Summary of the Teaching of Philosophy in Bangladesh

Philosophy in the National goals of Education
The Ministry of Education has the following philosophy related general objectives for education:

- To inspire and create enthusiasm among the learners in their thoughts, deeds and daily life to establish moral, humanitarian, religious, cultural and social values in personal as well as in national life.
- To develop awareness in the learners to protect the independence, sovereignty and integrity of Bangladesh.
- To promote fraternity, moral values, generosity and fellow-feeling in people and make them respectful of human rights.
- To promote democratic values through fostering tolerance of one another’s views and help develop life-oriented, realistic and positive attitude for blossoming democratic awareness.
- To create awareness about protection of environment.²

It is important to note that at the moment “hardly any attention is given to the higher abilities of reasoning, understanding, application, analysis and synthesis.”⁷

Primary education
Primary education in Bangladesh concerns five-year education. In recent years the curriculum has been need-based and life-oriented. For the newly introduced curriculum, fifty-three learning competencies for primary education have been introduced.

The weekly timetable of the relevant courses is presented in the table on the next page.

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¹ http://www.prb.org/Countries/Cambodia.aspx
² The GER is used in the education sector and by the UN. According to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics the definition of the GER is the “total enrolment in a specific level of education, regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the eligible official school-age population corresponding to the same level of education in a given school year.” Its purpose is “to show the general level of participation in a given level of education. It indicates the capacity of the education system to enrol students of a particular age group. It can also be a complementary indicator to net enrolment rate (NER) by indicating the extent of over-aged and under-aged enrolment.” It is calculated by dividing “the number of pupils (or students) enrolled in a given level of education regardless of age by the population of the age group which officially corresponds to the given level of education, and multiply the result by 100.”
³ http://www.moedu.gov.bd/edu_system__edu_policy.htm
⁴ Ibid.
⁵ http://www.ibe.unesco.org/
⁶ http://www.moedu.gov.bd/about_moe__focus_objectives.htm
⁷ http://www.ibe.unesco.org/
### Weekly time allocation per grade in minutes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bangla (mother tongue)</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>180</td>
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<tr>
<td>Music, arts and crafts</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other subjects</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(including, religious education, social studies, environmental studies, and religious education)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Assessment**

A continuous assessment of pupils has been implemented using observation, oral and written assessment and a monthly assessment using grades.

**Case studies of philosophy teaching in primary schools: Identified courses called “philosophy” in schools**

Not available at this moment.

**Case studies of philosophy teaching in primary schools: Philosophy related teaching in schools**

Not available at this moment.

**Secondary education**

Although some philosophy related goals can be distinguished, education is focused on preparing the students for the job market. The result is that “hardly any attention is given to the higher abilities of reasoning, understanding, application, analysis and synthesis.”\(^9\) The following philosophy related objectives can be mentioned\(^{10}\):

- Extend and consolidate primary education
- Provide students with knowledge of various subjects
- Develop students’ potentials and abilities
- Enable students to take an active part in society as good and responsible citizens

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\(^8\) [http://www.ibe.unesco.org/](http://www.ibe.unesco.org/)


\(^10\) Ibid.
### Weekly time allocation per grade in minutes\(^{11}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>11</th>
<th>12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
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<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
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<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
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<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economics</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civics</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts and Crafts</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Assessment
Secondary education is mostly exam-oriented with the first public examination starting at Grade 10.

**Case studies of philosophy teaching in secondary schools: Identified courses called “philosophy” in schools**
Not available at this moment.

\(^{11}\) Ibid.
Case studies of philosophy teaching in secondary schools: Philosophy related teaching in schools

Teaching Critical Thinking in Bangladesh

Newsletter College of Arts and Sciences Seattle University

By John Bean

Dr. John Bean, Professor of English, and his wife Rosalie (Kit) Bean, composition instructor at South Seattle Community College, have recently returned from Dhaka, Bangladesh, where they conducted six two-day workshops on writing and critical thinking for Bangladeshi college professors and English language trainers.

