Tracing Causal Processes and Examining ADB’s Contribution
Tracing Causal Processes and Examining the Asian Development Bank’s Contribution

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### Abbreviations

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<tr>
<td>ADB</td>
<td>Asian Development Bank</td>
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<td>BEDU</td>
<td>Bangladesh Examination Development Unit</td>
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<td>BISE</td>
<td>board of intermediate and secondary education</td>
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<td>BNP</td>
<td>Bangladesh National Party</td>
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<td>DSHE</td>
<td>Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education</td>
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<td>ESDSC</td>
<td>Education Sector Development Support Credit</td>
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<td>HSEP</td>
<td>Higher Secondary Education Project</td>
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<td>MOE</td>
<td>Ministry of Education</td>
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<td>NCCC</td>
<td>National Curriculum Coordination Committee</td>
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<td>NCTB</td>
<td>National Curriculum and Textbook Board</td>
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<td>NEP</td>
<td>National Education Policy</td>
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<td>NTRCA</td>
<td>Non-Government Teachers’ Registration and Certification Authority</td>
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<td>SBA</td>
<td>school-based assessment</td>
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<td>SEDP</td>
<td>Secondary Education Development Project</td>
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<td>SESDP</td>
<td>Secondary Education Sector Development Project</td>
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<td>SESIP</td>
<td>Secondary Education Sector Improvement Project*</td>
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<td>SEQAEP</td>
<td>Secondary Education Quality and Access Enhancement Project</td>
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<td>SSC</td>
<td>Secondary School Certificate</td>
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<td>TA</td>
<td>technical assistance</td>
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<td>TQISEP</td>
<td>Teaching Quality Improvement in Secondary Education Project</td>
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<td>TTC</td>
<td>teacher training college</td>
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* Not to be confused with the Secondary Education Sector Investment Program.
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Acknowledgments

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This study was originally set up to include rigorous statistical analysis of a large data set from the Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics with the aim of evaluating the effects of the use of stipends in Bangladesh, as also supported by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the World Bank. However, the data set proved ultimately unsuitable for this purpose. What remained of the evaluation was rigorous qualitative research as to the impact of 20 years of ADB- and World Bank-supported education reform and capacity development. Recently, there has been interest within the impact evaluation field in evaluating the impact of interventions targeting only one or a small number of units (so-called "small n" interventions) through rigorous qualitative research. This part of the evaluation was expertly conducted largely by the consultant researchers named below, and the present report is to a great extent the product of their approach and work:

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Executive Summary

Substantial progress has been made in secondary education in Bangladesh, particularly in terms of access and equity. Gross enrollment in secondary education (grades 6–10) rose from 46% in 2005 to 61% in 2011. Gender parity in enrollment has been achieved up to grade 10, and pass rates for the Secondary School Certificate (awarded upon completion of grade 10) have improved significantly, from 53% in 2005 to 82% in 2011. Despite these improvements, issues of low quality—particularly pertaining to the curriculum, student assessment, and teacher performance—remain as challenges to the education system. Domestic stakeholders and international donors have identified the following specific issues:

(i) students’ low learning levels and inadequate acquisition of noncognitive skills,
(ii) inequitable learning opportunities due to great variation in quality between schools,
(iii) a weak public examination system that reinforces rote learning, and
(iv) low teacher motivation and weak teacher development systems.

These issues pertain to public policy reform. The government has undertaken a number of policy reform initiatives in recent years to improve the quality of secondary education. These include revising the curriculum to make it more relevant to 21st century workplace skills, improving public examinations to support the development of students’ higher-order cognitive skills, and establishing a centralized and transparent teacher recruitment system.

A number of development projects have been implemented in the past 2 decades to support Bangladesh’s Ministry of Education. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) and World Bank have supported large development projects and have been the main development partners in secondary education. Between 1993 and 2013, ADB supported six projects that included work on developing curriculums, privatizing secondary textbooks, reforming student assessment and public examinations, strengthening in- and pre-service teacher training, and decentralizing education management. The World Bank also supported three support credits and a subsequent project related to improving the quality of secondary education.

Objective and Methodology

The purpose of this study was to explore policy reform within secondary education in Bangladesh from 1993 to 2013 while understanding the role of key factors—including development partners—in contributing to the process of policy change intended to improve education quality. The study focused on three areas within the formal education system: quality of curriculum, quality of student assessment, and quality of teaching. Given the significant financial and technical support by ADB, a key focus was to assess the contribution of this support to the policy reform process relative to other factors and to understand the extent to which development partners have helped bring about changes related to policy formulation and implementation.

Causal process tracing, a qualitative research methodology in the social sciences, was used to understand the genesis and trajectory of major policy reform initiatives across
six case studies. Process tracing involves identifying causal factors affecting change and plausible causal mechanisms (or processes of change) to explain outcomes. Process tracing identifies causal mechanisms that explain how and why policy change did or did not occur. Insights gained from this exercise can be used to inform future reform efforts. While drawing from the evidence presented in these case studies, along with theoretical assumptions about processes of policy change, hypothesized causal mechanisms were developed to explain policy reform in each case.

Case Studies of Policy Reform

Within each core area of interest (curriculum, student assessment, and teaching), two case studies were developed, detailing the major reform initiatives supported by ADB and other development partners that were attempted during 1993–2013.

Case study 1: Implementation of curriculum reform

Over the past 20 years, the government has made three attempts at curriculum reform in secondary education with support from ADB: (i) curriculum revision during 1993–1995, (ii) development of a uni-track curriculum during 1999–2006, and (iii) development of a new multi-track curriculum during 2006–2013. The uni-track curriculum policy reform was adopted and developed with financial and technical support from ADB. Under the adopted policy, all students would follow the same core curriculum until grade 10, at which time they would choose either science, humanities, or business studies as an educational track to pursue. (Prior to this reform, students had to select an educational track after grade 8.) The reform was postponed and ultimately abandoned however, in response to strong public opposition that science subjects would be diluted and greater emphasis would be placed on religious studies. The new government elected in 2008 undertook to revise the curriculum while maintaining the existing multi-track framework. The uni-track curriculum was abandoned, and a new cycle of revision led to adoption and implementation of the National Curriculum 2012. Thus, while ADB was the only development partner involved in this effort and provided significant support, the intended outcome of a uni-track curriculum was realized only to a small degree. That was due in large part to the domestic political agenda.

Case study 2: Textbook privatization reform

Secondary school textbook privatization was adopted by the government and partially implemented with financial and technical support from ADB and the World Bank in order to create a competitive market and lead to better quality textbooks. The National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB), however, continued to publish its own textbooks alongside those of private publishers. Textbook publishing is a lucrative component of NCTB’s activities, with employees receiving honorariums or salary top-ups for this work. The consequence of this partial privatization was reportedly twofold: (i) for the most part, schools, guardians, and students continued to select and purchase NCTB textbooks, believing that these books would better prepare students for national examinations; and (ii) as a result, private publishers lost interest in textbook sales, which were found to be not as profitable as expected. The Awami League government elected in 2008 took textbook publishing fully back into NCTB. Although the contribution of interventions supported by ADB (working in concert with the World Bank) made an important contribution to the process of policy change, the intended outcome of textbook privatization was realized only in part. Weak government ownership of the policy reform led first to its partial implementation, with textbooks still being produced by the governments rather than fully privatized, and then to its
abandonment in favor of the new government's preferred policy of free textbook provision.

Case study 3: Creative questions method in national examinations

Reforms to public examinations were initiated with financial and technical support from ADB. Public examinations had tested students’ ability to recall information and contributed to the widespread practice of rote memorization across secondary education. The implementation of a structured method (later named as creative questions) was focused on developing higher-order thinking skills. The reform was initially stalled in 2005 during the lead up to national elections, largely in response to public opposition spurred by concerns that teachers lacked sufficient training to implement the new method and the chance of student success on high-stakes public examinations would be lowered. The uptake of the creative questions method was facilitated in 2008 by support of influential opinion leaders. The government is pursuing the phased implementation of creative questions in all national examinations by 2015. The intended outcome of this particular reform is thus being realized gradually. While ADB’s contribution can be seen as important, the role of domestic policy champions was instrumental in shifting the negative public discourse around creative questions and facilitating implementation of the reform.

Case study 4: School-based assessment

School-based assessment (SBA) reforms involve introducing continuous assessment in the teaching–learning process. SBA reforms were initiated with financial and technical support from ADB. The implementation of SBA as part of the high-stakes Secondary School Certificate examination was stalled in response to public opposition. Parents, students, and teachers were concerned that what was termed the “subjective” nature of SBA would lead to bias in marking procedures (e.g., teachers would favor some students over others and parents would bribe teachers for higher marks). In response, the decision was made to include SBA in the lower-stakes Junior Secondary Certificate examination, which students take after completing grade 8. However, an official government order was still not issued at the time of study, thereby making it uncertain whether or not SBA reforms would be implemented. While ADB-supported interventions made an important contribution, the intended outcome of this policy reform has not yet been realized due to concerns voiced by domestic stakeholders and negative public perceptions of the proposed reform.

Case study 5: A registration and certification body for teachers

The Non-Government Teachers’ Registration and Certification Authority (NTRCA) was established to reform the teacher recruitment process at nongovernment secondary schools, which accounted for 97% of all Bangladesh’s secondary schools. NTRCA was established in 2005 with financial and technical support from ADB and the World Bank. NTRCA conducts examinations that prospective teachers must pass in order to be hired to teach in nongovernmental schools. Since 2005, NTRCA has conducted 10 rounds of examinations but, for reasons that are unclear, has not yet established a teacher certification process. ADB and the World Bank made important contributions to this policy reform process, although the intended outcome of the NTRCA functioning as both a registration and certification body has yet to be fully realized.

Case study 6: Teacher training reforms

Teacher training reforms have been conducted with the financial and technical support of various projects. ADB in particular supported the largest and most comprehensive
teacher training project in Bangladesh’s secondary education sector. Since costs associated with training programs are immense, financial support provided by development partners has been critical. In terms of training being implemented, these reforms have tended to be realized in full. Evidence suggests that ADB-supported interventions have made crucial contributions to teacher training reform initiatives.

Key Conclusions
Political and financial support were both necessary to initiate policy reform, but political support was not always sustained through to implementation. The causal explanation concerning the presence of both political and financial support to initiate the policy reform process is supported by all case study evidence. Where the role of government support becomes more decisive is when a change from one reform initiative to another coincides with a change of government. Whereas donor agencies appeared to have more bargaining and decision-making power during the earlier stages of policy formulation, later decisions were largely driven by the domestic political sphere and less attention was given to earlier agreements made with donors during policy formulation.

Proposed reforms had been on the domestic political agenda prior to donor involvement but political support was insufficient to initiate the reform process without financial support. Several of the reforms discussed in this study had been on the domestic policy agenda in Bangladesh for many decades, long before any donor involvement. Bangladesh’s first Education Commission Report in the early 1970s had called for reforms to textbook privatization, public examinations, teacher training, and school-based assessment. However, the financial support to initiate these reforms was largely absent until the 1990s, when donor agencies started to support efforts to improve access and quality in the secondary education subsector. This suggests that political support is not always sufficient to initiate the reform process while financial support, in these cases, is needed from development partners, such as ADB and the World Bank.

Domestic technical and managerial capacities were necessary to initiate the reforms, but these were not sufficient to sustain the reforms to implementation. Nearly all reform initiatives included components aimed to strengthen technical and managerial capacity and, as a result, improvements have occurred. Capacity building efforts focused largely on providing newly recruited mid-level project managers with international training and technical skills development to enable them to effectively design and facilitate reforms. Most of these individuals did not have the decision-making power or political resources ultimately needed to implement and sustain the reform process. Furthermore, there was high staff turnover at this level of management which negatively affected continuity and sustainability in the overall reform process.

Education reform was closely associated with political shifts. Changes in the political context are characterized by realignment of policy elites and their respective ideals, values, and shared histories. The bureaucratic arena either facilitates or impedes the policy reform process which is essentially defined by political context. For example, the Bangladesh National Party has continued to promote the policy of having 10 years of a common educational system for all (from grades 1–10), which aligned with education policy reform initiatives related to uni-track education. Meanwhile, the Awami League had promoted the policy of having 8 years of a common, unified education system (grades 1–8) before choosing a specific educational stream. The difference in ideals
becomes apparent during political shifts from one government to another, and this can drastically change the trajectory of the policy reform process.

The public arena tended to impede the policy reform process. Policy champions were crucial in helping to reshape public perceptions of reforms. Development partners need to support these champions where they can. The claim that the public arena influences the policy reform process is supported strongly by the evidence from three out of six case studies. Students and parents had a strong public reaction to reforms that would have a direct and visible impact on students, potentially affecting students’ course options, grades, and even career paths. Although the Secondary School Certificate public examination reform faced widespread public resistance, it was eventually implemented and institutionalized. That outcome was due in large part to the support of policy champions who helped to reshape public perceptions of the reform. The causal explanation that strengthening public support is needed to sustain reforms that have direct and visible impact on large numbers of individuals has a relatively high degree of certainty and uniqueness.

Government and development partner efforts to influence public understanding of the proposed reforms through public messaging and campaigning were limited. Although the groundwork for many reforms was laid in the late 1990s, the public reactions to the proposed reforms—when they occurred—took place from 2004 onwards. By that time social media had arisen and the effects of the proposed reforms had begun to become more visible and apparent to those who would be affected by them. There were few government or donor efforts to influence public understanding of the proposed reforms through public messaging and campaigning. The rationale and specifics of the reforms were sometimes misrepresented and misunderstood in the public domain. The government appeared largely unprepared to target large numbers of individuals and public debate. The magnitude of that debate may have been unanticipated inasmuch as the rise of social media in the mid-2000s was giving voice to the general public (especially youth) and driving public opposition.

Overall, support provided by ADB has been necessary to initiate policy reforms in secondary education, but it has not always been sufficient in sustaining reforms up to and through implementation. Policy reform success has been more limited than success in investment programs. A number of conclusions can be drawn from the preceding discussion concerning the role of ADB in supporting policy reform in secondary education in Bangladesh. First, this role is fundamentally relational and must be assessed relative to the resources deployed by the government and by other development partners, especially the World Bank. Second, given the interactive nature of policy change, whereby reform occurs as a complex process shaped by a multitude of interacting forces and actors, the limits to ADB’s influence must be recognized.

In several of the case studies explored, ADB was the most active development partner involved in supporting policy reforms, and thus it has been influential in defining the reform agenda. Although the support provided by ADB—both financial and technical—has been necessary to initiate and support policy reforms in the secondary education, however, it has been insufficient in and of itself to sustain them. Factors outside ADB’s direct influence, such as public opposition, the championing of opinion leaders, or unfavorable bureaucratic interests, have often been central to policy reform processes.
Recommendations

(i) Future feasibility studies of policy change, whether related to secondary education or in other sectors, need to be designed with specific attention to mapping the policy space; investigating all relevant policy changes, key actors, and forces for change; and locating donor actions and influence within the internal context of the member country.

(ii) The role of policy elites should be monitored and documented as part of policy reform planning, including to assess those elites’ interests, alignment with project goals, and relationships with others.

(iii) In the initial stages of policy planning, sufficient attention should be given to public consultations, formulating public messaging, and securing the support of policy champions.

(iv) Capacity for policy analysis in education should be built up with support upfront from ADB while actively involving research institutions and policy elites.

(v) As far as possible, ADB should synchronize its policy proposals with election of new governments and take advantage of windows of opportunity.
CHAPTER 1

Introduction

1. This paper examines the extent to which policy reform initiatives relating to the quality of the curriculum, student assessment, and teaching in Bangladesh’s secondary education (grades 6–10) were realized from the early 1990s to the present and identifies plausible causal factors that shaped the corresponding policy reform outcomes. Given the significant financial and technical support Asian Development Bank (ADB) has provided to Bangladesh’s secondary education, a key focus of the study is to assess the relative contribution of the ADB to the policy reform process vis-à-vis other factors.

2. Four core questions guide this study:
   (i) What were the major reform initiatives in curriculum development, student assessment, and teaching in secondary education in Bangladesh from 1993 to 2013?
   (ii) How were these policy reform initiatives developed and how did they progress (why, by whom, and driven by which factors)?
   (iii) To what extent were these initiatives implemented (partially, fully, or not at all)?
   (iv) How did development partners (particularly ADB) support the reform process?

3. The paper uses a particular methodology called causal process tracing to investigate these questions and understand how independent variables—including financial, technical, and political—contributed to policy reform initiatives. The study objectives are to short-list causal explanations for policy reform initiatives in the case study areas; rule out alternative, competing explanations that are incompatible with the evidence; and estimate the level of influence of each explanation in bringing about policy reform.¹ Appendix 1 provides a list of key documents reviewed. Appendix 2 lists the interviewees from the face-to-face key informant interviews. Appendix 3 details the study’s theoretical model of policy change and approach to core concepts. Lastly, Appendix 4 outlines the evaluation methodology, namely the study’s approach to causal process tracing.²

4. Section A below provides an overview of the secondary education context in Bangladesh, including fundamental educational issues of concern and government strategies aimed at addressing them. The next section (B) provides an overview of policy dialogue and formulation processes, and development partner support to secondary education is detailed in Section C. In Chapter 2, the main steps of process tracing are executed with the help of case studies. Chapter 3 assesses these hypothesized causal mechanisms against the case-study evidence in order to identify

the causal factors most instrumental in determining the realization of the outcomes. Chapter 4 summarizes findings in relation to the process tracing tests performed and identifies implications and recommendations.

