



rethinking schooling

FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

The State of Education for Peace,
Sustainable Development and
Global Citizenship in Asia



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



Mahatma Gandhi Institute
of Education for Peace
and Sustainable Development

Rethinking Schooling

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The State of Education for Peace, Sustainable
Development and Global Citizenship in Asia

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4 QUALITY
EDUCATION



Sustainable Development Goal

Target 4.7

By 2030 ensure all learners acquire knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship, and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.

United Nations, Transforming
Our World: the 2030 Agenda for
Sustainable Development, 2015

Foreword

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) represent a shared global ambition and intergovernmental commitment to meet a range of targets by 2030. The Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development (MGIEP) is UNESCO's first Category 1 education-related Institute in Asia and the only Institute focusing on education for peace and sustainable development, now enshrined in SDG Target 4.7. As a Governing Board Member of UNESCO MGIEP, I am pleased to see this publication released at a time when education for peace and sustainable development is needed more than ever.

SDG 4.7 re-articulates a humanistic agenda for education, building on UNESCO's normative instruments, including the 1960 Convention against Discrimination in Education; the 1974 Recommendation concerning Education for International Understanding, Co-operation and Peace and Education relating to Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms; and the 1990 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Report also supports advocacy for Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) as an integral element of quality education and key enabler for progress towards sustainable development (UNGA Resolution 70/209), as well as for Global Citizenship Education.

UNESCO MGIEP, in partnership with UNESCO's Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education (UNESCO Bangkok) and field offices in the region, in 2016 launched a project to review the extent to which concepts and competencies associated with SDG 4.7 are mainstreamed in education policies and curricula in 22 countries across Asia. This report builds on this project and reports on the state of education for peace, sustainable development and global citizenship in Asia, taking into consideration the larger political, economic and social contexts within which education discourses, policies and practices unfold.

I highly commend this report for boldly illuminating fundamental challenges confronting efforts to promote peace and sustainable development through education. I hope it inspires policymakers' and educators' own efforts to address these challenges in Asia and beyond.



Arzu Rana Deuba

First Lady of the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal
Member of Parliament of Nepal
Member of the Governing Board of UNESCO MGIEP

Director's Message

The UNESCO Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development (MGIEP) was established with a mandate that goes naturally towards achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4, Target 7 (SDG 4.7). The vision of the Institute is to transform education for humanity which cuts to the heart of fostering education for peace, sustainable development and global citizenship to build peaceful and sustainable societies.

The global indicator established for SDG 4.7 measures the extent to which Global Citizenship Education (GCED) and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), including gender equality and human rights, are mainstreamed in national education policies, curricula, teacher education and student assessment.

There are two methods through which we can interpret the term 'mainstream' in the global indicator. The first method, which I would call the 'traditional approach', entails the introduction of specific subjects on ESD and GCED into the existing school curriculum and students being tested in similar fashion as mainstream subjects such as mathematics, sciences, geography and languages, among others. The second method, which I would call the 'integrated approach', emphasises the integration of core concepts, principles and examples of sustainable development, global citizenship, gender equality and human rights within the present cadre of mainstream subjects.

The choice of which approach to take must be dictated by the ground reality countries presently face. And in most countries this reality is depicted by growing unemployment among the youth within a job environment that demands technical skills. Moreover, we must also acknowledge that adding more subject matter to an already overloaded curriculum is unrealistic.

A majority of reports produced to date have evaluated the mainstreaming of ESD and GCED based on the traditional approach. This report is different as it focuses on reviewing the existing policies and curricula of traditional subjects and exploring how sustainable development, peace, gender and human rights are illustrated in these subjects. It is indeed an ambitious endeavor; however, I am encouraged by the results that have emerged by this first review within the Asia region, across 22 countries.

I sincerely hope that some of the recommendations and future actions summarised in this report are taken forward by the Member States and UNESCO,

including an overall re-think on the fundamental priorities of education policy, promoting a participatory model for curriculum development and creating a platform to bring together experts in child-centered education and curriculum to design core subjects at the primary and secondary level, amongst others.

I am confident that this report will demonstrate how SDG 4.7 can be achieved, while simultaneously improving competencies in the core subjects.



Anantha Kumar Duraiappah
Director
UNESCO MGIEP

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Acronyms

ADB	Asian Development Bank
APCEIU	Asia-Pacific Centre of Education for International Understanding
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ASPnet	Associated Schools Project Network
DESD	Decade of Education for Sustainable Development
DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea)
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
EFA	Education For All
ESD	Education for Sustainable Development
ESDP	Education Strategic Development Plan/ Education Sector Development Plan
ESP	Education Strategic Planning
GAP	Global Action Programme
GC	Global Citizenship
GCED	Global Citizenship Education
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEMR	Global Education Monitoring Report
GII	Gender Inequality Index
GNH	Gross National Happiness
HDI	Human Development Index
IBE	International Bureau of Education
ICT	Information and communications technology
IEA	International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IS	Integrated Studies
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
LGBTQIA	lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, and asexual/agender/aromantic

MECS	Ministry of Education, Culture and Science
MEXT	Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology
MHRD	Ministry of Human Resource Development
MTB-MLE	Mother tongue-based multilingual education
MTL	Mother tongue language
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoES	Ministry of Education and Science
NCERT	National Council of Educational Research and Training
NCF	National Curriculum Framework
NEA	National Education Act
NEP	National Education Policy
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PEP	People's Education Press
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
RTE	Right To Education
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
SD	Sustainable Development
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SEAMEO	Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization
SEP	Sufficiency Economy Philosophy
SSDP	School Sector Development Plan
TVET	Technical and vocational education and training
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNESCO MGIEP	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development
UNHRC	United Nations Human Rights Council
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WTO	World Trade Organisation

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Executive Summary

INTRODUCTION

The Context: Asia, Sustainable Development and the UN Agenda for Education

The world today is beset by environmental degradation, socio-economic dysfunction and geopolitical instability – problems especially acute in many parts of Asia. In short, our current developmental trajectory is impelling us towards crisis. However, the dominant international discourse on education continues to see it primarily as a tool for enhancing economic growth, and takes for granted the intrinsically beneficial nature both of growth and of schooling. Our hopes for a future that is peaceful, prosperous and environmentally sustainable depend on grasping the broader meaning and potential of education. Asia, the continent that perhaps most starkly exemplifies the tensions between growth and sustainability, is an ideal place to begin this task.

The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are intended to set the global development agenda until 2030. Goal 4 exhorts member states to ensure ‘inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all’. Under SDG 4, Target 4.7 calls for countries to integrate values-based and action-oriented learning into their education systems:

By 2030 ensure all learners acquire knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship, and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture’s contribution to sustainable development.

United Nations, *Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, 2015

Amongst numerous international standard-setting declarations and programmes, systematic reviews of progress in integrating these concepts into

national education systems remain scarce. The global indicator for SDG 4.7 is the ‘extent to which (i) global citizenship education and (ii) education for sustainable development, including gender equality and human rights, are mainstreamed at all levels in (a) national education policies (b) curricula (c) teacher education and (d) student assessment’. But agencies and governments have so far lacked a baseline against which progress towards achieving SDG 4.7 can be monitored.

Supplying such a baseline in Asia was a key objective of compiling this report. But in attempting this task, it is important to highlight the challenges of implementing and monitoring a target which at first sight may seem an unwieldy conceptual hodgepodge. Ideas encompassed by SDG 4.7 include some yet to be assimilated into the lexicons of major languages, and potentially at odds with national curricular objectives. While ‘sustainable development’ and ‘global citizenship’ are often presented as add-ons designed to gear up schooling for the 21st century, they in fact challenge us fundamentally to rethink and redefine the purpose of education. These notions, if taken seriously, require us to make a radical departure from how education is conceptualised and organised today. Capturing this transformative aspiration of SDG 4.7 is a daunting yet pressing task.

Purpose and Structure: An Overview

In line with UNESCO’s efforts to reaffirm a humanistic vision of education, this report seeks to emphasise the transformative implications of SDG 4.7. This involves questioning the ethos of competition that informs dominant conceptions of education, in order to allow room for a vision that addresses the critical nature of current threats to peace and sustainability. UNESCO MGIEP selected Asia as a pilot region for reviewing progress towards the integration of SDG 4.7 into school curricula, since this is a vast, dynamic continent, culturally and ecologically diverse, and home to the majority of the world’s population. Asia is also undergoing rapid economic and political transformation, amidst persistent conflict – or the threat of conflict. Painting a rosy picture of the current state of education in Asia means ignoring its relationship to injustice, violence and environmental destruction. Coupling such obliviousness with self-congratulatory celebration of ‘achievement’ in the areas covered by SDG 4.7 is dangerously counterproductive, but is nonetheless common in international forums. We must not be afraid to highlight and confront the real challenges to meaningful implementation of SDG 4.7.

The present study contributes to recovering a vision of education based on a shared respect for human dignity and an ethos emphasising international collaboration over competition. This involves re-assessing the current international emphasis on monitoring and measuring student ‘outcomes’, and embracing a broader conception of education’s goals. The first part of the report presents the quantitative findings of a review of the extent to which concepts

embedded in SDG 4.7 are integrated in policy and curricula across Asia. At the same time, this part of the report highlights the limitations of the very attempt to quantify and ‘measure’ values and attitudes.

Making sense of the coding results required a broad interpretive framework sufficiently flexible to capture the specificities of the systems under review. Critically interpreting the quantitative data involved drawing on a wide range of existing research – ethnographic, sociological and historical – in education and related fields. The framework identifies three kinds of intertwined challenges to efforts to promote peace, sustainable development and global citizenship through education: (1) challenges of instrumentalism; (2) challenges of nationalism and identities; and (3) challenges of competitiveness and regimentation. The second part of the report contextualises the results of the coding exercise and discusses regional trends in light of these challenges.

Finally, the report concludes with considerations for the future. It suggests future actions by Member States and UNESCO to harness the potential of SDG 4.7 and set the direction of reform in systems of education globally.

PART I.

KEY REGIONAL FINDINGS: CONTENT ANALYSIS OF POLICY AND CURRICULUM

Coverage

This report builds on a project conducted by UNESCO MGIEP in partnership with the UNESCO Asia-Pacific Regional Bureau for Education (UNESCO Bangkok) to review the current state of incorporation of SDG 4.7 concepts in national education policies and curricula in 22 countries in Asia, classified into four regions:

1. East Asia (China; Japan; Republic of Korea);
2. South Asia (Afghanistan; Bangladesh; Bhutan; India; Islamic Republic of Iran; Nepal; Pakistan; Sri Lanka);
3. Southeast Asia (Cambodia; Indonesia; Lao PDR; Malaysia; Philippines; Thailand; Viet Nam); and
4. Central Asia (Kazakhstan; Kyrgyzstan; Mongolia; Uzbekistan).

Methods

Key education policy and curricular documents were collected from these 22 countries, and a total of 172 documents (including national curriculum frameworks and 4th and 8th grade subject curricula) were analysed using a common coding scheme adapted from previous UNESCO studies. While previous reviews have focused on so-called ‘carrier subjects’ of 4.7-related concepts such

as civic and citizenship education and history, the current study also looked at the official curriculum for ‘core subjects’ (mathematics, science, social studies and languages), given the proportion of instructional hours they occupy, their mandatory and examinable status, and their consequent role in forming the enduring dispositions of children and adolescents. The aim was to illuminate the prevalence or the relative weight of different concepts embedded in SDG 4.7 (e.g. human rights, gender equality, global citizenship) in core education policy and curricular documents.

Key Findings

Instrumental role of education in developing national identity and human resources

The countries reviewed generally emphasise the instrumental role of education in fostering national identity and developing human resources for economic development. Concepts associated with gender equality, peace, and global citizenship were found to be widely absent from national education policy and curricular documents analysed, with some exceptions. Across all 22 countries and among more than 80 sub-categories included in the coding scheme, ‘nation as privileged referent of identity’ was found to be the most prevalent concept. This emphasis, together with a generally low emphasis on ‘humanity as privileged referent of identity’, points towards the challenge involved in reorienting education in Asia towards global citizenship. In contrast to the general emphasis on ‘human resource development,’ concepts related to economic sustainability, such as ‘limits to growth’ and ‘green economy,’ were either absent or rarely featured.

Environmental aspects of sustainable development were widely cited, with an emphasis on conservation. However, ‘climate change’ and ‘renewable energy’ rated little coverage in the documents analysed. Most countries stressed the importance of ‘culture and heritage’, with particular reference to national traditions, customs and language, but acknowledgement of interconnections and interdependence across national boundaries was much rarer.

Skills and values embraced in education policy and curricula

‘Critical thinking’, ‘creative thinking’ and ‘problem-solving’ skills, as well as ‘collaboration’ and ‘empathy’ are evidently in vogue amongst policymakers and curriculum developers across Asia. But the overwhelming stress is generally on the instrumental dimension of these attributes. Such skills and competencies tend to be presented as important primarily for ensuring a flow of human resources for enhancing economic competitiveness. References to ‘civil liberties’ (under the category ‘human rights’) were completely absent in nine countries, and most featured no reference to the concepts included in the category ‘activism’ (‘participation in civic protest’, ‘engagement in debates on socio-

political issues’, and ‘action on issues of global reach’). By contrast, notions of ‘civic engagement’ (under the category ‘responsible lifestyle’) appeared to be endorsed in curricular documents across most countries. These patterns of emphasis are significant in indicating the nature of official visions of citizen-state relations across much of Asia, and raise questions regarding the extent of commitment to the transformative aspirations of SDG 4.7.

National curricular emphases and systemic realities

Some regional trends emerge, including the prominence given to ‘gender equality’ in South Asia (where countries ranking low in the Gender Development Index¹ are concentrated) and to ‘civil liberties’ in Central Asia (which encompasses countries rated as ‘authoritarian’ by the Democracy Index²). This might be interpreted as suggesting official recognition of particular problems in these areas, and genuine commitment to pursue improvement through education. However, alternative interpretations are possible. The absence of references to ‘civil liberties’ is observed in relatively democratic as well as ‘authoritarian’ countries; likewise, the paucity of references to ‘gender equality’ is common to countries rating high and low in the Gender Development Index. The meaning of coding results must therefore be examined on a case-by-case basis. This highlights the problematic nature of monitoring efforts based on tracking the ‘presence’ or ‘absence’ of particular concepts in official documents.

PART II. SUB-REGIONAL SYNTHESSES

While suggesting intriguing regional trends, the coding data alone tell us little about the state of education in individual countries. This is because policy and curricular documents frequently perform a symbolic function – conveying official aspirations or deflecting public criticism – rather than signaling a definite commitment to change. Analysis of the coding results thus required grounding in the historical, economic and geopolitical context as well as in theoretical understandings of education policy and curriculum. The second part of the report contextualises the review results and discusses regional trends in light of three challenges to the realisation of SDG 4.7 through education: (1) challenges of instrumentalism; (2) challenges of nationalism and identities; and (3) challenges of competitiveness and regimentation.

Challenges of Instrumentalism and Ethics

Policy and curricula across most countries surveyed (irrespective of their current level of development) emphasise the instrumental function of schooling in fostering human resources to enhance national economic strength.

1 See <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/gender-development-index-gdi>.

2 See <https://www.eiu.com/democracy2016>.

Interpretations of the meaning and purpose of education thus tend to be rather narrow; its role in enhancing national competitiveness, and in securing individual commitment to that goal (and capacity to contribute to it), overshadows broader, more humanistic conceptions. Across East and Southeast Asia, this instrumentalism is strongly evident in both countries that have recently opened up economically and those that have already achieved ‘developed’ status. Notions such as learner-centred pedagogy, ‘creativity’ and student autonomy are heavily emphasised in many curricula, but mainly for their perceived role in developing economically useful skills and competencies. Far less common is acknowledgement of the importance of such capabilities to the enhancement of human fulfilment and promotion of active, participatory citizenship. Meanwhile, the qualities of autonomy and independence ostensibly valued in students are widely denied to teachers themselves. Especially in South, Central and parts of Southeast Asia, teachers suffer from low status and a lack of training that critically impair their ability to adopt sophisticated pedagogical approaches. And across the continent, often rigid and unaccountable systems of state control over curriculum development, textbooks and schools militate against the full realisation of the ideals encompassed by SDG 4.7.

Challenges of Nationalism and Weak Regionalism

In most countries surveyed, an intense and often chauvinistic curricular emphasis on moulding national identity poses an acute challenge to a vision of citizenship education based on ‘universal values’ (e.g. human rights and cultural diversity). SDG 4.7 envisages preparing learners to live together on a planet under pressure, promoting tolerance and understanding both within and between nation-states. However, curricula in many Asian countries uncritically endorse strongly ethno-nationalist identities, often effectively reducing minorities or migrants to second-class status. Narratives of foreign hostility or inferiority are widely used to bolster national loyalties. Despite scattered references to the desirability of a ‘global’ outlook, fostering a strong national ‘selfhood’ takes precedence – as curricula prepare students for an international arena seen as characterised by inveterate competition. The explicit and positive embrace of regional identities in curricula is strikingly absent – even in Southeast Asia, the only region possessing (in ASEAN) a functioning framework for transnational collaboration. In East Asia, a pathology of competitive victimhood characterises narratives of recent conflict, with nations vying to portray themselves as the epitome of violated innocence. In South Asia, meanwhile, attempts to promote curricula that embrace the region’s social and cultural diversity have struggled to make headway in a context of increasingly intolerant nationalism and communalism.

The teaching of languages, potentially a crucial tool for fostering greater inter-communal and international understanding, has tended to be neglected or viewed in narrowly instrumentalist terms. In multilingual societies, the majority linguistic community is seldom encouraged and never compelled to learn

languages of linguistic minorities. Foreign language education often begins and ends with English, foregoing opportunities to use language learning to strengthen transnational Asian identities.

Challenges of Competitiveness and Regimentation

There is increasing international recognition that schooling is not a positive experience for many children and adolescents, especially in the Asia-Pacific region – a problem that UNESCO Bangkok’s ‘Happy Schools’ initiative aims to tackle. In addition to describing the magnitude of competitive pressures experienced by students in many Asian societies (manifested not least in the spread of examination-preparatory ‘shadow education’), this report stresses the implications of what are often differentiated schooling experiences for the ‘elite’ and the ‘masses’. Elitist approaches to education – long-established in some societies, re-emergent in others – lead to the blatantly unequal distribution of knowledge and sensibilities, undermining a sense of shared humanity and global citizenship. Credentialism – excessive reliance on academic credentials as the measure of a person’s ability – is endemic and spreading across much of Asia. Ironically, it is often associated with meritocratic policies and ideologies ostensibly aimed at promoting equality, but which in fact serve to reproduce and legitimise inequality.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

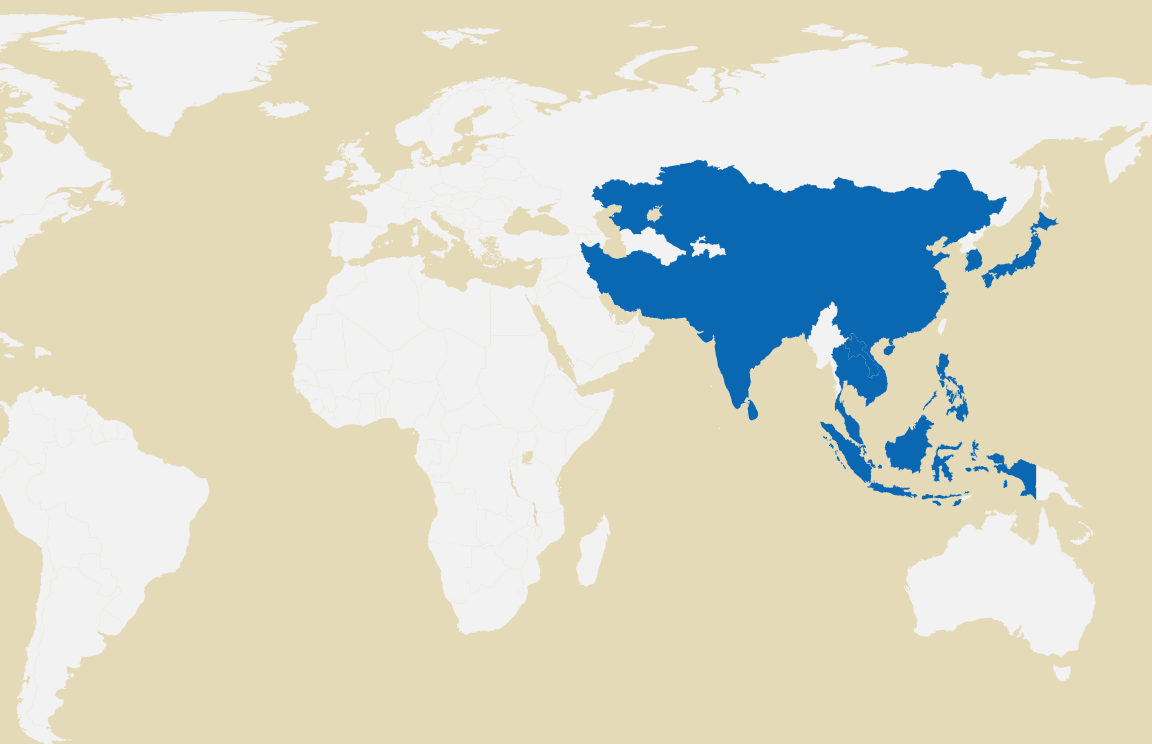
This analysis corroborates the well-established tendency of mass schooling to fall subservient to the imperatives of the nation-state and promote narrowly nationalistic conceptions of citizenship. A highly economic and state-centred idea of development dominates understandings of the role of education across most of Asia today. The idea of the active and reflective citizen who engages critically with the state in a participatory democracy is largely absent from official educational discourse, even in societies where electoral democracy is relatively well established.

Despite a global consensus regarding the desirability of education for peace, sustainable development and global citizenship as adumbrated in SDG 4.7, integration of these conceptions in national curricula remains an under-researched and under-theorised area. The aim of this review was not to gather and showcase ‘good practices’ self-reported by governments or agencies. Rather, it set out to assess progress – or the lack of it – towards realising these ideals, identify factors promoting or hindering progress, and suggest issues that warrant particular attention from those concerned to enhance education’s contribution towards securing a peaceful, sustainable and secure future for all. It concludes that educational change needs to be considered in tandem with reforms to political and social structures, and reappraisal of the cultural or ideological assumptions that underpin them.

Suggestions for Future Action by Member States and UNESCO

- 1. Rethink the fundamental priorities of education policy.** The potential of education for promoting collective prosperity and individual opportunity is beyond doubt. But schooling is important not just for its capacity to confer job-ready ‘skills’ or build ‘human capital’. It can both divide and unite, oppress and liberate, warp minds and enlighten them, and by promoting unsustainable socio-economic models ultimately impoverish rather than enrich us. Policymakers urgently need make promoting peace, sustainability and a consciousness of shared humanity central to their visions for educational development. SDG 4.7 should be seen not just as one of a menu of educational ‘goals’, but as the goal around which all others revolve.
- 2. Create a platform to bring together experts in child-centred education and curriculum designing in core subjects at primary and secondary levels.** Calls to integrate ESD, GCED and related concepts across all types and levels of education (formal and non-formal, kindergarten to postgraduate) mean that a focus on the particular challenge of designing curricula for basic schooling has largely been lost. Re-designing core subject curricula to promote sustainable development and global citizenship demands considerable multi-disciplinary expertise and awareness. Academic expertise in the psychology and sociology of education (to investigate how youngsters think and learn in different circumstances), and in the pedagogic sciences, is also required.
- 3. Promote a participatory model of curriculum development.** Treat teachers as partners in curricular design and planning debates rather than simply as delivery technicians. Lack of professional excitement, interest and autonomy is causing many ambitious teachers to leave the profession. Involve teachers in shaping curricular policies that affects classroom life. Restore the confidence of teachers as autonomous professionals capable of modelling the kind of active and engaged citizenship we seek to promote amongst students – rather than treating them as passive minions of controlling authorities.
- 4. Reassess international emphasis on monitoring and measuring educational ‘outcomes’.** Policymakers need to work from broader conceptions of the purposes of education, and focus much more on improving *inputs* – such as curriculum development, teacher training and the improvement of teaching materials – rather than simply on monitoring *outputs*. Competitive mechanisms and testing procedures aimed at securing ‘accountability’ tend to lead to curricular narrowing and reduced teacher autonomy and confidence. In line with 2 and 3 above, involvement in designing these ‘inputs’ also needs to be less centralised and more participatory.

Introduction



PREAMBLE

The view of education as a tool for achieving specified external goals is uniquely modern. Through most of human history, learning has tended to be viewed largely as an end in itself. As Wolf puts it, ‘our recent forebears, living in significantly poorer times, were occupied above all with the cultural, moral and intellectual purposes of education’ (2002, p. 254). Just as universal access to institutionalised schooling is a modern idea, so is the dominance of an instrumental vision of education as a tool whereby societies, nation-states and global organisations pursue various social, economic and political aims. For the purposes of the present project, these aims involve the pursuit of peace, sustainable development and global citizenship.

Before elaborating that agenda, it is worth highlighting the distinction between a vision of education as a technical toolbox for social readjustment, and as a living tradition of inquiry that is, in itself, constitutive of our humanity.³ Both the instrumental utility and intrinsic value of education are important, but a focus on one should not blind us to the significance of the other. This is especially so when – as here – our concerns include valuing diversity and fostering active, participatory citizenship. Nurturing these qualities is crucial to the wider pursuit of peace and sustainability. If schools turn out young people uniformly and unthinkingly committed to pursuing the kind of development that destroys the environment and intensifies social divides and inequalities, we risk hastening our collective destruction. Pursuing these aims demands that we understand education ‘in the round’, both as a social process and as an aspect of children’s growth and development. But realising education’s instrumental potential for helping achieve these particular kinds of goals also largely depends on recognising its intrinsic worth.

To the extent that we see education as an instrument for social improvement, our prospects for successfully deploying it depend on understanding the relevant context – historical, political, cultural and social. For instance, many of the Asian countries with which this report is concerned share legacies of colonialism. These have had important implications for the development of their schooling systems, and for dominant understandings of educational aims. This historical fact alone has a crucial bearing on any discussion of the relative importance attached on the one hand to the pursuit of ‘global citizenship’ (however defined), and on the other to nation-building objectives. Entrenched assumptions about the nature of the state and its developmental role have had a crucial bearing on perceptions of the social and economic function of education across much of Asia. Our purpose here is not to deny the crucial importance of the nation-state, but to emphasise the need to challenge and transcend narrowly nationalistic outlooks and associated conceptions of schooling.

3 This categorisation of the attributes of key ‘freedoms’ as ‘intrinsic’/‘constitutive’ or ‘instrumental’ is derived from Amartya Sen (1999).

The parameters of the present report are derived from the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and, in particular, Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Target 4.7, which asks all Member States of the UN to ensure that by 2030

... all learners acquire knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship, and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development (United Nations, 2015).

This is about far more than simply inculcating an environmentalist, internationalist catechism of ethical 'correctness'. It implies fostering a capacity and willingness to think and act across national, ethnic, religious or linguistic divides, animated by a profound consciousness both of our common humanity and of the fragility of our shared home.

The demands this places on education are heavy, to say the least. This report seeks to assess how far the aims and values encapsulated in SDG 4.7 have been incorporated into the policies and officially-mandated curricula of 22 Asian countries. By analysing current policies, curricular frameworks, subject syllabi and textbooks, it aims to create a baseline against which further progress towards Target 4.7 can be monitored. At the same time, it sets out to change the way we talk about and act upon SDG 4.7.

RATIONALE AND READERSHIP

Why was this Report Written?

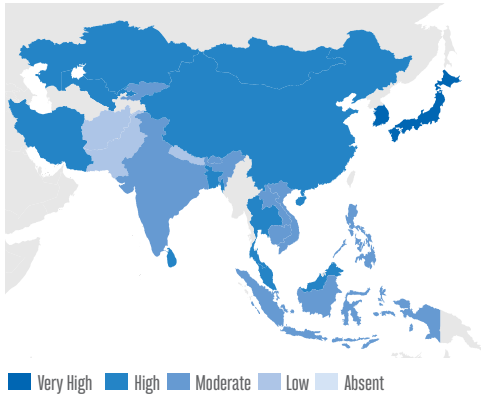
Calls to gear up schools for the 21st century are ubiquitous today. International educational discourse hails the potential of leveraging the 'youth dividend' and digital technologies for enhancing growth. Asia, home to the majority of the world's youth, is often central to such discussions. But despite this popular image of an innovation-led utopian future, reality today across much of Asia, as elsewhere, gives little cause for blithe optimism. Rampant inequality, heightened nationalism, environmental destruction and the growing danger of conflict critically threaten our common welfare. Education can potentially exacerbate these problems, or ameliorate them. This report critically reviews the current role of basic education (primary and lower secondary) in this respect across Asia, and proposes ways of enhancing its positive contribution to promoting sustainability and peaceful coexistence.

This study is informed by UNESCO's commitment to realising the SDGs through educational reform worldwide. The SDGs were articulated by consensus in 2015, with a target date of 2030 for their attainment. That consensus suggests a major opportunity for educational reform. Among the various targets and strategies

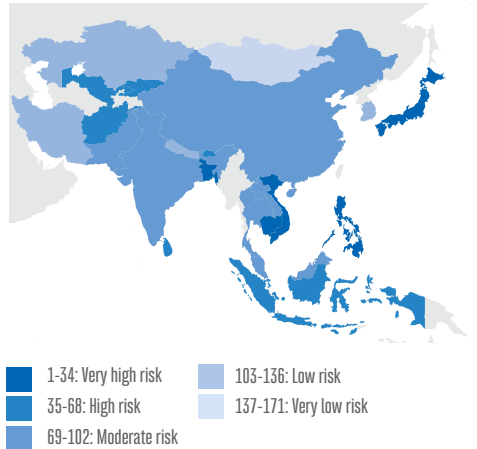
Figure 0.1 Asia: The diverse continent

The majority of countries covered by the review are in the high or medium categories of the Human Development Index (HDI), with two countries in the very high HDI category (Japan and Republic of Korea) and three countries in the low category (Afghanistan, Nepal, Pakistan). Ten out of 22 countries are rated as at very high or high risk in the World Risk Index.

Human Development Index (HDI) (2015)



World Risk Index (2016) % (rank)



adopted, SDG 4.7 in particular points towards the fundamental challenges that education policy must address in order to promote peace and sustainability. Even as systems of education pursue nationally determined priorities, this goal provides us with a synoptic perspective for reflection and reform. Since its inception, UNESCO has been strongly committed to a humanistic vision of education – a vision today encapsulated in SDG 4.7. These ideals need to be strongly restated and defended in an era when education has come under the pressure of narrowly economic and instrumentalist discourses. This narrowness is epitomised in the widespread reduction of analysis of education systems to the tracking of certain quantitatively measurable outcomes.

Deriving urgent significance from this broader context, the present study aims to assess the extent to which the ideals of SDG 4.7 have come to be embodied in policies and school curricula across Asian societies. Policy documents, including curriculum frameworks and core subject syllabi, were analysed for a total of 22 countries. The study involved content analysis based on a common coding scheme, and the development of an interpretive framework that categorises the key challenges in this area. This required the scoping of a vast amount of data on Asia's highly diverse educational landscape. Through surveying present-day curricular visions and practices, this report seeks to create a benchmark against

which future progress towards the attainment of SDG 4.7 can be assessed. But it is more than a technical exercise, since it also sets forth a vision of how conceptions of the fundamental purposes of schooling need to be reconfigured, if the ideals to which the global community has subscribed are actually to be realised.

Who is this Report for?

The intended readership of this report is wide and varied. To begin with, it is addressed to education policymakers – not only across Asia, but also worldwide. Asia’s economic and political significance in the 21st century render it pivotal to our global destiny. Education is crucial to shaping the political and socio-economic challenges facing Asian societies themselves; but, by virtue of Asia’s demographic, economic and geopolitical heft, these are also inescapably challenges for the world in general.

This report will give policymakers a sense of how successfully or unsuccessfully basic schooling is being deployed in pursuit of sustainable development and global citizenship, while illuminating how it could better foster a culture of peace and non-violence. In highlighting aspects of the curriculum downplayed or entirely ignored in high-profile cross-national assessments of educational performance such as the OECD’s Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), it reminds policymakers and other stakeholders that schooling is far more than an arena for the competitive acquisition of ‘job-ready’ skills.

Our second intended readership is, therefore, those responsible for designing curricular content – of all kinds, and for all levels of schooling. From drafting curricular frameworks and subject syllabi, to preparing textbooks and other instructional material, curriculum development involves, or should involve, a wide range of experts and practitioners. Crucially, these include teachers themselves. The role of teachers in shaping the curriculum that they teach is suppressed or denied in many education systems. But autonomy and responsible, participatory citizenship are crucial to the pursuit of sustainable development, and teachers are only able to model and effectively impart these qualities in so far as they themselves possess independent professional agency. Members of non-government organisations (NGOs) involved in children’s education also belong to this category of reader. In a number of Asian societies, NGOs have performed a key role in developing curricula for use in post-conflict settings and other challenging circumstances.

A third intended audience consists of researchers and young scholars of education. Historically, UNESCO’s documents have been valued by this community across the world. Across much of Asia, educational research has been something of a Cinderella discipline within academia – regarded at best as a handmaid to ‘serious’ academic fields and tasked with little more than training teachers to state-mandated specifications. But the importance of critical scholarship

on education and related social issues as a basis for public deliberation and decision-making deserves greater recognition in official policymaking circles. Similarly, the role of both the conventional press and new media in popularising and shaping educational debate has grown with the expansion of literacy. This report therefore seeks also to address media professionals and their readers who share an interest in education and a concern for the promotion of peace and sustainable development.

REVIEW DESIGN AND STRUCTURE

Review Design

The plan for this review consisted of four stages. The first stage involved content analysis of education policy and curricular documents from 22 countries based on a common coding scheme, and identification of major regional trends regarding the level of integration of SDG 4.7-related concepts (see **Part I** and **Appendix I** for details).

Figure 0.2 Countries covered by this study



Region	Countries
East Asia	China; Japan; Republic of Korea
Southeast Asia	Cambodia; Indonesia; Lao PDR; Malaysia; Philippines; Thailand; Viet Nam
South Asia	Afghanistan; Bangladesh; Bhutan; India; Islamic Republic of Iran; Nepal; Pakistan; Sri Lanka
Central Asia	Kazakhstan; Kyrgyzstan; Mongolia; Uzbekistan

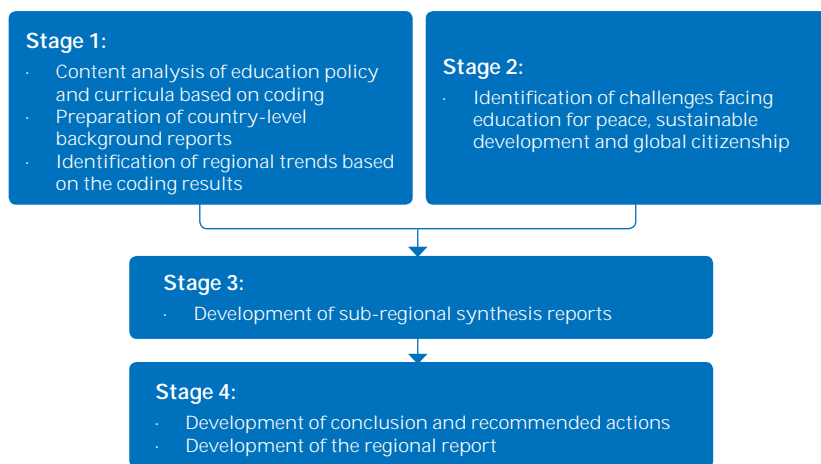
The development of the coding scheme built on a systematic review of existing UNESCO guidance materials; norm-setting, monitoring and evaluation documents; and ‘good practice’ reports on SDG 4.7-related initiatives. This

stage also involved preliminary analysis of the coding results and preparation of country-level background reports by national teams.

The second stage comprised the formulation of an analytical framework by the Core Drafting Group members. Informed by our reading of the country reports, we devised broad categories for discussing the major challenges confronting efforts to promote education for peace, sustainable development and global citizenship. This also entailed an extensive review of existing theoretical and empirical research addressing problems and issues relevant to our guiding concerns.

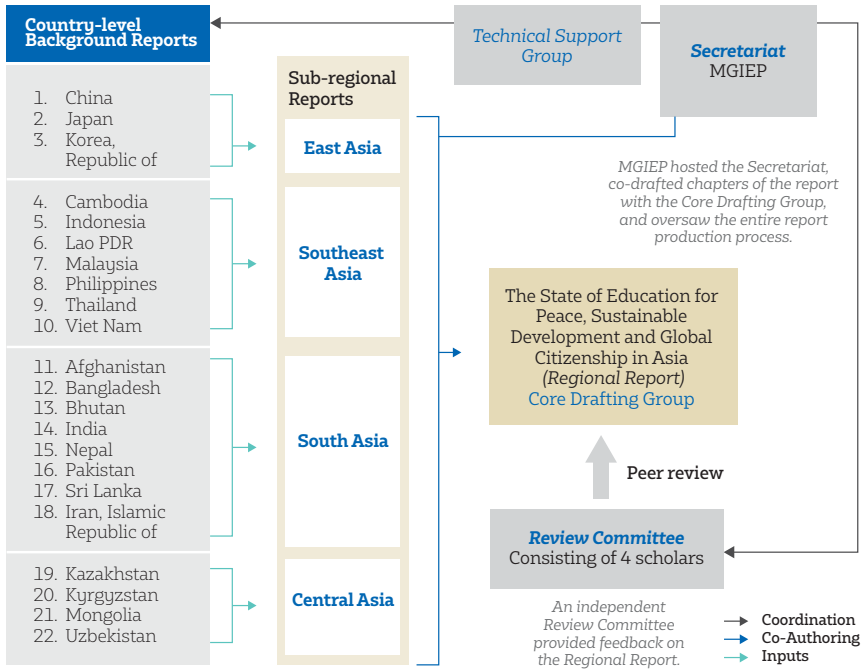
These two stages informed the third, involving the drafting of sub-regional synthesis reports (see **Part II**) that interpret the coding results and the analysis presented in the country-level background reports. At this point, we attempted to contextualise and triangulate those findings with reference to previous studies, including ethnographic work on schooling in Asian societies. Finally, the fourth stage of the drafting process involved articulating our overall conclusions and recommendations.

Figure 0.3 Overview of the drafting process



In total, 61 researchers were involved in data collection and analysis at the country level and development of country-level background reports (Stage 1), and five authors were involved in drafting sub-regional synthesis reports (Stage 3). The Core Drafting Group, consisting of three Asia-based education experts, then finalised the report, incorporating feedback from the Review Committee.

Figure 0.4 Overall governance structure of the study



Structure of the Report

The major tasks required for implementation of SDG 4.7 are broadly twofold. The first, more commonly recognised, variety involves mainstreaming and scaling up existing ‘good practices’ in Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), Global Citizenship Education (GCED), education for peace and other related fields; the Global Action Programme on ESD, for example, takes this approach (see UNESCO, 2014a). But the second and more difficult set of tasks relates to transforming dominant conceptions of education to render them consistent with the pursuit of sustainable development. This project was designed to address mainly the latter objective.

In the remainder of this Introduction, therefore, we discuss that transformative challenge with a particular focus on the curricula for basic schooling (i.e. Grades 1-9; primary and lower secondary). Following this, the first part of the report presents the quantitative findings of a review of the embedding of concepts enshrined in SDG 4.7 in the policy and curricula of 22 Asian countries. At the same time, this part of the report highlights the limitations of the very attempt to quantify the values and attitudes reflected in official policy.

Making sense of the quantitative results required an interpretive framework sufficiently flexible to holistically capture the state of education in relation to peace, sustainable development and global citizenship – the task addressed in **Part II** of this report. Interpreting the quantitative data involved drawing on a wide range of existing research – ethnographic, sociological and historical – in education and related fields. The framework identified three kinds of intertwined challenges to efforts to promote peace, sustainability and global citizenship through education: (1) challenges of instrumentalism and ethics; (2) challenges of nationalism and identities; and (3) challenges of competitiveness and regimentation. The second part of the report contextualises the results of the coding exercise and discusses regional trends in light of these challenges.

Finally, the report concludes with considerations for the future. It suggests future actions by Member States and UNESCO to harness the potential of SDG 4.7 and set the direction of reform for education systems globally.

UNDERSTANDING THE CHALLENGE OF EDUCATIONAL CHANGE

Discussions of educational reform often involve little or no reflection on the nature and purpose of schooling, either as a pedagogical or social institution. National and international documents typically take for granted education's importance for progress towards social, cultural and economic goals. It has been viewed by modernising elites primarily as a tool for disciplining citizens and optimising their 'human capital'. But education in its fullest sense depends on the realisation of a conception of teaching as a relational activity, rather than simply as a transmission belt for the inculcation of pre-packaged knowledge and skills.

We expect schooling to play a crucial role in shaping future generations – as citizens, workers and (hopefully) fulfilled human beings. In this respect, transmitting received concepts or notions constitutes, or should constitute, only a first step. At the most basic level, successful transmission itself depends on the articulation of key ideas in the relevant vernacular. In the case of concepts such as 'sustainable development' and 'global citizenship', this is no straightforward task. Like many important ideas floated as embodiments of global consensus since the mid-20th century, these still await satisfactory translation into major national or regional languages. The engagement of teachers and students with such ideas depends on how readily they are expressed and comprehended in the language of the classroom. This cannot be brought about simply by central diktat, but requires a more complex and demanding process of debate, negotiation and persuasion involving teachers and the broader public.

Incorporation of new ideas into curricular documents or textbooks is likewise an important step towards transforming classroom learning. However, this must involve far more than the insertion of a few isolated allusions to worthy goals. If topics such as ‘human rights’ or ‘parliamentary democracy’ are accorded merely a passing mention in a Grade 2 syllabus, it is very likely that such language has been inserted without much attention to any implications for teaching, or for the comprehension of 8-year-old children. Nominal incorporation of new ideas, without regard for the implications for pedagogy or classroom management, tends to reinforce cynicism amongst teachers, convincing them that the curriculum is unteachable. To avert this, the promotion of a new concept must involve careful consideration of how its various levels and nuances of meaning should be introduced to children at different phases of their schooling.

What Expertise is Required for National Curriculum Design?

Curriculum design is a crucial aspect of educational policy, far more complex and demanding than is often assumed. This is because it requires a coordinated interplay of diverse forms of expertise and experience. Broadly speaking, these take three forms: (a) child psychology and related aspects of sociology; (b) content matter relating to particular school subjects; and (c) pedagogical considerations. If the interplay is poorly coordinated or if expertise in one of these areas is unavailable, curricular quality will suffer. This coordination thus emerges as a crucial systemic variable for the effective achievement of policy goals.

a. Psychology and Sociology of Childhood: Children and Their Milieu

The first domain concerns our understanding of childhood itself. This has two major aspects. One is psychological, concerning the process of intellectual development from early childhood up to adolescence. Appreciating how children think at different points in their growth trajectory is crucial to informing curriculum-related inquiry and design. The psychologist’s contribution lies in reminding others involved in curriculum development that children construct reality quite differently from adults (Dewey, 1902; Elkind, 1981). The distinction between thinking and learning is important because the decision to introduce a concept or idea at a certain point in the age/grade spectrum should have some basis in an understanding of child development. *How* it is to be introduced or articulated in the syllabus and teaching materials should likewise be informed by psychological considerations.

In presenting a topic like water or energy, the selection of informational content and design of related classroom activities needs to be calibrated to the child’s way of thinking. All too often, schooling is treated as a means simply of displacing

children's ways of thinking with authoritatively sanctioned, scientifically validated understandings. But such attempted displacement may have only limited impact on deeply held beliefs or ideas that carry the weight of popular legitimacy. Children learn to arrange the knowledge imparted at school separately from that acquired from tradition or at home. Only pedagogic engagement with the latter is liable to lead to the transformation of entrenched personal beliefs.

Is water an unlimited thing? At age 7 or 8, many children are likely to believe that water is available for human enjoyment in unlimited quantities. For a child to learn about water conservation as a condition for sustainable development, it is important for him or her first to understand that water is measurable. This in turn depends on his or her internalisation of the concept of measurability of length and width. Measurement of length and area become a reality when they are routinely applied by children themselves to compare and judge the relations between different objects. Acquiring such habits of measurement prepares children to notice that water too has a quantity. Instructing them how to measure it then becomes a worthwhile challenge for the teacher, paving the way for promoting consideration of situations of scarcity. Other questions, such as 'Where did the water go?', may become meaningful at this point, requiring observations of a different kind.

Knowledge of the sociology of childhood also helps in curriculum-related deliberation, where psychological issues cannot be considered in isolation from the social context. A sociological perspective involves taking account of the role of home, neighbourhood, communal and other milieus in shaping students' lived experience. The diversity of these contexts requires flexibility in curriculum framing, something often overlooked in the highly centralised education systems common across Asia. Much work in child psychology also emphasises the impact of the social environment – economic, cultural and technological – on children's intellectual and emotional development (Bruner, 1962; Elkind, 1981). All of this requires considerable skill and flexibility not just from curriculum developers, but also from classroom teachers. A rigid curriculum policy that forces the teacher to stick to a prescribed text is likely to discourage engagement with the knowledge, experience and resources for learning that children bring with them to school.

No matter how syllabus-bound a system of education is, its efficiency will significantly decline if it permits little space for the teachers to adjust their pedagogical approach to their students' lived experience. Promotion of greater 'inclusion' and 'equity', entailing the practice of non-discriminatory pedagogy, requires sensitivity to the various dimensions of diversity and inequality within society – regional, national and local. Schooling is likely to feel remote and meaningless to many children if it does not engage with their experience of 'reality' (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). This is true for all school subjects, but especially for the social sciences, which seek to impart the capacity to make sense of the socially constructed world. Differences in milieus also exist within the system of schooling itself, not only between elite private and regular state-run schools, but typically also between rural and urban public schools. Even if the same curriculum is followed across the system, the effectiveness with which it is

taught will depend on both the ability and the scope teachers have for exercising professional judgement.

b. Subject Matter

Subject matter is the second key curricular domain. The classroom treatment of any topic (such as water conservation) ostensibly depends on the teacher, but he or she generally works within the parameters set by the official curriculum or syllabus. Although the terms are often used interchangeably, the 'syllabus' carries greater importance in many educational systems than the 'curriculum'. Their meanings are in fact quite distinct and, as Dottrens (1962) explained in an early UNESCO study, they represent a typology of educational systems around the world. Countries that follow a syllabus model generally offer less autonomy to teachers than those operating with a curriculum model. This distinction is rooted in the historical evolution of different national systems. In countries where modern education was introduced under colonial conditions, or by tightly controlled 'developmental states' – conditions that apply across most of Asia – the syllabus tends more strictly to constrain choice and treatment of topics. In many such systems, procedures for vetting or prescribing textbooks constitute a key instrument of control. The teachers are in practice generally expected to teach the textbook, rather than determining for themselves how to address a broadly defined theme. Indeed, especially at primary and lower secondary levels, teachers in such systems may themselves be unaware of the formal syllabus or curricular guidelines. Under such conditions, those drafting syllabi are tasked with framing topics with sufficient clarity to guide textbook authors and, through them, classroom teachers.

In many countries, since teachers are in practice expected to adhere to the textbook and desist from applying their own judgement, textual quality and clarity, as well as the nature of any accompanying illustrations, are crucial. These features of textbooks largely determine how a topic such as water conservation will be presented, as well as what kind of questions or exercises will be used to teach it and ultimately to assess or evaluate children's learning. If national or international policy documents ignore these micro-realities while setting up grand goals for curriculum policy, the results are likely to be disappointing at best. Particular topics may appear fleetingly in the syllabus or even the textbook. However, meaningful learning may fail to result, for reasons including inappropriateness of grade level, unclear or inconsistent rationale, mechanical textbook treatment, and, eventually, vague and unconvincing interpretation by the teacher.

c. Pedagogic Process

It is customary to hold the teacher responsible for such a chain of failure. This tendency has many consequences. The most relevant here is that teachers often act as timid transmitters of messages in which they may not believe, or which they

do not understand. When teachers routinely take the blame for poor systemic quality, they become cynical and resistant to change. This is particularly so when they find themselves on the lowest rung of a hierarchy that accords much higher status to syllabus designers and textbook writers. To the extent that they are treated as low-status functionaries rather than autonomous professionals, their engagement with their classes is likely to be performative (i.e. largely scripted) rather than relational. They will also feel vulnerable to inspection regimes largely heedless of the constraints imposed by examination syllabi, textbooks or other contextual factors, and intent on assessing pedagogical effectiveness on the basis solely of pupil ‘outcomes’ rather than observation or consultation.

The manner in which the teacher habitually relates to his or her class is a factor crucial to shaping their overall approach to learning. Their natural curiosity can be transformed into self-directed enquiry when teaching is grounded in an awareness of how children grow up and learn. But while there is a considerable body of professional knowledge regarding such matters on which teachers could potentially draw, in many education systems it is conveyed to them poorly, if at all. Across much of Asia (though with significant exceptions, in parts of East Asia, for example), teacher education itself often partakes of the same transmission-belt model of pedagogy that teachers then go on to implement in school classrooms. Debates on learning and intellectual development are ignored and teachers are fed, during their training, on simplistic messages or aphorisms rather than evidential or theoretical debate (Gupta, 2017). Such practices are based on a generalised perception of the intellectual calibre of primary school teacher recruits. Curricula and methods in teacher training often leave the novice teacher de-professionalised and reduced to the status of a subordinate classroom technician. In their efforts to relate to children, teachers are thus often constrained as much by the poverty of their own training as by the design of the curriculum they are expected to implement. While these issues of teacher capacity and de-professionalisation fall beyond the ambit of the research conducted for this report (analysed in subsequent chapters), they are crucial to interpreting the significance of its findings.

“
In their efforts to relate to children, teachers are often constrained as much by the poverty of their own training as by the design of the curriculum they are expected to implement
”

What Makes Curriculum Renewal for SDG 4.7 Particularly Challenging in Asia?

Goal-setting and Systemic Reform: Impediments of Instrumentalist Education Policy

The 1990 World Conference on Education for All in Jomtien, Thailand, was a precursor of current exercises in global goal-setting for educational reform.

Prior to Jomtien, international aid and multilateral efforts focused mainly on non-formal education. But the Jomtien Declaration⁴ articulated a concern for formal schooling in economically less-developed nations. Several Asian countries subsequently embarked on reforms supported by aid and loans, informed by new policy discourses that carried the stamp of global approval. These discourses centred on specific targets, to be implemented and monitored through procedures capable of bypassing putatively cumbersome and decrepit state structures, with the large-scale involvement of NGOs. This new education policy paradigm emerged in parallel with programmes of structural adjustment in the economic and financial spheres, which similarly sought to reduce the role of the state in directly providing key public goods, reframing it as essentially a regulating and monitoring agency. The post-Jomtien era has witnessed significant progress in expanding access to education across Asia, but also persistent or worsening educational inequality in both ‘developing’ and ‘developed’ societies, partly as a consequence of the spread of an ethos of marketisation.

With respect to education, recent policy trends are largely traceable to the enduring influence of human capital theory. First clearly formulated in the mid-1960s (Becker, 1964/1994), this demonstrated education’s role in improving the overall potential of a population for economic growth. The theory provided a strong justification for public investment in schooling, while also, perhaps inadvertently, heightening an emphasis on its instrumental utility over its intrinsic value.

“**If we assume that education’s overriding function is to provide talent to fuel economic growth, then inequality may come to seem the necessary price of efficient meritocracy**”

While furnishing useful grounds for persuading governments to pay greater attention to education, the popularity of this theory mythologised education’s efficacy as a catalyst of development and democracy. At the same time, it distracted public and policymaking attention from the socially distributive role of education – its function, as Wolf puts it, in labelling an individual as ‘a “top” or “near the top” sort of person’ (2002, p. 251) – something that sociologists in the 1970s had been at pains to highlight (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990). This is not accidental: the more we can be persuaded to put faith in education’s capacity to promote economic growth, the more we may be inclined to overlook the socially divisive consequences of competitive intensity and credentialism. If we assume that education’s overriding function is to provide talent to fuel economic growth, then inequality may come to seem the necessary price of efficient meritocracy.

Recent trends in educational policy across a wide spectrum of Asian societies, ‘developed’ and ‘developing’, reflect the persistent or growing prevalence of a human resource development perspective. This is as true of relatively impoverished South Asia (Chapter 5) as of relatively prosperous East Asia

⁴ See <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001275/127583e.pdf>.

(Chapter 3). In the former region, debates and policies pertaining to child labour, for example, indicate the tension between the human capital paradigm and a broader public welfare agenda. Meanwhile, in the education sector, the human capital perspective also influences public policy towards teachers, their recruitment, status, working conditions and professional preparation (Halperin and Ratteree, 2003; Zeichner, 2014). It further affects attitudes towards educational research as a sphere of academic activity: from Japan to India, governments in many Asian states have become increasingly dismissive of, or even actively hostile to, research into education that is anything other than narrowly policy-oriented. The job of educational researchers is increasingly seen as investigating how to implement the state-mandated goals of schooling more effectively, rather than contributing to debate over what those goals should be.

In many Asian societies, this new emphasis on ‘efficiency’ has legitimated the substitution of professional teachers by trained volunteers, para-teachers and technological devices. In the area of curriculum design, modular courses and an agenda of ‘skills’ delivery have increasingly taken precedence over comprehensive training to nurture in teachers the capabilities, attitudes and identity of autonomous professionals. These changes pave the way for a narrowly outcomes-driven approach, involving the quantified measurement of children’s knowledge through ready-made tests. However, it is hard to effectively implement such an approach in systems ‘locked in a low-learning, low-accountability, high inequality equilibrium’ (World Bank, 2016a, p. 3).

Furthermore, the premises underlying the relentlessly outcomes-focused, economic interpretation of the aims of schooling are seriously flawed. Claims that economic growth results directly from the success of schooling in fostering economically relevant ‘skills’, as measured by cross-national assessment exercises such as PISA, lack a solid grounding in the statistical evidence (Wolf, 2002; Komatsu and Rapple, 2017). This is not to deny that schooling is important for economic growth, just to point out that the relationship between schooling and growth is far more complex than is typically assumed, and is not readily susceptible to quantitative measurement. Quite apart from any ethical considerations, this fact alone should give us pause when considering to what extent and how to prioritise the fostering of ‘job-ready skills’ over other aspects or functions of schooling.

As we discuss in the regionally-focused chapters of this report, the dominance of a human capital paradigm, combined with other factors common to many Asian societies – strong meritocratic ideologies, minimal state welfare guarantees and intense credentialism – carries considerable social costs. Although the policy and curricular sources examined in the research preparatory to this report do not bear directly on these issues, they have severe implications for the capacity of Asian schooling systems to progress towards the goals enshrined in SDG 4.7. For example, recent years have witnessed not just an expansion of the market for private education across much of Asia, but also an explosion of examination-

preparatory cram schooling or ‘shadow education’, extending well beyond East Asia (where it has long been prevalent). The costs this imposes on families and on children in terms of money and time, as well as the psychological pressures arising from the atmosphere of extreme competitiveness, are incompatible with an approach to learning that values sustainability, collaboration and peaceable coexistence over the relentless competitive pursuit of individual or group advantage.

Beyond Information Transmission: Rewriting the Story of the Nation-State

The values enshrined in SDG 4.7 are also hard to reconcile with a conception of the goals of schooling that prioritises the inculcation of uncritical state-centred patriotism over all other ends. To point this out is not to dismiss the promotion of love of country as a legitimate aim of schooling, but to emphasise the need for attention to *how* patriotism is cultivated, and how it is related to other dimensions of identity that are important to nurturing a commitment to sustainability, peace and inclusive notions of citizenship.

Any curricular design that aims at transmitting information as its primary objective will fail in this respect. Perhaps Bertrand Russell was exaggerating when he wrote, ‘there can be no agreement between those who regard education as a means of instilling certain definite beliefs, and those who think that it should produce the power of independent judgement’ (1926/2010, p. viii). However, a vision of curriculum as a transmission belt for state-authorized knowledge is incapable of fostering in students the capacity for autonomous, critical learning that is intrinsic both to education in its fullest sense, and to active, participatory citizenship. The achievement of sustainable development and global peace does not detract from the importance of national citizenship, but ultimately depends on the capacity and willingness of national citizens to think and act autonomously, and make common cause with those of other nationalities or faiths.

Nonetheless, it is especially hard to press such an agenda in a context where national identities often are, or are felt to be, still profoundly insecure. The orientation of schooling towards promoting identities that are highly (if not exclusively) nation-centred is extremely strong across Asia. As already noted, this has much to do with the historical legacy either of direct colonial rule over much of the continent, or the threat of Western (or Japanese) domination, in stimulating highly state-centred forms of ‘catch-up’ modernisation. Especially in countries that gained their independence from colonial rule within living memory, and are still marked by mass poverty, acute socio-economic inequality, and internal ethnic or religious tensions – as is the case across much of Central, South and Southeast Asia – the prioritisation of nation-building is understandable and, indeed, necessary. But prioritising nation-building should not mean denial of the multi-faceted, multi-dimensional nature of citizenship,

encompassing consciousness of a common humanity that transcends national or ethnic divisions.

Primary and junior secondary schooling are typically tasked with legitimating and reinforcing commitment to the pursuit of national prosperity and power. UNESCO's efforts to promote humanistic values and consciousness of a global community constitute an attempt not to displace, but to supplement conventional patriotism. Nurturing the capacity and willingness to criticise particular national policies is not the same as disowning commitment to the nation itself, as the Indian writer-activist Arundhati Roy once appeared to do when declaring herself 'a mobile republic' (Vickers and Kumar, 2015, p. 23). For the vast majority of people across Asia (and beyond) – if not for wealthy and privileged super-elites – the nation-state remains unquestionably the most important guarantor of security and basic entitlements, as well as a crucial focus of collective identity. If sustainable development and global citizenship are to be pursued through schooling, this needs to be done in a manner that respectfully accommodates the nation-building agenda specific to each country. Especially where the state is relatively new or a sense of national insecurity prevails, the process of nation-building may remain fraught and complex – potentially complicating the task of implementing SDG Target 4.7.

Why Are Different School Subjects Relevant for SDG 4.7?

In discussing the curricular treatment of SDG 4.7, it has become customary to treat ESD and GCED as relevant only to subjects 'widely considered a part of social studies, including civics and citizenship education, moral education, history and geography' (UNESCO, 2016a, p. 32). However, as already noted, to the extent that it requires a reconceptualisation of the overall aims of schooling, rather than just minor technical adjustments, education for peace, sustainable development and global citizenship requires a thorough curricular overhaul. This section discusses what this entails for some of the key school subjects.

Citizenship Education and GCED

GCED is sometimes perceived as a form of civics for the 21st century, or associated with 'global civics' (Altinay, 2011) or 'global competencies' (OECD, 2016a). But caution is required in making this association, in particular given the colonial baggage of the term 'civics,' especially South and parts of Southeast Asia. There, civics was designed by colonial officials to nurture grateful, pliable and obedient recipients of the state's benevolence (Kumar, 2015). The idea of an active and reflective citizen who engages with the state under a participatory model of democracy was alien to the spirit of civic education under colonial conditions. At the same time, in countries that escaped formal colonial rule or were ruled under Communist auspices, the imperative of securing obedience to state authority also tended strongly to shape the design and content of civics or equivalent subjects (e.g. 'Politics').

Recent reforms in this area have taken many forms. For instance, in India, civics has been replaced at the federal level by the study of ‘Social and Political Life’ (NCERT, 2006a) although most provincial curricula (that in practice govern the teaching of most schools), continue to stick to civics (see **Chapter 5**). In a scattering of other countries, regional and global concerns have rendered civics or related subjects less narrowly nation-focused. But whatever curricula mandate, textbooks – whether state-produced or privately published – often still portray rural residents, ethnic minorities and women in stereotypical ways: as impediments to progress, or ‘backward’ recipients of benefits bestowed by their more ‘advanced’ compatriots. More broadly, the concept of ‘development’ itself, and the hierarchy it posits (implicitly or explicitly) between more or less ‘advanced’ countries, cultures and peoples, is seldom opened up to critical debate (Fong, 2011).

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Curricula should acknowledge that the state is no longer the only point of reference for a responsible citizen”

If citizenship education is to take on a global dimension, recognition must be given to the political responsibilities that an aware citizenry performs in a democratic social order. Curricula should acknowledge that the state is no longer the only point of reference for a responsible citizen. Target 4.7 mentions GCED as a means of fostering ‘knowledge and skills needed to

promote sustainable development’, and this relates not least to the ability of citizens to engage with corporate and commercial interests that are increasingly transnational in their operations, and their loyalties. Major transnational corporations have participated in recent UN conferences on sustainable development and climate change, and some now claim to be working for a green business model. Citizens across Asia and the rest of the world today need to be encouraged and empowered to hold transnational business to account for actions that affect environmental sustainability and social justice everywhere. The coordinated transnational action that is required will be hard to bring about or sustain without inculcation of an awareness that our identities, loyalties and interests extend well beyond national boundaries.

With the increase in demand for and access to schooling, as well as with growing rural-urban, inter-regional and transnational migration, school classrooms in many parts of Asia have acquired an increasingly complex, diverse character. These developments increase the importance of schools as places for inquiry, understanding and tolerance. It is crucial that all disciplines contribute to this, as the logical reasoning built up in mathematics is as important to dealing with complex issues as the ability (learnt through the study of geography) to read power relationships in space. Such social changes have a particular bearing on the significance of social sciences as a resource for learning how to deal with controversy and accommodate diverse views (foreign language learning is also highly significant here, as we emphasise below and in later chapters). However,

in many systems of education, the social sciences have tended to become increasingly marginalised, as natural sciences, mathematics and often English have been prioritised. This kind of jostling between different domains of knowledge indicates the frequent lack of coherence in curricular planning, and the continued prioritisation of disciplines assumed to contribute most directly to economic growth.

History and Peace

In history curriculum design, two particular issues are relevant to the pursuit of peace. The first pertains to the coverage of violent conflicts in national history, especially recent history. Conventional approaches involve either glorifying victory and minimising human and other losses incurred in wars, or emphasising the unique and incommensurable nature of one's own national victimhood, while belittling or ignoring the suffering of foreigners. School textbooks typically celebrate successful conquests by national heroes, no matter how ancient. Such celebrations of martial glory are seen as important for nation-building. In countries whose recent history has been ruptured by internal wars or conflicts, textbooks' role in reinforcing a sense of national identity tends to be viewed as especially vital.

With very few exceptions, officially mandated approaches to history teaching, and especially the textbooks produced to support them, adopt a disseminative style. This generally leaves little space for contemplation or critical discussion. But such space is crucial to enabling history to be used, as it can be, for exploring and understanding different points of view – for example, appreciating the suffering of others, rather than simply dwelling on the past victimhood of one's own nation. Relevant exercises can take various forms, such as presenting students with documents that offer different accounts of the origins of a conflict, and asking them to debate these. Prompting students to consider how other nations look at a conflict in their neighbourhood can be a useful means of developing a wider and more critical perspective. Looking at the same event from the viewpoint of others can lend an international or comparative dimension to the teaching of history in schools that can contribute crucially to the development of cross-national understanding.

