



ENHANCING ETHICS IN THE PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION SYSTEM IN BANGLADESH

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Abstract: The scope of the research is confined within the schools of primary, secondary and higher secondary levels of Bangladesh. Domains of ethics are selected based on focused group discussions with teachers, parents and students. The ethical state of different institutions was evaluated based on a ground visit to the schools, and interview with teachers, parents and students. Certain numbers of inhibiting factors were identified through interviews, ground survey and visits. In this paper, it has been asserted that a comprehensive approach needs to be taken for enhancing ethics in the education system of Bangladesh. Ethics in the learning contents, ethics in the school environment, role of teachers, role of society and role of state have been figured out deliberately. Since, this is an affair which needs a long-term persistent effort, as such concerted efforts need to be taken by all the stakeholders to get the desired output in the long run. Improving learning content in relation to ethical values at different levels, preparing teachers in the teachers' training schools and colleges for their task to become role model to the students, emphasis on co-curricular activities and practice of ethics at school environment are few of the significant works to be done. Schools/ colleges need to work concertedly with parents for enhancing ethics to the students. Schools should be made a place of pride for the students, teachers and parents. Social, electronic and print media need to be used as force multiplier for making positive changes in the affairs of moral and ethical development of students. Efforts to be taken for nurturing children's idealism to become forward looking, positive, patriotic and progressive person imbued with the spirit of liberation war.

Keywords: *Schools of Primary Levels; Schools of Secondary Levels; Schools of Higher Secondary Levels; Education System*

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INTRODUCTION

Ethics has a very important place in all areas of life. Ethical conduct and behavior take time to be established as it need to be internalized within our character over time. Besides, in the current age of technology where everything is available on the internet, ethical issues and ethics in education are becoming major concerns and very important than ever before. On the other hand, education is any act or

experience that has a determining effect on the mind, character or ability of an individual. There is no denying of the fact that ethical conduct has a strong correlation with education. Therefore, it can also be said that in education, ethics has a very important and effective role. In order to turn a student into an ethical decision-maker in every sphere of his life, ethics should be included in the education system right from the beginning. Despite the articulation of the importance of moral values and ethics in the purpose of education by the Education Commissions over the years, its reflection was not very much vivid in the educational institutions. Frequent leakage of question papers before public examinations and the running after it by the students depict the ethical departure of the group of people and the students. It is more or less vivid that the deviation of education from the ethics and morality has taken place over the years in both the educational institutions and the society. Thus, it is very much time worthy and necessary to work out the modalities of including ethics in the education system of Bangladesh. However, the focus of the study was limited to the education system at primary and secondary levels including higher secondary level as the foundation of ethics is likely to be instilled at these levels.

Instilling true ethical values to the students at all levels are undoubtedly a difficult task. The complete grooming up process that takes place at home and educational institution will certainly influence to formulate the solid ethical foundation. Ethics in Education involves exploring different views and beliefs, considering ethical dilemmas and the process of ethical decision-making by an individual so that he conducts ethically during studentship and later in his respective professional arena. Perhaps the inclusion of ethics in education right from the early stage might be the solution to the stated problem.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

For the purpose of study, an extensive review of relevant literatures has been conducted. Good number of books, articles, précis and internet sites were consulted. Many countries in the world have incorporated ethics and values in their national education system. Moral education in China expresses ideology and thought process of political masters. It can also be termed as political indoctrination (Maosen, 2006). This is regarded as important as academic education and physical education. In case of Japan, the contents of moral education lessons are divided in four broad heads which are; about the self, about relationship with other people, about relationship with nature and sublime things and finally about groups and society.

Olsthoorn (2011) argued that despite the diminishing role of honor in society at large, it continues to have a role in society. He also argued that few of the virtues like moral courage can actually be developed by education. On the other hand, Fotion and Elfstorm (1986) in their study explained how values at the intuitive level of thinking examine ethical questions at the critical level of

thinking. Both of them agreed that ethical education allows critical reasoning to happen, and thus can be developed and sustained through formal education.

Ethical values are always sacrosanct. There is hardly any difference evident in the ethical values of different religions. Scholars have analyzed requirement of ethical values since the inception of human civilization. Depending on the nature of the job and assignment, ethical values warrant different standard. Maximum literatures as mentioned above highlighted the importance of ethical values but the way of effective inculcation through education was not much explored. Therefore, it is very much necessary to study the subject of ethical development for the students of different levels with a view to promoting ethical values amongst students.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this research are:

- To provide an overview of the state of ethics in different educational institutions at primary and secondary levels.
- To find out the impediments for enhancing ethics at these levels.
- To formulate methods for enhancing ethics in the education system of Bangladesh at primary and secondary levels.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Primary Question. How to enhance ethics in the education system of Bangladesh at primary and secondary levels?

Secondary Questions.