A. Bangladesh’s Secondary Education Context and Government Reforms

5. In the early 1990s, the start of the review period, the secondary education system in Bangladesh faced significant challenges, as the curriculum had last been updated in 1977 and textbooks developed in 1983. Secondary education had little relevance to the demands of the labor market. Moreover, low numbers of students were transitioning from primary to secondary education and among those who did many dropped out (as evidenced by cohort survival rates from grades 6–10 of 40% and from grades 1–12 of 4%). On issues of access and equity, substantial progress has been made. Gross enrollment in secondary education (grades 6–10) rose to 46% in 2005 and to 61% in 2011. Gender parity in enrollment has been achieved up to grade 10, and pass rates for the Secondary School Certificate (awarded upon completion of grade 10) improved significantly in the late 2000s (from 53% in 2005 to 82% in 2011).

6. Despite these improvements, issues of low quality of curriculums, student assessments, and teacher performance remained central challenges to the secondary education system. Indeed, the Campaign for Popular Education, one of the prominent civil society groups documenting educational challenges in Bangladesh and pushing for reform, notes that the rapid expansion of the system (in the number of schools, teachers, and students) aggravated quality issues. The Campaign for Popular Education’s 2005 Education Watch report on secondary education traces issues of quality to “well-known causes,” including “deficiencies in teachers’ skills and capability, inadequate facilities and learning materials, poor enforcement of rules and criteria for approval of government subvention, inadequate low per student expenditure, and poor governance and management of schools.” Thus, while issues of educational expansion preoccupied domestic and international stakeholders in the early 1990s, issues of quality are now predominantly in focus.

7. Donor reports have echoed similar concerns. In 2002, ADB highlighted the limited quality of secondary education and attributed it mainly to poor teaching. A recent sector review by the World Bank identifies education quality issues as follows: (i) low learning levels, (ii) inadequate acquisition of noncognitive skills, (iii) inequitable learning opportunities, (iv) high disparities in quality between schools, (v) a weak public examination system, (vi) extensive private tuition exacerbating social inequalities, (vii)...

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6 A study on educational expansion in Bangladesh argues that the process was primarily politically driven, with the major political parties using education to stamp their own brand of nationhood and identity on the population. The authors suggest the politically driven causes of successful expansion are inseparable from persistent problems of low quality (see N. Hossain, R. Subrahmanian, and N. Kabeer. 2002. The Politics of Educational Expansion in Bangladesh. IDS Working Paper Series. No. 167. Brighton, UK: Institute of Development Studies).
low teacher motivation, (viii) low teacher time on task, and (ix) weak teacher development systems. Most of the quality issues are within the purview of public policy. The government, with international donor support, has undertaken ambitious initiatives in recent years, such as revising the curriculum to include skills needed for the 21st century workplace, improving public examinations to reduce rote learning, and establishing a merit-based teacher recruitment system.

1. **Educational Structure**

8. The education system consists of 5 years of compulsory primary education and 7 years of secondary education subdivided into three levels of secondary education: junior secondary (grades 6–8), secondary (grades 9–10), and higher secondary education (grades 11–12). Intermediate colleges, degree colleges, and some higher secondary schools offer grades 11 and 12. Secondary education in Bangladesh is a multi-stream, multi-track system. There are three streams or types of schools: general secondary, madrasah, and technical-vocational. Within these streams, students follow a unified curriculum and study the same core subjects up to grade 8. Beginning in grade 9, students choose to follow one of three specializations or tracks: science, humanities, or business studies. The reform initiatives discussed in this paper are related to junior secondary and secondary education (i.e., grades 6–10, described hereafter as secondary education). The government plans to restructure the schooling system to include 8 years of primary and 4 years of secondary education, which will have implications for curriculum, teacher training, and student assessment.

9. Bangladesh has more than 19,000 government-recognized secondary schools, including 3,000 junior secondary schools and 15,400 secondary schools, with 208,500 teachers and over 2 million students (footnote 8). The large and complex education system involves many stakeholders, including distinct ministries, boards, and semi-autonomous bodies. The Ministry of Primary and Mass Education oversees primary education, while the Ministry of Education (MOE) oversees post-primary education. Within MOE, the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education (DSHE) is responsible for managing and administering secondary education. The management structure is highly centralized, with authority concentrated in Dhaka. Seven regional boards of intermediate and secondary education (BISEs), along with a Bangladesh Madrasah Education Board and a Technical Education Board, are responsible for conducting public examinations. The National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) is charged with developing curriculum, in addition to publishing and distributing all textbooks to students.

10. A model of private-public partnership that combines public finance with private provision characterizes the secondary education system. Close to 97% of secondary schools are private, nongovernment schools (footnote 8). The government’s revenue provides for education budget to cover the cost of teacher salaries and school maintenance and repairs. The government provides substantial subsidies (subventions) in the form of monthly pay orders to nongovernment schools that satisfy a set of criteria for recognition in terms of physical facilities, minimum number and qualification of teachers, etc. These criteria are not strictly followed, however. Provision of subvention through monthly pay orders began in 1981, first covering 50% of the

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9 Madrasahs are Muslim educational institutions. In Bangladesh, there are two types of madrasahs at the secondary level: Dakhil (grades 6–10) and Alim (grades 11 and 12).
basic salaries of secondary school teachers and now covering 100% for teachers who passed the Non-Government Teachers’ Registration and Certification Authority (NTRCA) examination.

2. Policy Reforms to Support Quality Improvements

11. Prior to the late 1990s, the government played a limited role in policy making and planning for secondary education. Community-built and -managed secondary schools proliferated in a largely unplanned way in response to the increasing demand for secondary schooling. However, given the government’s greater participation in the financing of secondary education (at the time, subventions represented 75% of the DSHE budget), the development of medium- and long-term education policies and plans is crucial. A review of the critical issues in the sector indicated weak policy and planning structures, poor quality, and low internal and external efficiency.10

12. Despite limited capacity in policy and planning, government priorities for educational reform have been articulated in seven Education Commission reports and a series of 5-year plans, though not all have been widely disseminated or formally adopted for implementation.11 Still, many of the reforms debated and advocated for in recent years have a long history on the policy agenda. The report of the first Education Commission in 1974, for instance, stressed “future work-relevant technical and vocational education, an improved assessment system, letter grading in the assessment of student performance at all stages of education and making primary education from grade 1 to 8 and secondary from grade 9 to 12” (footnote 11).

13. The government’s most recent goals related to improving educational quality are articulated in the National Education Policy (NEP) of 2010, Bangladesh’s first unified and codified policy for all levels and streams of education.12 The NEP 2010 outlines the government’s commitment to improve the quality of education, with a focus on teacher quality, school level leadership, effective teacher training, increased resources, targeted improvements, and monitoring of key results.13 It emphasizes science, mathematics, English, and information and communication technologies to align secondary education with the needs of a rapidly modernizing economy. In support, the government is moving toward a sector-wide approach to strengthen its ability to manage reforms and harmonize development partner support.

B. Policy Formation and Development Partner Support

14. Development partner interventions fall into two categories: investment loans in the form of projects implemented over several years and development policy loans described as quick-disbursing funds to support a government’s policy and institutional reforms.14 In the case of projects, development partners may provide technical

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12 Despite a consistent commitment to education from both major political parties in the past, the NEP 2010 is Bangladesh’s first comprehensive education strategy.
assistance, a loan, or both. ADB support provided to the Government of Bangladesh from 1993 to 2013 for secondary education was mainly in the form of project investments with loan funds covering 80%–90% of the cost of a project and government funds covering the remaining 10%–20%. Loan funds become part of the government budget; all ADB-supported projects are essentially government projects. ADB conducts periodic missions to assess its funding and cooperation plan, undertake needs assessments, or engage in policy dialogue. It is common for the government to introduce its own priorities during this process, and these tend to be honored.15

15. There are two approval streams for development partner support: that of the government and that of the development partner. During the approval process, policy dialogue between the government and development partners occurs through both formal and informal channels. Within the government stream, there is a development budget for projects and a non-development budget for Ministry of Finance and line ministries. The Planning Commission, an independent authority under the Executive Committee for the National Economic Council chaired by the Prime Minister, is the formal body that determines how the development budget is spent.

16. Line ministries, such as the MOE, negotiate project proposals with development partners, such as ADB. The Project Proforma is the government document detailing all aspects of the project. The Planning Commission must approve the Project Proforma and may make changes to it during the approval process. For this reason, ADB prepares its project documents to be in alignment with the approved Project Proforma. The Planning Commission must then approve the ADB project document, which can take up to 8 months to occur. Each project director implements the approved Project Proforma, rather than the development partners’ document.

17. As part of project preparation, development partners conduct missions to negotiate and agree upon project terms with the government: a needs assessment mission, a project preparation mission, and a project appraisal mission.16 As a result, development partners provide inputs throughout the process of project development and a common understanding is established via negotiations among the government (MOE), donors, and project personnel. Once a project is approved by the Planning Commission, the government and the development partner sign the legal loan agreement. In addition to these formal channels, the project formulation process is shaped by informal dialogue. ADB staff, for example, maintains very close ties with senior government personnel and consistently engages in informal dialogue and interaction. For instance, needs assessment discussions can occur over the course of a year to a year and a half prior to formal project negotiations.

18. Although the dialogue process—whether formal or informal—may be exploratory, participatory, and open to government priorities, it may also be subject to imbalances of influence and power. According to a key informant, when projects are being formulated, development partners may enter into discussions with government bureaucrats who, due to high turnover, have relatively little experience in relation to sector technicalities.17 Development partners, in contrast, tend to bring in individuals

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15 As suggested by interviews with social sector specialists in Bangladesh.
16 There are formal negotiations between the World Bank and ADB during identification, preparation, and project appraisal missions: “each knows what the other is doing to prevent overlap” (interview with Deputy Director, Secondary Education Quality and Access Enhancement Project [SEQAEP]).
17 Interview with a senior education officer of a development agency.
who are experts and have been working in the sector for many years. In the words of one respondent who worked with a development project, “We come with institutional memory. We come with experience. We come with expertise. We come with our ideas as to how the [project] should be designed, and in most cases the design is the one we want.” As a result, development partners sometimes have the upper hand in initial negotiations and can exercise considerable influence in preparing government project and policy documents.

19. Some respondents suggested that development partners and external consultants have been tasked with formulating project and policy documents because the government lacked capacity. In the absence of experienced government or civil society negotiators, development partners are influential in shaping the development discourse and project formulation process. This does not, however, fit with the historical context: prior to the 1990s, policy documents in Bangladesh were developed and written by local experts called upon by the government. Arguably, increased donor influence in recent years can be attributed to the incentive structure that has emerged with the rapid growth of projects: policy elites secure aid funding and other benefits (i.e., appointments, salary supplements, foreign travel, and training) by accommodating the development partners when negotiating project formulation.

20. Nevertheless, arrangements made on paper during project formulation have not always been carried through to implementation. Thus, while donors may have the upper hand during the earlier stages of policy formulation, it appears that the decision of whether or how to implement a policy is ultimately driven by domestic political considerations shaped by individual and organizational interests, patronage, and value judgments. This was especially apparent when there was a government change between policy formulation and implementation. The six case studies of policy reform discussed here were formulated and initially agreed by the government and development partners. The focus in the following chapters is on what happened next—during implementation—and to identify the processes through which the agreed policies were implemented as planned, modified, or abandoned.

C. Development Support to Secondary Education

21. Secondary education receives about $1 billion total budget from the government, of which $140 million (14%) is development budget. While numerous development partners supported primary education from 1993 to 2013, ADB and the World Bank were the main development partners providing large-scale support, with ADB playing a leading role. ADB-supported interventions have focused on strengthening teacher training facilities, expanding pre- and in-service teacher training, reforming the public examination system, expanding school-based assessment, and revising the curriculum to make it more relevant. Over 1993 to 2013, ADB supported the following projects:

(i) Higher Secondary Education Project (HSEP, 1991–2001);
(ii) Secondary Education Development Project (SEDP, 1993–2002);
(iii) Secondary Education Sector Improvement Project (SESIP, 1999–2007);
(iv) Teaching Quality Improvement in Secondary Education Project I and II (TQISEP, 2002–2004 and 2004–2013);

(v) Secondary Education Sector Development Program (SES DP, 2006–2014); and

22. The World Bank funded a series of support credits and a subsequent project in Bangladesh over the same time frame:
(i) Education Sector Development Support Credits (ESDSCs, 2003–2008); and

23. The HSEP, implemented from 1991 to 2001, was supported through an ADB loan of $36 million. HSEP was limited in scope, inasmuch as it focused only on grades 11 and 12. ADB rated that project partly successful.

24. From 1993 to 2002, ADB supported the more comprehensive SEDP through a loan of $72 million. The project components included quality improvement through secondary school curriculum reforms, instructional materials management, and teaching training. Several policy reforms under SEDP had been on the domestic policy agenda since 1974 when the country’s first Education Commission was formed. At this time, the Education Commission recommended improving (i) the quality of textbooks through competition and privatization; and (ii) the training, certification, career trajectories, and reputation of secondary school teachers. SEDP also focused on policy reforms related to expanding access by constructing and/or rehabilitating classrooms, equipment, and furniture for about 1,840 schools comprising female, nongovernment, and madrasah schools; by providing materials, including school administrative handbooks; and by creating a stipend program for female students in about 53 thanas. SEDP further aimed to strengthen planning and management by enhancing technical and administrative capability of DSHE; as well as to improve project implementation by providing consulting services, equipment, vehicles, training and workshops, and incremental recurrent costs. ADB rated the project successful.

25. From 1999 to 2007, ADB supported the SESIP through a loan of $60 million. The project components were improving curriculum development, privatizing secondary textbooks, reforming student assessment and public examinations, reforming supervision, and establishing the School Improvement Fund. With regard to curriculum and teacher training, the SESIP continued the reforms introduced under the SEDP. Policy reforms related to student assessment had been on the domestic policy agenda since 1974. The Education Commission had recommended introducing school-based assessment, revising questions in public examinations to measure higher-order thinking skills (rather than direct recall), and giving equal weight to school-based assessment and public examinations. The SESIP also focused on management capacity and equitable access through facilities development and provision of stipends for females. ADB rated the project successful. The Independent Evaluation Department validated the project and concurred with this rating.

26. The TQISEP was implemented from 2002 to 2004 along with a $600,000 technical assistance (TA) being provided by ADB. TQISEP project components were as follows: (i) improving teaching quality through organizational development and capacity building, (ii) improving teacher training facilities, (iii) strengthening in- and pre-service teacher training, and (iv) improving equitable access and community involvement. The TQISEP was extended and expanded upon through TQISEP II,
implemented from 2004 to 2013. TQISEP II was funded by ADB with $500,000 of project preparatory TA and a loan of $69 million. ADB rated the project successful.

27. The Government of Bangladesh, which had been newly elected in 2001, sought financial support from the World Bank to implement secondary education reforms. The World Bank provided the government with a development policy lending operation in the form of a series of budget support credits known as ESDSCs. These credits had to be approved by the International Monetary Fund (footnote 17). The first credit, provided in 2004, was for $68.4 million. The two subsequent credits, ESDSC II in 2006 and ESDSC III in 2007, were for $69.1 million and $65.6 million, respectively. Policy areas supported were (i) improving system management, (ii) enhancing teacher quality, and (iii) strengthening curriculum and textbooks. The credits ended when the International Monetary Fund no longer approved of budget support to Bangladesh due to “governance issues” (footnote 17).

28. The World Bank also supports the SEQAEP. This project began in 2008 with an end date of 2017. The World Bank initially provided a loan of $130.7 million. There followed in 2014 an additional loan of $265 million. SEQAEP has four project components:
   (i) Improving education quality and monitoring learning levels by
       (a) providing incentive awards to students, teachers, and institutions;
       (b) supporting English language and mathematics learning and teaching;
       (c) developing students’ habit of reading through a program
           for grades 6–10; and (d) improving the assessment of education quality.
   (ii) Increasing equitable access by (a) providing stipends and tuition to
       poor girls and boys, and (b) improving school facilities.
   (iii) Strengthening institutional capacity while focusing on (a) project
       management, (b) institutional capacity building, and (c) school
       management accountability.
   (iv) Ensuring effective monitoring and evaluation of the project.

29. Upon approval of the Nepal 2010, ADB funded the development of an implementation strategy for the National Education Policy for Secondary Education Sector Project from 2010 to 2013 through TA of $600,000. Its objectives were to (i) analyze institutional arrangements, set priorities for technical and financial reforms, and monitor the reforms proposed in the NEP; (ii) organize consultations, focus group discussions, and workshops with key stakeholders; and (iii) organize a final workshop to present for agreement a draft implementation strategy for the NEP, including a road map with indicative timeline for a sector-wide approach.

