The Role of Education in Countering Radicalization in Bangladesh
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Bangladesh Enterprise Institute
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Bangladesh has achieved considerable success in its efforts to address the issue of terrorism/counter-terrorism. There is now a serious leadership crisis in most terrorist groups, thanks to the government’s stern measures against terrorism. However, there is still the threat of increasing radicalization as more and more youth turn to radical activity. Contrary to the traditional notion that people from economically deprived backgrounds and of low education are more prone to radicalization, recent trends show that educated youth from affluent families are also engaging in such activities. This trend has given rise to a new phenomenon: a new generation of youth who are technologically literate and well-versed in social media application skills. They garner more support from like-minded individuals and groups in carrying out radical activities ranging from selection, indoctrination and recruitment, to training, financing, planning and execution of their programmes.

This new wave of radicalization has emerged in Bangladesh as a serious threat to the internal stability of the society. In fact, Bangladesh is now witnessing the "second wave" of radicalization. The first wave occurred from 1999-2005, following the return of the Afghanistan war veterans to Bangladesh. The second wave consists of new, technologically advanced militant radical groups such as Hizbut Tahrir (HT), Hizbut Tawhid and Ansarullah Bangla Team (ABT). These proscribed groups are playing a pivotal role in propagating the 'global jihadist ideology in the local language.'

Among the various actors that can play a crucial role in countering radicalization, we believe that the role of education will be of critical importance. In recent years, the role of education in countering radicalization has gained prominence among policymakers and practitioners. As a matter of fact, education can act as an early intervention of any violent extremist tendencies, hence permitting an early and effective counter-strategy.
In view of the increasing influence and negative effects of these new trends in radical activism, Bangladesh Enterprise Institute (BEI) has undertaken a comprehensive research project, with financial support from the Royal Danish Embassy in Bangladesh, to assess the threat emanating from radicalization. The project entitled "Towards Developing a Better Counter Terrorism Regime in Bangladesh: Phase II" will explore the growing threat of radicalization in Bangladesh and its contingent implication, and seek innovative solutions in addressing the issues posed by this phenomenon. The project will contribute to strengthening the counter-terrorism regime of Bangladesh by advocating the use of non-kinetic soft power means for countering radicalization.

I would like to place on record BEI's appreciation for the continued support it has received from the Royal Danish Embassy in Bangladesh in the second phase of the project. I would also like to thank the members of the Advisory Committee and my colleagues in BEI for their contribution and commitment in producing this report.

Faroq Sobhan
President
Bangladesh Enterprise Institute
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report entitled "The Role of Education in Countering Radicalization in Bangladesh" is one of the deliverables of the project "Towards Developing a Better Counter Terrorism Regime in Bangladesh- Phase II", being implemented by Bangladesh Enterprise Institute (BEI). The report aims to explore the role of education in countering the phenomenon of radicalization in Bangladesh. A perception survey was conducted among representatives of the education sector in Dhaka City through administering structured questionnaire. Key Informant Interviews (KII)s and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were also held with highly placed education sector representatives of Bangladesh. Furthermore, extensive literature review was undertaken to analyze the trends, incidents, prospects and challenges of the role of education in countering radicalization in Bangladesh.

The term "radical" does not have any negative connotation, according to classic linguistic standards. However, currently it is defined as a tendency to use a peculiar brand of religion as justification for conquest and control over population and resources. Bangladesh has been witnessing a new wave of terrorism in the form of radicalization that includes extremist propaganda, fund raising, procuring supplies and conducting dawaati activities by Islamist extremist outfits. According to the perception survey conducted by BEI, 67% of the respondents think that radicalization is a problem in Bangladesh, and 68% of them think that the recent trend of radicalization in Bangladesh is mostly associated with Islamist Radicalization. From another set of response it can be observed that 63% of the respondents think that Islamist radicalization and extremism is on the rise in Bangladesh, whereas only 6% believes that the notion of Islamist radicalization is diminishing. There can be a number of causes that may lead to radicalization. The causes may vary from country to country. BEI's perception survey has indicated that 64% of the respondents consider political condition (political violence, disagreement among political parties regarding the transfer of political power) is the major cause of radicalization in Bangladesh.

The report shows that radical and extremist narratives in Bangladesh grossly misinterpreted religion and used it to appeal to people's 'soft corner.' The Islamist extremists aim to bring back the caliphate, with the primary objective of attaining state power. Thus, ideological conviction is one of the main features of radicalization and extremism. From the perception survey it has been observed that the Youth (56%) lead the chart as the most vulnerable section of the society to the appeal of radical organizations. Radical groups mainly exploit people's religious sentiment. They create opportunities for their recruits taking advantage of the shortcomings of the state. The propaganda of the radicals are at present more organized and far more appealing to their targets, especially via the extensive use of the internet (social media platforms), along with the use of leaflets, bulletins, cell-phones and other traditional means of communication.

The education system of Bangladesh is one of the diverse and critical education systems in the world. It is a combination of native culture and western education system. The present education system is divided into three major stages: primary, secondary and tertiary with three different streams- General (Bangla medium, English version and English medium), Technical-Vocational and Madrassa Education system. These days the education system of Bangladesh is being influenced by various socio-economic, political and other external forces, as it is constrained by so many factors that discrimination tends to arise naturally. The perception survey supports the
point as the majority of the respondents (52%) think the present education system of Bangladesh is discriminatory. The perception survey showed that many of the respondents (42%) consider diverse streams of education a factor for facilitating the process of radicalization in Bangladesh. It has become essential to develop an integrated approach among all types of education where no discrimination should be allowed, as negative attitude towards a particular stream of education leads to unfairness, inequity and injustice in the society.

The government of Bangladesh took an initiative to prepare a National Education Policy (NEP) in 2010 to cater to the needs of the modern times. In the policy, the government has taken some steps to address and combat the spread of radicalization. Though NEP 2010 addressed some of the core issues, still there exists a lack of reflection of those issues in the curriculum and text books. Text books have not yet totally incorporated the relevant sections of NEP 2010. On the other hand, the policy does not address social problems like extremism, radicalization and terrorism sufficiently. The National Education Policy should include separate chapters on radicalization and extremism to make students more aware on the issues and give them proper understanding, which, in turn, will educate our country as well as our future generation. From the perception survey it is found that, 34 % of the people have no idea about the NEP 2010, 32% think the education policy is secular, 23% think it is scientific, whereas 9% consider that this education policy has religious bias. A good percentage of respondents have said that the National Education Policy, 2010 and also the present text books/syllabi/curricula do not address (20% regarding NEP and 36% regarding present curricula/syllabi/text books) the issues relating to radicalization.