The second major issue relating to history teaching is the need for greater space for social history. Curricula and textbooks often focus exclusively on political events and heroic or leading personalities. The experiences of ordinary people – peasants, artisans, shopkeepers and so forth – are typically overlooked. Most school histories record tumultuous happenings marking the closure and inauguration of successive eras. How common people in different walks of life coped with such transitions is seldom brought into focus despite the availability of various sources such as letters, newspapers, pictures or toys that relate to their lives. Especially neglected are the lives of women and LGBTQIA (Blount, 2004; Mayo, 2014). Their absence in history textbooks exacerbates and helps

to perpetuate institutionalised disparities in the treatment of gender both within the classroom and beyond the school gates. Redressing this imbalance constitutes a vital step along the road to securing peaceful and sustainable development.

Science and Nature

Unlike history, science (and the concomitant study of technology) is typically introduced into the curriculum at primary level, when children's disposition towards nature is at a formative stage. Conventional science curricula and textbooks may inadvertently convey an antagonistic relationship between humans and the natural world around them. School science typically resonates with the popular belief that science heralds human mastery over nature. Many scientific discoveries and inventions are represented in the popular media as well as in textbooks as instances of humanity's capacity to tame nature and harness it to the pursuit of prosperity (Gunderson, 2014). Such an anthropocentric view of nature is incompatible with the objective of environmental sustainability, now widely enshrined in education policy statements at national and transnational levels. Even the use of the term 'nature' itself tends to posit an artificial separation between humans and the environment of which we are a part, and on which we depend (Johnston, 2002).

Science can be an unreliable friend to environmental education (Ashley, 2000). The stance of detached objectivity inherent in the conventional 'scientific' approach can seem at odds with, or irrelevant to, arguments for limiting the exploitation of nature and its resources. A tension thus often exists between the established culture of science and the emerging discourse of environmental conservation (Ratcliffe and Grace, 2003). While statements of environmental concern have been duly inserted into many school curricula worldwide over recent years, there has often been insufficient examination of what such concerns imply for the overall approach to teaching science. Environmental scientists are frequently sceptical of the school's capacity to do justice to environmental education (Gruenewald, 2004).

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Climate change and global warming are important themes recommended for study by UNESCO in the context of ESD. As concerns that affect our shared planet, irrespective of national distinctions, they are also highly relevant for GCED. International mobilisation for reduction of carbon emission levels has allowed the setting of target dates and the articulation of action plans for the use of renewable energy resources that might replace dependence on fossil fuels – but

this transnational commitment is fragile, and must be maintained and enhanced. In this context, what role can education play? Answering this question requires examining the values and attitudes imparted by science as a school subject.

The early years of primary education are the time when the young are mentally most disposed towards forming or acquiring preferences, stances and criteria of judgement. Taking this into account, it is worth considering how curricula and textbooks at this level have tended to approach topics related to climate change. Let us take the topic 'Means of Transport' as an example. Many curricula make this the focus of a unit or lesson in science texts designed for use by students of around 8-9 years old. The staple lesson on this topic covers different types of vehicles, typically arranged in order of speed. This ordering is also usually presented as paralleling chronological order, demonstrating the progress of science and technology since ancient times. The source of energy used by speedier vehicles cannot be meaningfully explained to an 8- or 9-year-old. But the formation of an association, in the child's mind, between 'speed' and 'progress' can hardly be avoided. Later instruction concerning the role of fossil fuels in climate change may prompt anxiety, but will struggle to unsettle the basic mind-set linking speed with progress. This illustrates the importance of coherence in the treatment of environmental concerns in primary science curricula, and of attention to the value-forming aspects of science learning.

Another example that can deepen appreciation of this aspect of science learning in primary classes is the topic 'Living and Non-living'. It is taught in order to encourage children to be observant and capable of noticing the ways in which life-forms co-exist in nature with other kinds of objects. In this respect the curricular emphasis should be on understanding the concept of an ecosystem (or at primary level the 'environment').⁵ This encourages the appreciation of the fragility of the balance between all species and resources, and the realisation that non-human life does not exist primarily or purely for our enjoyment and exploitation.

With respect to topics such as 'Means of Transport', 'Climate Change' and 'Global Warming', curriculum development needs to shed the assumption that science can be separated from technology, or that science and technology will invariably supply solutions to our environmental challenges. Such a technocentric rather than eco-centric stance (Gorobets, 2014) underlies the prevailing view that gradual replacement of fossil fuels by cleaner sources of energy will permit us to avoid any trade-offs in terms of technological convenience – or, with respect to transport, speed. For example, 'clean' or 'green' energy are often touted as solutions to our environmental problems that will allow us to have our technological cake and eat it. However, some technologies associated with

5 An ecosystem may be summarised as a biological community of interacting organisms and their environment, including the biotic (living) and abiotic (physical and chemical) components of the immediate environment which form a self-contained self-sustaining unit (Odum and Barrett, 2005, p. 36; Odum, 1971, pp. 8-36; 1975, p. 25).

“**Curricula need to confront learners with these complexities, rather than inculcating a blind faith in the capacity of science and technology to solve all our dilemmas**”

the promise of green energy, such as nuclear power, carry dire threats of a different kind to environmental sustainability. Curricula need to confront learners with these complexities, rather than inculcating a blind faith in the capacity of science and technology to solve all our dilemmas.

Science is not an objective practice divorced from ethical considerations. School curricula need to be alive to the moral premises that inevitably inform our understanding of science. Such issues are explored by Zeidler and Keefer (2003) in ‘The Role of Moral Reasoning and the Status of Socio-scientific Issues in Science Education’ (see also Johnston, 2013). Of paramount value is instilling awareness of the importance of careful custodianship of inanimate resources for the benefit of all living organisms, rather than licensing environmental ‘exploitation’ which tends to benefit a minority of one species, to the detriment of all others.

Geography

Geography is another important school subject implicated in the formation of basic dispositions and capacities relevant to the educational challenges that concern us here. Sustainable development poses conceptual problems that children can negotiate meaningfully only if they have been trained to ‘read’ the complexity of the world and relate facts to some sort of context – not least spatial and social (Morin, 1999). This involves assembling and holding, for further use, information that is largely symbolic in nature. The two-dimensional mapping of physical objects enables the mind to bring within its grasp elements that are dispersed over space. As with language learning (Britton, 1970/1992) and mathematics, map-making in geography renders spatial reality intellectually manipulable for purposes of analysis and reflection. Geography also is crucial for GCED as it looks at particular issues in relation to different spatial scales, from the local to the global and back. It thus illuminates spatial patterns and relationships, while also potentially fostering a sense of local rootedness and responsibility (Reinfried and Hertig, 2011; Morgan, 2013). As a discipline at the intersection of the physical and human sciences, it sees the Earth ‘as a human-environment-system from a spatial perspective’ (Rempfler and Uphues, 2012, p. 9).

Geography thus has a crucial role in teaching us to see our societies in their environmental context, something that is essential for the pursuit of sustainable development. In other words, as the International Charter on Geographical Education puts it:

Geographical perspectives help deepen understanding of many contemporary challenges.... Building on people’s own experiences, learning

geography helps them to formulate questions, develop their intellectual skills and respond to issues affecting their lives. It introduces them not only to key 21st century skills but also to distinctive investigative tools such as maps, fieldwork and the use of powerful digital communication technologies (IGU-CGE, 2016, p. 5).

This relationship between geography and other social sciences has not received sufficient attention in curriculum development. Drawing on John Dewey, Gaudelli and Heilman (2009) argue that conventional pedagogical approaches to geography are inadequate, particularly at a time when we face global challenges that require geographic knowledge and insight. UNESCO's concern for promoting learning about and for sustainable development will need strong support from geography teaching, but conventional instructional approaches are of doubtful use in this respect.

Across much of Asia, syllabi and textbooks for geography (as for related subjects such as history) tend to be highly cluttered with content knowledge, most of it purely informational. In the final three years of basic schooling, children throughout South Asia, for example, are required to assimilate densely packed gobbets of factual detail concerning the regional geography of different continents and their own country. This exposure to global geography forms the conventional content of geographical knowledge. Though some introduction to the essentials of global geography is needed, studies of children's socio-cognitive development underline the importance of encouraging them to explore and document the geography of their local region (Makiguchi, 1908/2002). This means on the one hand acknowledging the need to inculcate procedural knowledge (for example, how to conduct an investigation or how to make a simple map), while also building the kind of 'geographical perspective' called for in the International Charter on Geographical Education (IGU-CGE, 2016). This implies 'learning to think as a geographer' (what will I look for in my local context?) rather than simply imbibing a remote and abstract body of authorised knowledge (Lambert, 2004; GA, 2009; Reinfried and Hertig, 2011).

Officially-mandated curricula often persist in ignoring the potential of local geography as an object of study, perhaps because highly centralised production of textbooks and systems of public assessment militate against locally rooted approaches to learning. Such approaches to teaching geography also imply a change in the role of the teacher, and thus also in approaches to teacher training. Systemic constraints of this kind will have to be overcome in order to enable a focus on local exploration and observation; hands-on experience; representation through mapping; and critical reflection on the relationship between landforms, climate and human activity. All this requires substantial curricular reorganisation, rather than mechanical insertion of new topics. It also means striking an appropriate balance between privileging exploration of the local context, and heightening students' awareness and understanding of the wider world – in such a way that one goal reinforces the other. In both conceptual and technical

terms, the kind of redesigning required to render geography an effective vehicle of ESD is thus highly demanding; in tackling such a task, curriculum developers themselves will require advice and support (see, for example, the Geography chapter in UNESCO MGIEP, 2017).

Mathematics

Mathematics occupies a privileged position in the basic school curriculum everywhere. However, the nature of its role in children's intellectual development is often understood in rather vague terms – a vagueness reflected in its curricular treatment. The conventional approach to mathematics aims at making children numerate in the same way they are rendered literate – i.e. largely through recitation, cramming and copying. In conventional mathematics and literacy education, curriculum and pedagogy focus on mastery of skills with little concern for children's ability to find meaning in the operations they are trained to master. Although considerable effort has been made to implement child-centred policies in these foundational subjects, these have struggled to make headway in the face of deep-rooted traditional approaches and the customary wisdom that protects old pedagogies of arithmetic, reading and writing. Established pedagogical approaches are also legitimated by the excessively behaviouristic orientation that dominates institutions in charge of curriculum development and evaluation in many countries. Despite strong evidence that constructivist teaching of mathematics encourages children to apply their minds and use critical inquiry across the curriculum (Ducret, 2001), more conventional methods remain popular.

Barring a handful of countries, Asia presents a picture of completely or prematurely abandoned transition to psychologically defensible approaches to the teaching of mathematics. Research in South Asia shows that fear of mathematics sets in early among many pupils, failure rates are high, and the fear of failure acts as a major factor in driving children out of school before completion of basic education. For this reason, mathematics has been referred to as a 'killer' subject (Rampal and Subramanian, 2012, p. 63). In China, meanwhile, the bulk of the enormous burden of homework borne by students across all age groups relates to mathematics (Vickers and Zeng, 2017, p. 130). Moreover, mathematics serves as a common site of discrimination against girls and children from lower socio-economic strata (Fennema, 2000; Martin, Gholson and Leonard, 2010; Zevenbergen, 2001). The recent growth in international testing regimes – such as PISA and TIMMS – and the publicity surrounding them meanwhile contributes both to reinforcing a curricular bias towards mathematics (and away from other disciplines), and to

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encouraging policymakers, curriculum developers and teachers to favour forms of pedagogy seen as liable to maximise performance in these tests. This can mean missing opportunities to use mathematics to equip citizens to understand complex phenomena and raise productive questions.

It is impossible to imagine any significant curriculum renewal in the direction UNESCO has proposed without recognition of the key role of mathematics education in children's intellectual development. The contribution of mathematics to fostering analytical skills, critical inquiry, representational skills, proportional reasoning, assessment and judgement is crucial. But in many schooling systems, mathematics pedagogy tends to be characterised by hurried movement from one operation to another, paucity of hands-on experience in the early grades, poor quality of textbooks and rigid, ritualistic procedures of evaluation. Even in systems such as China's that have come to be internationally renowned for high levels of student 'achievement' in mathematics, levels of student interest in the subject may often be suffocated both by teaching and assessment techniques, and the enormous competitive investment of energy and time requirement to attain what counts as 'success' (Vickers and Zeng, 2017, p. 130). Early introduction of computing devices can further complicate the problems faced in mathematics teaching. If ESD and related areas are to be meaningfully incorporated into the basic curriculum, reform to mathematics curricula are one important pre-condition.

Language

The teaching of language skills, especially reading, poses challenges for the pursuit of sustainability and equity similar to those presented by mathematics (Ball and Blachman, 1991; Shankweiler and Fowler, 2004). These relate firstly to opportunities to acquire basic skills in these crucial areas, still denied to millions of children across large swathes of Asia (particularly South Asia). When combined with gaps in the schooling career of individuals (Juel, 1988; Shaywitz, 2003; Snyder, Tan and Hoffman, 2004), or problems of familial or communal poverty, these challenges are often magnified (Yarosz and Barnett, 2001).

But another set of issues relates to teaching methods. Approaches to teaching literacy that focus on naming and sounding out letters continue to dominate early childhood education in large parts of Asia (Gillon, 2004; Gillon and McNeill, 2009; Shapiro and Solity, 2008). In several regions, these methods have cultural sanction and are therefore resistant to change attempted through curriculum reform in isolation from teacher education. Across much of East Asia, the learning of scripts that are ideographic rather than alphabetic requires long, intensive and repetitive practice. This both reflects and helps reinforce the notion that learning, particularly in childhood, should consist of copying and assimilating authorised models of exemplary 'correctness' – moral as well as orthographic (Kipnis, 2011). It does not follow that East Asian societies are somehow predestined to maintain authoritarian pedagogical approaches across the board, but at least as regards

the acquisition of literacy, ideographic scripts arguably impose constraints on the scope for adopting more child-centred teaching methods in the early years.

Whatever the nature of the script, approaches that focus on engaging children with the meanings of texts depend on the availability of a wide range of reading material of high quality (Fisher, Frey and Lapp, 2012; Miller, 2014). This requires significant investment in primary and lower secondary school libraries and classroom reading corners (Warrican et al., 2008). Fostering links between reading and writing skills, and promoting the development of critical thinking and creativity, are essential to nurturing the sort of autonomous, engaged citizenry that sustainable societies require (Sterling, 2010). Investment in resources

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that expand children’s access to literature and capacity for self-expression through the written word is thus of foundational importance to wider efforts to promote ESD and GCED through schooling (Ewing, Callow and Rushton, 2017; Lee and Spratley, 2010).

Finally, it is also important to note the significance not only of mother-tongue learning, but also of the study of foreign or second languages, for promoting skills and attitudes associated with sustainability and global citizenship. Across Asia today, and indeed globally, schooling systems increasingly teach foreign languages,

proficiency in which is often a requirement for access to the most prestigious institutions of higher education. But foreign language learning is also increasingly dominated by the study of English – which, thanks to the legacy of colonialism, is in many Asian societies (e.g. those of South Asia) not considered a foreign language at all. Given a concern with promoting ‘global citizenship’, should we not celebrate this spread of English as the *Esperanto* of the 21st century, allowing nation to speak unto nation?

The role that English performs as a *lingua franca* certainly carries potential benefits, but skewing foreign or second language curricula almost exclusively towards English also threatens to exacerbate rather than reconcile divisions both within and between societies. In practice, the spread of proficiency in English, while opening up a world of opportunity for the privileged, can widen the gulf in experience and sympathy that separates them from the mass of their compatriots. At the same time, promoting the learning of English while neglecting the study of Asian foreign languages (or those of domestic ‘minorities’) can foster amongst elites habits of invidious comparison with ‘the West’, while leaving them largely ignorant of the culture or outlook of their closest neighbours. As we shall argue in **Chapters 3-6**, the potential of foreign language learning for promoting greater

transnational understanding is something that remains insufficiently recognised across much of Asia.

QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

The foregoing discussion of what implementing the vision of peace, sustainable development and global citizenship implies for Asian policymakers and curriculum developers is necessarily highly generalised, but makes clear that the challenges are manifold and hugely complex. Designing curricula conducive to achieving these goals requires not just technical adjustments around the edges of the existing system, but a fundamental rethink of the nature and purpose of schooling itself.

It is the purpose of the remainder of this report to examine more closely the extent to which school curricula across Asia have begun to undertake such a thoroughgoing rethink. After presenting in **Part I** the findings of the quantitative coding of policy and curricular documents, we proceed in **Part II** to analyse what lies behind those quantitative patterns. At the most basic level, these chapters interrogate the understandings of development and narratives of nationhood that inform curriculum development in different Asian societies, and ask to what extent these underlying assumptions are consistent with the goals espoused by UNESCO.

Earlier in this chapter, we identified three broad ‘challenges’ – of *instrumentalism and ethics*, of understandings of *nationhood and identities* and of *competitiveness and regimentation* – which confront attempts to realise these goals. The nature of these challenges is elaborated further in the preface to **Part II** of this report, but they relate closely to the problems and issues outlined here in our discussion of curriculum development and school subjects. Amongst the specific questions that arise are:

- Do school curricula define ‘development’ in narrowly economic terms, as an instrument for maximising GDP growth and fuelling national aggrandisement? Or do they emphasise a broader vision of development, consistent with the prioritisation of sustainability and inclusive, equitable ideas of citizenship?
- Fundamentally, are the skills and capabilities that curricula promote seen as important primarily for producing a pliant, efficient workforce, or for nurturing autonomous, critical and engaged citizens with a voice in determining their own collective future? Or to put it another way, *who*, as well as *what*, is schooling ultimately assumed to be for?
- In so far as schooling is conceived as serving specifically national goals, how is the nation conceptualised in curricula and textbooks? Is it presented as a homogenous and totalising collectivity, embodied by a state demanding unquestioning loyalty? Or is it represented as a diverse community,

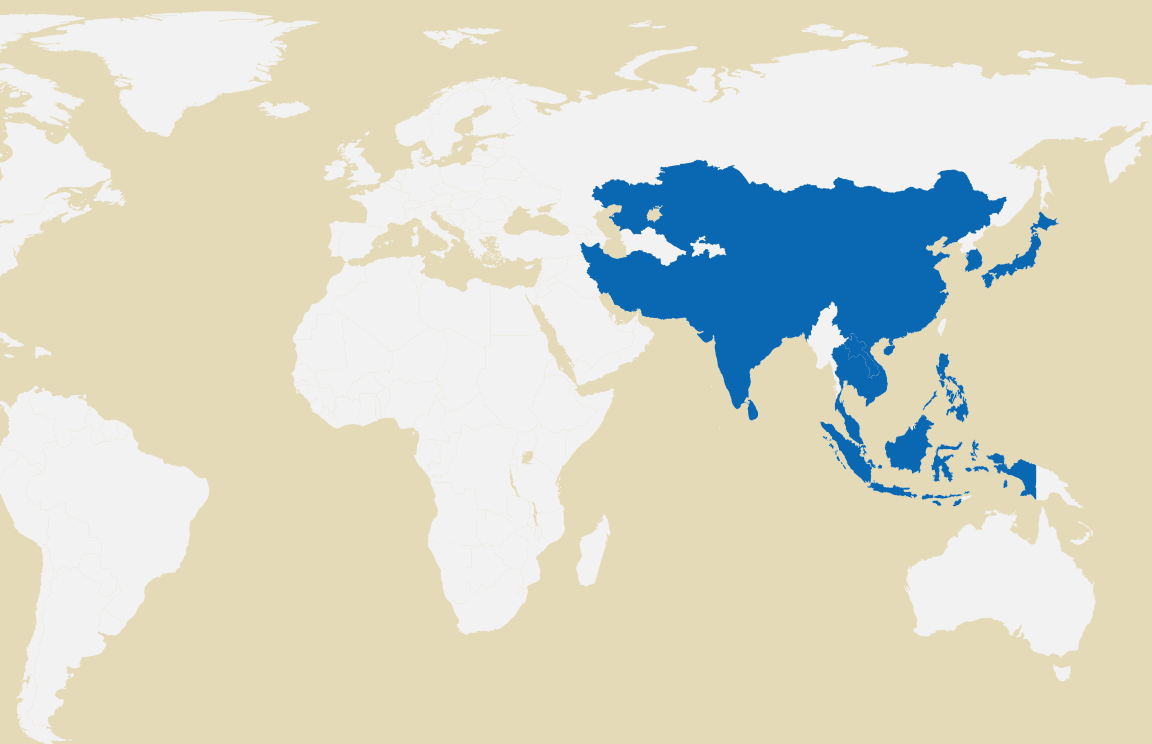
responsive to the voices and interests of minorities as well as majority ethnic or religious groups, and of women as well as men?

- Do school curricula recognise and value foci of identity besides or beyond the nation? Do they encourage a consciousness of regional belonging (or 'global citizenship') that transcends national divisions – and, if so, how?
- Whatever messages curricula convey regarding peace, sustainability and transnationalism, to what extent are the structures of schooling, and the wider social context, conducive to the realisation of these ideals? Do systems for curriculum development, public assessment and recruitment into higher education or the labour force foster equity, inclusiveness and tolerance? Or do they instead promote intense competition and credentialism, thereby limiting the potential for realising any broader vision of learning, while entrenching and legitimating invidious distinctions between supposedly 'meritocratic' elites and everyone else?

It will be clear that these questions challenge policymakers, curriculum developers, teachers and, indeed, parents to rethink the role of schooling in ways that go far beyond tinkering with the phraseology of official guidelines, or the content of officially-approved textbooks. It is a hoary axiom of educational scholarship, but one that bears repeating, that we cannot separate consideration of the ethos and function of the school from an understanding of the context – social, cultural and political – in which schools operate, and which they inevitably reflect. So rethinking schooling for the 21st century – in Asia or elsewhere – requires us at the same time to rethink the nature and orientation of our societies in far-reaching ways.

PART I:

Key Regional Findings



The current report builds on a project conducted by UNESCO MGIEP in 2016-17 to review the current state of education for peace, sustainable development and global citizenship in countries across Asia, in partnership with the UNESCO Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education (UNESCO Bangkok). The project was initially conceived to assess the feasibility of UNESCO MGIEP's approach of embedding ESD/GCED in core subjects such as mathematics and science (see UNESCO MGIEP, 2017, for this approach). After the initial planning in 2015 based on a literature review and consultations with relevant stakeholders, the project objectives and foci were slightly modified to align with the global indicator of SDG Target 4.7 finalised in 2016. This called for analysis of:

[the] extent to which (i) global citizenship education and (ii) education for sustainable development, including gender equality and human rights, are mainstreamed at all levels in (a) national education policies (b) curricula (c) teacher education and (d) student assessment. (UNESCO, 2016b, p. 79)

Over recent decades, there have been numerous calls for integrating promotion of peace, human rights, sustainable development and other related areas into the goals of national education systems (for example in the context of the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, 2005-2014). Various programmes, initiatives and projects have resulted, but there has been no systematic review of the extent to which concepts encompassed by SDG Target 4.7 have been integrated into national education policies and curricula. This project was thus conceived as an attempt to establish a baseline against which future progress towards achieving this target can be monitored until the stipulated 'deadline' of 2030.

Part I presents the quantitative results of the content analysis of policy and curriculum across 22 countries in Asia and discusses methodological issues pertaining to the quantitative approach to curricular analysis (see **Appendix I** for details of the coding methods and **Appendix II** for visual representations of the coding results). But while attempting to present quantitative evidence regarding the extent to which concepts embedded in SDG 4.7 are integrated in education policy and curricula, this review also involved reflecting upon and highlighting the limitations of a quantitative approach to analysing such issues. **Part I** therefore also outlines methodological lessons learnt from this review which can inform future efforts to monitor progress in relation to SDG 4.7.

Methods and Limitations

METHODS

Key education policy and curricular documents were collected from 22 countries in Asia, and a total of 172 documents (including national curriculum frameworks and the 4th and 8th grade subject curricula of core subjects) were analysed using a common coding scheme (see **Appendix I** for the detailed coding methods and **Appendix IV** for the list of documents coded). In total, 19,197 excerpts were coded as relevant to concepts embedded in SDG 4.7 (on average, 872 excerpts per country). The number of excerpts coded varies significantly from country to country partly due to variation in the number of official documents available for coding. Within the curriculum, the review focused on core subjects (mathematics, science, social studies and languages) at primary and junior secondary school levels, specifically Grades 4 and 8. The curricula for civic and citizenship education, and for subjects such as values education and moral education were also examined in countries where these are separately taught. The coding scheme built on and expanded similar reviews conducted by UNESCO (2016a) and the International Bureau of Education (IBE) and APCEIU (IBE-UNESCO and APCEIU, 2016). The scheme consisted of 14 coding categories derived from the wording of SDG 4.7 and competencies (knowledge; skills; attitudes, values, dispositions; behaviours and action) emphasised in UNESCO's work on ESD and GCED (see **Box 1.1**).

22
countries

172
documents

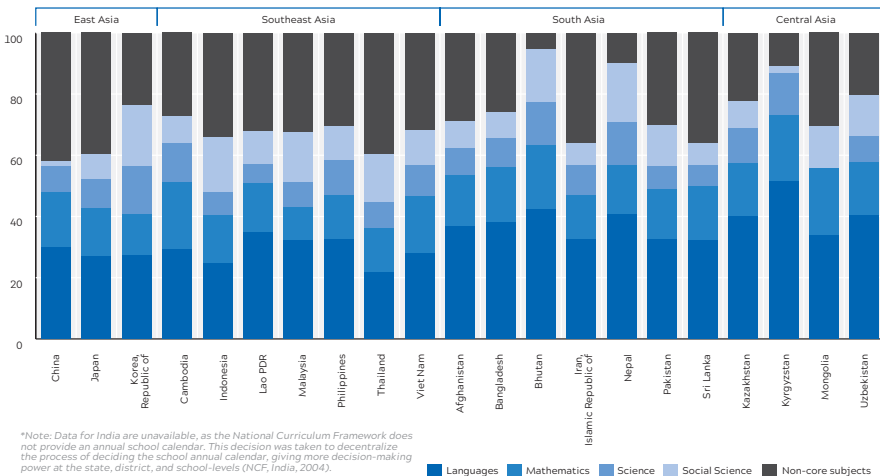
19,197
excerpts

Box 1.1 The 14 coding categories

ESD/GCED themes	Competencies
1. Economic dimension of sustainable development	11. Cognitive skills/critical and systemic thinking
2. Environmental dimension of sustainable development	12. Attitudes, values and dispositions
3. Good health and well-being	13. Behaviour and action
4. Human rights	13.i. Transversal/Cross-cutting skills
5. Gender equality	13.ii. Responsible lifestyles
6. Culture of peace and non-violence	13.iii. Activism
7. Justification and general orientation about global citizenship	
8. Global systems, structures and processes	
9. Global issues	
10. Interconnectedness	
	14. ESD, GCED and other educations

Previous reviews have focused on so-called ‘carrier subjects’ of 4.7-related concepts such as civic and citizenship education and social studies or social science. But the current study looked at the official curriculum for ‘core subjects’ as a whole, given the privileged position they occupy in school curricula in terms of instructional hours, their mandatory and examinable status, and the role they play in forming enduring dispositions of children and adolescents. The aim was to illuminate the *prevalence* or the *relative weight* of different concepts embedded in 4.7 (e.g. human rights, gender equality, global citizenship) in core education policy and curricular documents.

Figure 1.1 Percentage of instructional hours allocated to core and non-core subjects Grades 1-9



In addition, school timetables for Grades 1-9 were collected from all countries except for India, where the National Curriculum Framework does not provide an annual school calendar. This decision was taken to decentralise the process of deciding the school annual calendar, giving more decision-making power at the state, district, and school-levels (NCF, India, 2004). The comparative data of instructional hours can be found in **Appendix III**. **Figure 1.1** shows the percentage of instructional hours allocated to core and non-core subjects, calculated based on timetables collected, which clearly shows that more than 60 per cent of total instructional hours for Grade 1-9 is allocated to core-subjects in all countries except China, and the percentage goes up to more than 70 or even 80 per cent for some countries.

The current review was conducted as a pilot partly with the aim of informing future exercises in the Asia-Pacific or other regions. The use of the common coding scheme posed challenges inherent to content analysis as a methodology for cross-country comparison. Although several measures were taken to minimise the level of subjectivity and ensure inter-coder reliability (see **Box A.1 of Appendix I**), those embarking on similar exercises in future could benefit from considering a number of challenges encountered in this instance. Major methodological challenges include those related to coding as well as the drafting of country-level background reports contributed by national research teams (see **Stage 1 of Review Design in the Introduction**).

LIMITATIONS

In an attempt to sketch an initial broad picture of SDG 4.7 content in national education policy and curricula across Asia, the numerical coding results of this review highlight some intriguing regional trends (see **Chapter 2**). However, several aspects of the review process must be made explicit and subjected to critical reflection before presenting its findings. The design of the coding scheme and the coding methods employed, the nature of the data analysed, and the process of forming research teams all suffered from significant limitations. This section details these limitations and makes methodological decisions related to the review transparent to the reader.

1. Coding Scheme and Procedure Limitations

Coding Scheme Design

Establishing a coding scheme made it possible to quantitatively evidence the prevalence of concepts associated with SDG 4.7 in education policy and curricular documents. Given the complexities and ambiguities of these concepts, the coding scheme was not developed from scratch but based primarily on the wording of SDG 4.7 and coding categories developed for two recent UNESCO studies (IBE-UNESCO and APCEIU, 2016; UNESCO, 2016a).

Notions of 'global citizenship' and GCED:

As a concept and a term promoted by UNESCO, GCED is quite new by comparison with notions such as ESD, human rights education, peace education and education for international understanding. GCED was introduced by the UN Secretary General's Global Education First Initiative (GEFI) launched in 2012, which put forward three priorities: (i) put every child in school; (ii) improve the quality of learning; and (iii) foster global citizenship. Coupled with international discussion of the post-2015 development agenda, the final years of the UN Decade of ESD (2005-2014) witnessed reinvigorated debates over the need for educational transformation to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

According to one definition put forward by UNESCO, GCED is a 'framing paradigm which encapsulates how education can develop the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes learners need for securing a world which is more just, peaceful, tolerant, inclusive, secure and sustainable' (UNESCO, 2014b, p. 9). This definition is so abstract and broad that it encompasses ESD as well. GCED is also described as a 'metaphor' that seeks to extend intellectual and emotional horizons beyond the nation-state without, in any manner, weakening national and regional identities (UNESCO, 2016c). While UNESCO has avoided defining GCED in a prescriptive manner, this has become a problem in operationalising the notions of 'global citizenship' and GCED. Responding to the need to monitor SDG 4.7, much energy has been dedicated to distinguishing GCED from more conventional citizenship education.

The IBE-APCEIU study (IBE-UNESCO and APCEIU, 2016), focusing on global citizenship concepts in the curriculum guidelines of ten countries, derived coding categories from UNESCO's definitions of GCED and the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement's (IEA) international studies of civic and citizenship education. This study emphasised '[distinguishing] GCED from aspects of [Civic and Citizenship Education] that have traditionally dealt with international world-wide topics', in an attempt to 'identify the global citizenship and related concepts in the curricula's learning goals and content' (IBE-UNESCO and APCEIU, 2016, p. 10). While adopting the categories developed by IBE-APCEIU study, the coding scheme used in the current study also allowed the coding of more traditional content on international topics under the category of 'interconnectedness', derived from a study commissioned by the Global Education Monitoring Report – GEMR (UNESCO, 2016a).

Although the notions of 'global citizenship' and GCED are often contested in academic literature, there seems to be a broad consensus around the desirability and universal relevance of GCED conceived as an 'approach of transformative education for critical and active engagement in a globalised society' (Fricke et al., 2015, p. 8). In terms of monitoring SDG 4.7, however, it is not clear whether GCED means education for 'global citizenship', 'citizenship education' that has integrated global dimensions, or both. This complicates the task of operationalising GCED,

as there are not only different conceptions of ‘global citizenship’ (see Oxley and Morris, 2013; also see **Table 1.1**) but also different conceptions of ‘citizenship’ as well as ‘citizenship education’ (Johnson and Morris, 2010). Furthermore, determining what we mean by ‘transformative education’, what constitutes ‘critical and active engagement’, or which ‘global issues’ are worth including as coding categories can all be subjective acts which privilege a particular understandings of GCED – often those articulated by European scholars.

Box 1.2 What is transformative education?

The notion of ‘transformative education’ is used broadly by UNESCO, both in terms of delivering the ‘unfinished business’ or ‘broken promise’ of Education for All (EFA) and of promoting values-based and action-oriented education that aims at changing attitudes, values and behaviours. In most general terms, transformative education refers broadly to educational efforts to make the world a better place.

In the context of SDG 4.7, ESD and GCED are seen as ‘transformative’ in the sense that they empower learners to become agents of change. In the roadmap for implementing the Global Action Programme on ESD, UNESCO (2014a) characterises ESD as ‘holistic and transformational education’, which ‘achieves its purpose by transforming society’ (p. 12). In its guidance document on global citizenship education, UNESCO (2015a) states: ‘Global citizenship education aims to be transformative, building the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that learners need to be able to contribute to a more inclusive, just and peaceful world’ (p. 15).

Among environmental and sustainability educators, two questions are central to the notion of transformative education: (1) What kind of change — in values and perceptions as well as in social, political and administrative structures — do we need in order to achieve a transition to sustainability? and (2) what does this imply for learning? ESD can be considered in three stages progressively involving first-order, second-order and third-order learning. They correspond to education *about*, education *for* and education *as* sustainability (Lucas, 1979; Sterling, 2009).

- **Education about sustainability** is an essential first step which aims at deepening awareness, knowledge and understanding of the need for sustainability, and threats to it.
- **Education for sustainability** is vital to individual and social change, as it involves questioning the established frames of reference that typically condition our responses to the challenge of sustainability.
- **Education as sustainability** involves epistemic change and leads to cultivating a culture of sustainability.

Similarly, Vare and Scott (2007) identify two major approaches to ESD, which they categorise as ESD 1 and ESD 2.

- ESD 1 promotes informed and skilled behaviours as well as ways of thinking, useful in the short-term where the need is clearly identified and agreed.
- ESD 2 builds capacity to think critically about what experts say and to test ideas, exploring the dilemmas and contradictions inherent in sustainable living.

Noting the prevalence of ESD 1, they argue that successful ESD 1 in isolation from ESD 2 could diminish our capacity to manage change ourselves over time, and emphasise the complementarity of ESD 1 and 2.

Another set of challenges involved in the GCED-driven understanding of SDG 4.7 relate to the risk of perpetuating a narrow understanding of sustainable development. ‘Sustainable development’ can become merely one of a number of global dimensions or issues to be added to a menu of objectives or concerns. As **Tables 1.1** and **1.2** show, ‘environmental global citizenship (education)’ is understood as one of several forms of ‘global citizenship (education)’. The coding categories employed by the existing UNESCO studies reflect this understanding. Both the IBE-APCEIU study (IBE-UNESCO and APCEIU, 2016) and the GEMR study (UNESCO, 2016a) treat ‘sustainable development’ not as a broad, overarching concept as understood in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (United Nations, 2015), but as a much narrower concept grouped with climate change and biodiversity under ‘global issues’ (in the case of the former) or a category juxtaposed with human rights, gender equality, peace, health, and global citizenship (in the case of the latter).

Table 1.1 Categories of global citizenship identified by Oxley and Morris (2013) based on prevailing literature

Type of Global Citizenship		A focus on...
Cosmopolitan types	Political	the relationships of the individual to the state and other polities, particularly in the form of <i>cosmopolitan democracy</i>
	Moral	the ethical positioning of individuals and groups to each other, most often featuring ideas of <i>human rights</i>
	Economic	the interplay between power, forms of capital, labour, resources and the human condition, often presented as <i>international development</i>
	Cultural	the symbols that unite and divide members of societies, with particular emphasis on <i>globalisation of arts, media, languages, sciences and technologies</i>
Advocacy types	Social	the interconnections between individuals and groups and their advocacy of the ‘people’s’ voice, often referred to as <i>global civil society</i>
	Critical	the challenges arising from inequalities and oppression, using critique of social norms to advocate action to improve the lives of dispossessed/subaltern populations, particularly through a <i>post-colonial agenda</i>
	Environmental	advocating changes in the actions of humans in relation to the natural environment, generally called the <i>sustainable development agenda</i>
	Spiritual	the non-scientific and immeasurable aspects of human relations, advocating commitment to axioms relating to <i>caring, loving, spiritual and emotional connections</i>

Source: Adapted from Oxley and Morris, 2013, p. 306, Table 2

Table 1.2 Types of Global Citizenship Education by Gaudelli and Heilman (2009)

Type of Global Citizenship Education		Characteristics
GCED congruent with democratic citizenship	Cosmopolitan GCED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An emphasis on respecting <i>human rights</i> and revering <i>places</i> Embody Deweyan ideals of pragmatism
	Environmental GCED	
	Critical justice GCED	
GCED less congruent with democratic citizenship	Disciplinary GCED (focus on academic knowledge)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Failure to evoke egalitarian ideals Lack of civic aims
	Neoliberal GCED (focus on vocations)	
	Human relations GCED (focus on private interests)	

Notions of ‘sustainable development’ and ESD:

Recognising a tendency to reduce ‘sustainable development’ to its environmental dimension in existing studies relevant to SDG 4.7 monitoring, the coding scheme of the current study defined sustainable development as encompassing three dimensions – environmental, economic, and social. The persistent tendency to define ‘sustainable development’ (SD) narrowly – despite the adoption of the SDGs – reflects the often limited understanding of SD among professionals and researchers in the field of international educational development. It also reflects the persistence of siloed and fragmented approaches to SD on the part of both national governments and UN agencies.

The development of coding categories tends to be highly reflective of the assumptions and institutional agendas of the designers of any curricular monitoring study.⁶ In designing a coding scheme for a study such as this one, we are essentially envisioning the ‘ideal’ curricular embodiment of ESD and GCED. We thus felt it was critical to avoid reinforcing the current limited understanding of SD through the very design of our coding scheme. The notion of SD, however, is even more complex than that of global citizenship. While space does not allow a detailed discussion of the evolving concept of SD, it is useful to go back to the widely-cited landmark definition of SD by the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED, also known as the Brundtland Commission), which was tasked by the UN to develop strategies for achieving SD by 2000:

⁶ For example, although there is no explicit reference to ‘health’ either in the wording of SDG 4.7 or its global indicator, it receives a prominent position as one of nine coding categories in the study commissioned by GEMR (UNESCO, 2016a).

Humanity has the ability to make development sustainable – to ensure that it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The concept of sustainable development does imply limits – not absolute limits but limitations imposed by the present state of technology and social organization on environmental resources and by the ability of the biosphere to absorb the effects of human activities. But technology and social organization can be both managed and improved to *make way for a new era of economic growth*. (emphasis added, WCED, 1987, p. 8).

Much ESD writing presents the Brundtland definition of SD as development that ‘meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs’, and upholds it as an integrated approach to economic vitality, environmental sustainability and intra- and inter-generational equity. However, what is little known is that the WCED fails to set ‘clear priorities or guidelines for making decisions when conflicts and trade-offs among [the economic, environmental and social pillars] exist’ (Glasser, 2016, p. 59). While SD – in everyday use of the term – is often misunderstood as an eco-centric approach, the Brundtland definition in fact puts an emphasis on economic growth.

As are notions of global citizenship, definitions of SD are contested and elusive. The central debate regarding SD relates to whether we choose a ‘strong’ or a ‘weak’ – or ‘robust’ or ‘nominal’ – conception of sustainability. While the concept of ‘weak sustainability’ assumes the substitutability of natural capital, the concept of ‘strong sustainability’ is ‘based on the scientific fact that all human life and activity occurs within the limitations of planet Earth, or the “biosphere” where humankind lives, including all societal functions, such as the economy’ (Brunner and Urenje, 2012, p. 10). **Figure 1.2** shows that there is a long way to go before we reach the ideal model of SD. While environmental and sustainability educators often assess the quality of ESD based on whether it resonates with the concepts of weak or strong sustainability, the design of the present study did not allow an analysis based on these concepts. It also did not allow an analysis of how curricular content is framed according to different conceptions of interaction between humans and their environment.⁷ Therefore, the analysis of sustainability in education policy and curricula presented here is often superficial, limited to noting the mentioning (or lack of it) of concepts related to the environmental dimension of sustainable development.

7 Domazet et al. (2012) assessed ‘how curricular content presents the interaction between humanity, individuals and their bio-physical environment’, by using five categories of curricular content framing (pp. 62-63).

Figure 1.2 The ladder of sustainable development



Source: Adapted from Domazet et al., 2012, p. 30

Another limitation of the coding scheme was that it lacked a generic category for sustainable development. Sometimes there were references to the overarching concept of sustainable development which could not be reduced to its environmental, economic or social dimensions, but the scheme did not allow for the coding of generic references to sustainable development or sustainability, and the coders therefore had to decide where to code such references.

Coding Procedures

Although the coding scheme design suffered from conceptual limitations discussed in the previous section, the coding exercise nonetheless produced a very rich and voluminous dataset that is only partially explored in this report. As detailed in **Appendix I**, the methodology required both the in-depth reading of the documents and understanding of complex concepts embedded in 4.7. This

raised issues of subjectivity potentially complicating comparisons across 22 countries whose documents used 18 different languages.⁸

Coder variability and coding validity

National researchers coded in their own languages using a coding scheme in English (except in the case of Uzbekistan), and they were tasked with capturing cases where a concept was either explicitly or implicitly present. To assist the national researchers each coding category was described in detail and they were instructed to code based on an understanding of the concept behind words or the meaning of the concept, rather than conducting an automatic keyword search. The MGIEP team reviewed all the coding results and responded to all queries from national teams throughout the coding process. Although measures were taken to ensure inter-coder reliability (see **Box A.1 of Appendix I**), different coders may have coded sub-categories differently due to ambiguity in the concepts embedded in 4.7, a lack of consensus regarding the translation of these concepts into different languages, their own divergent understandings of what these concepts meant in the local context, their propensity to ‘overcode’ (to ‘read between lines’) or ‘undercode’ (to take a text at face value), or any combination of these reasons. Moreover, the process of coding required researchers to manually insert sentences into the relevant sub-categories. The extensive and complex nature of the coding scheme increased the chances of human error, irrespective of the coders’ understanding of concepts.

2. Dataset Limitations

To ensure comparability in the documents comprising the dataset, a document collection template was created (see **Appendix IV** – all 172 documents coded are presented in the format of this template). National teams, often in consultation with the UNESCO field office, the national commission for UNESCO, and/or the education ministry in the country, collected key education policy and curricular documents and filled the template. As noted by UNESCO (2016a), however, differences among documents were considerable across countries.

Significant Differences between Documents

Education laws, strategic plans/education policies, national curriculum frameworks (NCFs), and curricula of core subjects varied considerably in length, content, and focus from country to country. As a result, the number and volume of documents to be coded varied considerably across countries, as partly shown by the number of excerpts coded for each country (see **Appendix I**). Whereas some are exhaustive documents of several hundred pages (for example the Basic Education Core Curriculum of Thailand), others provide only a general overview

8 Documents coded are in: Bangla, Chinese, Dari, Dzongkha, English, Farsi, Indonesian, Japanese, Khmer, Korean, Lao, Malay, Mongolian, Nepali, Russian, Thai, Uzbek and Vietnamese.

of the curriculum. Some NCFs were particularly brief, consisting of fewer than 15 pages. While the study's focus was basic education (primary and lower secondary education), the focus of some documents was more extensive, covering K to 12 (from pre-school to upper secondary education), and in some cases also tertiary education.

Sampling Bias

To complete coding within the time frame of the project, the decision was taken to code subject curricula only for the 4th and 8th grades (see **Appendix I** for the reasons for selecting these two grades). However, this sampling of grade levels may have skewed the coding results. There is always a possibility that a topic reported 'missing' in a country's policy and curricular documents is in fact being addressed in the curricula of other grades. It would therefore have been ideal if documents from all grade levels at primary and secondary level could have been coded. This would also have enabled analysis of the relative emphasis certain concepts receive at different stages of education.

3. Research Team Limitations

Selection of National Researchers

Most national consultants were identified with the help of UNESCO Field Offices. Given the often close relationship between UNESCO and national ministries, we frequently encountered the challenge of establishing teams who were willing or able to provide a detached assessment of official policy. Consequently, certain national background reports tended to be overly descriptive in nature, offering accounts that glorified or celebrated national achievements. In order to ensure an objective assessment, peer reviewers – academics, government officials, individuals from the social sector – were commissioned to provide extensive feedback on country-level background reports.

There was also considerable disparity in national researchers' capacities to code as instructed and to interpret the coding results. Due to the linguistic diversity across Asia, the task of cross-verifying the coding data was highly demanding. In many cases, Google Translate was used to provide feedback to the national researchers and to ensure the documents were accurately coded. It was also used by the Core Drafting Group to verify certain claims made in national background reports.

Incorporation of Diverse Peer-review Feedback

On country-level background reports, sub-regional synthesis reports and the current final report, extensive feedback was sought from national and international experts and academics with expertise relating to different aspects of schooling. Feedback from different sources was sometimes highly contradictory, with

certain reviewers asking authors to ‘tone down’ criticism of national policies, even while others demanded more critical analysis of official policymaking involving greater consideration of the larger political and social context. As a result, much information considered politically too sensitive was deleted from this report, although the critical thrust of the analysis was retained. While many countries have instituted initiatives to promote certain aspects of ESD/GCED, the current report seeks to highlight the deep-seated, fundamental challenges which confront efforts to promote peace and sustainable development through education. Although certain peer-reviewers saw the final report as presenting a ‘Western’ view on the state of education in Asia, the authors of the Core Drafting Group are all based in Asia (though all received their academic training partially in Europe or North America, either at undergraduate or graduate level). A paucity of critical analysis of education systems in Asia by local researchers is symptomatic of both the marginal status of critical educational research in many Asian societies and the widespread fear of voicing criticism of official policy. It should be noted that the current report has no intention of trivialising governmental efforts, but refrains from simply itemising or cataloguing ‘good practice’ in ESD and GCED.⁹ It instead offers a critical framework for understanding the fundamental challenges to the meaningful implementation of SDG 4.7, which are widely shared across Asia.

9 See UNESCO Database on the Right to Education at <http://www.unesco.org/education/edurights/> for detailed information on the ratification of normative instruments and monitoring status of the right to education, including national reports on the 1974 Recommendation concerning Education for International Understanding, Co-operation and Peace and Education relating to Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

Key Findings and Insights

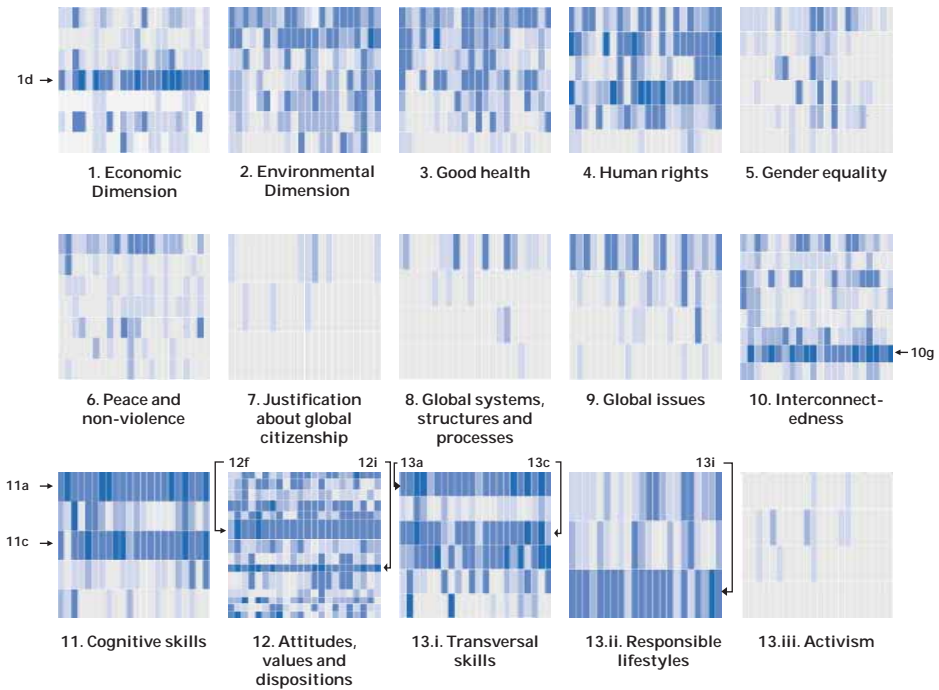
This chapter summarises the quantitative results of the current review which illuminate the prevalence or the relative weight of different concepts embedded in 4.7 in national education policy and curricula across 22 Asian countries. It also discusses implications for future efforts to monitor SDG 4.7, and briefly touches upon the challenges involved in developing regional syntheses (for East, Southeast, South and Central Asia) based on the country-level data.

CODING RESULTS

Data Visualisation: 'Heatmaps'

Given the variability in the number of documents and excerpts coded for each country, there was a need to normalise the data for cross-country comparison. The data for each sub-category was normalised by the total number of excerpts coded for each country. In the graphic representation in **Figure 2.1**, each row represents a sub-category, and each column represents a country.

Figure 2.1 Heatmaps across 22 countries at a glance



Box 2.1 **Nine concepts (sub-categories) most prevalent in documents analysed**

- 1d:** human resource development; human capital; skills; knowledge-based economy; career, job, employment
- 10g:** culture and heritage
- 11a:** critical thinking
- 11c:** creative thinking
- 12f:** attitudes of care, empathy, dialogue, respect and compassion (for others and the environment)
- 12i:** nation as privileged referent of identity
- 13a:** problem solving
- 13c:** collaboration/ working well with others/ social/ sociable; co-operation
- 13i:** participation/skills to participate at the local, national, global levels; active citizenship; civic engagement; constructive participation, serving the community, volunteering

Darker colours show that a sub-category is more prevalent. Therefore, those categories dense with darker colours were ‘hot’ or more frequently mentioned in policy and curricular documents across all 22 countries. On the other hand, those categories patchy or sparse with lighter colours were not covered well by these documents. Subcategory-wise heatmaps can be found in **Appendix II**. Where a horizontal bar in dark blue is visible, it means that a concept is highly prevalent consistently across countries. Nine such bars can be identified, and they correspond to ‘human resource development’ (in Category 1); ‘culture and heritage’ (in Category 10); ‘cognitive thinking’, ‘creative thinking’ (in Category 11); ‘empathy’, ‘nation as privileged referent of identity’ (in Category 12); ‘problem solving’, ‘collaboration’ (in Category 13.i), and ‘civic engagement’ (in Category 13.ii). Out of more than 80 sub-categories, these nine concepts were most prevalent in policy and curriculum document analysed for this review.

Major Regional Trends

Overall, the coding data seem to indicate that a conception of development as centred on the nation-state dominates understandings of the role of education across most of Asia today. It also demonstrates that citizenship is similarly conceived primarily in relation to the nation-state. As pointed out in the **Introduction**, securing mass recognition of these conceptions of ‘development’ and ‘citizenship’ has proven rather challenging in many post-colonial countries which have struggled economically. In many countries in Asia, pursuing state formation through popularising awareness of a basic historical narrative of nationhood remains a major priority for schooling. The data also seem to indicate a widespread lack of emphasis on ideas of active, reflective or participatory democratic citizenship. In the following description of major trends that emerge from the quantitative data, the prevalence of concepts in educational policy and curricular documents is explained in terms of ‘weightage’.

Weightage is the number of excerpts coded under a sub-category as a percentage of all excerpts coded for all documents for a particular country

$$\text{Percentage} = \frac{\text{Total number of sentences reported for a particular category}}{\text{Total number of sentences reported for all categories}} \times 100$$

- Very high prevalence or weightage = more than 5 per cent (This means that there are 40 or more references to the concept when the total number of excerpts coded for the country is 800.)
- High prevalence or weightage = 1-5 per cent
- Moderate prevalence or weightage = 0.5-1 per cent
- Low prevalence or weightage = less than 0.5 per cent (This means that there are 4 or fewer references to the concept when the total number excerpts coded for the country is 800.)
- Absence = zero

Trend 1:
Peace and global citizenship are largely absent from education policy and curriculum

Many concepts embedded in SDG Target 4.7, especially those associated with peace and global citizenship, are largely absent from national education policy and curricular documents in Asia (see **Appendices II-5-10**). It is likely that some concepts such as global citizenship are yet to be assimilated to the lexicons of major languages in Asia. Other concepts may be ignored or de-emphasised because they are viewed as largely irrelevant or incompatible with national goals and priorities.

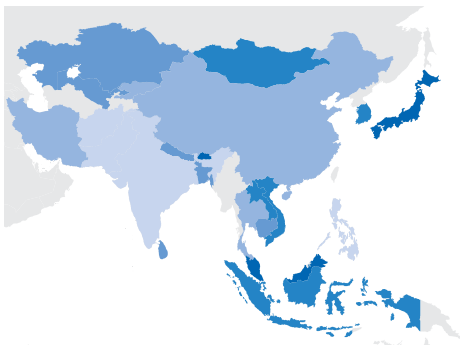
- a. Under the category ‘interconnectedness,’ which has a strong association with education for global citizenship, the coding data for two sub-categories ‘multiculturalism’ and ‘migration’ provide a particularly telling illustration of national trends. The concept ‘multiculturalism’ is completely absent in a number of monolingual countries covered here: Bangladesh, Cambodia, Mongolia and Viet Nam. (A ‘monolingual country’ is defined here as a country with only one official language.) Multiculturalism, however, is included in policy and curricular documents of some monolingual countries such as Japan and Korea. This can perhaps be attributed to the fact that, although Japan and Korea are linguistically and ethnically relatively homogeneous

Figure 2.2 The prevalence of the concept ‘conflict resolution’

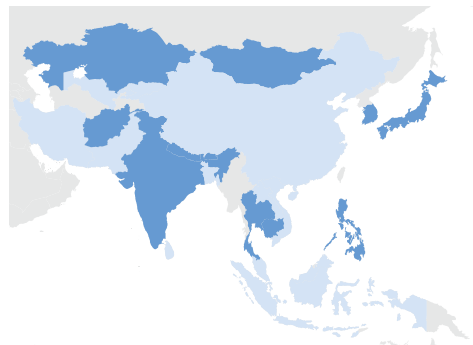
Countries ranking lower in the Global Peace Index tend to cover ‘conflict resolution’ more widely in education policy and curriculum.

But the absence of references to the concept was observed in countries ranking low in the GPI as well. Some countries (such as Japan, Korea and Central Asian countries) are rated peaceful in the GPI and also cover the concept widely.

Global Peace Index (GPI) (2015)



Conflict resolution (sub-category 6c)



Source: Institute for Economics and Peace, 2017. Global Peace Index 2017. <http://visionofhumanity.org/app/uploads/2017/06/GPI17-Report.pdf> (Accessed 29 September 2017).

compared to the majority of countries surveyed, a recent influx of foreign migrant workers means that ‘multiculturalism’ has become a topic of a public concern. Giving further support to this observation, ‘migration’ has some weightage in Korea and Japan – as well as in Kazakhstan, which also receives migrant workers, and in countries well known as senders of migrant workers, namely, Nepal, Afghanistan, Lao PDR and the Philippines – although the concept is absent in documents from all other countries. It is important to note here that there are also countries that are significant senders or recipients of migrant workers such as India and Pakistan that do not refer to ‘migration’ in education policy and curriculum documents.¹⁰ To explain such absence requires careful investigation into national contexts which is beyond the scope of this chapter.

- b. With some exceptions, there is an absence or paucity of references to the three coding categories associated particularly with global citizenship: ‘justification and general orientation about global citizenship’, ‘global systems, structures and processes’ and ‘global issues’ (see **Appendices II-7-9**). The only concepts that receive a high weightage in more than one country under these categories are ‘global governance system’ (in Nepal, Bhutan, and Thailand) and ‘globalization’ (in Korea, China, Uzbekistan, Pakistan, India, Lao PDR, Malaysia, and Viet Nam). This indicates that many themes and topics associated with GCED have not found their way into education policy and curricula in countries covered by this review. Among 22 countries, Bhutan is the only country that puts a very high weightage on ‘environmental sustainability’ and a moderate weightage on ‘justification and general orientation of global citizenship’, reflecting a relatively holistic approach to ESD and GCED.
- c. Overall the category ‘culture of peace and non-violence’ is weakly covered in documents analysed. This seems to indicate that peace is not a priority in national curricular goals in many Asian countries. While a generic sub-category of ‘peace’ receives a high weightage in 6 countries (Japan, Thailand, India, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Afghanistan), other sub-categories such as ‘peace-building’, ‘conflict resolution’, and ‘non-violence’ receive little or no weightage across countries (with exception of ‘peace building’ which receives a moderate weightage in Japan) (see **Figure 2.2**). Reasons for referring to ‘peace’ in education policy and curricula are different from country to country, and some are explained in sub-regional synthesis chapters (see, for example, **Chapter 3** for explanations for Japan, **Chapter 4** for Thailand, and **Chapter 5** for Afghanistan, Bhutan and India).

10 Other countries that are also well-known sender countries are: India, Bangladesh, Indonesia, China, Pakistan, Viet Nam, Korea, and Thailand. See <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/178966/adb-labor-migration-asia.pdf>

Trend 2:

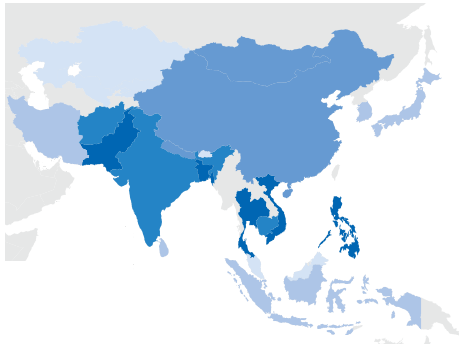
Many countries across Asia emphasise the instrumental role of education in fostering national identity and developing human resources for economic development

Across all 22 countries covered by this review, ‘nation as privileged referent of identity’ generally receives a very high or high weightage (with more than one third of the countries giving a very high weightage), making this the most prevalent of all concepts coded in the 172 education policy and curricular documents analysed for this review (see **Appendix II-12**). This indicates that all countries heavily emphasise the role of education in fostering national identity. This emphasis, coupled with the observations made in relation to Trend 1 and the minimal weightage given to ‘humanity as privileged referent of identity’,¹¹ strongly suggests that reorienting education in Asia towards global citizenship is a daunting task.

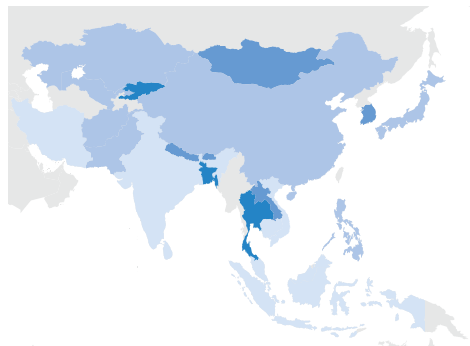
Figure 2.3 The prevalence of the concept ‘climate change’

Despite climate risk being a serious problem in most of Asia, ‘climate change’ has moderate to low prevalence in education policy and curriculum.

Climate Risk Index (1996-2015)



Climate change (sub-category 2c)

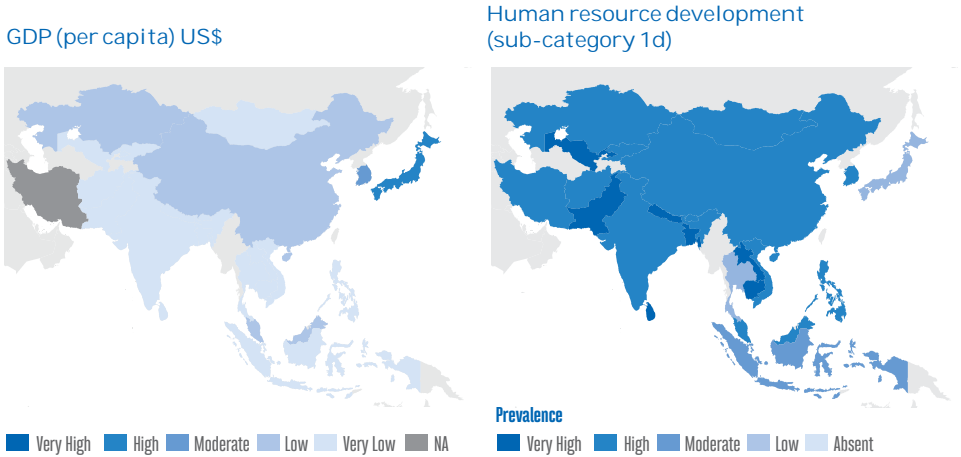


Source: Germanwatch. 2017. *Global Climate Risk Index 2017*.
<https://germanwatch.org/en/download/16411.pdf> (Accessed 28 September 2017).

11 Japan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan give a moderate weightage, and Sri Lanka, Pakistan, India and Cambodia give a high weightage to ‘humanity as privileged referent of identity’.

Figure 2.4 The prevalence of the concept 'human resource development'

Despite the different levels of development, the emphasis on 'human resource development' is consistently high in education policy and curriculum.



Source: World Bank. 2016. GDP per capita (current US\$).
<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD> (Accessed 28 September 2017).

In most countries (with the exceptions of Japan, Indonesia and Thailand), 'human resource development' also carries a very high or high weightage (see **Appendix II-1**). By comparison, other concepts relating to the economic dimension of sustainable development, such as 'limits to growth' and 'green economy,' are either completely absent or receive a low weightage across most countries. The environmental dimension of sustainable development rates a fair mention, but 'climate change' carries little or no weightage in the majority of the countries (see **Appendix II-2; Figure 2.3**).¹² As sub-regional synthesis chapters note, a strong emphasis on human resource development for achieving national competitiveness is evident irrespective of the level of economic development (see **Figure 2.4**). This emphasis on preparing children for competitive participation in the globalized economy is also manifested in the emphasis placed on skills seen as essential for this purpose, as discussed in **Trend 3**.

12 Most countries give a high weightage to 'environmental sustainability' or 'conservation'. While five countries (Japan, Uzbekistan, Afghanistan, Lao PDR and Malaysia) give a moderate weightage and five countries (Iran, Bangladesh, Cambodia and the Philippines) give a low weightage to 'environmental sustainability', all these countries except Cambodia and Malaysia give a high weightage to 'conservation'. Conversely, Korea, Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Indonesia give a low or no weightage to 'conservation' but a high weightage to 'environmental sustainability'. These two concepts thus need to be looked at together to understand the emphasis each country places on the environmental dimension of sustainable development. The only countries that do not give a high weightage to either are Cambodia and Malaysia.