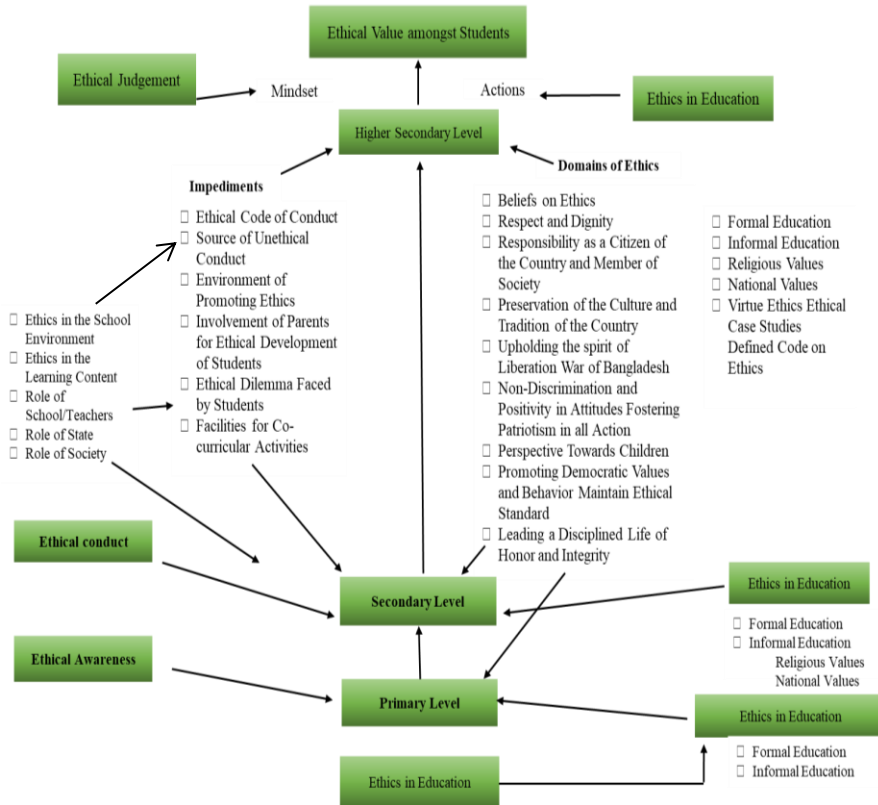
- What is the state of ethics in different educational institutions at primary and secondary levels?
- What are the impediments for enhancing ethics at these levels?
- What are the methods for enhancing ethics in the education curriculum?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study has been carried out by using both qualitative and quantitative approaches. In order to ascertain present ethical state of institutions at primary and secondary level, number of statistics on ethical understanding have been collected. For the sake of efficiency, data has been collected separately from primary level, secondary level including higher secondary level and teachers' training/ development level. As secondary source of data a good number of books, publications and electronic articles have been exhaustively consulted. Details of sample size are given as under:

- Students at different levels: 30 (Primary, Secondary and Higher Secondary: 10 each from 10 different institutions of all levels)
- Principals, Headmasters and Teachers (including Teachers' Training College): 30 (Primary, Secondary and Higher Secondary 10 each)
- Parents: 20

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK



ETHICS IN THE EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS INCLUDING LEARNING CONTENTS: AN OVERVIEW

In order to find out the content and environment related to ethics, it would be necessary to work out some of the domains of ethics, which will be used as the reflection or indicator to visualize ethical state of the institution.

DOMAINS OF ETHICS IN EDUCATION AT PRIMARY AND SECONDARY LEVELS

A student is drawn from their family, community, culture, religion etc. So certain basic beliefs and attitudes are consciously or subconsciously instilled in them. These, basically, constitute the anchor system that influences subsequent judgment and decisions about values and ethics. The educational institutions are truly a common platform to synchronize the ethical understanding of these diverse students. It is true that ethics cannot remain as abstract ideas only but have to be followed by actions always. So, the domains are selected based on discussions and study through which the ethical perceptions can be measured. After exhaustive discussions with good number of teachers and principals of schools and colleges and detailed study (FGD, Teachers 2018), the following domains are proposed as basis for defining issues of ethics:

Beliefs on Ethics. Purposefulness in life, honesty and integrity in personal conduct, being upright, self-esteem, being truthful, compassion and empathy for others, appreciating and participating in creative activities, commitment to fairness are few important factors of this domain.

Respect and Dignity. Respect for diversities including all citizens particularly the elders, respecting differences, believe in human rights and dignity for all are the crux of this domain.

Responsibility as a Citizen of the Country and Member of Society. Abiding by the laws of the country, society, schools and colleges, regarding diversities in the society and upholding social obligation to the underprivileged people especially those with different needs are the important parameters of this domain.

Preservation of the Culture and Tradition of the Country. Respect for own cultures and traditions, preservation of it, respect for other cultures and traditions are the important issues of this domain.