In recent years, the role of education in countering radicalization has gained prominence among policymakers and practitioners. Even from the perception survey, it has been observed that a good majority of the respondents (76%) consider “Education” as one of the important means to face the challenges of radicalization and extremism in Bangladesh. In building community resilience against radicalization, participants stressed the importance of utilizing existing networks, resources and programmes which should be further strengthened by informed, well-designed and inclusive policies. From the perception survey, the most effective way for the education sector to intervene in countering radical narratives is “Removing social discrimination among the students by attaching equal value to all streams of education” (47%), followed by “Increasing resilience of students/groups vulnerable to radicalization by providing knowledge on religious tolerance, ethnic tolerance, building interfaith harmony” (37%) and “Reducing involvement in illegal political activity by organizing diversionary /extra curricular activities for young people at different levels of education ”(37%), among others.

In today’s world, it is obvious that the role of education in countering radicalization is immense. Bangladesh, where radicalization is an emerging problem, requires urgent attention to face these challenges through education. It is also extremely important that the Government of Bangladesh recognizes the indispensable role the education sector can play with regard to countering radicalization and take appropriate steps in this regard to enhance their contribution, including developing a national counter radicalization policy to create a safe, secure and stable Bangladesh.
1.1 Background

Education is a catalyst for social change. It empowers people in a way that no other process can. Education has a revolutionary aspect. It is a powerful instrument in the process of overcoming any social problems in a society. In recent years, the role of education in countering radicalization has gained prominence among policymakers and practitioners. Tackling radicalization through education is reflective of a broader international shift toward terrorism prevention and the need to identify the enabling environment for extremists to disseminate their ideologies and recruit supporters.

Radicalization in the last decade has been spawned mainly by socio-economic and politico-ideological factors, and manifested in dogmatically extreme views leading to terrorist violence. It has become a terrible menace for the state and people all over the world, including Bangladesh. It has emerged as one of the most dangerous threats to peace, security, development and civilization. Traditionally considered a moderate, Muslim-majority country, Bangladesh has shown little inclination to replace secular thoughts with radical ideas and violence. Also, the citizens of this country have shown a fierce dedication to democratic government despite several attempts to install autocratic government. Yet, ongoing news reports of active militants captured and connections to regional and international criminal and terrorist organizations suggest that the threat is clear, present and cannot be neglected. The emergence of groups like Hizbut Tahrir, Harakatul Jihad al-Islami Bangladesh, Jamatul Mujahedeen Bangladesh and others, following the return of Bangladeshi mujahedeen from the Afghan wars infused violence in Bangladesh with the language of jihad and tactics borrowed from terrorist groups abroad.

The governments of Bangladesh have shown zero tolerance on terrorism and have taken strong measures to combat the terrorists through various security agencies. Although success came in many cases in combating terrorism, the root causes of radicalization facilitating violence and the steps to forestall the violent radicalization of groups and individuals in the society (counter-radicalization) have not been adequately addressed yet.

Traditionally, responses to terrorism in Bangladesh have been dominated by hard power approaches by the government and law enforcement agencies, but contemporary trends in security discourse have drawn attention to the potential role of education as an effective tool of countering radicalization. This is drawn from the concept that a quality
education in itself can play a critical role in helping young people distance themselves from extremism and resist the ‘pull factors’ that may drive them to recruitment. These pull factors can be contrasted by education through awareness raising, generating respect for others, and creating and maintaining cultures of peace and dialogue. However, it is also important to stress that quality education alone is not sufficient to prevent radicalization. Thus, in addition to providing quality education, more broadly effective education policies and interventions with the specific goal of countering radicalization should be focused on communities where youth are vulnerable to radicalization and specifically tailored to fit the local context. Education can help counter extremist ideologies and promote peaceful dialogue. In addition, it can also act as an early intervention of any violent extremist tendencies, hence putting in place an early and effective counter-strategy.

Therefore, looking into the role of education in countering radicalization in Bangladesh is a very judicious and sensible approach towards preventing the threat of terrorism.

1.2 Overview of the Project

Bangladesh Enterprise Institute (BEI) completed a 3-year project, entitled “Towards Developing a Better Counter Terrorism Regime in Bangladesh” in 2012, with financial support from the Royal Danish Embassy, Dhaka. The outcomes and recommendations of this project significantly contributed to a deeper understanding of the threats emanating from terrorism in Bangladesh. The research findings reveal that radicalization is a greater threat for Bangladesh in the long-run that needs to be dealt with in a proper manner.

Bangladesh has been witnessing a new wave of radicalism in the form of radicalization that includes extremist propaganda, fund raising, procuring supplies and conducting daawati activities of Islamist terrorist outfits. This radicalization, often based on misinterpretation of the Scriptures of Islam, challenges the mainstream national narrative of Bangladesh which is an age-old happy blending of secular democracy and moderate practice of religion. The ideologies of these groups not only undermine the democratic system of governance, they also use perceived and real grievances of Bangladeshis regarding the country’s relationship with the West, socio-economic and political issues to lend legitimacy to their objectives. Alarmingly, the contemporary Islamist radical doctrines are targeting the middle class, educated and influential people including those in the public and private universities and professions. In fact, terrorist outfits have significantly changed their strategy and tactics to carry out their activities in the face of tenacious pressure from the law enforcement agencies. The prime objective of their activities is to radicalize the Bangladesh society to establish a theocratic regime based on the Shariah.
Before such radicalization transforms into militancy and violence, it is essential to contain and eventually eliminate the menace at the initial stage of the continuum. While kinetic measures against terrorism are an important first step in combating the challenge, prevention would be a preferred solution by addressing the problems of radicalization and recruitment. In doing this, interventions like the role of the media and civil society in countering radicalism, the role of education system in shaping youth perceptions against terrorist ideologies, choking off terrorist financing, assessing the impact of Bangladeshi diaspora on Islamist radicalization, and the building of a counter narrative are essential for addressing the conditions conducive to the spread of radicalization and terrorism in Bangladesh as well as the radicalization process itself, which have not been fully explored in the first phase of the project.

In view of the above, BEI has undertaken a second, 3-year phase of the project funded by the Royal Danish Embassy, Dhaka, in understanding the dynamics of the continuing radicalization, recruitment and related issues and exploring the ways and means of combating the challenge of Islamist extremism in Bangladesh.

1.3 Methodology

This report is based on qualitative and quantitative analysis of primary data (Key Informant Interviews, Focus Group Discussions and Perception Survey) and secondary data (literature review).

1.3.1 Literature Review

A comprehensive literature review has been undertaken to analyze the trends, incidents, prospects and challenges of the role of education in countering radicalization in Bangladesh. Salient literature includes international reports and publications, newspaper articles, scholarly journals and reports, policy papers, working papers, issue briefs, publications from specialized domestic research and advocacy organizations, websites of international and local civil society organizations, and various national and international policy documents of renowned research institutions from home and abroad.