Trend 3:

Critical thinking, creative thinking, and problem-solving skills are emphasised in education policy and curricula

Across all 22 countries, documents strongly endorse the role of schooling in fostering ‘critical thinking’, with six countries giving this concept a very high weightage (see **Appendix II-11**).¹³ Likewise, ‘creative thinking’ carries a very high or high weightage across all but two countries.¹⁴ On the other hand, other sub-categories under the category ‘cognitive skills’ are not covered well. ‘Holistic thinking’ has a very high weightage in two countries (Korea and Iran) and a high weightage in three countries (Kazakhstan, Indonesia, Lao PDR), while ‘future-oriented thinking’ receives a high weightage in only two countries (Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan). Under the category ‘transversal skills’, ‘problem solving’ also carries a very high or high weightage in most countries, with two exceptions (Bangladesh and Indonesia – both ‘moderate’ in this respect) (see **Appendix II-13.i**). Critical thinking, creative thinking and problem-solving are important for addressing local and global challenges as global citizens. But the relatively low emphasis on holistic and future-oriented thinking, coupled with what is generally a highly selective championing of concepts related to human rights and democracy (see **Trend 4**), reinforces an impression that such skills are valued primarily as prerequisites for productive employment in the modern economy, rather than for the exercise of active, democratic citizenship.

Trend 4:

Collaboration and empathy are emphasised in education policy and curricula

In addition to ‘problem solving’, ‘collaboration’ is a concept well covered under the category ‘transversal skills’, with all but four countries putting a very high or high weightage on the concept (see **Appendix II-13.i**).¹⁵ Under the category ‘attitudes, values and dispositions’, ‘empathy’ carries a very high or high weightage across all countries but one (see **Appendix II-12**).¹⁶ Like critical and creative thinking and problem solving skills, empathy and collaboration are often highlighted as competencies essential for sustainable development and global citizenship. However, the values of empathy and communal collaboration also have an affinity with the so-called ‘Asian values’, often invoked to legitimise the prioritisation of

13 The six countries that give a high weightage to ‘critical thinking’ are: Japan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, Malaysia, and the Philippines.

14 While ‘creative thinking’ carries a moderate weightage in Afghanistan, it is absent from Japanese documents. This may be due to the fact that each subject has a dedicated section in the Japanese equivalent of a national curriculum framework (the Course of Study) and only the sections relevant to the general provisions, core subjects and moral education were coded.

15 Uzbekistan and Malaysia give a moderate weightage to ‘collaboration’, while Bangladesh and the Philippines give a low weightage. Three countries give a very high weightage: Korea, Mongolia and Kazakhstan.

16 ‘Empathy’ has received a moderate weightage in China and a very high weightage in Japan and Indonesia.

social harmony and order over freedom and democracy (Sen, 1999; Subramaniam, 2000; Myers, 2011). Whereas ‘respect for diversity’ and ‘tolerance’ rate a fair mention, receiving a high weightage in the majority of countries surveyed, the values of ‘democratic participation’ carry zero or low weightage in most (see **Appendix II-12**). Similarly, under the category ‘human rights’, ‘civil liberties’ and ‘democracy’ carry a high weightage in fewer than one third of the countries, with references to ‘civil liberties’ completely absent in nine countries (see **Appendix II-4**). Moreover, most countries have no reference to the concepts included in the category ‘activism’, namely, ‘participation in civic protest’, ‘engagement in debates on socio-political issues’, and ‘action on issues of global reach’ (see **Appendix II-13.iii**). This absence across most countries of references to actions associated with the exercise of political freedom, coupled with the absence or paucity of references to ‘civil liberties’, raises questions regarding whether the apparently strong emphasis on empathy and collaboration in education policy and curricula can be taken as indicating countries’ commitment to ESD/GCED.

Trend 5:

Gender equality is weakly covered in education policy and curricula except in South Asia

Some sub-regional trends emerge with respect to gender-related issues, including the prominence of ‘gender equality’ in education policy and curricular documents in South Asian countries (see **Appendix II-5; Figure 2.5**). Countries that accord high weightage to an umbrella sub-category of ‘gender equality’ are concentrated in South Asia: Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Nepal. Afghanistan and Bangladesh also give weightage to all related sub-categories (‘gender equity’, ‘gender balance’, ‘gender roles’, ‘empowerment of women’). Likewise, Indian documents make many references to ‘gender roles’ and ‘empowerment of women’ and accord some weightage on all other concepts included under the category ‘gender equality’. Pakistan gives moderate weightage to ‘gender equality’ and low weightage to ‘empowerment of women’.

Among 22 countries, three make no (zero) reference to gender equality in education policy and curricular documents: Iran, Indonesia and Uzbekistan. In East Asia and Southeast Asia, there is generally a paucity of references to gender equality. Malaysian documents frequently reference the sub-category ‘gender parity, sex ratio, gender balance’, ‘gender roles’ receive a high weightage in Thai documents, and the umbrella sub-category ‘gender equality’ is invoked with moderate frequency in those of Lao PDR. Other countries give at best a low weightage to between one and three sub-categories relating to ‘gender equality’. In Central Asia, references to gender equality are particularly scarce. Mongolia, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan make passing references to one sub-category apiece, while mention of the issue of gender equality is entirely absent in the documents from Uzbekistan. But the Gender Development Index (GDI) indicates that Central Asia is by no means at the bottom of the Asian ‘league table’ in this respect. The

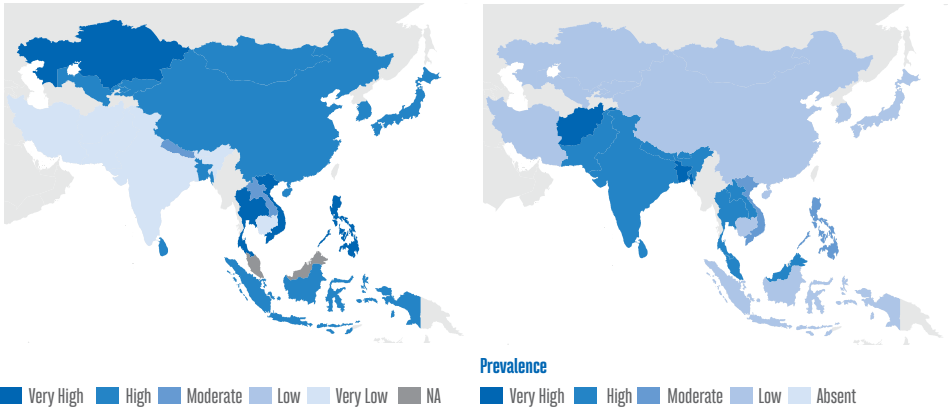
Figure 2.5 The prevalence of the concept ‘gender equality’

Countries that accord high weightage to ‘gender equality’ are concentrated in South Asia.

A paucity or absence of references to ‘gender equality’ in education policy and curriculum is observed both in some countries which rate very high as well as in others that score very low in the Gender Development Index.

Gender Development Index (GDI) (2015)

Gender equality (category 5)



Source: UNDP. 2017. Gender Development Index (GDI). <http://hdr.undp.org/en/composite/GDI> (Accessed 30 September 2017).

particular paucity of references to gender in this region can perhaps be partially explained as the legacy of egalitarian Soviet ideals of ‘gender-blindness’ (see **Chapter 6**).

A paucity or absence of references to ‘gender equality’ is observed both in some countries which rate very high as well as in others that score very low in the Gender Development Index.¹⁷ The meaning of the coding results therefore must be examined on a case-by-case basis – as is attempted in the regionally-focused chapters in **Part II**. The anomalous pattern of references to gender illustrates the problems involved in basing any monitoring efforts simply on counting the ‘presence’ or ‘absence’ of 4.7-related concepts in the official documents.

¹⁷ See <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/gender-development-index-gdi>.

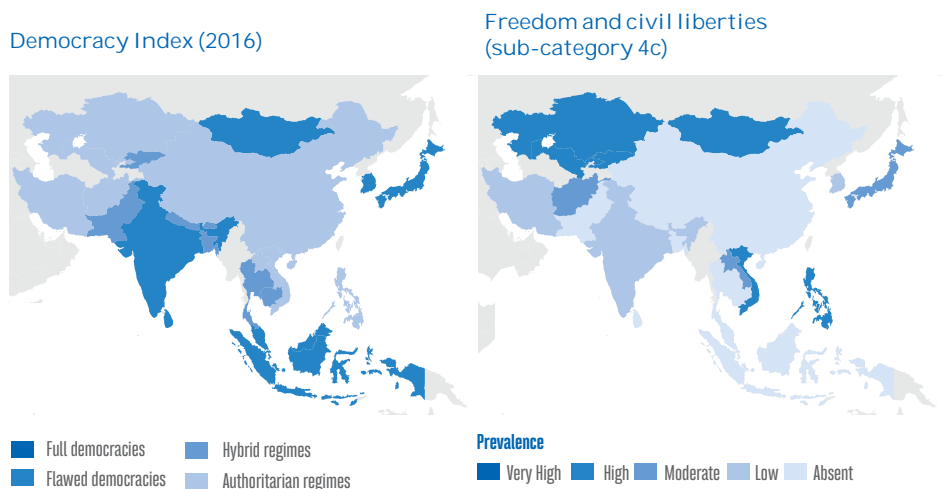
Trend 6: Human rights and democracy are narrowly understood in education policy and curricular documents

'Human rights' rates a fair mention in education policy and curricular documents across all 22 countries, with the exception of the sub-category 'civil liberties', which receives no mention in 9 countries (see **Appendix II-4; Figure 2.6**). As in the case for South Asia with respect to 'gender equality', Central Asia is the only sub-region that puts a high weightage on 'civil liberties'. Among 22 countries, Uzbekistan is the only country that gives a high weightage to all the sub-categories subsumed under the category 'human rights', including 'democracy' and 'social justice'. This result is intriguing, given that, according to the Economist Intelligence Unit's 2016 Democracy Index,¹⁸ Uzbekistan is rated as an 'authoritarian regime' and its score for 'civil liberties' is particularly low at 0.59 – bottom amongst the 22 countries included in the present review (the score for Kazakhstan is 3.82, for Kyrgyzstan 5.00, and for Mongolia, 8.24). Indeed, according to the 2016 Democracy Index, no Asian country covered in the present review qualifies as a 'full democracy'. Among 22 countries, Japan comes at the

Figure 2.6 The prevalence of the concept 'freedom and civil liberties'

'Freedom and civil liberties' rate a very high mention in education policy and curriculum in Central Asian countries.

The absence of references to the concept is observed in relatively democratic as well as 'authoritarian' countries according to the Democracy Index.



Source: The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU), 2017. *The Economist Intelligence Unit's Democracy Index*. <https://infographics.eiu.com/2017/DemocracyIndex/> (Accessed 30 September 2017).

18 See <https://www.eiu.com/democracy2016>.

top in a ‘flawed democracy’ category, followed by Korea, India, Indonesia, the Philippines, Mongolia, Malaysia, and Sri Lanka. The rest fall under either the ‘hybrid’ or ‘authoritarian’ regime category.

The coding result for ‘civil liberties’ seems to indicate that concepts sensitive to established political authorities may be either symbolically flagged or ignored altogether in education policy and curricula. The absence of references to ‘civil liberties’ is observed in relatively democratic and ‘authoritarian’ countries alike. As noted with respect the category ‘gender equality,’ we should therefore avoid rushing to interpret the absence of references to a certain concept as a deliberate omission of a sensitive issue. It is necessary to look carefully at the constituent components of the key concepts embedded in SDG 4.7 to make sense of the coding data.

As pointed out in the discussion of **Trend 4**, most countries make no reference to ‘participation in civic protest’, ‘engagement in debates on socio-political issues’, and ‘action on issues of global reach’ (see **Appendix II-13.iii**).¹⁹ This absence of references to ‘activism’ makes a sharp contrast with the prevalence of ‘civic engagement’ under the category ‘responsible lifestyle’ across most countries (see **Appendix II-13.ii**).²⁰ The ‘civic engagement’ sub-category is to be coded when there is a reference to ‘participation/skills to participate at the local, national, global levels; active citizenship; civic engagement; constructive participation, serving the community, volunteering’. Although terms such as ‘participation’, ‘active citizenship’ and ‘civic engagement’ can be deployed in ways that signify endorsement of critical engagement with social, political and environmental issues, the coding results seem to suggest that the service to the community and being a good community member are facets of citizenship that receive particular emphasis.

Trend 7:

Culture and heritage rate a frequent mention in education policy and curricula in most countries

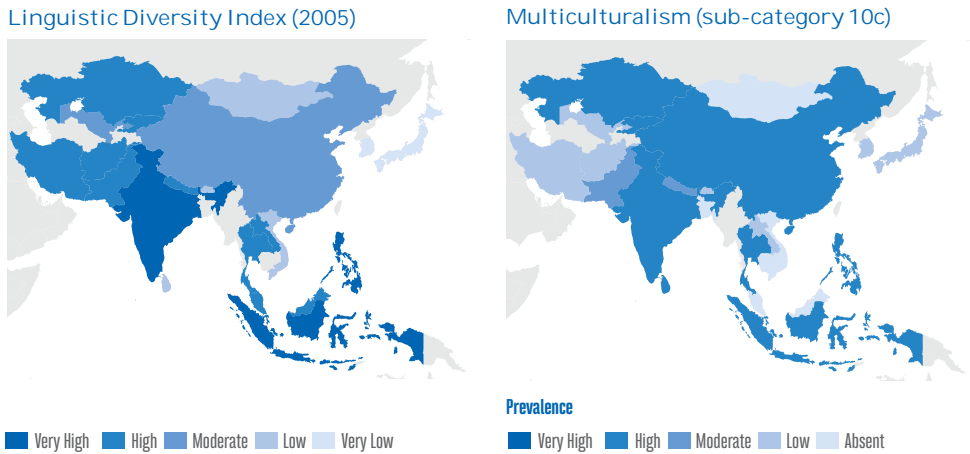
A very high or high weightage is given to ‘culture and heritage’ in most countries (with the exceptions of China, Bangladesh and Malaysia) (see **Appendix II-10**). Most references relate to national traditions, customs and language. In contrast, ‘global-local thinking’ and concepts of transnational interconnectedness and interdependence are weakly covered in most countries.

19 Indonesia and Viet Nam have a moderate weightage and Korea, Nepal, Iran and Afghanistan have a low weightage on ‘engagement in debate on socio-political issues’; Korea, Afghanistan and Lao PDR have a low weightage on ‘action on issues of global reach’; and Nepal and Afghanistan have a low weightage on ‘participation in civic protest’.

20 ‘Civic engagement’ carries a high weightage in all but six countries (low in Sri Lanka, Nepal, Thailand; moderate in Kyrgyzstan and Cambodia; and very high in Mongolia).

Figure 2.7 The prevalence of the concept 'multiculturalism'

Countries with high linguistic diversity tend to cover 'multiculturalism' widely in education policy and curriculum.



Source: UNESCO. 2009. *UNESCO World Report: Investing in Cultural Diversity and Intercultural Dialogue*. UNESCO, Paris.

Nine countries give a very high weightage to 'culture and heritage', including Indonesia, the Philippines and Viet Nam in Southeast Asia; Afghanistan and Pakistan in South Asia; and all four Central Asian countries. The very high prevalence of the concept in these countries can be partly explained by the need for nation-building in the context of post-war reconstruction (Viet Nam, Afghanistan) or post-Soviet transition (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan), or of strengthening national identity to overcome ethno-religious conflicts (Indonesia, the Philippines, Pakistan). Japan also gives a very high weightage to this theme, though establishing a coherent sense of national identity would not appear to present a similar challenge there.

Among 22 countries, China is the only country whose documents appear to give a low weightage to this notion. This might be interpreted as a reflection of socialist internationalism (contrasting with the turn towards 'culture and heritage' in post-socialist Central Asia) and a corresponding emphasis on 'multiculturalism/interculturalism' and transnational interconnectedness also suggested by the Chinese coding data. However, this supplies further support to the need for scrutinising the coding data in relation to the relevant context, since China's schooling system does not emerge from recent research as the model of tolerant, pluralistic multiculturalism that such findings appear to suggest (Leibold and Chen, 2014). The emphasis in China's documents on 'north-south relationships, south-south relationships, developed-developing

interconnections, interdependence' is likely a reflection of official attempts to promote the country's role as an aid donor and partner for developing countries across Asia and Africa. While 'multiculturalism/interculturalism' also receives a very high weightage in some other Asian countries marked with high ethnic diversity (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Sri Lanka, India, Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand) (see **Figure 2.7**), most of them accord no weightage to transnational interconnectedness, with the exceptions of India (moderate weightage) and Kyrgyzstan (low weightage).

KEY INSIGHTS FOR SDG 4.7 POLICY AND CURRICULUM MONITORING

Fully capturing the intent of 4.7 is a daunting task. Firstly, concepts embedded in 4.7 have contested definitions and many have yet to achieve widespread currency in local languages. UNESCO (2016b) promotes ESD and GCED as two mutually reinforcing pillars of 4.7 implementation, but they still lack internationally agreed definitions and there is often little conceptual clarity about what qualifies as ESD and GCED – or 'sustainable development' and 'global citizenship' for that matter (see **Chapter 1**). The coding results strongly indicate that key concepts associated with SDG 4.7 are often deployed in ways that are not in fact aligned with pursuit of the goals of sustainable development and global citizenship. The interpretation of the coding results here underlines the importance of carefully examining the constituent components of concepts related to SDG 4.7 to illuminate the extent to which different countries have integrated the ideas of peace, sustainable development and global citizenship in their policies and curricula.

Key insight 1: The coding data point to the need to scrutinise the constituent components of the different key concepts associated with SDG 4.7 to assess the extent to which ESD/GCED is integrated in education policies and curricula.

Secondly, capturing the transformative aspirations of 4.7 is not only technically but also politically challenging, because such aspirations could contradict key objectives of national curricula. The SDG4-Education 2030 Agenda reaffirms the right to education for all, and recognises the role of education in achieving goals beyond economic growth and national development. The overwhelming emphasis on the instrumental role of education in fostering national identity and generating 'human resources' for economic development (see **Trend 2**) points towards the challenge of implementing SDG 4.7 in countries across Asia. The coding data certainly reflect widespread awareness of many of the concepts associated with SDG 4.7, but determining what this actually signifies requires a closer examination of social and political conditions of the countries under review.

One lesson learnt is that we cannot necessarily interpret the prevalence of a certain concept (or sub-category) as indicating a more ‘advanced’ or ‘ideal’ treatment of the issue in question. What does a proliferation of references to ‘civil liberties’, for example, indicate? Does it indicate strong official commitment to promoting this ideal (and thus a high level of civil liberties), or acknowledgement that it requires urgent attention (and thus continuing problems in this area), or an effort to deflect domestic or international criticism by signifying determination to address the issue (while in practice continuing to ignore it)? The presence of a concept does not necessarily signify real commitment to the ideals it represents. Likewise, the absence of a concept may not reflect ignorance or a denial of its importance – and could even indicate quite the opposite (i.e. that the relevant idea is so embedded in that society that it is taken for granted).

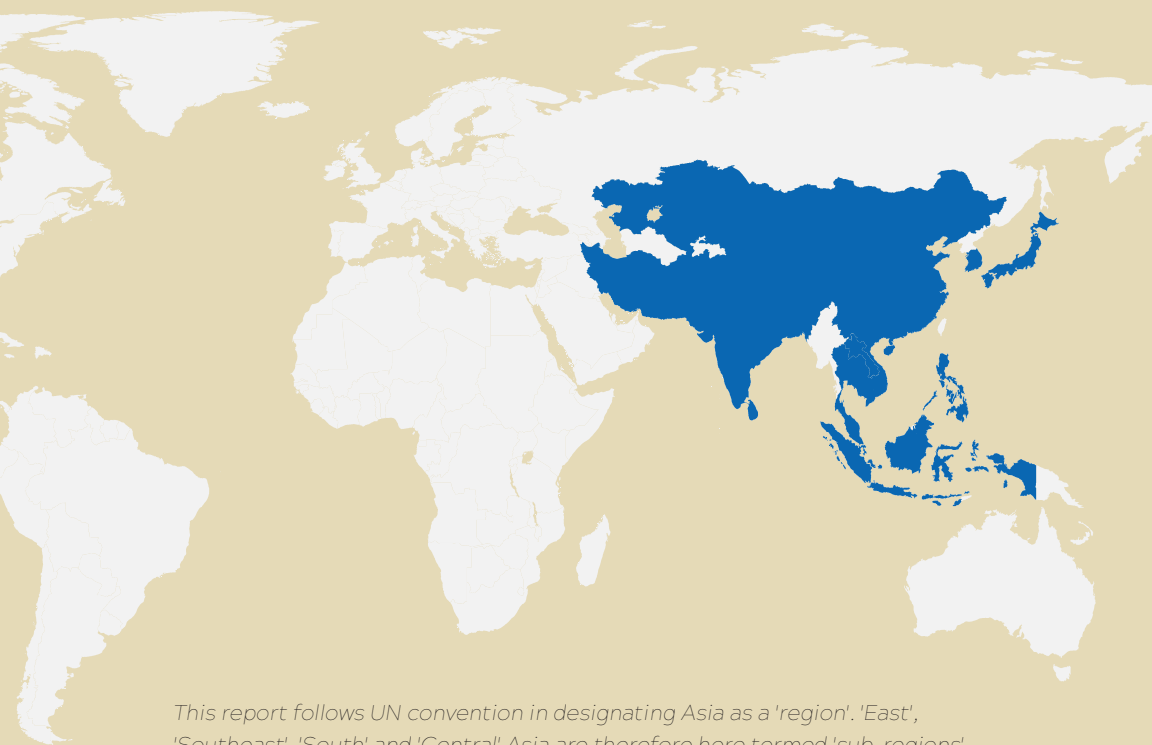
Key insight 2: The coding data underscore the limitations of monitoring efforts based on administrative self-reporting in relation to international standard-setting instruments (such as the 1974 International Recommendation concerning Education for International Understanding, Co-operation and Peace and Education relating to Human Rights and Fundamental Freedom), due to the often symbolic function performed by policy and curricular documents.

Key insight 3: The coding data also highlight the limitations of monitoring efforts based on tracking ‘presence’ or ‘absence’ of key terms relating to global citizenship and sustainable development (see, for example, UNESCO, 2016a), due to problems in interpreting such patterns in isolation from an analysis of the relevant context. Statements included in education policy or school curricula may reflect genuine official commitment, or may serve a largely symbolic purpose. Only analysis of the context can reliably indicate how official statements should be interpreted.

Part II of this report therefore analyses trends across different Asian regions, interrogating the political and social context so as to shed light on *why* certain concepts are prevalent and others are rare or absent in policy and curricular documents.

PART II:

Sub-Regional Syntheses



This report follows UN convention in designating Asia as a 'region'. 'East', 'Southeast', 'South' and 'Central' Asia are therefore here termed 'sub-regions'.

As noted in **Part I**, the compilation of this report has involved the extensive coding of policy and curricular documents from countries across Asia. These documents are referenced and cited comprehensively below. As discussed in **Chapter 2**, the coding data are useful in showing which concepts embedded in SDG Target 4.7 have been absorbed by the policy discourses of education systems in the 22 Asian countries covered by the current study. It shows, comparatively across the countries in terms of weightage given to each sub-category, which concepts have been mainstreamed at least at the level of national education policy, which concepts remain to be more fully integrated, and which concepts are absent. However, great caution is required in interpreting the data generated through the coding exercise.

Firstly, official ‘vision statements’ for education policy or school curricula often serve a largely symbolic purpose, signalling to the media, the public, businesses – and, at times, organisations such as UNESCO whose seal of approval is often valued by government officials – that policymaking is in line with the most ‘advanced’ thinking. But a more accurate indication of official priorities for education is likely to come not from policy documents or curricular guidelines, but from examination syllabi, state-approved textbooks and the teachers’ guides that accompany them (see Adamson, 2004, for China). This is especially so in a region such as East Asia, where state control over textbook approval is relatively strict and centralised, where textbooks and public examinations tend to be very closely aligned, and where both occupy a central role in teaching and learning. While formal guidelines constitute the ‘public face’ of curricular policy, the true character of official priorities is thus more likely to be revealed in the advice or recommendations of ministerial textbook screening committees. Indeed, both the importance and political sensitivity of such committees is reflected in the fact that their proceedings are almost always highly confidential and thus unavailable to the researcher.

A second set of issues that indicate caution in interpreting public statements of curricular policy relates to the danger of assuming alignment between the values expressed in such documents, and those espoused by teachers, parents and students. Even where educational authorities genuinely aspire to foster student ‘autonomy’, ‘creativity’ and appreciation of ‘diversity’, for example, little thought may have been given to how actually to achieve such a pedagogical transformation, let alone reconcile such aims with conflicting aspirations (i.e. the promotion of uncritical patriotism and moral ‘correctness’). While some teachers may share aspirations to render learning less intensely competitive and more student-centred, they may do so for reasons rather different from those that animate policymakers. And many will remain highly sceptical of the prospects of achieving greater ‘student-centredness’ in a context of largely unreformed public assessment systems, large class sizes and persistent pressure from principals, parents and students themselves to achieve ‘results’. Even insofar as officially promulgated ‘courses of study’ truly reflect government aims, the

translation of such aims into practice can never be assumed. As described in **Chapter 1**, however, integration of ESD/GCED into teacher education lies outside the scope of the original research that informs the present study. In what follows, therefore, reference will be made to recent ethnographic and other studies of Asian schooling that shed light on the actual situation in schools and classrooms.

Finally, and crucially, while this report draws on extensive numerical data generated through the coding of official curricular documents, the capacity of these data to represent even the meanings of those documents must be considered on a case-by-case basis. As pointed out in **Chapter 2**, a proliferation of references to ‘gender equality’, for example, may indicate strong official commitment to promoting this ideal through education, or it may merely constitute a superficial or symbolic ‘flagging’ of the concept aimed at deflecting criticism. More fundamentally, texts impart meaning through narrative, not through numbers; it is the stories they tell that are important, not the regularity with which they deploy particular words or phrases. The reliance on quantitative analyses of curricular and policy documents is one reason why research associated with ‘World Culture Theory’ often gives an exaggerated or misleading impression of convergence across education systems (on this, see Carney, Rappleye and Silova, 2013).

The analysis of curricula here, while citing quantitative data generated through the coding exercise, therefore also strives to place these documents in their broader political and educational context, interpreting the stories that they tell. The data in the country-level background reports and coding results are carefully weighed against other comparable datasets and socio-anthropological and fieldwork studies. The following four sub-regional chapters – East Asia (**Chapter 3**), Southeast Asia (**Chapter 4**), South Asia (**Chapter 5**), and Central Asia (**Chapter 6**) – follow a similar structure, providing a comparative analysis of the coding results framed by three sets of challenges to the meaningful integration of ESD/GCED into education policy and curricula.

These challenges are not simply the often-cited obstacles to scaling up ‘good practices’, such as a lack of understanding and resources, seen as resolvable through technical adjustment or incremental tinkering. They encompass rather more fundamental and complex barriers to the promotion of peace, sustainable development and global citizenship through education. And they remind us that reorienting policy and practice towards the pursuit of such aims requires consideration of how education is embedded in broader political and social structures, and reappraisal of the cultural or ideological assumptions that underpin these.

Three Challenges

The first set of challenges, involving ‘instrumentalism and ethics’, concerns understandings of the aims of education as revealed in official sources. A central issue here is the extent to which students, teachers and the natural environment itself are intrinsically valued, or treated as ‘resources’ or ‘capital’ for the promotion of industrialisation, modernisation or national aggrandisement. Do conceptions of the purpose of education (as manifested in policy, curricula and textbooks) embrace a broad vision of human ‘flourishing’, care for the natural environment, etc. as *intrinsic* goods – i.e. worthwhile in and of themselves (Sen, 1999)? Or do they prioritise the *instrumental* utility of the ‘skills’ or competencies gained through schooling in terms of promoting economic growth and national competitiveness?

The second category of challenges, relating to ‘nationalism and identities’, focuses on how the ethical positions informing curriculum development (including notions of state-citizen relations) have been expressed in state-promoted narratives of identity – and the implications of this for sustaining diversity and promoting tolerance and understanding both *within* and *between* nation-states. The analysis here asks whether, or how far, ‘national’ priorities have tended to undermine the valuing of individual autonomy and dignity – seeking to subordinate individuals and diverse communities to the pursuit of a ‘greater good’.

Finally, we investigate challenges of ‘competitiveness and regimentation’. Whereas the first two challenges focus on the ideological underpinnings and content of policies and curricula, here we focus on how schooling socialises children at a mundane, day-to-day level, and the implications of this for peace, sustainable development and global citizenship. There is an increasing international recognition that schooling is not a positive experience for many children and adolescents (see, for example, UNESCO, 2016d, 2017a). In addition to describing the magnitude of competitive pressures and the often distressing nature of a learning environment which features extensive private tutoring, school violence and bullying, we also touch upon the implications of differentiated schooling experiences for the ‘elite’ and the ‘masses’ in the societies under review. Elitist approaches to education – persistent in some societies, emerging or re-emerging in others – lead to the blatantly unequal distribution of knowledge and sensibilities, undermining a sense of common or shared humanity and global citizenship.

CHAPTER 3

East Asia

PROLOGUE: EDUCATION AND EAST ASIAN NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

The role accorded to education by East Asia's modernising elites is well captured in the words of Liang Qichao, a prominent Chinese intellectual who was profoundly influenced by a sojourn in late Meiji Japan:

[The self-governing group] is like an army. Advancing together, stopping together... Nobody fails to observe the public rules, nobody fails to seek the group's advantage. Men like this, and groups like this... [must certainly] stand strong in the world. (quoted in Kuhn, 2002, p. 127)

In this view, the maintenance of national autonomy – freedom from domination by other nations – involved disciplining individuals, subordinating them to ‘the greater good’. Twentieth-century Asian leaders have differed significantly on how to achieve this, but mainstream visions of nationhood have been profoundly shaped by military metaphors, implying – at least for the foot-soldiers – the inculcation of dutiful obedience and commitment to collective goals. The uniqueness of this pattern should not be exaggerated; a Durkheimian emphasis on political socialisation – or the role of schooling in turning ‘peasants into Frenchmen’, as Eugen Weber (1976) famously put it – characterised the nation-states of 19th-century Europe from which East Asian educational modernisers derived their prime inspiration. But the tendency to emphasise such values has persisted with peculiar force in a region both deeply scarred by the wars of the mid-twentieth century, and where Chinese and Korean ‘cold civil wars’ remain unresolved (Mitter and Major, 2004).

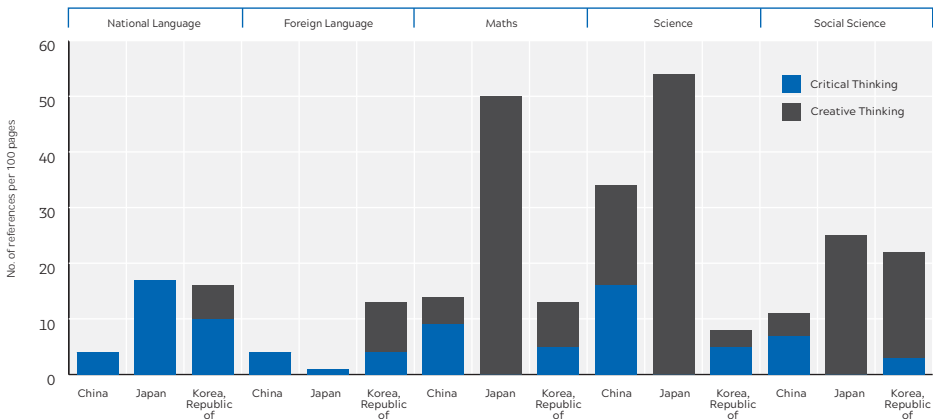
Regimentation has thus strongly characterised the socialisation strategies of East Asian schools, taking more or less overtly militaristic forms at different

times in different places. While an associated emphasis on interdependence can be positively construed (Rohlen, 1979; Cave, 2016), this approach by definition suppresses the expression of diverse opinions.

If curriculum and pedagogy are designed to ensure conformity and discipline, so – to varying degrees – are systems for administering education. Curriculum development remains highly centralised. State control or supervision over textbook production is strong across the region. These structures derive legitimacy from longstanding notions of the modelling of moral correctness as a core function of the state and its leaders (Bakken, 2000). But the flip side of the paradigm of ruler-as-teacher is that of teacher-as-ruler, delivering knowledge with unchallengeable authority. And key to reinforcing and institutionalising that pedagogic model is high-stakes testing of the mastery of factual and formulaic correctness.

Such ideas have not gone unchallenged, even (or especially) amongst education policymakers themselves. From the 1980s, policy discourse first in Japan and then in its East Asian neighbours has called for greater emphasis on individual autonomy, critical thinking and creativity, and for reductions in examination-driven competitive intensity. In 1998, major reforms aimed to make Japanese schooling more ‘relaxed’ (*yutori*) by shortening the school week, introducing electives and creating ‘Integrated Studies’ (*sougouteki-na gakushu*). In China, similar reforms were introduced under the banner of ‘quality education’ (*suzhi jiaoyu*), along with limited moves to decentralise curriculum development and textbook production (Vickers and Zeng, 2017, Chapter 6). Korea has also taken steps to dial down the peculiar intensity of its education system, adopting the slogan ‘Happy Education for All: Creative Talent Shapes the Future’ (Korea, Republic of, 2013). These include introducing a ‘Free Semester’ in middle schools (free of tests or examinations).

Figure 3.1 References to ‘critical thinking’ and ‘creative thinking’ in primary and secondary subject curricula across China, Japan and the Republic of Korea



In terms of policy discourse, states across East Asia appear to be embracing an increasing emphasis on student-centredness, autonomy, critical thinking and/or creativity, seemingly implying a move away from authoritarian pedagogical styles towards encouragement of debate and self-directed learning. This impression is confirmed by some of the data generated in the course of preparing the present study (see **Figure 3.1**) (significant inter-country variations are discussed further below). However, these aims are in tension with parallel agendas for didactic moral instruction and the inculcation of uncritical, state-centred patriotism – an emphasis that emerges clearly from our data (see **Section B**). Moves to promote pluralism and diversity have involved little compromise of monolithic state control over curricula – especially for morals, civics and history. Indeed, if anything, governments have sought to tighten their control over these aspects of curriculum development, and over the teaching profession, even while exhorting schools to foster greater individual autonomy.

The resulting tensions, and their implications for promoting peace, sustainability and global citizenship, are a major theme of the following analysis. These tensions and contradictions are by no means peculiar to East Asia. But the legacies of war, colonialism and strong state nationalism – crucial to influencing the thinking of statesmen (such as Liang Qichao) during East Asia’s formative era of modern state formation – remain powerful today, profoundly influencing conceptions of the role of education. Concerns for sustainability in all its dimensions are widespread throughout the societies of the region, and are articulated in official policies and curricular guidelines. However, in so far as sustainability (in its fullest sense) depends on transcending inter-state rivalries and forging transnational identities, the challenges facing East Asian educators are acute.

PEACE, SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP IN EDUCATION POLICY AND CURRICULA

The analysis here of policy and curriculum addresses the challenges outlined at the beginning of **Part II**.

A: Challenges of Instrumentalism and Ethics

What do East Asian policymakers think that education is ultimately for? Is their thinking governed by an overriding concern to promote human ‘flourishing’ in its fullest sense (encompassing a harmonious relationship with the natural environment), with education itself seen as intrinsic to understandings of ‘the good life’? Or is the education of citizens seen primarily as a way of enhancing their usefulness to the pursuit of state-defined developmental goals, rather than fostering their capacity to participate in shaping those goals in the first place?

This dichotomy, though somewhat crude, has a crucial bearing on the East Asian experience of modernisation. This is starkly evident in the case of China. Writing at the very advent of the 'Reform and Opening' era in 1978, one prominent critical intellectual expressed vehement opposition to a vision of citizens as 'mere tools... for carrying out modernisation' (quoted in Pantsov and Levine, 2015, p. 340). The predominance of an instrumental conception of education's role in forming citizens for state service remains a feature of official discourse. This asserts that a fiercely competitive international order requires prioritisation of the pursuit of 'comprehensive national strength' (*zonghe guoli*), for which purpose the improvement of the 'comprehensive quality' (*zonghe suzhi*) of the population is essential (China, 2014). Features of the 'quality' citizen highlighted in official documents include a capacity for 'innovation' and 'creativity' often defined in broad terms: for example, the primary-level 'Morality and Life' (*pinde yu shenghuo*) curriculum features six separate references to the importance of creativity, declaring that 'mental and physical activity and a creative life are intrinsic to children's individual development needs'. But the same curriculum features no references at all to critical thinking as such, nor to human rights, freedom of expression, democratic participation or the concept of global citizenship. Meanwhile, a conception of 'morality' that accords supreme importance to patriotism is reflected in the four references in the same document to the nation as a privileged referent of identity. By contrast, the primary science curriculum features 13 references to the importance of critical thinking as well as 8 to creativity. Innovative or creative thinking is apparently considered more important in relation to scientific and technical matters than to critical discussion of ethical, social or political issues (see **Figure 3.1**).

In Japan, the education reform agenda has been driven by a mounting sense of national crisis, rooted in perceptions of social malaise and international risk exacerbated by relative economic decline. The official response has involved an increasing emphasis on educational 'internationalisation'. Focused at the high school and, especially, tertiary levels, this has been interpreted as involving the fostering of 'human resources' (*jinzai*) equipped for an era of globalization. For Japanese officials, as for their Chinese counterparts, maximising national economic competitiveness and geostrategic heft tend to rank highly amongst the 'social needs' education policy is tasked with addressing. For this purpose, the current government has sought to ratchet up the already overwhelming bias, at tertiary level, towards hard sciences, engineering and medicine, and away from humanities, arts and social sciences (Japan, 2015).

At the level of schooling, the more student-centred aim of promoting 'zest for living' (*ikiru chikara*) – which first gained currency during the reforms of the late 1990s – remains ubiquitous in official documents (P. General Provisions Com., pp. 1, 2, 3, 6, 16, 21, 22). Premised on a perception of the nation's youth as morally and psychologically damaged or inadequate, this suggests that students are expected to become self-directed enthusiasts for learning and

doing. Official curricular guidelines emphasise the necessity for fostering a capacity for autonomous thinking, judgement and self-expression (*shikouryoku*, *handanryoku*, *hyougenryoku*) (P. General Provisions Com., pp. 2, 4, 6, 7, 13, 16, 21, 22, 61, 65, 79, 82, 83, 89). Thus will schools turn out ‘robust Japanese with fertile minds, prepared to grasp the opportunities of the 21st century’²¹ (P. General Provisions Com., p. 2). This emphasis is reflected in the relative weight accorded to ‘critical thinking’ in Japan’s formal curricular aims (see **Figure 3.1**).

Recent policy discourse in Korea has similarly stressed the need to enhance ‘creativity’ and ‘innovation’ to promote technology-driven economic growth. The Park Geun-hye regime made a slogan out of the phrase ‘creative economy’ (Korea, Republic of, 2015). There, as in China and Japan (see below), ‘integration’ of science and humanities curricula has been promoted since the early 2000s as a means of achieving ‘creative and character building education’ (Kim, 2013) to produce individuals capable of discovering ‘something novel by means of diverse challenges and ideas based upon basic abilities’ (National Curriculum Guidelines, 2015, p. 8). At the same time, the curriculum for primary and middle school Ethics (the Korean equivalent of China’s ‘Morality and Life’ subject) invokes notions of global citizenship, human rights (mentioned twice), respect for diversity (rating 13 references) and the virtues of critical thinking that its Chinese counterpart, in particular, appears to downplay. A recent UNESCO study of approaches to global citizenship education in ten countries worldwide acknowledged Korea for the exceptional prominence it accorded to this concept, and for ‘uniquely’ dealing with it in ‘socio-affective’ as well as cognitive terms (IBE-UNESCO and APCEIU, 2016, p. 30). However, such aims or messages have been in tension with parallel efforts to ramp up patriotic education (see below) and re-centralise control over curriculum and textbook development. There are indications that diversity, creativity and innovation have been valued by policymakers primarily for their economic instrumentality, rather than for their potential to render notions of citizenship broader, more critical and more participatory (Sung, 2016). In this respect, the implications of the 2017 change in administration remain to be seen.

Curricular Treatment of ‘Sustainability’

The strongly instrumentalist – and economic – outlook that informs official thinking on the goals of education across East Asia raises questions regarding the curricular treatment of ‘sustainability’. For example, when official documents discuss ‘sustainable growth’, do they emphasise sustained economic expansion, or the adaptation of economic strategy, lifestyles and attitudes to the demands of environmental sustainability? And are potential contradictions between these two very different interpretations of ‘sustainability’ highlighted and explicitly addressed in curricula and textbooks, or elided and ignored?

21 Original in Japanese: ‘21世紀を切り拓く心豊かでたくましい日本人’ (21 seiki wo kirihiraaku kokoro yutaka de takumashii nihonjin).

Here the results of the quantitative coding of official documents prompt more questions than they answer. In the case of China, for example, we find economic sustainability coded 29 times in the national policy documents analysed, and environmental sustainability only once (see **Appendix II-1**). However, the National Outline for Medium and Long-term Educational Reform and Development, promulgated in 2010, incorporates references to the importance of ESD – relating to both its environmental and economic dimensions. As early as 2003, the Education Ministry issued a set of ‘Guidelines for the Implementation of Environmental Education in Primary and Secondary Schools’, and since then China has organised an ‘International Forum on Education for Sustainable Development’ six times. Public concern over pollution and environmental damage has intensified in recent years (not least amongst well-heeled urban residents), putting pressure on the government to tackle problems such as climate change, smog and food safety (The Economist, 2017a). Signalling official commitment regarding these issues is one function that curricula and textbooks can serve.

For Korea, meanwhile, analysis of the ‘National Guidelines for the Elementary and Secondary Curriculum’ (NCF, 2015) revealed a predominance of statements relating to ‘human resource development; human capital; skills; knowledge-based economy; career, job, employment’. Economic sustainability was accorded considerable emphasis, especially in the sections pertaining to secondary education. The Framework stipulated that schools should ‘operate departments based on the changing needs in the job market and industrial need’ (NCF, 2015, p. 55), develop practicums, ‘implement a curriculum closely linked to industrial demands’ (p. 57), and offer counselling so that students can ‘systematically take appropriate courses to their prospective careers’ (p. 53). At least in this elaboration of national priorities for education, environmental as opposed to economic sustainability did not feature prominently. Korean secondary schools do offer an ‘Environmental Studies’ course as one of a number of elective options, but it is taken up by few students since such options are not required for high school graduation.

For Japan, lifting sustainable development up the international agenda has been linked to the country’s efforts to position itself as a leader in the field. As Mochizuki (2017) observes, as early as the 1980s political elites saw the promotion of environmentalism on the global stage as ‘an opportunity for the Japanese state to demonstrate its “dignity”’ (i.e. to garner international prestige) (p. 4). This was a factor in Japan’s sponsorship of the Brundtland Commission, which developed the most frequently-cited definition of sustainable development as meeting ‘the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs’ (WCED, 1987). It also informed Japan’s spearheading of the Kyoto Protocol, and its later proposal for the United Nations ‘Decade of Education for Sustainable Development’ (DESD). The tendency has been for such governmental initiatives to focus on ‘global environmental problems... far from home rather than encourage reflection on unsustainable development in

the country' (Mochizuki, 2017, p. 4), but ESD initiatives have resonated with local stakeholders because of their emphasis on the need to recognise and encourage grassroots agency.

Definitions of ESD also appear to have taken an unusual twist in the Japanese context. A 2014 ministerial report on the DESD claimed that 'education placing emphasis on building a sustainable society' has been promoted at all levels of schooling 'under the philosophy of developing "zest for life" with ability on thinking, decision-making and self-expression in addition to acquiring knowledge and skills' (Japan, 2014, p. 6). The invoking of 'zest for life' seemed to imply that, for Japanese policymakers, psychological health – curbing the supposedly heightened propensity of Japan's fragile youngsters to succumb to bullying or depression – was seen as one key element of the 'sustainability' or vitality of Japanese society. Ministerial documents (e.g. Japan, 2014) have also highlighted the role of Japan's UNESCO Associated Schools Project Network (ASPNet) (929 as of October 2016²²) as 'hubs' for the promotion of ESD, along with the use of Periods of Integrated Study (*sougoutekina gakushu*) to encourage relevant learning.

Treatment in subject curricula and textbooks

It is, however, individual subject curricula and, more especially, textbook content and classroom observation data (where available) that provide a more meaningful indication of the ways in which 'sustainability' is actually interpreted in schools (see **Box 3.1**). ESD (and GCED), as encountered by most East Asian students, is embedded in specific subject curricula rather than taught as a stand-alone subject (except, for example, in the case of Korea's 'Environmental Studies' elective).

Box 3.1 Main textbooks consulted for the present study

Japan (all current editions as of January 2017):

- Teikoku Shoin. 中学生の歴史 (*History for Middle School Students*)
- Teikoku Shoin. 中学生の公民 (*Civics for Middle School Students*)
- Tokyo Shoseki. 新しい社会歴史 (*New Society: History*) (*Middle School*)
- Tokyo Shoseki. 新しい社会 (*New Society*), *Primary Grades 3 and 4, Volume I*
- Tokyo Shoseki. 新しい社会公民 (*New Society: Civics*) (*Middle School*)

China:

Various textbooks published by the People's Education Press (人民教育出版社), Beijing, including:

- 语言 (*Language i.e. Chinese*) (*Primary School*)
- 品德与社会 (*Morals and Society*) (*Primary School*)
- 地理 (*Geography*) (*Secondary School*)
- 中华优秀传统文化 (*China's Splendid Traditional Culture*), *Grades 6-9, six volumes*

22 See <http://www.unesco-school.mext.go.jp/aspnet/>.

In China, at the level of individual subjects, coding data suggest that discussion of the environmental dimension of ‘sustainability’ hugely outweighs that of the economic (by 73 references to 3). But environmental issues are discussed primarily in terms of the scientific processes involved, or the threat posed by the actions of insufficiently ‘moral’ individuals, rather than their implications for economic strategy or state policy. Such a conclusion is suggested by the highly selective discussion of the need to adapt economic development or consumption in response to environmental threats. The Science curriculum (which features most coverage of environmental issues) stipulates that, from Grades 3 to 6, students should conduct a survey about white pollution and noise pollution in public places and discuss solutions to these problems (Part III, Chapter 4). From Grades 7 to 9, they should learn about the greenhouse effect and its impact on humans. It is suggested that they investigate the use of plastics, rubber and chemical fibres in modern industry, and offer solutions to the pollution caused by such materials (Part III, Chapter 3). Meanwhile, the People’s Education Press (PEP) Grade 6 primary textbook for ‘Morals and Society’ (*pinde yu shehui*) features a unit entitled ‘The Garden of Humanity’ (*renlei de jiyuan*) which stresses the pressure placed on the natural environment by over-population (implicitly justifying the government’s population policies), illustrates ways in which humans pollute their surroundings (with photographs of polluted Chinese rivers), and exhorts students to promote water conservation and reduce littering.

However, what is missing here is material inviting students to reflect on, discuss or critique the ways in which the state’s own vision and strategy for economic development may have contributed to environmental damage. For example, the troubling environmental implications of China’s Soviet-style program of dam-building are not acknowledged;²³ instead, Geography textbooks portray the achievements of ‘New China’ in the ‘comprehensive management’ of rivers such as the Yangtze (PEP, Geography Grade 8, Volume I. p. 47). Also absent from any list of those topics that students are invited to investigate or debate are the risks associated with nuclear power generation and disposal of the resulting waste, or the sustainability of China’s massive expansion of car production and ownership over the past twenty years. Overall, therefore, the message is that environmental challenges, although real and substantial, can be addressed through technical adjustments to the existing strategy for industrial development, without fundamental reappraisal of its ethical basis or ecological implications.

Korean subject curricula also refrain from inviting any searching critique of modern industrial processes or lifestyles, although specific environmental challenges associated with industrial activity are highlighted. As in China, discussion of environmental issues is mostly assigned to the Science curriculum, especially at secondary (middle school) level, though it is also accorded some treatment in Geography (pp. 66-73 of the Social Studies Curriculum, Grades

23 On the catastrophic environmental implications of Soviet attempts to reshape the natural environment for purposes of rapid industrialisation, see Perkin (1996, p. 130).

7-9). The middle school Social Studies curriculum suggests that students be set activities such as keeping ‘consumption diaries’, as a means of prompting reflection on their consumption habits as well as helping them to ‘plan future spending’ (p. 87) (whether or how such suggestions are implemented deserves further investigation). The Social Studies curriculum also notes the threat of climate change and challenges of pollution and conservation (though there only appeared to be two specific references to climate change in the coded documents). But while curricula may stipulate the inclusion of relevant facts, opportunities for discussion and debate – of these or any other ‘controversial’ issues – are generally limited in the Korean context (Oh, 2014; see the following sub-section).

In Japan, coverage of issues of ‘sustainability’ is similarly distributed between the Science and Social Studies / Civics curricula. There are several references to global warming in official documents, and the issue is dealt with in relevant textbooks. In middle school Civics texts, a chapter on ‘International Society and Us’ introduces various issues or challenges facing the contemporary world in general, and Japan in particular (with respect to its international relations). These include: the worldwide divide between rich and poor (and more or less wealthy nations); basic concepts in international relations, such as national sovereignty, borders and passports (with a disquisition on national flags and anthems reflecting the permeation of patriotic themes – see below); the role of multilateral organisations, such as the UN and associated bodies; the threat of global terrorism; unresolved conflicts (the Palestinian situation is singled out in both Tokyo Shoseki and Teikoku Shoin editions); climate change and rising sea levels (leading to flooding and inundation of low-lying islands); the energy crisis and the need for renewable energy; and the on-going threat posed by nuclear weapons. The books also feature guidelines or prompts designed to support students in completing in-depth reports on themes covered in the text. While recent research prompts scepticism regarding the extent to which teachers actually set such tasks (Cave, 2016), textbooks clearly give considerable prominence to issues relating to sustainable development, set in a global context (as well as to issues of conflict, peace and international collaboration).

However, textbook discussion of the Japan’s own transition to industrial modernity, and the sustainability of the economic model it has evolved, is sometimes notably uncritical. Primary Social Studies texts often offer a nostalgic take on the lifestyle of old Japan, while some Middle School Civics texts relate this to a peculiarly Japanese ‘spirit’ (see below) – without inviting critical reflection on the recent obliteration of tradition’s visible manifestations, architectural and otherwise (Kerr, 2015). In the Teikoku Shoin text, issues of pollution within Japan are discussed in relation to the role of ‘social capital’ and the environment in supporting industrial development (pp. 152-3). A discussion here of the ‘price mechanism’ features a photograph of tuna on sale at Tokyo’s main fish market, with a caption highlighting the role of supply and demand in determining cost (p.

111); but there is no reference to the threat posed by Japanese consumption habits to various aquatic species. Here, therefore, discussion of global environmental problems appears somewhat divorced from consideration of the economic challenges facing Japan or the problematic aspects of its developmental record. By contrast, a competing Tokyo Shoseki text features an extended two-page discussion of the 2011 nuclear catastrophe at Fukushima, inviting students to consider what caused it, how it was handled, and lessons to be learned (pp. 182-3). This includes some analysis of the historical context (post-war Japan's energy policies), the effects of the disaster itself and subsequent developments in energy policy in Japan and globally. It then invites students to discuss an appropriate energy policy for Japan in the light of various factors, both economic and environmental. There is thus considerable variation in textbook treatment of environmental conservation, pollution and related issues.

Generic Skills, Integration and Diversity in Curricular Reform – Rationales and Implications

Encouragement of more project work and autonomous learning is a prominent feature of curricular documents across East Asia. Even if official rationales for such reforms are often instrumentalist and economic, if operationalised in schools they might stimulate critical investigation and debate in ways conducive to furthering the sustainability agenda. So is there much evidence of this happening?

“
The idea of the teacher as an exemplary authority figure within the classroom and outside it is strongly entrenched within the profession, while modelling moral ‘correctness’ remains central both to teachers’ professional identities and to the vision enshrined in official documents”

Instructive here is the experience of Japan, which pioneered autonomy-oriented curricular reform in the East Asian context. Since the reforms of 1998 (implemented from 2002), textbooks have featured more exercises or questions calling for ‘investigation’ or ‘discussion’. However, these are generally ancillary to the main text, which continues to supply a conventional, authoritative narrative. Moreover, many – perhaps most – middle school teachers remain uncomfortable with attempts to transform them into ‘facilitators’ of autonomous student learning, for both

ethical and practical reasons (see Cave, 2016; Bjork, 2011, 2016); discomfort heightened by the contradiction between what prominent educators see as a ‘relentless attack’ on public schools and teachers, and the government’s rhetorical espousal of autonomy (Fujita, 2010, p. 49). As in China (Bakken, 2000; Kipnis, 2011) and Korea, the idea of the teacher as an exemplary authority figure within the classroom and outside it is strongly entrenched within the profession, while modelling moral ‘correctness’ remains central both to teachers’ professional identities and to the vision enshrined in official documents. Mounting concerns

over student behaviour have also made many teachers reluctant to experiment with less directive, instructional approaches (Arai, 2016) – especially given a lack of training in the new methods (Cave, 2016, Chapter 6). Crucially, though, the relative lack of reform to public examinations offers teachers, students and their parents little incentive to innovate. At primary level, where examination pressure is less intense, enthusiasm for project work – almost invariably with a local focus – has been greatest. But at middle school level, where projects might be expected to extend to in-depth, critical discussion of pressing social issues, research suggests that this seldom happens (Cave, 2016; Bjork, 2011, 2016).

In this respect, the introduction of ‘Integrated Studies’ (IS) does not appear to have had the impact originally intended. Cave (2016) found that debates were hardly ever conducted in IS lessons (p. 164). A general lack of enthusiasm for the new subject amongst middle school teachers is attributable largely to the requirements of senior high school and university entrance examinations. These take no cognisance of IS project work or classroom performance, focusing overwhelmingly on command of the conventional core subjects – Japanese, Mathematics, Science and English. Moreover, when disappointing results in the OECD’s 2004 PISA tests fuelled mounting panic over Japan’s economic competitiveness, subsequent reforms in 2008 saw electives entirely abolished and class time for IS reduced by between 10 and 43 per cent, to allow for significant extra time for Japanese (10 per cent), Maths (22 per cent), Social Studies (19 per cent) and – especially – Science and English (33 per cent) (Cave, 2016, p. 188) (for current data on instructional hours see **Appendix III**).

At primary level, where the pressure of public examinations is less imminent and pervasive, IS has proved more compatible with teachers’ entrenched beliefs and practices (Bjork, 2011, 2016). Primary Social Studies textbooks in Japan today invariably feature images of smiling pupils brandishing clipboards, out and about interviewing the elderly, rescue workers and so forth. At this level, investigative, exploratory activities – into, for example ‘where all the products [on supermarket shelves] come from’ or ‘the relationships between working people and us’ (Tokyo Shoseki SS Grade 5, pp. 60, 99) – may be allied to the didacticism concerning social ‘connectedness’ or interdependence mandated in curricular documents. But such activities potentially also promote awareness of issues such



Source: Kyoiku Shuppan(教育出版). 2016. 小学社会3・4上 (Primary Social Studies Grade 3 and 4, volume 1). Tokyo, Kyoiku Shuppan, p. 11.

as the sustainability of existing patterns of production and consumption. The problem is that at middle school level – as noted above – other priorities typically intervene to prevent the development of such learning into more self-directed and critical project work.



Source: Kyoiku Shuppan(教育出版). 2016. 小学社会3· 4上 (Primary Social Studies Grade 3 and 4, volume 1). Tokyo, Kyoiku Shuppan (image taken from the front cover).

What, then, of Korea and China, where the pursuit of autonomy, creativity and curricular integration was partly inspired by Japanese precedent (on China, see Vickers and Zeng, 2017, **Chapter 6**)? Ethnographic work in China’s Shandong Province has yielded findings somewhat similar to those of Cave with respect to Japan (Kipnis, 2011). Examination pressure means that particularly in middle schools, but sometimes also in primary schools, time allocated to areas relatively peripheral (in terms of examination weighting) can be sacrificed for the sake of greater focus on core subjects (see **Appendix III**). For example, while national curricular guidelines allocate four teaching periods per week to Mathematics during the compulsory years (up to the end of middle school), recent research indicates that ‘most schools arrange five or more periods’ (Wei, 2014).

“**Examination pressure means that particularly in middle schools, but sometimes also in primary schools, time allocated to areas relatively peripheral (in terms of examination weighting) can be sacrificed for the sake of greater focus on core subjects**”

Besides competitive pressures (common to all East Asian systems) arising from public examination ‘backwash’, the Chinese case also features particularly strong ideological or political constraints on the scope for promoting ‘autonomous’ student learning. In a study of school-based curriculum development in ‘moral education’, Ye (2014) nevertheless argues that ‘school power’ stands in a ‘semi-emancipatory’ relationship

with the party-state, allowing significant scope for grassroots innovation and diversity. In one of her three case-study schools (all in wealthy, industrialised Shenzhen), environmental protection became the core theme of the school’s moral education curriculum. ‘When we see the factories and local government pursuing monetary interests at the cost of polluting the environment,’ said the school principal, ‘we are responsible to teach the next generation right from wrong’ (p. 74). Some schools in China thus apparently can and do play a

role in heightening awareness of environmental problems. But the principal's singling out of the 'local' authorities for criticism is significant; while the probity and efficiency of local agencies can sometimes be questioned, open criticism of nationally-determined policies or strategies remains rare and potentially perilous.

Research on Korean schools, meanwhile, indicates that increasing emphasis in curricular documents on the promotion of 'critical thinking' and debate (see **Figure 3.1**) is not typically reflected in classroom practice. The fostering of creativity and problem-solving skills, or of attitudes associated with open and critical debate, such as respect for racial or gender diversity, have been identified as areas of particular weakness (Cho, 2004 as cited in Choi et al., 2009; Kim and Chang, 2015) (on diversity, see the following section). As students progress through the system, Moral Education, like the mainstream subjects, becomes increasingly test-driven and content-focused, with the result that discussion and critique typically feature low on the pedagogical agenda (Moral Education Curriculum (Korea), pp. 35-38; Kim and Chang, 2015).

Besides cultural, institutional and political factors, one of the most significant constraints on the pursuit of self-directed, autonomous learning, is perhaps class size. This is particularly true in China, where class sizes of 70 or more are quite common at middle school level (50-60 at primary level), but relatively large classes (upwards of 30) are typical across the region, especially at secondary level (OECD, 2012, p.

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East Asian schools
remain at or near the
top of OECD league
tables for class size
”

2). East Asian schools remain at or near the top of OECD league tables for class size.²⁴ Official calls for the promotion of autonomy and creativity have generally not been accompanied by the kinds of alterations to pupil-teacher ratios that would render it possible to deliver the kind of individually-tailored guidance that students engaged in varied, self-directed project work would need. As Kipnis points out (2011, p. 107), large class sizes both require a didactic, teacher-centred pedagogical style, and are premised on a vision of the teacher as an exemplary authority figure.

Autonomy and the Teacher

To what extent, then, are East Asian teachers encouraged or enabled to exemplify the qualities of creativity and independence that official curricula increasingly demand of students? We cannot assume that all teachers necessarily prioritise such goals. However, leaving aside their own ethical orientations, and the practical difficulties noted above, how consistent is the official espousal of autonomy? In particular, with respect to official efforts to shape the identity of the teaching profession, what is the 'hidden curriculum'?

24 In Japan, the government in 2011 initiated moves to reduce class sizes, but by 2014 the Finance Ministry was calling for increased class sizes as a cost-saving measure.

In the case of China, the clash between the curricular espousal of autonomy and creativity on the one hand, and structures for governing the teaching profession on the other, is especially stark. While the rigour with which political conformity is enforced has varied considerably from place to place and over time – with teachers in ‘elite’ schools in ‘advanced’ areas (such as those investigated by Ye in Shenzhen) typically granted greater latitude – the framework of control is all-pervasive. This begins with teachers’ own socialisation as youngsters, including their tertiary education and pre-service training: compulsory ideological/political education for students in ‘normal’ (i.e. teacher-training) institutions is particularly stringent (Yan, 2014; Chang, 2015). Systems for teachers’ subsequent professional development are often elaborate and impressive, especially in major cities, but these perform the dual function of supporting and monitoring. Meanwhile, teachers are subjected to constant, high-stakes assessment of their own performance, to determine decisions over contract renewal, promotions, salary increments or the allocation of prestigious tasks such as teaching examination classes (see Vickers and Zeng, 2017, **Chapter 7**). Such performance monitoring involves a mixture of quantitative metrics (chiefly students’ examination results) and more qualitative personnel reports. But the insecurity and intense pressure that these measures imply tends to militate against a sense of autonomous professionalism.

While China’s ‘democratic centralism’ implies strong constraints on teacher autonomy, the pursuit of tighter official control over the profession has also been a feature of Japanese policy in recent years. When the Basic Act of Education²⁵ was revised in 2006, a reference to the fostering of ‘independent spirit’ was downgraded from Article 1 to Article 2.2, where ‘a spirit of autonomy and independence’ was tied to ‘emphasising the relationship between one’s career and one’s everyday life and fostering the value of respect for hard work’. Meanwhile, in Article 9, on ‘Teachers’, a new reference was inserted to the ‘noble mission’ (*suko na shimei*) of teachers (officially translated as ‘the exalted nature of their calling’), linked to an obligation to ‘continuously devote themselves to research and self-improvement’ (see also McNeill and Lebowitz, 2007). Further revisions (in 2007) both to the School Education Law and to the Education Personnel Certification Law tightened administrative and managerial control over the teaching profession, requiring teachers to renew their licenses every ten years and undergo compulsory in-service training for this purpose. This was justified with reference to the obligation to pursue ‘self-improvement’ enshrined in the revised Act, as well as to managerialist notions of ‘accountability’ and ‘quality assurance’ – also increasingly invoked in China and Korea (on Korea, see Kang, 2016 and Sung, 2016).

Notwithstanding rhetorical affirmations of the importance and ‘exalted’ status of teachers, constraints on their professional autonomy are thus relatively stringent

25 The official translation of 教育基本法 is the ‘Basic Act of Education’, but it is also translated as the ‘Fundamental Law of Education’.

– and in some respects becoming more so. Teachers in Japan and Korea are not subject to the kinds of political or ideological controls enforced within China, and therefore freer – in theory – to promote critical debate in a manner conducive to the construction of open and tolerant conceptions of global citizenship. However, in practice teachers’ willingness to experiment pedagogically and model the kind of creativity that curricula purport to value is limited by various factors. These include their own ethical predilections (often prioritising other goals, such as the fostering of interdependence); lack of appropriate training; and official strategies for controlling the profession that undermine teachers’ security as a means of rendering them ‘accountable’ (i.e. more susceptible to managerial control). Perhaps most importantly, the intensely competitive pursuit of success in public examinations, which test received knowledge and command of set formulae, also tends to squeeze out other objectives, especially at secondary level (see below).

But the acutely contradictory demands placed upon teachers are not just implied by mechanisms for controlling them; they are to some extent explicit in the ideology of the official curriculum itself. Subordinating teachers to the pursuit of officially-determined national goals is the natural concomitant of a nationalism that preaches and presumes harmonious conformity with state-mandated values and identities – conceived as homogenous and totalising. This can profoundly complicate the task of exploring or accommodating ethical diversity or promoting critical debate, as the following section details.