30. Most recently, ADB funded the SESDP. Its implementation began in 2006. ADB provided two loans—one for $85 million followed by another for $30 million—to improve the quality of secondary education by revising curricula, supporting reforms of national examinations, strengthening student assessment, and strengthening school

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20 A World Bank education officer described discussions with the government that occurred over 3 years to move from a monthly pay order system to a grants-based or performance-based financing system that would have provided an incentive for well-performing schools and a disincentive for poor-performing schools. Despite these discussions, no actions were taken to change the system. This officer noted how “perhaps it would be too difficult politically to sell it to the teachers” and described its lack of implementation as a “failure.” The officer also noted how the SESIP had supported this systematic change.

management committees. The project focused on the functional specialization of the education cadre, revising the grades 9–10 curriculum, reforming Secondary School Certificate (SSC) exams, and introducing school-based assessment to grades 6–9. The reforms under the SESDP constituted a continuation of those formulated under the SEDP and SESIP. ADB rated the SESDP successful. The SESDP also focused on (i) decentralizing secondary education management, (ii) implementing a decentralized education management information system, (iii) implementing a school performance-based management system nationally, and (iv) reviewing the female secondary stipend program.
CHAPTER 2

Improving the Quality of Curriculum, Student Assessment, and Teaching

31. This chapter outlines the policy-based processes, activities, and actions that have taken place related to (i) curriculum development and textbook provision, (ii) examination reform and school-based assessment, and (iii) teacher recruitment and pre- and in-service training. It will discuss the relevant causal mechanisms that either contributed to official policy reform or altered and reversed policy reform initiatives in these areas. To guide this exercise, the discussion first explores core theoretical assumptions embedded in an interactive model of policy change (see also Appendix 3). It then provides a narrative of policy change for each of the six case studies, focusing primarily on causal factors or drivers of policy change and key developments.

32. The choice of interactive model of policy change was based on the understanding that the processes related to agenda setting, policy formulation, decision making, adoption, implementation, and evaluation do not necessarily proceed in a linear fashion, as would be suggested by the sequential nature of these steps. Rather, they are seen as highly complex processes shaped by a multitude of interacting forces and actors. The main actors of interest are policy elites. Policy elites and influential individuals can be establishment figures tasked with government decision making or they can be such other politically significant figures as senior civil servants, managers of important economic enterprises, leaders of popular organizations, prominent intellectuals, journalists, or religious leaders. From this viewpoint, the primary drivers of policy change are seen to be the ideas, interests, and resources that policy elites bring to bear.

33. This perspective also allows for the influence of a wider range of actors—including donors, the public, interest groups, opposition political parties, and the media—in shaping how policy elites perceive policy problems and options. Specifically, policy influence, or the extent to which interested parties can work to promote, alter, or reverse reform initiatives, can occur through an inside track, working closely with decision makers, or an outside track, seeking to influence change through pressure and confrontation. The inside track—typically used by donors—involves two types of influencing strategies: (i) use of evidence and advice, including research and analysis, evidence-based arguments, advisory support, and the piloting of new policy approaches; and (ii) lobbying and negotiation, namely face-to-face meetings and discussions, relationship building, and direct incentives and diplomacy. The outside


track, on the other hand, typically involves public campaigns and advocacy through the use of media, political debates, and public meetings.

A. Applying an Interactive Model of Policy Change

34. An interactive model of policy change gives rise to several causal claims, as provided below. They focus primarily on the processes of policy change that occur after a particular reform initiative has been placed onto the policy agenda. They detail assumptions pertaining to drivers of change related to the definition of particular policy characteristics, responses to reform initiatives in the bureaucratic and public arenas, and the resources required to sustain policy change.

Causal claim 1: Financial and political support are both present to initiate and sustain the policy reform process.

Causal claim 2: Technical and managerial support is present with the aim of building capacity and sustaining policy reforms.

Causal claim 3: Resources within the bureaucratic arena influence (either facilitate or impede) the policy reform process.

Causal claim 4: Reactions in the public arena influence (either facilitate or impede) the policy reform process.

35. These causal claims allow for multiple potential outcomes, including policy reforms being stalled, implemented (either partially, fully as intended, or with modifications), or rejected. Although framed in relatively broad terms to apply across the six case study areas, they will be analyzed below with reference to specific interventions and reform initiatives carried out in the period 1993–2013.

36. The first two causal claims above reflect the expectations that political commitments (for ideological or interest-based reasons), financial resources, and bureaucratic capacity have been central to reform initiatives aimed at enhancing the quality of curriculum, student assessment, and teaching. Further, as specified in the second two, the model of policy change used in this paper supposes that specific policy characteristics (including distribution of costs and benefits, technical complexity, and short- and long-term impacts) determine whether responses to the initiative will occur primarily in the public or bureaucratic arenas. Indeed, the narratives presented below suggest that some reform initiatives remain primarily in the bureaucratic arena while others engender conflict (and sometimes resolution) in the public arena. In the latter case, the response within the public arena influences the resources—primarily political—that policy elites are able to mobilize to sustain policy reform.

37. Each case study presents a detailed narrative of policy reform, designed to elaborate upon a hypothesized causal mechanism of how change associated with each case study occurred. These hypothesized causal mechanisms are presented in the figures (1 through 6) that accompany each case study and are based on the theoretical assumptions discussed above.

B. Curriculum Development (Case Study 1)

38. Prior to the early 1990s, the curriculum was designed to enable students to pass the SSC examination, which students take after completing grade 10, and the Higher Secondary Certificate examination, which students take after completing grade 12. The curriculum served as a gatekeeper to higher education and entry into middle-class professions, as well as administrative and managerial jobs generally (footnote 10). Since many secondary school graduates became self-employed and did not pursue
higher education or enter professional or administrative positions, the curriculum bore little relevance to the future work and life of its graduates and was considered to be a poor use of public investments. The curriculum reform that began in the 1990s aimed to align student learning with the skills needed in the emerging open market economy by improving the quality and relevance of the curriculum. This approach to curriculum reform, underpinned by neoliberal economic principles and informed by human capital theory sought to increase secondary school graduates’ potential future earnings and thus improve Bangladesh’s economy.24

39. ADB-supported projects helped government efforts to update the curriculum to cover topics such as science and technology. Promoting skills development for local small business and entrepreneurship, development of skills such as higher-level thinking, and a continued transition from rote to active learning were also key priorities. Projects have sought to strengthen MOE’s capacity to continuously upgrade the curriculum and monitor its implementation.25 The aim was to set in motion a continuous curriculum development process rather than a sporadic or ad hoc curriculum review.26

40. Since 1993, there have been three phases of curriculum reform in secondary education: (i) curriculum revision supported by the HSEP and SEDP during 1993–1995, (ii) development of a uni-track curriculum supported by the SESIP from 1999 to 2006, and (iii) development of a new multi-track curriculum supported by the ESDP during 2006–2013. Although the narrative below touches briefly on the curriculum revision supported by the HSEP and SEDP, it is geared toward providing a causal account of the failed implementation of the uni-track curriculum and the subsequent adoption and implementation of the most recent curriculum in 2012.

41. Updated curriculum (1995). The government began revising the secondary curriculum (grades 6–12) with ADB financial and technical support under the HSEP and SEDP. The new curriculum was completed in 1995, with new textbooks introduced in schools the following year. Teacher guides and instructional materials were also developed and produced. Business studies were included into the curriculum to support students’ acquisition of entrepreneurship and self-employment skills. This marked an ideological shift away from the theory-driven and “bookish” knowledge that was given priority in the earlier curriculum (footnote 24). However, the revised curriculum did not meet expected international and project standards. In general, the 1995 curriculum remained too knowledge-focused and continued to promote rote memorization and examination preparation (footnote 10).

42. Uni-track curriculum. The idea for a uni-track curriculum for grades 9 and 10 had previously been introduced by the government in the early 1980s, but it was withdrawn before being fully implemented.27 It again gained traction in the late 1990s, due in part to its alignment with concerns expressed by ADB and the government that the curriculum be more work-oriented and skills-based.28 The proposed reforms also

27 Interview with former NCTB Chairman.
28 Historically, there has been a unified curriculum for junior secondary (grades 6–8) and a multi-track curriculum for higher secondary (grades 11–12). There have been periodic attempts to change the curriculum for grades 9 and 10. In 1977, a curriculum committee headed by Professors Shamsul Haq and Zillur Rahman Siddiqui proposed a unified curriculum. This proposal led to a short-lived and failed attempt
dovetailed with existing international educational norms, which emphasized a uni-track curriculum past grade 8 to a higher-level grade in order to promote a more inclusive and equitable education system within which all students would access the same quality of education and opportunities. Students would thus be older when choosing a specialization that would influence their future life choices and opportunities. As shown in the hypothesized causal mechanism in Figure 3, the revision of the grades 9–10 curriculum would be undertaken by the SESIP, supported by the government and ADB, in order to make the curriculum more skills-based and relevant to future employment. SESIP consultants emphasized providing all students with the same foundational skills through a uni-track curriculum up to grade 10.

43. The uni-track curriculum was adopted as government policy under the Bangladesh National Party (BNP), with the MOE issuing an order in 2002 that the uni-track curriculum be introduced in grades 9 and 10 from 2005. As suggested in Figure 3, response within the bureaucratic arena was favorable and NCTB began to develop the new curriculum with technical support from ADB. The adoption of a uni-track curriculum incited resistance in the public arena, however. It was therefore not introduced and implemented as planned, due in large measure to mounting opposition from prominent educationalists, civil society groups, parents, and teachers.

44. Largely in response, the National Curriculum Coordination Committee (NCCC) decided in November 2005 that more time and scrutiny was required prior to introducing a uni-track system. The BNP government further delayed its implementation until 2007, after the scheduled elections, rather than abandoning it completely. However, the caretaker government of 2006–2008 did not reinstate this proposed reform. When the Awami League came into power in 2008, it sought to update the curriculum under the existing multi-track system, as reflected by the NEP 2010. The uni-track curriculum, therefore, was de facto abandoned.

45. **Updated curriculum (2013).** Following the 2008 election, the government assigned NCTB the task of looking afresh at the curriculum. NCTB was to develop a skills-based curriculum for grades 6–8 and 11–12, as well as to recast the grades 9–10 uni-track curriculum which had been developed under the SESIP but never introduced. The objective was to integrate this curriculum into a skills-based curriculum for the secondary cycle from grades 6 to 12 (footnote 27).

46. Curriculum revision took place with financial and technical support under the SESDP. Implementation of curriculum reforms followed a 6-year curriculum development plan (2008–2013). A curriculum review and needs assessment study were

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29 This exercise was also meant to link up with intended extension of basic education from grades 5 to 8 and the required revision of the grades 6–8 curriculum.


32 A. Rahman. 2005. Govt May Postpone Uni-track Edn System. *Daily Star*. 4 December. http://archive.thedailystar.net/2005/12/04/d5120401055.htm. By this time, the new uni-track curriculum had been developed and textbooks were at the point of being printed with the intention of delivering them to schools in December.

33 Two key informants attributed the failure to implement the uni-track curriculum to ADB.
to be conducted first, and decisions on the curriculum framework were then to follow. With a framework in place, curriculum development accelerated in 2010. Major changes were to (i) reduce the load by revising the curriculum and learning outcomes on the basis of contact hours; (ii) make the curriculum more activity-based and reflective of Bloom’s taxonomy; and (iii) align curriculum, learning outcomes, and assessment, particularly regarding the use of structured and/or creative questions.\footnote{Interview with an NCTB curriculum specialist. The new curriculum also introduced Information and Communications Technology as a compulsory subject for students in the general and madrasah streams, which corresponds with the government’s emphasis on information and communication technologies and multi-media classrooms as part of the high-profile Access to Information (a2i) Programme headed by the Prime Minister’s office.} After a series of review workshops and revisions, NCTB and MOE approved the curriculum. It then received final approval from NCCC and was accepted as the \textit{National Curriculum 2012}.\footnote{NCTB. 2012. \textit{National Curriculum 2012}. Dhaka.}

C. \textbf{Textbook Privatization (Case Study 2)}

Prior to the education reforms that began in the early 1990s, the existing textbooks were regarded by key stakeholders as inappropriate inasmuch as they encouraged rote memorization rather than higher-level thinking and reasoning skills. ADB was also concerned with the highly centralized nature of textbook production, which resulted in the use of a single, low-quality textbook per grade. NCTB spent most of its time and resources on the book production cycle, which restricted capacity for
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Curriculum development. NCTB was responsible for producing some 55 million primary and 26 million secondary (grades 6–10) textbooks, as well as 0.6 million English and Bangla textbooks for grades 11–12 (footnote 10).

48. First proposed as a subcomponent of the SEDP, privatization was seen as a way to improve the quality of textbooks through competition, reduce textbooks costs for students, and allow NCTB to devote more time to curriculum development. Because textbooks for grades 11–12 had been privatized already, one objective of the SEDP was to extend textbook privatization to grades 6–10. During development of the SEDP, the BNP government accepted this idea and committed to issuing guidelines on privatization of the publication, printing, and distribution of secondary education textbooks from 1996 onwards. Textbook privatization did not come to pass under the SEDP, however. The government and ADB agreed that textbook privatization would be addressed under the follow-on project, SESIP. Figure 2 provides a hypothesized causal mechanism of the partial implementation of textbook privatization in the early to mid-2000s. The following discussion expands upon the causal explanation offered.

49. As depicted in Figure 2, the government and ADB agreed that SESIP would pursue the privatization of grades 9–10 textbooks as a first step toward laying the foundation for commercial publishing in primary and secondary education. During planning for the SESIP, the BNP government committed to separating NCTB’s textbook publishing and curriculum development work and to privatizing the publishing of grades 9–10 textbooks by 2003 (footnote 10). In the early to mid-2000s, the push for textbook privatization was also taken up by the World Bank. It was then in the process of negotiating the terms of the ESDSCs I–III, which also included support and provisions for this policy reform (footnote 21). Rather than focusing on textbooks for grades 9–10, as did the SESIP, the ESDSCs supported textbook privatization for grades 6–10.

50. Beginning in 2004, the policy reform was partially implemented, with the government gradually moving toward the privatization of grades 6–10 textbooks (footnote 17). For the next 2 to 3 years, textbook privatization was expanded (Figure 2). In 2008, ADB reported that NCTB had privatized the publishing of 19 of 33 textbooks for grades 9 and 10 and was planning the privatization of remaining textbooks in phases. The World Bank also deemed the reform to be a reasonable success, with all textbooks for grades 11–12 and 6–8 having been produced competitively by 2008 (footnote 21).

51. During this process, however, NCTB continued to produce and publish its own textbooks for every grade and every subject. The consequences of this partial privatization were reportedly twofold: (i) for the most part, schools, guardians, and students continued to select and purchase NCTB textbooks, believing that these books would better prepare students for examinations; and (ii) as a result, private publishers lost interest in textbook sales, which were not as profitable as hoped. Although the SESIP and ESDSCs were successful in separating textbook production from curriculum development and in reducing the scope for rent-seeking, textbook privatization was not fully implemented.

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37 During this same timeframe, the Japan Bank for International Cooperation, in a review of Bangladesh’s education sector, recommended that textbook production and distribution be transferred from NCTB to private companies (see Japan Bank for International Cooperation. 2002. Bangladesh Education Sector Overview. Tokyo).
38 Interviews: NCTB curriculum specialist, former NCTB chairman, academic.
52. ** Provision of free textbooks.** With the change of government in 2008, which brought the Awami League back into government, NCTB was again responsible for all textbook production. The new government sought to provide free textbooks to all students up to grade 10, a commitment reflected in the NEP 2010. With the new curriculum introduced in 2012, new textbooks were published and distributed by 2013. Textbook privatization is thus largely a “dead horse.”

53. Although ADB and World Bank pushed for textbook privatization in the past, they are now largely in support of providing free textbooks. Current and former donor staff interviewed for this study recognized that the provision of free textbooks is indeed a significant accomplishment, but they also worried that it hampered the incorporation of innovations found in other countries within the region, such as putting textbooks online. A recent ADB-supported report on developing an implementation strategy for the NEP 2010 recommends that a public-private partnership approach for textbook production and distribution be explored. It is not clear at this point whether the government will take up this recommendation.

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**Figure 2: A Hypothesized Causal Mechanism of the Partial Implementation of Textbook Privatization**

Causal Claim 1: Financial and political support (present)

- Government and ADB signal commitment to privatize textbook publishing through approval of SESIP (1999); push for textbook privatization also taken up by the World Bank as it negotiates the terms of ESDSCs I-III

Causal Claim 2: Technical and managerial support (present)

- SESIP feasibility study leads to establishment of Independent Textbook Evaluation Committee; SESIP also provides support to private sector publishers, editors, and authors on textbook planning, design of instructional materials, presentation of learning materials, and editing techniques

Causal Claim 3: Bureaucratic arena facilitates reform

- Partial privatization begins in 2004 and is expanded over the next 2 to 3 years

Causal Claim 3: Bureaucratic arena impedes reform

- Under new system, NCTB continues to publish its own textbooks; monetary incentives related to textbook production at NCTB impede full privatization of textbook publishing

Outcome: Policy partially implemented, then abandoned

- Private publishers lose interest because parents and teachers prefer NCTB textbooks
- New government (2008) moves forward with provision of free textbooks, and publishing again becomes exclusive purview of NCTB

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39 Grades 11 and 12 textbooks are predominantly produced by private publishers (as has always been the case).
40 Interview: academic.
41 ADB. 2012. *Policy Advice Technical Assistance: To Develop an Implementation Strategy for the National Education Policy with an Emphasis on the Secondary Sector*. Manila. This point was also made by a senior education advisor in his interview with this study’s authors.
D. Public Examination Reform (Case Study 3)

54. There were two phases of examination reform in secondary education over the past 20 years: approval for SSC examination reform under the SESIP from 1999 to 2007, and implementation of SSC examination reform under the SESDP from 2006 to 2013. The government and ADB-supported projects sought to reform public examinations to tackle the pervasiveness of rote learning in secondary schools and to improve the test administration procedures in the BISEs. The objectives were to create modern examination techniques and replace direct recall questions with new questions that would assess such higher-order abilities as analytical thinking, evaluation, and problem solving. The projects also aimed to improve the reliability and accuracy of test administration procedures and improve quality and standardization across the BISEs.