1.3.2 Key Informant Interviews (KII)

KII were held with ten highly-placed representatives of the education sector in Bangladesh who have worked extensively on education policy, education system, radicalization, extremism, violence and terrorism to gain their valuable insights into the role of education in countering radicalization in Bangladesh. The key informants provided in-depth information, which is not available in the public domain. Such empirical inputs contributed significantly to the understanding of radicalization, and
the existing and possible role of education in countering radicalization. Strict research ethics has been followed in collecting information to ensure utmost confidentiality of the interviewees.

1.3.3 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)
BEI has also conducted six Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with representatives of the education sector of Bangladesh. The first FGD was with the Civil Society Organizations working on education in Bangladesh; the second FGD was with Government officials working in different departments under the Ministry of Education; the third one was organized with the students from public and private universities; the fourth was held with teachers from schools, colleges and universities; the fifth was with the Madrassa teachers, and the sixth was held with some eminent educationists and security experts of the country. A holistic view, in terms of possibilities of the education sector working in the field of counter-radicalization in Bangladesh, was obtained by way of these discussions.

1.3.4 Perception Survey
A perception survey was conducted by BEI through administering structured questionnaire among 100 education sector representatives in Dhaka City. The survey touched upon quite a few important issues like state of radicalization in Bangladesh, causes of radicalization, vulnerable sections of society, education policy, education system, student politics, education's role in countering radical/extremist narratives and steps to make education policy and system more effective in countering radicalization/extremism in Bangladesh and other interrelated issues.

1.4 Organization of the Report
The report starts with an introductory statement and is divided into sections that focus on specific subjects relating to the role of education in countering radicalization in Bangladesh. Section II of the report presents radicalization and counter radicalization, highlighting the definitions of the terms, current state and causes of radicalization in Bangladesh. Section III illustrates the narratives of radical and extremist groups and their techniques/tools to spread those narratives in Bangladesh. Section IV explores the education system of Bangladesh and the challenges facing it. The next section presents an overview of the National Education Policy, 2010 and its challenges. Section VI focuses on the main thrust of the report, which is to present the role of education in countering radicalization in Bangladesh. The last section presents some concluding remarks and recommendations, with a view to making the education sector of Bangladesh more effective in countering the phenomenon of radicalization.
2.1 Defining the terms- Radicalization; Counter Radicalization

Radicalization- There is no clear definition of radicalization. The term is used casually, and little has been done to systematically develop it into a conceptual tool through which to understand the process that may lead individuals to support violent extremism. Generally, it is widely referred to as a departure from normal social and political attitudes and behaviors. For the purpose of this report a functional definition of radicalization has been adopted as the following:

"Radicalization is a process in which a person gets indoctrinated by others or self-motivation into a rigid ideology, religious or otherwise, equipped with a set of goals and plans that may eventually lead to extremism, militancy and terrorism aiming at national and/or international systemic change for governance and regulating human lives." ¹

Counter-Radicalization- Similarly, the definition of counter-radicalization is also a bit imprecise. For the purpose of this report, the definition of the counter-radicalization is.

"Counter Radicalization is a package of social, political, legal, educational and economic programmes specifically designed to deter disaffected individuals from crossing the line and becoming terrorists." ²

This definition is adopted by the United Nations Working Group on Radicalization and Extremism that lead to Terrorism. In other words, counter-radicalization refers to programmes designed to prevent the violent radicalization of groups and individuals in the society by reducing vulnerability and increasing resilience.

2.2 Radicalization - A Bangladesh Perspective

Bangladesh has traditionally been an inclusive, secular and tolerant society. It has enjoyed positive relations between different communities even being a Muslim-majority country. Almost 90% of the population is Muslim and the remaining 10% is Hindu,

¹ Quoted from a presentation, entitled “Countering Radicalization in Bangladesh”, made by Mohammad Humayun Kabir at a Bangladesh-India Security Dialogue held in New Delhi on 3 April 2014.
Christian, and Buddhist. Major religious festivals are marked by national holidays and celebrated in an atmosphere of tolerance, with the main religions sharing many rituals in common and receiving extensive media coverage. Therefore, Bangladesh has not experienced any major religious unrest and, historically, relatively few people have been attracted to any violent extremist ideology. This is despite Bangladesh's problems of widespread poverty, limited land and other resources, and areas of poor governance.

The trend of radicalization is not ancestral in Bangladesh. It can be referred to as a relatively recent phenomenon. Though the leftist radicalization has existed in Bangladesh since the erstwhile East Pakistan, now it is almost decimated. Some of the well-known left-wing parties were Purba Bangla Community Party (PBCP), Red Flag, Gono Mukti Fouz (GMF), Biplobi Community Party, Sarbahara Party, Janajuddho, Gono Bahini, etc. But these groups have diluted over time due to lack of popular support and marginalization.

However, from the beginning of the new century, Bangladesh has experienced an upsurge in support for Islamist violent extremism. An influx of already radicalized groups, such as returning veterans of the Afghanistan war and migrant workers from abroad, influenced public opinion. The brutality and atrocity against Muslims in Palestine, Iraq, Afghanistan, Kashmir and some other areas fuelled radicalism and contributed to the rise of extremism in Bangladesh. Gradually, the Islamist radicals and extremists have begun to come to the spotlight by spreading training and radical ideologies to the society with the resolve to establish Islamic rule based on Shariah in Bangladesh.

The governments of Bangladesh have already shown zero tolerance on terrorism and have taken strong measures to combat the terrorists through various security sectors. Although success came in many cases in combating terrorism, success in disconcerting terrorist motivation, ideologies and networking is still a huge challenge for the entire country.

According to the perception survey conducted by BEI, 67% (Fig.1) of the respondents think that radicalization is a problem in Bangladesh and 68% (Fig.2) of them think that the recent trend of radicalization in Bangladesh is mostly associated with Islamist Radicalization.

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3 Sample Vital Registration Survey (SVRS), Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS)
4 Report on "the Role of the Media in Countering Radicalization in Bangladesh" by Bangladesh Enterprise Institute (BEI), 2014
From another set of response it can be observed that 63% (Fig.3) of the respondents think that Islamist radicalization and extremism is on the rise in Bangladesh, whereas only 6% believes that the notion of Islamist radicalization is diminishing.

Figure 1: Perception Survey Statistics on Current State of Radicalization in Bangladesh

Figure 2: Perception Survey Statistics on Recent Trend of Radicalization in Bangladesh

Figure 3: Perception Survey Statistics on Current State of Islamist Radicalization in Bangladesh
A good number of respondents (42%) also shared that religion-based political parties and social organizations sometimes play a vital role in encouraging Islamist radicalization in Bangladesh.

Currently, few radical organizations have gained in strength and tried to come into the public spectrum. They have attracted public and media attention through their activities and propaganda.

