriculum. It is new to us. We need time to understand anything new. We have a very vague idea about it. We cannot understand anything, and we cannot make our children understand anything. The curriculum is a system we can perceive. The way we were taught is completely different. We cannot understand it; we cannot understand at all.”

We can see that the guardian reassures us multiple times that they “cannot understand” the new curriculum in various ways. The concepts of ‘curriculum’ and the ‘new curriculum of Bangladesh’ are unfamiliar to parents. Although they become aware of their children, they lack an understanding of the pedagogical aspects of education. They explain how they learned about the new curriculum through social media. They know that in 2023, the curriculum was introduced for classes I, VI, and VII, but they had no idea about grades II, III, VIII, and IX, which started in 2024.

As a new pedagogical phenomenon, experiential learning in schools in Bangladesh emphasizes “learning by doing” and follows a formative assessment pattern. The traditional memory-based examinations and grading system cause guardians to express their anxiety in the following way:

My children are in eighth and ninth grades. There are no exams at school like the ones we used to have; instead, they participate in various activities. They stay busy working in groups with friends and using mobile devices. I do not understand what they will do without exams since there is no pressure on students to study. (Rahima [pseudonym])

Some parents believe that classroom activities involving peer and group work help learners develop collaborative skills. This year's seventh-grade students have gained confidence in delivering PowerPoint and poster presentations. They generate innovative ideas to complete their tasks and take-home assignments. However, they tend to forget the information included in their assignments within two months because they do not memorize it for their examinations as their parents did during their school years. Amira (pseudonym), a parent, said: "I do not say to conduct 100% memorization-based examinations; at least 30% of the assessments can go for memorization-based examinations." They worry that students may not acquire sufficient knowledge of the subjects, which could hinder their prospects due to a lack of memorization.

Again, some parents believe that classroom activities involving peer and group work help students develop teamwork skills and leadership qualities. This year, the seventh-grade students have gained confidence in creating PowerPoint presentations and posters. They can generate innovative ideas to complete their tasks and take-home assignments. However, they tend to forget the information included in their assignments within two months because they do not memorize it for their exams, unlike how their parents did during their studies. While students engaged in poster writing can summarize any content, they struggle to develop elaborative and descriptive writing skills. Parents feel that learners are unable to gain sufficient knowledge in the subjects, which may hinder their future success due to a lack of memorization.

The study takes place in an urban area where learners are exposed to various TV shows, cartoons, social media, gaming, and global online connectivity related to the English language. Half of the participants believe that these exposures contribute to their children becoming an advanced generation that lacks enjoyment in reading textbooks. For example, they mention the English textbook for eighth grade, where the topics are not particularly interesting and are considered "below standard." Furthermore, the use of Bangla instruction in English textbooks is also not well-received.

[1.1.1 Read the expression in the bubble. Then, in pairs/groups, ask and

Answer the following questions. Later, share your responses with the whole class.]

(Bubble এ প্রদত্ত অভিব্যক্তিটি (expression) পড়ো/ তারপর, জোড়ায়/ দলে নিচের প্রশ্নগুলো জিজ্ঞাসা করো এবং তার উত্তর দাও/ পরে, পুরো ক্লাসের সাথে তোমার উত্তর শেয়ার করো।)

(English, Class Eight, 2024, p.1)

Moreover, several parents questioned whether the teachers are capable of teaching the new curriculum. Kereena, the parent of a seventh-grade student, said, as a teacher of the new curriculum myself, “I feel the teachers are not trained enough to teach this new curriculum. There is room for ambiguity, and there will always be teachers who will misuse this ambiguity.”

There is no substitute for teacher training when the new curriculum is launched. All parents share the same vision as the teachers who attended the workshop on the new curriculum; however, they are unable to explain the new method accurately. The guardians are requesting seminars on the new curriculum for both teachers and parents. They emphasize the importance of intensive teacher training to ensure the successful implementation of the new curriculum, benefiting future generations.