55. ADB anticipated that policy reform initiatives to the SSC public examinations, given their high social value and importance, would stimulate other educational quality reforms initiated as part of the SESIP, including the development of more appropriate curriculum, textbooks, and classroom instruction. The public examinations were not revised as part of the 1995 curriculum reform. Therefore, the emphasis in secondary education continued to be on rote memorization and so-called “teaching to the test,” despite the new learning competencies outlined in the revised curriculum.

56. Consequently, a systems-approach was adopted with the SESIP whereby reforms to the curriculum and public examinations would be addressed simultaneously and holistically. Figure 3 provides a hypothesized causal mechanism for the implementation of a key policy in this reform agenda—the use of a structured question method (which came to be known as creative questions) in public examinations. As part of the public examination reform activities, the Bangladesh Examination Development Unit (BEDU) was established at Dhaka BISE in order to develop new examination techniques and improve capacity in test administration. In 2003, four newly recruited technical officers from BEDU attended a 6-month training course in assessment and measurement at the University of Melbourne, Australia. This group developed a detailed technical proposal for reform of SSC examinations in order to improve validation of SSC exams against stated curriculum objectives for all subjects and to improve the reliability of question marking and uniformity of SSC results across the BISEs.

57. The proposed reform reduced the proportion of multiple-choice questions and introduced alternative question styles (structured questions) to replace the narrative or essay questions in the SSC examinations. The new question styles were based on Bloom’s Taxonomy and geared to measure higher-order cognitive skills, including knowledge acquisition, comprehension, application, analytical thinking, synthesis, and evaluation. These changes were intended to enable the examinations to test students more effectively across the full range of the curriculum learning objectives and to help overcome the excessive emphasis on recall of facts from textbooks.

58. The new structured question model was tested in pilot SSC examinations in 49 schools, with approximately 10,000 students participating in the pilot examinations.

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42 There are three examinations in secondary education, leading to award of the Junior School Certificate (JSC) after grade 8, the Secondary School Certificate (SSC) after grade 10, and the Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) after grade 12. The examinations are to be taken by all students attending junior secondary and secondary schools, and they are generally designed for the purposes of certifying and selecting students for higher levels of education.

43 Interview: assessment specialist, BEDU.
The results indicated that students were able to cope with the new questions, the tests had better validity, and feedback from teachers and students was generally positive.\textsuperscript{44} NCCC approved the proposal for examination reform after the pilot test. The MOE issued notification in July 2005 for introduction of the revised SSC examinations.

59. Training of master trainers nominated from each BISE was trialed in late 2005. A teacher’s guide to the new style examination questions was produced that contained sample structured questions and examination papers with accompanying model answers and marking schemes. Under the SESDP, the training of master trainers continued, and the master trainers then trained examination question-setters, markers, and moderators.\textsuperscript{45} Implementation of the proposed SSC examination reform was delayed, however, following public protests (stemming from perceived difficulties that students would have adjusting to the new model) and the change of government.

60. In 2008, a standing advisory committee comprising of policy elites—including eminent educationalists and a leader of the popular Bengali nonprofit reading organization \textit{Bishwo Shahitto Kendro}—was formed to provide guidance on implementing the SSC public examination reform. Based on the recommendation of these opinion leaders, the name of the structured questions method was changed to “creative questions” to improve the messaging framework related to the reform and better appeal to the public. The content and style remained the same.

61. As depicted in Figure 3, the NEP 2010 outlined a commitment to the full implementation and institutionalization of creative questions in SSC examinations, starting in 2010 with two subjects (Bangla and religious studies) and with plans to roll out across all subjects by 2015. Instead of trying to reduce the significance of the public examination system, the policy reform sought to improve the quality of questions and marking procedures in the existing SSC examination system. Specifically, NEP 2010 set out to reform the public examination system by (i) introducing the creative question method, (ii) setting rules and regulations regarding the preparation of question papers to ensure uniformity and consistency across BISEs, and (iii) improving textbook design and development to facilitate implementation of the creative question method. The creative question method has since been introduced in all levels of public examinations, including the Junior School Certificate (JSC) and Higher Secondary Certificate.

62. The introduction of creative questions is considered to be an education reform success and has been cited by ADB as a major reason for the higher pass rates at SSC level compared to in previous years (footnote 17).


\textsuperscript{45} ADB. 2013. \textit{Secondary Education Sector Development Program (Project)—Project Data Sheet}. Manila.
### Figure 3: A Hypothesized Causal Mechanism of the Implementation of Creative Questions in Public Examinations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Causal Claim 1: Financial and political support (present)</th>
<th>Government and ADB signal commitment to reform public examination through approval of SESIP (1999); support continues with SESDP (2006)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Causal Claim 2: Technical and managerial support (present)</td>
<td>Specialists from BISEs attend international training course (2003); they develop and pilot new approach to SSC public examinations based on international evidence and advice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Causal Claim 4: Public arena facilitates reform</td>
<td>Change of government (2008); implementation of reform is backlogged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcome: Policy implemented</td>
<td>Creative questions method is integral part of NEP 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2010–2015: Creative questions implemented in all SSC public examinations between 2010 and 2015</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


### E. School-Based Assessment (Case Study 4)

63. Essentially all student assessments in Bangladesh are based on public examinations and on school tests administered by the schools at the end of each semester. These summative school tests, by and large, are the only form of student assessment conducted by schools and serve primarily a gatekeeping role in promoting students to the next grade. This type of student assessment tends to be modeled after the public examinations, with questions taken directly from textbooks (footnote 10). Hence, like the public examinations, these assessments led to an overemphasis on rote learning.

64. School-based assessment (SBA) proposals typically include the development and assessment of a range of student learning outcomes based on (i) intellectual skills that extend beyond simply the recall of knowledge (e.g., understanding, application, analytical thinking, higher-order thinking, and problem solving), and (ii) personal and social skills (e.g., values and attitudes, cooperative learning, and social decision making). The introduction of SBA into schools constitutes a strategy for reducing rote learning and examination pressure among teachers and for reducing the tendency for teachers to “teach to the test.” Current practice recommends integrating national
public examination results with SBA as a way to enhance the reliability and validity of student assessment.\textsuperscript{46}

65. The practice of SBA in Bangladesh is not common. There are widespread concerns that the educational context is not suitable for this more subjective form of student assessment. Students and families have raised concerns that teachers could manipulate students’ marks to fit their own advantage, whereas teachers have said they may well be coerced by powerful parents to give their child higher marks.\textsuperscript{47} The overall impression is that the groundwork needed to implement SBA in schools is not yet in place in Bangladesh; it requires building teachers’ skills, a more transparent student assessment system, and more confidence among students and parents.

66. There were two phases of SBA reform in secondary education: proposal and approval for SBA for grades 6–9 under the SESIP from 1999 to 2007 and revision to SBA design and ongoing policy dialogue under the SESDP from 2006 to 2013. As shown in Figure 4 and outlined below, efforts to implement SBA have been met with public resistance, which has stalled its implementation. The government and ADB-supported projects that sought to introduce regular SBA in schools for grades 6–9 came under the leadership of the NCTB Secondary Assessment Unit. Under the SESIP, the SBA system was premised on the assumptions that not all curriculum goals can be assessed by examinations and tests and that teachers who are given responsibility in assessing their students will be more responsible for ensuring fair and valid assessments. SBA applies formative assessment methodologies by teachers to achieve timely corrective actions, and it encourages the use of a wider range of learning activities.

67. The new Secondary Assessment Unit was established to provide leadership for incorporating SBA into the NCTB curricula, assist schools and teachers with implementing SBA, and monitor the effectiveness of SBA in the schools over the long term. In 2003, a handful of technical officers from the Secondary Assessment Unit joined those from BEDU on the 6-month training course on assessment and measurement at the University of Melbourne. Upon their return, they developed a technical proposal for the development and implementation of SBA.

68. In July 2005, the government approved SBA for national introduction in grades 6–9. In 2006, the NCTB released a teacher’s guide for SBA that included an assessment of students’ coursework, their personal development, and end-of-year and/or end-of-semester examinations. The NCTB recommended that 30% of marks be based on students’ coursework and 70% on the SSC examinations. The SESED locally trained 18,000 head teachers and 65,000 subject teachers on the SBA model (footnote 47). However, the NCTB’s recommendation was never taken up.

69. Starting in 2004, when the proposed SBA reforms became public, they generated widespread opposition from teachers, students, and parents. Social media activities and newspaper articles regarding the challenges related to SBA fueled public protests. This was largely driven by concerns that the alleged subjective nature of school-based assessment would lead to bias in marking (e.g., teachers would favor some students over others and parents would bribe teachers for higher marks).\textsuperscript{48}

\textsuperscript{48} Interviews: former chairman, NCTB; assessment specialist, BEDU; and curriculum specialist, NCTB.
public reaction was strong because the reform would have an immediate impact on many students and their families.

70. In 2009–2010, a feasibility study found the SBA model was too labor intensive for teachers, especially given large class sizes (in some cases, 200 students) and that training had been insufficient to prepare students. SBA was, furthermore, not mentioned in the NEP 2010. However, the model was revised in 2012 under the SESDP to make it more teacher-friendly and to reduce the workload on teachers. It was renamed continuous assessment. Then in January 2014, a decision was made to implement continuous assessment as part of the JSC (grade 8) from 2015 instead of the SSC. Although approved by the Education Secretary, the government order was still pending at the time of the field visits (2013).

71. To make SBA an important and sustainable component of secondary education, it is considered essential to integrate the results with the public examinations (footnote 48). Key informants interviewed noted that implementing this reform at a lower educational level, as compared to the high-stakes SSC examination, would elicit less concern from parents and be less likely to result in public protests. Furthermore, the marks allocated by teachers for SBA/continuous assessment would account for only 20% of a student’s total grade, which again was suggested to be below the threshold of what would cause concern to parents. Key informants spoke about developing “safety nets” to ensure proper implementation of SBA/continuous assessment in schools and to curb any misconduct.

72. At the time of interviews, there was a tentative plan to develop materials and training for the continuous assessment materials, although questions arose about sources of funding given that the SESDP activities had ended. There were also mixed messages about the extent to which SBA/continuous assessment was being implemented in secondary schools. Reports from ADB suggest that SBA has been beneficial to students by heightening their learning skills and boosting attendance rates in school. On the other hand, key informants suggest the use of SBA/continuous assessment is not a policy priority and there is insufficient monitoring and training to institutionalize the reform. By and large, key informants indicated that SBA was rarely practiced in secondary schools and it has received little attention since the initial teacher training took place in 2005.

49 Interview: senior social sector specialist, development agency.
50 Interview: curriculum specialist, NCTB.
51 The September 2015 project completion report for SESDP indicates that SBA has made some progress and 25.5% of teachers have been trained on SBA by 2015.
F. Teacher Recruitment (Case Study 5)

73. As shown in Figure 5, the first major reform to process was supported through the ADB-financed SESIP, implemented from 1999 to 2007. The government and ADB discussed and negotiated this project’s components for more than a year prior to the project proposal being finalized. One of the project’s aims was to “support the process of reviewing and establishing teacher qualifications for grades 9–12.” The government articulated reforms to teacher recruitment through the NEP 2000 recommendation that “teachers in both government and non-government schools are expected to be appointed by a Teacher Selection Commission.”

74. While the government and ADB were aligned regarding the need to reform the teacher recruitment process for government and nongovernment schools, a 2000 World Bank report supported the existing nongovernment teacher recruitment process. The report stated that “this type of private management has proven to be more flexible than management by the Directorate of Secondary Education. For example, schools can hire their own teachers without going through a cumbersome central bureaucratic

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**Figure 4: A Hypothesized Causal Mechanism of the Modified and Uncertain Implementation of School-Based Assessment**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Causal Claim 1: Financial and political support (present)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Government and ADB signal commitment to reform student assessment through approval of SESIP (1999); support continues with SESDP (2006)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Causal Claim 2: Technical and managerial support (present)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Specialists from NCTB attend international training course (2003); they develop and pilot new approach to student assessment based on international evidence and advice</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Causal Claim 3: Bureaucratic arena facilitates reform</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Government approves proposal for SBA reform (2005)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Causal Claim 4: Public arena impedes reform</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Public protests and debate stalls reform (2006)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome: Reform is modified, implementation uncertain</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Recommendation to include SBA/CA as part of high-stakes SSC examination is not implemented. Unknown whether it will be included as part of the JSC examination. SBA/CA takes place in some schools, but no monitoring or recent training to sustain reform initiatives</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


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This report highlighted the problem of untrained teachers, rather than who is selected to teach.

75. Efforts to support reform of the teacher recruitment process were also supported by ADB through the 2004 TQISEP, financed through an ADB loan and Canadian International Development Agency grant funds. The project’s aims were to reform the teacher training system at secondary level (grades 6–10) by “establishing and building the capacity of the Non-Government Teachers’ Registration and Certification Authority (NTRCA).” The project proposal describes the vision for this agency as follows:

The Project will support the establishment of NTRCA for secondary education. After undertaking an accredited training program and examination, and obtaining an approved initial teacher training qualification, a teacher may be registered as qualified after carrying out a successful first year of probationary teaching... A policy will be approved prior to loan effectiveness and implemented during the Project that only trained and registered secondary school teachers will be allowed to teach in secondary schools (footnote 55).

76. “An accredited training program” refers to the fact that there are many poor-quality private teacher training colleges (TTCs) where one can “buy a teaching certificate.” Because teachers with a certificate receive a higher starting salary, some individuals are concerned with obtaining a certificate, regardless of the quality of the training program. There could be more quality control if individuals were required to complete their training at one of the 14 government TTCs prior to passing the NTRCA examination, said one informant.

77. The TQISEP proposal also envisioned that the establishment of NTRCA would mitigate the risk of abuse and rent-seeking in hiring practices in private secondary schools, since the recruitment of trained, qualified, and registered teachers would be linked to the subvention provided by the government for these schools. Under TQISEP I, MOE staff participated in overseas training and study tours regarding teacher registration and certification as well as the accreditation process in preparation for establishing and running NTRCA (footnote 58). By 2004, the World Bank seemingly had changed its position regarding the need to reform the teacher recruitment process for nongovernment schools, as it supported establishment of the NTRCA through its ESDSC (2004), ESDSC II (2006), and ESDSC III (2007) (footnote 21). Bangladesh’s Cabinet approved the establishment of NTRCA in 2004, and, in the following year, Parliament passed the Non-Government Teachers’ Registration and Certification Act. NTRCA conducts registration examinations for individuals seeking to become teachers at nongovernment schools. NTRCA conducted its first round of examinations in November 2005 and its tenth round in 2014.

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56 Interview: senior education advisor, nongovernment organization (NGO).
57 Interview: ADB-supported project deputy director.
78. DSHE provides 100% salary support to nongovernment schools that hire teachers who have passed the NTRCA examination. A World Bank report notes that “by tying MPO (monthly pay order) subventions to the recruitment of certified teachers, DSHE managed to enforce the hiring of certified teachers by school management committees/governing bodies warding off any political influence in the recruitment of teachers” (footnote 21, p. 4). Several key informants mentioned the influential role of ADB and the World Bank with regard to supporting the establishment and running of NTRCA. Key informants reported the establishment of NTRCA to be a “success” of the TQISEP and that it was established through World Bank pressure in order to enhance the quality of the recruitment of good quality teachers. A 2007 World Bank-funded independent evaluation found the NTRCA teacher certification process to be “successful” and that “rent-seeking in registering nongovernment [sic] schools or certifying teachers has considerably diminished in the past years (footnote 21, p. 12).” In the first 3 years of certifying teachers, “no single case of malpractice in teacher certification has been reported.”

79. However, key informants raised concerns regarding the certification process. One pointed out that NTRCA examination questions cover teaching content and not pedagogy and that NTRCA is headed by administrators rather than educators. Another informant raised concerns about the level of the examination questions being low: “If you look at the questions and go through the actual test instrument and look at how these are marked and graded and how many actually passed and so on, I think there is a problem there. I cannot pin it down and cannot give you numbers, but I think this is so.” This informant pointed out that, when considering the teacher recruitment process, attention must also be given to the level of education of individuals taking the examination since national university graduates are widely believed to be better-educated than graduates of degree colleges where many teachers have been educated.

80. Examination pass rates were drastically different when comparing the first round of examinations (58%) and the following 2 years (22% and 19%, respectively), indicating problems with the process. These problems may have been due to the examination questions, the marking system, and/or some form of corruption. A 2008 World Bank reports that the “certification process has been tightened,” reflecting “the drive for excellence and the strong commitment to select the best teachers for a better quality of secondary and higher secondary education (footnote 21, p. 15).”