There can be a number of interrelated causes that may lead to radicalization. The causes may vary from country to country. Some of the key causes that have been congregated from the KIIs and FGDs are: (I) Poverty and Unemployment; (II) Illiteracy and Ignorance; (III) Influx of expatriate ideology (IV) Influence of external factors; (V) Teaching of abhorrence toward other religions and Western values in some religious schools; (VI) Political instability; (VII) Economic and social deprivation, (VIII) Perception of political injustice by radical groups; (IX) Using religious groups for political interests of the mainstream parties; (X) Propaganda by radical organizations; and (XI) Corruption and poor governance.

Besides, BEI’s perception survey shows that 64% of the respondents consider political condition (political violence, disagreement among political parties regarding transfer of political power) is the cause of radicalization in Bangladesh, followed by Illiteracy and less/poor/inappropriate knowledge & understanding of Islam and others (58%), Using religious groups for political interests (58%), Influence of external factors (54%), Propaganda by the Radical Groups/organizations through various tools & techniques such as: extensive use of the social media platforms, the use of leaflets, bulletins,
cellphones, personal communication, and distorted interpretations of Islam taught in mosques, etc. (51%); Influx of expatriate ideology (50%); Corruption and poor governance (48%); Economic aspects referring to Poverty, Economic disparity and deprivation, Unemployment and under employment (45%), and Decline in interfaith harmony (39%).

Figure 5: Perception Survey Statistics on Causes of Radicalization in Bangladesh

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What are the causes of the increase in radicalization in Bangladesh? (%)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Corruption and poor governance</td>
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<td>Decline in interfaith harmony</td>
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<tr>
<td>Propaganda by the Radical Groups</td>
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<tr>
<td>Using religious groups for political interests</td>
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<td>Influence of external factors</td>
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<td>Influx of expatriate ideology</td>
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<td>Illiteracy and inappropriate knowledge of Islam</td>
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<td>Economic</td>
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<tr>
<td>Corruption and poor governance: 48%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Decline in interfaith harmony: 39%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Propaganda by the Radical Groups: 51%</td>
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<td>Using religious groups for political interests: 58%</td>
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<td>Influence of external factors: 54%</td>
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<td>Influx of expatriate ideology: 50%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Illiteracy and inappropriate knowledge of Islam: 58%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Economic: 45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political: 64%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 5: Perception Survey Statistics on Causes of Radicalization in Bangladesh
3.1 Main Features of the Radical and Extremist Narrative in Bangladesh

Radical and extremist narratives in Bangladesh grossly misinterpret religion and use it to appeal to people's 'soft corner.' The propaganda is faith-driven and spread through exploitation of the religious sentiment of the masses. Radical and extremist narratives preach that all other interpretations of Islam are false, and try to feed in the idea that their way of Islam is the 'purest form' and the 'only way of Islam.' The Islamist extremists aim to bring back the caliphate, with the primary objective of attaining state power through violent means. Thus ideological conviction is one of the main features of radicalization and extremism. Their agenda involves establishing an Islamic state to be run on the basis of the Shariah. Thus, the narratives are propagated to attain political objectives by capitalizing on the internal problems of governance among others. Some participants have said that the extremists turned towards violent means to secure and achieve their objectives.

In your opinion, which section of the society is most vulnerable to the appeal of radical organizations? (%)

- People with less knowledge of Islam: 55%
- Madrassa Students: 41%
- Marginalized: 24%
- Unemployed: 36%
- Poor: 19%
- Adults: 6%
- Women: 20%
- Children: 18%
- Youth: 56%

Figure 6: Perception Survey Statistics on Vulnerable Section of the Society to Radicalization
In Bangladesh, the extremists target the vulnerable groups starting from madrassa students to private university students to poverty stricken individuals to elite section of the society. Individuals who are frustrated with the government and its corrupt practices, along with inadequate levels of peace, dignity and economic benefits, are most vulnerable to extremist ideologies. Furthermore, extremist groups take advantage of the low levels of literacy rates and high levels of poverty prevalent in our society. It becomes very easy to motivate and indoctrinate people with little or no education, in the name of religion. Extremist groups take advantage of the gap in the knowledge of Islam among the masses of people. They prepare distorted interpretation of Quranic verses that serve their purpose of spreading radicalization and extremism in the society. People have a tendency to get influenced by these distorted Islamist narratives as there prevails inadequate knowledge about their own religion.

From the perception survey it has been observed that Youth (56%) leads the chart as most vulnerable section of the society to the appeal of radical organizations, followed by people with less/poor/inadequate knowledge and understanding of Islam (55%) and madrassa students (41%).

3.2 Types of Techniques/Tools used by the Radicals andExtremists to Spread their Narrative

Radical groups mainly exploit people's religious sentiment. They create opportunities for their recruits through making use of the shortcomings of the state. They also use the mainstream media and social media to spread their narratives, along with traditional means of exploitation: where certain mosques are chosen by the radicals as a hub to collect and recruit their targets, in addition to being utilized as religious educational institutions. Charismatic religious leaders are also used to spread the extremist propaganda. Furthermore, cadre-based political organizations, religious seminars, gatherings are also frequently used to spread propaganda. Various forms of incentives are also used to attract people, such as financial incentive which is evidently a very effective means of attracting people in a country where poverty levels are very high. The radical groups also have considerable influence on coaching centers, hostels, etc., where they provided financial assistance to the youth in order to appeal to them and recruit them. Radical groups have already developed a strong financial base and they use this to attract more targets. The concept of fear and rewards in the afterlife are also taken advantage of in order to pursue people into accepting their radical ideologies.

Furthermore, the Wahhabi idea has been used as an important tool, and has been advertised as being the purest form of Islam- thus, using ideological tools along with political tools.
Some radical groups have even taken some professional groups, such as teachers, under their wings and used them to preach their ideology indirectly at educational institutions. The aim behind this strategy is to shape the young fragile minds to make them work for and support their activities.

Radical and extremist organizations also heavily recruit women and the youth: segments of the population who generally lack economic and social independence. Moreover, radical groups provide financial support and various types of training to the potential candidates for sustained periods of time in order to build trustworthy relationships with them, and later employ them to preach their narratives. Women are assigned to perform door-to-door visits, as they have easier access and could change the mindsets of other women with more efficacy than their male counterparts.

Furthermore, radical and extremist groups seek out very bright students from schools and universities who are not financially very sound and motivate them with job security and financial stability. Out of these students, a lot of them get attached to these radical groups and spread radical ideologies to their surroundings. Besides, these groups try to target any big gathering where they can find groups to talk to and spread their ideas.

On the other hand, leaflets, books, journals, and social media are also used to preach radical messages. Portrayals of suffering in the Muslim world, such as the tragedies in Iraq, Afghanistan, Palestine, among others, were also exploited in order to garner support.