Upholding the Spirit of Liberation War of Bangladesh. Knowing the true history of our liberation war, understanding the true spirit of liberation war, believing in the basic values of our nation and constitution, patriotism and nationalism in line with the spirit of our liberation war are the basic issues of this domain.

Non-Discrimination and Positivity in Attitudes. Gender equality, positivity in attitude, nondiscrimination, preventing gender barriers in personal, social, economic and social roles, gender mainstreaming in art, culture and creative spheres are the important parameters of this domain.

Fostering Patriotism in all Actions. Education at all levels should always focus

on instilling patriotism in the minds of all students. It should be reflected equally both in actions and mindset at all spheres of life.

Perspective towards Children. Societal obligation to children, respect for children's right, protection of children from all sorts of unfair treatment and giving the children conscious hearing are the few important issues of this domain.

Promoting Democratic Values and Behavior. Absolute inclusiveness in all affairs, freedom of faith, belief, speech and opinion, rule of law, promoting democratic practices and behaviors, respect of rights and needs of minorities in the society are the few important issues of this domain.

Maintain Ethical Standard and Values. Being involved individually and collectively to maintain and uphold ethical values in all the actions are the core issues of this domain.

Leading a Disciplined Life of Honor and Integrity. A student should always lead a life of honor and integrity whether he is being observed or not. It has to be instilled in a way that it is done without any kind of influences what so ever.

ANALYSIS

General Understanding of Ethics. Majority of the respondents responded that being honest and truthful is the core issue of ethics. No student talked about upholding the spirit of liberation war, preservation of history, fostering patriotism while defining ethics. Detail findings is given as under:



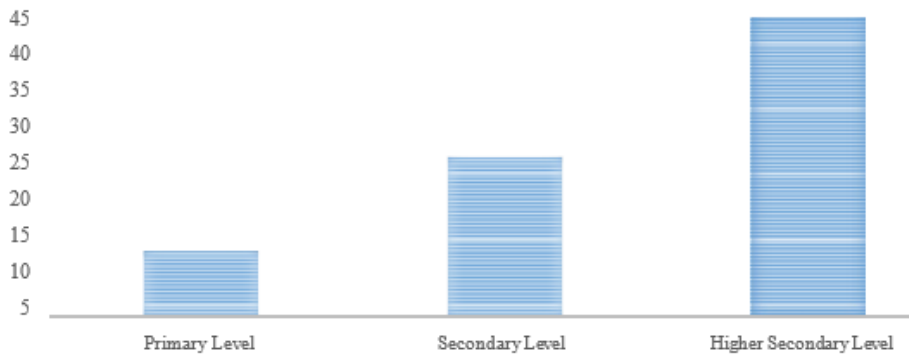
Source: Author's Field Survey (n = 30)

Domains of Ethics in the Schools. Observation in the school environment provides picture in the context of practicing and observance of ethics. Classes of different schools were observed for few days to see the adherence of ethical values by the students/ teachers/ staffs. Detailed analyses are given in subsequent paragraphs.

Spirit of Liberation War in Education. Liberation war is truly a unique episode of the history of Bangladesh. It involves the highest level of movements of long 24 years including language movement, six-point Bengali nationalist movement of 1966, mass uprising of 1969 and many more. Bangladesh's independence was earned by the killing of 3 million martyrs, abuse of 2 lakhs women within 9 months' period of liberation war. Young generations in schools and colleges must know the true history of our independence and also practice the spirit of our liberation war in the day-to-day activities.

In an answer of the question to the teachers and parents about the things to do in an effort to upheld the spirit of our liberation war, different opinions have come up which are given as under:

Knowledge on the History of Liberation War

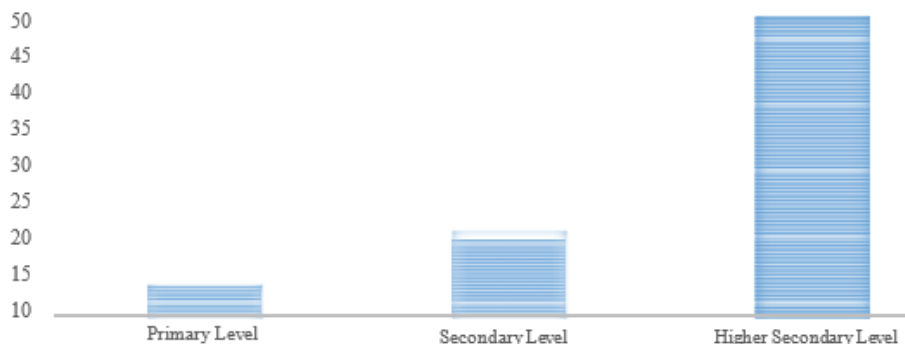


Source: Author's Field Survey (n = 30)

- Few opine that learning should start at primary level so that these very young students can feel and realize the struggle that the nation faced and accordingly they can hold the spirit of liberation war in their life time.
- Celebration of national days like Independence Day, Victory Day, and Martyrs' Day should be done with due respect and enthusiasm. It should not only remain limited to laying floral wreaths on martyr's grave but also include detailed program including cultural program, discussion, seminar etc.