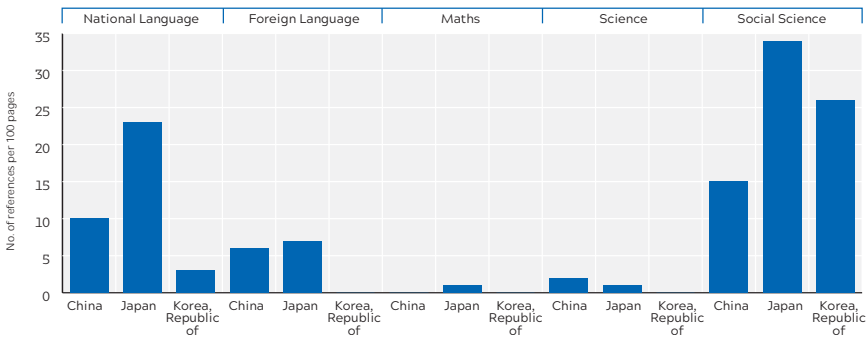
B: Challenges of Nationalism and Identities

This section discusses the challenges that curricular portrayals of identities – national or otherwise – pose for the pursuit of the sustainable development goals, and especially for the kind of tolerant transnationalism which the concept of ‘global citizenship’ implies. We briefly analyse how the nation is portrayed in curricular documents, with reference to culture, ethnicity and geography. However, conceptions of the nation are most clearly revealed in narratives of its past, and accounts of relations with non-national ‘others’. The curricular treatment of history is therefore of particular relevance here. And relevant to any consideration of how officially-mandated historical narratives represent national identity is the portrayal of minorities, and of women and gender issues. Addressing such issues involves asking how far school curricula promote critical engagement with visions of identity that challenge singular, linear national narratives, inviting students to consider alternative perspectives on developmental issues. Finally, we discuss ways in which curricula define and promote ‘internationalism’, in relation to programmes for foreign language education and international exchange.

Here the most pertinent finding from our quantitative data concern the marked prevalence of ‘the nation as a privileged referent of identity’ in curricular

documents across the major East Asian states (Figure 3.2; see also Appendix II-12i). Formal definitions of ‘nationhood’ differ significantly amongst these societies, with multicultural diversity, for example, enshrined in official definitions of ‘Chineseness’ in a way that we do not find in official identity discourse in Japan or Korea. Nevertheless, mainstream conceptions of identity (whether ‘national’ or ‘minority’) typically frame it as primordially-determined and ethno-culturally rooted. Moreover, the strong privileging of the ‘national’ category implies a marginalisation of other dimensions of identity.

Figure 3.2 References to ‘nation as privileged referent of identity’ in primary and secondary subject curricula in China, Japan and the Republic of Korea



The Ideal Citizen and National Self-image

At first sight, differences in the language used to describe citizenship and nationhood in China, Japan and Korea appear striking. Ringing affirmations of China’s ‘socialist’ identity, for example, seem to distinguish it starkly from Korea and Japan, which highlight their democratic credentials. But a closer examination of the ways in which citizenship (‘socialist’ or ‘democratic’) is defined suggests underlying similarities in the understanding of state–citizen relations. These are reflected in representations of the appropriate balance between citizens’ rights and responsibilities vis-à-vis the state, the nation’s role in international society, and the conceptions of national identity that underpin such discussions.

Japan’s status as a democracy is emphasised in official documents, which highlight the importance of respecting the dignity and rights of the individual. However, the importance of bringing students to a ‘correct recognition’ of the relationship between freedom and rights on the one hand, and duties and responsibilities on the other is also stressed (MS Social Studies, p. 28). While attaining a deeper ‘understanding of democracy’, they should be afforded ‘the basic training required of citizens charged with bearing the responsibilities of popular sovereignty’. Among the ‘correct’ notions to be inculcated, a consciousness of national identity and ‘love’ of Japan, her culture and traditions feature especially

prominently (e.g. P. Japanese, p. 17). A sense of responsibility to the world beyond the nation is also acknowledged, as when the Primary Social Studies guidelines allude to ‘the civic qualities required of those who will shape a peaceful and democratic nation and society living in international society’ (P. Social Studies, p. 22). However, stipulations of civic duties or qualities are typically accompanied by the phrase ‘as Japanese’ (*nihonjin toshite*), or an equivalent. Thus, ‘while gaining a heightened awareness of themselves as Japanese living in international society,’ students should be instilled with ‘the spirit of international cooperation’ (Middle School Foreign Languages Course of Study, p. 99). From primary level, students are expected to acquire ‘love’ for ‘their country’ and a commitment to the development of state and society (P. Japanese, p. 17). It is repeatedly stressed that love of country means loving its history and culture (P. Social Studies Com., pp. 5, 6, 7, 14) and ‘territory’ (p. 4). And this love dictates the acquisition of the skills that the nation requires – such as ‘robust and fertile minds’ primed for ‘the 21st century’.

Chinese documents link definitions of the ‘ideal citizen’ even more explicitly to commitment to state-mandated developmental goals. Article 5 of the 1995 Education Law states that education shall serve the construction of socialist modernisation, be combined with production and labour, and nurture ‘socialist successors’ possessing the qualities of morality, intelligence and physique required to serve the socialist cause. Patriotism and collectivism are specified in Article 6 of this law as crucial components of the moral outlook that schooling should affirm and reinforce. The Basic Education Curriculum Reform Outline of 2001 further stresses the importance of ‘socialist morality’ and the heritage of ‘fine Chinese traditions’ and ‘revolutionary traditions’. However, definitions of ‘socialism’ are studiously vague, with the conventionally socialist ethic of egalitarianism receiving little emphasis in curricular discourse (see Vickers, 2009). Dedication to serving ‘country and people’, on the other hand, is consistently emphasised, with patriotism invested in the Communist Party as much as in the nation-state. Meanwhile, the increasingly vaunted ‘fine Chinese traditions’ are implicitly equated with the cultural inheritance of the Han majority (Jones, 2005; Vickers, 2009).²⁶ Tapping popular Han-centric nationalist sentiment, however, risks raising tensions not just with China’s neighbours but also with domestic minorities still unreconciled to Chinese rule. This risk is heightened by the teleology of unification and assimilation that pervades official narratives of the national past (see below).

A similar teleology looms even larger over legal and curricular representations of the Korean nation. This is manifested less in strident attacks on the Democratic People’s Republic (North Korea) than in studied avoidance of references to it. Only

26 A new 6-volume textbook series for junior middle school on ‘China’s Splendid Traditional Culture’ (*Zhonghua youxiu chuantong wenhua*) features just one unit (i.e. one quarter of one volume) on ‘ethnic customs’ (*minzu fengqing*). This features the usual images of minorities in traditional costume, singing and dancing — but gives little or no sense of the diversity of these communities, or their histories of autonomous development (China, 2015-2016).

the Social Studies Curriculum (2015) alludes specifically to the reality of national separation, the existence of North Korea, and the importance of unification (pp. 118, 119, 140, 141, 164, 209, 295 and 311). Otherwise, students are portrayed as belonging to a nation encompassing the whole peninsula and sharing a common culture epitomised by the spirit of *'Hongik Ingan'*,²⁷ traceable to the legacy of the earliest Korean kings. Indeed, this is spelt out at the very beginning of the National Guidelines for Elementary and Secondary Education (Korea, Republic of, 2015). Until 2007, the official curriculum did not acknowledge, let alone countenance, the existence of ethnic or cultural diversity in Korean society. This has since changed significantly (see below), but dominant visions of 'Korean-ness' still reflect an assumption of homogeneity.

In Korea, as in China and Japan, national identity is typically depicted as immemorially ancient, ancestrally conferred and distinguished by an immutable cultural 'essence'. Curricula celebrate and promote the achievement of technological progress, exhorting students to excel above all in the pursuit of scientific knowledge; but the nations for whose sake that knowledge is ultimately to be deployed are generally depicted as ancient, timeless, culturally unique and homogenous.

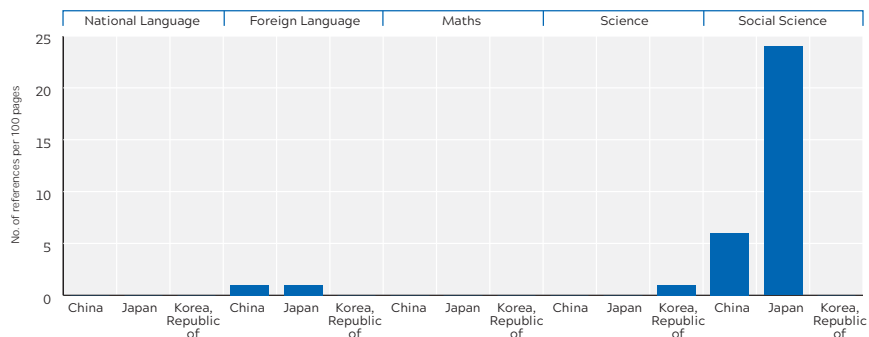
“**In Korea, as in China and Japan, national identity is typically depicted as immemorially ancient, ancestrally conferred and distinguished by an immutable cultural 'essence'**”

War and Peace in the Narrating of National Histories

An 'othering' of the West in the assertion of cultural uniqueness is one key strand in official identity discourse across East Asia, coexisting (somewhat paradoxically) with an intense emphasis on 'catching up' with Western powers (Mochizuki, 2004). In the case of Korea and China, a similar combination of self-conscious distancing and developmental envy has been evident in attitudes to Japan (Morris, Shimazu and Vickers, 2013, Introduction). This phenomenon is intermeshed with the 'othering' of supposedly inferior groups (Dikotter, 1997), and with narratives of the recent past that locate enemies closer to home (Morris, Shimazu and Vickers, 2013). The latter relate especially to divergent accounts of the twentieth century wars, the subject of claims by all the major East Asian players to special victimhood. In contemporary China, the focus has shifted somewhat from victimhood to pride in the country's pivotal contribution to the Allied victory over 'fascism'. However, for China, as (with some qualification) for Korea, the violation of innocence precedes and ennobles the march to eventual victory. And for Japan, China and Korea alike, commemorating the suffering inflicted by external forces precludes much acknowledgement of victimhood or villainy as phenomena transcending national borders. Rather than resolving legacies of animosity, this helps to ossify them.

27 Roughly translatable as 'broad beneficence to humanity'.

Figure 3.3 References to ‘culture of peace and non-violence’ in primary and secondary subject curricula in China, Japan and the Republic of Korea



This is starkly evident in the case of Japan, where a justified claim to uniqueness – in relation to the 1945 atomic bombings – underpins a ‘forward-looking’ narrative of quintessentially peaceable nationhood (Zwigenberg, 2015). Despite the efforts of the current Abe administration to revise the post-war ‘Peace Constitution’ and promote a vision of Japan as a ‘normal’ country (i.e. one reconciled to the virtues of maintaining a conventional military and deploying it abroad in defence of allies), curricular analysis reveals the strong persistence of pacifist rhetoric, especially in Social Studies (Figure 3.3; see also Appendix II-6). The tone that this takes is illustrated by this declaration in the current Middle School Course of Study for Social Studies:

As a consequence of their reflection on the Second World War and other past wars, as well as their experience of the atomic bombings at the end of World War II, the Japanese people hope that government action will never again precipitate the disasters of war, and, trusting in the sense of justice and good faith of the peace-loving citizens of various countries to preserve national security, renounce war as a means of resolving international disputes, and have decided not to maintain land, naval or air forces or any other kind of armed force. (p. 142)²⁸

Many textbooks consequently adopt a moralising tone in discussions of Japan’s role in ‘international society’. The Tokyo Shoseki Civics text highlights ‘Japan’s pacifist diplomacy’ (*Nihon no heiwashugi gaikou*), relating it to the experience of the atomic bombings (p. 194), while in the equivalent Teikoku Shoin text, a section on ‘the principles of Japanese diplomacy’ is followed by one headed ‘Standpoint as the only victim of atomic attack’. Japan’s energetic promotion of denuclearisation and global peace (including UN peacekeeping missions) is highlighted, as is its generosity as an aid donor.

28 The assertion that Japan lacks ‘any kind of armed forces’ is misleading as Japan has the ‘Self Defense Forces’.

In discussing relations with neighbouring countries, besides stressing the American alliance, the texts highlight territorial disputes with Russia, Korea and China. There are notable differences in the representation of these: Teikoku Shoin, for example, simply asserts that the islands in question have been 'Japanese territory from ancient times' (*Nihon koyuu no ryoudo*) (pp. 168-9), whereas Tokyo Shoseki in each case details the origins of and legal basis for Japan's claims – though without presenting the claims of the opposing parties (pp. 196-7).²⁹ Tokyo Shoseki, unlike Teikoku Shoin, also notes the relevance of 'great suffering in past wars' to the state of relations between Japan, Korea and China, but without offering any details (p. 195). The improvement of relations will depend, opines the former text, on a 'strengthening of mutual understanding' and 'working together for greater development and prosperity'.

But a crucial barrier to that understanding remains divided memories of war – especially the Asia-Pacific War (Shin and Sneider, 2011; Morris, Shimazu and Vickers, 2013) – divisions that Japan's own curriculum does little to explain or resolve. Images of the Hiroshima or Nagasaki Peace Parks adorn the covers of several Civics texts,³⁰ reflecting the continuing centrality of memories of atomic attack to constructions of Japanese identity as inherently pacifist. However, on aspects of the war key to perceptions of Japan in neighbouring countries, textbooks are far less forthcoming – and have become noticeably less so in recent years (see Cave, 2013).

Indeed, all textbooks place far more emphasis on the wartime suffering of ordinary Japanese than on the experience of those subjected to Japanese invasion. This focus is heightened by 'investigative' sections inviting students to research and reflect upon particular events: Tokyo Shoseki provides a two-page spread on Hiroshima (pp. 230-1), while Teikoku Shoin focuses on the American invasion of Okinawa and the suffering of civilians there – admittedly at the hands of the Japanese army as well as the Americans (pp. 230-1). (If any Japanese villain emerges from textbook accounts, it is the faceless 'military'.) The Teikoku Shoin text also features a similar 'investigative' section on the migration of colonists from Nagano Prefecture to Japanese-occupied Manchuria, but largely ignores the impact of this phenomenon on the local population (pp. 222-3). One footnote refers to a single paragraph elsewhere on 'Chinese resistance', but another links to a longer discussion of the plight of Japanese stranded in mainland Asia after the 1945 surrender. Meanwhile, both Tokyo Shoseki (p. 223) and Teikoku Shoin (p. 225) discuss the Nazi Holocaust with reference to the role of Sugihara Chiune, Japanese consul in Latvia, in issuing 'visas of life' (*inochi no biza*) to persecuted

29 Teikoku Shoin's history textbook, in another two-page spread on Japan's territorial disputes, does provide a brief account of the history of the Japanese claims to the various islands similar to that provided in the Tokyo Shoseki Civics text.

30 For example, the image of the Nagasaki Peace Memorial Statue is featured on the back cover of Nippon Bunkyo Shuppan (2016) and the front cover of Shimizu Shoin (2016) Civics textbooks. The image of the Hiroshima Dome is on the front cover of Kyoiku Shuppan (2016) Civics text.

Jews. Accounts of wartime Japanese suffering are thus juxtaposed with tales of Japanese heroism.

An overwhelming focus on the mingled suffering and heroism of the national subject is a feature of officially-sanctioned historical narratives in China and Korea as well. As emphasis in Chinese curricula on Marxist teleology and class struggle has been diluted in the post-Mao era, so elements of socialist internationalism have been displaced by an increasingly chauvinist nationalism. This is reflected not least in shifting depictions of the Communists' Civil War antagonists, the Kuomintang (KMT), who until the 1980s were reviled as 'class enemies' under whose rule China had languished in a 'semi-colonial, semi-feudal' state. More recently, however, depictions of the iniquity of the KMT and China's traditional ruling elites have been decisively toned down, with former class enemies admitted into the pantheon of 'national heroes' (*minzu yingxiong*) (Jones, 2005). This has left foreign imperialists – epitomised by the brutal Japanese military – singled out as agents of Chinese victimhood in a historical narrative cast in overwhelmingly nationalist terms.

Accounts of Japanese imperialism, invasion and occupation have been accorded prominence in textbook narratives of modern Chinese history since the 1980s. As Rose shows with respect to high school texts, the extent of coverage has shifted over time, with an apparent reduction in the early 2000s (Rose, 2013). However, that involved stripping out contextual analysis or explanatory nuance, if anything rendering the stark details of Japanese atrocities even more inexplicable and outrageous. The theme of China's climactic struggle against Japan (and foreign imperialism more generally) is highlighted in other areas of the school curriculum, too, including texts for 'Morals and Politics' (Vickers, 2009) and for Chinese language. Primary school Chinese language texts, for example, regale students with the story of a heroic Chinese child sacrificing himself to save his village from Japanese 'devils' (Vickers and Zeng, 2017, p. 139). As in many other formerly occupied societies, morally or politically complex aspects of the wartime experience, such as the fraught issue of collaboration, are largely neglected (Vickers, 2017a). And reinforcing the vision of recent history as a struggle of Chinese against foreigners, light against dark, is the absence of any significant discussion in school textbooks (or museums or the mainstream media) of instances of domestically-authored Chinese suffering (see Dikotter, 2013; Yang, 2013).

In Korea, too, the focus on national victimhood has been overwhelming, complicated by the looming shadow of the unresolved Civil War with the North. Korean curricula have tended to cope with the North-South split by largely ignoring it (though the picture at school level may be different – see next section). The same was true, until the 1980s, of the colonial period, which the military dictator Park Chung Hee preferred to sweep under the national carpet due to his own 'collaborationist' past. Nationalism was promoted instead by cultivating memories of an earlier anti-Japanese resistance struggle: that of

Admiral Yi against the invasion of Hideyoshi Toyotomi in 1592 (Han, 2013, pp. 112-3). Following Park's 1979 assassination, his military successors shifted the curricular focus, with high school history texts from 1987 dedicating over a quarter of their content to the Japanese colonial period. However, while emphasising stalwart Korean resistance to Japanese oppression, these texts were ambiguous regarding the colonial legacy, crediting it with bringing inevitable and ultimately desirable 'modernisation', albeit with the unpalatable accompaniment of foreign domination (Han, 2013, pp. 113-4).

Following democratisation in the late 1980s and early 1990s, Korean politics has tended to be sharply polarised between conservatives defensive of aspects of the legacies of dictatorship and colonialism, and leftists vehemently critical of both. For the rightists, success in promoting economic development constituted the main standard for judging the performance of colonial, military or indeed democratic regimes (Kang, 2016, p. 44). For the leftists, the developmental achievements of both the Japanese and military regimes were seen as fundamentally tainted by colonialist and capitalist 'exploitation'. Textbook 'wars' ensued once the system of monopolistic, state-authored textbooks was dismantled from 2002, with more right-leaning *Kyohaksa* texts for modern history pitched against those produced by the left-leaning *Keumsung* publishing house (Kang, 2016).

Victimhood and nationalism are intertwined for both left and right, but with rather different emphases and political implications. Leftists have tended to appeal to a profoundly essentialist vision of the *Han minjuk* (Korean race-nation), seen as requiring emancipation from both malevolent foreigners – especially Americans and Japanese – and their Korean fellow-travellers. For those on the left, globalization and the exploitative operations of transnational capital are but the latest instance of foreign oppression, in which home-grown rightists are complicit. National salvation is therefore to be sought through restoring sovereignty and ridding the peninsula of malign foreign influences. In 2003, the *Keumsung* texts, purveying a narrative along these lines, were adopted by 53 per cent of schools (Kang, 2016, p. 50).

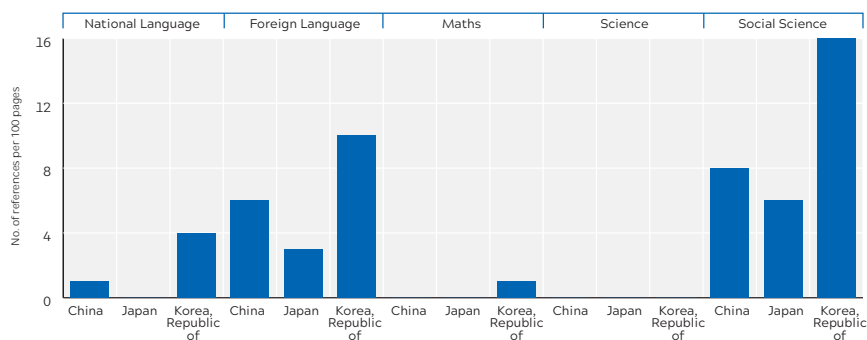
Those on the political right, while sharing a similarly essentialist vision of the Korean *minjuk* and an emphasis on the legacy of foreign oppression, have remained overwhelmingly preoccupied by the threat of Communism, in the shape of North Korea. In the rightist narrative, economic modernisation, engagement with globalization and loyalty to the American alliance remain crucial to national strength and the capacity to resist the threat from the North. This has implied a rather different emphasis in rightist accounts of the national past. Following the 2008 election of the conservative President Lee Myung-bak, the bureaucratic power of the state was deployed to pressure both the leftist *Keumsung* publishing house to revise its textbook, and schools to desist from adopting it; adoption rates fell to 32 per cent (Kang, 2016, p. 50). Lee's successor from 2013, Park Geun-hye, then attempted to restore the system of state-prescribed

textbooks, though this policy is almost certain to be abandoned by her successor. Textbook pluralism thus survives in Korea, but in a highly polarised form ironically underpinned by broad consensus over the ethno-cultural essence of nationhood.

Portrayals of Ethno-cultural Diversity: Minorities and Migrants

As the coding results demonstrate, the importance of respecting diversity is acknowledged, to varying degrees, in curricula across East Asia (see **Appendix II-12d**). However, references to diversity or tolerance tend to dissolve, on closer examination, in the pervasive solvent of nationalism. Besides documents relating to Moral Education (or equivalent subjects) and social studies, it is significant that specific references to diversity appear most frequently in foreign language curricula (see **Figure 3.4**). Understandings of pluralism and diversity as qualities that cut across national boundaries, characterising domestic as much as international society, remain generally weak.

Figure 3.4. References to ‘respect/appreciation for diversity’ in primary and secondary subject curricula in China, Japan and the Republic of Korea



More general policy statements, taken on their own, give a rather different impression in the case of China. There, official curricula explicitly highlight the diverse ethnic character of the People’s Republic, mandating extensive provision for the education of ‘minorities’ – alongside persistent emphasis on inter-ethnic ‘unity’ or ‘solidarity’ (*minzu tuanjie*) (see MOEGO and SEACGO, 2008). The National Education Outline (*gangyao*) 2010-2020 enumerates various measures aimed at ‘advancing’ bilingual teaching; ‘pairing’ schools in minority areas with those elsewhere, for purposes of ‘assistance’; incentivising graduates to teach in ‘minority-inhabited areas’; and developing ‘modern distance education’. The 13th Five-Year Plan 2016-2020 makes the ‘sound development of ethnic areas’ a ‘strategic goal’ of reform (Chapter 40), while emphasising successes already achieved. The number of years of education received by 14 of the 56 officially recognised ethnic minorities, including Koreans, Manchus, Mongols and Kazakhs, now exceeds the national average (UNHRC, 2013). In Tibet, it is claimed, fifteen years of free education is available; the enrolment rate of school-age children for primary schools has reached 99.64 per cent; youth illiteracy has fallen to 0.57

per cent or less; and average years of schooling have reached 8.6 years (SCIO, 2015). From 2011 to 2015, 528 educational aid projects in Xinjiang have been implemented involving the investment of RMB 10.8 billion (approximately USD 1.57 billion) (SCIO, 2016).

However, apparent success on such quantitative measures should not obscure serious problems with the recognition and accommodation of diversity in China. This applies not only to the treatment of officially-recognised ethno-cultural ‘minorities’, but also to other marginalised groups. For the officially-recognised minorities, bilingual education is largely restricted to primary level, with learning in Chinese the sole route to full participation in the modern economy. There is a pervasive assumption that the relative ‘backwardness’ of minorities renders them in need of assistance from the more ‘advanced’ Han; education and development are viewed as means of ‘raising’ the former to the level of the latter. Narratives of the histories of ‘minority’ peoples and regions are highly selective, ensuring conformity to the overarching teleology of unification and assimilation (Vickers, 2006), and religious freedom has in recent years been increasingly tightly circumscribed. Meanwhile, amongst Han Chinese taught to celebrate the developmental benefits bestowed upon ‘backward’ regions such as Tibet and Xinjiang, anger at Tibetan and Uighur ‘ingratitude’ has recently mounted (Leibold, 2014).

The Han themselves are also highly diverse – something barely acknowledged in official discourse on citizenship, identity and values. Not only is this diversity linguistic, cultural and ethnic, but crucially it is also residential. The urban-rural divide, institutionalised by the country’s household residency (*hukou*) system, remains the most crucial division within Chinese society, cutting across all others and profoundly fragmenting the experience of citizenship. This is manifested not least in the educational plight of the children of migrant workers, millions of whom are either ‘left behind’ in often rudimentary rural schools, or compelled (as a result of their effective exclusion from, or marginalisation within, urban public schools) to study in substandard community-run schools (Goodburn, 2009; Vickers and Zeng, 2017, Chapter 9).

In contemporary Japan, by contrast, the discourse of national unity and homogeneity has implied a strong commitment to uniform and equal provision of schooling – even if, as Kariya (2013) argues, this commitment has been eroded in recent years. At the same time, domestic diversity has been acknowledged through celebrating marginal local variants on the theme of homogenous Japaneseness, or with reference to non-cultural issues. Curricular stipulations relating to ‘respect’ or ‘appreciation’ of diversity thus mostly refer to longstanding regional variations in customs, handicrafts and festivals; inter-generational differences; and understanding of the challenges faced by disabled people (specific references to, for example, *Nikkei* Brazilian or ethnic Korean or

Chinese minorities are absent from curricular documents).³¹ Students are also to be encouraged to investigate particular issues and challenges confronting their local area, with a view to heightening their awareness of its 'special characteristics' (P. Social Studies CS, p. 22). The clipboard-wielding students invariably featured on the covers of Primary Social Studies textbooks are doubtless engaged in such investigations.

Significant for an understanding of the curricular framing of 'diversity' are discussions of 'tolerance'. The objects of tolerance are almost invariably located outside Japan itself; the commentary to the Primary 'General Provisions' features four references to the need to 'respect other countries' (*takoku wo sonchou*) (P. General Provisions Com., 3, 7, 24, 79). Diversity is here depicted primarily as characterising a world of homogenous nations, rather than intrinsic to national communities themselves. The stipulations for moral education at primary level spell this out: 'While having solicitude for our nation's traditions and culture, and possessing a heart full of love for country, to take interest in foreigners and foreign cultures'³² (P. Moral Education Com., p. 51). One of very few explicit references to the presence of 'foreign children' in Japanese schools brackets them with Japanese returnees, calling for both groups to be provided with 'close guidance' and for other students to be brought to recognise their 'advantages and special features' (P. General Provisions Com., p. 79). But this implicitly maintains the distinction between an essentially homogenous Japan and the 'foreign' world, with cultural diversity in the Japanese classroom portrayed as a factor of 'foreignness' or exposure to foreigners.

Actual curricular coverage of ethnic and cultural diversity within Japan, or related issues of discrimination, is not quite as nugatory as official curricula might suggest. There is significant variation in local policy, with authorities in some regions with large migrant or minority ethnic populations seeking ways of promoting greater inclusion or integration (Tsuneyoshi, Okano and Boocock, 2011). Talk of education for 'multicultural symbiosis' (*tabunka kyosei*), which first emerged in civil society, has gained currency in national policymaking discourse (Okano, 2012). Civics and History texts generally note the presence of substantial ethnic Korean and Chinese minorities, relating this to the legacy of Japanese colonialism (e.g. *Teikoku Shoin Koumin*, p. 46; *Tokyo Shoseki Koumin*, pp. 47, 49). Some discussion of the Ainu (in Hokkaido) and of Okinawans as distinct ethnic groups is also common, as is reference to discrimination against *burakumin* (a long-despised hereditary underclass) (e.g. *Teikoku Shoin Koumin*, pp. 44-5). The growing presence of foreigners in Japan is also highlighted and linked to growing demand for migrant labour in certain sectors, as a result of the ageing

31 A related issue is that the Japanese government does not collect data on ethnic diversity amongst Japanese nationals — which encompasses indigenous peoples, naturalised migrants and former colonial subjects. This makes it difficult to gauge the true nature and extent of diversity and devise appropriate policies (see Tsuneyoshi, Okano and Boocock, 2011).

32 Original in Japanese: '外国の人々や文化に関心を持つ' (*gaikoku no hitobito ya bunka ni kanshin wo matsu*).

and shrinking of Japan's indigenous population. Problematic aspects of their situation, such as their lack of voting rights (even in local elections), are noted in some texts. However, as in the curricular documents, so in textbooks, discussion of the nature and extent of diversity is generally premised on a black-and-white distinction between 'Japanese' and 'non-Japanese'.

“
An embrace of ethno-cultural diversity, in Korea as in Japan and China, is in tension with representations of national identity that emphasise its primordial cultural and ancestral origins”

Korea has in recent years experienced an influx of migrants from overseas (especially from Southeast Asia) that, in proportional terms, is far larger than that seen in Japan: the number of foreign workers alone has risen 'more than thirtyfold' since 2000, to over 600,000 in 2013 (The Economist, 2017b). In response to this phenomenon, successive revisions to the official curriculum since 2007 have alluded to the concept of diversity, culminating in a 2015 stipulation in the National Guidelines that this must be 'appreciated and respected'. This comes

amidst indications that such appreciation and respect is notably lacking in the treatment of many foreign migrants in Korean society, especially unskilled labourers from Southeast Asia, who have come to constitute 'a new underclass' (The Economist, 2017b). But an embrace of ethno-cultural diversity, in Korea as in Japan and China, is in tension with representations of national identity that emphasise its primordial cultural and ancestral origins. How such rhetorical nods in the direction of diversity translate into reform at the level of schools and classrooms remains to be seen.

A special dimension of diversity in the Korean context relates to refugees from North Korea. Defectors from the North are seen as sharing essentially the same culture and heritage as Southerners, and have learnt to see themselves as members of a single Korean *minjok* (race-nation). The radical divergence of the societies north and south of the 38th Parallel renders North Koreans culturally quite alien from their southern cousins, but entrenched notions of homogenous nationhood prompt resistance to framing this as a manifestation of 'diversity' (Joe, 2012; Kim, 2013). Furthermore, some scholars argue that since this concept has essentially been imported from a West where different social, cultural and political conditions prevail, overseas studies are of limited use in informing Korean debate (Lee and Baik, 2012). Official policy documents refer to North Korea in the context of discussions of peaceful reunification and the history of North-South relations, but do not encourage in-depth, critical discussion of conditions in the North and their implications for reconciliation or for integrating Northern defectors. Meanwhile, teachers are legally discouraged from expressing opinions regarding such matters in the name of educational 'autonomy' or 'independence' (i.e. under regulations aimed at countering Communist 'subversion') (Oh, 2009). Nevertheless, this has not prevented some schools and NGOs from conducting

educational programs and research dealing with North Korea and the challenge of peaceful unification (Park, 2015).

Across the major societies of East Asia, therefore, official curricula reveal a persistent tension between dominant understandings of nationhood as primordial, ancestrally-determined and essentially biological, and the insertion into policy discourse (quite recently in Korea and Japan) of exhortations to respect 'diversity'. This has serious implications for indigenous minorities or recent migrants whose languages, beliefs and cultural practices diverge from the norms of the national mainstream or 'core' ethnic group. But it also implies problems for an embrace of notions of global citizenship rooted in transnational understandings of civic rights and duties and consciousness of shared humanity.

Internationalism, East Asian Transnationalism and Language

Taken together with the overwhelming curricular emphasis on the nation as a privileged referent of identity, the coding results suggest that East Asian curricula are ambivalent, if not wholly negative, in their treatment of transnational identity (**Figure 3.5**; see also **Appendix II-7, 10a and 12h**).³³ Korea is exceptional in deploying language of global citizenship in its curricular documents – a practice linked to the Government's highly-publicised sponsorship of 'Education for International Understanding' (Seoul hosts a related UNESCO Category 2 Centre³⁴: APCEIU) and more recently of GCED. Japanese curricular documents, for their part, prominently feature rhetoric invoking shared 'humanity', which is often linked to its self-image as a pacifist country (see **Figure 3.3**). But to the extent that transnationalism is discussed in official documents, it tends to be abstract and decontextualised (as the data in **Figure 3.5** suggests). Sweeping affirmations of shared humanity or international harmony are seldom brought into contact with the complex realities of life in contemporary East Asia.

In the case of China, curricular references to global citizenship, global systems, structures and processes and global issues are especially scant (see **Appendix II-7-9**). Analysing primary school moral education (*pinde yu shehui*), a study found that curricular reforms in the early 2000s featured increased discussion of global issues (especially at Year 6 level), but still accorded these only 8 topics as compared with 48 for the national element (Law, 2011, p. 111, cited in Rose, 2015, p. 90). Meanwhile, a growing emphasis in representations of the nation on China's 'glorious national traditions' and 'traditional virtues' reflects an ideological shift from socialist internationalism to neo-traditionalist nationalism. Investigating textbooks, Rose found that references to terms such as 'global village' (*diquacun*)

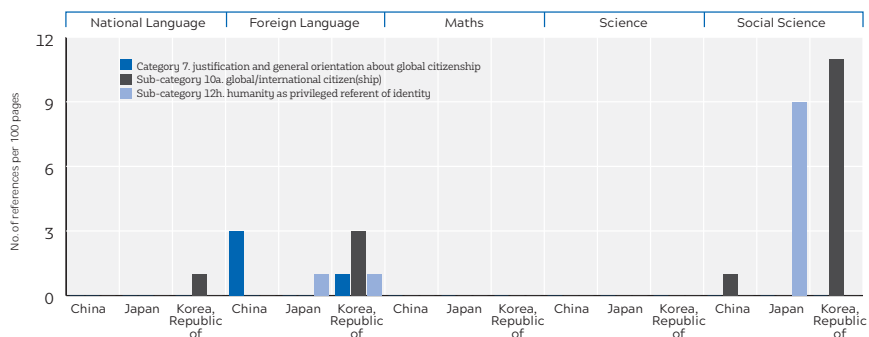
33 In this respect, Hong Kong and Taiwan constitute partial exceptions. Taiwan, for example, especially when under Democratic Progressive Party rule, has placed great emphasis on its multicultural 'Asian' heritage, as a means of differentiating itself from the Chinese mainland (see Vickers, 2010). But since data on Taiwan and Hong Kong were not analysed for the present study, here we make only limited reference to the situation there.

34 Though not legally part of UNESCO, Category 2 institutes and centres are associated with UNESCO through formal arrangements approved by the UNESCO General Conference.

or ‘global villagers’ proliferated, accompanied by allusions to the interests shared by children worldwide, and to global issues (including SARS and climate change) that affect them (Rose, 2015, pp. 98-99). But school texts also stress that world peace depends on the continuing modernisation and strengthening of China’s military. Middle school civics (*sixiang pinde*) texts emphasise that, as a ‘developing’ country facing manifold pressures from developed countries, only by further promoting national development can the state bring about the ‘great revival of the Chinese people’ (p. 97). This emphasis on the importance of economic and military strength and the dangers of national weakness is underpinned by a historical narrative highlighting instances of foreign ‘bullying’ (Vickers, 2009).

The prominence in Japanese Social Studies curricula of ‘humanity as a privileged referent of identity’ parallels the embrace of pacifism in the same documents (see **Figure 3.3**). But at the level of textbooks, evidence suggests that recent years have seen a drift towards more emphasis on the national component of identity. Whereas the 1996 edition of a widely used social studies text in Japan (by Mitsumura Toshio) featured phrases such as ‘same world person’ and allusions to notions of global citizenship, the 2011 edition of the same text contained ‘no reference to world or global citizens in the corresponding section’ (Rose, 2015, p. 99). Ironically, over the same period, debate over ‘internationalisation’ has been a major feature of educational debate within Japan. However, as noted above, this has tended to be dominated by the instrumentalist objective of producing ‘global human resources’ to boost national competitiveness, and has emphatically not embraced notions of transnational identity. As Tsuneyoshi puts it, ‘discussions of internationalisation in Japan... are linked to discussions of developing citizens who have a Japanese identity and who can function as “Japanese” in international society’ (2011, p. 117). It is expected that citizens’ perception of the world beyond Japan will always be refracted through the prism of their Japaneseness. And this approach to nationhood is legitimated through reference to overseas practice. For example, the primary Social Studies Course of Study directs that students should be ‘brought to understand that our country and other countries have national flags, and be instilled with an attitude of respect for these’ (p. 24), thus ostensibly aiming at the promotion of international awareness and ‘respect’. But given the domestic political controversies surrounding such matters, it is likely that the overriding goal here is to normalise veneration of Japan’s own national flag by reference to a putative international standard.

Figure 3.5 References to select categories related to global citizenship in primary and secondary subject curricula in China, Japan, and the Republic of Korea



In Korea, while official documents do not explicitly invoke ideas of shared humanity, notions of global or international citizenship feature prominently – not only in Social Studies, but also in Foreign Language curricula (see **Figure 3.5**). However, as in the case of Japanese references to ‘humanity’, this statistic on its own does not indicate how (or whether) consciousness of national and international identities is related. East Asian internationalism tends to be premised on a conception of nations as fundamentally discrete and impermeable – something that applies as much to Korea as to Japan or China (see above). Rather than leading to a blurring or transcending of international divisions, interaction between nations thus conceived tends to become an exercise in parading national uniqueness.

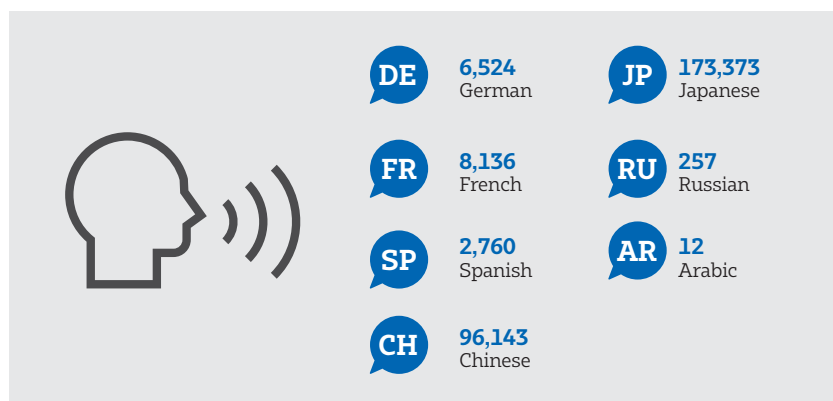
Curricula for foreign languages are one area in which the tensions between nationalism and internationalism are especially apparent. In Korea, documents stress the importance of learning to be open-minded and non-discriminatory in dealing with those of other nationalities, and the utility of English as a tool for gaining understanding of other cultures and traditions. Significantly, they also allude to the importance of using English to explain Korean culture to foreigners (Korean English Curriculum, p. 5). The idea that a key purpose of studying English is to enable students to explain their national characteristics to foreigners (i.e. Westerners) also features in Chinese and Japanese curricula, and reflects how foreign language curricula are tasked with shoring up national boundaries even while imparting the capacity to cross them.

“**The idea that a key purpose of studying English is to enable students to explain their national characteristics to foreigners (i.e. Westerners) reflects how foreign language curricula are tasked with shoring up national boundaries even while imparting the capacity to cross them**”

This tension is particularly explicit in Japan’s curricular documents. Those relating to foreign languages highlight the aim of promoting an understanding of international diversity, or ‘fostering an attitude of actively engaging with the world in each individual student’ (MS Foreign Language, CS, p. 1). But they also stress the importance of equipping students to ‘explain Japan’ and ‘deepen’ foreigners’ ‘understanding of our country’s language and culture’ (MS Foreign Languages, Com., p. 69). A related message repeatedly stressed in curricular documents is the importance of strengthening students’ ‘capacity for communication’ (*tsutaeru nouryoku*), whether in Japanese or in English (e.g. P. Japanese CS Com., pp. 4, 8, 12, 129, 134). This is explicitly related to the promotion of ‘mutual understanding’. The Course of Study for Primary Japanese emphasises that ‘in a context of respect for each other’s position and opinions, in interpersonal relations the capacity for verbal communication must be heightened’ (p. 8).

Significant here is the medium envisaged for international communication: English. Across East Asia, foreign language education largely begins and ends with English. The heavy curricular emphasis on mathematics, science and the national language, in addition to the timetabling of compulsory lessons in morals, civics and national history, tends to leave space for instruction in only one foreign language. There are significant differences in national practice. Japanese schools, for example, typically commence foreign language instruction significantly later than those in Korea and urban China (see **Appendix III**). The situation in China’s rural and ‘minority’ regions is different again, with the former often lacking any qualified foreign language teachers, and the latter confronting a ‘trilingual trap’ as a result of the need to study two non-native languages: Mandarin Chinese and English (Zhao, 2014). (Trilingualism is of course not disadvantageous in itself, but is experienced as such by many Chinese ‘minorities’ in a context of intensely

Figure 3.6 The number of high school students learning second foreign languages in Republic of Korea (based on the Statistical Yearbook of Education, 2012)



Source: Lee, 2015, p. 48, Table 1

competitive credentialism – see below.) There are exceptions to this rule in China: in particular regions, some schools offer languages other than English as the main foreign language – in the Northeast, for example, Japanese is taught in a number of secondary schools. In Korea, meanwhile, significant numbers of students study a second foreign language at high school level (see **Figure 3.6**). Japanese is the most popular second foreign language in Korean high schools, but Chinese has been gaining in popularity in recent years. The statistics in **Table 3.1** show a steep decline between 2012 and 2015 in absolute numbers of Koreans studying Japanese. Japanese students, by contrast, almost never spend significant time receiving lessons in any foreign language other than English: official figures put the number doing so at senior high school at around 1.5 per cent of the total student population.³⁵

Despite these differences, an overwhelming emphasis in foreign language education on English, and a neglect of Asian foreign languages, characterises all East Asian schooling systems. This neglect both reflects and contributes to the weakness of any shared sense of East Asian identity. In neither China nor Japan is any real attempt made to relate ideas of transnational values or identity (such as they are) to the East Asian context. In Japan, official guidelines make few references to the country’s ‘Asianness’, thereby downplaying the significance of shared identity with Koreans or Chinese, either as neighbours or domestic minorities. Indeed, while it is stipulated that Middle School students should learn about how recent immigration to Australia and New Zealand has contributed to these societies’ ‘multiculturalism’ and growing ties to Asia (MS Social Studies, p. 41), there is no comparable mention of Japan’s manifold and complex Asian connections. Japanese textbooks for history and literature overwhelmingly focus their portrayals of China on the ancient period (Yang, 2014). Indeed, Japanese students (unlike their Korean counterparts) all study classical Chinese texts as part of the curriculum for ‘national language’ (i.e. *Japanese*) – even while opportunities to study modern Chinese at school are virtually non-existent.

“Despite these differences, an overwhelming emphasis in foreign language education on English, and a neglect of Asian foreign languages, characterises all East Asian schooling systems”

If anything, the contribution of schooling to fostering mutual understanding has become even weaker in recent years. Rose (2015) finds that Japanese curricular coverage of contemporary China has become even more perfunctory and stereotyped since the 1990s. Civics texts now emphasise differences in the lifestyles of Chinese and Japanese youngsters, where previously there was more

35 Figures from Japan (2014) state that the total number of students at high school level studying foreign languages other than English was 48,129, out of a total student population in that year of just over 3,330,000 (Japan, 2016).

Table 3.1 Number of institutions, teachers and learners of the Japanese language in the Republic of Korea, China and Mongolia

Country and region	2012			2015								Population* (People)
	Institutions (Institutions)	Teachers (People)	Learners (People)	Institutions (Institutions)	Teachers (People)	Learners (People)	Learners per 100,000 population (People)	Composition by educational stage (learners) (People)				
								Primary	Secondary	Higher	Other	
Republic of Korea	3,914	17,817	840,187	2,862	14,855	556,237	1,106	1,106	451,893	51,963	51,221	50,293,439
China	1,800	16,752	1,046,490	2,115	18,312	953,283	69	1,573	52,382	625,728	273,600	1,376,048,943
Mongolia	59	192	8,159	76	253	9,914	335	1,811	4,556	2,402	1,145	2,959,134
Total	5,773	34,761	1,894,836	5,053	33,420	1,519,434	1,510	4,490	508,831	680,093	325,966	1,429,301,516

Source: Adapted from Japan Foundation, 2017, p. 22, Table 2-1-1.

emphasis on similarities (Rose, 2015, pp. 93-97).³⁶ Chinese textbook depictions of contemporary Japan allude to a notion of ‘eastern culture’ (*dongfang wenhua*), but in highly stereotypical terms – while emphasising the Chinese origins of many aspects of traditional Japanese culture. Overall, Rose concludes, China and Japan are ‘generally not portrayed as fellow constituents of a shared “East Asian” region or cultural sphere,’ with curricula in both countries featuring ‘little discussion of the nature or extent of their shared cultural traditions, beyond references to the (one-way) transmission of culture from China to Japan in the distant past’ (p. 100).

Gender

What do prevalent conceptions of nationhood and development imply for gender relations? Much rhetoric on the role of women in development has tended to view this matter instrumentally; women have often been implicitly depicted as ‘mothers of development’, with the value of girls’ education defended by reference to its utility in ‘reducing poverty, containing population growth, engendering public health, and strengthening the nation’ (Ross, 2006, pp. 29-30). On this matter, official curricula have little to tell us: issues of gender equality

“
Issues of gender equality barely rate a mention in curricular documents for any of the major East Asian countries”

barely rate a mention in curricular documents for any of the major East Asian countries (see Appendix II-5). In the case of China and Japan, the issue appears almost entirely absent from such documents; in Korea, it rates a passing mention only in the curriculum for middle school Social Science. But this curricular ‘blind spot’ is itself highly significant.

Concern for gender equality has typically taken a low priority in Japan’s public policy agenda; Japan typically comes at the very bottom of developed-country league tables for female employment, the gender pay gap and other measures of equality (OECD, 2012). Curricular documents indicate no concerted drive to transform entrenched attitudes in this area. This does not imply the complete neglect of such issues in textbooks. These feature many images of women, often stereotypical (nurses, teachers, shoppers, homemakers, receptionists and so forth), but sometimes less so. The Teikoku Shoin Civics (*Koumin*) text, for example, features a picture of the athlete Yoshida Saori (brandishing a Japanese flag at the London Olympics) (p. 166) and a text box on Ogata Sadako, the former (female) head of the UNHCR (p. 183). But the same text features only one short paragraph explicitly addressing the theme of gender equality (p. 43), which simply outlines relevant Japanese legislation and exhorts everyone to ‘take responsibility’ for promoting equality. Tokyo Shoseki’s Civics text goes somewhat further, devoting almost a whole page to this theme, and presenting a text box

36 By contrast, references to Korea, according to Rose, still tend to emphasise similarities with Japan (2015, p. 96).

on parenting classes for fathers. A cartoon figure of a puzzled male student asks the apposite question: 'Why has the involvement of men in parenting become a focus of attention?' (p. 48). Teachers might conceivably use this as a cue for classroom discussion.

However, textbooks seldom relate Japan's situation in this regard to any wider context. The Tokyo Shoseki text features a graph comparing the workforce participation of Japanese women with their counterparts in America, Sweden and Germany (p. 48), but this is exceptional. The plight of women in poorer Asian countries is highlighted, with Malala Yousafzai featuring on the cover of the same textbook. To be sure, the plight of Pakistani women and girls is hardly comparable with the situation of their Japanese counterparts. But when the proportion of female students at Tokyo University, the country's premier institution of higher education, is stuck well below 20 per cent (University of Tokyo, 2017), Japan surely has little cause for complacency.

In China, where Mao Zedong famously declared that 'women hold up half the sky', female liberation is officially depicted as a key achievement of Communist rule. However, research by Ross in the early 2000s indicated persistent assumptions regarding 'the gendered division of labour and role patterns', especially in instructional materials for young children (2006, p. 43). In fieldwork in Shaanxi Province, she found that all 'scientists, workers, peasants and soldiers' portrayed in Social Studies texts were men, while '100 per cent of teachers and 75 per cent of service personnel' were women. Only 5 per cent of characters 'named or central to a storyline' were female. Males also predominated in a mathematics textbook reviewed by Ross, appearing 'in privileged settings and occupational roles that... implicitly derogate female mathematical abilities' (p. 43). A more recent analysis of the situation of urban Chinese women (more educated and 'liberated' than their rural sisters) suggests that official discourse on women's social role remains highly state-centred and utilitarian, legitimating a social order still highly skewed against women's interests (Fincher, 2014). Meanwhile, curricular representations of political leadership, reflecting reality outside the school gates,³⁷ implicitly depict public decision-making as an overwhelmingly male preserve.

37 The top echelons of the Communist Party are overwhelmingly male-dominated, while Politburo Standing Committee, China's top decision-making body, remains exclusively male.

Box 3.2 Curricular treatment of sex education

Besides according scant attention to gender, curricula are also notably coy regarding sex and sexual orientation. Sex education in Korea falls under the rubric of Home Economics or elective courses, and does not encompass emotional dimensions, diverse gender norms or the practice of 'safe sex'. It mostly deals with biological matters (e.g. changes to the body during adolescence), the process of pregnancy and birth, and possible side-effects of sexual violence such as sexually-transmitted diseases (Lee et al., 2010). In Korea, as in Japan, broader approaches addressing gender diversity, discrimination on the basis of gender or sexual orientation, and adolescent sexual activity are generally left to NGOs or civic groups. Public conservatism on such matters, reinforced in the Korean case by the influence of evangelical Christianity as well as 'Confucian' traditionalism, has deterred policymakers from adopting a more open approach, though Korea's Ministry of Education has recently been edging towards reform (Kim, 2016).³⁸ In China, for its part, limitations on civil society actors along with official and popular sensitivity regarding sexual licentiousness or perceived 'deviance' render open discussion of such issues even more problematic, despite signs that public attitudes may be shifting (The Economist, 2017c).

The neglect of gender issues in official curricula is symptomatic of visions of national development that see women's education and labour fundamentally as means to national ends. What is weak or lacking, as Ross argues in the case of China, is a conception of female lives as 'ends in themselves' (2006, p. 30). But while this observation applies with special force to the condition of women, to a considerable extent it applies more broadly, too. This is particularly apparent when we consider the phenomenon of educational intensity and competitiveness, along with the practices, structures and beliefs that condition it.

C: Challenges of Competitiveness and Regimentation

Subject curricula shed little light on the intensity of educational competition in East Asian schooling systems, but the ramifications of this for the welfare of youth and the 'sustainability' of the region's societies warrant some discussion here. Indeed, at the level of broader policy, concerns over the pressures on pupils have been a central theme of educational debate since at least the 1990s. Measures have been introduced in all three countries with the declared aim of alleviating the pressure of examination-preparatory study. In both Japan and China from the early 2000s, school timetables were shortened and Saturday classes proscribed. Revisions to subject curricula were supposed to shift the focus of learning away from the drudgery of memorisation, and towards the nurturing of generic 'skills' and creativity. A similar discourse emerged in Korea, manifested most recently in the 'Free Semester' initiative. In the slogan beloved of Japan's Education Ministry, by affording students the space to 'relax' and study on their own initiative, these changes would restore their 'zest for living' (*ikiru chikara*).


38 A public consultation on changes to the relevant guidelines has been mooted.

“
Curricular change has not been matched by significant reform to university entrance examinations, nor by shifts in the recruitment practices of major employers”

However, the chief consequence of such measures has been not a dialling down but a ramping up of educational intensity. Curricular change has not been matched by significant reform to university entrance examinations, nor by shifts in the recruitment practices of major employers. Indeed, the massification of higher education across the region – particularly rapid in China, where promotion rates from high school to college rose from 27.3 per cent in 1990 to 86.5 per cent of a far larger cohort in 2011 (Zhang and Bray, 2016) – has

rendered a college degree the minimum qualification for an increasingly wide range of jobs. This has naturally increased the tendency of employers to sort potential recruits on the basis of the university in which they enrol after high school. That, combined with a heavy emphasis (especially in Japan and Korea) on seniority in promotion decisions, and the growing scarcity of permanent contracts, accentuates the risks in adopting an unorthodox career path.

In this situation, reductions in class time and textbook content, rather than reducing exam-preparatory pressure, have intensified and privatised it. The growth of private tutorial schooling in Japan was already attracting comment in the 1970s, but as reforms constrained public schools from meeting demand for examination-preparatory tuition, the industry received a further boost. So too did a nascent private schooling sector, as the marketised provision of educational services was increasingly promoted as a substitute for public schooling. Ethnographic research in China’s Shandong Province (Kipnis, 2011) and Japan’s Kobe region (Arai, 2016) shows this process at work. In these societies, as in Korea, the competitive pursuit of examination advantage has become a mania, consuming enormous familial resources, energy and time. Indicators cited by Bray and Lykins (2012, pp. 4-5) show the proportion of pupils receiving private supplementary tutoring at junior secondary level:

China (PRC)	65.6 per cent (urban households)	
Japan	65.2 per cent (junior secondary Grade 3)	
Korea	72.5 per cent	

The same source reports that almost 90 per cent of elementary school pupils in Korea were receiving private tutoring, as were 73.8 per cent of their urban Chinese counterparts.

Reliable data on rural Chinese households are harder to come by. However, this does not imply that rural children escape the pressures of the education system.

Indeed, the figures for supplementary education in China need to be considered in tandem with another phenomenon: the increasing use of boarding schools. Since the 1990s, the state has been ‘concentrating’ rural junior secondary (and often upper primary) schools in county towns, creating larger institutions with better facilities and more qualified teachers. As Murphy (2004) argues, such schools are also designed to ‘turn peasants into modern Chinese citizens’, by subjecting village children to the standardised curriculum of urban China, taught in the standardised national language. Timetables typically ensure that lessons or supervised study occupy almost every waking moment of the day. In regions where public boarding facilities are scarce, private boarding schools catering to rural students – including many ‘left behind’ by migrant parents – have become increasingly popular. Here the curriculum tends to be even more narrowly examination-preparatory, pedagogy more rudimentary, and children’s time more strictly regimented, with lessons and study periods timetabled from 6AM to 9PM (or later) (see Vickers and Zeng, 2017, p. 222).

The competitive intensity of Chinese education has been further fuelled by a distinctive structural feature: the ‘key-point school’ system. Since the late 1970s, public resources have been funnelled into selected (invariably urban) schools with the aim of training an elite to lead the national modernisation drive. Although the ‘key-point’ terminology was officially abandoned in the 1980s, the persistence of a hierarchy of prestige within the public schooling sector is universally acknowledged. ‘Key point’ institutions exist at every level of the system from kindergarten upwards, equipped with superior facilities and better-qualified staff than their run-of-the-mill counterparts. Securing entry to such institutions for one’s child is a prime objective for urban parents. While the government has recently mandated the stricter enforcement of school ‘zoning’ rules, persistent inter-school inequalities mean that attempts to block the competitive impulse have so far been largely ineffective (Vickers and Zeng, 2017, Chapters 3.4 and 8).

The post-war Japanese and Korean schooling systems have placed a far greater emphasis on uniformity and equality – at least until recently. There, as in China, examinations for entry to senior high school constitute a principal selective watershed, prompting intense competition. However, ensuring the equitable provision of public schooling, at least during the compulsory years, has been a central priority of public policy. Japan, for example, has taken pains to ensure that per-student funding levels were broadly equal across the country (in rural and urban areas). Teachers are employed not by individual schools but by local school boards, with staff regularly transferred between schools.

However, in both Japan and Korea, official commitment to uniformity and equality has steadily eroded in recent years. In addition to the growth of private schooling, Japan has witnessed official attempts to promote new varieties of publicly-funded high schools (e.g. ‘Super English High Schools’) that explicitly aim to select and nurture ‘elite’ talent. The language used to justify such initiatives – of ‘creativity’, ‘21st-century competencies’ and ‘global human resources’ – is highly

instrumentalist and economic. In Korea, a similar shift has occurred, with the establishment of 'Special High Schools' (SHS) eroding a longstanding official commitment to 'high school equalisation'. Initially touted as offering specialised curricula to students talented in particular fields (science, foreign languages, the arts), SHS have tended to be seen as offering particular advantages in the competition for college entry (Sung, 2016, pp. 154-5).

While Western policymakers fret over the inability of their systems to match Korea and its East Asian neighbours in the PISA surveys of student achievement, influential political, commercial and media actors within the country have sought to 'manufacture' a 'fear of global competition' (Sung, 2016, p. 156) – a fear directed especially at China. In 2004, the *Chosun Daily* lamented that Korean schools were sending 'our children' to the 'cold international battlefield of competition without body armour', where they would be met by China's '40 million university graduates waiting like a reserve army to be deployed in research and development and places of industry' (cited in Sung, 2016, p. 156). This missing 'armour' allegedly consisted of a capacity for creativity and innovation stifled by the country's anachronistic focus on 'equalisation' of high schooling. Such arguments were deployed in order to promote 'diversification' in the interests of nurturing an elite primed for the rigours of international competition. However, related reforms went hand-in-hand with attempts under former President Park to ramp up patriotic education while maintaining stringent national testing regimes.

The virtues of diversity and choice have been invoked to justify not only the introduction of elitist forms of educational provision, but also innovations in assessment designed to reward those possessing unusual 'talent'. One instance is Japan's 'Admissions Office Entrance Examination', rolled out from the early 2000s, whereby universities assess students through a combination of written tests, themed oral presentations and discussion. In Korea, meanwhile, the attractiveness of SHS has been enhanced by privileges granted by top universities to applicants from these schools, boosting demand for private high school preparatory courses. In China, an experiment granting top universities greater autonomy in student recruitment quickly ballooned, with Shanghai's prestigious Fudan University at one point recruiting over 60 per cent of its intake through the 'independent recruitment' (*duli zhaosheng*) route. Following a 2013 corruption scandal involving Beijing's Renmin University, quotas for non-standard admissions were officially capped at 5 per cent of total enrolments (Vickers and Zeng, 2017, p. 188). However, not just at college-entry level, but from kindergarten onwards, the capacity for the wealthy and well-connected to game a supposedly meritocratic system has persisted, in ways summed up in a 2013 report for the *Caixin* magazine:

Those who have power use connections, those who have money go abroad to pursue their education, those with no money study hard for the Maths Olympiads; those with no money, power or energy go to the back of the

queue. The psychology of parents becomes warped, and so does that of their children (cited in Vickers and Zeng, 2017, p. 194).³⁹

The effect of this elitism – pronounced in China, newly re-emergent in Korea and Japan – has been to accentuate education’s role in reproducing and exacerbating inequality. Broadly speaking, this means a continued emphasis on regimentation, discipline and loyalty for the majority (and for their teachers) – reflected, as we have already noted, in the priority accorded to patriotism and moral education in curricula across the region. While public examinations and constant testing and ranking exert intense individuating pressures, schools go to great lengths to promote ethical and ideological conformity. East Asian schooling is often represented as inculcating a strongly ‘collectivist’ ethos, and while the forms that collectivism takes differ quite significantly across the region (as demonstrated, for example, in the classic comparative study of preschool education by Tobin, Karasawa and Hsueh, 2009), this stereotype broadly holds good. However, those whose possession of special ‘talent’, wealth or connections enables them to study in elite institutions such as China’s ‘key-point schools’, or to escape altogether to schools in the West, can experience quite a different learning environment. Both growing educational elitism and increasing socio-economic disparities thus contribute to a widening gulf between a privileged minority ‘licensed to think’ (whether or not they do so) (Russell, 1932/2010, p. 12), and a majority socialised to compete to conform. Meanwhile, one result of hyper-meritocracy, as noted by Kariya (1995), is that elites whose position derives from success in such a system tend to be endowed with an enormous sense of entitlement, and little compunction for those whose presumed lassitude has led to failure (see also Ito, Kubota and Ohtake, 2015, pp. 22-3). This, indeed, is precisely the outcome that Michael Young foresaw in his satire, *The Rise of the Meritocracy* (1961).

“
The effect of this elitism — pronounced in China, newly re-emergent in Korea and Japan — has been to accentuate education’s role in reproducing and exacerbating inequality”

It is easy to see how this combination of an ethos of intense competition with a strong emphasis on conformity might also constitute a recipe for serious social

39 Examinations have been criticised across East Asia for adopting methods of assessment that reward memorisation and formulaic knowledge rather than originality or curiosity. Heavy reliance on multiple choice-type tests is typical, prompting calls for reform. In China, proposed changes to college entrance examinations involve expanding the range of subjects in which applicants can choose to be assessed. However, whether any such changes — if implemented — will reduce examination pressure is open to doubt. And regimes (as well as much of the public) across the region value ‘objectivity’ in testing procedures. Forms of assessment (such as the expository essay) that rely largely on the autonomous professional judgement of the assessor can be seen as susceptible to corrupt manipulation or as favouring privileged groups. But another key factor behind official reluctance to treat examiners — like teachers more generally — as autonomous professionals is an overweening preoccupation with bureaucratic (or political) control.

maladjustment – particularly in the form of bullying. Indeed, Japan in particular has witnessed something of a moral panic over problems of bullying and violence in schools (Arai, 2016, p. 49). According to a recent UNESCO report, 68 per cent of LGBT students in Japan reported experiencing bullying at school – the highest level in Asia (compared to 7 per cent in Mongolia, the lowest reported rate) (UNESCO, 2017a, p. 24). The OECD’s latest PISA study indicates that levels of happiness or contentedness reported by East Asian youth are the lowest amongst all 47 countries surveyed: Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Macau and Hong Kong came right at the bottom of the league on this count – only Turkish students reporting higher levels of dissatisfaction with their lives (OECD, 2015a, p. 71).⁴⁰

But official responses to reports of violence, suicide or other transgressive behaviour amongst youth have tended to locate the causes in psychological and moral deviance, rather than in the socio-economic, political or educational context. The Japanese educationalist Manabu Sato observes of ‘neoliberal discourse’ that ‘it replaces politics and society with emotion and psychology’ (quoted in Arai, 2016, p. 42). Intensification of moral and patriotic education has been justified with reference to the supposedly weak or lax morale of Japanese youth, who are thereby blamed for the economic stagnation of which they themselves are the prime victims. Similarly, in China, stock official responses to widely-publicised instances of youth violence or aberrant conduct have involved calls for a strengthening of ‘moral education’ or ‘thought reform’ (Vickers and Zeng, 2017, p. 62). More broadly, China’s discourse of ‘quality’ (*suzhi*) ascribes primary responsibility for poverty and educational backwardness to underprivileged individuals and families themselves, rather than to the state or the social order; people fail, in other words, because their ‘quality’ is low (Murphy, 2004). In the formulation ‘quality education’ (*suzhi jiaoyu*), the term *suzhi* has meanwhile been associated with calls to promote creativity, autonomous learning and critical thinking, albeit – as noted above – for fundamentally instrumentalist, economic purposes. These are the skills required for success in the knowledge economy, and therefore it is those who manage to acquire them who deserve to be rewarded by a market that the state is represented as largely (if not entirely) incapable of taming.⁴¹ As Arai observes in her analysis of education reform discourse in Japan, ‘the independent global individual [is] not free from competition but exposed to all forms of competition’ (2016, p. 48).

40 The report is ambiguous regarding whether students’ unhappiness derives from their experience of schooling or of ‘life’ in general. But school and studying are central to the experience of life as a teenager in a developed society.