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G. Teacher Training (Case Study 6)

81. As with teacher recruitment, concerns about teacher training practices have been at the forefront of efforts to reform secondary education since the early 1970s. The 1974 Bangladesh Education Commission Report notes how “in our country we have yet to fully realize that teaching is a profession and it requires training as much as any other profession.” In 1973–1974 only 19% of the 82,000 secondary school teachers were trained.

82. In 1999, roughly 65% of lower secondary school teachers, most of whom taught in nongovernment schools, were untrained, while this was the case for slightly more than 25% of teachers employed at government schools (footnote 10). While some teachers had completed teacher education programs at TTCs, these programs were of poor quality (footnote 10). In-service teacher training occurred only when there was curriculum change and was short term in nature. At this time, TTCs focused solely on pre-service teacher preparation and were incapable of conducting in-service training programs. A 2000 World Bank Education Sector Review noted how “most teaching is done by reading the textbook to the students and having them memorize the answers to the questions at the end of the chapters (footnote 54, p. 67).”

83. In recent years, the government, international development partners, and local advocacy groups recognize the need to provide teachers with in-service and pre-service training to change the teaching–learning process from traditional rote learning to

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active learning.\textsuperscript{64} Thus, all secondary education projects since 1993 have had a teacher training component. This chapter highlights the teacher training components of the following projects: SEDP (1993–2001); HSEP (1993–1998); SESIP (1999–2007); ESDSC I, II, and III (2005–2007); and TQISEP I and II (2004–2017). Figure 6 provides a hypothesized causal mechanism of the teaching training reforms initiated by these interventions.

84. One of the SEDP’s three main components, titled quality improvement, included revision of the teacher training curriculum and the provision of in- and pre-service teacher training through the teacher training institutes. Since Bangladesh’s independence, the textbooks used for teacher education programs had never had been written in the national language of Bangla. Upon revision of the curriculum through the SEDP, 15 new textbooks were written and produced in Bangla. Due to a time shortage, however, teachers were not oriented to the new curriculum. As a result, TTC teachers faced some difficulty in fully grasping and delivering the new curriculum (footnote 36). Through the SEDP, 12,535 teachers received Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) training (39% of whom were female), 657 received training for a master’s of education (53% of whom were female), and approximately 134,000 teachers received training on the revised curriculum in 19 subjects. Female TTC students received a stipend to support their training.

85. In 1991, the majority of Bangladesh’s 13,000 higher secondary teachers (grades 11–12) in 869 institutions were untrained. DSHE regulations did not require individuals to have completed pre-service teacher training to be hired and, once teaching, there were no in-service teacher training opportunities (footnote 26). To improve the quality of teaching at the higher secondary level, one of the ADB-financed HSEP’s four components was focused on teacher training. Under the HSEP, four higher secondary teacher training Institutes were to be established and pre-service and in-service teacher training was to be conducted, including the training of all untrained teachers. Delays in constructing these institutes (increased from four to five) caused significant constraints. A shortage of adequate training facilities resulted in fewer teachers receiving in-service training than planned and also significantly impeded DSHE’s ability to conduct pre-service training programs. As a result, project targets were revised: pre-service program development was eliminated and the target for in-service teacher training was reduced from 9,600 to 5,000 teachers. By the end of the project, 4,821 teachers had received in-service training. Failure to reach the target was attributed primarily to financial and staffing constraints.

86. The ADB-financed SESIP, a follow-up project to the SEDP, included a component designed to enhance the quality of teaching through improved teacher education. ADB provided 7 months of technical support to develop the SESIP (footnote 10). The SESIP proposed secondary teacher education reform by supporting the development of a comprehensive teacher education policy for pre- and in-service teacher education, as well as providing institutional support. It supported 20 government-approved recommendations made by the 2001 Secondary Teacher Education Task Force. The teacher education curriculum was revised, accredited by the National University of Bangladesh, approved by the government, and introduced into all public and private teacher training institutions in 2007. The revised curriculum aimed to move teachers’ practice from rote learning to active teaching and learning methods and “was developed on the basis of a comparison of current programs with

regional and world practices, and on the outcomes of three special research studies (footnote 55, p. 6).” The SESIP provided various types of training, including international training, in-country training, and training by the National Academy for Educational Management for 1,700 teachers. Under the SESIP, a competency-based B.Ed. program was to be implemented under the TQISEP. (The SESIP proposal also expects that MOE would increase the recurrent budget for teacher training by at least 10% annually so that the training begun under the SESIP could continue following its implementation.)

87. The ESDSC was designed to support three policy areas, including to enhance teacher quality by supporting the government’s objective to develop a comprehensive in-service training program. One of the ESDSC’s seven key performance indicators was the percentage of teachers completing in-service training. The target was 25% by the end of the ESDSC III (2007). While the percentage of teachers who received in-service training doubled from 10% in 2003 to approximately 21% in 2007 (footnote 21), the ESDSC’s target was not reached. (Data regarding in-service teacher training was missing from the Implementation Status and Results Report for ESDSC II, as some indicators were omitted.) The 2008 ESDSC report notes that “MOE implements teacher training plan for all new and head teachers. 20% of existing untrained secondary education teachers trained and certified (footnote 21, p. 10).” The low ESDSC target indicates the severe lack of in-service teacher training opportunities for an education system with so many untrained teachers.

88. The TQISEP I was designed to address the “acute shortage of trained secondary school teachers” by enhancing the quality of pre- and in-service teacher training (footnote 21). TQISEP’s components included: (i) establishing an integrated secondary teacher education system, (ii) training head teachers and administrators, (iii) developing and implementing an in-service training program for all untrained teachers, (iv) providing support to TTCs (government and private accredited institutions) to develop and implement a compulsory in-service professional development training for all teachers, (v) training teacher trainers, (vi) improving teacher training materials, (vii) improving the teacher training accreditation criteria and processes, and (viii) supporting policy reform to ensure all new teachers have earned a B.Ed. from a government pre-service training institution or a private TTC.

89. The TQISEP I trained school staff and administrators at 18,500 out of 19,070 secondary schools (both government and nongovernment). These included school management committee members, head teachers, and assistant teachers. Secondary school administrators at the district and Upazila levels were also trained. MOE staff numbering 503 persons participated in overseas study tours and training that included teacher educator training, special needs training, inclusive education training, and master’s degree education. In-service teacher training was also conducted with 459,633 assistant teachers, using the Continuing Professional Development training course (footnote 61).

65 “(Fourteen) government teacher’s training colleges and 106 non-government teacher's training colleges are offering B.Ed. course. Dhaka University's Institute of Education and Research (IER) offers 4-year B. Ed. (Hons), M. Ed., M. Phil and PhD degrees in Education. Bangladesh Open University also offers B. Ed. and M. Ed. courses through distance mode. Some private universities are also offering B. Ed. and M. Ed. courses. The infrastructure, quality of training system, contents taught in all these institutions except the IER of Dhaka University are, to a large extent, of below standard.” S. M. R. Islam, 2012, Ensuring Quality Teacher’s Training for Secondary Education. Financial Express. 7 July. http://www.thefinancialexpress-bd.com/old/more.php?news_id=135702&date=2012-07-07
Despite efforts to improve the quality of pre- and in-service teacher training through the various projects mentioned above, the quality of teaching continues to be a significant problem as noted in the 2010 NEP: “The existing teachers’ training system of our country is very traditional, insufficient, certificate-based, loaded with theoretical knowledge, incomplete in practical learning, based on rote learning and conventional testing system.” In addition, the practice of obtaining a B.Ed. from low-quality private institutions rather than a higher-quality national TTC continues to be popular. Private TTCs were described as “certificate mills” by one key informant.

**Figure 6: A Hypothesized Causal Mechanism of the Full Implementation of Teacher Training Reforms**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Causal Claim 1: Financial and political support (present)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Government articulates its need to improve the quality of teacher training in NEP 2000 and NEP 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Government and ADB signal commitment to improve teacher training through approval of SEDP, HSEP, SESIP, and TQISEP I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Government and World Bank signal commitment to improve teaching training by approving ESDSCs I-III</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Causal Claim 2: Technical and managerial support (present)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• While some degree of technical assistance is commonly part of interventions designed to improve the quality of teaching, TQISEP I was the largest and most comprehensive of these types of interventions. Technical assistance was aimed at improving national policy, planning, and coordination of teacher education, strengthening institutional capacity of agencies involved in providing teacher training, and establishing an effective teacher management system to ensure quality education at secondary level</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Causal Claim 3: Bureaucratic arena facilitates reform</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Teacher training occurs through various projects</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome: Policy implemented</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Teacher training is conducted by the government and through various projects</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


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CHAPTER 3

Policy Change in Curriculum, Student Assessment, and Teaching

91. This chapter uses the case-study evidence provided in Chapter 2’s discussion of policy reform to compare the extent to which targeted outcomes were realized. Analysis is provided of the contribution made by various causal factors, including development partner support in general and that of ADB in particular. Hypothesis testing is conducted by first identifying whether the hypothesized causal mechanisms provided in Chapter 2 are consistent with the available evidence and then subjecting each to a series of tests, with the goal being to maximize the certainty and uniqueness of causal explanations. The overall goal is to maximize the certainty and uniqueness of the hypothesized causal mechanisms, thereby minimizing the likelihood that outcomes related to policy reform initiatives could be accounted for by alternative explanations. A certain prediction is unequivocal, while a unique prediction is accounted for by only one theory or piece of evidence under consideration. Following Stephan Van Evera’s explanation of the causal process tracing method (Appendix 4), the paper distinguishes four kinds of tests of causal inference representing different degrees of certainty and uniqueness: hoop, straw-in-the-wind, smoking gun, and doubly decisive tests.

92. The paper focuses on passing hoop tests, whereby a given piece of evidence must be present for a hypothesis to be valid. Passing a hoop test thus affirms the relevance of a hypothesis but does not confirm it. To maximize test strength, the paper seeks to identify hypotheses that are high in certainty and uniqueness, thereby reducing the size of the hoop and increasing the level of confidence in concluding that the specific part of the mechanism was present in comparison to plausible alternatives (see Appendix 4, Figure A4). The results of these tests are discussed in the concluding chapter. Table 1 provides the basis for this analysis. It details the extent to which outcomes materialized and evaluates the contribution ADB made.

A. Curriculum Reform

93. Financial and political support. In all three attempts at curriculum revision, both financial and political support from the government and ADB were present to initiate the reform process. The process of curriculum reform was facilitated and accelerated by ADB-supported project funding. The downside of this reliance on project funding is that curriculum revision has tended to occur in one-time development cycles, rather than as a continuous process. In the absence of ADB-supported funding, curriculum revision would presumably have taken place on a more limited scale and/or more infrequently.

94. Some key informants suggested that curriculum reform has tended to take place in a politicized environment. Curriculum represents a source of rivalry between the two main political parties in Bangladesh, and each uses it to disseminate its
preferred version of history. According to one key informant, the politicized nature of curriculum development has worsened in recent years. Still, each phase of curriculum revision had the support of the government and ADB, which provided the initial political support necessary. Indeed, where political support was lacking—as seen in the stance of the current government toward the proposed uni-track curriculum—the given reform was not implemented and a new phase of curriculum revision began.

95. Technical and managerial support. TA and managerial support have also contributed to the processes of curriculum reform. Strengthening capacity at NCTB, for instance, has been a core component of curriculum reform initiatives. To aid in the revision process that culminated in the National Curriculum of 2012, the SESDP supported capacity development at NCTB. This included funding 20 NCTB personnel to pursue master’s degrees locally in curriculum development and/or implementation as well as to travel abroad (mainly to Australia, Malaysia, and New Zealand) for experience-sharing and further skills development. The project also engaged international consultants who were reportedly instrumental in the curriculum revision process.

96. Many of the reforms in the curriculum over the past 20 years have sought to move toward global educational norms. Dissemination of global norms is a complex process. ADB-supported projects have acted as conduits of this policy knowledge and its learning through experience-sharing, hiring of international consultants, and training of national project personnel abroad.

97. Capacity development at NCTB is necessary in order to institutionalize curriculum development as a continuous process and leveraged in-house expertise. Although capacity building has improved considerably at NCTB since the early 1990s, capacity remains a concern. Actual curriculum writing is still conducted by consultants, with NCTB personnel acting as managers of this outside expertise. Recruitment remains overly dependent on project-based funding and turnover is frequent. Of the 20 curriculum specialists trained under the SESDP, for example, one key informant estimated that only three remain at NCTB. Moreover, the transfer system for government employees appoints people with little or no background in curriculum and textbook development who tend to stay for a short time and then move on. This system limits the building of specialized knowledge at NCTB and the effective implementation of curriculum reforms. The evidence associated with capacity development at NCTB suggests that TA and managerial support have helped build and sustain curriculum reform, specifically the development of revised curriculum.

67 Interview: senior education advisor, NGO.
68 Interview: curriculum specialist, NCTB.
69 Interviews: academic and project consultant; and senior education advisor, NGO.
### Table 1: Contribution of ADB-Supported Interventions in Realizing Intended Outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome Area: Quality of Curriculum</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Commentary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Failed implementation of uni-track curriculum</td>
<td>Outcome realized to small degree and evidence that intervention made an important contribution</td>
<td>Although the proposed uni-track curriculum was adopted and developed with financial and technical support from SESIP, the reform was postponed and ultimately abandoned in response to public opposition. The new government elected in 2008 undertook to revise the curriculum but maintained the existing multi-track framework.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partial implementation, then abandonment, of textbook privatization</td>
<td>Outcome realized in part and evidence that intervention made an important contribution</td>
<td>Textbook privatization was adopted and partially implemented with financial and technical support from both ADB and the World Bank. Response in bureaucratic arena was unfavorable, as NCTB continued to publish its own textbooks. The new government elected in 2008 reverted to textbook publishing fully under NCTB purview.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Outcome Area: Quality of Student Assessment</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Commentary</th>
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<tr>
<td>Phased implementation of creative questions method in national examinations</td>
<td>Outcome realized in full and evidence that intervention made a crucial contribution</td>
<td>Reforms to public examinations were initiated with financial and technical support from SESIP and SESDP. Although implementation of creative questions was initially stalled in response to public opposition, its uptake was subsequently facilitated by support of influential opinion leaders.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Modified and uncertain implementation of SBA</td>
<td>Outcome realized in part and evidence that intervention made an important contribution</td>
<td>Reforms to student assessment were initiated with financial and technical support from SESIP and SESDP. Implementation of SBA as part of SSC examination was stalled in response to public opposition. The decision was made to include SBA in JSC examination, but an official government order is still outstanding.</td>
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<th>Outcome Area: Quality of Teaching</th>
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<td>Full implementation of teacher training reforms; training conducted through various projects</td>
<td>Outcome realized in full and evidence that intervention made a crucial contribution</td>
<td>Teacher training has been conducted with financial and technical support of various ADB-supported projects, particularly TQISEP I and II, the largest and most comprehensive projects designed to enhance pre- and in-service training. Since costs associated with training programs are immense, financial support has been critical.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Partial implementation of NTRCA as both a registration and certification body</td>
<td>Outcome yet to be realized and evidence that intervention made an important contribution</td>
<td>NTRCA was established in 2005 with financial and technical support from ABD (SESIP and TQISEP I) and the World Bank (ESDSCs I-III). NTRCA has conducted 10 rounds of examination and registers teachers to be hired in nongovernmental schools. For reasons that are unclear, it has not yet established a teacher certification process.</td>
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98. **Response within the bureaucratic arena.** In all three attempts at curriculum revision over the past 20 years, the bureaucratic response has been favorable toward reform initiatives. In each case, government orders were issued to reform the curriculum and both the NCTB Chairman and project staff advocated for reforms and conducted the necessary development work to update and revise the curriculum. Following MOE’s decision to introduce the uni-track curriculum, the SESIP and NCTB conducted an initial series of workshops in five regions to communicate the rationale for the uni-track curriculum to key stakeholders, including principals, teachers, district education officers, school management committee members, parents, and journalists. Curriculum development took place in 2004 under the guidance of 13 subject content committees formed by NCTB with the approval of MOE. Completed in November 2004, the draft curriculum was reviewed first by an expert committee headed by the team leader of SESIP technical assistance and then at six divisional stakeholder workshops and a national workshop. After incorporating the recommendations, the subject committees prepared final drafts of the curriculum for 13 subjects. In March 2005, NCCC, the highest approval body for national curriculum, approved the uni-track curriculum and recommended it be disseminated through teacher training prior to school-level implementation.

99. Two elements of the bureaucratic arena constitute impediments to reform initiatives: First, the management structure at NCTB limited the institutionalization of ongoing curriculum development over the years. Although the agency is now divided into separate wings responsible for textbooks and curriculum, the vastness of the tasks related to the publication and printing of textbooks leaves little room for curriculum development. Second, the lack of a national curriculum policy framework has hindered the streamlining of long-term planning. At present, curriculum reform is largely seen to occur on an ad hoc basis and depends on the influence and funding of development partners. An overarching framework would help to regulate the process and make it more predictable by establishing “a clear set of principles to inform curriculum decision-making, and lay out the structures and processes upon which to base curriculum development, management and implementation.” On balance, bureaucratic influence has been one of facilitation, but impediments did exist.