Preservation of History of Independence. It has been found that only very few schools at higher secondary level have made some efforts for the preservation of history related to our independence. At primary level, it is almost nonexistent. However, at secondary level, nominal efforts were found in regards to preservation of history of independence. Details of the survey result is shown underneath:

Preservation of History of Independence



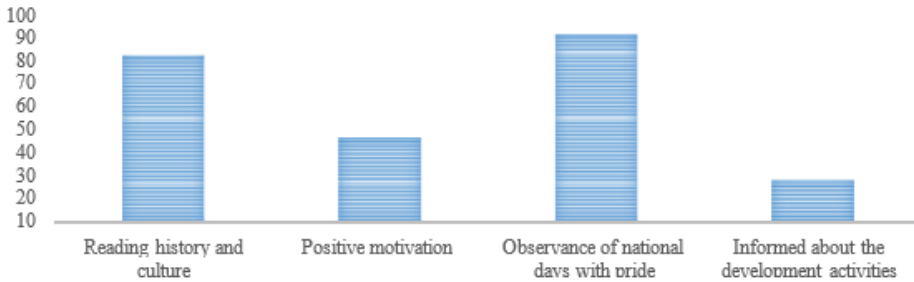
Source: Author's Field Surve (n = 30)

On the other hand, majority of the respondents opine that lack of preservation of history resulted in a serious gap between our liberation war and the young students. However, they have suggested few actions to be taken at institutions of all levels:

- Students must realize the true spirit that liberation is the root of our existence, present condition, development etc.
- Effort should be taken at the institutions of all levels to preserve true history of our independence.
- Schools and colleges must organize periodical programs including discussions, cultural programs, seminars, etc. based on the history of our liberation war and independence so as to attract young minds about it.
- At the same time, students must also possess adequate knowledge about the anti-liberation forces because history will remain incomplete without it.

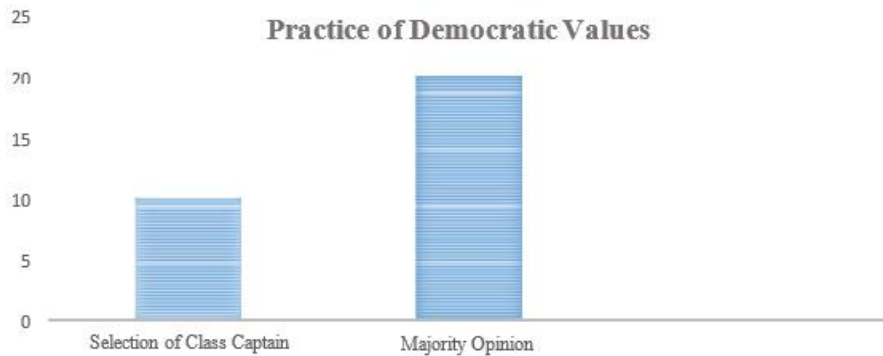
Fostering Patriotism in all Actions. Patriotism in all actions certainly helps students to build a sense of own identity. Students will feel that they have a responsibility and purpose in society and in the country. On the other hand, it helps build own character also. However, in a question on the ways to develop patriotism amongst young students, different opinions came up as shown in the figure:

Fostering Patriotism in All Actions



Source: Author's Field Survey (n = 30)

Promoting Democratic Values and Practices. It has been observed that democratic norms, values and behavior are not much practiced in the classroom. Majority of the students responded that during selection of class captain or taking any major decisions, opinion of the majority students is not taken at maximum time. Details of the survey is shown below:



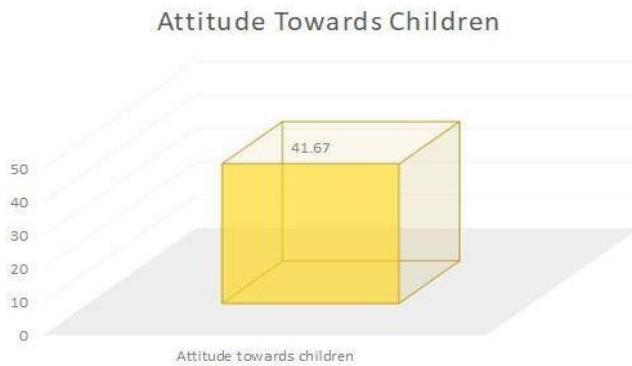
Source: Author's Field Survey (n = 30)

Preservation of Culture and Tradition. Culture is an integral part of our country and it gives our identity as a nation. It is particularly important in this age of globalization where culture is in serious threat from external pressure. Observation in different schools revealed instances of observance and preservation of culture in case of only national days like Pohela Baisakhi, Eid Day, and Language Martyrs' Day only. In a question to the parents and teachers on the ways to preserve our culture and traditions, different opinions came up which are given as under:

- Adequate practice of cultural activities at schools/colleges
- Enrichment of Bengali language and literature
- Preservation of important documents of historical importance in the school library especially related to our liberation war

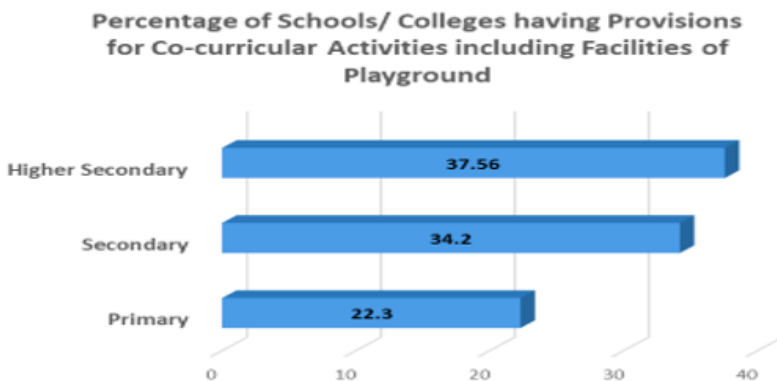
Leading a Disciplined Life of Honor and Integrity. Discipline not only helps to become a perfect person but also makes a man focused on reaching his/her goals of life. School observation revealed existence of some disciplinary enforcement mechanism but it is strongly felt that there is a need to strengthen the efforts both in terms of enforcement and motivation.

Perspective towards Children. Teachers and the staffs must respect the children and their rights in terms of giving quality and inclusive education. Teachers must show utmost caring attitude, genuine respect to the students' diversity, sincerity in deliberation and kindness towards the children. However, on a question to parents about the attitude of teachers towards students in the classroom, mixed opinion came up. About 47% respondent believe that teacher's attitude towards children is positive in terms of delivering inclusive and quality education.

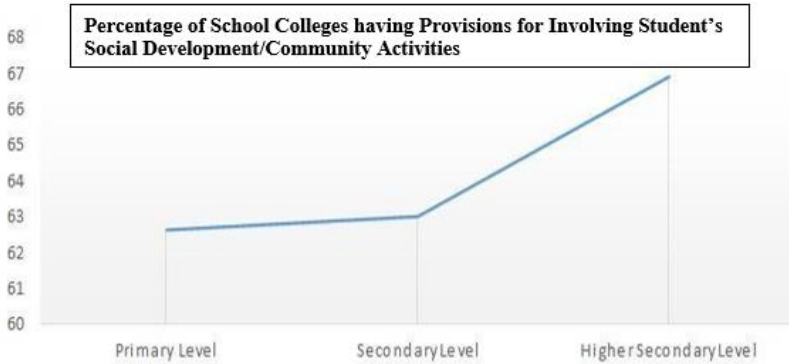


Source: Author's Field Survey (n = 30)

Miscellaneous Issues on Ethics. 37.56 % respondent opined that there are provisions of co-curricular activities including playgrounds in Higher Secondary level whereas 34.2% opined that it is available in secondary and 22.3% in primary level.



Source: Author's Field Survey (n = 30)



Source: Author's Field Survey (n = 30)

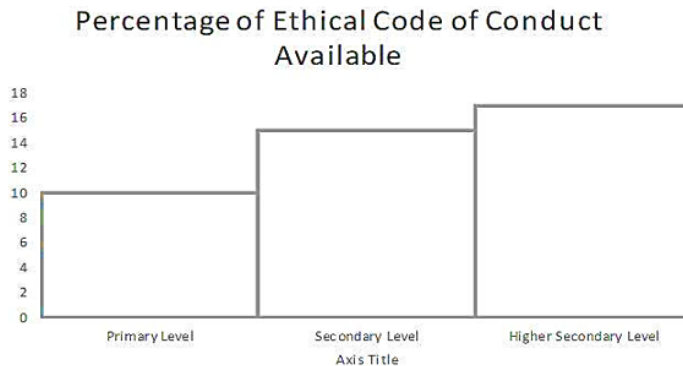
There are a very few numbers of schools in primary and secondary level having the provisions for students' social development and community activities. However, this percentage has a sharp increase in case of higher secondary level as shown in Figure.

It has been found that being honest and truthful is the core issue of ethics as per the opinions of majority of the respondents. However, few opines that being cooperative and supportive to friends and others, behaving in acceptable manner, respecting others, upholding the spirit of liberation war, preservation of history, fostering patriotism are also important issues of ethics.