As proclaimed, the new curriculum was adopted to enhance the education of schoolchildren. The government also aimed to create an education system focused on learning through experience and observation. The philosophical foundation of the curriculum stems from “progressivism” to “help the learners from their interests and points of view on daily life affairs and problems” (National Curriculum Framework, 2021, p. 3). The learning process, according to this theory, follows “interdisciplinary, integrative, and interactive,” which reflects two recent and significant theories in pedagogy: “constructivism” and “reconstructivism” (p.3). In short, the new curriculum will enable learners to “gain experience for adaptation to the surrounding environment” and also “help the learners to interact with and adapt to the social learning environment constantly” (p. 3). Most parents in Bangladesh, understandably, have limited exposure to educational theories, except for those guardians who have pursued pedagogical studies. This contributes to the lack of appropriate knowledge about the ‘curriculum’ and the ‘new curriculum of Bangladesh.’ Parents expressed concerns about instructors' ability to implement the new curriculum effectively. They observed instances where

instructors appeared unprepared or inadequately trained, uncertain about specific subjects. This pedagogical resistance stems from skepticism regarding teachers' ability to teach the curricular material effectively.

Parental perceptions often conflict with actual information about the curriculum, its vision, mission, and the philosophical foundations of constructivism in education. Social media significantly accelerates the spread of misinformation and disinformation, acting as a catalyst for resistance. This situation has created a cycle of misinformation stemming from a lack of knowledge and understanding of the educational theories that shape a country's curriculum. Misinformation circulates as entirely false when videos of teachers dancing in classrooms from neighboring countries become national news. However, without a grasp of experiential learning, parents and others accept disinformation, believing there is no point in learning within an experiential-based education system.

6.2 Economic Resistance:

In the new curriculum, learners must present their acquired knowledge through either a paper or a PowerPoint presentation. Some schools may require their students to showcase demo projects. A few parents believe that practical work requires numerous materials to enhance their children's education. Most classroom assignments will likely be completed in classes where schools provide the necessary materials. Thorough investigations are needed to determine whether the schools comply with the policies of the Ministry of Education and the NCTB. Rahima, the guardian of an eighth grader, sighed, "In a family of seven, it is tough even to pass a day without struggle. All these projects are very troublesome, so Hasib's (student) father is pressuring me to drop him from school and let him work."

Like other forms of propaganda, spending on assignment tools is also rooted in post-truth theory. In reality, learners must complete their poster writing tasks in the classroom, using poster paper or the back of the yearly calendar. The take-home assignment will be done in the activity section of the textbook. Furthermore, students' activities will be assigned based on their learning capabilities, which may help alleviate the anxiety associated with additional costs, as the teacher's guide for class Seven suggests:

This time, the students were asked to prepare their balanced food platters. They will use readily available food at their local level to create these dishes. They will illustrate their platters by drawing pictures of the food in the 'My balanced food platter' picture in the Wellbeing textbook (Wellbeing, 2024, p.19).

The above instructions from the “Teacher’s Guide (TG) of Class Seven” use phrases like “readily available food at their level,” and the platter will be created “by drawing pictures,” demonstrating that there is no point in spending extra money on expensive food; instead, they should ‘draw’ what they would like to prepare. Additionally, those who do not have the ‘drawing ability’ may write or speak about the topic according to their skills:

Ensure that learners can participate in class activities. In this case, prioritize the learner's choice and ability. For example, if a learner prefers to express himself with a pen or by hand rather than through drawing, encourage him to do so. If a student has a verbal difficulty, allow him to express himself in writing or in another way during the discussion. If a student faces physical challenges in hanging a picture on the wall, let them remain in their place and display the image. Alternatively, with their permission, you or another student can hang the picture on the wall (Wellbeing, 2024, p. 10).

In TG, it is evident that students experience no pressure related to extravagant spending or compulsory activities. Parents’ perceptions require a solid understanding of how to implement the curriculum.