41 Though it is worth noting that, at least in Japan, the commentary on the Course of Study for Middle School Social Studies stipulates that students should be ‘led to consider’ the contribution that national and local governments as well as civic groups can make to resolving problems — including environmental conservation, consumer protection and social security — that the market, left to itself, would be incapable of dealing with (pp. 125, 128).

CONCLUSION

Across East Asia (as elsewhere), invocations of ‘autonomy’, ‘creativity’ and ‘critical thinking’ should therefore not be assumed to signify any fundamental reappraisal of dominant conceptions of knowledge, the socialising function of education, or the authority of the state. State authorities have in general sought to foster such qualities above all for the instrumental purpose of maximising national economic competitiveness, rather than out of conviction of their intrinsic value. This is not to say that educational stakeholders have been united in their instrumentalist proclivities. Japan’s *yutori kyouiku* reforms, for example, initially enjoyed broad support from both skills-focused, economic conservatives and leftist progressives who sought to liberate students from stultifying curricular rigidity and intense credentialism (Arai, 2016; Cave, 2016); different groups supported the reforms for different reasons. Liberal-leaning curriculum developers have also sometimes emphasised economic rationales for reforms they see as desirable for other reasons, precisely in order to appeal to senior officials more preoccupied with the pursuit of growth and the maintenance of control (see Vickers, 2005, on the case of Hong Kong). But in so far as progressive objectives thus need to be smuggled in ‘under cover’, this reflects the dominance of more conservative political agendas.

At the same time as noting the authoritarian flavour of East Asian curricula, it is important to acknowledge the remarkable success of these societies in improving livelihoods, and the contribution of education in this respect. Green et al. (2007), for example, take post-war Japan and the ‘East Asian Tigers’ as their benchmark for the successful deployment of education in pursuit of ‘strategies for successful globalization’. These societies not only achieved extremely rapid rates of economic growth until the 1990s, but did so while increasing the equality with which the benefits of growth were distributed (mainland China and Hong Kong standing as notable exceptions in this regard). Rates of poverty reduction and levels of gender equality across the region were also far better than in many other parts of Asia (especially South Asia). Policies promoting the universality and uniformity of educational provision, especially basic education, played a crucial role in achieving these relatively egalitarian distributive outcomes. And those outcomes, in turn, were crucial in creating the basis for some form of democratic transition in Japan and several of the ‘Tigers’ (China, not coincidentally, again standing as an exception – see Ringen, 2016).

Internationally, the perception of East Asia as an educational success story has been greatly reinforced in recent years by the performance of the region’s

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students in the OECD's PISA tests. But, by the same token, these tests have helped reinforce and institutionalise unsustainable levels of educational competition globally. The cost of this is borne by parents driven to divert family savings into the coffers of cram-school entrepreneurs, and of course by students subjected to the attendant pressures and forced to narrow the focus of their learning.

Perhaps this level of competition could be somewhat justified if it were shown to contribute to further improvements in the prosperity of the societies concerned. However, research has convincingly demonstrated the tendentiousness of widely-shared assumptions of a causal link between national rates of economic growth and heightened performance in standardised international tests (Komatsu and Rappleye, 2017) – or, for that matter, between growth and expanded access to tertiary education (Wolf, 2002). In other words, while the intensity of educational competition reflects what is at stake for individuals and families in the race for credentials, its causal relationship with aggregate rates of economic growth is opaque. Indeed, far from crediting frenzied credentialism with boosting GDP, it is more plausible to see it as hugely wasteful for both individuals and societies, in terms of time, energy and fees spent, and of earnings lost (Wolf, 2002).

At the same time, intense competitiveness has been associated across most of East Asia with highly regimented approaches to the socialisation of the young. Here again some nuance is called for in assessing the record of these societies. High levels of social cohesion have been seen as part of the East Asian formula for rapid economic growth (Green, 2013) – just as low cohesion and a relatively weak consciousness of national identity (and broader mutual regard) in societies such as the Philippines has been seen as hampering their capacity to emulate the 'East Asian Miracle' (Maca and Morris, 2012). But the narratives of national identity that underpin societal cohesion in East Asia carry a potentially catastrophic long-term cost, in so far as they fuel nationalist chauvinism and condemn the peoples of the region forever to relive the conflicts of the past. That cost is also borne by domestic 'minorities' and migrants who fail to conform to dominant conceptions of nationhood.

In post-war East Asia's era of high growth (which came rather later in the case of China), a combination of patriotic education, economism and scientism was invoked to persuade citizens of the necessity for individual sacrifice in the cause of national development. But even while dominant conceptions of development have remained narrowly state-centred, the prospect of improved livelihoods for the young has receded or vanished. We need to reconsider whether the sacrifices demanded of East Asian youth today are either economically necessary or sustainable – psychologically, politically or environmentally. At the same time, the weakness of regional integration and the dangers of renewed conflict compel us to consider how education might contribute to dialling down the antagonisms that divide East Asian societies both internationally (Rose, 2015) and intra-nationally or domestically (Vickers, 2017b). Global citizenship is a fine aspiration, but is meaningless without a grounded sense of shared regional identity.

CHAPTER 4

Southeast Asia

PROLOGUE: ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL DIMENSIONS OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Southeast Asia's diversity and openness offer both opportunities and challenges for implementing SDG Target 4.7. It is home to a myriad of ethnic, religious and linguistic populations, making it difficult to speak of a single Southeast Asian region. As a result of its wide-ranging connections with the rest of the world (Reid, 1988), Southeast Asia has historically absorbed, adapted and hybridised various external influences (Wolters, 1999). This highly varied cultural and historical context to some extent implies a corresponding variety in the interpretation of concepts embedded in SDG 4.7. But here, as in East Asia, essentialist notions of culture have often been invoked by state elites keen to legitimize a selective borrowing of concepts represented as inherently 'Western'. For instance, the state in Thailand has a history, dating back to the 19th century, of adapting borrowed ideas like liberal democracy to align with the imperative of national self-strengthening in the face of Western colonialism (inspired particularly by the example of Japan – see **Chapter 3**). Similarly, the authorities in Viet Nam have translated foreign terms into politically acceptable local equivalents, often changing their original meanings. Viet Nam, like China, supplies a prime example of the hybridisation of communism, which in Asia has tended to develop as a variant of anti-colonial nationalism distinct from its Soviet or Eastern European manifestations. The often acute political sensitivity surrounding the borrowing or adaptation of ostensibly 'foreign' concepts complicates the task of integrating ESD/GCED into school curricula (UNESCO, 2016e).

Partly due to the existence of regional entities such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO), Southeast Asia as a region has often expressed a collective commitment to sustainable development. A tendency to seek legitimation for national policies through alignment with the UN agenda is

reinforced by the fact that Thailand hosts the Asian regional offices of UNESCO and UNICEF, which in turn work closely with SEAMEO. One ongoing initiative relevant to SDG 4.7 is the Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metric (SEA-PLM), developed by SEAMEO and UNICEF. This is a primary education learning metric for SEAMEO countries which covers the key domains of reading, writing, mathematics and global citizenship for Grade 5.⁴²

An important element of the context for understanding the urgent need for reorienting education towards sustainability in this region concerns the highly uneven distribution of the benefits of rapid economic development (UNESCO, 2014c). Calls for a people- rather than state-centric ASEAN reflect the urgency of addressing consequent socio-economic inequality, and an associated rise in social tensions, often involving ethno-religious discrimination (Rigg, 2016; Davies, 2016). These problems exist for both newly industrialising economies as well as those that have attained middle- or high-income status. Of the former, having emerged in 1993 from a traumatic history of genocide and communist rule, Cambodia, a constitutional monarchy with multi-party politics, has developed rapidly with substantial national and international investment. At the same time, the country has suffered from chronic corruption and inequality. Viet Nam initiated its own economic opening up or *doi moi* policy in the 1980s,⁴³ and since joining the WTO in 2007 has seen its economy grow at about 6 per cent per year, with the private sector playing a vital role (McKinsey Global Institute, 2012). Lao PDR, which opened its economy to foreign capital investment around the same time, has also enjoyed rapid rates of growth in recent years, although poverty, youth unemployment and the rural-urban income gap remain substantial problems (World Bank, 2015). The experience of these countries shows that economic growth is a far from an adequate measure of ‘development’ broadly understood (see, for example, Sen, 1999), let alone of ‘sustainable development’.

Among the more established economies, Malaysia, having recorded an average economic growth of 7 per cent over the past 25 years, is likely to become a high-income nation by 2020 (OECD, 2016b). The Philippines is in the medium category of the Human Development Index (HDI) and has enjoyed substantial economic growth, particularly in recent years. However, in 2012, the Philippines had the highest inequality among the middle-income countries of Southeast Asia (World Bank, 2014). Likewise, Indonesia has experienced both substantial economic growth and rising inequality in recent years. Thailand is similarly an upper-middle income country, but is facing a middle-income trap. It loses out on competitiveness to fellow Asian countries that can offer lower costs of production, while lacking the technological capacity to compete with higher-value-added industries in other countries.

42 See <http://www.seaplmm.org/seaplmm/>.

43 The *doi moi* policy is a comprehensive political and economic reform in 1986 towards a ‘socialist oriented market economy’ (Neubart and Roeckel, 2008).

Inequality is also highly gendered across this region. Based on the Gender Inequality Index (GII), Cambodia, Lao PDR and the Philippines have one of the largest gender gaps in Asia (UNDP, 2015; see also **Chapter 2, Figure 2.5**), whilst the Philippines also has one of the widest gender gaps in participation in the labour force in Southeast Asia (PSA, 2016). The growing inequality, despite being a major issue for Southeast Asia, has not been adequately addressed in the region's education systems – as we shall see.

Another important aspect of sustainability in this region relates to vulnerability to natural disasters and other environmental challenges due to intense development, external capital investment and climate change, which disproportionately affect the rural and urban poor (Boomgaard, 2007; Bankoff, 2003; UNESCO, 2014c). Reflecting this context, SEAMEO's education agenda for 2015-2035 sets 'resiliency in the face of emergencies' as one of seven priorities (SEAMEO, 2017). In 2004, the devastating Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami struck coastal parts of Thailand, Malaysia and particularly the Sumatran province of Indonesia, killing tens of thousands. The Philippines is particularly vulnerable to natural hazards such as typhoons, floods and earthquakes, and ranks third among 177 countries on the 2016 World Risk Index on natural disasters (UNU-EHS, 2016; see also **Introduction, Figure 0.1**). It is frequently hit by super-typhoons, most recently in 2013 by Haiyan/Yolanda. Thailand suffered its worst floods in 50 years in 2011-2012, which killed over 800 people and displaced millions (Santi and Allen, 2012). Viet Nam is also prone to typhoons and floods, while Cambodia and Malaysia likewise experience frequent floods and droughts; an estimated 84 per cent of the Cambodian population is living in flood risk areas (CFE-DMHA, 2014). Singapore and large areas in Indonesia and Malaysia also suffer periodically from the problem of haze arising from the large-scale burning of forests in Indonesia, which has experienced catastrophic deforestation. Given the frequency of natural hazards in the Philippines in particular, the state has resolved to mainstream disaster-related education in the school curricula, as indicated in the Republic Act 10121 on disaster risk reduction (DRR) and management. While there are institutional bodies and relevant policies in place that focus on DRR in Southeast Asia, more attention is needed to integrate it fully into education systems, as called for by the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 (UNISDR, 2015).

Whereas ESD and GCED – as defined and promoted by UNESCO – are endorsed by SEAMEO, and there are initiatives and programmes to further these efforts in curricula and teacher education reforms, such initiatives tend to be detached from more controversial issues in politics and diplomacy. For example, across Southeast Asia in recent years, there have been disturbingly illiberal developments with regard to human rights, free speech and civil society activism, with particularly dire implications for ethnic, religious and other minorities (Welsh, 2016, 2017). Although attempts to depoliticise schooling are nothing new (and in many cases date back to colonial times), there is a pressing

need for more sophisticated approaches to curriculum design that encourage classroom engagement with diverse perspectives on current affairs, supported by resources – such as electronic and print media – judiciously sourced by teachers themselves.

Geography, history and current economic, environmental, social and political issues weigh heavily on the meaningful implementation of ESD/GCED in Southeast Asia. Education does not, and cannot, operate in isolation from the broader political and social context. When the broader context is either explicitly or implicitly antipathetic to concepts and values embedded in SDG Target 4.7, the superficial insertion of ESD/GCED into policy, curricula, teacher education and student assessment may not only prove meaningless, but actually distract from or undermine progress towards more fundamental reform. Governments must ensure that education becomes an enabler, rather than an obstacle, to achieving transformation towards peace and sustainable development – while recognising that this is a complex and challenging task that requires far more than the insertion of a few choice phrases into official policy documents.

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PEACE, SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP IN EDUCATION POLICY AND CURRICULA

To a large extent, the state of ESD/GCED in Southeast Asia mirrors the regional and global situation. While at national level there is general awareness of, and in some cases commitment to, most aspects of ESD/GCED, it is constrained by a number of challenges noted in various UNESCO reports, including the lack of understanding, capacity and collaboration on the part of educational stakeholders to implement it (see, for example, UNESCO, 2014c). In many societies, problems with ensuring implementation of official policy are by no means restricted to ESD/GCED. In Indonesia, for example, governmental programs are less successfully implemented in remote parts of the country.⁴⁴ In Viet Nam, the general quality of teaching has been adjudged poor, often outdated, overly abstract, and widely variable across different areas of the country (Prime Minister of the National Assembly of Viet Nam, 2012). And although environmental education projects have been in progress since 1986⁴⁵ in Viet Nam, there has been little follow-through in terms of incorporating relevant messages into school textbooks. This is partly due to the lack of collaboration between different state bodies:

44 The government is trying to address this issue through the *Nawa Cita* (Nine Dreams) programme or the 2015-2019 National Mid Term Development Plan, which includes ‘building Indonesia from the remote, outer areas by strengthening the regions and rural villages in the framework of unity of nation’ as one of its nine major goals (Indonesia, 2014).

45 See <https://aeed.asean.org/environmental-education-in-the-schools-of-viet-nam-project-vie98018/>.

environmental education comes under the purview of the Department of Science, Technology and Environment, while textbooks are the responsibility of separate departments of primary and secondary education.

Problems with the overall systemic capacity of some education systems in the region certainly constitute one species of challenges to the integration of ESD/GCED into schooling. But while such problems are typically seen as remediable through awareness raising and enhanced cross-sector collaboration, this chapter focuses on the range of more fundamental challenges outlined earlier in the present report. Firstly, an intense focus on the pursuit of economic development undermines the intrinsic value of education as an experience that enhances each individual's capabilities and freedom. Secondly, state efforts to foster singular and homogenous national identities present another set of challenges, particularly for minority groups and for the fostering of global citizenship. Finally, the intensity of educational competition in Southeast Asian schooling systems has repercussions for student well-being and the promotion of equity in and through education.

A: Challenges of Instrumentalism and Ethics

The state of education for peace, sustainable development and global citizenship in Southeast Asia is mixed, partly because of the instrumentalist paradigm that dominates thinking about education policy across most of the region. On the one hand, Southeast Asian policymakers and educators are aware of the ESD/GCED concepts and formally acknowledge their importance. Related terms and ideas feature – more or less prominently – in policy documents, curriculum frameworks and subject curricula in most countries. On the other hand, while ESD/GCED competencies are frequently mentioned in the official documents, they tend to be narrowly interpreted so as to avoid disturbing or problematising the continuing pursuit of unsustainable and exploitative economic strategies.

State Instrumentalism Manifested in Policy Documents

The overriding prioritisation of economic growth pervades education plans and strategies across Southeast Asia. Human resource development is a major stated goal in the educational documents of all countries in the region except for Thailand. By comparison, other aspects of the economic dimension of sustainable development, particularly green economy and limits to growth, generally receive little emphasis across the region (see **Appendix II-1**). Under the category 'transversal skills', the subcategories most often cited are those of clearest economic relevance, such as problem solving skills and collaboration; by contrast, the management and resolution of conflict are infrequently emphasised, with the partial exception of Cambodian and Malaysian documents (see **Box 4.1** and **Appendix II-13.i**). Given the prevalence of conflict in the Philippines, involving rebels and armed extremist groups in Mindanao (OPAPP and STRIDES, 2009), the total absence in Filipino documents of references to

conflict resolution, reconciliation and mediation seems peculiar (though it is possible that such missing concepts are discussed in the curricula of other grade levels not analysed in this study).

Within Southeast Asia perhaps exists the supreme exemplar globally of state deployment of education for explicitly instrumentalist purposes: Singapore. Although it did not prove possible to code Singapore's current policy and curricular documents for this study, the relationship between education and the Singaporean 'developmental state' is widely acknowledged and debated (Gopinathan, 2015; Green et al., 2007; Lim, 2016). Singapore's extraordinary growth since the 1960s has been attributed to its success in producing 'human capital', and in 'scaling up' its quantity and quality to match the needs of an increasingly sophisticated economy. But this has been accompanied by levels of social inequality significantly higher than in the developed economies of Northeast Asia (Japan, the Republic of Korea and Taiwan) – due in part to the highly stratified and elitist nature of the schooling system. And despite hopes expressed in the mid-1990s for a more 'open, participative and consensual' model of governance in the post-Lee Kuan Yew era (Gopinathan, 2015, p. 19), this has yet to materialise. The adoption of a 'Thinking Schools, Learning Nation' agenda in the late 1990s was paralleled by the espousal of an ideology of 'Total National Defence'. 'Skills' of creativity or analysis were thus envisaged not as giving rein to free-wheeling critical debate, but as competencies to be exercised within state-defined parameters, for the purposes of maintaining and reinforcing national strength (Han, 2009). As by far the most prosperous society in the region, Singapore has been an influential exemplar of a highly statist, instrumentalist and economic model of educational development.

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Developmental statism on the Singaporean model can be seen as a more successful, market-oriented variant of the similarly centralised, human capital-focused and instrumentalist vision classically associated with Communism. In the context of its *doi moi* programme of economic liberalisation (begun in 1986), the education system of Communist Viet Nam has maintained a strong focus on *chuyen* (expertise). The government substantially supports education, allocating to it a fifth of the national budget in 2010. While the Education Law underlines the importance of a holistic education, the Education Strategic Development Plan (ESDP) 2011-2020 looks to 'achieve rapid and sustainable economic development associated with transforming the growth model and restructuring the economy towards higher quality, effectiveness and competitiveness' (Prime Minister of the National Assembly of Viet Nam, 2012).

In Cambodia, given its difficult recent history, the government is also understandably concerned to improve the quality of education in order to facilitate national and human resource development. Its ESP for 2014-2018 envisages the building of a stable, peaceful and prosperous country, but it also highlights how 'human resource development as the building of knowledge, competence, entrepreneurship, skills, creativity and innovation in all sectors but especially science and technology and the ability to manage research and development is essential' (p. 12). Similarly, in Lao PDR, the Education Sector Development Plan (ESDP) 2016-2020 aims to transform the country into an upper middle-income country. Human resource development receives strong support from the state, so that the country's workforce 'meets regional and international standards' and thereby becomes 'a strong production power and thus capable to contribute more in socio-economic development' (p. 6). The ESDP also puts forward the aim of producing students who are 'good citizens, being educated, knowledgeable, employed, capable, innovative, creative, and enthusiastic about the development of the country' (p. 2). Further, the Plan's reference to interdependence with other countries does not stress building peace or achieving sustainable development, but learning from them how to become more internationally competitive (p. 8).

Box 4.1 Emphasis on peace in Cambodian policy and curricular documents

In recognition of Cambodia's history of conflict, there is a positive emphasis on the culture of peace and non-violence. The overarching vision of the Royal Government is to 'build a Cambodian society which is peaceful, with political stability, security and social order' (Education Strategic Planning (ESP) 2014-2018, 2013, p. 11). A critical view of the Pol Pot regime is expressed in various documents such as the Curriculum Framework for General Education and Technical Education; Education Strategic Planning; and Detailed Course Syllabus and Learning Standard for Social Studies and Moral-Civics Education (Grade 8). The Moral-Civics Education textbooks emphasise gender and human rights, living with the community, friendship with others, and culture of peace and non-violence.

However, this can also be seen as one instance of how the coding data alone can give a misleading impression. Lamenting the destructive toll of conflict and advocating peace and harmony in general terms is not difficult. Identifying and confronting the causes of conflict, dealing with its traumatic legacy, and effecting meaningful reconciliation are far more challenging. Here, simply a rhetoric of 'peace' and assertion of collective national victimhood can serve to distract from the murky politics of some current domestic elites (as is the case in the East Asian context of 'competitive victimhood' — see Chapter 3). Looking at the Cambodian school curriculum in its broader social and political context, the extent to which it contributes to truly healing the wounds of the Pol Pot era is questionable.

Elements of the instrumentalist theory, if not always the practice, of developmental statism are also strongly evident in the educational plans of countries across the region that do not have a heritage of Leninism (or Singaporean-style one-party rule). In Indonesia, the administration of President Joko Widodo, who assumed office in 2014 as the country's first leader drawn from outside the traditional political-military elite, developed the *Nawa Cita* (Nine Dreams) programme or the 2015-2019 National Medium Term Development Plan

(the third RPJMN), which explicitly espouses economic and political objectives. This encompasses goals aligned with ESD/GCED, such as the eighth ‘dream’ of ‘unity in diversity; conversely, however, the sixth dream aims to ‘improve people’s productivity and competitiveness in the international market so that the nation of Indonesia can move forward and rise along with other Asian nations’⁴⁶ (Indonesia, 2014). The National Long-Term Development Plan for 2005-2025⁴⁷ aims to nurture competitive citizens who possess creative and critical thinking skills, primarily for their economic utility rather than their potential for transforming civic and political life (Indonesia, 2015a). That document also acknowledges the need to support social diversity, as does the 2015-2019 Strategic Plan (Indonesia, 2015b), which further advocates holistic intellectual, moral, social, and physical education. The second RPJMN (2010-2014) had also underlined both the importance of sustainable economic growth through ‘effective management of natural resources’ (p. 18), as well as the need for ‘enhancing the quality of Indonesia’s human resources’ (p. 19).⁴⁸ While medium- and long-term development plans seem to acknowledge tensions involved in the pursuit of sustainable development and uphold the values associated with SDG 4.7, the coding data show that education policy and curricular documents adhere to a conventional model of economic development with its focus on human resource development (**Appendix II-1**). The underlying issue may be the assumption that unlimited economic growth can be pursued along with the goal of environmental conservation or sustainable use of natural resources.



Likewise, Malaysia’s Education Blueprint for 2013-2025 seeks to develop human capital and the national economy. While it endorses varied principles of access, equity, unity, quality and efficiency, the Blueprint’s largely pragmatic approach is influenced by ‘1Malaysia’, which is an ongoing programme designed by Malaysian Prime Minister in 2010.⁴⁹ The 1Malaysia agenda also invokes important principles aligned with ESD/GCED such as people-centricity, unity in diversity and social justice. However, its overriding aim is for the country to attain developed nation status – and the increasing Islamicisation of the Malaysian state, with troubling implications for minorities, casts doubt on the level of commitment to goals of social inclusivity (Ting, 2015).

There are numerous state directives in the Philippines that support aspects of ESD/GCED, such as human rights, social justice, peace, gender equality, and international solidarity (see **Box 4.2** in the next section). Concepts related to

46 Original in Indonesian: ‘Meningkatkan produktivitas rakyat dan daya saing di pasar Internasional sehingga bangsa Indonesia bisa maju dan bangkit bersama bangsa-bangsa Asia lainnya’.

47 Developed in accordance with Article 4 of Law No. 25/2004 on National Development Planning.

48 See http://thereddDesk.org/sites/default/files/rpjmn-2010-2014-english-versi_on_20100521111052__2608__0.pdf.

49 See <http://www.1malaysia.com.my/>.

human rights and attitudes, values and dispositions aligned with ESD/GCED such as justice, tolerance and empathy are frequently referenced in curricular documents analysed for this study (see **Appendix II-12**). However, as is often the case throughout the region, the education system in the Philippines is burdened by a plethora of diverse, sometimes contradictory aims. Under Article XIII, Sec. 17 and 18 of the 1987 Constitution, the Commission on Human Rights was created that, besides endorsing human rights education, fosters patriotism, nationalism and appreciation of national heroes, while also encouraging critical and creative thinking, broadening scientific and technological knowledge, and promoting vocational efficiency (Article XIV, Sec. 3, No. 2, Philippines, 1987). The education system places a strong emphasis on shaping Filipinos into skilled, competitive employees and entrepreneurs. The coding data show that the K to 12 curricula, based on the 2011 Basic Education Program, heavily emphasises the fostering of cognitive skills (critical and systemic thinking), problem solving and ‘life skills’ (see **Appendix II-11**; **Appendix II-13**), in pursuit of the objective of cultivating ‘holistically developed Filipinos with 21st century skills’. But, once again, tensions between this conventional (and conventionally instrumentalist) emphasis on the role of schooling in producing human capital and the promotion of economic or environmental sustainability go unacknowledged.

In Thailand, the role of education in meeting the economic needs of the state is clearly manifested in both the 1999 National Education Act (NEA) and the 2008 Basic Education Core Curriculum, which aim to produce the ideal Thai worker of the future. The Curriculum emphasises five development-related competencies, namely, communication, critical thinking, problem solving, technological application, and life skills (Basic Education Core Curriculum, 2008, p. 5). This list of skills, and the language in which they are formulated, closely echoes Singapore’s agenda for nurturing ‘21st Century Competencies’, where critical and inventive thinking, communication, collaboration and information skills are portrayed as necessary for survival in the ‘globalised world we live in’.⁵⁰

A strongly statist and instrumentalist orientation is also manifested in curricular references to the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP), adopted in Thailand following the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis. This is despite the fact that the aims of the SEP itself – highlighting principles of moderation, self-immunity and risk management (Prasopchoke, 2010) – would seem to be closely aligned with SDG Target 4.7. Creating a knowledge-based economy features among its numerous goals, which also include building a just society, promoting lifelong learning, balancing food and energy security, strengthening economic and security cooperation across the region, and fostering environmental sustainability. In a manner similar to Bhutan’s efforts to promote Gross National Happiness (GNH) internationally, Thailand puts emphasis on SEP in official documents and tries to position itself as a leader in taking the transformative steps needed to shift the world onto a more sustainable and resilient path. However, while

50 See <https://www.moe.gov.sg/education/education-system/21st-century-competencies>.

official documents devote some space to discussing issues of environmental sustainability and natural resource management, there is a lack of any holistic or coherent critique of unsustainable development in theory or practice. SEP fails to define sustainable consumption, address inequalities in the distribution of wealth and power, or promote a vision of interconnectedness beyond the homogenising definition of Thainess and national identity on which it is premised (see the next section of this chapter on challenges of nationalism).

State Instrumentalism and Student Empowerment

In Southeast Asia, as in other Asian sub-regions, policy discourse suggests widespread consensus concerning a need to shift from teacher-centred pedagogy and rote learning to student-centred and inquiry-based learning. This is salient across the countries surveyed, from Cambodia, which has Least Developed Country (LDC) status, to Singapore, at the other end of the ‘developmental’ spectrum. Cambodian documents discuss the importance of participatory learning (see,

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In Southeast Asia, as in other Asian sub-regions, policy discourse suggests widespread consensus concerning a need to shift from teacher-centred pedagogy and rote learning to student-centred and inquiry-based learning”

for example, the ESP), while curricula in Viet Nam ostensibly promote student-centred learning, calling for pedagogical approaches that enhance students’ learning and creativity, allowing them to learn at their own pace (e.g. Moral Education, p. 168; History and Geography, p. 221; Biology, p. 301). Singapore, whose ‘Thinking Schools, Learning Nation’ initiative was noted above, now encourages students to ‘learn more actively and independently’, while a review of assessment methods aims to ensure a reduction of ‘reliance on rote learning’.⁵¹ Official documents in the Philippines call for student-centred and transformative learning,

so that students may understand and act on social, political and environmental issues.⁵² In Indonesia, official espousal of the language of multiculturalism in theory creates space for bringing discussions of diversity into the classroom, especially given simultaneous calls to replace rote learning with the fostering of analytical skills and character development. In short, a superficial perusal of state documents might lead the observer to adopt a strikingly optimistic view regarding education’s contribution to fostering tolerant, active and critically engaged citizens across the region.

However, other evidence suggests that moves away from the traditional pedagogical focus on formal lectures, recitation and memorisation – or, more to the point, from the authoritarian ethos that underpins such methods –

51 See <https://www.moe.gov.sg/education/education-system/nurturing-students>.

52 See Republic Act No. 10533 or An Act Enhancing the Philippine Basic Education System by Strengthening its Curriculum and Increasing the Number of Years for Basic Education (Implementing Rules and Regulations), Sec. 5(e) (2013).

have generally been partial and hesitant. The mainstay of formal instruction remains the teacher, regarded as a fount of authoritative knowledge within the classroom, even while typically treated as a lowly minion outside it. For example, research suggests that teaching in Lao PDR continues to be largely based on rote learning rather than understanding or application in life (Chounlamany, 2014). In Cambodia, student-centred learning is sometimes limited to having students interview people from their community (e.g. Khmer Course Syllabus for Grade 8, p. 55), which may enhance local knowledge without implying any significant shift from teacher-centredness. Similarly, although the 1999 NEA in Thailand envisages students participating in their own learning, working at their own pace and operating in teams, pedagogy remains largely teacher-centred. The curriculum for Grade 4 Thai is taught through rote memorisation of prayers (p. 9), although documents suggest a slightly more active role for students at Grade 8 level. Students are not encouraged to question teachers' statements and assertions, which would typically be interpreted as a sign of disrespect. One study of English education in Thailand concludes that 'the avoidance of critical evaluation, the absence of academic rigor, student dependence on teachers, and teacher dependence on hierarchy all contribute to the silence that impedes change to a system that needs reform' (Nicholls and Apiwattanakorn, 2015, p. 11).

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In many countries in Southeast Asia, country-level background report authors interpreted the notion of 'transformative education' in a way aligned with state instrumentalism, rather than as implying any fundamental reorientation of the goals of education. Tellingly, the defining goal of Malaysia's Government Transformation Programme is to transform the country into a high-income nation. In the Philippines, meanwhile, the depoliticisation suggested by the coding data is reflected in the way curricula and textbooks celebrate migrant labourers as 'national heroes' – even though dependence on the remittances of overseas labourers is symptomatic of domestic economic dysfunction and the political dominance of neo-feudal vested interests (Maca and Morris, 2015). This is one instance of how official curricula remain silent on the issue of social activism and refrain from promoting inquiry into the structural causes of inequality and poverty (see **Appendix II-13.iii**). Despite extensive reference to critical and creative thinking skills in curricula across Southeast Asia (see **Appendix II-11**), the universal prioritisation of economic competitiveness suggests that conceptions of education's role are not 'transformative' in the sense meant by the UN (2015).

ESD/GCED in Subject Curricula

Four trends emerge with regard to integration of ESD/GCED themes and competencies into subject curricula across Southeast Asia, with implications for the challenge of instrumentalism. First, many concepts that do not directly

contribute to economic growth are absent in subject curricula, even if they are mentioned in strategic documents. These include concepts pertaining to human rights, social activism and critical debate of current issues. In Cambodia, for example, concepts associated with ESD/GCED are flagged in the ESP, and in policy statements and curriculum frameworks (documents likely to reach the notice of foreign aid donors), but not in subject content. In Lao PDR, concepts such as economic sustainability, interconnectedness and good health and well-being similarly feature as desired objectives or background rationale in official documents, but largely fail to permeate through to the level of substantive curricular content. Likewise, in Malaysia concepts such as gender equality, culture of peace and non-violence, global systems, structures and processes and global issues feature in the general curriculum framework, but not in curricula for actual school subjects. In the Philippines, some concepts mentioned in curricular vision statements – including the commitment to upholding human rights which is so pronounced in the national Constitution⁵³ – are infrequently found in subject curricula.

Second, concepts related to the environmental dimension of sustainable development are selectively included in subject curricula in a way that does not encourage critical engagement with the need for a transition to sustainability. Across Southeast Asia, certain aspects of environmental sustainability such as conservation receive greater emphasis in the Science subjects, but in most countries the need to promote renewable sources of energy (except in Indonesia) or address climate change (except in Lao PDR and Thailand) are weakly covered or not covered at all in policy and curricular documents (see **Appendix II-2**) (in these respects, Singapore – which has recently sought to position itself as a model of environmental sustainability – would also claim exceptional status).⁵⁴ The Laotian Science curriculum does not delve deeply into environmental issues, but highlights the successful generation of hydropower in the country (ໂລກອ້ມໂຕ World Around Us, Grade 4 textbook), reflecting the emphasis placed by Communist states elsewhere on the ‘taming’ of nature (on the case of China, see **Chapter 3**). Discussion of environmental sustainability in Thailand’s Science curriculum is confined to highlighting the importance of natural resources and prudent management of their use at local, national and global levels (p. 8 of the Grade 4 curriculum, p. 10 of the Grade 8 curriculum). Similarly, the Science subjects in Viet Nam, particularly Biology, highlight conservation, but are silent on issues such as climate change and renewable energy. In the Philippines, the

53 As a post-martial law document, the 1987 Constitution was drafted primarily as a rejection of martial law and as an affirmation of peace based on human rights, freedom, social justice and equity, and democracy, and this unequivocal avowal is palpable in many sections and provisions of the law. Specifically, the right of all citizens to quality education, including free education at the primary and secondary levels, was clearly articulated in this law. The constitution is also clear about the responsibility of educational institutions to ‘inculcate’ respect for human rights and that of the state to guarantee full respect for human rights.

54 Though scholars have highlighted the contradictions inherent in Singapore’s attempts to reconcile developmental statism, economic and demographic expansion and environmental sustainability (see Barnard, 2014).

environmental dimension of sustainable development appears infrequently in subject curricula; in so far as it is addressed Science, Social Studies and Values Education, the focus is on conservation and waste management.

Thirdly, it is notable that the most frequently coded ESD/GCED competencies, in core subjects such as mathematics, tend to be interpreted in a profoundly instrumentalist manner. In Cambodia and Lao PDR, concepts that frequently appear in the Mathematics curriculum are problem solving, life skills and collaboration – but in a context completely unrelated to any critique of social, political or economic systems or practices. Malaysia’s Mathematics curriculum stresses the importance of promoting critical thinking – but acknowledgement of its importance is superficial at best in the social studies curriculum. Here as elsewhere across the region, ‘critical thinking’ may be recognised as a desirable

“**‘Critical thinking’ may be recognised as a desirable curricular objective, but as an economically useful generic skill, rather than as a quality intrinsic to the full realisation of individual humanity and healthy communal life**”

curricular objective, but as an economically useful generic skill, rather than as a quality intrinsic to the full realisation of individual humanity and healthy communal life. It is doubtful whether it is generally understood, let alone taught, as ‘the ability to question norms, practices and opinions; to reflect on own one’s values, perceptions and actions; and to take a position in the sustainability discourse’ as defined by UNESCO (2017b).

Fourth, issues that have a direct impact on the survival and well-being of the population receive less emphasis than topics that are perceived as important for economic growth. Treatment of DRR in curricula across Southeast Asia is uneven and generally weak (see **Appendix II-12**). Only the educational documents of the Philippines and Malaysia feature any substantial coverage of the issue, as expressed narrowly in the subcategory of resilience (under attitudes, values and dispositions) – but the relationship between the risk of weather-related disasters and manmade climate change is not highlighted.

It is apparent that the systematic integration of ESD/GCED into curricula across Southeast Asia is compromised by the overwhelming official prioritisation of human resource development. The tendency to flag up ESD/GCED concepts in broader curricular statements, but not in subject curricula or guidelines, reflects policy makers’ desire to signal – in part to international agencies and aid donors – that they embrace the international agenda on ESD/GCED. Nevertheless, the coding data suggest that actual official priorities (as reflected in instructions to teachers) centre

“**A transformation of pedagogical approaches is also necessary – such that students are encouraged to see themselves as actively engaged national and global citizens, rather than passive cogs in the machinery of economic expansion**”

around the fostering of human capital. To ensure that ESD/GCED concepts are comprehensively taught in schools, it is necessary to include hitherto neglected concepts such as human rights, while embracing the broader meaning and intrinsic value of cognitive skills (such as critical thinking or creativity) and environmental sustainability. This also implies a transformation of pedagogical approaches, such that students are encouraged to see themselves as actively engaged national and global citizens, rather than passive cogs in the machinery of economic expansion.

B: Challenges of Nationalism and Identities

Emphasis on Nationalism and National Identity

Across most of Southeast Asia, official efforts to foster national consciousness typically involve reinforcing the supremacy of the majority ethnic or religious group. This has important ramifications not only because Southeast Asia is socially diverse, but also because it faces critical ethnic and religious tensions and disputes (UNESCO, 2014c). Many disadvantaged groups, including ethnic and religious minorities and women, struggle to secure recognition for their distinctive identities. Although the coding data suggest some acknowledgement of the importance of justice and respect for social diversity, other major aspects of the ESD/GCED values are understated, namely, anti-discrimination; humanity as a privileged referent of identity; democratic participation; and embedded identities (see **Appendices II-12c, 12h, 12j, 12k**).

The coding data show that crucial ESD/GCED concepts absent from or side-lined in education policy and curricular documents include: civil liberties and freedom (**Appendix II-4**); gender equality (**Appendix II-5**); culture of peace and non-violence (**Appendix II-6**); and concepts pertaining to global citizenship (**Appendices II-7-10**). There is also scant coverage of topics related to global citizenship, such as the role of transnational corporations; the rule of international law; global poverty; and other global issues such as genocide, terrorism, war, and refugees (**Appendix II-9**). Neither the various aspects of gender equality, nor education in issues of sexuality or reproductive health, receive any significant treatment (**Appendix II-14**). A similar regional trend is evident with respect to concepts such as non-violence, conflict resolution and peace building, which are completely missing in the documents analysed. While references to ‘participation, active citizenship, civic engagement, and volunteering’ are highly prevalent under the category ‘responsible lifestyles’ (**Appendix II-13.ii**), there is almost no reference to ‘engagement in debates on socio-political issues; direct action on issues of global reach; and participation in civic protest’ under the category ‘activism’ (see **Appendix II-13.iii**).

In many countries, accommodation of minorities is complicated by the fact that nationalism is equated with the values and identity of a majority ethnic and/or religious group. For example, serious communal conflict has persisted

in Myanmar since 2012, particularly with Buddhist extremist groups targeting Muslim Rohingya and other minority groups (Cheesman, 2017). In Cambodia, not only the education system but also the entire nation is governed by the principle of ‘ជាតិ សាសនា ព្រះមហាក្សត្រ’ (Nation, Religion, King). Various educational documents in the country promote the majority Khmer and Buddhist identity; students are urged to love the Khmer language and literature, even if they are not ethnic Khmer or Buddhist (see, for example, the Curriculum Framework for General Education and Technical Education, 2015).

“
In many countries, accommodation of minorities is complicated by the fact that nationalism is equated with the values and identity of a majority ethnic and/or religious group”

Thailand’s education system also aims to instil a ‘love of nation, religion and king’ (Basic Education Core Curriculum, 2008, p. 7). This concept leads the list of 12 officially sanctioned Thai Values, which variously underline the importance of Thai traditions and morality, as well as support for the monarchy, SEP and public interest (Thailand, 2016). Amongst other things, ‘Thai-ness’ is equated with faith in Theravada Buddhism. Ninety-four per cent of the population are categorised as Buddhist, but, as in the Philippines, there is a Muslim minority in the southern provinces where a long-running insurgency is being waged.⁵⁵ Buddhist morality permeates Thai society, with the curriculum for values education explicitly tasked with imparting a consciousness of *dharma*. The 2017 Strategic Plan aims to instil (*plūk fang*, to ‘plant and bury’) in learners a love and pride in ‘Thai-ness’ encompassing the desired characteristics of the ideal citizen stated in the Core Curriculum. But the curricular emphasis on an essentially mono-cultural nationalism threatens to exacerbate tensions between the Thai Buddhist majority and minority groups such as the Chinese, Lao, Khmer, Malay, Mon and Hmong.

In Malaysia, while there is no overt ethnic or religious conflict, the Malay majority is constitutionally granted *bumiputra* (‘sons of the soil’) status and benefits from affirmative action policies. Ethnic minorities are depicted in officially-approved textbooks as interlopers, and doubt is implicitly cast on their claim to full Malaysian-ness (Ting, 2015; Morris, Shimazu and Vickers, 2013). The primacy of the nation is based on the ideology of *Rukunegara* (‘National Principles’), while the Vision 2020 agenda envisages a united ‘*Bangsa Malaysia*’ (Malaysian nation) (Mohamad, 1991, p. 1) – with all students, regardless of ethnicity, urged to identify as Malaysians and love the nation. However, the *bumiputra* policy, combined with increasing official espousal of Islamism as a component of nationalism (Ting, 2015), has serious implications for the accommodation of ethnic and religious diversity in Malaysia.

55 United Nations. *Thailand (Population)*. <http://www.un.or.th/services/population/> (Accessed 25 October 2016).

Indonesia is a vast archipelagic country with a large and diverse population, comprising numerous ethnic, religious and linguistic groups. The state promotes a unifying national ideology that attempts to accommodate this social diversity, comprising the ideals of *Pancasila* (Five Principles, one of which is The Unity of Indonesia) and *Bhineka Tunggal Ika* (Unity in Diversity). However, Indonesia has in the past experienced ethno-religious conflicts, involving minority and secessionist groups, which have only recently been resolved.⁵⁶ The Education Law No. 20 promotes nationalism and the national identity, as well as peace, democracy, gender equality, non-corruption, and non-discrimination. Indonesian educational documents mention concepts such as critical thinking and interconnectedness, but these are framed in terms of state-determined and largely economic pursuits. For example, the aim of the revised curriculum as stated in the Law is to ‘prepare Indonesian citizens to have the ability to live as individuals and citizens who are faithful to God Almighty, productive, creative, innovative, and affective and able to contribute to the society, nation, state, and world civilization’⁵⁷ (p. 7). The concept of learning to live together, which converges with *Pancasila* and is potentially applicable to dealing with minority issues, does not feature among the officially-mandated goals of schooling (Hauschild, 2013).

Viet Nam is also characterised by considerable ethno-linguistic and religious diversity. Ethnically, the largest group is the Viet (Kinh) people, followed by the Tay, Thai, Muong, Khmer (ethnic Cambodian), Hoa (ethnic Chinese), Hmong, Nung, and other minorities. While more than half the population are Buddhists, Catholicism is growing in popularity, followed by the Cao Dai and Hoa Hao faiths (United States, 2015). Religious groups are registered with and regulated by the government. Reflecting the enduring influence of Confucian ideas, the curriculum features a strong focus on *hong* (ethics) as well as technical expertise; classrooms often display the classical slogan, *tien hoc le, hau hoc van* (‘First Study Rites, then Study Literature’) (Marr, 1997, pp. 329-331). Still influential in the education system are the five teachings of ‘Uncle Ho’ (Ho Chi Minh, the recognised founding father of independent Viet Nam), which exhort students to love the country and to study well (Hoan, 2006). The secondary curriculum framework urges students ‘to love the country, to be proud of and protecting the valuable traditions of the nation’⁵⁸ (p. 765). Vietnamese culture is both diverse and characterised by transnational legacies linking it strongly to China as well as to neighbouring Indochinese cultures (not to mention more recent French,

56 The recent controversy surrounding the former governor of Jakarta, a Chinese and Christian, for allegedly making blasphemous against Islam, shows the continuing frailty of social harmony in Indonesia (see <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/09/world/asia/indonesia-governor-ahok-basuki-tjahaja-purnama-blasphemy-islam.html>).

57 Original in Indonesian: ‘*Kurikulum 2013 bertujuan untuk mempersiapkan manusia Indonesia agar memiliki kemampuan hidup sebagai pribadi dan warga negara yang beriman, produktif, kreatif, inovatif, dan afektif serta mampu berkontribusi pada kehidupan bermasyarakat, berbangsa, bernegara, dan peradaban dunia*’.

58 Original in Vietnamese: ‘*Yêu đất nước, quê hương Việt Nam. Tự hào và có ý thức giữ gìn phát huy các truyền thống tốt đẹp của dân tộc*’.

American and Soviet influences). However, memories of colonialism and of conflict associated with the independence struggle are reflected and reinforced in the school curriculum, which promotes an ethno-culturally essentialist, state-centred brand of nationalism that seeks to strongly differentiate Viet Nam from its neighbours – especially China (Salomon and Ket, 2009).

The ESDP in Lao PDR similarly reflects an essentialist vision of nationhood, defining ‘an ideal citizen of Lao PDR’ with reference to an exhaustive list of desirable qualities, as

a person who has knowledge and skills, moral and right values, loves the country, has faithfulness, physical and mental health, maintains solidarity in the country, loves lifelong learning, loves their own customs and traditions, loves progress and science, consistently strives to meet the demands of sustainable economic growth, and is ready both to cooperate and compete with neighbouring countries. (p. 25)

The country is home to various minority groups, who are classified under four major categories, namely, Lao-Tai, Mon-Khmer, Hmong-Mien, and Chinese-Tibetan, but the majority are Lao Buddhists. Although the Constitution declares that ‘Lao citizens have the right and freedom to believe or not to believe in religions’, the practice of other religions is often difficult (International Federation for Human Rights, 2012).

The education system in the Philippines also officially espouses the aim of promoting a coherent and unifying sense of national identity, encompassing but not erasing the country’s ethnic and religious pluralism, including its significant Muslim minority. Since the late 1960s, there has been a long-running Islamic insurgency in the province of Mindanao. There have been numerous directives relating to that conflict as well as the more general need to acknowledge minority identities (see **Box 4.2**). The K to 12 curricula provides for students to learn through their mother tongue, but the concept of learning to live together continues to revolve around the learner’s identity as a member of the Filipino nation. While state directives expressly support ethnic and religious diversity and inter-ethnic harmony, it is unclear if contentious issues of conflict and difference are critically addressed in schools. The extent to which schooling across the country helps to deepen students’ understanding of the long-running conflict in Mindanao is questionable.

Nevertheless, if official policy statements give the impression that promotion of national identity is an overriding imperative, closer inspection of curricula and textbooks suggests a rather different conclusion. As noted above, Filipino students are encouraged to admire and emulate migrants who leave their homeland to work overseas. The capacity of Filipinos to adapt to life in other cultural and social settings is celebrated: their unique transnationalism becomes a source of national pride. To the extent that this implies a relative absence of

chauvinism, it may be seen as very much in keeping with UNESCO's notion of 'global citizenship'. But the Philippines has also been held up as an object lesson of the adverse social and political consequences of failure to cultivate a coherent and unifying sense of national identity (Maca and Morris, 2012). Surveys suggest a relatively low level of popular commitment to the national community, and a widespread desire to adopt an alternative nationality (especially American or Japanese) should the opportunity present itself (Maca and Morris, 2015). For elites, migration has served as a sort of political safety valve, releasing pressures that might otherwise challenge entrenched privilege in one of the region's most unequal societies. Here, therefore, transnationalism constitutes not so much a broadening out of identity consciousness in ways likely to promote sustainable peace, but a strategy for staving off reform of a fundamentally unsustainable socio-economic dispensation.

Box 4.2 State directives and national and other identities in the Philippines

State directives acknowledging minority identities in the Philippines

DepEd Memorandum No. 14, s.2013 (or the DepEd Peace Movement in Mindanao) supports tolerance among ethnic and religious groups, particularly Catholics and Muslims, while R.A. 9054 (or An Act to Strengthen and Expand the Organic Act for the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, Amending for the Purpose Republic Act No. 6734 Entitled 'An Act Providing for the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao', as Amended) calls for a complete and integrated system of education in Mindanao. The indigenous peoples of the Philippines, who comprise up to a fifth of the national population, are among the most marginalised in the country, suffering disproportionately from human rights violations and armed conflict. There are between 110 and 185 languages in the Philippines. Republic Act No. 8371 (or the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act of 1997) mandates the education of indigenous peoples to be carried out in their own language and in a manner appropriate to their learning. However, what support exists for the implementation of these various directives is unclear. While the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process was set up to integrate peace education teaching exemplars into curricula subjects, it has become inactive.

There also appears to be an ambivalence in official documents regarding the articulation of Filipino and Muslim identities. DepEd Order No. 51, s.2004 (or Standard Curriculum for Elementary Public Schools and Private *Madaris*) aims to promote both the Filipino identity and the Islamic cultural heritage in elementary public schools and privately-run Muslim schools called *Madaris*; however, precisely how Muslim identities are to be reconciled with notions of Filipino identity powerfully influenced by Catholic culture and beliefs is not explained. Recently, however, there have been developments signalling more 'affirmative actions' for the Philippine indigenous peoples, such as the establishment of the Indigenous Peoples Education Office (IPsEO) (DepEd Order 103 series of 2011), adoption of a National Indigenous Peoples Education Policy Framework (DepEd Order 62 series of 2011) and more recently the adoption of Indigenous Peoples Education Curriculum Framework (DepEd order 32 series of 2015).

Integration of gender concepts and sexuality education into curricula

The weakness of state-directed efforts at political socialisation through education in the Philippines has been attributed in part to the influence of other powerful social actors, amongst which the Catholic Church has been especially prominent (Maca and Morris,

2015). This has had implications for efforts to make teaching about gender and sexuality an integral part of the school curriculum. Between 2000 and 2003, a four-phase campaign based on Memorandum 423, s.2000 was launched to integrate gender concepts into the English, Science, Math, Filipino, and *Makabayan* curricula. However, related teacher training projects were not sustained, and several years into the campaign teaching materials for schools were yet to be printed (Ilo et al., 2010). The 2009 Republic Act 9710 further sought to correct gender stereotypes across the school curriculum, including, crucially, the curricula for Muslim and indigenous groups in Mindanao. However, resistance to sexuality education remains widespread and entrenched, partly due to the local Catholic hierarchy's relatively rigid stance on abortion and other gender-related issues.

Standing in stark contrast to the Philippines is the case of Singapore, where the state has pursued a concerted nation-building strategy aimed at binding together an ethnically and linguistically diverse population. Singapore also stands out from most of its neighbours in terms of the effective translation of government policy statements into determined bureaucratic follow-through. Given severe inter-ethnic tension during the transition to independence, the management of ethnic diversity has been a particular official priority. This has been conducted in a highly top-down, paternalist fashion – epitomised by the use of schooling to impose Mandarin Chinese as a unifying ‘official’ mother tongue for the ethnic Chinese community (who originally spoke diverse regional languages). Officials have used schooling, housing policy and quotas to maintain a rigid categorisation of the population into four bureaucratically convenient but rigid and strongly-bounded ethnic silos. The result is that multiculturalism Singapore-style essentially corresponds to Amartya Sen’s definition of ‘plural monoculturalism’ (2006): the ethnic communities co-exist in parallel, but inter-ethnic mingling is limited. At the same time, members of all ethnic communities are exhorted to ‘know and love Singapore’ and ‘believe in Singapore,’⁵⁹ with curricula designed to direct belief firmly towards the developmental achievements of the ruling party. At the same time, the curriculum for social studies, in particular, has been used to remind Singaporeans of all ethnicities of the dire threats that Singapore has faced in the past, and the continuing need for unity and discipline in order to resist potential threats in the future (Khamsi and Han, 2013).

The construction and maintenance of totalising, rigidly bounded national identities, posited on ethno-cultural essentialism and a narrative of ever-present foreign ‘threats’, sits awkwardly, to say the least, with attempts to

“**The relatively recent emergence of most societies in the region from colonialism, the conflict that accompanied that process, and the enduring social divisions that were often part of the colonial legacy, help explain why the task of nation-building has been accorded such overwhelming priority by post-colonial elites**”

59 See <https://www.moe.gov.sg/education/education-system/desired-outcomes-of-education>.

promote sustainable peace and ‘global citizenship’. At the same time, the region’s recent history means that it should come as little surprise to find the ‘nation as a privileged referent of identity’ overwhelmingly dominant in Southeast Asian curricular documents (see **Appendix II-12i**). The relatively recent emergence of most societies in the region from colonialism, the conflict (especially horrific in Indochina) that accompanied that process, and the enduring social divisions that were often part of the colonial legacy, help explain why the task of nation-building has been accorded such overwhelming priority by post-colonial elites. There can be no doubt that strong and cohesive statehood is a necessary condition for successful development. But if this comes at the expense of the sensitive accommodation of domestic diversity, and involves the radical ‘othering’ of neighbouring peoples, it risks stoking conflict over the long term, while undermining transnational collaboration on matters of urgent common interest today.

ESD/GCED in Subject Curricula

Three principal trends emerge with regard to the integration of ESD/GCED themes and competencies in subject curricula, which have implications for the challenges of nationalism and identities across Southeast Asia.

Gap between policy and subject curricula

First, many concepts that can promote awareness and tolerance of diversity are absent in subject curricula (at least for the grades examined here), even if they are mentioned in strategic documents. In Cambodia, for example, such concepts include: human rights; gender equality; culture of peace and non-violence; and global issues. Similarly, although human rights feature frequently in the Thai national curriculum framework, they are rarely discussed in subject curricula. As discussed in **Box 4.3**, this is partly attributable to claims of a supposed tension between universalist notions of rights on the one hand, and Thai values and the preservation of social order on the other. As already noted above, such a gap between broad statements of policy goals and subject curriculum guidelines also reflects differences in the intended audiences for such documents – with the former more likely to be circulated at international gatherings, and the latter determining the parameters within which teachers and textbook publishers actually operate.

The Philippines supplies another example of such a gap between broad curricular ‘vision statements’ and actual subject curricula – coverage of concepts such as human rights and the culture of peace and non-violence being absent from the latter, even though highlighted in the former. Why this is so is unclear, but it does not betoken the resolution of conflict or infringements of human rights through the expansion of democratic institutions, since such problems have persisted and recently worsened (Amnesty International, 2017). In this case, the gap between policy and subject curricula may reflect either official complacency,

or lack of capacity for implementing curricular reform – or both (see **Box 4.2**). And in a context of weak official control over textbook production and curricular delivery (Maca and Morris, 2015), government proclamations often have a largely symbolic quality. One possible example of such a symbolic gesture is the Department of Education’s decision to include the history of martial law in the curriculum in the wake of controversy over former dictator Ferdinand Marcos’ burial at the Heroes Cemetery in 2016 (Mateo, 2016); what effect this has on teaching and learning remains to be seen.

‘Carrier’ subjects of values

As in much of the postcolonial world (and beyond), across Southeast Asia subjects such as social studies, history and civics, typically the ‘carrier subjects’ for ESD/GCED, largely focus on national values, although they also highlight other values (Baillon et al., 2014). The Indonesian Social Studies curriculum, for example, focuses on attitudes and character-building with the aim of nurturing students who are ‘wise, responsible, caring, polite and confident, and patriotic’ (p. 62); reference to more universalistic values such as human rights and gender equality are scant. Consciousness of national identity is to be imparted through having students learn about Indonesian national heroes. In Malaysia, the subject curricula for History (Social Studies), Moral Education (Values Education) and English feature an emphasis both on fostering desirable ‘attitudes’ (patriotism prominent among them), and on improving cognitive ‘skills’ (including critical and systemic thinking). But in a context of increasingly Islamicised and Malay-centric notions of national identity as conveyed through curricula, the scope for teachers or students to critically discuss state-determined visions of nationhood appears to be narrowing (see Ting, 2015).

In the Philippines, the curricula for Social Studies and Values Education appear to promote consciousness of the importance of interconnectedness; global issues; human rights; transversal skills; and responsible lifestyles. Official guidelines for both subjects positively emphasise the importance of one’s culture and identity; the rights of Filipinos as members of the nation; and values such as democratic participation, respect for diversity, and caring for others and the environment. However, as already noted, promotion of other cross-cutting concepts such as gender equality or the culture of peace and non-violence do not feature amongst the list of qualities to be fostered through either subject. And, as discussed above, the effectiveness with which the Filipino curriculum imparts a coherent and unifying vision of national identity is questionable.

While frequently mentioned in Thailand’s national curriculum framework, the concept of culture of peace and non-violence is poorly covered in subject curricula, for example in social studies. The curriculum largely ignores issues of conflict within the country, according little or no emphasis to concepts such as interconnectedness, collaboration with others and respect for diversity. With

respect to discussion of cultural similarities and differences with other Asian countries, curricula and textbooks are typically highly Thai-centric, presenting the country's neighbours as historical enemies (Mukdawijitra, 2013, p. 110). Recent research shows that intercultural understanding is weak in Thai education, which does not directly address the importance of understanding and learning to live together with other groups, particularly in relation to conflict in the Muslim South and to migrant workers in the country (Jones, 2014).

A strongly nationalist paradigm may not always entirely exclude coverage of values related to ESD/GCED. In Viet Nam, the Curriculum Framework for the Secondary Level stresses the importance of understanding important events in human history and the relationship between national and global history, and of respecting other countries and their cultures (p. 763). In Cambodia, human rights and values education figure prominently in Social Studies and Moral-Civics Education (also see **Box 4.1**). The curricula of these subjects feature, among other things, references to the law against racial discrimination and the importance of human rights and the rights of minorities, including ethnic minorities and the disabled (p. 50). But where a highly state-centred and ethno-culturally essentialist variant of nationalism predominates, discussion of universal rights is likely to be decontextualised and tokenistic.

Language education and identity

Thirdly, in Southeast Asia, as elsewhere, language education is a crucial carrier of values, as regards the construction both of a sense of national (or ethnic) selfhood, and of transnational dimensions of identity. In many societies across this region, the role of language in this respect is particularly complex and fraught. This relates not only to the accommodation of generally very high levels of linguistic diversity, but also to foreign language education. In some regions of the world – notably parts of Europe – foreign language learning has, in recent decades, been seen as important in part for its potential to buttress forms of transnational identity consciousness. This dictates the allocation of considerable class hours to foreign language instruction, and encouraging many students to learn multiple foreign languages (see **Appendix III** for table on instructional hours). In Southeast Asia, however, the study of foreign or second languages at school effectively begins and ends for most students with English (plus,

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In states where the process of nation-building is relatively young, and mass schooling relatively new, it is natural for a high priority to be accorded to instruction in a national common language”

for minorities, the language of the majority ethnicity); opportunities to study languages spoken by domestic minorities or neighbouring countries (frequently the same) are generally scarce.

In states where the process of nation-building is relatively young, and mass schooling relatively new, it is natural for a high priority to be accorded to instruction in a national

common language (see Lee and Suryadinata, 2007). Particularly in mainland Southeast Asia, where modern states trace their origins to ancient kingdoms, language and nationhood tend to be closely aligned in curricular rhetoric, with the national language presented as both an object of and vehicle for sentiments of pride. For example, the Khmer language curriculum for Cambodian primary school students, is tasked with improving students' 'ability, personal quality, self-respect, self-confidence, daily learning, and pride of their own nation'⁶⁰ (Basic Curriculum for Primary Education, 1996, p. 7). Similarly, the Vietnamese language curriculum proclaims instilling love for the Vietnamese language, literature and culture of Viet Nam as a prime objective.

However, neither in mainland nor in archipelagic Southeast Asia do linguistic and national boundaries neatly align, so that curriculum developers everywhere must somehow address issues relating to linguistic diversity. Some states, such as Viet Nam, have relatively extensive provision of mother tongue instruction for minorities, at least at elementary level (see Dang, 2010); others, such as Myanmar and Thailand, evince problems with the integration of minorities into mainstream public schooling, an issue bound up with a reluctance to acknowledge some border populations as legitimate national citizens.⁶¹ The cases of Thailand and Myanmar illustrate how the issue of recognising and teaching minority languages is often closely intertwined with issues relating to the delineation of nationhood and national boundaries. This underlines the potential value of encouraging students to study the languages (and cultures) of bordering nations, since resolving problems facing minorities often depends on detoxifying poisoned relationships with close national neighbours. But opportunities for Vietnamese, for example, to study Khmer as a foreign language, or for Cambodians to study Vietnamese or Thai, remain vanishingly small.

A multicultural and multi-ethnic archipelago, Indonesia is home to over 200 local languages and dialects. However, in the wake of the World Wars and the ending of Dutch occupation, Bahasa Indonesia came to be regarded by the leaders of independent Indonesia as a critical tool for constructing a consciousness of national unity (Simpson, 2007). The Constitution states that '*Bahasa Negara ialah Bahasa Indonesia*' (The national language shall be Indonesian (Bahasa Indonesia)) (Article 36, 1945), with no acknowledgement of the minority languages. This nationalist approach has contributed to threats to the existence of local and regional vernaculars, some of which are slowly dying out (Musgrave, 2014) – their extinction also serving as testimony to the successful implementation of national language policies. However, awareness of the threat to Indonesia's linguistic diversity has prompted moves to amend the Constitution and enact new laws. Article 32 of the amended constitution stipulates that 'The government

60 Original in Khmer: 'ជំរុញចំណេះដឹង កែលម្អគុណសម្បត្តិខ្លួន គោរពខ្លួនឯងមានទំនុកចិត្តលើខ្លួនឯង ចូលចិត្តរៀនសូត្រជាប្រចាំ ហើយមានមោទនភាពជាតិជាតិច្នោះ'.

61 See <https://www.burmalink.org/background/thailand-burma-border/displaced-in-thailand/refugee-camps/>.

respects and cultivates local and regional vernaculars as the national cultural treasure'.⁶² Correspondingly, Article 33, Point 2 of Law No. 20 Year 2003⁶³ states that 'Vernacular languages can be used as a medium of instruction in the early stages of education if necessary in the delivery of specific knowledge and/or skills' (p. 11).⁶⁴ On the other hand, while the importance of English as a tool of global communication is recognised, its growing popularity has 'worried' policymakers who fear its spread may hamper the use of Bahasa Indonesia as the national lingua franca (Nazarudin, 2009). The use of English is curbed in most forms of media, including the advertising and entertainment sectors. This promotion of the national language, taking precedence over both regional and foreign languages, is seen by some as limiting Indonesia's economic, social and scientific growth, while its neighbours benefit from a more unrestricted adoption of English (Nazarudin, 2009).

Box 4.3 Tensions and convergences between 'traditional' and ESD/GCED concepts and values in Southeast Asia

Asia has a long history of the selective interpretation and translation of Western concepts by national leaders and curriculum developers, who have sometimes contested 'universal values,' arguing that they are 'Western' and thus unapplicable to 'Asian' societies. Amartya Sen characterises and critiques this as the 'Lee thesis', named after Singapore's founding leader Lee Kuan Yew, devoting much of his classic work, *Development as Freedom* (1999), to countering it. But the Lee thesis remains very much alive and well across Southeast Asia, as many national education policy and curricular documents reveal.