IMPEDIMENTS OF DESIRED ETHICAL DEVELOPMENT OF STUDENTS

According to the ground survey, certain inhibiting factors were identified towards ethical development of students which are enumerated as under:

Absence of Ethical Code of Conduct. Details of the survey is as under:



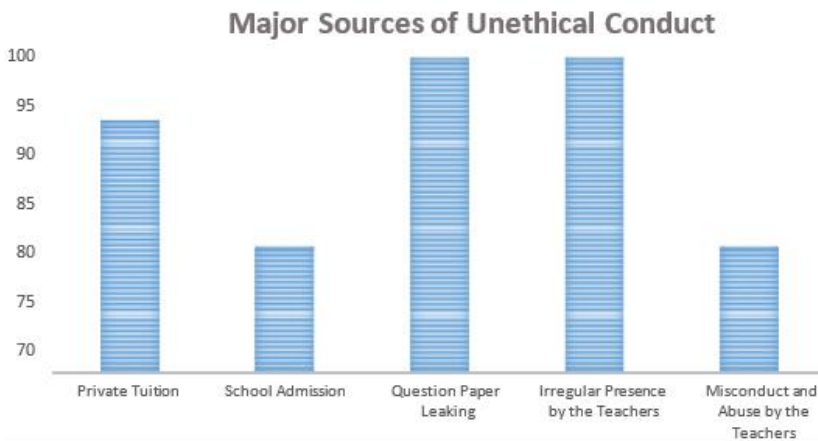
Source: Author's Field Survey (n = 30)

It is evident from the Figure that majority of the respondents opine that very insignificant amount of primary level schools has ethical code of conduct. However, in case of secondary and higher secondary level, there are more schools/colleges having ethical code of conduct in different forms.

It is felt and realized by the teachers and staffs that Ethical Code of Conduct has a positive impact on the professional conduct and behavior of all concerned. It can also serve as a tool for enhancing transparency and accountability of all teachers and staffs. However, in an answer to the question on the ways to implement of Ethical Code of Conduct in the schools of all level, respondents expressed diverse views which are given as under:

- In majority of the cases, Ethical Code of Conduct is not available. However, even if it is available, there is no proper enforcement mechanism of the Code.
- The Ethical Code of Conduct must be made part of academic curriculum of the teachers in the 'Teachers' Training Schools/ Colleges.
- Majority of the respondents opine that conduct in the school examinations, leaking question papers of different examinations, school admissions, private tuitions, presence of the teachers in the school/colleges regularly and timely presence are few of the important issues to be included in the Ethical Code of Conduct.

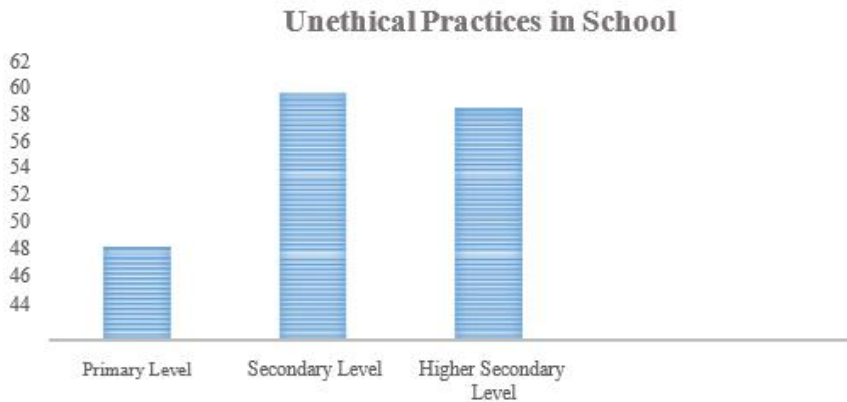
Unethical Conduct Prevailing in the Institutions. Details of the survey is as under:



Source: Author's Field Survey (n = 30)

Despite repeated serious instructions from the government, there is still cases of leaking of question papers including public examinations. Teachers must act as role model to the students. If the discipline of the teachers is not proper, it is never expected that the discipline of the students will be of expected standard.

Some of the major unethical practices prevailing in the schools are promoting poor students to higher classes, favoritism in marking, manipulation in result, malpractices in public examinations, teachers resorting to private tuitions etc.



Source: Author's Field Survey (n = 30)

Non-Involvement of Parents for Ethical Development of Students.

Involvement of parents is one of the most important issues for desired ethical development of students. Majority of the parents agree that parents play a significant part not only in the academic success but also in the ethical development of the students. However, in a question on how to develop teachers-parents' cooperation for ethical development of students, different opinions came up which are given as under:

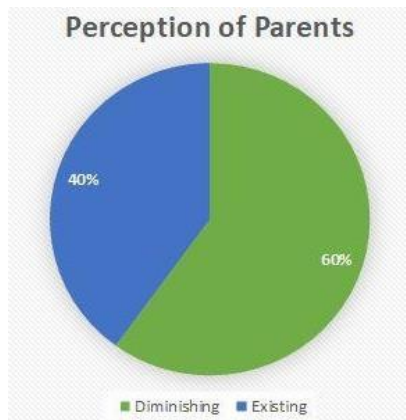
- Teachers-parents' involvement for ethical development of students must be based on trust and confidence. Efforts need to be taken by the management and teachers to enhance mutual trust and confidence so that confidence-based cooperation leads to desired ethical development of students.
- Frequent meeting with the parents to be organized by the school authority so that parents can develop an effective cooperation-based relationship with the teachers.