At present the radical groups have chosen the virtual means, particularly Facebook and YouTube, to spread radical preaching as these are safer and the possibility of their getting tracked and caught by the law enforcers is lower. Moreover, a larger target can be reached using fewer resources, less time and less energy when these techniques of online radicalization are adopted by the mainstream radicals. Now the door-to-door propaganda is not the sole method for reaching and spreading narratives. The radicals are always updating their strategies and tactics as technologies tend to improve day by day. It is also believed that the propaganda of the radicals is at present more organized, and far more appealing to their targets, especially via the extensive use of the internet (social media platforms), along with the use of leaflets, bulletins, cellphones, personal communication, and distorted interpretations of Islam taught in mosques, etc. Loudspeakers of the mosques are also used to spread propaganda in certain parts of the country.
SECTION 4 : EDUCATION SYSTEM OF BANGLADESH

Education is a driving force for any country to flourish, prosper and address diverse issues in a society. The education system of Bangladesh is one of the diverse and complex education systems in the world. Basically, it is a combination of native culture and western education system. The present education system is divided into three major stages; primary, secondary and tertiary with three streams- General (Bangla medium, English version and English medium), Technical-Vocational and Madrassa Education system.

General Education Stream

The first level of education in Bangladesh is comprised of 5 years of formal schooling (class / grade I - V). Education, at this stage, usually begins at 6+ years of age up to 11 years. Primary education is generally provided by the government and non-government primary schools. Other types of institutions like kindergartens and junior sections attached to English medium schools are also imparting it. A public examination at the end of grade 5 has been introduced which is called P.S.C (Primary School Certificate).

The second level of education is comprised of 7 years of formal schooling. The first 3 years (grades VI-VIII) is referred to as junior secondary. After grade 8, another public examination has been introduced, namely J.S.C. (Junior School Certificate). The next 2 years (grades IX -X) is secondary while the last 2 years (grades XI - XII) is called higher secondary. In secondary education, there are three streams of courses, such as Humanities, Science and Business Education, which start from class IX, where the students are free to choose their course(s) of studies. This level of academic programme ends at the end of class X when students are to appear at a public examination called S.S.C. (Secondary School Certificate).

The third level of education is comprised of minimum 4 years of formal schooling. The minimum requirement for admission to higher education is the higher secondary certificate (H.S.C). Higher education is being offered in the universities and post HSC level colleges and institutes of diversified studies in professional, technical, technological and other special types of education. HSC holders are qualified to enroll in 4-year bachelors' degree honors courses in degree level colleges or in the universities. After successful completion of a pass/honors bachelors' degree course, one can enroll in the master's degree course. For those aspiring to take up M.Phil and Ph.D courses in selected disciplines or areas of specialization, the duration is of 2 years for M.Phil and 3-5 years for PhDs after completion of master's degree.

6 http://www.banbeis.gov.bd/es_bd.htm
The medium of general education is both in Bengali and English. The English medium of general education is commonly known as "Version" which follows the exact curricula of the Bengali medium. The curriculum and textbooks for the general education system are designed and maintained by National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) from primary to higher secondary level.

There is one distinctive area of general education system - cadet colleges. Cadet Colleges are important in the education system of Bangladesh. A cadet college is a special type of Military-run school-cum-college established to produce students capable of providing leadership in various walks of life. Military education is compulsory in Cadet Colleges.

Another form of general education is English Medium institutions in Bangladesh. English Medium schools are mainly private schools where all the courses are taught in English except one Bengali Language subject at Ordinary Level (O-Level). These schools in Bangladesh follow the General Certificate of Education (GCE) syllabus where students are prepared for taking their Ordinary Level (O-Level) and Advanced Level (A-Level) Examinations. The General Certificate of Education system is one of the most internationally recognized qualifications, based in the United Kingdom. The Ordinary and Advanced Level Examinations are English equivalent to the Secondary School Certificate (SSC) and Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) examinations respectively in Bangladesh. Currently there are two Boards operating from Bangladesh for Ordinary and Advanced Level Examinations, which are Edexcel and University of Cambridge International Examinations.7

- **Technical - Vocational Education Stream**
  Technical - Vocational education in Bangladesh is designed in three phases under two major levels of secondary and tertiary level of education. There is no technical-vocational institution at the primary level of education. Also, "Ebtedayee" in the first level (Primary level) of Madrassa education has no scope for technical-vocational education. Vocational courses start from secondary level. The certificate courses prepare skilled workers in different vocations starting from ninth grade after completion of three years of schooling in secondary school. At this level the courses are diversified in different vocations spread over 1 to 2 years duration. Diploma courses prepare diploma engineers at the polytechnic institutes. This course is

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spread over 4 years duration after passing the Secondary School Certification examination. There is a technical education board called Bangladesh Technical Education Board (BTEB), which grants affiliation to the technical institutes.\(^8\)

- **Madrassa Education**
  
  A peculiar feature of the Bangladeshi education sector is the large presence of Islamic institutions of religious learning, commonly known as madrassa. In Bangladesh, the religious education sector comprises of both state regulated madrassas as well as independent, private madrassas. The madrassa education system focuses on religious education, teaching all the basics of education in a religious environment. Islamic teachings are compulsory. Religious studies are taught in Arabic and the students also usually serve the related mosques. Students also study some or all of the courses from the general education system.

  There are mainly two types of madrassas – Aliya and Qawmi. Aliya madrassas offer primary to post-graduate level mixed education and are partly funded and supervised by the government. Qawmi madrasas offer pre-primary to post-graduate level Islamic education; they are privately funded and stand outside government control. In Aliya madrassas, modern general education is provided alongside Islamic education. These are most commonly private madrassas of which majority are registered madrassas that operate with state funding; these are regulated in terms of curriculum content and teacher recruitment policy under a unified state recognized Madrassa Education Board. On the other hand, an unknown number of private madrassas exists outside the state control. These are popularly known as "Qawmi" madrassas. There are five levels in the madrassa education system namely, Ebtedayee, Dakhil, Alim, Fazil and Kamil.

  The primary level of Madrassa is known as Ebtedayee education. This is equivalent to primary level of general education. The first level of madrassa education is comprised of 5 years of schooling from grades I - V. The secondary level of madrassa education named as Dakhil is comprised of 7 years of formal schooling. It takes five years in Dakhil stage (S.S.C. level) from grade VI - X while the last 2 years in Alim (higher secondary) stage. The tertiary level is comprised of 4 years of education. The minimum requirement for admission to higher level of madrassa education is the Alim (equivalent to HSC) certificates. Alim pass students are qualified to enroll in 2-year Fazil education.

  Also, there are a good number of girls' madrassa for girl students.

