Textbooks cannot be made completely error-proof'

Dr M Tariq Ahsan, professor at the Institute of Education and Research of Dhaka University and member of the National Curriculum Development and Revision Core Committee, discusses the newly launched curriculum for Classes 6 and 7 that has sparked much debate and controversy, in an interview with Md Shahnawaz Khan Chandan of The Daily Star.

Why was this new curriculum necessary?

Various studies, including those conducted by our government, have revealed that our students have been failing to achieve competencies corresponding to their grades. Only 25 percent of students can achieve the expected competencies after completing primary education in Bangladesh. The situation is similar in secondary education too. This happened because our previous curriculum and the evaluation system were entirely knowledge-focused. In 2017, the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) conducted a situation analysis of our primary and secondary education systems, where we looked into the needs for a new curriculum, mistakes in the previous curriculum development processes, and the ways to mitigate the challenges. Then we reviewed different international research to understand the global trend of curriculum reform. In one of the studies, we found that 52 out of 102 countries reviewed reformed their school curricula and adopted competency-based curricula.

Why is the new curriculum called "competency-based"? How will teachers evaluate the competency level of students?

In a competency-based curriculum, students from pre-primary grades to Class 12 will acquire specific sets of competencies instead of memorising answers to questions. We have introduced a 360-degree assessment in this curriculum. In the previous curriculum, teachers were given the sole authority to among the students; instead, there assess a student. Now, subject will be collaboration to achieve teachers will not be the only certain skills. As there will be no evaluators. Learners will have to achieve specific competencies by doing a range of activities in the centres and using guidebooks. This classroom, at home and even in curriculum has focused mostly on their own communities. Parents, peers, community members the learners to acquire a certain competency – will take part in the evaluation process.

This curriculum has introduced two terminal exams as well, but

competency will improve their performance both in literature and social science. Now, if one subject teacher is biased and gives poor or better comments for this specific competency, the learner's achievements in the same competency in another subject will reveal said bias.

To ensure reliability and transparency, the whole evaluation an app, a raw version of which has already been used successfully in



Prof M Tariq Ahsan

the piloting of the curriculum. Through this app, students' progress in acquiring competencies and their evaluation can be tracked.

It is said that this curriculum will reduce dependency on coaching centres and guidebooks. How?

Abolishing the scoring system will ensure there is no competition competition, students will not be the board has to complete the interested in going to coaching formative assessment, which means monitoring students' progress whoever has any role in helping will be a continuous, ongoing process. Every day, students will be given feedback to develop their performances. There will be

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evaluation rubrics and performance indicators for student assessment. There will be no scoring or grading system; instead, the students' competency level will be assessed through qualitative description such as "beginner's level," "intermediary level" or "advanced

Consistency and interlinks Our school curriculum has also been maintained to eradicate any chances of bias. Suppose a certain grade. While studying these subjects, they will acquire some common or related competencies for example, linguistics. This be conducted online.

students will not write memorised answers in those exams. They will solve unique problems related to their competencies. There will be no public exams before Class 10. We are working to develop a new structure of public examinations as well.

Why are there so many mistakes in the textbooks?

among the competencies have undergone a radical and transformation. comprehensive Some of our authors probably could student studies six subjects in a not cope with this level of change. Besides, the pandemic hampered this process; many of our training sessions and material review had to

There are two aspects of the errors in the textbooks. Some errors occurred due to the authors' and editors' negligence - for instance, the much discussed allegation of plagiarism. Meanwhile, some errors may have been left intentionally. Although textbooks were reviewed several times by the editors and external experts before publishing, we cannot say that it's impossible system will be managed through to leave intentional errors in the textbooks. Our education minister has formed a committee to investigate whether errors were left intentionally or not. An expert committee has also been formed to review the books to find all the mistakes and suggest corrections. The corrected versions of the textbooks will be delivered to the teachers as soon as possible. The corrected books will also be made available on the website for the public, so that we can publish a final, refined version of the textbooks in

Does the NCTB have enough resources to identify the mistakes, correct them, and distribute so many books within a short time?

Textbooks cannot be made completely error-proof. So, we need to think about how quickly and efficiently we can remove the errors and print the corrected versions. Steps have already been taken to strengthen our author and editorial panel for the next batch of textbooks. As you know, we have published textbooks for only two grades this year. We want to learn from our mistakes and deliver improved material in the future.