100. **Response within the public arena.** Since the policy characteristics associated with curriculum revision have a direct impact on students, parents, and teachers, responses to curriculum reform have tended to occur in the public arena, as well. Where curriculum revisions have entailed updating within the existing multi-stream system, public reactions have not impeded the reforms. In the case of the uni-track curriculum, in contrast, public opposition from parents, teachers, civil society groups, and prominent educationalists hindered its introduction. The resistance centered around three main objections. First, a few prominent and influential educationalists raised a concern that the quality of science education would be diluted and ignored under the proposed uni-track curriculum. Some opposed the reform in a column of a leading Bengali newspaper, and in a follow-up article the reform was described as a “clever deception.” This resonated with middle-class parents who worried that science

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70 Interviews: curriculum specialist, NCTB; and academic and project consultant.
71 Interview: assessment specialist, BEDU.
72 One key informant associated these influential figures with the Awami League, in opposition at the time.
education would be downgraded in the move from a specialized, tracked system to one where science would be taught to all students up to grade 10.\(^{74}\)

101. The second objection was that the secondary education system was not ready for the change to a uni-track curriculum, since it would require qualified teachers capable of teaching an expanded curriculum in all schools, as well as necessary resources, such as science equipment and labs, which many schools did not have.\(^{75}\) Teachers were concerned with their responsibilities under the proposed change, leading some to organize under the National Committee to Resist Unified Education.\(^{76}\) Lastly, there were concerns that the BNP government was using the uni-track curriculum to place greater emphasis on religious studies.\(^{77}\) Secular civil society groups were opposed to this move and charged that it would fuel religious extremism and militancy.\(^{78}\) These objections intensified into public protests, with protesters forming human chains and mothers demonstrating in front of the National Press Club in Dhaka. The government decided to delay introduction of the uni-track curriculum, presumably judging its political costs to be too high. The government elected in 2008 chose not to reintroduce the idea, instead pursuing curriculum revision under the existing multi-stream system.\(^{79}\)

102. While most experts interviewed for this paper agreed that the idea for the uni-track curriculum was sound, they contended that it had not been “sold” properly. Its development had been conducted too hastily and sufficient confidence-building had not been established among key stakeholders.\(^{80}\) In particular, the consultation and preparation of teachers was considered lacking.\(^{81}\) A phased approach focusing on improvements to science and math instruction (in particular) under the existing multi-track system may have worked better to gradually instill confidence and pave the way for the transition to a uni-track curriculum.\(^{82}\) Moreover, the reliance on evidence and policy advice from development partners may have been insufficiently attuned to winning over public opinion. When opposition to the uni-track curriculum became widespread, vocal, and organized, project personnel appeared unprepared for the resistance. This evidence suggests that the public arena influences the curriculum reform process; the widespread public opposition revealed a lack of political support that policy elites could harness to introduce the reform.

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\(^{74}\) Interviews: ADB-supported project deputy director; academic and project consultant; curriculum specialists, NCTB; and former chairman, NCTB.

\(^{75}\) Interviews: senior education officer, development agency; ADB-supported project deputy director; and senior education advisor, NGO. Under the multi-track system, a school could choose to offer only the courses in one of the three specializations, and that presented a barrier to the application of a uni-track curriculum.


\(^{77}\) Interviews: senior education officer, development agency; and former chairman, NCTB.


\(^{79}\) Building on the experiences of developing the uni-track curriculum, the SESDP included provisions to develop and implement a public information dissemination strategy to orient parents, teachers, students, and other stakeholders to the new curricula and to alleviate their potential concerns. Early in the subsequent revision process, NCTB conducted a curriculum review and a needs-assessment evaluation for grades 6–12. This was the first time such a comprehensive study had been conducted in Bangladesh. As part of this process, NCTB staff traveled throughout Bangladesh to consult with various stakeholders, including parents, teachers, school management committees, and political leaders.

\(^{80}\) Interviews: former chairman, NCTB; curriculum specialist, NCTB; and academic and project consultant.

\(^{81}\) Interviews: academic and project consultant; and former chairman, NCTB.

\(^{82}\) Interview: senior education advisor, NGO.
B. Textbook Provision

103. Financial and political support. Efforts to privatize textbook production received financial support under the ADB-supported SESIP and World Bank-supported ESDSC. The reform initiative received political support from the BNP government to privatize the publishing of grades 9–10 textbooks by 2003. Initial political support was strengthened also by the joint efforts of ADB and the World Bank. With the change of government in 2008, however, government support for privatization was lost. The Awami League Government implemented the provision of free textbooks, a policy assumed to be in better alignment with its ideological underpinnings and which it claims as a major achievement. The contrast between the BNP government’s support for privatization and the Awami League Government’s support for free textbooks underscores the role of political interests and ideology in spurring particular reforms forward. Again, the evidence supports the causal explanation that both financial and political support was required to initiate and sustain textbook reforms.

104. Technical and managerial support. This was strengthened in support of implementing textbook privatization. Taking up a recommendation from an SESIP feasibility study, MOE established the Independent Textbook Evaluation Committee to evaluate and approve textbooks submitted to MOE by private publishers. The SESIP also provided support to private sector publishers, editors, and authors on textbook planning, design of instructional materials, presentation of learning materials, and editing techniques (footnote 55). However, the TA was less influential in the reform to provide free textbooks. ADB-supported capacity building at NCTB no doubt influenced the efficiency and management of the policy, but it had been conducted in support of other initiatives than the provision of free textbooks specifically. Some informants mentioned that the new NCTB Chairman is a particularly competent manager and that has influenced the efficiency with which free textbooks have been produced and distributed. On balance, therefore, the evidence suggests that technical and managerial capacity for textbook reforms were strengthened.

105. Response within the bureaucratic arena. The bureaucratic response to textbook privatization was mixed. Although the government supported the policy and moved forward with its adoption, it continued in allowing NCTB to publish its own textbooks. This was ultimately an impediment to privatization. Textbook publishing is a lucrative component of NCTB’s activities, with employees receiving honorariums (or salary top-ups) for this work. There are thus a host of embedded incentives related to textbook printing and publication. NCTB was hence not keen to give up this activity altogether, and that constrained full implementation of privatization. In contrast, the provision of free textbooks works with the existing incentive structure at NCTB, which facilitated its implementation. Both pieces of evidence support the causal explanation that the bureaucratic arena influences policy reform. In the first case, the incentive structure at NCTB acted as an impediment. In the second, NCTB was a facilitator.

106. Response within the public arena. There is limited evidence to suggest that reforms related to textbook provision engendered a strong response from the public arena. The public perceptions of NCTB textbooks as being better suited to prepare students for examinations contributed to the limited success of the policy reform. This

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83 Interview: senior education officer, development agency. The Education Minister, for example, is a former member of the Communist Party.

84 Interviews: curriculum specialist, NCTB; and academic and project consultant.

85 Interview: senior education advisor, NGO.
stemmed from the decision that NCTB would continue to publish its own textbooks. The current government emphasizes free textbooks as a major achievement aimed at helping families, thereby highlighting a popular policy to buttress public support. Evidence of this was not directly observed by this study, however. The evidence is thus generally supportive of the hypothesis that the public arena has moderated textbook reforms, but this causal explanation appears to be relatively weak.

C. Public Examination Reform

107. Financial and political support. In the two phases of public examination reform, both financial and political support was present to initiate the reform process. The loan approval and proposal to reform public examinations were contingent on financial support from the government and ADB. In 1999, both collaborated via the SESIP to develop better means to evaluate student achievement beyond the level of recall, involving abilities such as analytical thinking, evaluation, and problem solving. This was the first explicit attempt from an international donor to reform the secondary examination system. Notably, policymakers’ desire to reform the public examination system dates back at least to the early 1970s. At that time, the country’s first Education Commission had recommended that staff at each of the BISEs should be trained in measurement and assessment techniques in order to develop examination questions that would measure student competencies (i.e., not simply the recall of facts) and provide a more “dependable yardstick” of student learning and progress.86 The public examination reform was not initiated until almost 30 years later, when financial and technical support was provided by ADB. The evidence therefore suggests that political support alone was insufficient. Rather, both financial and political support was needed to initiate examination reform.

108. Technical and managerial support. Financial and political support assisted with the capacity building for specialists and managers at BEDU, as well as teachers and master-trainings. The four specialists who attended the international training course on assessment and measurement techniques spearheaded the initial reform process. They did so through introduction of the new model of structured and/or creative questions, development of the reform proposal relating to the SSC examinations, carrying out a pilot study, and development of teacher manuals. This core team championed bringing about the reforms based on evidence and advice: they appealed to good practice, evidence-based arguments, and providing advisory support. It is largely on the basis of this information and evidence that the government approved the SSC examination reform in 2005. The evidence therefore suggests that technical and managerial resources played a role in the examination reform process.

109. Response within the bureaucratic arena. In the two phases of public examination reform, the bureaucratic response was favorable toward the objectives. In 2003, MOE issued a directive to the SESIP and NCTB to take a joint initiative to reform the SSC examination system, thereby signaling a commitment to examination reform. In July 2005, the reform to introduce structured and/or creative questions was given official approval, with a plan to introduce the revised SSC examinations from 2009 onwards. From 2008, the new government (Awami League) continued to provide bureaucratic support for examination reform. In June 2009, the government made public that the structured and/or creative question method would be introduced in the

SSC examinations. The new questions model also became the key student assessment reform in the NEP 2010. Overall, the influence with respect to examination reform has been one of facilitation—by both the BNP and Awami League. This is one of the few reforms where continuity in reform initiatives and implementation plans was observed.

110. **Response within the public arena:** Initial impediment. Starting in 2004, when the proposed reforms to public examinations became public, they generated substantial opposition from teachers, students, and parents. This was largely driven by concerns that teachers did not have sufficient training to develop the new style of questions for public examinations and that students’ chances of securing high marks would be hampered, given that memorization and direct recall would no longer be sufficient for obtaining high grades. The public reaction was strong because the proposed policy reforms would have had an immediate and direct impact on broad sectors of the general public (i.e., more than 2 million students and their parents).

111. **Subsequent facilitation.** Under the SESDP, it was noted that changes to examinations would need to be disseminated widely to the public in a timely and careful manner to build confidence. In 2008, a national workshop was held at the Bangladesh Institute of Administration and Management, and the SESIP/SESDP team of assessment specialists presented the proposed examination system reforms to the public, mainly the use of new questions that would assess high-order thinking skills. The proposed reform gained the support of a few influential individuals, including well-known writers and social activists. A committee was formed that included influential individuals whose “words carry a lot of weight,” according to one key informant. These individuals formed a standing advisory committee and made a recommendation that the reform to the examination questions should be implemented but suggested that it could be better communicated to the public using simple, less intimidating language. Hence, the reform was named the “creative questions method,” highlighting that it was intending to improve student creativity. The support of these policy champions and opinion leaders marked a crucial turning point for implementation of the policy reform to the public examination system. The evidence is thus supportive of the causal explanation that the public arena has influenced examination reforms. The implementation of the reform to examination questions was facilitated by public communications, messaging, and advocacy. Gaining the endorsement of influential writers and social activists was considered a good “PR exercise,” according to a key informant.

D. **School-Based Assessment**

112. **Financial and political support.** In the two phases of SBA reform, both financial and political support from the government and ADB were present to initiate the reform process. The proposal to introduce SBA in grades 6–9 was contingent on financial support from the government and ADB. Policymakers in Bangladesh have shown a commitment to introduce SBA. The country’s first Education Commission in the 1970s had introduced the idea of SBA and recommended that classroom teachers be trained to monitor and assess student progress throughout the year. The commission had recommended that student assessment practices be a synthesis of public examinations and school-based assessments, with equal weight given to both.

113. **Technical and managerial support.** In 2003, four specialists from the NCTB Secondary Assessment Unit attended an international training course on assessment and measurement at the University of Melbourne. This core group of technical officers revitalized the notion of SBA into policy dialogue and provided leadership for its
development and implementation. The SESIP also sought to improve the use of regular SBA through the training of secondary school teachers across secondary schools in 2005/2006. Technical and managerial capacity thus influenced the adoption and implementation of SBA. However, while there was an initial push to get SBA onto the policy agenda through the capacity building of technical experts and then into schools through the training of classroom teachers, this initial momentum was not sustained.

114. **Response within the bureaucratic arena.** In the two phases of SBA over the years, the bureaucratic response has been cautious. Although the government developed and piloted the SBA model, it was reluctant to implement changes at the policy and school levels. In 2005, MOE issued a government order to implement the SBA system for students in grades 6–9. This decision was based on “principle,” according to one key informant, rather than genuine interest or capacity to pursue the reform. No date to implement the reform was set and no decision was taken as to whether the marks would be integrated with those of the public examinations. The stakes for actively pursuing the initial SBA policy reform (under the SESIP) were potentially high for the government. There was strong public opposition to the SBA, and this could have been potentially costly in the forthcoming elections. The government did not have the political resources to face the opposition. Therefore, although there was bureaucratic support for developing the evidence and teacher training for SBA, the government did not actively pursue implementation efforts.

115. The NEP 2010 made no reference to SBA policy reform, thereby suggesting that it was not a policy priority. The lack of any mention of SBA was notable given the strong commitment to student assessment reform (primarily creative questions) in the NEP 2010. In January 2014, the Education Secretary made a decision to incorporate SBA/continuous assessment as part of the lower-stakes JSC examination from 2015. An official order was still outstanding, however, and it is uncertain whether this decision would be implemented. The government facilitated SBA/continuous assessment reform initiatives with respect to evidence and advisory support. However, its reluctance to institutionalize the SBA/continuous assessment reforms has slowed the reform process and signaled that this is not a policy priority.

116. **Response within the public arena.** The negative public response to SBA meant that it has been a politically difficult reform to pursue. Despite progress between 2003 and 2006 in terms of developing evidence and advisory support, the government was reluctant to pursue the reform, especially in anticipation of elections. Unlike examination reform (creative questions), there has been an absence of policy champions to mobilize the public reaction. Although the government signaled a commitment to implement SBA/continuous assessment as part of the JSC examination, this decision suggests that it was trying to mitigate the public reaction by introducing the reform in the lower-stakes examinations and by reducing the percentage of overall marks for which SBA will account. Response within the public arena influenced the SBA/continuous assessment reform process. The government has been deficient in political capital needed to manage widespread public opposition.

**E. Teacher Recruitment**

117. **Financial and political support.** The need to improve the quality of teaching through reform of the teacher recruitment process for nongovernment schools had been recognized and articulated by the government in the NEP 2000. The government, through subventions, has covered and continues to cover a very large proportion of teachers’ salaries at nongovernment schools. Prior to the establishment of NTRCA, it
nevertheless had no authority to control and/or monitor who was hired. For this reform to be implemented, a law was passed enabling the government to have such authority. Currently, the government provides subventions to teachers who are both employed by nongovernment schools and who have passed the NTRCA examination, thus encouraging schools to hire teachers who have passed this exam.\footnote{While a school management committee at a nongovernment school may still hire teachers who have not passed the NTRCA examination, the school will not receive a monthly pay order for these teachers.}

118. ADB supported reform to the teacher recruitment process as early as 1999 through the SESIP and then the TQISEP. The latter provided the funding and mechanism to support the government in conceptualizing, establishing, and supporting NTRCA, an agency responsible to oversee the teacher recruitment process for nongovernment schools. The World Bank also provided support for NTRCA through its ESDSC I, II, and III.\footnote{In 2000, the World Bank supported the decentralized teacher recruitment process used at nongovernment schools at the time. In 2004, however, it began supporting the reform.} The evidence suggests that financial support from ADB and the World Bank along with political support were needed for this reform. The government signaled its support to strengthen the recruitment process for nongovernment teachers in NEP 2000 and in its approval of the SESIP, TQISEP, and ESDSC I–III. However, financial support was also required to establish NTRCA and for it to conduct examinations.

119. Technical and managerial support. Under the SESIP and TQISEP, technical support was provided to support reforms in the teacher recruitment process, particularly in regard to the establishment and running of NTRCA. Under TQISEP, MOE staff participated in overseas training and study tours regarding teacher registration and certification as well as accreditation. This training was provided to support the capabilities of MOE staff to establish and run NTRCA. Thus, technical and managerial capacity has influenced the reform of teacher recruitment.

120. Response within the bureaucratic arena. The bureaucratic response to this reform was positive, given the evidence that the NTRCA was established and had been running for a decade. NTRCA was envisioned to do more than just register individuals who had passed the NTRCA examination, making them eligible to be hired as teachers at nongovernment schools. Responsibilities listed on the NTRCA website indicate the agency also has a mandate to further develop teacher standards and requirements, including to establish a teacher certification process. The evidence thus supports the conclusion that resources within the bureaucratic arena influence reform initiatives related to teacher recruitment at nongovernment secondary schools. Because the teacher certification process has not been implemented, however, reforms to the nongovernment school teacher recruitment process have arguably been implemented in part and thus supported in part within the bureaucratic arena.