6.3 Religious and Cultural Resistances:

Religion is always a sensitive issue in the classroom. Careful preparation is required for the textbook. Amid the chaos of Bangladesh's new curriculum, the class three textbook on *Islam and Moral Education* is no exception. A significant number of guardians believe there is no need to combine “Moral Education” with “Islam” because the Islamic lifestyle embodies moral values. All guardians of class three students wish to change the depiction of human figures in the chapter “Importance of Purity and Cleanliness,” where Wadu is illustrated with human figures. They are asking for the facial drawings to be

removed and replaced with blank spaces since Islam forbids pictures that include eyes and noses. To them, this represents a non-Islamic approach to the textbook. Kareena (pseudonym), the mother of a seventh grader from an English version NCTB curriculum school, says, “My son feels very bored and has lost interest in their religious study book because of the content, and it is all a tactic to destroy religious devotion of the new generation.”

There were mixed reactions to this issue. Kamal said regarding the use of Bangla in the English textbook and Bangla culture-based content in the other textbooks, “I appreciate their effort to familiarize the students with Bengali culture. However, I feel it is sometimes exaggerated.” Parents believe that the new curriculum is making students overly dependent on devices. Globally and culturally, people’s reliance on devices increased during the COVID-19 pandemic, which had been an issue before the new curriculum’s implementation.

However, parents express concern that their children often play games while pretending to search for study materials on Google. They desire a return to textbook-oriented studying. Culturally, they value their children reading paper books and taking notes by hand rather than engaging in digital reading and completing assignments. With the advancement of technology, fewer parents believe that their children should be proficient in digital applications. Kareena, the mother of a seventh-grade student, says, “I feel anxious about my son being derailed due to these cultural inappropriacies from the books of NCTB, and other children, whose parents are not able to pay attention to them, might be more derailed.”

In today's world, the social media issue surrounding LGBTQ (Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer) is causing significant tension among parents. The History and Social Science textbook for seventh-grade students features a chapter titled “The Story of Sharifa,” which vividly illustrates the psychological struggles of the third-gender community. One university teacher protested strongly by tearing out the pages of that chapter, claiming that the new curriculum is attempting to “brainwash” teenagers regarding “transgender” culture. Parents believe that the ‘transgender’ concept is both religiously and culturally stigmatized in developing countries like Bangladesh. This issue spreads

like wildfire through society. In an interview, parents strongly support the protest against including controversial gender issues in the textbook for teenagers, stating, “There is no point in making the teenagers know about ‘transgender’. The knowing might create curiosity among them and ultimately destroy our religious and cultural norms.”

Therefore, according to Gestalt Theory, “learning only occurs when there is a harmonious relationship between the curriculum, society, and culture” (National Curriculum Framework, 2021, p.3). Aligning the curriculum, society, and culture presents challenges, and no stakeholder can be excluded from sharing their perspectives. Furthermore, parental perceptions can shape the needs of their children. If parents gain a clear understanding of the experiential and competency-based education system through various workshops, the four elements, “Values, attitudes, skills, and Knowledge” (p.19) of learners can be effectively supported under the new curriculum of Bangladesh until further revisions are required over time.

6.4 Parental Acceptance

Parents often perceive resistance; however, the quiet acceptances should not be excluded from discussions. Competency-based teaching and learning, along with the four components of knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes, reflect the recommendations of the OECD Future of Education and Skills 2030, as mentioned in the NCF-2021, where the pillars of education are designed to develop skills across three clusters:

I. Cognitive and metacognitive skills: By researching a specific topic across various sources, learners improve their cognitive and metacognitive abilities.

My daughter searches the internet and prepares her lessons with more information than the text. It helps her learn the topic more thoroughly. (Rahima, the parent)

II. Social and emotional skills: Collaborating in groups or engaging in paired activities helps learners connect socially and emotionally with their peers, which may aid them in adapting to a broader world setting in the future.

My two children were very shy. They began studying a new curriculum in sixth grade and are now in seventh grade. The pair and group work conducted in sixth grade helped them overcome their shyness on a larger scale. I am happy about that. (Pulok)

III. **Physical and practical skills:** It is said that "Physical and practical skills development is integral to the holistic education of learners, fostering not only physical well-being but also cognitive development and social interaction" (Smith & Jones, 2020, p. 45). As learners are expected to develop their cognitive and social interaction skills, their physical and practical skills gradually improve.