\(^8\) http://www.banbeis.gov.bd/es_bd.htm
**Management of Educational Institutions**

At the school level, in the case of non-government secondary schools, school management committees, and at the intermediate college level, in the case of non-government colleges, governing boards, formed as per government directives, are responsible for mobilizing resources, approving budgets, controlling expenditures, appointing and disciplining staff. While teachers of non-government secondary schools are recruited by school management committees concerned observing relevant government rules, teachers of government secondary schools are recruited centrally through a competitive examination. At the tertiary level, universities are regulated by the University Grants Commission. The colleges providing tertiary education are under the National University of Bangladesh. Each of the medical colleges is affiliated to a public university. Universities in Bangladesh are autonomous bodies administered by statutory bodies such as Syndicate, Senate, Academic Council, etc. in accordance with the provisions laid down in their respective Acts. A good number of private universities and private medical colleges have also enriched our education system. However, in these institutions students need to pay fees at a very high rate but there they are entitled to a lot of modern educational facilities.

**Challenges**

The educational institutions, barring a few honorable exceptions, have become virtual battle fields, in which political and other quarters backed by teachers and other staff, aided by political parties, often fight pitched battles for power and supremacy.

The achievement of a university is judged not on the basis of quality of its research or the competence of its teachers and students but by its adherence to the schedule of examinations and the prevention of closures. The functioning of government academic institutions gets paralyzed by the frequent strikes and violence on the campus leading to serious confrontations between different students’ fronts as well as with the authorities in which basic issues get blurred and merits of the decisions are buried.

These days the education system of Bangladesh is being influenced by various socio-economic, political and other external forces which are changing values of lives of the students and the teaching communities in particular and society at large. As the education system of Bangladesh is constrained by so many factors, discriminations do arise. From the perception survey also it can be seen that majority of the respondents (52%) think the present education system of Bangladesh is discriminatory.
Many of the participants (42%) have repeatedly stressed on the issue that, to some extent, diverse streams of education in Bangladesh contribute to the process of radicalization as well. For example, English medium education is costly and the cost of Private University is also quite high where only the urban, affluent and well off families’ children get access. As a result, a gap is generated among the students of different sections of the society. In addition, declining family values is also responsible for the rise of radicalization in Bangladesh.

It is important to develop an integrated approach including all kinds of education systems in Bangladesh. No discrimination should be allowed in the education system, as negative attitude to a particular stream of education leads to unfairness, inequity and injustice in the society.
There should be ‘unity in diversity’ in education system combining all, where there should be no place for discrimination. The uniform system should be supplemented by a stable political system. If we cannot change the violent political system we can never change the education system to counter the process of radicalization in Bangladesh.

It is imperative to build an inclusive social system. Our political system needs to be addressed at first; because our political system is not aligned with our society. It has been noticed that our education system has become politicized and polarized. Many of the experts have shared that teachers are also being biased by politics and religion in Bangladesh. From the perception survey, majority (80%) of the respondents have said that they think teachers and other persons related to education in Bangladesh are biased by politics and religion.

![Figure 9: Perception Survey Statistics on Bias of Teachers and Other Persons related to Education in Bangladesh](image)

Some experts on the education sector have shared that as a society we need to change our mindset as everyone does not need to be into higher education. Only people who are interested in teaching and research-oriented work need to go for higher education, and for the others the technical and vocational education needs to be available. At the same time, technical and vocational education has to be upgraded and promoted to a standard that can compete with other streams of education and have equal value attached to its certificates.

In addition, our family values need to be in right place. Parents need to give proper and quality time to the children and then teachers need to be responsible to give the right moral education to the children. Ethics and morality should be a core component in our education system.

Though it seems still very difficult to overhaul the entire education system, it is obvious that a reform is needed to make education a strong weapon against radicalization and extremism.
SECTION 5 : AN OVERVIEW OF THE NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY, 2010

The government of Bangladesh took an initiative to prepare an Education Policy in 2010 to adjust with the need of the modern times for building the future generation efficient in knowledge and technology and inspired with moral values, national tradition and the spirit of the Liberation War. The first Education Commission was constituted in 1972 to prepare an Education Policy under the leadership of Dr. Qudrat-e-Khuda. Finally, in 2010, the Ministry of Education formulated the National Education Policy, 2010 (NEP, 2010). An important aspect of this Education Policy is that it emphasizes on religion, science and technical education.

The distinctive features of this education policy are as follows:

- The policy seeks to bring all students of the country, irrespective of their religions, genders, and physical limitations, socio-economic and geographic locations under one system.
- One-year pre-primary education for children over five years of age will be introduced.
- Compulsory primary education extended up to class-VIII from class-V and secondary education to class-XII with uniform curriculum and syllabus will be followed in general, madrassa and vocational levels.
- The policy is non-communal but there will be compulsory subjects on religion and ethics for students up to class-VIII. The policy dropped the word "secular" from its draft to make it acceptable to all segments of the society.
- Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and Bangladesh Studies have been introduced at the primary and secondary levels.
- The compulsory subjects are Bangla, English, Mathematics, Bangladesh Studies, Paribesh Parichiti (education on social environment and climatic change), Information Technology and Science.
- The policy says technical education institutions would be established in every upazilla and the number of educational institutions on polytechnic, textile and leather will be increased.
- Teachers will be given more facilities alongside more and modern training, the policy said. It said steps would be taken to frame an integrated education law and form a permanent education commission.
- Every school will have a mandatory library equipped with necessary books.
- More scholarships for the poor will be given.
- More training for teachers and promotion will be contingent upon experience and training.  

Some other distinguishing features of the policy are the following:
- On Madrassa education, it said the students of primary and secondary level must study uniform curriculum and syllabus of general education (NEP, 2010)
- According to the NEP, religious and moral education needs to be introduced to put emphasis on moral aspects; along with fundamental teachings of every religion. NEP also mentioned that religious education would not limit itself only to religious customs and rituals, rather it would seek to build up the moral character of the students.
- NEP also stated that indigenous people and other communities who observe different religious faiths, other than the four major religions, would have opportunities to learn about their own religions and concerned values.
- According to the NEP, measures will be taken to ensure the availability of teachers from ethnic groups and to prepare texts in their own languages so that ethnic children can learn their own indigenous languages. In these initiatives, especially in preparing textbooks, the inclusion of respective indigenous communities will be ensured.  

In the National Education Policy, 2010, the government of Bangladesh has taken few steps to address and combat the spread of radicalization like planning to introduce religious and moral education; introducing the idea of integration of different streams by creating a uniform curricula and syllabus for some specific subjects at the primary and secondary level; updating the curricula of Madrassa education by giving importance to the subjects such as, English, Science, Mathematics, Bangladesh Studies, Information Technology and Vocational Education in the syllabus and curriculum of Ebtedaye and Dakhil levels so that the madrassa students get equal opportunities and find them competent for the demand and needs of the national and international job market and by introducing a positive and progressive image of women in the curriculum of the primary level, which may help bring up a change in the social behaviour and mindset of all students.