121. Response within the public arena. The evidence suggests that the policy reform initiatives regarding teacher recruitment did not reach the public arena because they did not directly or immediately impact broad sectors of society (i.e., students and families), as was the case with reforms to curriculum, public examinations, and SBA/continuous assessment. The reform initiatives to teacher recruitment would have a more indirect impact on student learning and examination results. Therefore, the public arena did not influence reform initiatives related to teacher recruitment at nongovernment secondary schools.
F. Teacher Training

122. Financial and political support. As early as 1974, the government had articulated the critical need to improve the quality of teacher training. This concern was also reflected in both the NEP 2000 and NEP 2010. The cost of teacher training is immense, especially given the number of secondary school teachers in Bangladesh who are untrained or who have never received in-service training, and is a critical factor hindering MOE’s ability to provide such training. Given the central role training plays in efforts to improve teacher quality, teacher training has been an important component of all development partner support in the sector during the period covered by this paper. The TQISEP I was the most comprehensive of these projects. The evidence supports the causal explanation that both financial support from ADB and political support were needed to initiate and implement teacher training reforms.

123. Technical and managerial support. Because a teachers’ practice is influenced and affected by many factors, measuring the impact of teacher training is extremely difficult. As a result, it is difficult to isolate the impact of training on a teacher’s performance. While there is evidence of more technical and managerial support in the number of training opportunities provided through various projects, evidence as to the quality of these various training programs, especially in terms of impact, is not available. Nevertheless, the number of training opportunities provided suggests that technical and managerial capacity influenced the reform process in teacher training.

124. Response within the bureaucratic arena. There is evidence that the bureaucratic arena has generally facilitated the reform efforts pertaining to teacher training over the past 20 years. Technical, managerial, financial, and political resources have consistently been available to policy elites, as noted above. Reform efforts have been consistently applied through changes of government. Teacher training does not represent an outcome area where successive governments have altered the direction of previous reforms upon taking office. The evidence thus supports a view that resources within the bureaucratic arena influenced reform initiatives related to teacher recruitment.

125. Response within the public arena. Similar to teacher recruitment reforms, there is evidence that the policy reform initiatives in teacher training did not reach the public arena because the impact on students and families was not direct or immediately visible. Therefore, the evidence suggests that the public arena did not influence reform initiatives related to teacher training at nongovernment secondary schools.
This chapter discusses key findings arising from interrogating hypotheses against the case study evidence presented above and presents recommendations. The results and recommendations are tempered by the fact that policy change tends to take a long time to realize its objectives. As the case studies show, the policy process can span 30 years or more and the reforms continue to evolve even after policies have been implemented or abandoned. Two of the six policy reforms (creative questions and teacher training) were implemented as planned and sustained over several years. Four of the six reforms were not implemented as planned: uni-track curriculum and textbook privatization were abandoned, SBA has not yet been implemented, and the NTRCA has not been implemented as a certification body. This does not suggest that the projects that had components on reform failed in their entirety, as their investment components may have done well. But the findings do suggest that reform efforts made through projects need to be continuously reviewed and that policies should be allowed sufficient time to mature before final judgment is passed on whether their impacts have been successful or not. Implementation challenges and shortcomings should not be mistaken for failures associated with the policy itself.89

The authors hope that ADB’s new Secondary Education Sector Investment Program, approved in 2013 with a megaloon of $500 million as a follow-up to the SESDP and implemented with significant support from the International Development Association ($250 million), will continue work in the six areas as in other areas and meet with full success. The operations department has reported that ADB had extensive policy consultations with the government and a wide range of stakeholders. Key to the new approach is a results-based lending approach, with progress on disbursement-linked indicators being a key incentive for government progress on capacity development, reforms, and investment. Initial progress reports suggest that this approach is changing the mindsets of government officials and that the indicators tracked are proving a powerful tool for shifting attention from inputs to achieving results.

This paper illustrates that policy reforms to improve the quality of secondary education are highly complex and shaped by a multitude of interacting factors and actors. These rarely proceed in a linear fashion. Policy reforms were found to constitute an ongoing process, with modifications and reversals, particularly in regard to decision making by policy elites. The decision-making process in all six case studies included a series of formal and informal stages, with numerous interactions with policy elites that included establishment figures and managers of donor agencies, and, in some cases, leaders of popular nonprofit organizations, prominent intellectuals, and journalists.

129. Achieving outright and definite success in terms of implementing specific policy reforms was rare. Policy reform objectives tended to be modified or jettisoned, particularly in response to either a change of government or public resistance to the proposed reforms. Furthermore, determining whether gains in policy reform were significant and lasting is dependent on the observer’s perspective. For example, official donor documents suggest that policy transition to SBA/continuous assessment has been relatively successful and is an ongoing process, while evidence from national policy documents and key informants indicates that SBA/continuous assessment has not been implemented in a meaningful or sustainable manner and the policy activities have mostly been abandoned. Moreover, successfully implementing a reform does not guarantee the longer-term outcome of improving the quality of education. Key informants noted, for example, that the creative questions method was successfully implemented, but they questioned the potential of creative questions to improve the quality of education and student learning outcomes.

A. Key Conclusions

130. Political support and financial support were both necessary to initiate policy reform. Political support was not always sustained through to implementation. The causal explanation concerning the presence of both political and financial support to initiate the policy reform process is supported by all case-study evidence. Generally, political and financial forms of support were mutually interdependent during the initial loan negotiation process; political support depended on the financial support of donor agencies (particularly ADB and the World Bank), and the other way around. There is a high degree of certainty and a convincing amount of support for this explanation inasmuch as each case study provided strong evidence. Because any reform initiative is dependent to some degree on financial resources and political support, this causal explanation has relatively high certainty. However, it has low uniqueness for precisely the same reason. Using the logic of a hoop test (para. 92 and Appendix 4), this causal explanation jumps through a relatively wide hoop.

131. Where the political support becomes more decisive is when a change from one reform initiative to another coincides with a change of government, as in the case of reforms pertaining to the uni-track curriculum and privatization of textbooks. These reforms were initiated under the BNP government but were quickly abandoned by the Awami League when it took office. Initial political support was not always sustained, as these cases illustrate, and that contributed to stalled or failed implementation. Donor agencies appeared to have more bargaining power during the earlier stages of policy formulation, whereas later decisions were largely driven by the domestic political sphere while less attention was given to agreements made earlier with donors during policy formulation.

132. Proposed reforms had been on the domestic political agenda prior to donor involvement, but the political support was insufficient to initiate the reform process without financial support. Several of the reforms discussed in this paper had been on the domestic policy agenda in Bangladesh for several decades, long before any donor involvement. Bangladesh’s first Education Commission Report in the early 1970s had called for reforms regarding textbook privatization, public examinations, teacher training, and school-based assessment. However, the financial support to initiate these reforms was largely absent until the 1990s, when donor agencies began supporting efforts to improve access and quality in the secondary education subsector. This evidence suggests that political support is insufficient to initiate the reform process.
without financial support (in these cases, from international donors, such as ADB and the World Bank).

133. Domestic technical and managerial capacities were necessary to initiate the reforms, but these were not sufficient to sustain the reforms to implementation. The causal explanation concerning the influence of technical and managerial capacity to initiate the policy reform process is also supported by the evidence related to outcomes in curriculum, student assessment, and teacher recruitment and training since the 1990s. Nearly all reform initiatives included components aimed to strengthen technical and managerial capacity. Improvements have occurred as a result. Capacity building efforts focused largely on providing newly recruited mid-level project managers with international training and technical skills development to enable them to effectively design and implement reforms. The causal explanation that strengthening local capacity helps to support reform efforts has a relatively high degree of certainty but a low degree of uniqueness. Efforts to build technical and managerial capacity were less successful at sustaining the reform efforts. That was due in part to the fact that capacity building focused on mid-level project managers, most of whom did not have the decision-making power or political resources ultimately needed to implement the reforms. Furthermore, high staff turnover at this level of management affected continuity and sustainability in the overall reform process.

134. The bureaucratic arena either facilitates or impedes the policy reform process. Greater analytical leverage stems from the causal explanations embedded in expectations about responses within the bureaucratic and public arenas. With regard to the first—that the bureaucratic arena influences policy reforms—differences can be observed across the various outcomes. The incentive structure related to textbook production at NCTB, for example, seriously impeded efforts to privatize textbooks. In this case, this causal explanation has both a relatively high degree of certainty and of uniqueness, inasmuch as the particular mechanism of monetary incentives (honorariums for textbook production) does not apply across cases. Again using the language of the hoop test (para. 92), this explanation clears a narrower hoop. Uni-track curriculum and SBA/continuous assessment are two additional policy reforms initiatives that were impeded in the bureaucratic arena. In the first case, this resulted from a change of government and its different ideological underpinnings as to the nature of secondary education and the duration of a common education for all students. Hence, both curriculum reforms that were initiated under the BNP government were later abandoned under the Awami League government. The policy reform related to implementing SBA/continuous assessment was slowed due to limited interest in the bureaucratic arena from 2008 onwards and potential costs associated with pursuing a publicly unpopular reform. The BNP has continued to promote the policy of having 10 years of common education for all (from grades 1–10), which aligned with education policy reform initiatives related to uni-track education, whereas the Awami League has promoted the policy of having 8 years of common, unified education (grades 1–8) before choosing specific educational streams. The difference in ideals becomes apparent during political shifts from one government to another, and this can drastically change the trajectory of the policy reform process.

135. Policy champions were crucial in helping to reshape public perceptions of reforms. The causal claim that the public arena influences the policy reform process is strongly supported by the evidence from three out of six case studies. Regarding the failed introduction of a uni-track curriculum, for example, the causal explanation that widespread public opposition reduced the political resources available to policy elites and raised the political costs to the government has relatively high degrees of both
Conclusions and Recommendations

The evidence suggests that the negative public response was decisive in the government’s changing its plans. Similarly, public opposition to SBA/continuous assessment meant the reform was not implemented as the SESIP and SESDP projects had planned, which was to be over a 15-year period. Although the reform was agreed in principle, negative public response led to the reform not being implemented. Although the SSC examination reform process began with broad public opposition, several eminent and influential writers, educators, and professionals voiced their strong support for the reform. That effectively garnered widespread public support for the reform. The influence of these policy champions, who were trusted and listened to by the general public, changed the way the reform was publicly framed and helped to create a more receptive public arena. As a result, the examination reform was implemented successfully. The initial public response to policy change was negative in the three case studies where reactions to the policy reforms occurred in the public arena (uni-track curriculum, SBA/continuous assessment, and examinations). Students and parents expressed strong public reactions because these reforms, unlike the other three reforms, would have direct and visible impacts on students, potentially affecting their course options, grades, and even career paths.

The SSC examination reform is the only one of the three proposed reforms that was institutionalized, due in large part to the support of policy champions who helped to reshape public perceptions of the reform. For uni-track and SBA/continuous assessment reforms, there were only negative responses in the public arena, and government and donor efforts to counter this resistance were lacking. For this reason, the explanation that strengthening public support is needed to sustain reforms that have direct and visible impact on large numbers of individuals has a relatively high degree of certainty and uniqueness. The other three reforms (textbooks, teacher training, and teacher recruitment) did not elicit strong public reactions. The impact of these reforms on the wider public was less direct, visible, and/or salient. In these three cases, reform activities—from approval to implementation or (in the case of textbook privatization) abandonment—played out exclusively in the bureaucratic arena. To large extent, decisions were influenced by neither public acceptance nor resistance to the proposed reforms and required less confidence-building among the public or appeals to “good practice” and evidence.

Government and donor efforts to influence public understanding of the proposed reforms through public messaging and campaigning were limited. Tracing policy reform processes from the early 1990s, this paper finds that in the early stages there was a state of equilibrium surrounding established practices in curriculum, student assessment, and teaching. Although practices may have had negative effects on students and the education system, there existed widespread public acceptance of existing practices and institutional arrangements in the secondary subsector. Efforts started in the late 1990s, with government and donor support, to alter existing practices by introducing policy reform. More often than not, the efforts to alter the status quo through policy reform upset the existing equilibrium, causing students and families affected by the changes to react. The intensity and location of these reactions played a significant role in determining whether a specific reform would be adopted, implemented, and sustained. Responses occurring in the public arena were stronger, more visible, and carried high stakes for policy elites, as compared with policy reform.

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initiatives that played out only in the bureaucratic arena. Although the groundwork for many reforms started in the late 1990s, the public reactions to the proposed reforms—when they occurred—took place from 2004 onwards, with the rise of social media and when the effects of the proposed reforms started to become more visible and apparent to those who would be affected by them.

139. There were few government or donor efforts to influence public understanding of the proposed reforms through public messaging and campaigning. The rationale and specifics of the reforms were sometimes misrepresented and misunderstood in the public domain. When faced with opposition and false information in the media or public events, the government made little attempt to counter the opposition and communicate the rationale for the proposed reforms. The government appeared generally unprepared to target large numbers of individuals and public debate, which may have been unanticipated due to the rise of social media in the mid-2000s. Social media gave voice to the general public (especially youth) and drove forward public opposition.

140. Overall, support provided by ADB has been necessary to initiate policy reforms in the secondary education subsector, but this has been insufficient for sustaining reforms to implementation. A number of conclusions can be drawn from the preceding discussion concerning ADB’s role in supporting policy reform in Bangladesh’s secondary education subsector. First, this role is fundamentally relational: it must be assessed vis-à-vis the resources deployed by the government and by other development partners, especially the World Bank.

141. Second, given the interactive nature of policy change, whereby reform occurs as a complex process shaped by a multitude of interacting forces and actors, the limits to ADB’s influence must be recognized. In several of those case studies explored, ADB was the most active (if not the only) development partner involved in supporting policy reforms. Thus, it has been influential in defining the reform agenda. Although the support provided by ADB—both financial and technical—has been necessary to initiate and support policy reforms in the secondary education subsector, it has been insufficient for sustaining them. This is documented in particular case studies within this paper. Factors outside ADB’s direct influence, such as public opposition, the championing of opinion leaders, or unfavorable bureaucratic interests, have often been central to policy reform processes, as in the cases of the uni-track curriculum, creative questions, and textbook privatization, respectively. The question arises as to whether an international donor like ADB can do more to successfully see through the reforms it has initiated. This is the subject of a number of recommendations provided below.

B. Recommendations

142. Understanding donor influence in relation to the domestic political sphere. The paper’s results support the conclusion that the primary drivers of policy reform are found within the domestic political sphere. Indeed, the case studies explored underscore the importance of domestic constituencies in determining outcomes of policy reform, even where donor financial and technical support was prominent. In some cases, the lack of attention to sustaining stakeholder and public acceptance led to the failed or stalled implementation of policy reforms. In others, the support of policy champions was crucial in fostering the political resources that policy elites needed to sustain the reform process. It is therefore recommended to ADB that:
1. Future feasibility studies of policy change, whether related to secondary education or in other sectors, should be designed with specific attention to mapping the policy space; investigating all relevant policy changes, key actors, and forces for change; and locating donor actions and influence within the internal context of the member country.

143. **Systematic tracking of policy elites.** Actions of policy elites significantly shape the processes of policy change. Official documentation reviewed typically described reform processes as being led by objective evidence and established institutions, including political parties. The evidence shows, however, that the reform processes were guided by policy elites who stand behind these institutions or political parties and their respective and collective values, interests, and political resources. Policy elites tend to be geographically concentrated in metropolitan areas and therefore have great power to access and influence others. In much of the official government and donor-produced documentation, there was limited reference to the role of individuals and policy elites who shape the reform process. It is therefore recommended to ADB that:

2. The role of policy elites be monitored and documented as part of policy reform planning, including to assess elites’ interests, alignment with project goals, and relationships with others.

144. Contemporary policy issues often tend to be opaque, complex, and subtle. They are often too difficult to be readily understood by everyone. Elites, hence, have an opportunity to play as credible change agents. They lend their goodwill to reform proposals and virtually underwrite value addition of policies. This helps reduce transaction costs of convincing others and paves the way for smoother policy changes.

145. **Public messaging, advocacy, and campaigns.** The paper shows that when policy change plays out in the public arena, reforms may elicit strong public opposition if the impacts of the reforms are perceived as costly or as an unwanted change in the status quo. The back-and-forth between the public and bureaucratic arenas can drastically alter or reverse the policy process at later stages of planning (after significant resources have already been invested). It is therefore recommended to ADB that:

3. In the initial stages of policy planning, sufficient attention be given to public consultations, formulating public messaging, and securing the support of policy champions.

146. While the inside track of policy influence—characterized by appeals to best practice and government-donor lobbying—is central to policy reform processes, so too is the outside track of public messaging and debate. This further emphasizes the role of policy brokers and champions. The role of local research bodies and think tanks is vital in fashioning an appropriate stance of the various interest groups. ADB facilitates the work these groups do through technical assistance, but its effectiveness can be enhanced.

147. **Policy-analysis capacity building.** Government capacity is crucial for comprehensive appraisal of policy issues and options. Without sufficient such capacity and appraisal, policy and interest groups might be led astray. The establishment of a core technocratic group with relevant competence, around which the policy-making secretariat having linkages with key interest groups could be developed, could be beneficial as a capacity building measure. It is therefore recommended to ADB that:
4. Capacity for education policy analysis be built with upfront support from ADB which actively involves research institutions and policy elites.