We should also consider the NCTB's capacity. Every year, mammoth task of printing. publishing and distributing more than 350 million books. As a result, it cannot focus on more important issues such as monitoring the implementation of curriculum, enhancing teachers' performance, enhancing the quality of materials, etc. Textbooks could easily be completed by outsourced service providers, which is a common practice around the world.

How are teachers and education officials being trained for the new curriculum? There are allegations that the ongoing training is inadequate.

Those who are saying so are not aware of the full package of our training programme. Not only the teachers, but all the relevant officials and other stakeholders will also receive training on several segments, such as curriculum framework, subject-wise training. and a five-day, in-person training. Besides, there are mentoring teams in every upazila who will help the teachers follow the new curriculum. There is also a written guideline on how to use the curriculum and the textbooks. All the training materials, videos and other resources are available online. There will be a refreshers' training for all newly recruited teachers and educational administrators as well.

Are you getting sufficient government support for the implementation process?

government has been providing tremendous support. The finance ministry has approved Tk 600 crore just to conduct the ongoing training programme. We are collaborating with Amazon for technological solutions and database management. In the next two years, our officials will develop the necessary skills through this collaboration, to manage the huge amount of school-based data.

We need to keep in mind that we will be able to benefit from the demographic dividend for at most 20-25 years. If we cannot transform our young generation into skilled manpower within this period, we will not be able to keep pace with the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

The world must not fail Turkey-Syria earthquake victims



Turkey and Syria are reeling from the shocks and aftershocks of three

powerful earthquakes that have rocked these countries within a

span of less than a day. As of 1pm (Bangladesh time) on February

7, as many as 4,800 people have died in Turkey and Syria because

of the earthquake, and hundreds of thousands have been rendered homeless. Harrowing tales are

coming out of the region. The death

toll is expected to rise as search

and rescue operations continue

in both the countries. There is

another risk involved: the dropping

temperatures. Weather conditions in

both the countries are not conducive to conducting effective rescue operations. Those left homeless and

placed in tents will be under increased

risk of being affected by the near

freezing temperatures, especially the

thewar-torn northeast Syria is greater,

as they are already in compromised

living conditions. Eleven years of civil war and oppression by the

government forces and terrorist

elements have left millions in Syria's

northeast vulnerable to multiple

risk factors, including multiple

displacements - there are people who

reduced access to nutrition, decent

accommodation, medical care,

education; and now, the earthquake is

expected to make the situation worse

for the people. "Women and children

will find themselves particularly at

risk of exploitation and abuse should

they find themselves once again

displaced," said Tanya Evans, country

director of the International Rescue

And in the rebel-held areas, where

reaching aid and humanitarian

assistance is already difficult due

to differing geopolitical interests of

various actors, people's sufferings will

be greater. Not that Syria gets much

aid, with less than 50 percent of the

required USD 4 billion collected.

The IRC has urged the international

community to "urgently increase

critical funding." While many

countries, including Bangladesh,

India, China, US, UK, and France, have

victims, making sure they reach the

victims in need would be a critical

challenge for the agencies working

For Turkey, the earthquake -

worst in years and resembling the

in 1999 that claimed more than

on the ground.

Committee (IRC) in Syria.

have been displaced up to 20 times

The challenge for the residents in

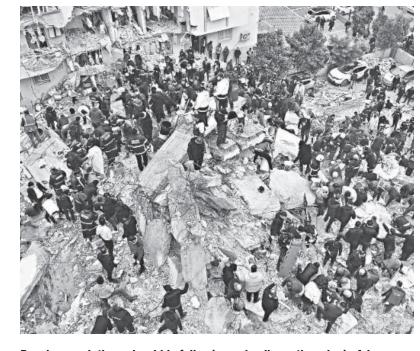
children and the elderly.

LOOK

Tasneem Tayeb is a columnist for The Daily Star. Her Twitter handle is

A CLOSER individuals, ensuring their immediate and sustainable rehabilitation especially in view of alarming weather forecasts - and making sure they get safe and unmanipulated access to essential nutrition and medical care will be the priority.