10 National Education Policy, 2010.
Though NEP 2010 addressed some core issues there is a lack of reflection of those issues in the curriculum and text books. The Islam and Moral Education text book is not sufficient to show the right direction for students. Text books have not fully incorporated the sections of NEP 2010. Though religious education has been changed and some additional chapters have been added focusing on extremism and Jihad, the teaching and learning process has not improved. The syllabus is long but the outcome is dissatisfaction. The system is not generating quality education. The policy also does not sufficiently address social problems like extremism, radicalization, and terrorism. It is essential to include elaborate sections on these issues immediately, so that the students can be aware of these issues. NEP should include separate chapters on radicalization and extremism to make students aware and give them proper understanding of the issues, which, in turn, will educate our country as well as our future generations.

From the perception survey it is found that, 34 % of the respondents have no idea about the NEP 2010, 32% think the education policy is secular, 23% think it is scientific, whereas 9% consider that this education policy has religious bias.

![Figure 10: Perception Survey Statistics on Opinion about the National Education Policy, 2010 of Bangladesh](image)

According to the perception survey, a good percentage of respondents have said that the National Education Policy, 2010 and also the present text books/syllabi/curricula do not address (20% regarding NEP and 36% regarding present curricula/syllabi/text books) the issues relating to radicalization.
Lastly, 36% of the survey respondents think that the NEP 2010 is not adequate to face the challenges of radicalization in Bangladesh.
In recent years, the role of education in countering radicalization has gained prominence among policymakers and practitioners. Tackling violent extremism through education is reflective of a broader international shift toward terrorism prevention and the need to identify the enabling environment for extremists to disseminate their ideologies and recruit supporters.

Even from the perception survey it has been observed that an overwhelming section of the respondents (76%) consider "Education" as one of the important means to face the challenges of radicalization and extremism in Bangladesh.

From the different discussion sessions, three broad themes were identified and underscored by the representatives of the education sector. These are: people, programmes, and policies. In building community resilience against radicalization, participants stressed the importance of utilizing existing networks, resources and programmes, which could be further strengthened by informed, well-designed, and inclusive policies.

According to the perception survey, the effective ways for the education sector of Bangladesh to intervene in countering radical narratives are as follows:

- Removing social discrimination among the students by attaching equal value to all streams of education (47%);
- Increasing resilience of students/ groups vulnerable to radicalization by providing knowledge on religious tolerance, ethnic tolerance, building interfaith harmony (37%);
Reducing involvement in illegal political activity by organizing diversionary/extra curricular activities for young people at different levels of education (37%);

Encouraging teacher’s involvement and initiative to discuss these issues from both global and national perspectives (33%);

Reducing involvement in illegal political activity by organizing diversionary/extra curricular activities for young people at different levels of education (29%) can also be means to counter radical narratives and messages.

In your opinion, which is the most effective way for the education sector to intervene in countering extremist/radical narratives and messages? (%)

Policy

It was broadly recognized that undertaking counter radicalization programmes through education would require support at the local and national political levels, and that policies play a strong role in creating a balanced framework for engagement on these issues.

*Generating support for education on radicalization*

Ensuring the support of policymakers for education on radicalization was deemed critical for success in Bangladesh. Communities and civil society actors might take the lead in
developing projects and raising funds, but they still require some policy support to ensure the sustainability of programming and, for example, their integration into broader educational systems.

- **Developing targeted and evidence-based education policy**

Radicalization is an intricate problem that requires multifaceted solutions, of which education could be one tool in the toolbox. While some educational concepts are universal and transferable, it is crucial that policies are targeted, context-specific, and based on detailed research rather than assumptions. In fact, participants noted that while religious schools are often blamed for generating religious radicalization, poorly resourced or managed public school systems are more likely to create an enabling environment for radicalization and violent extremism.

- **Creating inclusive, well-designed policy**

Participants agreed that approaches to countering radicalization in education should be need-based and the development of curricula, policies, and procedures should be based on the interests of youths rather than the priorities of policymakers or practitioners. It was pointed out that including youth in the development of curriculum design may increase its effectiveness because it is based on beneficiary views, and not simply adults' perceptions of what youth want/need. Thus, policy support for student-led or student-designed curricula may not only increase the quality of students' education, but also create a sense of investment in their future that could help build resilience against radicalization and extremism.

Survey respondents also highly considered (51%) introducing the issues related to radicalization and extremism into the education policy and curricula and 44% of them think that, these issues need to be included from secondary level education that will help in countering the threat of radicalization in Bangladesh.

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**Figure 16: Perception Survey Statistics on Importance of Inclusion of Issues Related to Radicalization in NEP and curricula**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>29%</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9%</td>
<td>Partially</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11%</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51%</td>
<td>Not sure</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Do you think inclusion of the issues related to radicalization/ extremism in education policy and curricula will help in countering radicalization in Bangladesh? (%)
Creating a fair and transparent recruiting and admission process

Recruiting process for teachers in schools, colleges, and universities need to be transparent, fair and merit-based. Political appointment, lobbying will only harm the quality of the institution and in turn we will have under-qualified teachers and harm the total standard of the institution. On the other hand, the admission process of the students also needs to be equally transparent, fair and merit-based. When students are not admitted on the basis of their merit it would create a huge crisis for both students and the nation. If anyone gets into any institution through the back door we might push the brightest student behind and in turn losing the best possible minds from the education sector of the country.

Programmes

A great deal of importance was attached by the discussants in creating proper and appropriate programmes through which counter-radicalization issues may be raised within an education framework.

Encouraging diverse interests

Experts stressed the importance of a well-rounded educational experience that encourages creative thinking and curiosity for a diverse range of interests. This type of learning, according to the participants, increases exposure to diversity, critical thinking, and collaboration. Educational institutions, particularly universities, represent a battleground of ideas where many different ideologies, opinions, and viewpoints are shared and debated. Curricula and school programmes that promote this type of healthy exchange of ideas could encourage students to broaden their horizons, think critically, and become more self-aware.

However, some participants cautioned that this kind of open environment could also risk allowing radical ideologies to flourish. To balance this, it was suggested that schools
could enhance their curricula by engaging with youth outside the classroom. For example, sports, art, drama, theatre, clubs, debate teams, and other after-school programmes, specifically designed for a particular subset of vulnerable youth, could help them develop positive interests and promote a sense of self-worth and self-confidence.

- **Raising awareness about radicalization and education, and vice versa**

  In order to correct misunderstandings about the concept of radicalization and counter radicalization and distinguish it from "hard" counterterrorism measures, it is necessary to create awareness-raising campaigns that could explain the purpose of countering radicalization and how it relates to broader educational goals, and explore how educational institutions and all other relevant education actors could play a role in its practice. However, participants also cautioned that teachers who do not have the proper support or tools to address this issue could actually cause more harm than good. Therefore, it was suggested that these lessons should be integrated into the existing curricula in an intelligible and easily digestible way where it is addressed as one of the many risky behaviors or dangers affecting youth.