What follows is Dr. Bean’s reflection on their experiences. What could you, would you, and should you do if your car hits a rickshaw and injures the rickshaw-wallah? This question raises complex ethical issues in a city where angry crowds might smash your car and where there is no dependable infrastructure of lawyers and insurance companies or of police responding to traffic accidents, or of hospitals caring for impoverished rickshaw pullers. The question also provoked heated debate among workshop participants unfamiliar with the American classroom style of active learning and argument. Unlike the traditional Bangladesh classroom, which relies on lecture and rote-learning, our critical thinking workshops showed how language learning might address issues of culture and power. (Note that the question also provides communicative language practice in use of modal verbs.) We were invited to Bangladesh by the Center for Languages at BRAC University in Dhaka. The faculty had read my book Engaging Ideas: The Professor’s Guide to Integrating Writing, Critical Thinking, and Active Learning in the Classroom and wanted to infuse critical thinking into the Bangladesh educational system. BRAC, which stands for Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee, is one of the world’s largest NGO’s and has been credited with lifting millions of people out of poverty through micro-lending, healthcare, and education. Its founder, Mr. Fazle Abed, has won the Bill and Melinda Gates Humanitarian award as well as numerous other honors. Mr. Abed was influenced in the 1970s by the work of the Brazilian educator Paolo Freire in Pedagogy of the Oppressed, who argued that literacy training informed by critical pedagogy could help the world’s poor raise critical questions about their oppression. Kit and I were honored by the opportunity to contribute, in our small way, to this social justice mission. We made a balanced co-teaching team because my background in pedagogical research was combined with Kit’s multicultural experience teaching at South Seattle Community College, where her classrooms are filled with immigrants and refugees, many from Muslim countries in Africa. We created six different workshops for four different audiences: College professors at English medium universities in Bangladesh; university-level English language instructors; educational trainers working with English language instruction in rural grade schools and high schools; and English language trainers in Islamic Madrassa schools. Our expenses were partly paid by the U.S. State Department under their “English Language Specialist” program in third world countries.
Identified programmes to provide teaching materials in philosophy

The need for philosophy in Bangladesh

Our present society is facing a severe moral crisis. Values, ethics and education are imperative for justice and peace. Sustainable development of a society is preconditioned by peace, which is not an object that can be purchased or given, but a healthy socio-economic condition brought about by rational beings through moral acts and rational thoughts. Efforts have to be made to understand and attain peace within the context of the individual, the family, the society, the nation and the world, as Sun Myung Moon proposes, reflecting Confucianism.

Social, moral and religious values and principles are necessary components for development of any society. Strong ethical foundation in education and sound reasoning of our views provided by philosophy can positively strengthen the capacities of our sense of values and broaden our minds for critical appraisal of our own actions -- a soul-searching way of curbing white-collar crime and blue-collar corruption in a country like Bangladesh. Moral philosophers may have a role to play in providing conceptual foundation to the values and principles that contribute towards the work of social cohesion in this conflicting world. [...]In the context of Bangladesh, the NCTB must consider introducing a course like "Philosophy for Children" at the school level, as is the expected outcome of engaging philosophy in the general public advocated by Unesco. On the contrary, logic at the HSC level in our curriculum has been downgraded in order of groups in recent years in such a way that our higher secondary students rarely find it suitable to choose it. Furthermore, our existing PSC rules set aside philosophy graduates to vie for some, though not all, civil service jobs.

We seem to have failed to eliminate the common misperceptions about philosophy that still exist in our society, even though institutional philosophy teaching commenced in the early 1920s. Our philosophy bigwigs should sit together with the concerned high-ups to deal with the aforesaid issues, and engage in brainstorming in search of new philosophical practices for the advancement of philosophical study and research.

Prof. Golam Dastagir, Department of Philosophy, Jahangirnagar University
Original article entitled ‘Rethinking philosophy today’ in the Daily Star 15-11-2007

Links

http://hdrstats.undp.org/indicators/332.html
http://www.ibe.unesco.org/
http://www.moedu.gov.bd/about_moe__focus_objectives.htm
http://www.moedu.gov.bd/edu_system__edu_policy.htm
http://www.prb.org/Countries/Cambodia.aspx
http://www2.seattleu.edu/WorkArea/linkit.aspx?LinkIdentifier=id&ItemID=9092

Acknowledgements

This summary was prepared by Arthur Wolf, and comments on initial drafts were made by several experts.