To reach the victims trapped in the TASNEEM TAYEB rebel-held areas in Syria (Idlib and northern Aleppo provinces) - home



People search through rubble following a deadly earthquake in Adana, Turkey on February 6, 2023. PHOTO: REUTERS

17,000 lives – could not have come at a worse time. The economy is fighting spiralling inflation – 85 percent as per the recent data – and an increased cost of living: as of November last year, food prices were 99 percent higher than the year before, transportation expenses had increased by 117 percent, housing cost went up by 85 percent, and domestic producer price index indicated a 157.69 percent annual increase. And in the wake of the first earthquake, the Turkish lira hit a record low, adding further pressure on the struggling currency.

While there is no denying that Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has been generous in opening the country's doors to the helpless Syrian victims - currently housing more than 3.6 million refugees – it is taking an additional toll, among other factors, on the country's economy and his popularity, as people are having to eat up their savings due to the rising living costs and increasing poverty, and there has been little help from the international community.

Amid these conditions, general offered assistance for the earthquake elections are expected to be held in Turkey in May this year. How the 68-year-old veteran – president since 2014 – responds to this new emergency will be a key factor determining his standing in the upcoming elections.

But keeping all considerations harrowing 7.4 magnitude earthquake and analyses apart, reaching aid and assistance to the affected families and

to more than 4.1 million internally displaced refugees - the agencies would have to navigate challenging scenarios. Already the UN has limited access to the Bab al-Hawa border crossing - a major crossing point between Turkey and Syria - through which aid could be transported into northeast Syria, and on top of that, it has also sustained significant damage due to the earthquake, making aid transportation difficult. Moreover, Gaziantep, epicentre of the first earthquake, is considered a major hub for aid groups working across the border in northwest Syria, and the damage there has created additional pressure on aid workers.

In view of these scenarios, aid agencies and both the Turkish and Syrian governments, as well as the rebel groups, would have to work in collaboration and find immediate and effective solutions to make sure that the people trapped there are taken care of and provided with the support they need.

The next few hours are going to be so is reaching immediate aid to the affected people. If there was ever a time for the Turkish and Syrian governments, the rebels and the world community to rise above their differences and unite for the cause of humanity, it is now. The world must not fail the helpless earthquake victims.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Ministry of Women and Children Affairs Strengthening Gender Responsive Budgeting in Bangladesh Project Building No-6, Room-308, Level-3 Bangladesh Secretariat, Dhaka-1000

Request for Expression of Interest EOI

Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MoWCA) has been implementing a project "Strengthening Gender Responsive Budgeting in Bangladesh (GRB)" with UN Women. The project aims to strengthen institutional capacity to use GRB as a tool to further advance financing agenda for gender equality. Ministry of Women and Children Affairs is intended to recruit national consultant to support in the finalization process of National Action Plan for National Women Development Policy (NAP-NWDP).

Qualifications, experience, and key functions are as following:

Position name, number, and duration	Educational qualification	Experience	Key functions
National Consultant- NAP-NWDP	Master's degree in Social Science, Economics,	experience and proven track record working on gender equality issues, particularly with the government. Working experience in preparing national action	Review the draft NAP-NWDP in relation to 8th Five Year Plan and SDGs gender related priorities. Facilitate validation workshops with ministries and divisions. Finalize NAP-NWDP.
Post-01 Duration: 4 months	Development Studies, Gender Studies, or from other relevant disciplines.		

Terms and Conditions:

- Qualified and eligible individuals are encouraged to apply with Expression of Interest (EOI) form and updated CV, 2 copy passport size photographs (with justifying suitability) to the Project Director, Strengthening Gender Responsive Budgeting in Bangladesh (GRB) Project, Building No-6, Room-308, Level-3, Bangladesh Secretariat, Dhaka-1000.
- Please Contact: Cell- 01777764769, Email: noor.shah@unwomen.org, to get the Expression of Interest (EOI) form. The application shall have to be submitted directly or via post on or before 02 March 2023 by 04:00 pm in sealed

Candidate's age should be between 35-65 years, age limit may be relaxed for experienced and suitable candidate.

- The applicants shall submit necessary supporting documents in favor of qualification and experience along with the
- Only short-listed candidates would have to face an interview at a schedule determined by the project authority.
- Candidates who are employed would require applying with proper channel. No application will be received within the stipulated date and time.
- The duty location will be in Dhaka.
- 10. The authority reserves the right to accept or reject any of the EOI.

(Most. Ferdousi Begum) Joint Secretary and Project Director Ministry of Women and Children Affairs Telephone: 02-5510050 (Office)