Ethical Dilemma Faced by the Students. Ethical dilemma is considered a problem where a student faces two possibilities neither of which is overwhelmingly acceptable. It has been observed with grave concern that students do not have any theoretical knowledge on the subject but on and off they are facing these consequences. As they do not have any knowledge on how to deal with this ethically, so they resort to the solution which apparently seems to be beneficial to them. On a question on how to deal with ethical dilemmas faced regularly by a student on a day-to-day basis, the parents and the teachers gave some important opinions:

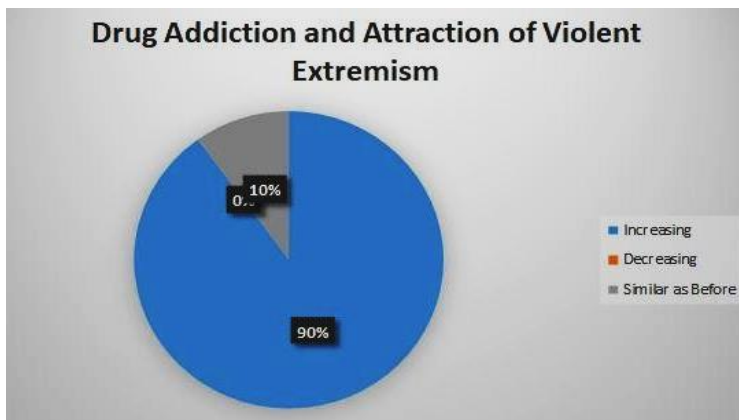
- Theoretical knowledge to be delivered to all the students on how to deal with ethical dilemmas. Lessons must be imparted to them on the issue of cognitive dissonance faced by the students.
- Ethical climate and environment have to be created in the entire school premises in a way that the cases of ethical departures come up as isolated cases only.
- At the same time, arrangement has to be made to give award to the good ethical performers so that all students are encouraged.

PERCEPTION OF PARENTS

According to ground survey 60% of the parents believe that the ethics is diminishing day by day. Furthermore, most of them (90%) believe that drug addiction and attraction of violent extremism is on rise as presented in the following figure.



Source: Author's Field Survey (n = 30)

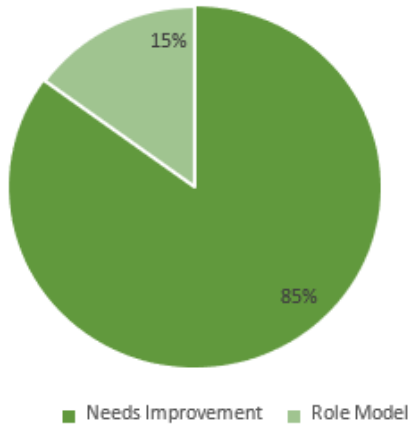


Source: Author's Field Survey (n = 30)

IMAGE OF TEACHERS NOT AS A ROLE MODEL

According to ground survey 85% of the respondents believe that the students are not currently considering the teachers as the role model.

Image of Teachers as Role Model



Source: Author's Field Survey (n = 30)

Information Technology Advancement. Bangladesh, in the last decades, has made significant progress concerning technology. Cell phones and internets are now a source of both information and disinformation in the sense that it affects the ethical upbringing of the students. It is also causing reduced social interactions for the students, that increases tendency of self-centricity.

Globalization. In a global world, we constantly encounter cultures and values that are often incompatible with our ones. Students tend to pick those cultures that are in other way harming their upbringing. Such a globalized culture has caused friable ethical values, declining respect for seniors etc.

WAYS OF INCLUSION OF ETHICS IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

ETHICS IN THE LEARNING CONTENTS

Inclusion of ethics in learning contents is very much discussed and widely recognized problem. This was also vividly expressed during the ground survey from all the stakeholders. The job is to help the students by giving them the opportunity to form their ethical judgment and reasoning about what is ethical or

wrong. Providing opportunities to develop and practice reasoning capabilities in the school is the most prevalent challenge. Recognizing ethical dilemmas and way out should be the focus point to address at the school levels. There is a need to emphasize more on application of ethics in life rather than possessing only theoretical knowledge. Following efforts that can be taken are:

- Improving learning content and including topics related to ethics and values. In-depth learning to instill ethics at foundation level need to be emphasized.
- Including the topics related to our independence and liberation war in the curriculum.
- More emphasis to be given on co-curricular activities to broaden students' learning.
- Restructuring in students' learning to get them away from memorizing and attract towards innovative application-oriented learning.
- Content of learning material in respect to history, culture, liberation war and patriotism should be included with due importance and it must be represented appropriately.