In Thailand, for example, human rights (*sitthi manutsayachon*) has often been dismissed as a Western concept that disregards Thai values and social harmony (Hongladarom, 1998, p. 97); it is no accident that a landmark statement of an 'Asian' vision of human rights, prioritising 'economic rights', is the Bangkok Declaration of 1993.⁶⁷ Human rights education in Thailand is limited to such efforts as the work of the small Associated Schools Project Network (ASPnet), which promotes child rights and UNICEF's Child-Friendly Schools (Churairat, 2002). The NEA exhorts students to support the Thai system of democracy under the constitutional monarchy. In particular, the Grade 4 curriculum teaches that to be a good citizen is to participate in the democratic system (*withi prachathipatal*), but this refers merely to overt acts like voting in elections (p. 9). Thailand's educational policies and curricula do not explore issues related to civil liberties. Similarly, in Lao PDR, democracy is popularly equated with elections, while human rights receives little attention in subject curricula. Concepts related to global citizenship and activism are absent from curriculum documents, in a wider political context in which public demonstrations and debates over contentious socio-economic issues are rare and officially discouraged. In Viet Nam, the subject curriculum for the Vietnamese language briefly mentions democracy, but this is interpreted as meaning support for the socialist ideology of the ruling party, and possession of a democratic and humane spirit.

62 Original in Indonesian: '*Negara menghormati dan memelihara bahasa daerah sebagai kekayaan budaya nasional*'.

63 See <http://pendis.kemendiknas.go.id/file/dokumen/uuno20th2003ttgsisdiknas.pdf>.

64 Original in Indonesian: '*Bahasa daerah dapat digunakan sebagai bahasa pengantar dalam tahap awal pendidikan apabila diperlukan dalam penyampaian pengetahuan dan/atau keterampilan tertentu*'.

At the same time, counter-claims are made regarding convergence between traditional 'Asian' values and those associated with ESD/GCED. Amartya Sen's work constitutes one instance of this. Another is the cultural theory of Virgilio Enriquez (1992), which may be used to explain how ESD/GCED aligns with traditional Filipino perspectives. Enriquez pointed to the connectedness between the self and others which shapes a humanistic, accommodational Filipino worldview and an action-oriented form of global citizenship. A number of traditional terms may be linked to ESD/GCED, namely *kapwa* (the unity of self and others), *pakikipagkapwa* (treating people as equals), *pakikiramdam* (sensitivity to others' feelings), and *pakikibaka* (joining a struggle). However, it should also be noted that these are mostly terms derived from Tagalog culture and language — the biggest ethno-linguistic group at 25 per cent of the Philippine population (PSA, 2012 cited in McEachern, 2013, p. 50) — which risks ignoring the socio-cultural diversity in Filipino society. This should be taken into account when applying Enriquez's value structure to other Asian countries that are also characterized by a broad spectrum of differences, diversity and ethnic and cultural pluralism.

The situation in Singapore and Malaysia is rather different. Here, instruction in 'mother tongue languages' (MTLs) – those of key minorities included – is widespread, at least at primary level. The Ministry of Education in Singapore espouses the aim of providing greater flexibility in the teaching and learning of MTLs in order to 'help students with different abilities to go as far as they can.' However, the practice of effectively segregating the population into discrete ethnic silos, already noted in the case of Singapore, extends to language education, with few students of the majority ethnic group studying languages of other ethnic groups. Instead, the typical pattern in these countries is for most students to study their mother tongue plus English. Minority students in Malaysia and Indonesia typically also study Malay or Bahasa Indonesia, but this places an additional academic burden on such students which their counterparts from the majority or 'core' linguistic community do not share.

The cases of Malaysia and Singapore also highlight the complex linguistic legacies of colonialism, particularly with respect to the role of English not just as a foreign language, but as a domestic lingua franca.⁶⁶ In the Philippines, an Anglophone former colony with around 170 indigenous languages, medium of instruction in schools has been a focus of prolonged and intense controversy. A 2003 decree mandating English as the medium of instruction at all levels of education (a move favoured by many business groups) was overturned in 2012, to be replaced by a law requiring schools to offer instruction in multiple indigenous mother tongues, as well as Tagalog and English. As a result, the Philippines curriculum now tasks schools with offering 'mother tongue-based multilingual education' (MTB-MLE)⁶⁷

65 See <http://www.internationalhumanrightsllexicon.org/hrdoc/docs/bangkokNGO.pdf>.

66 The case of Indonesia is rather different, since Dutch-medium schooling for indigenous children during the colonial era was almost non-existent; the role of Dutch in Indonesian public life (and education) therefore extended little beyond the end of formal colonisation (on Sukarno's experience, see Rush, 2014).

67 See Republic Act No. 10533 or Enhanced Basic Education Act.

– a laudable objective, but one likely to place huge strains on the capacity of the system with respect to resources, training provision and governance.

The status of English as *the* global language might seem to imply that its increasing prevalence in school curricula is something that advocates of ‘global citizenship’ should welcome. Certainly, this has been an argument that advocates of English-medium schooling in the Philippines have been keen to make, coupling internationalist rhetoric with the promise of economic rewards stemming from fluency in the language of global commerce (Maca and Morris 2015, p. 141). From Cambodia and Viet Nam to Thailand and Indonesia, curricula acknowledge the significance of foreign language education for promoting interconnectedness, peace and harmony between nations – as well as granting students access to the principle linguistic vehicle for scholarly and scientific discourse.

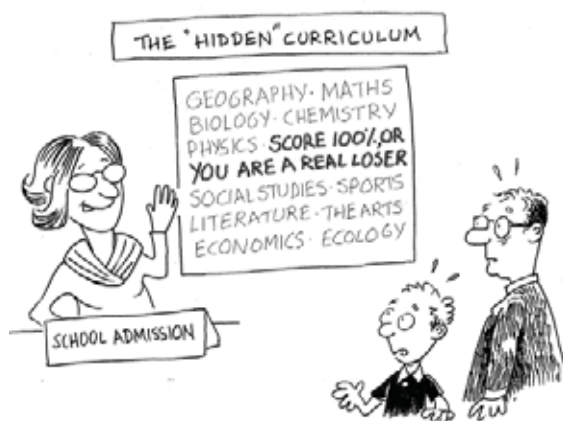
But across much of Southeast Asia, the focus on English to the virtual exclusion of other foreign or second languages reflects the dominance of instrumentalist conceptions of the purposes of schooling, as well as the vested interests of elites. It implies a vision of English as a ticket to global citizenship for those able to access the best quality instruction, leaving the monoglot masses corralled within national or communal boundaries. Meanwhile, the monolingual as well as ethnically essentialist conceptions of nationhood that typically inform curricula threaten to ossify and intensify divisions within as well as between national communities.

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C: Challenges of Competitiveness and Regimentation

While there is a lack of detailed, region-wide information on the challenges of intense competition and regimentation outlined in the introduction to **Part II**, issue-specific studies suggest that problems often related to educational intensity, such as the prevalence of shadow education, bullying and school violence, are widespread throughout Southeast Asia. Such pressures are rising, often contributing to negative experiences of schooling (UNESCO, 2016d). As in East Asia (see **Chapter 3**), intense educational competitiveness is fuelled by the structure and content of public examinations, patterns of recruitment into the labour market, a shift to mass higher education, and a context of minimal public welfare provision that leaves entitlements overwhelmingly dependent

on employment. But while exploring the causes of the phenomenon lies beyond the remit of this report, its consequences for ESD/GCED are highly relevant. Educational intensity and competitiveness, centred around readily measurable performance in core subjects, tends to squeeze out curricular space for meaningful discussion of or engagement with issues of diversity, sustainability or conflict. Moreover, the tyranny of competitiveness governed by rigid, unchallengeable standards constitutes a form of ‘hidden curriculum’ deeply at odds with the promotion of peace, tolerance or cross-cultural understanding.



The incidence of private supplementary tutoring is not known with any certainty in Southeast Asia. While there is some research and statistical information (albeit often dated) on aspects of private tutoring in some countries, a lack of research and comparable datasets at the regional level means that the prevalence of this phenomenon is likely to be understated (see for instance Bray et al., 2015; Kenayathulla, 2015; Bray and Lykins, 2012; Benveniste, Marshall and Santibañez, 2008; de Castro and de Guzman, 2010; Dang, 2011). Even in Singapore, where anecdotal information points to a high percentage of school-age students receiving private tutoring, comprehensive research on the issue is lacking (Tan, 2009). Shadow education remains ‘shadowy’ in more than one sense.

National data from many societies point to a rise in the use of private tutoring. The likely causes are varied, and include increasing marketisation of education across the board (extending to expansion of the private schools sector), and, in some contexts (e.g. Cambodia and Viet Nam), the influence of traditional tutoring practices (Bray et al., 2015; Bray and Lykins, 2012). Intense examination-oriented competition, particularly in countries like Singapore and Malaysia where most students now expect to access higher education, increases demand for private tutoring (Jelani and Tan, 2012). Such demand is also accentuated by reduced family size, as in Viet Nam, the Philippines and Singapore (de Castro and de Guzman, 2010; Dang and Rogers, 2013). In Singapore, these combined pressures have made schooling a difficult, stressful experience for many students

(UNESCO, 2016d). Sometimes, private tutoring also emerges to plug gaps in schooling stemming from a challenging or frequently revised curriculum, as in Singapore (Tan, 2009), from the lack of class time to fully cover the syllabus or from poor quality teaching, as in the cases of Cambodia and Viet Nam (Cambodia, 2010; Dawson, 2010). For these reasons, families in Viet Nam increasingly feel that supplementary tutoring is essential (Dang, 2008).

Conversely, responding to – or often fuelling – such demand, teachers may decide to augment their incomes by becoming private tutors (Bray and Lykins, 2012). This can have a highly adverse backwash effect on schooling, incentivising teachers to limit their pedagogical input during school hours, so as to compel students (or their parents) to pay for instruction after school. In some cases, this move is precipitated by the low pay, which in some contexts leaves teachers close to the poverty line. This situation is exemplified in Lao PDR, where tutoring has been found to contribute up to a third of secondary teachers' incomes. Separate surveys in 2010 and 2008 showed that 4.7 per cent of primary school teachers and

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Efforts to regulate, limit or even expressly forbid private tutoring have proven ineffective in many Southeast Asian countries, with controls widely ignored or circumvented by private tutors and schoolteachers”

14 per cent of lower secondary teachers were involved in private tutoring respectively (Dang, King and Waite, 2010). In Cambodia, too, most private tutoring is provided by teachers as a means of supplementing their low pay (Dawson, 2009). Efforts to regulate, limit or even expressly forbid private tutoring have proven ineffective in many Southeast Asian countries, with controls widely ignored or circumvented by private tutors and schoolteachers (Bray and Lykins, 2012).

A 2012 report on supplementary private education in Asia, commissioned by the Asian Development Bank (ADB), cites a range of useful – though somewhat dated – statistical surveys conducted across Southeast Asia in recent decades (Bray and Lykins, 2012). One such survey is a 2010 study of 23 schools in the Philippines, which discovered that 40.7 per cent of grade 6 students and 46.5 per cent of grade 10 students received private tutoring. Similar surveys in Cambodia showed an increase in primary school tutoring from under a third to half of the students between 1998 and 2004, as its costs (and demand) rose. In Viet Nam, a 2006 survey of 9,189 households found that 32 per cent of primary students were receiving private tutoring, which rose to 46 and 63 per cent at lower and upper secondary levels respectively. As the ADB report also stated, a survey in Malaysia in 2005 found that a fifth of households had spent their budget on private tutoring. Another survey in 2011 found that nearly 90 per cent of students from eight schools in the state of Selangor had received private tutoring in primary school. Such tutoring, in Myanmar, has since 1992 been regarded as ‘virtually indispensable to complete secondary education’ (UNESCO, 1992, p.

24). An unpublished 2009 survey found that tutoring accounted for 12.6 per cent of household costs at Grade 1 and 15.6 per cent at Grade 5. Shadow education also appears widespread in Indonesia, especially at primary level, but its precise extent is unclear. This is also true of Thailand in 2011, where, the ADB report noted, cram schools were proliferating and consuming US\$233 million in fees.

There is also significant ethnic variation in access to private tutoring in some Southeast Asian countries. A 2012 study of primary school students in Malaysia found that minority Chinese students were more likely to receive private tutoring than majority Malay students – although it also suggested that the gap may be closing (Jelani and Tan, 2012). According to an earlier study in 2005, Chinese and Indian households in Malaysia also spent more money on private tutoring than Malay households (Bray and Lykins, 2012). There is a similar ethnic dimension in Viet Nam, but with the roles reversed: majority Kinh students were receiving more private tutoring than the minority students (Dang, 2011). More research into the causes of such ethnic discrepancies is needed, but it bolsters the findings of studies – including the ADB report – that indicate the tendency of private tutoring to exacerbate existing patterns of social inequality.

Research in Singapore, Malaysia and Viet Nam suggests that the benefits of private tutoring are uneven and are subject to a law of diminishing returns (Cheo and Quah, 2005; Dang, 2007; Tan, 2009). It may lead variously to improved or poorer academic results. Research in Cambodia finds that rather than supplementing school education, private tutoring makes it less efficient – largely due to the behaviour of teachers doubling as tutors (see above) – while also reducing students' time for leisure and rest (Dawson, 2009).

The precise incidence of bullying in schools across the region is also unclear, but the existence of legal and policy provisions against it suggests that it may be substantial, if under-reported. The Anti-Bullying Act in the Philippines provides a framework for dealing with bullying in elementary and secondary schools. The Act addresses incidents of bullying and cyberbullying and establishes procedures and requirements for reporting, and related sanctions. It also calls for attempts to build parental and community awareness, and the capacity to counter bullying. There is no similar law in Singapore, although the Protection from Harassment Act, aimed to protect adults, stipulates protection of 'persons against harassment and unlawful stalking and to create offences [*sic*]' (UNESCO, 2017a, p. 35). There have also been a variety of anti-bullying campaigns in the region. In 2013, Malaysia participated in UNICEF's #ENDviolence initiative, which sought to raise awareness of bullying. The initiative also led the government, civil society and private sector to take action against bullying and to plan future research and action. The Indonesian government has collaborated with stakeholders such as parents' associations and adolescents' networks in launching a social media campaign against child bullying, which includes the publication of an 'End Bullying' manual for children. In Viet Nam, the Young Lives project on childhood poverty found verbal and indirect bullying, such as humiliation and social

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The tendency in much discussion of bullying has been to ‘psychologise’ the problem, seeing it as a matter of individual deviance susceptible to treatment by trained counsellors or psychiatrists”

exclusion, to be the most prevalent type of bullying, with physical bullying being least common (UNESCO, 2017a).

Nevertheless, as with shadow education, so with bullying, more research is needed to understand how the prevalence of these phenomena is related not just to the structures of schooling and public examinations, but also to wider societal

factors. The tendency in much discussion of bullying – not just in Southeast Asia, but elsewhere too (e.g. Japan) – has been to ‘psychologise’ the problem, seeing it as a matter of individual deviance susceptible to treatment by trained counsellors or psychiatrists. But an excessive focus on the correction of individual maladjustment risks (perhaps intentionally) obscuring the role of societal maladjustment in fuelling tension and antagonism within and beyond the confines of the school. Similarly, in the case of shadow education, there is a need to look beyond the microscopic analysis of familial decisions or ascriptions of causality to ‘culture’, and examine how socio-economic institutions, as well as educational practices, fuel competitive intensity. Without a better understanding of the social causes of educational intensity, and a determination to address them, much talk of reorienting schooling towards the fostering of ‘peace, global citizenship and sustainable development’ is likely to remain just talk.

CONCLUSION

The coding data generated in the process of preparing this report appear to suggest some grounds for optimism regarding the state of ESD/GCED in Southeast Asia. These data correspond with the findings of an earlier review that shows widespread awareness of important ESD/GCED-related concepts at least at the state and policy levels, and to a lesser extent at the level of subject curricula (Australian Council for Educational Research, 2016). Rhetoric calling for greater recognition of the importance of social diversity or multiculturalism, global interconnectedness and environmental sustainability feature to varying degrees in official documents across. There also appears to have been a positive trend towards greater awareness and utilisation of ESD/GCED concepts in policymaking circles, partly driven by the efforts of agencies such as UNESCO and UNICEF, often in cooperation with SEAMEO.

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However, official rhetoric is one thing, classroom implementation often quite another – and rhetoric itself frequently faces in multiple directions, seeking to please different constituencies (foreign as well as domestic). In a region where postcolonial nation-building is still widely perceived as a novel, fragile and incomplete undertaking, human resource development and the moulding of loyal, patriotic citizens remain highly prioritised objectives of national education systems. Both these economic and nationalist imperatives have combined to make learning a frequently uneven, narrowly focussed and stressful experience for students. Expanding shadow education and problems such as student bullying are both symptomatic of that stress, and factors contributing to its exacerbation.

Transnationalism, promoted in SDG 4.7 under the rubric of ‘global citizenship’, is essential for the effective and sustainable pursuit of environmental conservation and international peace. Southeast Asia possesses a significant structure for promoting transnational collaboration – ASEAN – and UNESCO has been involved in efforts to use education to promote the idea of ‘ASEAN-ness’ across the region (Hirata, 2016). However, there is as of yet little evidence to suggest that ASEAN is operating as a catalyst for consciousness of a shared regional destiny that transcends the competitive state-formation projects of its various member nations. Rather, regionalism in Southeast Asia, as embodied by ASEAN, appears to be project pursued for narrowly instrumentalist,¹ economic and strategic purposes by elites for whom any challenge to the absolute supremacy of the nation-state remains utterly unconscionable.

The challenges discussed in this chapter are likely to continue to compromise the meaningful integration of ESD/GCED concepts and competencies into curricula in Southeast Asia. Key ESD/GCED concepts have in general been accorded selective and partial interpretations, signalling rhetorical conformity with an international agenda, while seldom implying any fundamental reorientation of entrenched, conventional nation-building strategies, or of schooling’s role in relation to them – the sort of reorientation envisaged in key UNESCO documents (UNESCO, 2014c; UNESCO, 2015b; UNESCO, 2016c).

In considering ways to improve the state of ESD/GCED, it is important, first, to acknowledge and reconcile the competing influences that shape educational priorities across Southeast Asia. This may admittedly produce some degree of official discomfort, but then promoting attitudes and competencies required for dealing with difficult issues is central to the vision of ESD/GCED itself. It is essential to encourage and support Southeast Asian policymakers, curriculum developers, educators, and students in their efforts to find ways not just to manage but also embrace disagreement and diversity in the classroom. This is the kind of transformation of cultures of schooling that Southeast Asia needs if its peoples are to find sustainable ways of living peaceably in a region of vast diversity, and of collaborating to address shared environmental, economic and security challenges.

CHAPTER 5

South Asia

THE CONTEXT: HISTORICAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL

The present-day political map of South Asia⁶⁸ shows the deep and lasting impact of British colonial rule in the region. Although other European imperial powers also competed for power and influence in South Asia, it is the British who succeeded in establishing their empire here. The long political struggle that uprooted imperial dominance was shaped by multiple forces, including the interaction between British political institutions and socio-economic changes occurring in South Asia. However, the final phase of colonial rule was shaped as much by global trends, particularly the two world wars, as by British or indigenous initiative. In the regions bordering on Central Asia, a global geo-political contest for resources had set in during the imperial era, and the contest continued after empire's formal demise.

These wider trends are inseparable from the advent of modernity and its expression in various sectors of social life, including religion, gender relations and education. South Asia went through a vast and painful turmoil when colonial rule ended soon after World War II. The partition of India into two nation-states caused a holocaust which continues to overshadow economic, military and political realities and relations in the region to the present. Barely 24 years after the partition of India and Pakistan, the latter faced another traumatic division in which its eastern wing became an independent nation-state by the name of Bangladesh.

The region normally referred to as South Asia, including Iran, covers 5.12 per cent of the world's surface area (World Bank, 2017a) but is home to 24.8 per cent of the world's population (World Bank, 2017b); within the Asian continent, the South Asian region covers 11.5 per cent of the land area while accounting for nearly 39.5 per cent of the population. South Asia is thus the world's most densely populated region. Within this region, the Gangetic valley has the highest population density

68 Traditionally not a part of South Asia, Iran has been included in this region as it was the only country analysed from Western Asia.

and levels of poverty as well as the lowest levels of economic growth. North of that valley and bordering on Central Asia, the mountainous states of Nepal and Afghanistan have relatively low population density but high levels of poverty. In addition to its land-locked location, which has historically made it a site of great-power rivalry, Afghanistan has suffered persistent violence on a scale with few parallels elsewhere (Hopkirk, 1991).

South Asia is also a region of high ethnic, linguistic and religious diversity. The vast Himalayan watershed that divides China from South Asia is itself home to many different cultural groups often referred to as 'tribes'. According to the 2011 Census of India, the number of individual ethnic groups recognised as Scheduled Tribes is 705 (India, p. 3). South Asia has substantial populations professing all the major religions of the world. Unlike the pluralistic distribution of languages (whereby major languages tend to be territorially distinguished), religious diversity often follows an interwoven pattern, with people of different faiths inhabiting the same locale. This lack of correspondence between linguistic and religious divisions renders conventional modernist concepts and institutions somewhat confused and inadequate for purposes such as educational planning. Moreover, apart from officially recognised languages and religions, smaller linguistic groups (often associated with 'tribes') and cults also vie for formal recognition. Both language and religion have profoundly shaped the modern history of South Asia and they continue to pose complex challenges to administrative practices derived from colonial rule. Finally, in a manner far from unique to South Asia, but particularly acute there, the English language has become economically and administratively dominant, thus constituting a key axis for struggles to entrench or challenge socio-economic privilege.

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While prolonged colonial rule is an important part of the historical backdrop, no less significant is the simultaneous persistence of monarchies throughout the region. With independence, the dissolution of older monarchies occurred as a gradual and highly contested process rather than a simple switch in India and Pakistan. In smaller states, such as Nepal, Afghanistan and Bhutan, the journey from monarchy to democracy has proved longer and more complex. But even in the region's two most populous states, the co-existence (and co-dependence) of colonial rule and older, quasi-feudal landholding arrangements has left an enduring legacy, posing serious challenges to the functioning of democracy and the market economy (Bardhan, 1998). Density of population and the primacy of agriculture as means of livelihood point towards the role of iniquitous land ownership patterns. Inadequate and unsustainable land reforms have allowed the

persistence of feudal patterns of land ownership and social relations (Moore, 1966).

A considerable portion of the rural population belongs to the class of landless labourers. In South Asia as a whole, this cheaply available labour force forms a major factor in any explanation of extensive poverty. It also takes the burden of any attempt to explain the difficult transition South Asian countries face in their growing urban centres. The relevance of this bigger picture for the development

“**Legally, all children in the region are entitled to free and compulsory elementary schooling. However, translating this legal provision into social reality continues to prove extremely challenging**”

of a modern system of elementary education can hardly be overstated. Legally, all children in the region are entitled to free and compulsory elementary schooling. However, translating this legal provision into social reality continues to prove extremely challenging. The first South Asian country to have fully universalised school enrolment is Sri Lanka (Hettige, 2007; Little, 2010), where rates also vary little by district or gender.⁶⁹

One other socio-cultural specificity of South Asian society completes this picture. As a social institution, ‘caste’ or *jati* has deep and complex roots that are not confined to religion even though, as a category, it is usually invoked in the context of Hinduism. Its role in segregating manual workers – especially those involved in scavenging and several essential rural handicrafts – from others is crucial to any analysis of cultural patterns and the socialisation of the young (Srinivas, 1995; Dube, 2001). However, the caste system has even wider implications, especially in the context of gendering of girls, a subject that has only recently begun to be researched by social anthropologists (Dube, 2001). As the dominant dimension of discrimination in modern institutions such as schools, caste takes on a vast range of connotations throughout South Asia. Last but not the least, it also significantly impinges upon the relationship between modern democratic politics and education (Guha, 2007). For instance, the system of reservations for the lower castes has expanded the scope of the system’s ability to achieve more equal distribution of educational opportunity.

India’s relative size defines the region more than nominally as the ‘Indian sub-continent’. In terms of population, economy and political clout, India is in a dominant position in the region. Ironically, insofar as it contributes to a lack of that willingness to pool sovereignty that is essential to meaningful transnational integration, that dominance may help explain why South Asian regionalism has failed to gain traction, despite the establishment of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) in the 1980s (we see a similar dynamic at work with respect to China and East Asia). Old conflicts and geo-political conditions

69 See https://www.unicef.org/srilanka/overview_1647.htm.

have impeded the implementation of several declarations of intent to achieve peace and cooperation among member states in areas such as education.

Education has been a major priority for SAARC's efforts to promote collective action, but there has been little forward movement in the directions mapped out by SAARC resolutions. One such resolution was the Rawalpindi Declaration made in the early 1990s, asking for an inquiry into school textbooks to ensure that they reflect a regional perspective on shared challenges.⁷⁰ Concern for the overall quality of education across the region has also been articulated by SAARC.

“**Education has been a major priority for SAARC's efforts to promote collective action, but there has been little forward movement in the directions mapped out by SAARC resolutions**”

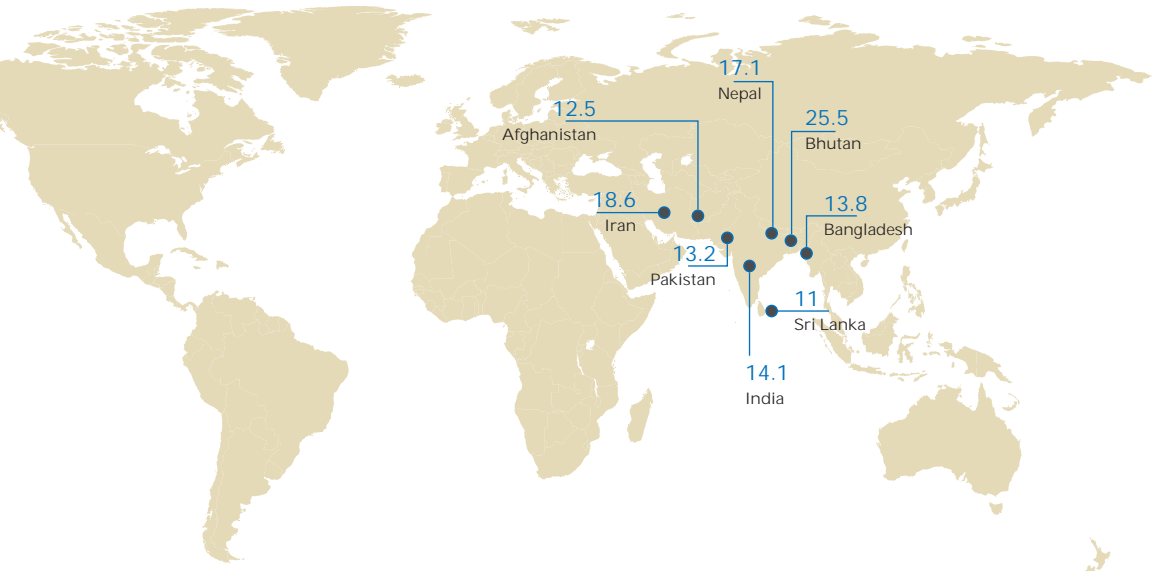
During the 1990s, the countries of the region separately initiated several major flagship programmes to achieve the Jomtien goals for universalising primary education. The District Primary Education Programme (DPEP)⁷¹ and the *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* (SSA)⁷² were two such initiatives. These programmes have had mixed consequences, in that they enabled the system to expand at a rapid pace even as concern for quality of child-welfare policies and teaching deepened. This mixed outcome can be attributed partly to the simultaneous impact of basic changes in economic policies, initiated in order to structurally adjust national economies to global trends. These economic reforms, still unfolding, are essentially redrawing state-market relations, with significant effects for public provision in sectors like education and health. Thus, liberalisation of the economy has meant withdrawal of the state, or a reluctance to extend its competence, in order to give greater space to private entrepreneurship in education and to non-government organisations (Kumar, 2011). State investment in education was expected to increase as a result of faster economic growth, but that has not happened. A major commission set up in the mid-1960s had set 6 per cent of GDP as a benchmark for the investment required for educational development in India (Government of India, 1967). That level of investment continues to be elusive although public expenditure varies a great deal across different provinces in India (Dreze and Sen, 2013).

70 See http://saarc-sec.org/areas_of_cooperation/area_detail/social-affairs/click-for-details_8.

71 See <http://www.nuepa.org/libdoc/docservices/ds/dpep.pdf> for a list of studies on the DPEP.

72 See <http://mhrd.gov.in/sarva-shiksha-abhiyan>.

Figure 5.1 Government expenditure on education in South Asia
(% of total government expenditure)



Source: World Bank, 2017c

Table 5.1 Role of agriculture in South Asian economies

Country	Per cent labour force in agriculture	Per cent of population living in rural areas	Agricultural GDP (as per cent of total GDP)
Afghanistan	59.4	Over 75	29.9
Bangladesh	44	80 (57 per cent landless)	18.6 (fisheries 4.4 per cent of GDP)
Bhutan	92.8	85	18.7
India	54	69	17.7 (fisheries 1.1 per cent of GDP)
Nepal	92.9	92.9	36.5
Pakistan	38.6	63	21.2
Sri Lanka	43	80	12.8 (fisheries 1.7 per cent of GDP)

Source: Climate Action Network South Asia, 2014, p. 3, Table 1

To what extent these recent changes will influence the basic structure of the economy and society in South Asia is not easy to estimate. Agriculture remains the source of livelihood for the vast majority of the population across the

region (see **Table 5.1**),⁷³ even as its share in the overall economic output has been declining. In terms of habitation, health and well-being, this single fact has great significance, implying the overwhelmingly rural nature of South Asian life. Rural-urban tension and conflict has long been, and remains, a key feature of the political economy of the South Asian region (Bardhan, 1998).

Several parts of South Asia have witnessed prolonged armed conflict. While Nepal and Sri Lanka have faced internal strife, Afghanistan and parts of Pakistan have also been sites of militancy and violence linked to wider geopolitical conflicts. Meanwhile, the conflict over forest and mining rights in the tribal regions of Central India has caused considerable violence over recent decades. Internal strife in Sri Lanka and Nepal mutated into political extremism and prolonged guerrilla struggles. In Pakistan, the region bordering on Afghanistan has been a site of violent conflict between the state and religious extremists. Indeed, Afghanistan has been a site of conflict for most of its modern history as a nation, and its recent experience of war has caused long-term damage to its institutional structures. International aid is a major source of the reconstruction effort in several domains, including education, extending to curriculum planning. From this perspective, South Asia presents a complex picture of the modern state's struggle to establish a stable, equitable institutional system capable of pursuing prosperity with peace (Oommen, 2004).

PEACE, SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP IN EDUCATION POLICY AND CURRICULA

A: Challenges of Instrumentalism and Ethics

Primacy of Human Resource Development and Limits to Student-centred Pedagogy

The South Asian region has witnessed radical changes or reforms in recent decades, not least in the economic arena, that have influenced policies and priorities in education in ways that are widely under-appreciated. Among the chief effects has been to accentuate an emphasis on education's role in fostering 'human resources' for economic development. Analysis of policy documents for the present study points to the high frequency of references to human resource development as an official goal across the region. India was the first state to re-designate its federal ministry

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The human resource paradigm has since attained dominance across South Asia, framing education as a process of harnessing human capital through equipping the young with marketable 'skills'.
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73 In Afghanistan, Bhutan, India and Nepal, almost half of all employment remains in agriculture (World Bank, 2011).

of education as a Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD). This happened in the mid-1980s, when a young prime minister sought to invoke the idea and symbolism of preparing the country for the 21st century. The human resource paradigm has since attained dominance across South Asia, framing education as a process of harnessing human capital through equipping the young with marketable ‘skills’. In policy documents from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal, a similar emphasis on human resource development for achieving global-level competitiveness is evident. This is not simply a reiteration of the older goal of promoting vocational education, but reflects a re-envisioning of the role of education in the context of a wider embrace of market-oriented economic strategies. Education has increasingly come to be seen primarily as a means of enhancing national competitiveness in a thoroughly marketised global economic order (see **Box 5.1**).

Box 5.1 Examples of references to human resource development in education policy and curriculum frameworks in South Asia

The aspiration to be globally competitive is prominently expressed in the policy documents of almost all South Asian countries. Bangladesh's National Education Policy (NEP) (2010) affirms that the aim of education is ‘to ensure skills of high standard at different areas and levels of education so that learners can successfully compete in the global context’ (p. 9). Elaborating on this goal, the Prime Minister commented: ‘A properly educated nation, which is modern in genius and intellect and forward-looking in thinking, can only put the country at the zenith of its development.’ She further opined that ‘an education policy [has to be] in tune with the need of the modern times, with a view to building the future generation as a human resource, efficient in knowledge and technology and inspired with moral values, national tradition and the spirit of the liberation war.’

A more recent example is Nepal's School Sector Development Plan (SSDP) (2016), which states: ‘a long term goal of education... is to provide citizens with the knowledge and skills they need to work for the development of the country and to integrate Nepal into the global community. To achieve this goal, the Government of Nepal is working to ensure access to quality basic education for all and to develop work and job market relevant education’ (p. 79). Further, Nepal's National Curriculum Framework (NCF) (2014) argues that ‘education should help prepare productive and skilled citizens competent to undertake local, national level jobs and also capable to international job market if it requires to’ (p. 33) — the latter phrase a clear if somewhat oblique reference to the importance of remittances from migrant labour to the Nepali economy. The NCF also states that the curriculum ‘would be broad based and balanced to develop human resources who are competitive in the global market, diverse and have critical and constructive skills’ (p. 36). There is also an emphasis on TVET soft skills in the NCF: ‘School education will pay special attention to producing employment oriented human resources.... TVET soft skills essential for employment oriented education will be integrated in basic education’ (p. 70).

In a similar vein, the Sri Lankan National Policy (1997) stresses a commitment to, ‘rapid economic development. This endeavour demands a human resource of highly qualified, motivated, trained or trainable output from the education system. The current system is failing to deliver that required output’ (p. 4).

The Pakistani NEP (2009) proclaims education to be 'a vital investment for human and economic development' (p. 9), 'enabling individuals to earn their livelihood through skills and contribute to the national economy, transforming it from supply-oriented to demand-oriented and preparing the students for the world of work' (p. 18). This notion is also reiterated in Iran's Fundamental Reform Document of Education (2011), where education is cited as 'a significant instrument for promotion of the country's qualified human capital in various areas' (p. 6).

UNESCO's calls for 'transformative' education are reflected in many South Asian educational policy documents, though it is not always clear what meaning is being ascribed to 'transformation'. In most cases, education is associated with 'social transformation', implying change in values, attitudes and social norms. In general, the value framework promoted by the UN seems to have been well-absorbed in South Asian policy rhetoric. Concern for human rights is frequently expressed in policy and curricular documents, with the partial exception of Iran (see **Appendix II-4**). Gender equality, environmental conservation and preparedness for natural disasters are also mentioned often (see **Appendix II-2** and **5**).

In a general sense, the countries of this region have demonstrated the desire for improving education and making it more child-centred, at least at the level of policy discourse – though here too economic ends tend to supply the overarching rationale. Child-friendliness has been promoted in school design, school management, curricula and textbooks. However, the exact meaning of child-centred pedagogy continues to be unclear in policy documents. In the context of the recent upsurge of economic reforms and the policy of using education for making the economy more globalized, the claim of child-centredness tends to lose substance. In Sri Lanka, for example, 'student centred' education is defined as:

a shift from the teacher-centred education system to a student-centred system and a more activity-based education system in order to develop the competencies and skills of the student body so as to enable the system to produce the required human resources for the world of work. (Grade 7 Science Teacher's Guide, 2016, p. 1)

Similar references can be found in documents from Nepal and Bangladesh (see **Box 5.1**). This formulation both reflects and helps explain the gap between the sometimes high-flown rhetoric of educational policy and curriculum guidelines on the one hand, and syllabi, textbooks and classroom practice on the other. One factor here is inadequate systemic capacity for meeting the challenges of reform (for example with respect to teacher training and curriculum development), but another, perhaps more fundamental, set of factors relates to the contradictory nature of the educational agenda itself. Calls to make pedagogy more child-centric, both in order to improve learning standards and to foster autonomy and respect for individuality, are in tension with demands to prioritise the generation

of human resources responsive to the demands of globalized and unaccountable market forces. But policy documents do not acknowledge that there is a potential contradiction between these two directions.

All country-level background reports and other sources from across the region show the primacy attached by policy makers to use of technology as a key to educational reform. Indeed, the instrumentality of education as a means of achieving economic and social goals is currently centred in the instrumentality of technology. In this respect, technology on which policy makers overwhelmingly pin their hopes is ICT. The competencies and skills referred to in policy and curriculum documents are those required for using ICT. Equipping schools from the primary grades upwards with computers is widely cited as a priority for education spending. Other forms of technology are sparingly referred to in the documents examined in this study. For example, in the case of Nepal, ICT education has been accorded great importance in plans devised for preparing capable human resources to meet the challenges brought about by globalization and advances in science and technology (NCF, p. 14). The policy document also lays emphasis on preparing students for the 21st century, for which ICT is seen as a medium, as well as using technology to connect to the world. In Pakistan, too, the NEP highlights the promotion of ‘Use of Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) in Education’ in line with the Ministry of Education’s ‘National Information and Communication Technology Strategy for Education in Pakistan’ aiming to contribute to accelerating and expanding learning beyond the books and with world.

“Calls to make pedagogy more child-centric, both in order to improve learning standards and to foster autonomy and respect for individuality, are in tension with demands to prioritise the generation of human resources responsive to the demands of globalized and unaccountable market forces”

“A single-minded focus on computers is one sign of the narrowness of official understanding of student-centric education, and of the kind of ‘human resources’ required for the purpose of securing sustainable development”

By contrast, provision of equipment necessary for nature study from primary grades onwards, e.g. binoculars to study bird life, or magnifying glasses to study soil, water, insects, etc., do not form a priority in current policy discourses, despite their near-universal emphasis on the importance of science to achieving the general goals of educational reform. A single-minded focus on computers is one sign of the narrowness of official understanding of student-centric education, and of the kind of ‘human resources’ required for the purpose of securing sustainable development.

Treatment of Concepts Embedded in SDG 4.7 in Curricula

Sustainable development

On the question of sustainable development, the various documents examined for this study point towards a common trend across South Asia. As discussed above, barring certain important exceptions, these suggest a clear dominance of the economic dimension of sustainability over all other dimensions. Policy documents in many South Asian nations show that sustainability is primarily interpreted in terms of economic growth (see **Box 5.1**).

In this sense, sustainability implies the urgency felt among these nations to sustain the momentum of economic growth. This is eminently understandable, considering the high levels of poverty prevailing in these countries. However, if economic sustainability comes to dominate official thinking to the virtual exclusion of other concerns, this suggests an absence of the willingness to acknowledge that existing patterns of economic growth are incompatible with the demands of environmental and social sustainability – and threaten harm to human wellbeing in the long term, or sooner.

In Nepal, while the language of SSDP (2016) is closely aligned with the SDGs, with the stated goal being ‘to transform lives through education’ (p. 15), the coding data show that Nepal puts the highest emphasis on human resource development and life skills among all categories coded (see **Appendix II-1** and **13.i**). There is little emphasis on the environmental dimension of sustainable development. A major aspiration of the country is to graduate from low-income to middle-income status, and education is focused on creating human resources for this purpose. We also find that, in the case of Nepal, environmental sustainability is discussed mainly with reference to the safety of schools themselves – as this relates, for example, to the reconstruction and recovery of schools in earthquake-affected districts; mainstreaming school safety and DRR in school management plans; and fostering life skills including environmental awareness and disaster preparedness. Although this is an important issue given Nepal’s situation, it largely ignores fundamental connections between unsustainable economic development, ecological damage and the exacerbation of the risk of disasters.

By contrast, just such connections between the three dimensions of sustainable development – environmental, economic and social – are drawn in the policy documents of Bhutan. These demonstrate the potential for discussing environmental sustainability across subjects and not only limiting it to obvious ones like science. Some examples of the treatment of environmental sustainability in Bhutanese textbooks for Grade 8 are as follows:

We have to acquire a deeper understanding of the total cost of modern life in the context of a finite planet. Every benefit and convenience has hidden effects that we inflict on the environment. Children need to learn their lessons from first hand experience at slaughter-houses, farms, factories, water sources, hydroelectric and nuclear power plants, sewage treatment facilities, garbage dumps, pulp mills, logging and reforestation areas, mining sites, et cetera. Even in the largest urban centres, we are still interconnected and dependent on our surroundings far beyond city limits.

(Reading and Literature, English Class 8 (2007), p. 99)

Below is another example of a textbook passage relating to economic sustainability and awareness of the impact of globalization on the economic and social life of a farming community:

Despite cries from farmers to increase protection from cheap imported food in their market, some politicians are even considering joining the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

If they do not remove all barriers to outside investment and trade, the WTO will lock them into binding trade liberalization rules and impose sanctions on their fledging industries.

Bhutan is at a cross road. Either it signs up to the WTO rules that will give foreign multi-nationals and investors rights over their laws in trade, resources and services or it continues to protect small local producers and rural economies from the vagaries of the global economy.

(Reading and Literature, English Class VIII (2007), p. 58)

An example from the Bhutan Class VIII Geography textbook of a discussion of the situation of indigenous people is also illuminating:

The Lakhaps, who are able to live at altitudes of between 3000m and 3500m, grow buck wheat and barley in summer. These crops can be cultivated in cold places where there is scanty rainfall. People use animal waste mixed with leaves as manure. Yaks and sheep give some additional income as these animals thrive in cold conditions. The population in these areas is very sparse. There are relatively few Lhakhaps, as conditions here do not support a larger population.

(A Geography of Bhutan, Our Man-made Environment, Course Book for Class VIII, p. 15)

As textbooks from Nepal could not be examined for the present study, we cannot say whether the lack of integration of sustainable development concepts noticed in policy documents there extends to textbooks. However, Bhutanese textbooks appear exceptional in terms of the extent to which they encourage critical engagement with sustainable development issues. The same can be said of the effort to revamp curriculum and textbooks made by India's apex curriculum body, the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) from the mid-2000s. As will be elaborated in the next section of this chapter, the 'national' and the 'state' or provincial pictures in India remain very different matters, so

that materials produced locally and used by most Indian learners are still unlikely to foster a critical engagement with issues relating to peace, sustainable development and global citizenship. However, NCERT's National Focus Group position paper on 'Habitat and Learning' (2006b) makes several vital points regarding the relationship between nature, livelihoods and educational inquiry. It treats children as researchers whose own learning can generate micro-level knowledge about the state of the environment. This perspective is reflected in NCERT's textbooks for environment studies and Social and Political Life (the name given to the radically reconceptualised subject known as Civics under the 2005 reforms in India). Several lessons in these textbooks offer living instances of social action on debates and conflicts pertaining to natural resources such as lakes and forests, and on dams, roads, etc. (for further discussion see Gupta, 2015).

Figure 5.2 shows a few illustrations of some of the key debates on sustainability from the many examples that we find in the Social and Political Life series of textbooks for Grades 5-8. The complexity of these issues has been presented in a way that it offers children an opportunity to develop their cognitive abilities and engage with them in a nuanced manner.

Figure 5.2 Excerpts from the Indian Grade 8 *Social and Political Life* textbook

Soma and Helen are watching the Republic Day parade on TV with their grandfather.



Oh see! An adivasi float!

Dadu why do they always show adivasis as only dancing?



Yes, don't they know anything else about us!

The lives of adivasis are very rich; most people don't know that.

Suddenly we were told that the forest was not ours. Forest officials and contractors cut down large parts of it. If we protested they beat us and then took us to court, where we did not have our lawyers and could not fight our cases.

When I was young, our village in Orissa was beautiful. We got everything we needed from the land and the forests around us. We in turn respected the land, the forest, the river.



Then how did you survive, Dadu?



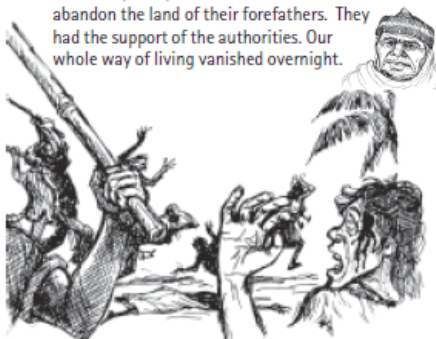
Many of us were forced to leave our homes and find seasonal work in nearby towns.



Then the companywallahs came. They said there was iron ore under our land, they wanted to mine it. They promised jobs and money, if we sold our land to them. Some villagers were excited. Others said this would destroy our lives and we would get nothing. Some gave



Then they beat and threatened us till eventually everyone was forced to sell and abandon the land of their forefathers. They had the support of the authorities. Our whole way of living vanished overnight.



Oh, Dadu! And our land what...

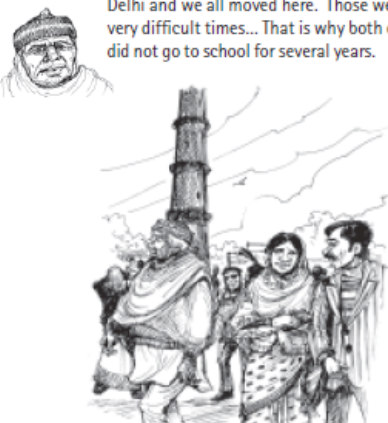
For our 30 acres we got a little money from one contractor. I never saw most of my friends again.



The money hardly lasted in the city. We had no means of livelihood anymore. We were all cramped into a tiny rented room. How we missed our carefree lives, the open spaces.



After a few years your father got a job in Delhi and we all moved here. Those were very difficult times... That is why both of you did not go to school for several years.



I hated going back to school. We had missed so much of our studies and other children made fun of us. We spoke Santhali at home, and did not know Hindi.

But now we have friends. I can even speak some English now.



I wish I could have shown my friends our village before it was destroyed.

You can still tell them about our village. It has a lot to teach them...

One day I'll make a movie on this story, our story, the adivasi story.



Source: NCERT. 2008. *Social and Political Life, Grade 8*. New Delhi, NCERT, pp. 81-82.

Environment as a Public Facility

In recent years, while the courts have come out with strong orders on environmental issues, these have sometimes affected people's livelihoods adversely.

For instance, the courts directed industries in residential areas in Delhi to close down or shift out of the city. Several of these industries were polluting the neighbourhood and discharge from these industries was polluting the river Yamuna, because they had been set up without following the rules.

But, while the court's action solved one problem, it created another. Because of the closure, many workers lost their jobs. Others were forced to go to far-away places where these factories had relocated. And the same problem now began to come up in these areas – for now these places became polluted. And the issue of the safety conditions of workers remained unaddressed.

Recent research on environmental issues in India has highlighted the fact that the growing concern for the environment among the middle classes is often at the expense of the poor. So, for example, slums need to be cleaned as part of a city's beautification drive, or as in the case above, a polluting factory is moved to the outskirts of the city. And while this awareness of the need for a clean environment is increasing, there is little concern for the safety of the workers themselves.

The challenge is to look for solutions where everyone can benefit from a clean environment. One way this can be done is to gradually move to cleaner technologies and processes in factories. The government has to encourage and support factories to do this. It will need to fine those who pollute. This will ensure that the workers' livelihoods are protected and both workers and communities living around the factories enjoy a safe environment.



Emissions from vehicles are a major cause of environmental pollution. In a series of rulings (1998 onwards), the Supreme Court had ordered all public transport vehicles using diesel were to switch to Compressed Natural Gas (CNG). As a result of this move, air pollution in cities like Delhi came down considerably. But a recent report by the Center for Science and Environment, New Delhi, shows the presence of high levels of toxic substance in the air. This is due to emissions from cars run on diesel (rather than petrol) and a sharp increase in the number of cars on the road.



Workers outside closed factories. Thrown out of work, many of the workers end up as small traders or as daily-wage labourers. Some might find work in even smaller production units, where the conditions of work are even more exploitative and the enforcement of laws weaker.

Do you think everyone got justice in the case cited above?

Can you think of other ways in which the environment can be protected? Discuss in class.

Source: NCERT. 2008. *Social and Political Life, Grade 8. New Delhi, NCERT, p. 129.*

What are the sources of environmental pollution in your area? Discuss with respect to (a) air; (b) water and (c) soil. What are the steps being taken to reduce the pollution? Can you suggest some other measures?

Source: NCERT. 2008. *Social and Political Life, Grade 8. New Delhi, NCERT, p. 131.*

However, the NCERT textbooks have made little impact on state-level textbooks, wherein didactic lessons about saving the environment continue to be presented in an abstract fashion that fails to engage with current debates or students' lived experience. The same is true of most privately published textbooks, including those produced by relatively respectable publishers. This varied picture reflects the systemic challenges posed by India's federal polity for educational reformers.

In the specific context of social and environmental studies, the goal of focusing on sustainability appears to be harder to realise in India's state-level curricula and syllabi than in those used by schools affiliated to the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE), where NCERT's textbooks are mandatory. Nor are the difficulties of introducing curriculum reform from the 'centre' downwards, so to speak, unique to India. A similar situation exists in Pakistan. Reforms initiated by national-level authorities can help to set new trends, but initiative is needed at the local and regional levels to relate broader policy goals, such as the inclusion of sustainability-related concerns, to the design of the learning materials used by most children. Such challenges may appear less severe in countries (such as those in East Asia) with more centralised systems of educational administration and curriculum development. But there too, attempts to shift attitudes on issues such as sustainability or citizenship purely through top-down initiatives are unlikely to be sufficient on their own. When it comes to promoting models of engaged, critical citizenship, for example, fostering a greater sense of responsible agency and professional autonomy amongst teachers, curriculum developers and other stakeholders is important – and is incompatible with treating them simply as minions of a distant and unaccountable central authority.

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Reforms initiated by national-level authorities can help to set new trends, but initiative is needed at the local and regional levels to relate broader policy goals, such as the inclusion of sustainability-related concerns, to the design of the learning materials used by most children
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Science and mathematics are two major school subjects that are supposed to orient children's minds towards an appreciation of issues relevant to environmental sustainability (see **Chapter 1**; UNESCO MGIEP, 2017). These two subjects also provide the foundational skills and attitudes required for the study of other areas in the curriculum, especially the social sciences. In all South Asian countries, these subjects are compulsory from the primary grades onwards although they are introduced somewhat differently and the class hours allotted to them in the daily timetable also differ (see **Appendix III**).

Concern for improving the teaching of these subjects has been expressed in curriculum policy documents. Available research points towards considerable and persistent weaknesses in curriculum planning, syllabus design, textbook

development and teacher preparation in both science and mathematics.⁷⁴ Under the Right to Education (RTE) law promulgated in India in 2010, subject-specialist teachers are supposed to be appointed to teach maths and science at upper primary and junior secondary level, but the paucity of teachers has made this goal difficult to achieve, especially in the northern Indian states where retention rates have traditionally been poor and child labour has persisted. Methods for teaching mathematics and science have also given cause for concern because, despite changes in policy, older behaviourist methods of teaching continue to be widely popular. **Box 5.2** provides an example of the challenge of translating policy into practice and efforts to overcome this challenge.

Box 5.2 Improving science and mathematics teaching

India's NCF 2005 recommends constructivist pedagogic practices, and these are also now mandated in new teacher training syllabi. However, the use of drills and cramming for introducing small children to basic mathematical concepts remains common, resulting in poor capacity for application of mathematical skills or problem solving in different areas, including science. Similar problems have been noted in other countries of the region. NGOs in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Afghanistan and Nepal have been quite active in promoting progressive methods of teaching science and mathematics. In certain pockets, these efforts have borne fruit, and, to a certain extent, NGO-initiated innovations have been mainstreamed in curriculum policy too.

The Hoshangabad Science Teaching Programme (HSTP)⁷⁵ for rural schools, initiated in the 1970s, provides a case in point here. The HSTP is the first example in India of collaboration between voluntary groups and professional scientists in a participatory curriculum development exercise aimed at accommodating innovative methods such as the 'discovery' approach to science teaching in place of the conventional textbook-centred methodology. Later, environment-based education came to be incorporated as an integral part of science teaching. The state government of Madhya Pradesh gave the Programme space in the development of the curriculum — including textbooks, low cost experiments with a kit for every classroom, an open book examination system and intensive teacher education programmes. Subsequent reforming efforts in India and neighbouring countries have taken inspiration from HTSP. India's NCF 2005 built on lessons learnt from this programme.

Gender equality

For the region as a whole, gender equality has emerged as a major social policy issue over recent decades. In general, it has also been increasingly highlighted in official statements of educational aims. In documents from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Bhutan, gender equality figures frequently (see **Appendix II-5**).

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For the region as a whole, gender equality has emerged as a major social policy issue over recent decades”

74 In the case of India, for example, see: India. 1993. *Learning without burden*. New Delhi, Ministry of Human Resource Development.

75 See https://www.eklavya.in/index.php?option=com_content&task=category§ion-id=12&id=52&Itemid=74.

However, the present study shows that the references to gender equality continue to be only moderately frequent in Pakistan and altogether absent in Iran. Related difficulties or challenges posed for educational policy range from the general goal of equalising educational opportunity to specific reforms to cultural practices, such as child marriage, that are discriminatory or harmful for girls. The

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The rural-urban divide, poverty, the caste system and rights of religious minorities are some of the key dimensions of inequality that intersect with gender disparity, complicating efforts to tackle it”

distribution of educational opportunities in an equitable manner is a subject where several types of inequality intersect. The rural-urban divide, poverty, the caste system and rights of religious minorities are some of the key dimensions of inequality that intersect with gender disparity, complicating efforts to tackle it.

Problems of inequality and injustice in the sphere of gender relations have recently received considerable attention in different countries across the region. The gender gap in literacy has narrowed in most parts of South Asia although it remains as high as 44 per cent in Afghanistan (National Education Strategic Plan III, 2016, p. 19). In many parts of rural India, as well as Pakistan and Nepal, the gender gap in adult literacy remains high (UNESCO, 2012a).

Portrayal and discussion of the gender gap in this and other respects have been acknowledged as important means of critical pedagogy, especially by NGOs active in this domain. School education is a major sphere in which South Asian governments have chosen to be pro-active on the gender front. The coding data show that South Asia is the only region that addressed gender equality with a high weightage in policy and curricular documents, arguably due to having the lowest levels of gender equality within the region (see **Chapter 2**).

Box 5.3 Examples of references to gender equality in education policy and curriculum frameworks in South Asia

Gender equality is superficially incorporated in policy documents across the region, accompanying a long list of internationally prevalent key words and concepts. The Sri Lankan National Policy (1997), for example, states: ‘Concepts relating to peace education, national harmony, democratic principles, human rights, gender equality and environmental conservation will be built into the Social Studies and other subjects as appropriate’ (p. 1). Similarly, Bangladesh’s NEP (2010) aims ‘to remove socio-economic discrimination irrespective of race, religion and creed and to eradicate gender disparity; to develop non-communalism, friendliness, global fraternity, fellow-feeling and respect for human rights’ (p. 8).

Nepalese documents discuss issues like child marriage, lack of girls’ toilets in schools, gender disparity in society, and lack of appropriate teacher training. For example, the SSDP (2016) acknowledges that ‘good quality sexuality education, particularly education that integrates gender and human rights in a meaningful way is needed’ (p. 23), and that ‘married girls are 11 times more likely to be out of school compared to their unmarried peers and early marriage is cited as the second most common reason for school drop-out’ (p. 26).

Pakistan's NEP (2009) recognises that there exist disparities across 'gender, ethnic minorities, provinces, regions and rural-urban divides', particularly with regard to access to education; these disparities are collectively identified as an issue with 'serious implications for sustainable and equitable development in the country' (p. 66)

The emphasis, however, has been on increasing girls' enrolment and retention, which is reflected in all the country-level background reports and noted as an aspect of social and economic 'sustainability'. But such documents tend to highlight the developmental benefits seen as flowing from raising access to education for girls – such as reduced fertility rates. There is indeed considerable evidence to suggest that such benefits are real – and reducing levels of population growth, for example, is certainly a goal well worth pursuing for most societies in this region. However, a discourse emphasising the instrumentalist

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Girls are still too often valued as 'mothers of development', rather primarily as human beings deserving of dignity and respect in their own right”

value of literacy and education among girls has dominated not only policy but also academic discourse on development (as noted by Dreze and Sen, 1995). Recognition of the intrinsic value of girls education, in line with UNESCO's humanistic vision, remains weak. Girls are still too often valued as 'mothers of development', rather primarily as human beings deserving of dignity and respect in their own right.

Addressing gender disparity through curricular intervention has also received some official attention, for example in India. The Social and Political Life series published by the NCERT for upper-primary classes demonstrates how gender issues can be woven into all aspects of knowledge about social, political and economic structures for the early adolescent student. Use of literature to address gender issues is also a noteworthy innovation. However, questions surrounding differences between national and state-level policies and practices (noted above) have implications for the reach and impact of such innovative approaches.

Human rights

Direct references to human rights are found in policy documents across the region. The coding data show that sub-categories relating to rights and responsibilities and social justice, as well as social equity, were referenced frequently in policy and curricular documents analysed for South Asia. By contrast, references to civil liberties were either very infrequent (in Iran, India, Bangladesh, Afghanistan) or completely absent (in Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Nepal and Bhutan) (see **Appendix II-4**). References to human rights occurred mainly in the context of access to education and right to education in the mother tongue (see **Box 5.4** for an example).

Box 5.4 References to human rights in Nepal's School Sector Development Plan (SSDP), 2016-2023

The Constitution of Nepal (2015) guarantees the fundamental right to education and lays down the directive principles of the federal state and the provinces on education (p. 16, SSDP). Reflecting this guarantee, Nepal's SSDP states: 'Every citizen shall have the right to free and compulsory basic education, and free education up to the secondary level' (p. 17). The SSDP and the Ministry of Education have a policy of supporting mother tongue-based multilingual education up to grade 3 (SSDP, p. 41).

Curricular engagement with the concept of human rights is far from a matter of common knowledge or expertise. The Indian NCF and several related position papers provide evidence of in-depth understanding of the challenge of using critical pedagogy to deal with violations of human rights, such as those involving equality and social justice, that are structurally embedded in culture. As manifested in a relatively low weightage on the sub-categories of democracy and civil liberties in the coding data (see **Appendix II-4**), documents from South Asian countries feature rather limited references to the wider, democratic context of human rights. A paucity of references to the sub-categories under 'culture of peace' such as peace building, conflict resolution, non-violence, and awareness of forms of abuse also suggests that the inclusion of human rights among lists of policy priorities is often somewhat tokenistic or symbolic (see **Appendix II-6**).

Amongst the eight South Asian countries surveyed for this study, the coding data show that Afghanistan places the highest weightage on the concept of peace, covering all sub-categories. This is understandable given the unending violence suffered by the country. Other countries that place a relatively high emphasis on this concept are India, Bhutan and Bangladesh. On the other hand, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Pakistan and especially Iran put low emphasis on peace in policy and curricular documents. In Sri Lanka, where violent internal strife was long endemic, education ought to be seen as a major site for reflecting on and engaging with children's experience of violent conflict. This can also be said of Nepal, where human rights figure quite highly among policy priorities. However, acknowledgement of the context and ethos in which human rights need to be addressed seem absent from policy, and especially from curriculum guidelines (where one might expect the context to be more fully elaborated). This reminds us the limits of what education, on its own, can achieve when the larger context is shaped by social and political factors that militate against the realisation of peace, sustainability and tolerance.

To conclude, official conceptions of the social purpose of education are dominated in South Asia by the goal of human resource development. Some other aims are accorded varying levels of importance, but in official discourse they often derive legitimacy from their supposed contribution to the attainment

of the economic and strategic goals of national development. The following excerpt from a Grade 4 Pakistani textbook nicely illustrates this issue:

Results of Peace

1. **In a peace loving society, people live a prosperous life.**
2. **A peace loving nation is respected in the world.**
3. **Foreign investors like to invest in a peaceful society that increases job opportunities.**
4. **Justice and democracy prevail in a peaceful society.**
5. **A peaceful society achieves educational, social and economic development.**

Source: Punjab Curriculum and Textbook Board (PCTB). 2016. Grade 4 Social Studies. Lahore, PCTB, p. 55.

This illustrates the almost mystical charm that education, as a general panacea, appears to hold for curriculum designers and policy makers. It also demonstrates a lack of understanding of the importance of engaging with the lived experience of children themselves – in readily comprehensible language. The ‘Results of Peace’ listed in this Pakistani text are meant to be appreciated by a 9- or 10-year old grade 4 child. The text assumes that the child already understands concepts like ‘justice’ and ‘democracy’ and the role of ‘foreign investors’. As a passage in a prescribed textbook, it is likely to be memorized by the child, but in most cases almost certainly without comprehension. If textbook creators expect a marginal comprehension to result from the cramming of children’s minds with these five ‘results of peace’, this is unlikely to include an appreciation of the often paradoxical or contradictory nature of struggles for justice, or the ambiguity of the benefits that ‘foreign investors’ may bring to developing nations. Blind faith in the effectiveness of education as a tool for pursuing national development here trumps appreciation of the intrinsic value of peace, justice, democracy or of learning itself as a crucial constitutive element of the good life.

B: Challenges of National Identities and Social Cohesion

Nationalism and Citizenship Education

Citizenship education has taken divergent forms in South Asia, but mostly within the older colonial model which used the school subject of civics to inform children about the various (beneficial) roles the state plays in their life. As nations that have experienced prolonged colonial control and mass struggles against it, countries of this region actively use schooling as a means of inculcating nationalist fervour. In some cases, this takes the form of militaristic nationalism that harks back to older, pre-colonial experiences of armed conflict (Benei, 2008). In India, recent curriculum reforms at federal level have attempted to

and thus often in the classroom, too. This approach also remains common, if not universal, in other parts of South Asia, including India where patriotic nationalist ideas take a militaristic tone in many provincial textbooks, particularly with reference to the wars that India has fought with Pakistan and China (Benei, 2008). Clearly, conventional approaches to citizenship education thus present a key challenge to prospects for realising education for peace (see **Box 5.5** for an illustration of the role assigned to schooling in developing national identity in Bangladesh and Pakistan).

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Patriotism constitutes a paradigm that permits evasion of unresolved issues of memory and identity-building in curricula and textbooks — and thus often in the classroom, too”

Box 5.5 Developing national identity through education: The cases of education policy in Bangladesh and Pakistan

A nationalist agenda is closely tied to identity-building and values education. Narratives of war heroes are now as common in textbooks as biographies of the leaders of the anti-colonial struggle used to be (and still are in most parts of South Asia). In Pakistan, narratives of the various wars fought with India are commonly used for building a patriotic civic identity combined with qualities such as loyalty to the nation and the spirit of sacrifice.

In Bangladesh, educational policy emphasises the importance of language in the movement for independence from Pakistan. One of the key objectives of the Bangladeshi NEP (2010) is ‘to inspire the students with the spirit of [the] war of liberation and develop patriotism, nationalism and qualities of good citizens’. Moreover, a major objective of primary education in Bangladesh is expressed using emotive language: ‘to ignite in [students] the spirit of [the] national liberation movement and encourage them with patriotism to dedicate themselves to nation-building’; ‘Knowledge of our national heritage, values and glorious history will make our future generation proud and courageous, efficient in the acquisition of knowledge and help them grow up into a true patriotic force’ (NEP, 2010, p. 6). The education policy document also tries to ensure that this emphasis on national identity is reflected in curricular materials, rather than serving a merely symbolic purpose: ‘Textbooks of all levels will include in appropriate sections the context and spirit of language movement and liberation war, the factual history related to them and the narratives of heroism of the freedom fighters’ (p. 69).