6.4 Feedback aligned with Post-truth Framework

In the literature review, post-truth presents three different perspectives on important societal phenomena: information, misinformation, and disinformation. According to post-truth theory, parental perceptions of the 2021 curriculum reforms change through various types of information, misinformation, and disinformation.

Knowledge of educational theory is essential for introducing a new curriculum. Like many stakeholders, parents lack awareness of the experiential learning approach used in Bangladesh's curriculum. Before implementing the new curriculum, all stakeholders have the right to be informed about the upcoming procedures. In this regard, unclear parental perceptions of the experiential learning-based curriculum indicate a lack of proper information, which leads to parental discomfort with the 2021 curriculum.

Experiential learning shifts from rote memorization to experience-based education. Because parents are unfamiliar with this new teaching approach, they often believe there is no real learning happening for students. To them, memorization seems to reinforce the learning process. Due to widespread misinformation about 'no learning' in experiential curricula, parents become frustrated, and social media amplifies the issue. It is completely false that experiential learning does not properly educate children.

Finally, disinformation happens when parents believe social media videos about the teachers' dancing and frog jumping activities without proper scrutiny, even though those videos were actually taken from a neighboring country. When parents see such unacademic activities on the school grounds, they become truly confused.

The theory of post-truth thus influences the development of a new curriculum and calls for extensive research on information, misinformation, and disinformation before reforming and implementing it. This process should include input from all stakeholders, including parents, to create a better education system in Bangladesh.

7. Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, this research illuminates parental perceptions of the new experiential learning-based curriculum in Bangladesh. Through a thorough analysis of parental feedback, several engaging insights have emerged. Firstly, parents tend to view the experiential learning approach as passive experiences rather than from a meticulous and informed perspective, seldom recognizing its potential to enhance their children's educational experiences. Secondly, concerns regarding the implementation and effectiveness of the new curriculum have been emphasized, indicating areas for improvement and further development by the parents. Thus, this research enhances our understanding of how parents perceive educational reforms and highlights the significance of incorporating their perspectives into curriculum design and implementation processes.

Recommendations from this study highlight the importance of ongoing communication among schools, parents, and policymakers to ensure alignment and transparency in curriculum reform efforts. Furthermore, if targeted initiatives are implemented to effectively address parental concerns, it could significantly enhance the effectiveness of the new curriculum. The following steps can be followed to have an inclusive curriculum as the study identifies discussing parental perceptions:

- i. Before implementing any new curriculum, thorough training should be offered through a variety of workshops,

- seminars, and expert talks, both online and in person, for teachers and parents.
- ii. By increasing the dissemination of information about the evolving education system through both digital and print media, policymakers and the government can encourage parents to share their valuable ideas for supporting their children in line with the new curriculum-based education policy to meet global demands.
 - iii. In addition to the Teachers' Guide (TG), NCTB can develop a Parents' Guide (PG) to make the lessons clearer. Today's parents are concerned about their children and often take good care of them at home. The PG can help parents guide their children more effectively.

However, it is important to recognize the limitations of this research, including potential biases in the sample population and reliance on self-reported data, as well as constraints related to time and resources. Future studies could use mixed-methods approaches to cross-verify findings and gain a more comprehensive understanding of parental perceptions. The study indicates that it does not provide a complete picture of parental perceptions regarding the quality of study materials, since data collection was limited to urban areas where parents tend to be highly educated and concerned about their globally exposed children.

Regarding future research, their focus may include examining the long-term impacts of the experiential learning curriculum on student outcomes and parental involvement. Furthermore, comparative studies across different regions and educational settings could provide valuable insights into the generalizability of the findings and help shape best practices for curriculum development and implementation.

Therefore, by addressing parental concerns and utilizing their support, education authorities can enhance collaboration and engagement within the educational community. This is where our research becomes relevant. Our research can shape and guide future reforms in education with a comprehensive vision.

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