ETHICS IN THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

Implementation of Code of Ethics. Majority of the respondents opines that there is serious need to have a defined code of ethics for institutions which will become the way of life. Ethical code can guide each member of the institutions at the point of ethical dilemmas.

Upholding the Spirit of Liberation War. True spirit of liberation war like opposing unethical activities, practice honesty and democratic norms should be practiced in all activities in school/college etc. History of independence to be preserved in a very befitting manner so that students are frequently exposed to attain adequate knowledge on that.

Stopping Unethical Practices. Some of the major unethical practices prevailing in the schools are promoting poor students to higher classes, favoritism in marking, manipulation in result, malpractices in public examinations etc. Besides, questions paper leaking, humiliating students, absenteeism, irregularity are also prominent unethical practices. Efforts need to be taken both by motivation and coercive measures so that these types of unethical practices are reduced at any cost.

Making School as a Place of Pride. There are some schools found possessing very unacceptable environment and facilities, which are not suitable for promoting ethics in educational environment. These include arrangement of

appropriate sanitation, hygiene, co-curricular activities etc. A school should be a place of pride for any community in respect to all physical facilities and cleanliness as well.

Maintaining Ethical Environment in School. Maintaining ethical environment in the school is considered to be the most challenging affair. Possible unethical conduct/ practices may result in conflicting situation amongst the teachers and other staffs. It may affect the academic environment very seriously. These in turn affect the minds of the young generation as they consider teachers as their role model. Proper motivation to the teachers by the appropriate authority and strict enforcement by the management is the prerequisite to maintain ethical environment in the school.

School and Parents in Congruence. Teachers and parents need to have a sustainable and strong collaboration for promoting ethical values in the minds of young students. School needs to figure out ways and means to develop cooperative relation and sustainable mechanism to promote ethics to the students.

Democratic Upbringing in the School. Effort may be taken to impart both theoretical and practical knowledge on the basic subject of democratic norms and practices. Selection of Class Captain and other Prefects may be done through a process following democratic norms.

Practicing Ethics in School. It is very much important to create adequate opportunities for the students to practice all the domains of ethics mentioned in the paper. Besides, students must be given opportunities to develop their reasoning capabilities on moral issues and figure out the ways to recognize and address moral dilemmas of life. Few other activities in this regard may be highlighted as under:

- Reviewing learning content of moral and ethical issues addressing practical issues of ethics rather than theoretical instructions.
- Efforts may be taken for ensuring such practices in the classroom, school, home and the community involving students and teachers.
- Efforts may be taken to create ethical environment in the school where every individual and stakeholders including teachers, students and staffs has a role to play.
- Fear free environment need to be created so that students can ventilate their points, discuss without hesitation.

Role of Teachers. Teachers must refrain from all the unethical practices. They must behave as per the defined ethical code of conducts. They must refrain themselves from unethical conduct like leaking of question papers, absenteeism,

private tuition, malpractices during school admission etc. However, the matter of fact is that the teachers/mentors must follow the ethics/ideals of life like honesty, sincerity, punctuality, truthfulness, devotion, dedication etc.

Role of Society. Majority of the respondents opined that those values and ethics are very important in social life. As such, society needs to play its role for instilling ethics amongst the young minds.

Role of State. Different discussions with stakeholders figured out the role of state in promoting values and ethics amongst the students. Social media has enormous power and influence over students and mass people. Efforts to be taken to use both social and electronic media to publicize the efforts to uphold the spirit of liberation war in the form of depicting true history, periodical discussions, seminars etc.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Inclusion of true ethical values within young students of primary, secondary and higher secondary levels are undoubtedly a difficult task. It is envisaged that ethical development of students requires a continual systematic program of understanding, learning and thereby reinforcement of the standard of conduct.

A comprehensive approach needs to be taken for including ethics in the education system of Bangladesh. Ethics in the learning contents, ethics in the school environment, role of teachers, role of society and role of state have been figured out deliberately. There is a need to emphasize more on application of ethics in life rather than possessing only theoretical knowledge. It must involve opportunities for appropriate application in the classroom and the society involving students. A school should be a place of pride for any community in respect to all physical facilities, cleanliness etc. Proper motivation to the teachers by the appropriate authority and strict enforcement by the management is the prerequisite to maintain ethical environment in the school. Teachers must act as role model to the students so that they can follow them and develop character accordingly.

The paper finally recommends the following immediate measures to be adopted:

- Learning contents need to be improved in relation to the defined ethical domains at different levels.
- Teachers need to be trained in the Teachers Training Schools and Colleges with a view to inculcate appropriate and desired standard to become role model for the students.

- Social, electronic and print media need to be used as force multiplier for bringing positive changes in the affairs of moral and ethical development of students.

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