Similarly, Pakistan’s NEP (2009) has many references to the need for creating a national identity among students as expressed below:

Our education system must provide quality education to our children and youth to enable them to realize their individual potential and contribute to the development of society and nation, creating a sense of Pakistani nationhood, the concepts of tolerance, social justice, democracy, their regional and local culture and history based on the basic ideology enunciated in the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

Global Citizenship Education

Material related to the general orientation or justification of global citizenship (see **Appendix II-7**) or to critical engagement with global issues – such as international law, transnational corporations, migration – did not receive substantial treatment in any South Asian policy or curriculum documents (see **Appendix II-8-10**). This marks a sharp contrast with the curricular emphasis on

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Even as educational policy documents attempt to articulate aims like producing confident, competent and globally competitive citizens, such insecurities are also conveyed in the heavy emphasis placed on national identity and interests”

preparing children for competitive participation in the globalized economy (see the emphasis placed on critical thinking and creative thinking in **Appendix II-11**). As in other Asian sub-regions, the categories global systems, structures and processes, and global issues hardly feature in South Asian documents. In Bangladesh, the naming of ‘Bangladesh and Global Studies’ as a subject from Grade 1 indicates the importance attached in educational policy to the articulation of national aspirations. The tokenistic rather than substantial nature of the ‘global’ reference is evident precisely because the subject is introduced so early, i.e. in the first year of primary education when a child has little natural interest in or awareness of a global

context. But a sense of urgency and haste in introducing a global dimension to the curriculum is not confined to Bangladesh, and can be largely attributed to economic insecurities that are acutely felt across this region and beyond. Even as educational policy documents attempt to articulate aims like producing confident, competent and globally competitive citizens, such insecurities are also conveyed in the heavy emphasis placed on national identity and interests.

Limitations and vulnerabilities of the industrial base in different regions of South Asia are widely reflected in curriculum policies. In India, while the NCF (2005) attempts to prioritise internal reforms in education, in order to strengthen humanistic, child-centric tendencies, state-level (i.e. sub-national level) curriculum policies follow the more common global discourse of competencies. The Indian NCF takes a cautious view of the implications of globalization for education whereas certain state-level documents, although claiming that they are ‘aligned’ to the NCF, tend to focus overwhelmingly on the economic aims of schooling. In Bangladesh, the growth of the readymade clothes industry is officially celebrated as one example of the role that global competitiveness can play in national development (Ahmed, 2004).

The case of Bhutan is unique. As a small country geographically placed between two large, populous and powerful nations (India and China), it has attempted to stake out its own path of development. This has been articulated in the idea of Gross National Happiness (GNH) as the aim of development rather than the

more familiar GDP. The National Education Framework (2012) of Bhutan specifies the meaning and implications of GNH for education. Nurturing mindfulness and reflective capacities is given high priority, and values to be cultivated among citizens are defined in terms of various levels of relationships: in the family, communities and the nation. The Framework states:

Bhutan envisions a System of Whole Education that will nurture and encourage its citizens to be mindful, reflective, creative, skilful, successful, confident, active and informed, capable of contributing effectively to the successful realisation of GNH and the values therein, and building a peaceful, democratic, sovereign, secure, stable and self-reliant Bhutan, full of creativity and vitality. (p. 11)

Bhutan's model of development and its associated vision for education is uncommon, but some of the constraints it faces are not. Corporal punishment is an example of a culturally rooted practice at odds with the declared aims of reform. There have been substantial efforts by the Ministry of Education to ban corporal punishment, but these have met with significant resistance.⁷⁷ Similar resistance in other South Asian societies is widely-known but seldom acknowledged. A large-scale survey carried by India's National Commission for the Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) showed that the practice of administering corporal punishment is prevalent among all categories of schools and at all levels of education (NCPCR, 2011). In Pakistan, efforts to control this practice have been mooted with the support of NGOs, but cooperation from teachers has been patchy.⁷⁸ The prevalence of corporal punishment is an indicator of the extent to which education is perceived across the region as a means of regimentation. This assumption finds legitimacy in traditional understandings of the role of parents and teachers in the children's lives.

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The prevalence of corporal punishment is an indicator of the extent to which education is perceived across the region as a means of regimentation”

GCED ideas may not be easy to reconcile with nationalist goals. This is particularly true of South Asia because nation-building agendas are informed either by the imperative of military preparedness to meet external attack, or by the threat of internal strife, or both. The kind of enlargement of empathy associated with GCED is not easy to accommodate in such a climate, despite the economic incentives that are often invoked for nurturing a global outlook among the young.

The challenges posed by excessively nationalistic pressures on curriculum designers and textbook developers needs to be understood in the context of widespread political uncertainty. Reforms designed to address the challenge of nationalism are hard to enact, and even harder to implement, in circumstances of domestic and international political instability – even while such instability

77 See <http://www.saievac.org/cp/bhutan>.

78 See <http://www.endcorporalpunishment.org/assets/pdfs/states-reports/Pakistan.pdf>.

renders them all the more urgently needed. Nonetheless, the NCERT example from India shows that professional engagement with curriculum designing can, to a certain extent, contribute to the sustainability of reforms despite a far from propitious political backdrop.

Language: As a School Subject and Medium of Instruction

Teaching of language at school, especially at primary level, constitutes the most complex area of education policy making across South Asia. This complexity arises from three distinct factors: the multilingual character of society; the impact of colonial rule; and the limited institutional capacity of the system for managing reform. Country reports commissioned for this study testify to problems arising from the interaction of these factors. While the multilingual nature of society is acknowledged as the basis of public policy across most of the region, official documents maintain silence on the widespread use of English as the medium of instruction in private schools catering to social elites. Formal public policy in all countries of the region stresses the importance of using the child's mother tongue as the medium of learning at the primary stage. For example, Nepal official policy states that the basic aim of educating children is 'to develop their linguistic skills over time in their mother tongue, as well as in Nepali and in English and to use those skills for their academic, social and economic advancement and for building a socially and economically vibrant society' (SSDP, 2016, p. 42).

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Only Bhutan has departed from this conventional wisdom and has made English the medium of instruction for all children across different subjects.⁷⁹ In all other countries of the region, English is taught as a distinct subject in government schools, from Grade 3 onwards in most cases (see **Appendix III**). In India, it has been introduced from Grade 1 in many states, apparently in an attempt to bridge the gap between government and private schools, but with no discernible effect on the rapid growth in popularity of private schools. The Indian 3-language formula has, over the last few decades, attracted other countries in the region as a means of promoting national integration. However, the data received from different countries indicate that the regional language and English remain the two main components of the school timetable in elementary classes.

Bangladesh is the only country in the region with a single dominant language – language-based identity having been at the core of the popular movement that led to the formation of Bangladesh as an independent nation-state (Hamid and

⁷⁹ This policy was introduced in the 1960s under the third king, Jigme Dorji Wangchuck, who wanted the country to be able to 'communicate with the rest of the world' (Bhutan, 2014).

Jahan, 2015). This also holds true for Iran where, despite the host of diverse ethnic groups, the tendency has always been to strengthen the Persian language ‘as the lingua franca’ (Fundamental Reform Document of Education, p. 18), chiefly due to the lack of relevant information on ethnic groups. Minority languages are acknowledged by the constitution but are not given a formal status, as multilingualism is seen as a threat to national unity (see Riazi, 2005; Haddadian-Moghaddam and Meylaerts, 2015). English does not feature in the Fundamental Reform Document of Education, but there are provisions for foreign language education so long as an ‘Islamic-Iranian identity’ is enforced (p. 32).

In Pakistan, language and identity issues, especially with reference to the relationship between national and provincial languages, have loomed large in education policy debates (Rahman, 2008). For other countries, the choice medium of instruction at early primary level presents has often become a major political question, with political movements forming around campaigns to secure ‘mother tongue’ recognition for particular languages. Thus, language learning has sometimes taken on a peculiar political instrumentality of its own – becoming an arena for struggles to contest or assert particular narratives of identity and related administrative arrangements (Box 5.5 shows how the role of language in the second national movement in Bangladesh is related in textbooks). In

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Tensions between the trend towards the privatisation or marketisation of educational provision and attainment of the goals adumbrated in SDG 4.7 is acute across the region, and is epitomized by the intensity of competition to access English-medium schooling”

Sri Lanka, the reconciliation reached after prolonged, violent strife between Sinhala and Tamil (communities distinguished amongst other things by language) forms an important basis for the new educational policy.

To a considerable extent, the issue of English as a medium of instruction, insofar as it also involves issues related to the prevalence of private schooling, impinges on the ‘challenges of competitiveness’ discussed briefly in the following section. Tensions between the trend towards the privatisation or marketisation of educational provision and

attainment of the goals adumbrated in SDG 4.7 is acute across the region, and is epitomized by the intensity of competition to access English-medium schooling. Although English is now taught in government schools across South Asia from the early grades, the quality of teaching is apparently poor, fuelling the demand for private schooling. However, private schooling also implies, though not in every case, the use of English as a medium of teaching, not merely its inclusion in the list of subjects taught. The role that English plays in maintaining and reproducing the class divide between the richer and poorer sections of society is an issue on which policy is generally silent. This can be understood by recalling that English-medium schooling is served by private finance. Across South Asia, English-medium education has greatly expanded over recent decades. Preparing

small children for entry to English-medium private schools has also emerged as a substantial shadow industry in urban centres. As a study by LaDousa (2014) shows, the division between English and vernacular medium schools is indicative of social incoherence thriving amidst a dominant ethos of great insecurity and competitiveness.

Language learning at primary level means acquiring skills of reading and writing. Discussion of these processes is conspicuously absent from policy discourse across South Asia, except in the national-level Indian document. The persistence of old methods of teaching reading, which emphasise decoding and sounding out rather than comprehension and enjoyment, has been noted by scholars across South Asia. Despite the relatively high rate of enrolment now achieved in all South Asian countries, lack of functional literacy in the adult population, especially among women, religious minorities and tribal groups, remains a serious problem associated with acute social inequality.

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The role that English plays in maintaining and reproducing the class divide between the richer and poorer sections of society is an issue on which policy is generally silent
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Religion and Values

The question of how values should be taught has been debated throughout South Asia's modern history. During the colonial period, this question had already become highly political. Values were widely portrayed and perceived as associated with distinct cultural and religious communities, which in turn were generally portrayed as impermeable and immutable. Whether schools should teach any values explicitly became a matter of contention because many were run by groups representing a particular caste or religion. Colonial policy adopted a posture of equal distance from all religions. This evolved into the framework of a 'secular' approach when India became independent. Something quite different happened in Pakistan, where religion was treated as a legitimate source of values to be taught in schools.

Regular class time is provided for moral education in elementary schools in Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka. In Sri Lanka, religion is taught as a separate main subject all through elementary classes. Bangladesh mandates the teaching of 'Religion and Moral Education' all through classes 1 to 8. The Bangladesh NEP (2010) explains one of the objectives of Religious and Moral Education as follows: 'Students will be encouraged to acquire noble virtues, honesty and courage. They will be infused with patriotic spirit. Students will build up their characters with moral and human values that will be reflected in their social and national consciousness' (p. 30).

In Pakistan, the study of Islam starts in Grade 1 for all children; similarly, the study of the Holy Quran in Iran and Islamic Education in Afghanistan also begin in Grade 1. India has no such provision in its state-run schools. In a recent curriculum

reform exercise, the NCERT instead took the view that peace education should serve as a perspective for syllabus and textbook development across all subjects. This approach was seen as opening the way for values to be incorporated into the curriculum without providing for a separate moral education class. However, the more conventional teaching of moral education continues to be popular in many of India's private schools, and textbooks for this subject, published by private publishers, are widely sold, in many cases across national borders. These typically offer stories from different religions as the core 'content' of moral education, which is sometimes termed 'peace education'. The practice of using music education for quasi-religious education is also quite common, although research or documentation on this issue remains scant.

Both explicitly religious and more secular varieties of moral education in South Asian schools contribute to the general ethos and goal of nationalist socialisation. Political shifts have sometimes caused the nationalistic ethos of schooling to take on a militaristic form. From the perspective of sustainable development and the goal of encouraging a culture of peace through education, excessive emphasis on nationalist fervour and rivalry pose a palpable challenge for educational reform in South Asia.

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Both explicitly religious and more secular varieties of moral education in South Asian schools contribute to the general ethos and goal of nationalist socialisation
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C: Challenges of Competitiveness and Regimentation

A variety of factors, some of them common to other parts of Asia, make South Asia especially prone to early regimentation and stressful competitiveness among the young. The factors responsible for these problems are both socio-cultural and systemic in nature. Historical legacies play a substantial role, contributing to entrenched systemic weaknesses that frustrate aspirations for reform. The most important among these consists of a public examination system that 'fails' a substantial number of students at different points in their

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Private schools use competitive entry and sustained monitoring of the child by means of test scores to lure parents, thereby undermining the apparently 'softer' creative assessment strategies propagated by the government
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institutional trajectory, starting with primary grades. Recent attempts to postpone the earliest public examination are facing serious resistance on the grounds that children will lose motivation to study without the looming threat of a high-stakes test. Post-Jomtien reforms in most South Asian countries attempted to introduce continuous assessment in place of the traditional annual public examinations that brand most children as failures. Many international organisations were involved in supporting such efforts, but so far with decidedly mixed results. Even as government schools are being pushed to adopt such reforms,

the growth of private schooling exerts a contrary pressure. Private schools use competitive entry and sustained monitoring of the child by means of test scores to lure parents, thereby undermining the apparently ‘softer’ creative assessment strategies propagated by the government. This ‘softer’ approach is also facing resistance from the public, due not only to a tradition of regimentation in domestic child-rearing practices, but also – and crucially – to the strong backwash effect of systems for recruiting candidates into higher education and prestigious professions, and a social context of minimal or virtually non-existent state-provided social entitlements.

Imposition of a strict and often stressful regimen on the child’s everyday life is one of the attractions that private schools offer. Precisely why this attracts parents deserves fuller investigation, but previous research has pointed towards two main causes. One is a conventional patriarchal ethos whereby the father is supposed to convey sternness in all situations (Kakar, 1971). This stereotype has conventionally been applied to definitions of the good teacher: traditionally male and expected to treat his students with fatherly sternness. This image of patriarchal authority was also associated with the moral right to administer severe corporal punishment (Kumar, 2016). The other source consists of the imprint of colonial – essentially Victorian – ideas concerning discipline and development of ‘character’ (NCPCR, 2011). These ideas shaped the military academies and ‘public’ schools started during the colonial period across South Asia. From architecture to everyday routines and institutional ethos, the boys’ public school promoted the values of dedication, loyalty and strict discipline (Srivastava, 2007). These norms seem to have found a fertile soil in the patriarchal ethos of the Indian sub-continent. New ‘public’ (i.e. high-end private) schools continue to promise to parents that their wards – now including girls as well as boys – will benefit from the high standards of discipline and character-building. They are seen as models for other private as well as government schools, especially residential (i.e. boarding) establishments.

Between these high-end schools and the modest low-fee private and supposedly free government schools, there exists a vast social gap. The single bridge that straddles this divide is the old public examination system, popularly known as ‘Board exams’. Teaching in every kind of school is driven by the aim of giving children the best possible preparation for the High School (grade 10) and the Higher Secondary (grade 12) exams. Despite attempts at reform, these exams have essentially changed little since the end of the 19th century. Their features are: questions are based on prescribed textbooks and require fixed answers; examinees are marked and classified in ‘divisions’ on the basis of their aggregate or total marks in all subjects; and a substantial proportion of students are declared to have ‘failed’. These features have encouraged cramming, coaching and intense competition. Despite criticism and frequent promise of reform, the Board exam has survived across South Asia. It serves as a regulator of transition to higher levels of education, withstanding pressure from below consequent to

the expansion of access to schooling and the democratisation of aspiration. In a study of several countries witnessing similar tendencies, Dore (1976) coined the term ‘diploma disease’. South Asian societies display this affliction in an acute form, with sustained competitiveness from the earliest grades reinforcing regimentation of children through pedagogic and other means. The recent fashion for outcomes-based approaches in education policy (associated with the OECD/PISA paradigm) is, if anything, further accentuating such pressures.

The growth of private education has meanwhile challenged some older social policy norms, such as the imperative of protecting education from the intrusion of profit-seeking private enterprise. Across South Asia today, there is a proliferation of chains of schools operated by large commercial concerns, some domiciled overseas. They thrive in a market marked by the perceived under-supply of high-quality education – whereby ‘quality’ is taken to connote forms of curriculum

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Across South Asia today, there is a proliferation of chains of schools operated by large commercial concerns, some domiciled overseas”

and instruction capable of transforming children into globally competitive units of production. This conception of quality typically implies a heavy reliance on imported, decontextualised curricula, teaching materials and pedagogical approaches – as well as the use of English as the medium of instruction. Private tuition constitutes another (related) instance of a commercial boom in the education sector. Sen (2010, p. 14) found that at the primary level in West Bengal, 57 per cent of

students were receiving private tutoring. Rana et al. (2005) estimated the costs of private tutoring for students in government primary schools in West Bengal at 21.5 per cent of the total costs of educating a child (p. 152). Nationally, a 2008 market survey of companies offering coaching estimated the size of the sector at US\$6.4 billion and predicted annual growth of 15 per cent over the subsequent 4 years (Vora and Dewan, 2009, cited in Bray and Lykins, 2012, p. 60).

The meanings ascribed to child-centredness or the promotion of ‘global citizenship’ in commercial educational enterprises are a matter deserving of further research. Amongst other things, the commercialisation of education in South Asia is associated with the multiplication of internationally-affiliated schools, stretching an already wide social gap between the higher middle classes and their less privileged compatriots. Governments have generally been reluctant to interfere in the functioning of such schools by regulating them. Thus, while policy documents may claim all-round progress towards the achievement of equity as envisaged by SDG 4.7, fast-moving changes in the political economy are exacerbating entrenched inequities. Educational and curricular planning thus confronts fundamental social, economic and political challenges to the realisation of a more balanced, inclusive and humanistic vision of schooling – with formidable vested interests opposing meaningful change. Research into the relationship between culturally entrenched inequalities, more recent discourses

of meritocracy, and the social structures and interests that such discourses help legitimise, is urgently needed to guide educational policy across South Asia.

CONCLUSION

This review of the South Asian region underlines the difficulty of using official policy and curricular statements as the basis for any assessment of the extent to which education is contributing to attaining goals such as peace, global citizenship and sustainability of development. Making any such assessment requires that we also consider a range of fundamental problems or questions relating to the context out of which policy emerges, and which it seeks to influence. One such question relates to systemic or institutional capacity – of the system for administering schools, and of the broader policy making apparatus. Both need to be studied before we can arrive at any objective understanding of how education is contributing to the achievement of policy goals. In India, the national and state-level realities differ so considerably that generalization regarding the situation across the country is practically impossible.

An elite stratum of private schools dominates and distorts perceptions of education amongst policy making elites – divorcing their own experience from that of the bulk of the population served by public schooling. This is true for India, Pakistan and most of the rest of South Asia, where there exists a growing gap between conditions in state-run schools and private schools, the latter now representing about one third of the system. The continued growth of private schooling exerts a complex and largely detrimental influence on the general education system and its capacity for contributing to the realisation of a coherent policy agenda driven by humanistic values. The assumption that state regulation alone can ensure effective public accountability and attention to the broader goals of education is questionable at the best of times. But across South Asia, the regulatory powers of states have come under great strain over the recent decades, as global institutions have effectively persuaded governments to shed state responsibilities and open up a market in provision of key public services to private operators. These globally endorsed policies have created new strains and contradictions in a system already steeped in attitudes of colonial condescension towards the poorer strata of society.

Ideological conflicts are part of the everyday reality of South Asia. Many of these conflicts have been managed relatively effectively by democratic institutions, but others have tended towards violence. Indeed, violence has become endemic in several regions of the subcontinent, directly affecting children's overall livelihoods and their opportunities for education. But even for the majority of children, spared the direct impact of

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One way in which education can contribute to peace is by fostering the belief that a desire for peace is something shared by one's closest neighbours
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violence, schooling often disseminates messages that threaten to inure the young to the inevitability of conflict. One way in which education can contribute to peace is by fostering the belief that a desire for peace is something shared by one's closest neighbours. However, across South Asia, schooling frequently does the opposite. Too often, lessons learned in school contribute to distrust and a belief in the inveterate hostility and fundamental 'otherness' of neighbouring nations, or even fellow-nationals of a different caste or creed. This is not a recipe for any kind of sustainable future for the region.

“While the spread of education has created channels of upward mobility, the path from education and training to work that offers dignity and the chance of a decent and secure livelihood has become increasingly uncertain across South Asia”

One fundamental way in which education can contribute to peace and sustainability is by helping to ensure that all citizens have a tangible stake in a shared future. While the spread of education has created channels of upward mobility, the path from education and training to work that offers dignity and the chance of a decent and secure livelihood has become increasingly uncertain across South Asia. This larger context has mitigated the gains made over the decades in several spheres of social policy, such as gender relations, human rights, minority and tribal rights, and rural-urban equilibrium. Not only attention to curricular content and pedagogical practices, but also

restoration and reform of the institutions crucial to the effective delivery of curriculum, are therefore essential to the prospects for further progress towards ESD/GCED.

CHAPTER 6

Central Asia and Mongolia

THE CONTEXT: POST-SOCIALIST TRANSFORMATIONS AND EDUCATIONAL CHANGE

The term Central Asia typically denotes Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan: all were part of the Soviet Union before 1991. Together with Mongolia, Manchuria and parts of Iran and Western China, they are sometimes alternatively described as Inner Asia (Rossabi, 2017). Mongolia is hard to classify geopolitically, having had extensive historical links with various parts of Northeast and Inner/Central Asia (and points far beyond) during different periods (Sabloff, 2011). But for the purposes of this report, we treat Mongolia together with the states of Central Asia, given their shared recent legacy of Soviet hegemony, and the importance of this for their educational development.

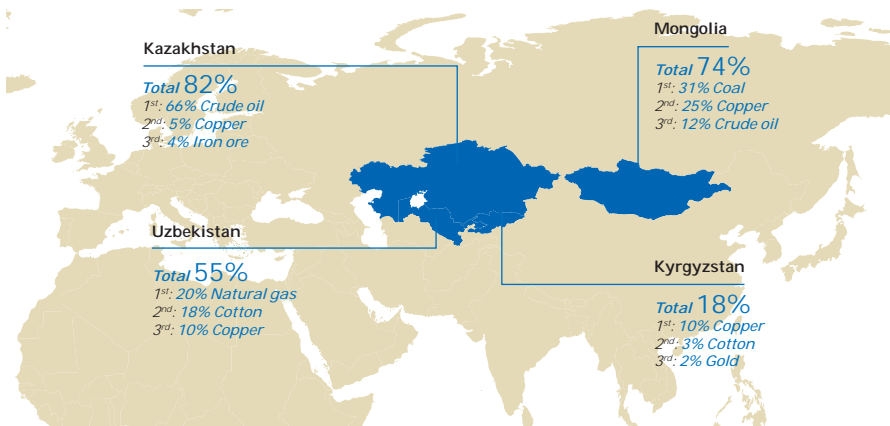
The Central Asian states and Mongolia share many social and cultural commonalities, but their recent socialist past and the scale and impact of their post-socialist political, economic and social transformations are among the most significant. While the Central Asian states were numbered among the Soviet Union's fifteen republics, Mongolia, although formally sovereign, was often regarded as the 16th republic or a Soviet satellite state by foreign observers (Lattimore, 1956). Though each state had a distinct geopolitical and domestic political situation, the rediscovery of national identities and the process of nation building became one of the fundamental tasks for the countries in this region after the collapse of the Soviet Union. In particular, establishing unitary states in multi-ethnic societies was one of the major and urgent challenges for the Central Asian states, which until the collapse of the USSR had shown little propensity for political independence. The dissolution of the Soviet state prompted feverish efforts at nation-building throughout the region, as the governing elites of new states sought to re-appropriate and re-interpret histories distorted or ignored

during Communist times, and turn schooling to the purpose of instilling new forms of national consciousness.

Economic and Political Contexts

The countries reviewed in this chapter – Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia and Uzbekistan – find themselves in significantly different political and economic situations after nearly three decades of ‘post-Soviet transition’. The abrupt end of the Soviet-era command economy in the region, which was the poorest and least developed in the entire socialist bloc, and consequent economic crisis in the 1990s, had a devastating effect on the school system. High unemployment, steeply rising poverty and declining government expenditure on public goods, including education, were experienced across the region. The economies of the Central Asian states and Mongolia declined by 20–60% of GDP by 1996 (Hill, 2002; UNDP, 1997). The education system faced unprecedented difficulties due to a lack of funding, shortages of human resources and declining enrolment rates. The Central Asian states and Mongolia have addressed these issues with varying effectiveness, depending on the performance of their resource-dependent economies and official policy priorities. Post-socialist educational reforms have been circumscribed by the availability of finance, in turn contingent on national economic performance. But as elsewhere in the former Soviet bloc, these societies were also subjected to ideologically flavoured doses of ‘shock therapy’, administered by institutions such as the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank. As Steiner-Khamsi and Stolpe (Chapter 6, 2006) have argued with respect to Mongolia, this contributed to the wilful destruction of the institutional infrastructure of schooling systems that had achieved strikingly high levels of literacy and numeracy during the Soviet period.

Figure 6.1 Share of commodities in total exports in Central Asia and Mongolia



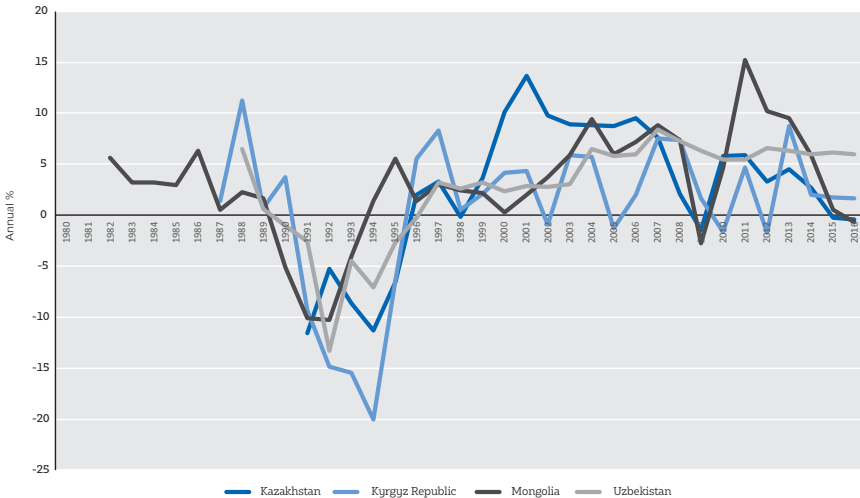
Source: Adapted from Saggi and Anukoonwattaka, 2015

The pace of the government programs of economic reform (price liberalization; privatisation of companies, land and public apartments; and financial reform) – particularly privatisation of medium- and large-scale state companies – intensified through the mid-1990s across the region, resulting in a substantial shifting of assets into the private sector. Though Uzbekistan implemented ‘gradual reform’, including partial financial reform and privatisation – and enjoyed relatively strong economic performance – the country faced high rates of unemployment and rising income discrepancies between urban and rural regions (Falkingham, 2005; Pomfret and Anderson, 1997). In recent decades, an abundance of extractive resources, including oil and gas, has had a pivotal role in the economies of the Central Asian states, particularly Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan (Pomfret, 2010). The petroleum and gas industry in particular has been key to the economy of Kazakhstan, which also depends heavily on the export of minerals (see **Figure 6.1**). A booming energy sector fuelled double-digit annual economic growth in the early and mid-2000s. Uzbekistan has relied heavily on production and export of gold and uranium, of which it boasts rich reserves. In Mongolia, a global mining boom beginning in the mid-2000s boosted production and export of minerals, especially coal, copper and gold (Pomfret, 2010). However, the region has suffered from symptoms of the kind of ‘resource curse’ afflicting many mineral-rich societies elsewhere, especially in post-colonial Africa. Corruption and political mismanagement of natural resources have been widespread, irrespective of the political complexion of the region’s regimes. While facing the same kind of governance challenges, Kazakhstan has been rated more successful than its neighbours in managing its mineral wealth (Collier and Venables, 2011; Liebenenthal, Michelitsch and Tarazona, 2004).

Kazakhstan has also topped regional HDI rankings in recent years (UNDP, 2016). According to the UNDP report, Kazakhstan’s life expectancy at birth is 69.4 years, gross national income per capita is US\$20,867, and expected and mean years of schooling are 15 and 11 respectively. Mongolia and Uzbekistan have improved their HDI score over the past decade and currently lie at 92nd and 105th respectively in the UNDP’s global rankings (see also **Introduction, Figure 0.1**). Improvement in access to education and in economic growth and stability have been key to their recent progress (UNDP, 2016). The increase in Mongolia’s HDI by 0.13 over the past decade was largely due to a 1.1 percentage point increase in the combined primary, secondary and tertiary gross enrolment ratio (Enkhtsetseg, 2012, p. 4). Overall, Uzbekistan suffered the least from the collapse of the Soviet Union. The country restored its GDP to pre-independence levels as early as 2002, and has since maintained an extended phase of sustained economic growth. The nation’s economy has grown rapidly over the past decade and lifted significant parts of the population out of poverty (World Bank, 2016b). The increasing export of gas, gold and copper, coupled with high commodity prices, has financed a sharp increase in public investment (IMF, 2015). Ranking at 120th, Kyrgyzstan has the lowest HDI score among the four countries surveyed here, and is the only one categorised as a ‘medium’ rather than ‘high’ performer by the UNDP. Between

1990 and 2015, Kyrgyzstan's life expectancy at birth increased by 4.5 years, mean years of schooling by 2.2 years and expected years of schooling by 1.2 years, but the country's GNI per capita decreased by about 9.1 per cent (Casey, 2017; UNDP, 2016). The growth of Kyrgyzstan's economy has been highly volatile compared with the countries in the region (see **Figure 6.2**), mainly due to volatility of external flows (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2016a).

Figure 6.2 Economic growth trends in Central Asia and Mongolia



Source: World Bank, 2017d

The trajectory of the post-socialist transformation across this region has had a profound influence on the education sector. In Central Asia, as elsewhere, the systemic capacity of education is critical to success in introducing and integrating ESD/GCED into school curricula. Investment in teacher training, educational resources and schooling infrastructure is bound to the national economic capacity and policy priorities. In Kyrgyzstan, rural areas suffer from high unemployment, decreasing rates of school enrolment – especially for impoverished families and girls – and declining social services. As of 2017, 32.1 per cent of the population lives below the national poverty line, the large majority of them in rural areas (ADB, 2017). Government expenditure on education has been among the highest in the region, but outcomes are limited by an extremely high level of poverty especially in rural districts.

In political terms, the Central Asian states are mostly categorised by international observers as non-democracies – though the extent to which democratic principles are embedded in political institutions and processes, and the role of the state in economic and social affairs, varies considerably across the region. It has been observed that the post-Soviet Central Asian states have established governments, with varying degrees of authoritarianism, behind a formal quasi-

(or pseudo-) democratic facade (Rumer, 2005, p. 3; see also **Chapter 2, Figure 2.6**). Kyrgyzstan, often labelled as a case of ‘soft authoritarianism’ or as a ‘semi-consolidated authoritarian regime’ (Freedom House, 2017), is widely seen as the most open and democratic of the Central Asian states. Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, politically and economically the region’s most important states, have been governed by highly centralised political regimes for over a quarter of a century. In this context, Mongolia has been seen by international observers as ‘an island or oasis of democracy’ in the heart of Asia (Fish, 2001; Torbati, 2016).

At the advent of the post-Soviet transition, Mongolia was the only country in the region to choose a parliamentary system of government. But the institutional consolidation of this system remains far from fully accomplished. Entrenched corruption and cronyism in the government and political parties have eroded the rule of law and public trust in political institutions (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2016b; OECD, 2015b). In 2010, Kyrgyzstan also adopted a semi-presidential, semi-parliamentary system. Earlier, Kyrgyzstan had been the least politically stable country in the region: public protests against corruption, clientelism and the deterioration of livelihoods overthrew two presidents: Akayev in 2005 and Bakiyev in 2010. In contrast to Akayev’s largely peaceful overthrow, clashes between protestors and Bakiyev’s forces in 2010 led to violence and the death of nearly one hundred civilians (Esengul, Mamaev and Yefimova-Trilling, 2014). The share of the industrial sector in the Kyrgyz economy declined from 62 per cent in 1990 to 16.1 per cent in 2004, with the fall blamed partly on lack of finances and deficiencies of managerial competence and probity, combined – as elsewhere in the region – with the disintegration of the socialist command economy (Kasymov and Nikonova, 2006). Kyrgyzstan’s economic and political volatility help explain why the influence of the international donor community has been especially strong there (see the next section).

These diverse political environments have influenced the direction, pace and breadth of education reforms. As noted above, however, the Central Asian states share in common the significant fact that nationhood was essentially a novelty thrust upon them by the dissolution of the USSR. The national delimitation process of the Soviet Union in the 1920s had ‘established them as distinct national territorial units, albeit with their sovereignty highly circumscribed’ (Isaacs and Polese, 2015, p. 372); but, unlike the Baltic states, until 1991 they were politically quiescent and lacked strong popular movements for independence. An important difference between Mongolia and the Central Asian states is that, despite their common subjection to Soviet rule (or strong ‘guidance’), the former had long enjoyed both the trappings of a sovereign state and a strongly distinct identity, and national narrative when the geopolitical earthquake struck in 1991. But in Mongolia, as across

“**The Central Asian states share in common the significant fact that nationhood was essentially a novelty thrust upon them by the dissolution of the USSR**”

Central Asia, search for symbols and ‘national ideologies’ took place throughout the region in the 1990s.

For the states of Central Asia, but far less so for Mongolia, the challenge of affirming a ‘de-Russified’ national identity was thus acute. Whilst the Uzbeks, Turks and Tajiks were the dominant population in their respective countries, accounting for 80 per cent of the total population, both Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan hosted a large number of ‘minorities’; in the former, ethnic Kyrgyz accounted for only 65 per cent of the population, while in the latter Kazakhs only crossed the majority threshold in 1999 (Peyrouse, 2008, p. 1). As a result of Soviet ethnic engineering, the Central Asian states shared a legacy of russification and sovietisation. The 1990s witnessed a tide of emigration of Russians and other ethnic minorities, but

“
The multi-ethnic and multilingual characteristics of the Central Asian states and the potentially existential risk posed by serious internal conflict are reflected in education policy and practice in different ways”

the societies of the region still exhibit exceptional ethnic diversity, with inter-ethnic tensions high in societies such as Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. Security and stability across the region depend on the careful management of ethnic relations (Azizov, 2017; Massansalvador, 2010). In contrast, Mongolia is more ethnically homogeneous, with a small Kazakh minority accounting for just 4 per cent of the population (Mongolia, 2011). The Soviet (mostly Russian) presence pre-1991 was largely transient rather than settled, consisting of technical specialists and military personnel, who left when the USSR collapsed. The multi-ethnic and multilingual characteristics of the Central Asian

states and the potentially existential risk posed by serious internal conflict are reflected in education policy and practice in different ways. These include the introduction of bi- or tri-lingual education (see **Appendix III**) and publication of textbooks in multiple languages.

International Influence on Education Reforms

Since the 1990s, most governments in Central Asia have adopted policy reforms incorporating ‘international standards’ or ‘Western’ education values such as student-centred learning, standardisation of student assessment, introduction of curriculum standards and diversification of educational provision (Shagdar, 2006; Silova, 2009a). Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Mongolia actively experimented with a range of imported education policies, mostly linked to funding from international donor organisations.⁸⁰ Curriculum reforms focused on reducing the number of subjects, introducing integrated curricula, or reducing curricular content to promote ‘efficient’ learning and heighten emphasis on

80 In addition to international aid from the Western donors, there has also been aid provided through the modality of South-South cooperation or ‘policy borrowing’ from close neighbours such as Turkey and Russia.

critical thinking and problem solving rather than the mastery of specific subject material (Shagdar, 2006). Various foundations and initiatives have spent vast sums introducing ‘interactive teaching methods’, ‘participatory teaching’, ‘active learning methods’, ‘creative thinking’ and ‘critical thinking’, and human rights and civic education throughout Central Asia, with perhaps the largest impact in Mongolia, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan (DeYoung, 2006; Steiner-Khamsi and Stolpe, 2006).

In Mongolia, education reforms have been initiated by nearly every new administration following four-yearly parliamentary elections. The early period of post-socialist education reform is described by local researchers as a period of ‘confusing and unconscious imitation of others’ (Kaye et al., 2017). Three rounds of curriculum reform have taken place in Mongolia since 2002. A new Law on Education was approved by the Mongolian Parliament in 2002 and a number of changes were made to the Education Law for Primary and Secondary Education. Schooling was reorganised into an 11-year system from 2005. The development of new set of State Education Standards (SES), introduced in 2004, was intended to replace a previous curriculum, developed in 1997, which was essentially content-driven. The 2004 SES sought to promote a skills-based curriculum, emphasising student-centred methodologies. It espoused new concepts such as lifelong education, open curriculum and student assessment standards, while UNESCO’s four pillars of learning were cited by local educators and researchers as central to their overarching framework (Nookoo, 2016). In 2006, the government approved the Master Plan for the Development of Mongolian Education 2006-2015, which aimed to move to a 12-year system in 2008. Major modifications were made to the SES in 2007, 2010 and 2011, with the stated intention of improving implementation and outcomes. To support implementation of the SES, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) has organised a nation-wide project on student-centred teaching methods since 2006.

In Kyrgyzstan, substantial impetus for curriculum reform at the policy level came in response to what were seen as the dismal results of the country’s first participation in PISA in 2006, when it placed last among the 57 participating countries and economies. This was interpreted as indicating a need to align school curricula and educational institutions with international standards. The PISA results were used by the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) to legitimate reform and gain donor support. Since 2006, the Soros Foundation-Kyrgyzstan has provided technical and methodological assistance to efforts to promote a competence-based approach, and to establish (in 2009) a new National Framework Curriculum for Secondary Education (Soros Foundation-Kyrgyzstan, 2014). This national standards document introduced a new framework for shaping the content of ‘outcomes-based education’, and the development of a new competency-based curriculum has subsequently proceeded with assistance from international donors such as the Asian Development Bank and the World Bank (Kyrgyzstan, 2012a). PISA results in 2009 indicated little change since 2006, a

fact cited as evidence of a troubling slowness in the curriculum reform process. A lack of coordination among key government agencies and donor-funded projects and inadequate consultation with schools, teachers and service receivers were blamed (Shamatov and Sainazarov, 2010). But it is unclear quite how a curricular revolution could be expected to deliver radical change in 'outcomes' within three years.

Kazakhstan introduced its own New State General Educational Standards in 2002, but it did not significantly alter the previous content-driven approach. With the support of international donors – especially the Soros Foundation – the introduction of outcomes-based education was proposed by a group of national educators (Bridges, 2014). The State Programme of Education Development 2005-2010 was developed on the basis of government acknowledgement that curricula and pedagogy required substantial reform, including a transition from rote learning to outcomes-based learning. Three types of competencies were defined in the programme, namely general competencies, subject-area expected outcomes and subject-based outcomes. Nine learning areas (literature and language, person and society, social studies, mathematics, informatics, science, arts, technology and physical education) and expected outcomes, including general competencies such as problem solving and life skills, were defined by the programme (UNESCO, 2011). The new approach proclaimed the goal of fostering greater flexibility, diversity and choice. School-based curriculum development was to be encouraged, and schools would be allowed to specialise in different subject areas such as foreign languages, mathematics and the natural sciences.

Since 2007, Kazakhstan has participated in international monitoring studies such as TIMSS (2007) and PISA (2009). Nationwide discussion of the results of these tests, especially the below-average achievement in PISA, has had a direct impact on education reform policy (Bridges, 2014). The State Program of Educational Development in the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2011-2020 set a target of developing 'the training system and professional development of the pedagogic staff of Kazakhstan'. For achieving this target, the government initiated a teacher education reform program, selecting the University of Cambridge as a strategic partner. A new set of State General Education Standards were introduced in 2012 and 2016. The 2016 State General Education Standards are applied only in schools piloting a 12-year curriculum. The rest of the system remains under the 2012 State General Compulsory Education Standards, which determines the list of compulsory subjects, programmes and study plans and allows each school to develop its own educational plan (Pons et al., 2015).

While Mongolia, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan have thus imported a range of education policies linked to financing from multilateral or bilateral donors, Uzbekistan has been less keen to follow this path (DeYoung, 2006, p. 505). The Uzbekistan government has been determined essentially to preserve the status quo, control policy convergence and implement reform gradually. Uzbekistan's legal and statutory framework for regulating schooling has remained relatively

unaltered since 1997. The Law on Education, the National Program for Personnel Training (NPPT) and the Basic Education Development Program were adopted in 1997. The main target of the NPPT – restructuring the education system and introducing new forms of compulsory 3-year specialised, technical and vocational provision at secondary level – was achieved in 2009. In compliance with the NPPT, the Government of Uzbekistan approved the SES for general secondary education in grades 1-9. This incorporates a modern basic study plan, education standards for 23 subjects, and standard curricula and training programs established in 1999 (Weidman and Yoder, 2010, p. 64).

As with many curricula reforms across the region, targeted programs and projects on ESD have often been financed by international donor organisations. In Kyrgyzstan, for example, the 2005 establishment of the Education Council for Sustainable Development as well as the development of national guidelines on the integration of ESD into school policy, practice and learning resources were associated with various donor-funded projects. However, a recent review reports on limited communication and coordinated action among the relevant government ministries and agencies, and the weak capacity of Ministry of Education personnel with respect to the implementation of ESD (Duishenova et al., 2016, p. 15). Similarly, in Uzbekistan the Coordination Council for Environmental Education and ESD was established in 2006, in collaboration with UNESCO, to implement the National Policy on ESD (UNESCO/UNECE, 2007; United Nations, 2010). However, reports subsequently pointed to serious inadequacies in the capacity and supporting environment needed for the implementation of ESD (United Nations, 2010). In Mongolia, the National Program for ESD for All was approved by the Government in 2009, with support from international donors such as the Swedish Development Agency (SIDA) and Swiss Agency for Cooperation and Development (SDC). The guidance document titled ‘Main rationale and directions for integrating ESD into the school system and activities’ was released by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (MECS) in 2016, with assistance from SDC.

As sustainable development still tends to be understood in narrowly environmental terms, many of these ESD guidance documents or advisory bodies have not had much impact on mainstream education stakeholders. In Kyrgyzstan, emphasis on the environmental dimension of sustainable development is evident in a range of projects on promoting biodiversity conservation, environmental safety and green building principles, and in normative legal documents such as the Concept of Ecological Safety of the Kyrgyz Republic and the Concept of Education for Sustainable Development. In 2001, Kyrgyzstan’s ratification of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (known as the Aarhus Convention) accentuated emphasis on the environmental dimension of ESD.

Much work labelled as ‘ESD’ in Central Asia has taken place within the framework of the ‘Environment for Europe’ process, a partnership of 56 Member States of the UNECE region (which includes European countries as well as Canada, the United States and former Soviet states), UN organisations represented in the region, other intergovernmental organisations, regional environmental centres, NGOs, the private sector and other groups. The process is a regional pillar of action for sustainable development, and focuses on helping countries of Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia to improve their environmental standards. This means that government agencies responsible for environmental conservation and protection have often had responsibility for administering projects and events related to ESD. Integrating ESD initiatives into mainstream schooling thus remains a major challenge in Central Asia, as elsewhere across Asia.

The Legacy of Soviet Education

The legacy of Soviet infrastructure and ideas have had a varying impact on post-1991 education reform. The system devised and imposed by Soviet pedagogues, administrators and advisers aimed to create a new, universal ‘socialist person’, and was characterized by a view of education as an orderly, systematic, well-organised process of acquiring and consolidating disciplinary knowledge (Fimyar, 2015). Traces of this approach are still widely evident in national curricula and entrenched pedagogical practices and beliefs across the region.

While secondary schools in the former Soviet Union and Mongolia emphasised gender equity and occupational specialisation, they were characterised by authoritarian, teacher-centred pedagogical approaches, highly centralised systems of curriculum development and subject curricula tightly packed with factual and formulaic content (DeYoung, 2007). Trust in the scientific method and a focus on the acquisition of ‘facts’ and ‘correct’ information transmitted via the teacher were criticised by reformers from the 1990s for contributing to insufficient attention to the quality and manner in which students were learning (Silova, 2009a). But calls for a shift to student-centred pedagogy challenged the foundations of the traditional Soviet-based school education system.

“While secondary schools in the former Soviet Union and Mongolia emphasised gender equity and occupational specialisation, they were characterised by authoritarian, teacher-centred pedagogical approaches, highly centralised systems of curriculum development and subject curricula tightly packed with factual and formulaic content”

Policy makers and teachers were often unconvinced by claims regarding the supposed weaknesses of Soviet-style pedagogy and resistant to calls for

substantial curricular revision (Silova, 2005). Indeed, amidst the uncertainty of the transition from state socialism, admiration for some of the educational achievements of the Soviet past has increased (Reeves, 2005, p. 10), as has interest in localised theories of moral and cultural education, such as those in Kyrgyzstan based on the redefined ‘seven precepts of Manas’⁸¹ (DeYoung, 2007). The influence of Soviet-style approaches tends to differ between social studies and humanities (except history) on the one hand, and mathematics and natural science on the other. With respect to the latter, policy makers and educators generally remain strongly convinced of the superiority of established methods, and committed to maintaining them (Silova, 2009a); after all, Soviet achievements in mathematics and science were widely admired in the West (Brown, 2009). In contrast, there has been far greater willingness to countenance introduction of new pedagogical approaches in the social studies and humanities, where post-socialist ideological and political transformations required a significant reconfiguration of old identities and values systems (Nookoo, 2016). Therefore, although references to the merits of ‘student-centred’ approaches are more or less pervasive in policy and curricular documents across the region, the extent to which this signifies the adoption of new approaches to subject teaching at classroom level is highly variable. Since it is often aid donors who are pushing the new approaches, linking funding to the adoption of their agendas – but precisely for this reason, official rhetoric on such notions as ‘student-centredness’ should not be taken entirely at face value.

New State Education Standards: Transitioning to Competency-based Approach

As discussed above, all four countries under review in this chapter have adopted policy reforms to align their education systems with ‘international standards’ and ‘competency-based’ approaches. The previous sections have described some of these efforts and challenges confronting their realisation. This section further examines the introduction of new SES, with a particular focus on Mongolia, whose SES has been most frequently revised, and Uzbekistan, which has adhered to a more conservative or ‘protectionist’ policy under the ‘Uzbek model of gradual transition’ (reforms to SESs in the four countries are summarized in **Figure 6.3**).

In Mongolia, as already noted, it has become customary for each new administration to introduce its own signature package of education reforms. Implementation of the SES introduced in 2004 faced a range of challenges such as ill-equipped teachers and the lack of relevant materials and resources. Although the SES proclaimed the introduction of new pedagogical approaches, the national curriculum remained overloaded with theoretical and factual content. A lack of complementary resources and support from the government contributed to the relative lack of change in actual classroom practice (Mongolia, 2013). In 2009, the newly formed government launched the Mongolian Cambridge

81 An epic poem (see *Manas*, 2004. Translated by Walter May. Rarity, Bishkek).

Education Initiative with the intention of aligning the system more closely with international standards. New curricula were piloted in English, mathematics and science in selected laboratory schools. The project aimed to review and update the National Curriculum and Assessment Framework, supporting the implementation of a 12-grade curriculum and a national testing system. Once again, following parliamentary elections, the MECS launched a new comprehensive education sector quality reform program in 2012 to ‘upgrade the curricula and teaching approaches to international standards and better meet the needs of a diverse range of student needs’ (Mongolia, 2015). The new core curriculum focuses on skills or competencies to be acquired by students at various stages of schooling from pre-primary to senior secondary, through studying an integrated subject curriculum. The competency-based approach permeates the policy framework for 2012-2016, encompassing reforms to the national curriculum, recommended teaching and assessment methods, textbook and teaching-learning resources and the system for teachers’ professional development (Sarvi, Munger and Pillay, 2015).

By contrast, in Uzbekistan, the government for many years largely eschewed curricular reform, instead devoting more resources to building and renovating schools across the country, while boosting student subsidies and teachers’ salaries – with the express intention of improving equal access to education through enhancing the ‘material-technical base’ (UNICEF, 2010). The SES introduced in 1999 defined compulsory content or minimum standards for each educational level, along with optional components dependent on students’ particular needs and capacities, the availability of facilities, staffing and the developmental requirements of the local area (UNDP, 2008). This ‘old SES’ remained highly prescriptive, underscoring the importance of theoretical knowledge and rote learning, and was seen as at odds with approaches for developing and assessing learners’ competencies and life-skills (Centre for Economic Research, 2010). Preparatory studies began in 2005 with a view to developing a new SES to meet changing societal ‘needs’. A lead government policy research institute in Uzbekistan concluded that improving educational quality required an urgent transition to a new approach focused on developing knowledge, abilities and competencies (Centre for Economic Research, 2009). The new SES was adopted in 2010 (Uzbekistan, 2010), but in the event it did not represent a substantial break with its predecessor (Nasirov, 2017).

In 2012, Uzbekistan adopted a National Education Sector Plan 2012-2017. This called for improvements to schooling in order to better equip learners with skills of independent thinking and organisation. The Plan aimed to prepare students for successful progression into vocational education, bestowing competencies that would enable them to contribute to society. The government pointed to complaints from parents and other stakeholders regarding the inadequacy of the existing SES and the country’s schools and teachers to meet ‘modern requirements’ (Usmanova, 2017). Global and regional trends towards

Figure 6.3 Introduction of New State Education Standards (SES) in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia and Uzbekistan

Kazakhstan:

- The New General SES (launched in 2002) introduced mainly an outcome-based education program.
- The State Programme of Education Development 2005-2010 was developed based on the acknowledgement that education standards and processes required a substantial reform – including the transition from rote to outcome-based learning.
- The nationwide discussion of the results of Kazakhstan's participation in international monitoring studies such as the TIMSS and PISA – in particular the below-average achievement in PISA – had a direct impact on Kazakhstan's education reform policy (Bridges, 2014). The SES were revamped in both 2012 and 2016, which determined a list of compulsory subjects, programmes and study plans, and allowed each school to develop its own educational plan (Pons et al., 2015).

Mongolia:

- The new SES (launched in 2004) introduced a skills-based curriculum, emphasising student-centred pedagogies. Major modifications were made to the SES in 2007, 2010 and 2011 to improve its implementation and outcomes.
- In 2009, the newly formed government launched the Mongolian Cambridge Education Initiative in order to align Mongolia's education system to international standards (a new curriculum was piloted in English, maths and science in selected laboratory schools). The project also aimed to review and update the National Curriculum and Assessment Framework.
- Post-parliamentary elections, the Ministry launched another comprehensive quality reform program for 2012-2016, that mainly focused on skills/competencies that students must acquire – a competency-based approach to learning achievements (Sarvi, Munger and Pillay, 2015).

Uzbekistan:

- In compliance with the National Program for Personnel Training (NPPT), the Government of Uzbekistan approved the SES for general secondary education for grades 1-9 in 1999, which incorporates a modern basic study plan, education standards for 23 subjects, standard curricula and training programs (Weidman and Yoder, 2010, p. 64).
- A new SES was adopted in 2010 but could not substantially improve the standards of education (Nasirov, 2017).

Kyrgyzstan:

- In Kyrgyzstan, a new SES was first developed in 1996 and subsequently revised in 2002, 2004 and 2015, while the Law on Education was adopted in 1992 and amended in 1997 and 2005.
- After much deliberation, the Government approved the new SES and an Action Plan in 2015 for the phased implementation of new generation standards in secondary education by 2022 (Soros Foundation, 2014).

competency-based schooling, and the widespread view of education as a tool for enhancing national economic competitiveness, have put increasing pressure on the government to follow the lead of countries like Mongolia. In April of 2017, the Government of Uzbekistan approved a new SES for general secondary schooling, and for special and vocational education. The introduction of the new standards for particular subjects, and publication of textbooks to accompany them, is due to proceed gradually until 2020.

PEACE, SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP IN EDUCATION POLICY AND CURRICULA

The Soviet education system emphasised universal and equal access to schooling, proclaiming investment in education as central to the socialist project of empowering the masses. This has contributed to a persistent belief among the peoples of Central Asia and Mongolia in the intrinsic value of schooling. At

“**At the same time, the role of schooling in political socialisation has been turned to new nation-building purposes. Policy and curricular documents often juxtapose highly nationalistic sentiments with emphasis on values and attitudes apparently aligned with SDG 4.7**”

the same time, the role of schooling in political socialisation – a key concern of Soviet policy makers – has been turned to new nation-building purposes. Policy and curricular documents often juxtapose highly nationalistic sentiments – often hard to reconcile with claims to democracy – with emphasis on values and attitudes apparently aligned with SDG 4.7. For example, in Uzbekistan, the 1999 SES stated that secondary education ensures the formation of the student’s personality; acquisition of systematic, scientific knowledge; the development of abilities in creative thinking; and the inculcation of a responsible

attitude towards the surrounding world through knowledge sharing on national heritage – both cultural and spiritual.

In this section, we explore the implications of these countries’ efforts to align their school curricula with ‘international standards’ and ‘competency-based education’, and ask whether basic education has consequently become more aligned with the goals of peace, sustainable development and global citizenship.

A: Challenges of Instrumentalism and Ethics

Largely regardless of political and ideological differences, the purpose of education as described in legal and statutory documents across this region encompasses both its instrumental and intrinsic qualities. Education is universally hailed as an essential tool in the national quest for competitiveness;

but documents also generally espouse a vision of education as a vehicle for human fulfilment, the expansion of rights and individual empowerment.

Nonetheless, the policy and curricular documents of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan appear overall to embody a more instrumental vision than those of Kyrgyzstan and Mongolia. Policies in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, strong states with highly centralised political regimes, make clear the absolute priority of strengthening national economic competitiveness. By comparison, the policy visions of Mongolia and Kyrgyzstan are less definite regarding the ordering of priorities, despite – or owing to – their openness to technical and financial assistance provided by the international donor community.

“**Education is universally hailed as an essential tool in the national quest for competitiveness; but documents also generally espouse a vision of education as a vehicle for human fulfilment, the expansion of rights and individual empowerment**”

Kazakhstan

In 2006, President Nazarbayev in his message to the people of Kazakhstan emphasised the importance of making the education system contribute more effectively to enhancing national competitiveness. Accordingly, in 2007 a new Law on Education initiated the process of transitioning to a 12-year curriculum, along with reforms to pedagogy and teacher training. However, problems with implementation, blamed on a lack of resources, capacity and preparation, soon prompted the government to review its strategy and increase investment in schools and teacher development (Mynbayeva and Pogosian, 2014). For example, the initial deadline for universalising the 12-year system was postponed several times (Bridges, 2014, p. 35). ‘World education standards’ and the ‘competitiveness of Kazakhstan’ have become catchphrases of policy discourse since 2007. This period is described by Bridges as the ‘modernization of an entire system of education based on a strategic partnership model with major international educational partners’ (2014, p. 30).

The State Program of Education Development in the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2011-2020 was based on the main priorities of the Kazakhstan 2030 Strategy. The Programme asserts that investment in human capital results in significant economic and societal benefits, stating: ‘education should be regarded as [an] economic investment...not just a social expenditure’ (Kazakhstan, 2010, p. 2). In Kazakhstan, officials evidently see managing society via incentives and regulations within the framework of market competition as the primary role of the state; state initiatives emphasise this idea with slogans such as ‘a competitive nation’ and ‘competitive products’ (Adams and Rustemova, 2009). Investment in human capital is seen as of vital importance to the development of a technically progressive, productive labour force (Kazakhstan, 2012). Enhancing national competitiveness is linked to the role of education in enabling individuals to

participate in the global economy as professionals. Indeed, President Nazarbayev asserted that the success of the educational reforms could be judged by whether any citizen obtaining education and qualifications in Kazakhstan could become a specialist and professional in any country of the world (Tassimova, 2013, p. 99).

Meanwhile, the Kazakhstan state proclaims full commitment to upholding human rights, to be guaranteed through a variety of government agencies, organisations, institutions, including the Human Rights Ombudsman.⁸² However, while concepts related to human rights are highly prevalent in official documents (**Appendix II-4**), discussion of activism and the functioning of civil society is largely avoided (**Appendix II-13.iii**). While democratic principles are formally enshrined in law, the political monopoly of the ruling party *Nur Otan* and state domination of society and the media constrains the exercise of civil rights (Satpayev, 2012). The coding data show that in Kazakhstan activism is interpreted mainly as alertness of, and intolerance towards, anti-social, terroristic and religiously extremist elements (Grade 9, Geography, p. 8). The importance of obeying the law, displaying patriotism and agreeing with the current political, economic and social ideologies is emphasised. Kazakhstan is the only country – across the 22 surveyed for this report – whose documents feature significant coverage of the sub-category ‘genocide, terrorism, war, refugees’ (see **Appendix II-9c**). Environmental action for the protection and conservation of natural resources and endangered animals is encouraged in curricula (Grade 9, Geography, p. 4), but participating in demonstrations and organising political opposition are not portrayed as desirable forms of activism. The meaning of democracy is thus interpreted rather narrowly, as in many other Asian countries. In the new national strategy document ‘Vision of Kazakhstan 2050’, democratic development is defined as consisting of the following steps: decentralisation to empower the rural population; improving public sector personnel to ensure better transparency and less corruption; and reforming the criminal justice system (Kazakhstan, 2012).

In Kazakhstan, very detailed methodological recommendations and instructions (‘Letters’) for school teachers are issued annually by the National Academy of Education relating to building patriotism; fostering inter-ethnic tolerance, peace and respect for historical heritage; or promoting multilingual education. Ever since the ‘Vision of Kazakhstan 2050’ was approved by President Nazarbayev, the Letters have been directed at achieving the specific targets identified in the document. This sets out an aspiration to join the ranks of the top 30 developed countries not only in terms of per capita income, but also in terms of a wider range of social, environmental and institutional achievements (Linn, 2014). The State Program for Education and Science Development for 2016-2019 (based on the Nation Plan ‘100 Steps’ to support the realisation of the ‘Vision of Kazakhstan 2050’) set as its overarching goal to increase ‘the competitiveness of education and science and human capital development for sustainable economic growth’ (2016, p. 2). While nearly all subject curricula refer to certain aspects of

82 See <http://www.ombudsman.kz/en/>.

environmental protection and conservation (**Appendix II-2**), and some subject curricula – such as Grade 9 biology and Grade 9 foreign language – contain content on global and national environmental issues, very limited space is devoted to discussion of the socio-environmental aspects of economic growth.

Uzbekistan

Similar to Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan is also a strong state which has devoted much attention to discourses on the ‘Uzbek model’ of development, nationhood and moral order (Adams and Rustemova, 2009). A lack of horizontal government accountability and space for independent public debate has prompted serious criticism both abroad and (with greater circumspection) domestically. According to Bertelsmann’s Transformation Index (2016), political space is tightly controlled by the ruling party, which strictly censors any criticism of the government and its policies.

A significant enhancement of the quantity and quality of the physical infrastructure of schooling, improvement of the ‘material-technical base’, and a gradual increase in teachers’ salaries have been reported by the Government of Uzbekistan as major achievements of its program for developing the secondary education system over the past decade (UNESCO, 2012b). The government states that ‘a key educational goal in Uzbekistan is the preparation of highly-qualified specialists for the country’s economy and industry as well as the intellectual and spiritual development of citizens’ (Uzbekistan, 2013, p. 64).

The education policy documents stress upon the state’s objectives and achievements in the areas of social welfare provision – subsidies for poor families, free textbooks and other assistance to vulnerable groups – as well as the high rate of school enrolment. The Education Law defines the purpose of general secondary education as inculcation of necessary knowledge, independent thinking, organisational skills and social experience, and development of initial professional orientation and awareness of the next levels of education (1997, p. 4).

As discussed in the previous section, the recent introduction of the new SES based on a competency approach was a response to the regional trend of modernising curricula to align with international standards (Uzbekistan Today, 2017). It was also aligned with the ‘Concept of ESD’ approved in 2011. The concept document set out to improve the competency of teaching personnel and learners, and to reform pedagogical approaches in schools (Uzbekistan, 2011). This explains why Uzbekistan is exceptional amongst Asian countries in the prominence given in policy and curricular documents to ‘ESD’ (see **Appendix II-14**). However, the official interpretation of competency-based learning seems narrow and instrumentalist. The new SES described six key competencies including:

- communication competency;

- information competency;
- self-improvement competency;
- civic competency;
- national and universal competency; and
- mathematical and innovation competency. (Uzbekistan Today, 2017)

The content of several subjects has been revised significantly; for example, elements of basic coding have been introduced into the curriculum for primary school mathematics, and the subject ‘Labour training’ has been changed to ‘Technology’. According to a senior government official, as a result of implementing the new standards, learners will now say ‘I can...’ instead of saying ‘I know...’ (Nasirov, 2017). The competencies are conceptualised as ‘the actual activities that the student must master by the end of a certain stage of training’ (Uzbekistan Today, 2017).

With country-level data collection and analysis completed before the new SES for secondary education were adopted in April 2017, the analysis here is based on the results of coding curricular documents collected for Uzbekistan in 2016 (see **Appendix IV**). The coding data of Uzbekistan show that many aspects of the environmental dimension of sustainable development carry a high weighting in curricular documents, including environmental conservation, renewable energy and ecology (**Appendix II-2**) and environmentally sustainable lifestyles (**Appendix II-13g**). This is perhaps in part a consequence of the environmental devastation of the country as a result of utterly unsustainable economic policies pursued during the Soviet period – with massive irrigation projects and the introduction of industrialised agriculture leading to widespread desertification and the virtual destruction of the Aral Sea. Social dimensions of sustainable development – good health, human rights and interconnectedness (**Appendices II-3, 4, 10**) – also feature prominently in curricula.

However, there is no reference to the category ‘activism’ (**Appendix II-13.iii**). The absence of references to ‘current and future participation in civil protests’ (13k) and ‘engagement in debates on socio-political issues’ (13l) undoubtedly reflects official reluctance to countenance any challenge to the image of Uzbek society as peaceful, orderly and contented. An emphasis on orderliness and political quiescence is further reinforced by promotion of a vision of the family as central to the regulation of society and the provision of welfare. Reflecting the provisions of the Law on the Family and the Civil Law are curricular exhortations to respect the elderly, particularly parents, take care of children and respect national traditions.

Mongolia and Kyrgyzstan

Instrumentalist understandings of education are also clearly present in Mongolia and Kyrgyzstan, but there they take a somewhat different form. In both Mongolia

and Kyrgyzstan, as in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, documents lack references to ‘activism’ (**Appendix II-13.iii**). At the same time, they extensively discuss the importance of critical and creative thinking – although (ironically) to a lesser extent than Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan (**Appendix II-11**). Mongolia and Kyrgyzstan have been relatively ‘free’ politically and open to the involvement of donor agencies in policy formation.

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In all Central Asian states and Mongolia, documents lack references to ‘activism’”

Bilateral and multilateral donors have exerted significant influence on their national policy priorities, in education as in other sectors. A lack of either top-down or broad-based, stable and long-term national development visions is also common to these two countries. Policy consistency has been undermined by political volatility. At the same time, democratic accountability has recently exposed governments to intensifying public demand for better educational provision.