148. Timing of policy initiation. Important policy reforms in any sector cannot be carried out without active support of the government in power. Hence, policy reforms need to be introduced when the policymakers have the mandate to bring about change. This is particularly relevant for elected governments, which usually have much greater goodwill in the early phase of administration. Hence, it would be advantageous to synchronize the initiation of policy reforms with new governments as these are elected with fresh mandates. Government’s ability to introduce policy reforms is both a matter of its effective performance as well as an issue as to the legitimacy of its mandate. Without this, policy proposals are likely to be lacking credibility among the clients and would not be readily acceptable. It is therefore recommended that:

5. As far as possible, ADB should take advantage of the window of opportunity that the election of new governments can offer for the adoption of policy proposals.
Appendixes
APPENDIX 1: KEY DOCUMENTS REVIEWED


### APPENDIX 2: LIST OF INTERVIEWEES FROM FACE-TO-FACE KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Title/position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Rukhen Azad</td>
<td>Consultant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Md. Shahid Bakhtiar Alam</td>
<td>MOE, SEQAEP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Didarul Alam</td>
<td>MOE, Director of Monitoring and Evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Prof Khan Haibibur Rahman</td>
<td>MOE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Rudi van Dael</td>
<td>ADB, Senior Social Sector Specialist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Jamil Mahmood</td>
<td>ADB former senior social sector officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>S.M. Edadur Rahman</td>
<td>ADB, Senior Social Sector Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Taslima Begum</td>
<td>Head of Dhaka Textbook Board, MOE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Siddiquur Rahman</td>
<td>Retired professor and director, Institute of Education and Research, University of Dhaka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Shimon Kumar Das</td>
<td>Deputy Director, Secondary Education Sector Investment Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Dr. Manzoor Ahmed</td>
<td>Senior Advisor, Institute of Educational Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Rasheda K. Choudhury</td>
<td>Executive Director of Campaign for Popular Education and formerly adviser in caretaker government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Prof. Dr. Md. Sirazul Hoque</td>
<td>Director (Planning and Development), Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Ratan Kumar Roy</td>
<td>Project Director, SESDP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Dr. Iqbal Aziz Muttaqi</td>
<td>Now Japan International Cooperation Agency consultant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Gazi Ahsanul Kabir</td>
<td>Former chairman NCTB, previously a national consultant SESDP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Subrata S. Dhar, PhD</td>
<td>Senior Operations Officer, Education, Human Development, World Bank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Md. Zakir Hossain</td>
<td>Curriculum Specialist, NCTB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>KM Rafiqul Islam</td>
<td>Project Director, 310 Model School Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Banamali Bhowmick</td>
<td>Project Director TQI II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Mushifiqu Rahman</td>
<td>Deputy Project Director TQI II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Lutfur Rahman</td>
<td>Curriculum Specialist, NCTB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Md. Zulfiquar Rahman</td>
<td>Deputy Director, SEQAEP</td>
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<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Robiul Kabir Chowdhury</td>
<td>Bangladesh Examination Development Unit, SESDP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Md. Al Hasan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Ahmad Odaidus Sattar Bhulya</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Notes:**

- ADB = Asian Development Bank
- MOE = Ministry of Education
- NCTB = National Curriculum and Textbook Board
- SEQAEP = Secondary Education Quality and Access Enhancement Project
- SESDP = Secondary Education Sector Development Project
- TQI = Teaching Quality Improvement
APPENDIX 3: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF POLICY REFORM IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

1. This study focuses on significant and relevant causal mechanisms that either contributed to official policy reform or altered and reversed policy reform initiatives related to curriculum development, student assessment, and teaching in Bangladesh’s secondary education subsector.

2. Public policy is defined as a set of processes, activities, or actions in which a government entity or its representatives respond to a given problem or issue through such measures as regulations, laws, and funding priorities (see Table A3.1).\(^1\) Policy reform is defined as change associated with “deliberate efforts on the part of governments to redress perceived errors in prior and existing policy and institutional arrangements.”\(^2\) Policy change is a related term. It is a multifaceted phenomenon which may involve (i) attitudinal change pertaining to the framing of debates and acceptance of issues on the political agenda; (ii) procedural change related to changes in the process whereby policy decisions are made; (iii) change in policy content, including legislation and government orders; and/or (iv) behavioral change associated with policy implementation and/or evaluation.\(^3\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table A3.1: Core Concepts in this Study</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Public policy</strong> refers to a set of processes, activities, or actions (not a single, discrete decision) in which a government entity or its representatives respond to a public problem or issue through such measures as regulations, laws, and funding priorities (Neilson, 2001).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Policy change</strong> is a multifaceted, interactive process, involving agenda-setting, decision making, adoption, implementation, and evaluation. Change initiatives may be altered or reversed at any stage in their life cycles. Outright success is rare (Jones, 2011).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Policy reform</strong> refers to policy or institutional change that is thought to lead to a more desirable outcome than current practice permits (Thomas and Grindle, 1990).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Policy reform and change are processes that pertain to agenda-setting and policy formulation, decision making, adoption, implementation, and evaluation. They do not necessarily, however, proceed in a linear fashion as these sequential policy-making steps might suggest. Rather, this study understands policy change and reform as a “highly complex process shaped by a multitude of interacting forces and actors.”\(^4\) This kind of interactive, actor-centered approach recognizes that:

   A policy reform initiative may be altered or reversed at any stage in its life cycle by the pressures and reactions of those who oppose it. [...] Understanding the location, strength, and stakes involved in those attempts to promote, alter or reverse policy reform initiatives is central to understanding the outcomes.\(^5\)

4. As outlined in Figure A3, an interactive model of policy change supposes that interested parties can exert pressure for change at many points. In practice, this means that the steps from policy formulation to adoption to implementation are not necessarily as simple or direct as assumed by a linear model of policy making. Rather, the characteristics of a particular policy will influence the nature of the reaction or response to it, both in the bureaucratic and public arenas; the potential that the

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policy will be implemented as intended; and the resources that policy elites and implementers require if the change is to be pursued successfully.\(^6\)

5. The main actors of interest in an interactive model of policy change are policy elites, although they are thought to be at least partially constrained by political and societal pressures, historical context, and the legacies of prior policies (footnote 6). Policy elites and influential individuals can be establishment figures tasked with government decision making or they can be other politically significant figures, such as senior civil servants, managers of important economic enterprises, leaders of popular organizations, prominent intellectuals, journalists, or religious leaders.\(^7\) According to this view, the primary drivers of policy change are the ideas, interests, and resources that policy elites bring to bear, as outlined in Table 3.2.\(^8\)

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\(^8\) Although the causal mechanisms identified in this study reflect theoretical assumptions, the mechanisms are justified on the basis of empirical evidence alone.
Table A3.2: Main Drivers of Policy Change

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ideas and perceptions</th>
<th>Personal attributes and goals, policy learning (from prior policies, lessons from other jurisdictions), ideological predispositions, and professional expertise and training</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interests and positions</td>
<td>Political and institutional commitments and loyalties, incentives, political calculations, and positions in bureaucratic hierarchy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Resources             | Political: elite consensus and public acceptance  
                        Bureaucratic:  
                        (i) Financial (budgetary resources and foreign assistance),  
                        (ii) Managerial (aspects of bureaucratic power, such as control of appointment and promotion), and  
                        (iii) Technical (related to policy analysis, strategies for implementation, etc.) |


6. This perspective also allows for the influence of a wider range of actors (including donors, the public, interest groups, opposition political parties, and the media) in shaping how policy elites perceive policy problems and options. Specifically, policy influence, or the extent to which interested parties can work to promote, alter or reverse reform initiatives, can occur through an inside track, “working closely with decision-makers,” or an outside track, seeking “to influence change through pressure and confrontation (footnote 4, p. 2).” The inside track (typically used by donors) involves two types of influencing strategies: (i) use of evidence and advice, including research and analysis, evidence-based arguments, advisory support, and the piloting of new policy approaches; and (ii) lobbying and negotiation, namely face-to-face meetings and discussions, relationship building, and direct incentives and diplomacy. The outside track, on the other hand, typically involves public campaigns and advocacy through the use of media, political debates, and public meetings.

7. Within the inside track, donor policy influence can take place through a number of channels. Along with technical and financial assistance to support reforms, donors use policy dialogue to identify and pursue opportunities to bring about changes to policy direction and/or emphasis in a particular realm of activity. Beginning with how policy is designed and formulated, donors engage in policy dialogue to influence policy change in partnership with recipient governments, civil society, the private sector, and other donor agencies.

8. This study understands policy dialogue as a process defined by four elements: (i) its degree of formality, or whether dialogue occurs through formal channels (e.g., project negotiations), semi-formal channels (e.g., meetings at international conferences) or informal ones (e.g., conversations at social events); (ii) its character as directive or non directive, pertaining to whether dialogue lays out policies to be followed or is more suggestive and open to debate; (iii) its channel, or whether dialogue is initiated by international or bilateral organizations; and (iv) its choice of instrument, or whether dialogue takes place through program aid, projects, or technical assistance.9

9. Although donor involvement in processes of policy change can be influential, especially during policy formulation (i.e., analysis, generation of policy options, bargaining), the main drivers of policy reform tend to fall within the domestic political sphere.10 In particular, processes of policy change are shaped by the domestic history of reform, as defined by who has supported and opposed proposed measures and by government ownership of the reforms in question.11 Indeed, the very early stages of

policy formulation, which involve analysis of existing challenges in the education sector and appreciation of the domestic context, often do not involve donors and can be crucial to building the political support necessary to sustain the reform process. Reforms that are donor-initiated and designed while having with little domestic support and few local roots may be adopted on paper but only partially implemented or abandoned in the end.
APPENDIX 4: CAUSAL PROCESS TRACING METHODOLOGY

1. Process tracing is used in this study to understand how independent variables contributed to policy reform initiatives in the secondary education subsector in Bangladesh. Process tracing is defined as a qualitative analytical tool that “attempts to identify the intervening causal process—the causal chain and mechanism—between an independent variable (or variables) and the outcome of the dependent variable.”

2. The overarching goal is to “thin out the facts to the minimum necessary” to explain policy change related to the secondary education curriculum, student assessment, and teacher recruitment, and furthermore to enable the “bare bones” of the causal process to appear. An advantage of this qualitative approach is that it seeks to establish and refine the interrelated causes of policy change, thereby moving a plethora of discrete—and sometimes conflicting—pieces of evidence into a parsimoniously configured account of the causal process. The results are open to systematic skepticism from others; those who are skeptical about the hypothesized causal mechanisms in this paper can use this piece of work to refine the causal process or create new lines of argument.

A. Definition of Causal Mechanism

3. A causal mechanism is conceptualized as a process that is “capable of bringing about or preventing some change in the system as a whole or in some of its subsystems.” The study’s focus is on the interactive influence of independent variables and, in particular, how these are transmitted through a series of interlocking parts to produce outcomes in the three case study areas. The investigation understands each part of the causal mechanism as an individually necessary element that can be assessed empirically based on the diagnostic evidence collected within the established study time period.

4. Mechanisms are real but not necessarily observable (e.g., societal norms or values). In the present cases, they were not always identifiable by direct observation but rather were inferred through evidence provided by key informants and the documents review. The study aims to model those parts that were absolutely essential and necessary to produce a given outcome. In this way, it seeks to achieve explanations of policy change that are as parsimonious and minimally sufficient as possible.

B. Data Sources

5. The evidence to identify causal mechanisms is based on diverse sources, including a systematic review of policy documents, publications and papers; and face-to-face interviews with key informants. Document analysis, to start, consisted of a review of policy documents, donor documents, and publications (gray literature), newspapers articles, and academic papers (see Appendix 1). The review focused on information related to secondary education policy, particularly the quality of curriculum, student assessment, and teaching. Causal mechanisms embedded in these documents were explored while giving close attention to the kinds of evidence available to help explain various causal

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relationships. This review of background information further investigated documentation of official (i.e., government and/or donor produced) narratives for events related to the development of secondary education policy. The review process culminated in the development of plausible causal explanations that account for these policy reform initiatives.

6. Semi-structured interviews were conducted between January and March 2014 with 26 key informants, including government representatives, experts, development practitioners, policy advisors, senior staff at nongovernment organizations, and other influential informants such as academics (see Appendix 2). Most key informants had been directly involved in policy development related to school reform and capacity building at the secondary level. They were identified using purposive and snowball sampling methods.

7. Given its focus on investigating policy-related developments at the highest levels of government, this form of “elite interviewing” proved highly relevant. Such elite actors can be critical sources in process tracing, as they may corroborate what has been established by other sources, establish the perspectives of groups of people on the inside track, and reconstruct the unofficial narratives of events. Particular efforts were made to understand key informants’ perspectives on secondary school policy development since the early 1990s, particularly in relation to development partner support. Efforts were made also to gain insight into contextual issues often missing in official versions of events as presented in documents and reports.

8. Written information collected was primarily from donor reports (and hence donor-focused) and public sources of information (i.e., media, academic journals). The team had limited access to official government documents related to the policy reform process because officials in Bangladesh are bound by oath to rules making it a criminal offence to disclose various materials, including official documentations and communications, that have come into their possession in the course of official duties.

9. Moreover, the focus of this study was on the reform processes during planning and implementation rather than on policy formulation and bargaining. The need to focus the study was a consequence of limited time and the wide scope, including three broad areas of policy reform and six specific case studies that spanned several decades and numerous development projects. In many cases, respondents’ recall of project negotiations and bargaining was hazy, especially when these processes had occurred decades earlier. In other cases, turnover and retirement of key personnel made the gathering of details on policy formulation processes difficult, if not impossible.

C. Research Strategy: Certain and Unique Explanations

10. This study follows the main steps of causal process tracing as follows:
   (i) background narratives were developed into case studies, which act as the primary data set against which hypotheses were assessed;
   (ii) alternative hypotheses to explain the cases were developed, reflecting core theoretical assumptions; and
   (iii) hypotheses were interrogated against case-study evidence (footnote 5).

11. The crucial building block was to establish a detailed narrative and timeline that characterized key events over time. This involved focusing on the unfolding of policy reform initiatives from the

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1990s to the present and identifying significant events, processes, and actors, which, in turn, permitted an analysis of change and sequence in the six case study areas. Following this step, the study was able to establish a set of hypothesized causal mechanisms embedded in the narratives and collect additional evidence that would either confirm or invalidate these initial assumptions and ideas.

12. A goal of this study is to maximize the certainty and uniqueness of the hypothesized causal mechanisms, thereby minimizing the likelihood that outcomes related to policy reform initiatives could be accounted for by alternative explanations. A certain prediction is unequivocal, while a unique prediction is accounted for by only one theory or piece of evidence under consideration. In this regard, Stephan Van Evera has distinguished four kinds of tests of causal inference representing different degrees of certainty and uniqueness: hoop, straw-in-the-wind, smoking gun, and doubly decisive.9

13. This study focuses on passing hoop tests, whereby a given piece of evidence must be present for a hypothesis to be valid. Passing a hoop test thus affirms the relevance of a hypothesis but does not confirm it. To maximize test strength, the study sought to identify hypotheses that are high in certainty and uniqueness, thereby reducing the size of the hoop and increasing the level of confidence with which to conclude that the specific part of the mechanism was present in comparison to plausible alternatives (Figure A4). To test hypothesized causal mechanisms, a process of interrogating particular hypotheses against the case-study evidence was conducted in order to identify those hypotheses most consistent with the processes of policy change observed. The end result was identification of causal mechanisms that had the most convincing amount of support.

14. Straw-in-the-wind tests are the weakest in that they are neither unique nor certain, and simply lend support for an explanation without decisively ruling it in or out. Smoking gun tests, on the other hand, are unique but not certain: If a given piece of evidence is present, a hypothesis must be valid. However, its absence does invalidate the hypothesis.10 Since this study looks for causal explanations that have a relatively high degree of certainty, it is guided by the argument put forth by Derek Beach and Rasmus Brun Pedersen that neither straw-in-the-wind nor smoking gun tests are particularly

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suitable or analytically useful for the study of social and political change (footnote 4). *Doubly decisive* tests, on the other hand, are both unique and certain, and provide the strongest inferential leverage, in that they confirm a particular hypothesis and eliminate all others. Although doubly decisive tests are ideal, it is extremely difficult to find the empirical evidence necessary to test them when studying social phenomena.

15. The study involved both inductive and deductive stages. During the inductive stage, policy change in Bangladesh’s secondary education subsector was examined, and empirical evidence was collected through the document review and initial interviews in order to identify plausible causal mechanisms potentially responsible for the policy reform initiatives. During the deductive stage, efforts were then made through follow-up interviews, member checking, and a further review of documents to test the extent to which the identified causal mechanisms accounted for the outcomes. The relationship between the inductive and deductive phases was not linear. Rather, this was an iterative process that included several cycles encompassing an inductive path to build empirical evidence and a deductive path to test whether the identified causal mechanisms could account for the policy outcomes.

16. Interview data were then coded, analyzed, and triangulated with the findings obtained from the document analysis. In so doing, the complexity of causal chains was explored, prior causal explanations evaluated, and efforts made to discover alternative explanations as to why policy reform initiatives developed as they have. After coding and analyzing the empirical data collected, a narrative analytical report documenting the key findings and hypothesized causal mechanisms was developed. This draft report was sent to key informants for member checking in order to improve the accuracy of analysis and test the validity of assumptions. These informants were requested to assess the preliminary results, to correct errors, and to suggest any additional information that may be important to include in the final report. This member-checking process is assumed to have added significant credibility and validity to the research process and results.

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11 During the coding process, both preset and emergent codes were developed. Preset codes were based on the core research questions and the conceptual framework for the study (elaborated upon above). Emergent codes arose from the data themselves.

12 A small group of key informants participated in the member-checking process. These key informants were selected based on the breadth and depth of their knowledge of particular reforms over the past 20 years.