- **Inspiring civic responsibility**

  Academic practitioners and policymakers both agreed widely that including a civic education and citizenship responsibility component in curricula could equip students with the social and communication skills necessary to address their grievances in a positive, non-violent way. Civic responsibility and citizenship may also build a shared sense of culture within a society that consists of a diverse mix of ethnic, religious, and cultural backgrounds.

- **Promoting cultural initiatives**

  Participants agreed that cultural learning was crucial for youths as it enhances their self-awareness and identity, while also opening their minds to different customs, practices, and traditions, and promotes comparative analysis. Participants suggested that another possible counter radicalization intervention that promotes cultural learning would be to provide translations of critical texts, popular novels, and storybooks in students' mother tongue. For conservative schools, allowing students access to translated religious texts would help deepen the understanding of their religion and empower them to challenge extremist narratives that use religious rhetoric to justify violence.

  Schools could also support local and national cultural heritage programmes, such as plays, arts, and cultural shows which could help students challenge preexisting notions and develop their imaginative and strategic capacities. Some participants suggested that one way of doing this could include providing space for interaction between students and prominent local artists, writers, and musicians, for example, and encourage youths to become involved in cultural activities both inside and outside the classroom. In addition, film and cultural festivals can help bridge gaps between different communities through
shared experiences and cross-cultural dialogue. It is important to note that these cultural exchanges alone, however, may not prevent radicalization, but they do have the possibility of building future resilience against radicalization and violent extremism in areas where deep cultural divides and polarizing rhetoric have historically increased tension and promoted violent extremism. Through these different activities, youths could realize their potential and not be confined to a single identity, such as their religion or ethnic background.

People

There was widespread agreement among the respondents and participants that effective counter radicalization strategy through education is not only about the content of the curriculum and policy but also about fostering relationships between people and their communities in order to ensure a safe, collaborative, and constructive environment. The most significant actors included: teachers, families, students, and local community leaders. The engagement of these actors was deemed essential to ensuring the sustainability of the counter radicalization efforts.

- **Building effective partnerships**

Participants agreed that building effective partnerships between the education sector and the greater community might help to develop opportunities for people to engage in positive activities in their communities, and might create a sense of shared responsibility for their safety and development. Building effective partnerships was seen as important in developing resilience to the divisive narratives expounded by extremist groups. Within the primary and secondary school systems, building effective partnerships also means educating and supporting practitioners inside the educational establishments in addressing issues such as faith, culture, and radical political thought. Religious and cultural community leaders, law enforcement officers, and experts have a vital role in providing necessary support for the education system where they are able.

Educational institutions can play a role in facilitating community dialogue and strengthening the relationship between institutions and their communities. It was emphasized that involving families and the broader community in the education system is crucial. Educational institutions, with support from the private sector, could also utilize their space after school hours to reach out to students’ families and communities through continuing education programmes or activities. The experience of practitioners in several regions indicated that bringing families and communities into the school environment could serve to create common goals and increase support for education overall.

- **Giving importance to family education**

There should be proper guidance from the families as family is the first educational institution for each and everyone. Family has a huge role to play in shaping the young minds in right and accurate manner. Nowadays, guardians/parents are not giving
enough and quality time to their children to instill the very important teachings of life. So we need to understand the importance of family education and act on it acutely. The significance of family education is irreversible.

Finally, according to the perception survey, the key steps that can be taken to make education policy and system more effective in countering radicalization in Bangladesh are as follows:

- Introducing "Moral Education" as a new subject (52%);
- Introducing new chapter and contents in textbooks on terrorism, religious tolerance, ethnic tolerance, and building interfaith harmony (43%);
- Introducing counselling cell in every educational institution (41%);
- Introducing separate sections on radicalization, extremism, ethnic and religious tolerance in NEP (39%);
- Proper monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the Education Policy (34%);
- Facilitating dialogue, discussion forums, campaigns on education policy and system (34%);
- Introducing unified education system up to class VII (24%).
SECTION 7 : CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

From an early age children should be taught to respect, understand and accept people of different beliefs. People fear diversity simply because they are accustomed to the way things used to be and change makes them uncomfortable. Others may somehow feel being in jeopardy because they perceive increased participation by traditionally underrepresented groups in the workplace and the political process as a challenge to their own power. If left unaddressed, these fears can lead to resentment and intolerance. However, these fears can often be countered through education.

Education is the finest way that can refine behaviours and norms in a society. Refurbishing the education system as well as education policy should be done to reduce tensions in the society. All activities and plans should be thought through so that these can contribute to reducing tensions between various groups in the country. Education needs to be managed with genuine and honest intention to establish the idea of equal access to education and learning for all. Time has come to take effective measures in countering radicalization and extremism through education in Bangladesh.

Some key recommendations from primary responses also include:

- Revise the national education policy 2010, to incorporate the issues of radicalization, extremism, religious and ethnic intolerance;
- Incorporate these issues from primary level to higher level as per student’s needs;
- Beside policy making, attention should be paid to policy implementation and policy monitoring;
- An accurate and stern monitoring and evaluation system of education policy is essential;
- Need to bring all Madrassa, specially Qawmi Madrassas, English medium schools as well as all traditional educational institutions under state control and supervision;
- Education Policy should be built on unification rather than division. Policy should be inclusive incorporating all cultures and identities together.
- It is urgently needed to carefully scrutinize the syllabus contents and the textbooks at all levels to ensure that the textbooks encourage closer inter-faith and inter-cultural understanding;
- Encourage students, teachers to bear true respect and understanding for all faiths and cultures;
- Emphasis on moral education;
The University Authority may initiate some common/inter-disciplinary courses for all faculties in order to build their knowledge on state-building, nation-building, good governance, good citizenship, and on other social issues;

Disassociation of teachers and students' politics from the politics of national political parties;

Students and teachers' politics should be concerned with various aspects of education only;

Start more vocational schools around the country. Include madrassa students into various vocational courses or start vocational course in the madrassas;

Introduce counselling cells in every institution;

Promote debate, discussion and free-thinking in the society;

Extra-curriculum activities like sports and cultural programmes may help generate social and cultural values among students that may play a big role to combat radicalization and extremism;

The education sector needs to be above political influence and the system needs to be transparent and accountable.

It is obvious that the role of education in countering radicalization is immense and critical. Bangladesh, as a Muslim-majority country, where radicalization is a growing problem, requires urgent attention to face these challenges through education. It is also extremely important that the Government of Bangladesh recognizes the indispensable role the education sector could play with regard to countering radicalization and takes steps to develop a national counter radicalization policy to create a safe, secure and stable Bangladesh.