In Kyrgyzstan, the Education Development Concept approved in 2002 defined development plans and strategies for the education sector until 2010, calling for a system that provides students with ‘knowledge and skills to meet the demands of a market-oriented economy’ (UNESCO, 2010). The MoES sees a rapidly changing world requiring individuals to be adaptive and adequately prepared to deal with a high degree of uncertainty, according to the ‘Education Development Concept of the Kyrgyz Republic until 2020’ (Kyrgyzstan, 2012b). The SES defines desired outcomes as core competencies that will help each student to achieve their individual, civic and professional needs (p. 3). One of the main official goals is to combat unemployment by equipping citizens with appropriate 21st-century skills and competencies. These, combined with a set of socio-emotional skills and moral values and attitudes, are seen as a formula for nurturing the ideal Kyrgyz citizen, ready to compete at local, regional and global levels (see **Appendices II-13.i-ii**). By 2020, in addition to priming citizens for competition in the global economy, the education system is supposed to be fostering in them qualities of patriotism, acceptance of democratic and civil rights and freedoms, tolerance and readiness for active professional experience (Kyrgyzstan, 2012b, p. 7).

In Mongolia, the MECS launched a comprehensive quality reform program for the education sector in 2012 to upgrade the curricula and teaching approaches, and to better meet the needs of a diverse range of students (Mongolia, 2015). As elsewhere, Mongolia’s new curricula highlights critical and creative thinking skills (see **Appendix II-11**). In 2013, the Mongolian government began to implement a national program titled ‘Right Mongolian Child’ (Зөв Монгол Хүүхэд). The objective of the program was to enhance the enabling familial, social and educational environment for every Mongolian child in order for them to become citizens with self-confidence, skills of creative thinking, decision-making, collaboration and life-long learning, and who respect the national language, culture and traditions (Mongolia, 2013). The basic premise of the policy is that the ‘development of

each and every child’ should replace the ‘all children’ approach, and parents, schools and the local community should be assisted to work together to help children acquire adequate cognitive, physiological and moral development, and self-confidence. The Action Plan of the Mongolian Government (2016-2020) states that a key objective of its education policy is to:

...transform schools to human development centers. Schools will offer not only knowledge, education and skills to children but will also help them grow up ‘healthy, with a positive mind-set, well-disciplined, be a good person able to lead a dignified life, be patriotic and be proud of being a Mongol. (Mongolia, 2016)

Instrumental and Intrinsic Value of Education

While the instrumental role of education in developing human resources for strengthening economic competitiveness is underscored in education policy and curricula in these four countries, moral and values education seems to carry equal – if not more – weight in the education policy discourse. The high prevalence of ‘values education’ (Appendix II-14) in the documents analysed for Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan is striking, reflecting the importance of schooling in ideological socialisation (see the next section). But it is unclear to what extent the high priority accorded to top-down political socialisation warrants the dismissal as mere rhetoric of the high prevalence of references to ‘human rights’, including freedom and civil liberties, across all four countries (Appendix II-4).

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While the instrumental role of education in developing human resources for strengthening economic competitiveness is underscored in education policy and curricula in these four countries, moral and values education seems to carry equal – if not more – weight in the education policy discourse
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The Soviet ideology of egalitarian education seems to explain – at least partially – why the category ‘human rights’ was coded very frequently in Central Asia and Mongolia, compared to other Asian regions. However, the coding data also show that gender equality is among the themes least integrated into education policy and curricula (Appendix II-5). Although the universal principle of gender equality has been enshrined in the Constitutions and major legal and statutory documents of the four countries – which all inherited from their socialist past a strong cultural norm of gender equality – this appears to have had little bearing on the formulation of curricular objectives and content. Integration of gender-sensitive education and values of gender equality into curricula and textbooks thus appears to be one area of weakness with respect to the understanding and implementation of ESD/GCED – but the coding results should not be interpreted as signifying that Central Asia is more retrograde in this respect than some

countries, such as those in South Asia, that appear to give greater prominence to gender issues in their curricula.

At the same time, it is also evident that education reforms in Central Asian states and Mongolia have sought to replace the Soviet and Communist ideologies with projects of political socialisation tasked with strengthening national identity on the one hand, and fostering acceptance of the norms and values of the global market economy on the other. While this does not necessarily mean that the intrinsic value of education – as a process of enhancing human capabilities and freedoms – is automatically or universally subordinated to instrumentalism, the newly introduced competency-based approaches seem to be leading in some cases to a curricular narrowing, as with the ‘six key competencies’ identified in Uzbekistan’s new SES. The next section further explores the implications of a state-centred, instrumentalist vision in relation to the role of schooling in fostering citizenship.

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Although the universal principle of gender equality has been enshrined in the Constitutions and major legal and statutory documents of the four countries, this appears to have had little bearing on the formulation of curricular objectives and content
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B: Challenges of Nationalism and Identities

Although a range of concepts associated with ‘human rights’ are highly prevalent in the curricula and policy documents of the four countries under review (**Appendix II-4**), it is important to consider whether concepts such as civil liberties and democracy may in some circumstances themselves be deployed as instruments of political indoctrination and manipulation, as some international observers have argued (Silova, 2009a). Concerns for national security, territorial integrity and consciousness of imperilled sovereignty often permeate the national narratives promoted by the elites across Central Asia and Mongolia. And perhaps these concerns are not entirely self-serving. In a landlocked location between major global and regional powers, and faced with post-colonial legacies

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Policy documents and curricula across the region show little evidence of effective integration of SDG 4.7, particularly when it comes to promoting forms of identity consciousness that transcend national divisions
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from a diaspora to contested borders, foreign policies across the region have been influenced by intersections of competing interests (Rumer, 2005). Prospects for better relationships among the Central Asian states have been frustrated by vexing transnational and bilateral issues such as border disputes, drug-trafficking, tussles over the exploitation of shared natural resources, trade and transit, and water management (Linn, 2006). Many issues facing the Central Asian states such as water security and climate change require inter-state cooperation for significant progress (Bernauer and

Siegfried, 2012; Weinthal, 2006). It is difficult to assess the extent to which values and competencies required for understanding and addressing these critical issues are included in learning resources and educational practice on the ground, but policy documents and curricula across the region show little evidence of effective integration of SDG 4.7, particularly when it comes to promoting forms of identity consciousness that transcend national divisions.

Loving the ‘Motherland’

The imperative of loving the ‘Motherland’ and respecting its history, culture and traditions is universally prioritized across this region. The coding data show overwhelming emphasis on national identities, patriotism and nationalism in the three Central Asian states and, to a slightly lesser extent, in Mongolia (**Appendix II-12i**). On the other hand, national policy documents and curricula largely neglect concepts pertaining to global citizenship (see **Appendices II-7-10**), with some partial exceptions. For example, Kazakhstan’s SES contains a few sections where global environmental issues, poverty, consumerism and racism are presented as issues for discussion in specific subjects (Grade 9 Biology and Geography); similarly, Kyrgyzstan’s subject curricula feature significant coverage of issues of sustainable development, with an emphasis on its transnational environmental dimension (Grade 9 History and Grade 9 Geography; see **Appendix II-2**).

The project of building a new national identity has been most intensive in the Republic of Kazakhstan, which experienced the most extensive ‘russification’ of all Central Asian Soviet republics. Building a unitary state and a bilingual and multicultural nation has also become a key priority for Kazakhstan’s political elites (Cummings, 2005). The state policy documents and President Nazarbayev’s speeches have explicitly referred to Kazakhstan as the ethnic centre of the Kazakhs, and Kazakhs as the original successors to the nationhood, but simultaneously they acknowledge the multinationalism of Kazakhstani society (see **Box 6.1**). The coding data show significant consistency regarding nation-building priorities across policy and curricular documents. Through literary readings in the Kazakh language, for instance, the objective is to ‘foster respect for the language, culture, history of the Kazakh people, love for the Motherland, [and] the Republic of Kazakhstan’⁸³ (Grade 4, p. 2); similar objectives are echoed in the curricula of other subjects.

In Kyrgyzstan, as elsewhere in Central Asia, developing a new state ideology that integrates concepts such as the nation, freedom, responsibility and development has been viewed as a key to successful nation-building (Murzakulova and Schoeberlein, 2009). The SES presents the aim of education as developing ‘love for the Motherland, respect for national traditions, and respect for the cultural

83 Original in Russian: ‘с предметом «Литературное чтение»: через аутентичные тексты учащиеся учатся высказывать свое мнение с учетом познавательных особенностей казахского языка; воспитывает уважение к языку, культуре, истории казахского народа, любовь к Родине, к Республике Казахстан’.

and natural wealth of Kyrgyzstan⁸⁴ (p. 2). Attempts to foster a consciousness of national identity have focused on ‘cultural and ethnic history’ (Chapman et al., 2005, p. 522). The ‘Ideological Programme of Kyrgyzstan: Charter for the Future’ (Ideologicheskaya Programma, 2003) and ‘Development through Unity: The Comprehensive National Idea of Kyrgyzstan’ (Razvitie cherez edinstvo, 2007) are among the most comprehensive statements of the ideological underpinnings for nation-building in independent Kyrgyzstan. They were accompanied by the publication of various books and brochures, as well as the performance of state-orchestrated celebrations, such as those commemorating the 1,000-year anniversary of the epic of Manas and the 2,200th anniversary of Kyrgyz statehood (ibid). The History curriculum of grades 7-9 emphasises the importance of understanding and taking pride in the national identity and cultural heritage of Kyrgyzstan (p. 12, 16), but it also evinces acknowledgement of ESD/GCED categories such as multiculturalism (p. 12), gender equality (p. 11), tolerance (p. 9, 11, 16, 17) and the rule of law (p. 11). This seems to suggest that concepts aligned with democratic principles have to some extent complemented the state-driven effort to forge a national identity based on celebration of a shared ancestral past. But the attempt to construct a cohesive sense of Kyrgyz national identity has been a far from harmonious process, as discussed in the next section.

Managing Diversity

Representations of national identity that emphasise a shared immemorial past can be in tension with respect or tolerance for domestic ethno-cultural diversity. In Kyrgyzstan, the new state-sponsored ideology of the nation has been perceived differently by ethnic minorities. A substantial change occurred in the ethnic composition of the country in the post-Soviet period. In 1989, Kyrgyz made up only 52.4 per cent of the population and Uzbeks 12.9 per cent, while Russians – many of whom emigrated after the Soviet collapse

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Representations of national identity that emphasise a shared immemorial past can be in tension with respect or tolerance for domestic ethno-cultural diversity”

– accounted for 21.5 per cent. The Kyrgyz state adopted a predominantly ethnic model of nationalism in the early years of independence, which highlighted the importance of Kyrgyz culture and identity. This understanding of the nation contributed to growing discontent among the minorities, mostly Russians and Uzbeks. In the early 1990s, many Russians left Kyrgyzstan, so that Uzbeks become the largest minority ethnic group. As of 2017, the country’s ethnic mix is: Kyrgyz (73.2 per cent), Uzbeks (14.6 per cent) and Russians (5.8 per cent) (NSCoKR, 2017).

Reflecting the need to manage interethnic tensions, the concepts of tolerance (**Appendix II-12e**), solidarity (**Appendix II-12g**) and respect for diversity (**Appendix II-10c**) are extensively mentioned in the policy and curricular documents.

84 Original in Russian: ‘любовь к Отчизне, уважение национальных традиций и бережное отношение к культурному и природному богатству Кыргызстана’ (Kyrgyzstan, 2014).

However, references to peace are absent except for the sub-category ‘peace building’ (**Appendix II-6b**). The local meaning of ‘peace-building’ relates to the management of inter-ethnic tensions within the country. The risk of ethnic conflicts, especially between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks in the south of the country, has not been managed effectively in the post-independence period. Since the Kyrgyz-Uzbek conflict in Osh (Southern Kyrgyzstan) in the spring of 1990, several interethnic clashes have taken place, including conflicts between the Dungan and Kyrgyz youth in a village in Chui province (Marat, 2006) as well as continued clashes between the Kyrgyz and Uzbeks in Southern Kyrgyzstan (see Akiner, 2016). Interethnic tensions have also been exacerbated by a politicised divide between the country’s north and south. The commitment and ability of the government to eradicate the North-South divide is key to achieving ‘peace-building’ in Kyrgyz society.

Content relating to understanding multicultural realities and traditions, tolerance and peaceful conflict resolution features in some subject curricula (Grade 7-9 History and Grade 7-9 Geography). The History curriculum, for instance, emphasises ‘the formation in schoolchildren of the skills of applying historical knowledge for understanding the essence of modern social phenomena, in communicating with other people in a modern multicultural, multi-ethnic and multi-confessional society’⁸⁵ (p. 8). In this situation, new concepts such as global citizenship may take some time to be recognised in the country; consolidating the nation-state takes precedence. Multi-lingual education has been viewed as a path of transformation for Kyrgyzstan towards greater national unity and stability. Related policies include the ‘Concept of Poly-cultural and Multilingual Education in the Kyrgyz Republic’, which was issued in 2008, and a guide for designing and implementing multilingual programs approved in 2016.

Another factor to be considered in discussing diversity is religion. In Central Asia, the political and social influence of Islam was profoundly reduced (or suppressed) during the period of Soviet rule. Although the post-Soviet transition has witnessed the revival of Islam across the region, the Central Asian states have largely maintained a commitment to local Islamic beliefs and practices, resisting, for example, the influence of fundamentalist forms of Islam prevalent across the Middle East. According to the 2016 Global Terrorism Index,⁸⁶ Central Asia has relatively low levels of the impact of terrorism compared to East, Southeast and South Asia, and Mongolia has seen no (zero) impact; Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan rank far below Finland (at 68th), at 84th, 94th and 117th, respectively. The spread of radicalisation remains limited across these countries, but political repression, social injustice and inequality mean that it remains a latent threat

85 Original in Russian: *‘формирование у школьников умений применять исторические знания для осмысления сущности современных общественных явлений, в общении с другими людьми в современном поликультурном, полиэтничном и многоконфессиональном обществе’.*

86 See <http://economicsandpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Global-Terrorism-Index-2016.2.pdf>

(Hann and Pelkmans, 2009; Omelicheva, 2016). In Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, attempts to dampen the influence of Islamic images and ideas have included the exclusion of religious symbols from these state's national flags, in contrast to those of Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, which feature half-crescents and stars signifying Islam. Religion has not been used by political elites to create a national identity, partly because this might stoke tensions with ethnic Russian minorities, and incur the ire of Russia itself, still a crucial regional power (Hilger, 2009).

Policies in Kazakhstan relating to the promotion of multiculturalism in school curricula are summarized in **Box 6.1**.

Box 6.1 Promoting multiculturalism in Kazakhstan

In 1995, President Nazarbayev established the Assembly of the Peoples of Kazakhstan (APK) — a consultative body set up under Article 44 of the Constitution and designed to represent the interests of all ethnic groups in the country. Learning about the APK is included in the Grade 9 Geography curriculum (p. 3).

In his annual address in 2008, President Nazarbayev stated that his concept of the 'Trinity of Languages', which defines Kazakh as the state language, Russian as the language of inter-ethnic communication and English as a tool for integration into the global economy and society, is essential for achieving the prosperity of the nation. In 2011, he approved the state program on trilingual education for 2011-2020.

In 2009, the government promulgated the Doctrine of National Unity, a blueprint for maintaining the multicultural character of Kazakh society through acceptance of common values such as patriotism, tolerance and appreciation of shared history. The Doctrine identifies three principles: 'one country, one destiny'; 'various origins, equal opportunities'; and 'development of national spirit' (Melich and Adibayeva, 2013). The coding data show that multiculturalism, tolerance and patriotism are integrated widely, and often as interrelated values, in policy documents and curricula (**Appendices II-10c, 12e, 12i**).

According to the coding results, 'multiculturalism' is highly prevalent in state education policy documents and curricula in both Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan (**Appendices II-10c, 12f**). This reflects the Kazakhstan government's vision of multi-ethnic and multicultural harmony (Schatz, 2000) and a similar emphasis in official discourse in Kyrgyzstan. In Mongolia and Uzbekistan, by contrast, acknowledgement of the multi-ethnic and multicultural character of the nation tends to be low-key or altogether lacking. The coding data reveal no reference to multiculturalism, respect for diversity and embedded identities in the Mongolian documents analysed, no doubt reflecting perceptions of the Mongolian nation as ethnically homogenous (**Appendices II-10c, 12d, 12j**). But attitudes and values of 'tolerance' are frequently cited in the documents from Mongolia as well as in those from Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, though rather less so in Uzbekistan (**Appendix II-12e**). The notion of embedded identities (see **Appendix I**) hardly features in materials from any of these countries, with the partial exception of Kyrgyzstan (**Appendix II-12j**). There is also a paucity of references to concepts associated with peace among the three Central Asian states (**Appendix II-6**).

This arguably reflects the relatively low priority accorded to promoting a sense of shared regional identity which, as well as being desirable in itself, is critical for underpinning inter-state cooperation on cross-border issues such as drug-trafficking, natural resource development and water security.

Civic and Citizenship Education

The varying nature of political regimes across the region, and related variations in the strength and scope of civil society, have influenced integration of civic and citizenship education into education policy and curricula. Civic and citizenship education in the region mainly focuses on human rights education and values of democratic participation and active citizenship. In Kyrgyzstan and Mongolia, local civil society has been more vibrant and influential in advocating human

rights and social justice, and lobbying against the government on issues such as corruption. The coding results show that Mongolian documents extensively cover concepts associated with the category ‘human rights’, including civil liberties, social justice and to a lesser extent, democracy (see **Appendix II-4**). This in part reflects extended efforts by local civil society groups and foreign donor organisations (Altangerel, 2009; Damdin and Vickers, 2015). However, policy and curricular documents from Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan feature considerable coverage of human

rights and civil liberties, albeit with less of an emphasis on social justice and democracy. Intriguingly, Uzbekistan is the only country out of all 22 surveyed for this report which gives a very high or high weightage to ‘human rights’ across all five related sub-categories (**Appendix II-4**). This in part reflects numerous references to the notion of education itself as a universal human right, which was a characteristic of Soviet official discourse. But the impression given by the coding results of Uzbekistan’s promotion of human rights through schooling constitutes one more reason for caution in relying on quantitative data alone to monitor progress towards achieving SDG 4.7.

It is also important to note that the local meaning of civic and citizenship education has changed over time. For example, in Mongolia, the term ‘Civic/Citizenship Education’ introduced by civil society organisations and donors was used interchangeably with ‘Democracy Education’ in the 1990s. However, when ‘Citizenship Education’ began to be discussed as an integral component of the primary and secondary curriculum in the 2000s, it was considered by policy makers and leading educators as ‘Citizen’s Education’ or ‘Civilization Studies’. The terms ‘citizenship’ and ‘civilization’ can be translated by the same word *irgenshil* in Mongolian, and this concept is associated with the widespread perception amongst educators of Civics as a vehicle for teaching about morality, Mongolian traditional customs and national values. For example, the primary objective of the current Grade 8 Civic Education curriculum is to raise citizens

“**Civic and citizenship education in the region mainly focuses on human rights education and values of democratic participation and active citizenship**”

who ‘value Mongolian customs and cultural values’⁸⁷ (p. 1, 3, 5, 7). The high priority accorded to cultivating national identity is accompanied by relative neglect of concepts pertaining to global citizenship (see **Appendices-II-7-10**).

Meanwhile, research by Damdin and Vickers (2015) suggests that schooling in Mongolia may be reinforcing, or at least failing to moderate, negative attitudes amongst many students towards their powerful neighbour, China (views of Russia amongst the students interviewed by contrast generally seemed rather positive). Until the 1940s, China: claimed suzerainty over the country; is still home to the majority of ethnic Mongols; has been the chief foil for articulating consciousness of a distinct Mongolian identity; and is today the country’s most important trading partner. Indeed, the question of how or to what extent growing Chinese influence across Central Asia has impinged upon curriculum development, especially as it relates to the portrayal of national identities, is one on which the country reports prepared for this study remain largely silent. But it is of crucial importance for understanding the relationship between schooling, strategies for national development, the emergence of any sense of transnational identity and the prospects for regional peace.

C: Challenges of Competitiveness and Regimentation

While education policy discourses changed substantially between the mid-1990s and mid-2000s, education practices on the ground did not keep pace (Silova, 2005; Steiner-Khamsi and Stolpe, 2006). Complex reactions, or ‘mutations’ and ‘localizations’, sprang up in response to the introduction of new ‘international’ education standards and ‘the latest global trends in education’ (Karpov and Lisovskaya, 2001; Nookoo, 2016). There has been a dynamic interplay between the new ideas and existing educational institutions, the political agendas of post-Soviet regimes, legacies of traditional pedagogical approaches and the capacity or willingness of educators to adapt to proposed changes.

‘Student-centred Approach’ in Practice

Governments across the region have ostensibly embraced ‘new teaching methodologies’ at the policy level, but persuading teachers and schools to ditch established practices has been difficult, given the entrenched Soviet practice of teaching by disciplines, and prioritising transmission and mastery of authorized, ‘scientific’ knowledge. Ethnographic work reveals how notions of student-centredness have been adjusted or tailored to local contexts. For example, in Mongolia, even though teachers used the term ‘student-centred teaching’, their ‘presentations,

“**Governments across the region have ostensibly embraced ‘new teaching methodologies’ at the policy level, but persuading teachers and schools to ditch established practices has been difficult**”

⁸⁷ Original in Mongolian: ‘монгол ёс заншил, соёлын үнэт зүйлсийг эрхэмлэн хэрэглэдэг иргэн болж төлөвшинө’.

discussions and other activities remained teacher-led At no time during the lesson was there room for student- or group-initiatives, or student-led activities' (Steiner-Khamsi and Stolpe, 2006, p. 119).

The coding data cannot tell us whether this kind of gap between policy and practice has been addressed in recent years, but research on individual countries suggests that progress may require more time. Researchers generally acknowledge that understandings of student-centred approaches among educators in the region can differ significantly from those espoused by overseas researchers or officials from the foreign aid community, especially because values such as collective identity and solidarity, respect for teachers and elders in general, an emphasis on effort and conventional views of academic achievement remain central to local visions of the nature and purpose of schooling. For example, research has indicated that the cultural beliefs and practices of Kazakhstani teachers are hard to reconcile with student-centred and collaborative approaches (Burkhalter and Shegebayev, 2012, p. 59). And a study of Kyrgyzstan concludes that the majority of teachers, students and institutions there are not adhering to a student-centred approach (de la Sablonnière, Taylor and Sadykova, 2009).

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There is a mismatch between attempts to reform curricula and teaching methods, and lack of reform to systems for assessing student performance”

The coding data show that education policy and curricula in the four countries extensively refer to student-centred approaches (see **Table 6.1**).⁸⁸ A significant gap between the stated aspirations of reformed national curricula – which appear increasingly competency-oriented – and approaches to assessing educational performance – which still largely adheres to the established practice of testing mastery of knowledge and set formulae – characterizes schooling systems throughout the region. The mismatch between attempts to reform

curricula and teaching methods, and lack of reform to systems for assessing student performance, is vividly illustrated by the following comment from a Mongolian schoolteacher:

At our school we frequently use interactive teaching methods from September through March. In April, we refocus on content so that our students pass the exam in June. (Steiner-Khamsi and Stolpe, 2006, p. 112)

88 The very high number of references in documents for Kazakhstan can be partly attributed to the coder's propensity to overcode, as compared to other coders, coupled with the volume of documents analysed.

Table 6.1. Teaching/learning approaches in all coded documents (number of references)

	Student/ Learner Centred	Respecting Learner's diversity	Inter- disciplinary	Whole- school approach	Use of ICTs/ Social media
Kazakhstan	623	50	72	0	50
Kyrgyzstan	23	2	12	0	8
Mongolia	18	16	4	4	7
Uzbekistan	76	1	12	1	11
TOTAL	740	69	100	5	76

Although a student-centred approach is heavily emphasised in education policy and curricula, a tradition of teacher-centred pedagogy remains – as does a strong emphasis on preparation for national-level high-stakes examinations such as the National Graduation Test, and Maths Olympiads. A boom in private tutoring and examination preparation courses across the region has been connected to a number of drivers, including the deteriorating quality of education in mainstream schools, the persistent importance of high-stakes examinations, and the increasingly competitive and insecure nature of the labour market combined with the collapse of Soviet-era welfare guarantees (Silova, 2009b) (the issue of supplementary private tutoring is taken up in the next section).

In Kyrgyzstan, teachers were offered little training for the task of creating new materials for the purpose of school-based curriculum development, as envisaged in official policy (de la Sablonnière, Taylor and Sadykova, 2009). Central authorities did not allow schools to choose texts, and those they had were rarely updated. Research in the late 1990s reported that, in the absence of substantial training and new resources, teachers could only ‘follow slavishly’ the approach laid down in such materials, leading to a ‘very passive stance’ (Webber, 2000). Although the central authorities introduced new concepts and approaches such as assessing the surrounding environment, critical analysis, collective decision-making and the use of phrases such as ‘learner autonomy’ and ‘critical thinking’, they did not provide any specific guidance or new resources to assist in operationalising these ideas. In the Central Asian societies, teachers had little exposure to the discourse of alternative ways of conceptualising education (de la Sablonnière, Taylor and Sadykova, 2009).

As Amsler (2009) observed in Kyrgyzstan, the hope that education promises a brighter future for both the individual and society often coexists awkwardly with teachers’ extremely low salaries and declining professional legitimacy. The social status of teachers has weakened in

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The hope that education promises a brighter future for both the individual and society often coexists awkwardly with teachers’ extremely low salaries and declining professional legitimacy
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all four countries since the 1990s to varying degrees. Poverty among teachers is prevalent throughout the region; for example, as of 2009 many teachers in Kyrgyzstan were living below the official poverty line (Silova, 2009b). Meanwhile, the education ministry and regional authorities typically fund only teachers' salaries, often leaving local schools to fend for themselves in terms of acquiring materials and maintaining basic infrastructure (Mertaugh, 2004).

Mongolia and Kazakhstan also exhibit long-standing issues with the qualification level, motivation and compensation of their teaching force, excessive teacher workloads, inadequate infrastructure (with some schools hosting two or even three shifts a day), lack of resources and insufficient provision of teacher training. Teachers' base salary is often insufficient to meet basic living expenses, let alone financially support a household. As a result, teachers across the region have developed various compensation strategies such as teaching additional hours, collecting fees from parents at school and taking on additional work outside of school (UNICEF, 2011).

Regimenting the Mind

Aside from a serious lack of teacher capacity in general, one reason why many teachers resist adopting new student-centred approaches to teaching is a reluctance to compromise their privileged position in the classroom (de la Sablonnière, Taylor and Sadykova, 2009). Ordinary teachers have, at best, limited opportunities to initiate change or to raise questions in order to discuss major issues. In Kyrgyzstan, for example, both teachers and children profess respect for the authority of leaders and regard it as inappropriate to question them (Yakavets, 2016, p. 695). Especially in more rural schools, teachers expressed fears that independent thought and action in the classroom and in school were inappropriate (DeYoung, 2007, p. 251).

Whereas authoritarian pedagogical styles are far from uncommon in other Asia regions, the extent to which schools function as sites of ideological control across much of Central Asia is striking. For example, in Kazakhstan, the president's speeches – enshrined in laws, government policies and initiatives – are cited in every school's development plan (Yakavets, 2016). In Uzbekistan, books by President Karimov have been included in the secondary curriculum for memorisation and recitation in university entrance examinations (Ashrafi, 2008). In 2015, the government of Uzbekistan banned the teaching of political science (Kutcher, 2015), reflecting official sensitivity over forms of education seen as liable to foster critical awareness of political issues amongst Uzbek youth. In Central Asian countries under highly centralised political regimes, Silova (2009b) argues, 'many parents have actively sought private tutoring for their children to compensate for the strictly imposed ideological indoctrination that has dominated school curricula and left students without the basic knowledge and skills necessary to survive in the post-Soviet context' (p. 59).

Education, Social Justice and Corruption

As elsewhere in Asia, private supplementary tutoring is now a major phenomenon across Central Asia and Mongolia. In the late 2000s, a cross-national study covering three Central Asian countries revealed that 64.8 per cent of students surveyed in Kazakhstan and 52.5 per cent in Kyrgyzstan were receiving supplementary private tutoring during the final grade of secondary school (the proportion is today almost certainly higher); the study also highlighted the negative implications of private tutoring, including exacerbating social inequalities and fuelling corruption in mainstream schools (Silova, 2009b). At around the same time, a study focusing on Mongolia revealed that over two-thirds of students surveyed had received private tutoring; it also revealed that the percentage of students receiving private tutoring stood at more than 70 per cent amongst those residing in the capital (Ulaanbaatar) and whose parents had received higher education (bachelor's degree or higher) (MEA and OSIESP, 2005).

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The proportion of students being tutored by their own teachers is large across Central Asia, compared to other countries of the former socialist bloc”

While the transition to a market economy has contributed to generating new education opportunities for many youngsters, it also led to unequal educational opportunities and outcomes and eroded teaching as an autonomous profession. For Silova (2009b), the scale of private tutoring in Central Asia not only reflects ‘a dramatic crisis of confidence in mainstream schooling’ (p. 169) but also the stark reality that ‘education has become a public sector conducive

to corruption’ (p. 171). Various factors interact to invite corruption, but perhaps the most important is the low salary level of civil servants, including teachers. The proportion of students being tutored by their own teachers is large across Central Asia, compared to other countries of the former socialist bloc. To compensate for their low salaries, some teachers intentionally withhold part of the syllabus in their regular classes, thus incentivising their students to pay for out-of-school tutoring. Indeed, ‘students frequently report being extorted by their teachers to use private tutoring on a regular basis’ (p. 169).

‘Shadow education’ aside, even initiatives aiming at improving the quality of formal schooling can sometimes have unintended consequences in terms of aggravating inequality and social injustice. For example, when governments choose particular schools as partners or laboratories piloting innovative programs or approaches, this tends to make certain public schools more prestigious than their ‘ordinary’ counterparts. In Mongolia, though high-performing or relatively prestigious public

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‘Shadow education’ aside, even initiatives aiming at improving the quality of formal schooling can sometimes have unintended consequences in terms of aggravating inequality and social injustice”

schools are in theory obliged to accept children from their catchment area, they tend to find ways of reserving places for the best-performing students as well as children whose parents offer special ‘donations’ (similar practices became widespread in China from the 1990s; see Vickers and Zeng, 2017, **Chapter 9**). In Uzbekistan, upon completion of nine years of basic schooling, students continue their education in specialised, vocational education institutions (lyceums and colleges), where they can enrich their academic knowledge and gain professional qualifications (Uzbekistan, 2013). However, the system has created inequity and opportunities for corruption. Unlike universities, which use a state controlled examination for admission, lyceums and colleges hold their own entrance examinations. The process of admission to popular lyceums and colleges that prepare students for promising professions has thus presented significant opportunities for corruption (Yusupov, 2009).

CONCLUSION

Coming last in our analyses of Asian regions, this chapter vividly illuminates the challenges confronting efforts to reorient education towards peace, sustainable development and global citizenship. First, it exposes how schooling in post-Soviet Central Asia has been reconceptualised to serve the need for rapid nation-building in a region whose states were unprepared for independence when the USSR collapsed. Schooling thus goes to great lengths to popularize narratives of the national past, imputing immemorial, semi-mythical origins to what (with

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The particularly heavy emphasis on nation-building across this region, accompanied in some cases by crude leader cults, is symptomatic of the fraught and fragile nature of post-Soviet statehood, and a political context that severely complicates the task of implementing SDG Target 4.7
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the significant exception of Mongolia) are mostly new entities of considerable ethnic diversity. The particularly heavy emphasis on nation-building across this region, accompanied in some cases by crude leader cults, is symptomatic of the fraught and fragile nature of post-Soviet statehood, and a political context that severely complicates the task of implementing SDG Target 4.7.

Second, this chapter highlights the transformation of Soviet-era understandings (however constraining) of education as a ‘common good’, and their supplanting, at least at the level of policy discourse, with a relentless emphasis on schooling as an instrument for generating ‘human resources’ equipped with the competencies the market demands. Of course,

Soviet policy makers also saw education in largely instrumentalist terms, to be valued for its contribution to strengthening the state and maintaining the technological rivalry with the West (especially in armaments production). But the ideals of internationalism, egalitarianism and popular welfare that socialism also claimed to champion have passed into eclipse in Central Asia, as across much of

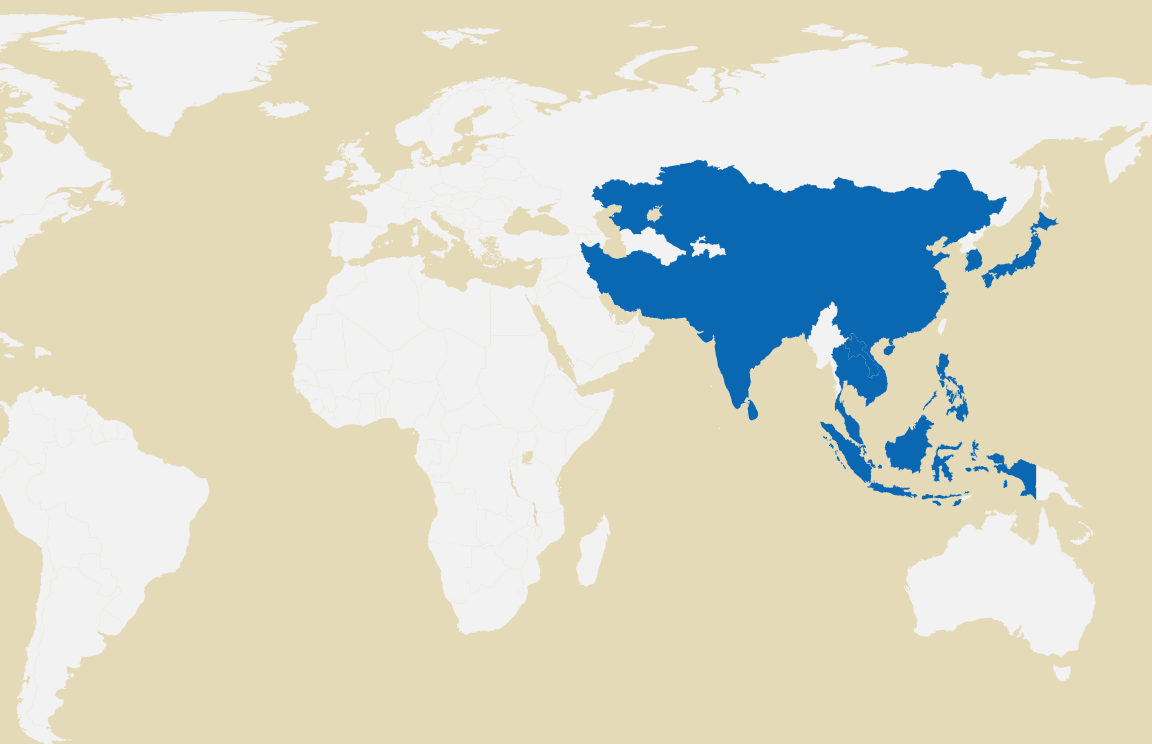
the former USSR, since the early 1990s. This is perhaps in part precisely because of the cynicism bred by the yawning gap between Soviet ideals and reality, although, as Brown notes (2009), by the 1970s and 1980s citizens of the Central Asian regions of the USSR were generally more content under Soviet rule than their counterparts in European Russia or the Baltic region.

Many observers have also noted the role played by international donors in shaping education discourse and policy in post-Soviet Central Asia and Mongolia. Niyozov and Dastambuev (2012) have identified three strategic interests guiding these external actors: (i) detaching Central Asian states from the Soviet past (i.e. securing their independence and keeping them out of the Russian orbit); (ii) inoculating or quarantining them against the spread of anti-Western Islamic extremism; and (iii) securing their integration into and dependence on the global market economy. The dichotomisation of ‘socialist’ and ‘capitalist’ systems and the outright rejection of the former has typically informed the work of international donors and local policymakers, clearing the ground for the dominance of the market-oriented human capital paradigm. In post-socialist Central Asia, education has come to be seen primarily as a ‘private good’ rather than a public one. As Silova (2009b) puts it, ‘education (including various types of private tutoring) has become the last hope and the main way to advance or maintain one’s socio-economic position as the economic prospects for those without educational credentials deteriorate’ (p. 167).

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rather than a public
one”

Although the coding results and the qualitative analysis indicate some lingering influence of the egalitarian Soviet legacy at the level of policy rhetoric, the post-Soviet social reality is one of widening inequality, which under-resourced and increasingly stratified schooling systems are ill-equipped to counter. Attainments in the fields of education, health care, science and equality during Soviet rule were initially expected, after 1991, to form a strong foundation for a swift transformation of the Central Asian states into stable, prosperous democracies (Niyozov and Dastambuev, 2012). But even a cursory survey of the current state of schooling across the region illustrates how widely off the mark such predictions have proved. Instead, the Central Asian states and Mongolia have embraced a new totalising paradigm – of schooling for the production of marketable human resources and reinforcement of nationalist loyalties – which, while rather different from the Soviet ideological cocktail, is no more conducive to peace, sustainability or domestic or international harmony.

Conclusions and Ways Forward



Conclusions

The present study demonstrates that the ideals of peace, sustainability and global citizenship associated with SDG 4.7 are reflected to varying extents in education policies and curricula across Asia. However, it also reveals the extent of the challenges that remain if schooling is truly to become a vehicle for realising a sustainable and peaceful future, underpinned by a consciousness of what we owe to each other and to our shared home by virtue of our common humanity. Superficial insertions of particular concepts and competencies into policy documents and curricula guidelines will not suffice for this purpose. The piecemeal and largely rhetorical adoption of ideas of critical thinking, or empathy, or even ‘peace’ in curricular documents is unlikely to loosen the nexus between unsustainable development and formal schooling. While ESD, GCED or related areas remain consigned to the fringes of school curricula, ‘scaling up’ existing good practices in this area will make little contribution to securing the peaceful and sustainable future we all presumably desire. We need to place these concerns at the centre of our thinking about education.

The findings of this study show that these ideas remain peripheral rather than central to official discourse on schooling across Asia. Both the coding results discussed in **Part I**, and the qualitative analysis in **Part II**, demonstrate that despite the immense political, economic and cultural diversity of the societies under review, they mostly share a broadly similar orientation towards the goals of schooling – one that is in fundamental respects at odds with the goals enshrined in SDG 4.7.

Most espouse the overwhelming or absolute priority of national interests and identities over transnational understandings. Many in turn define the nation – explicitly or implicitly – in terms of rigid ethno-cultural categories, with implications for the status of minorities and migrants, and for the accommodation of diversity. And many, though not all, portray the nation as an object of unquestioning loyalty rather (or more) than a guarantor of rights – as an entity that commands its citizens, rather than being commanded by them. Schooling typically reinforces the imperative of absolute loyalty by presenting children with a vision of the world that is implicitly Darwinian – in which strong nations compete to survive, while the weak go under. Given the still raw legacy of colonialism, imperialism and violent conflict across Asia, the prevalence of

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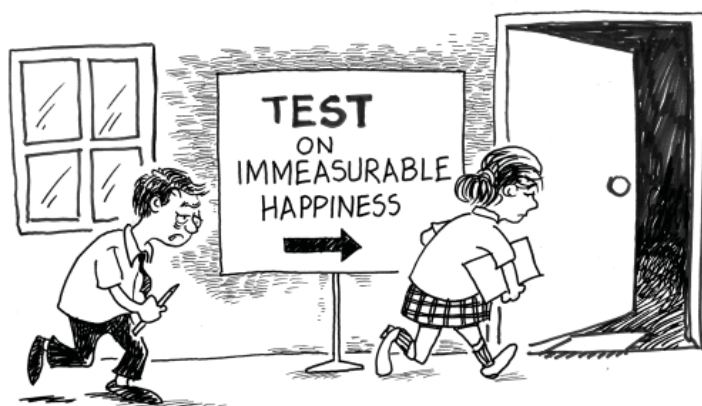
this nationalist orientation should come as no surprise, but it constitutes a considerable barrier to the realisation of SDG 4.7.

An enduring emphasis on national self-strengthening also implies a strongly instrumentalist vision of education, with maximisation of national competitiveness seen as the ultimate end of schooling. This instrumentalism is strongly evident across most of Asia, and is related to a vision that implicitly values citizens primarily as ‘human resources’ or ‘human capital’ for the pursuit of economic growth. Consequently, the range of skills and competencies that schooling systems seek to impart tends to be heavily skewed towards mathematics and the sciences, with humanities and social sciences correspondingly neglected.

Until quite recently, this sort of economism and scientism was associated, across much of Asia, with command economies and state manpower planning. But

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The result is an approach to schooling that typically combines high levels of regimentation with intense competitiveness, increasingly spilling over into the private sector as families invest in cram schooling and other forms of supplementary or alternative provision”

now schooling in most Asian societies prepares students for the rigours of a highly competitive labour market, in which opportunities are determined by the competitive acquisition of credentials, there are typically few second chances, and state provision of key public goods other than schooling (and often of that too) is minimal or inadequate. The result is an approach to schooling that typically combines high levels of regimentation with intense competitiveness, increasingly spilling over into the private sector as families invest in cram schooling and other forms of supplementary or alternative provision. Though not captured in our coding exercise, this context is crucial to assessing the prospects for realising SDG 4.7 across Asia.



SDG 4.7 challenges us to reaffirm a humanistic vision of education, countering the widely prevalent view of human beings as resources, and ‘nature’ as an object for human consumption and exploitation. While appreciating the crucial importance of education for promoting collective prosperity and individual opportunity, we need to conceive the purposes of schooling in terms that go beyond building ‘human capital’ and enhancing ‘employability’. This means confronting the pervasive instrumentalism that currently informs official thinking on education across Asia.

Even where official discourse features endorsements of ‘critical thinking’ or ‘problem solving’, these are typically valued as economically useful ‘skills’ rather than as attributes intrinsic to the notion of an educated individual and autonomous, engaged citizen. Similarly, while ‘autonomous learning’ or ‘independence’ are widely espoused as objectives of schooling, this is typically in the context of frameworks that provide little room for questioning larger social and geo-political realities. The dominance of the national lens affords little scope for students to gain a sensitive and nuanced appreciation of the tensions – often relating to environmental or economic factors – that underlie conflict within and between nations. Curricular documents typically convey general concern for the environment without linking it to the dynamics of a global economic and financial system organised around the competitive pursuit of narrowly-conceived individual and national self-interest.

Policymakers across Asia and beyond therefore urgently need to place the promotion of peace, sustainability and a consciousness of shared humanity at the centre of their vision for educational development. In UNESCO parlance, SDG 4.7 should be seen not just as one of a menu of educational ‘goals’, but as

“Policymakers across Asia and beyond therefore urgently need to place the promotion of peace, sustainability and a consciousness of shared humanity at the centre of their vision for educational development”

the central goal around which all others revolve. UNESCO itself has consistently emphasised the intrinsic, rather than merely instrumental, value of education. Its metaphor of four pillars of learning – learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together, learning to be – represents knowledge, skill, togetherness and the self. The latest endorsement of this holistic vision comes in *Rethinking Education: towards a global common good?* (UNESCO, 2015b), which declares that a humanistic agenda in education ‘means going beyond narrow utilitarianism and economism to integrate the multiple dimensions

of human existence’ (emphasis added; p. 10). UNESCO has also resisted the managerial discourse on educational ‘quality’, upholding a view of quality as indicative of the capacity of an educational system to improve itself (UNESCO, 2005).

UNESCO's current concern for promoting sustainable development through education, based on a broad vision of peace, equity and global citizenship, can be traced back at least as far as the 1972 report, *Learning to Be: The world of education today and tomorrow*. Attempts to challenge the instrumentalist assumptions underlying dominant approaches to curriculum development have long been associated with a parallel debate on the nature of learning and its relationship to schooling for the young (Bruner, 1986). Research on learning in the behaviourist paradigm helped this debate to move beyond arguments over the significance of nature *versus* nurture, but also contributed to privileging the predictable and measurable aspects of learning over its creative aspects.

The discourse of 'competencies' represents the latest attempt at formulating objectives so as to make education more purposive and efficient. As defined by the OECD (2005, 2016a), the notion of 'competency' encompasses knowledge, skills, attitudes and values. The OECD groups the competencies it regards as essential for life in our 'globalized' world into three broad categories: technological, social and individual. These are intended to provide a framework for clarifying the goals of learning, thereby rendering the work of the teacher more transparent and predictable. But despite the apparent novelty of this approach, we have been here before. Stenhouse (1975) pointed out that the creative element in education, and in the act of teaching, inevitably introduces an element of unpredictability into its outcomes. Instrumentalist views of education, however, tend to insist that curriculum and teaching should be organised around fully measurable outcomes; as McKinsey's in-house motto has it, 'everything can be measured, and what gets measured gets managed' (cited in Morris, 2016, p. 9). Our study demonstrates the dominance of this view across Asia.

But this managerialist conception of schooling implies a negation of teachers' agency and autonomy, while narrowing the definition of learning to the acquisition of isolated competencies and skills. The findings of this study suggest that outcomes-driven policies are fueling a growing tendency to hand pre-scripted curricula to teachers, thereby diminishing their agency in the classroom. The concomitant of this denial of teacher autonomy is a robotic view of the child. The core competency model envisages training the young to successfully negotiate the world as it exists, rather than empowering them to imagine and shape a better world. So dominant has the terminology of 'competencies' become in international discourse on education policy, that UNESCO itself has adopted it in its attempts to promote ESD and GCED.

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For the potential of schooling to promote peace, sustainable development and global citizenship to be fully realised, curriculum policies, textbooks and pedagogic practice must be grounded in an understanding of the importance of the teacher's freedom and capacity to contextualise knowledge in a manner appropriate to the child's milieu”

However, the approach of listing discrete competencies – without sufficient reflection on what is required for operationalising them – is not compatible with the ambition of deploying education to transform established conceptions of development, equity and justice. For the potential of schooling to promote peace, sustainable development and global citizenship to be fully realised, curriculum policies, textbooks and pedagogic practice must be grounded in an understanding of the importance of the teacher’s freedom and capacity to contextualise knowledge in a manner appropriate to the child’s milieu. This implies investment in robust academic preparation of teachers, enabling them to grasp the nature and scale of the challenges involved in ESD and GCED. And ultimately, it implies reconceptualising teaching as a craft and an autonomous profession, rather than a technical exercise in the efficient delivery of pre-packaged ‘competencies’.

1. Towards Education for Sustainability

The child who has felt a strong love for his [*sic*] surroundings and for all living creatures, who has discovered joy and enthusiasm in work, gives us reason to hope that humanity can develop in a new direction. Our hope for peace in the future lies not in the formal knowledge that adult can pass on to the child, but in the normal development of the new man [*sic*].

Maria Montessori (1948/1972, p. 69)

This report underlines the fact that if ESD/GCED is to be effectively integrated into primary and junior secondary schooling, then both the process of curriculum design, and the reconfiguring of the education system more broadly, will require substantial and sustained input from educational experts and practitioners. Teachers need to be not just trained, but persuaded of the importance of this agenda and engaged in shaping and adapting it, so that they in turn can engage their students in a similarly interactive manner. Curricular coherence and effectiveness requires the articulation of issues related to the sustainability agenda, and of their pedagogical implications, in a manner that is readily comprehensible to most teachers. Curriculum design must also acknowledge the need to stimulate students’ curiosity and foster a critical awareness of the difficulty and complexity of achieving environmental sustainability, peace and global citizenship – even while reinforcing commitment to these goals.

A good way to start, with younger children, is to afford them opportunities to learn about the natural environment through direct experience. Many Asian countries now teach environmental studies at the primary level, and in several countries, including Mongolia, Afghanistan, Bhutan, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, a course which mentions ‘environment’ in title is timetabled in basic education (see **Appendix III**). With important exceptions, however, pedagogical approaches

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Pedagogical approaches are often largely devoid of any hands-on experience of nature”

are often largely devoid of any hands-on experience of nature. With growing urbanisation, many schools lack any space for a garden, but in many societies it is rare even for rural schools to include gardening-related activities in their curriculum. Indeed, study of the environment (experiential or not), where it is timetabled at all, is customarily treated as a marginal or extra-curricular activity, peripheral to the core curricular areas of mathematics and science. These trends have been exacerbated by the intensely competitive ethos that has come to permeate schooling. But learning for sustainable development demands that every child is given the chance to experience life in nature, including that of plants, birds, animals and insects.

If taken beyond the level of rhetoric, the sustainability agenda can constitute an inspiring resource for critical thinking. Schooling needs to confront the inconsistencies between curricular messages regarding sustainability on the one hand, and the frequently unsustainable nature of development strategies and everyday practices on the other. Failing to address the typically yawning gap between some of the ideals that subject syllabi and textbooks profess – and the not-so-hidden curriculum of discourse and conduct beyond the school gates – is a recipe for fostering cynicism and disengagement. At the same time, striking an appropriate balance between hope and realism is both especially important and particularly difficult when presenting young children with the magnitude of our environmental crisis and threats to peace.

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Schooling needs to confront the inconsistencies between curricular messages regarding sustainability on the one hand, and the frequently unsustainable nature of development strategies and everyday practices on the other
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Promoting meaningful debate requires breaking down the concepts encompassed by SDG 4.7 into readily comprehensible and carefully contextualised issues, to which children can begin to relate on the basis of their own experience. At the very least, schooling needs to foster in students an awareness of the tensions and contradictions inherent in our aspirations for a sustainable and peaceful future on the one hand, and an institutionalised commitment to unlimited economic growth and consumption on the other. As already noted, the demands this places on curriculum developers and teachers are considerable – and, if they are to be met, curriculum design cannot be left simply to technocrats in the central ministry, but must involve a wide range of experts and stakeholders, including classroom teachers themselves.

2. Towards Education for Global Citizenship

To imbue the minds of the whole people with an abnormal vanity of its own superiority, to teach it to take pride in its moral callousness and ill-begotten wealth, to perpetuate the humiliation of defeated nations by exhibiting trophies won from war, and using these in schools in order to breed in children's minds contempt for others, is imitating the West where she has a festering sore, whose swelling is a swelling of disease eating into its vitality.

Rabindranath Tagore (1917/2010, p. 23)

Global citizenship education essentially involves fostering a consciousness of identity as multi-layered and multi-dimensional, rather than as a homogenous quality with a singular focus: the nation. In this respect, the present study shows how far most Asian systems of schooling are from transcending nationally-bounded visions of collective identity. It is important to stress once again that

“It is important to stress that emphasising the importance of going beyond national identity does not mean denying the importance of nation-states as institutions, nor of the sense of belonging and mutual regard that they promote and embody”

emphasising the importance of going beyond national identity does not mean denying the importance of nation-states as institutions, nor of the sense of belonging and mutual regard that they promote and embody. But to the extent that mutual regard stops at national boundaries (or those of faith-based or ethno-linguistic groupings), threats to peace will remain acute, and building transnational consensus around strategies to tackle our shared environmental crisis will remain an uphill struggle.

Reforming approaches to political socialisation to encourage identification with those of different national, religious or ethnic backgrounds is a complex task, and a real transformation of mass consciousness is likely to take more than one generation. Both that complexity and the pedagogical factors rehearsed above mean that efforts to foster greater transnationalism and tolerance of diversity should begin close to home. 'Global citizenship' can seem a vague and airy concept; but regionally-rooted identities, based on bonds of culture, faith and language are latent in Asia's shared history. Societies across the continent bear the imprint not just of centuries of invasion, conquest and colonisation, but also of commercial and cultural interaction spanning many generations, with profound and lasting consequences. To outside observers, it can seem puzzling, not to say tragic, that Pakistanis and Indians, or Japanese and Chinese, share many elements of a common literary legacy, enjoy much the same popular culture, and share a host of tastes, beliefs and traditions – yet largely choose to regard each other as enemy aliens. In these cases, the resources for

constructing a sense of shared identity do not have to be uncovered or invented – they are there in plain sight.

But across Asia, one of the similarities that many states share is a persistence in using education primarily to instill a sense of national difference or uniqueness – not least vis-à-vis their closest neighbours. Even where history and civics curricula refrain from glorifying war – in the manner lamented by Tagore a century ago – they often take the alternative path of wallowing in victimhood. The competitive assertion of national victimhood is potentially just as corrosive of international understanding as war-related triumphalism. It can encourage both an arrogant sense of national moral superiority, and an aggrieved consciousness of innocence violated, which can all too easily transmogrify into violent antipathy for the nations or groups held responsible for past violations.

If this is true of curricula designed for use in publicly run schools, what of the fee-paying ‘international schools’ whose number is proliferating across Asia? If global citizenship education were to be found anywhere, surely it would be here? However, global citizenship as manifested in these schools, and expressed in the use of English as a medium of instruction, is essentially the identity of a privileged globalized elite. This is not the vision of inclusive, democratic transnationalism propounded by UNESCO. Taken as individual institutions, such schools may be excellent in themselves, and may do their best to promote worthy ideals amongst their students. But as both a symptom of and a factor in the exacerbation of the massive gulf in knowledge, experience and sensibilities between elites and everybody else, their spread if anything contributes to undermining a consciousness of shared humanity and common citizenship not only across national boundaries, but also – and especially – within them.

Of course, in many Asian societies, access to opportunities to learn English, the global lingua franca, today extends well beyond the precincts of a few elite private schools – a fact that may be taken as a harbinger of a more global sensibility. But even where it is taught in public schools, high-quality instruction in English, and the attainment of real proficiency, largely remain the province of those wealthy or privileged enough to supplement public provision. Meanwhile, the teaching of English is primarily – and understandably – motivated by instrumentalist, economic considerations: policymakers seek a ready supply of ‘global human resources’, while individuals and families see English as a means of acquiring, or retaining, elite status. But the overwhelming focus on English in foreign language teaching, combined with the curricular bias towards mathematics and science across much of Asia, typically squeezes space for the

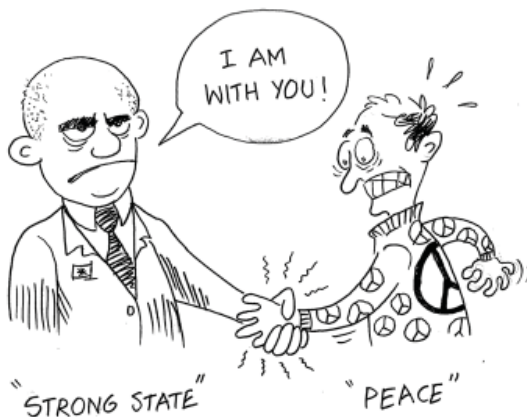
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The teaching of English is primarily — and understandably — motivated by instrumentalist, economic considerations: policymakers seek a ready supply of ‘global human resources’, while individuals and families see English as a means of acquiring, or retaining, elite status
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learning of other Asian languages out of school timetables. Japanese students, for example, study classical Chinese (in their *Japanese* language lessons), but almost never any modern Chinese at all (see **Chapter 3**). This is not conducive to promoting the kind of transnational consciousness that Asia needs to foster in the interests of peace.

In the context of citizenship education, the discourse of ‘jobs’ and ‘employable skills’ poses yet another key challenge. Much of the world, including parts of Asia, is witnessing largely jobless growth, widespread youth unemployment or under-employment, or increasingly irregular, insecure employment, in ways that are putting immense strains on social cohesion. Nonetheless, educational policies generally continue to treat skills-training and employability in isolation from the broader humanistic and civic goals of schooling. Education continues to fuel the aspiration for a steady career and the life-style associated with it. But in many countries, stable jobs have greatly dwindled, while employers attempt to maintain motivation and productivity by manipulating the ambitions and fears of their increasingly transient and insecure workforces. Vocational education is widely touted as a means of job-creation, but it tends to focus on narrowly defined skills packages. Rather than fostering opportunities for fulfilling careers, vocational high-schooling often performs the social function of managing expectations amongst students whom society has deemed ‘failures’, condemning them to insecure and unremunerative employment (Woronov, 2016).

An excessive or unbalanced focus on the role of education in enhancing ‘employability’ and boosting growth intensifies pressures on learners and undermines the impact of curricular exhortations to pursue sustainability. Such a

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Such a focus encourages young people to see schooling primarily as an exercise in the competitive acquisition of ‘human capital’, and to value themselves and others primarily as units of productive capacity”
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focus encourages young people to see schooling primarily as an exercise in the competitive acquisition of ‘human capital’, and to value themselves and others primarily as units of productive capacity (and consequent earning and consumerist display). A fundamentalist brand of meritocracy, deeply entrenched in East Asia but prevalent elsewhere too, helps legitimise existing patterns of privilege while contributing to new forms of discrimination or social fragmentation. Tweaking curricular messages in the areas of citizenship education, gender, diversity or human rights can only go so far in addressing such issues. To restore public awareness of the intrinsic value of learning, and

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What is needed is a fundamental reassessment of a social contract marred by pervasive insecurity”

moderate the extreme forms of credentialism that permeate many Asian schooling systems, what is needed is a fundamental reassessment of a social contract marred by pervasive insecurity. If we seek to persuade young people to care about our common future, it would help to give them a tangible stake in it.

3. Reclaiming the Central Importance of Education for Peace

In the ongoing atomization of society, citizens and classes have both vanished as forces for change and given way to a world of individuals, who come together as consumers of goods or information, and who trust the Internet more than they do their political representatives or the experts they watch on television. ... Our representatives continue to hand over power to experts and self-interested self-regulators in the name of efficient global governance while a skeptical and alienated public looks on. The idea of governing the world is becoming yesterday’s dream.

Mark Mazower (2012, pp. 426-7)

Promotion of peace has been widely adopted as a formal aim of schooling, but integrating it into curricula framed within a ‘national development’ perspective has proved difficult. Although the discourse of globalization has proven popular with many policy makers and curriculum developers, focus has tended to fall primarily on its commercial implications, rather than on global cooperation for the sake of peace. In the curricular documents of many Asian countries, including some that have recently faced or are currently experiencing violent conflict, discussion of peace appears to be relatively absent. The ‘culture of peace’ to which SDG 4.7 refers remains weakly acknowledged, if at all, across much of this continent.

Moreover, even where peace is highlighted in curricula and textbooks, it tends to be associated with implicitly nationalist assertions of unique victimhood, lending ‘us’ special insight into the horrors of war, and thus a right and duty to preach pacifism to our neighbours and the world at large. This pacifism can

be sincere and deeply felt. But when the neighbours in question see themselves as possessing even stronger claims to victimhood at the hands of today's self-appointed peacemongers (or their grandparents), this approach can become self-defeating. Rather than promoting international brotherhood and harmony, it can exacerbate and ossify mutual alienation and incomprehension – as illustrated in **Chapter 3** on East Asia. A thoroughgoing pacifism means removing the nationalist blinkers, and acknowledging the capacity for aggression and atrocity that lurks within every culture, society and individual.

As a concept, peace is wedged between sustainability and global citizenship. The successful pursuit of these objectives depends on the presence of peace, making the role of schooling in securing peace absolutely pivotal. Several meanings and approaches can be recognised in the emergent discourse of peace education (Bajaj and Hantzopoulos, 2016), but in its fullest sense it is about more than preventing antagonism from spilling over into conflict by reminding us of the dangers of war – important though this is. Securing 'sustainable' peace requires tackling head-on the chauvinist attitudes that fuel antagonism, dehumanising the 'other'. Here the potential of schooling, for better and for worse, is enormous.

Many regions of Asia, as well as the Middle East and parts of Europe, have experienced heightened levels of insecurity, uncertainty and violence since the end of the Cold War, manifested not least in an upsurge in terrorism (Franklin, 2006). The search for peace through education conducted by eminent philosophers and educationalists during the inter-war years of the last century – including Bertrand Russell, Maria Montessori and Rabindranath Tagore – is thus no less urgent today (Brehony, 2004). These thinkers argued for a radical transformation of schooling as a means of mitigating fear of war and its consequences. They proposed ideas of 'world citizenship' which prefigure the 'global citizenship' championed today by UNESCO.

The globally respected expert on early childhood education, Maria Montessori, was particularly eloquent and inspiring on this score. Her analysis of peace addressed the psychological terrain of adult-child relations, focusing especially on the implications for pedagogy. In her lecture 'Education and Peace' (Montessori, 1948/1972), she demonstrated how curricula and pedagogy that ignore the child's own nature tend to breed servitude of the mind. She argued that this ultimately serves to perpetuate violence and war, and to maintain the illusion that war in itself offers the ultimate resolution of conflict. Her analysis underlines the importance of child-centred education to fostering attitudes and capabilities that are crucial to the maintenance of peace and the achievement of sustainability.

Just as in Montessori's day, clarity as to precisely what constitutes 'child-centredness' in schooling remains somewhat elusive. Calls for greater 'child-centredness' risk being seen as naïve, fundamentalist pleas for pedagogic progressivism. However, as our data show, this has not prevented governments

across Asia from selectively appropriating the rhetoric of ‘autonomy’ and ‘creativity’ – concepts that imply an ideal of self-directed learning. As noted above, these concepts have typically come to be viewed almost entirely through the prism of economism, as if the political and social implications of independent, critical thinking could (and should) somehow be separated from its role in enhancing productivity. The widespread combination of exhortations to promote creative, autonomous learning on the one hand, and uncritical state-centred patriotism on the other, reminds us of Bertrand Russell’s sarcastic suggestion that students ‘showing a certain degree of aptitude for science shall be exempted from the usual training in citizenship, and given a license to think’ (1932/2010, p. 11). In other words, one pedagogical ethos for the technocratic elites destined to rule, and another for the masses who obediently do their bidding.

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One pedagogical ethos for the technocratic elites destined to rule, and another for the masses who obediently do their bidding”

To point this out is not to advocate a simplistic dichotomy between ordered, rules-bound teaching and a pedagogical free-for-all. As Russell acknowledged, ‘complete freedom throughout childhood’ does not teach a child ‘to resist the solicitations of a momentary impulse,’ and prevents him/her from developing ‘the capacity of concentrating upon one matter when he/[she] is interested in another, or of resisting pleasures because they will cause fatigue that will interfere with subsequent work.’ However, at the other extreme, ‘very rigid discipline, such as that of soldiers in wartime, makes a man/[woman] incapable of acting without the goad of external command’; and it is this pattern that is prevalent across much of Asia. ‘The strengthening of the will,’ Russell concluded, ‘demands... a somewhat subtle mixture of freedom and discipline, and is destroyed by an excess of either’ (p. 23). This brings us back again to the centrality of pedagogy and of the teacher’s role and status.

The concept of peace sits at the confluence of three major pursuits of schooling: the instilling of certain ethical norms (including an appropriate measure of discipline); the fostering of a consciousness of citizenship; and preparation for the world of work. All three pursuits are today subject to novel and related forms of turmoil. Multiple factors are associated with the apparent erosion of longstanding ethical norms in many societies, but alienation from the state and insecurity in the workplace are key among these. The relationship between the citizen and the state was famously seen by Rousseau as a ‘social contract’ whereby individuals in a hypothetical (or rather mythical) ‘state of nature’ surrender freedom in return for security and the consolation it brings (Rousseau, 1762/2003). But today the willingness or capacity of many states around the world to afford security to the young appears to have worn thin, making them prone to fear and despair. The sense of insecurity is heightened by the failure of national economies to generate a sufficient amount or quality

of employment, in many cases despite continued or accelerated growth. This is particularly so across Asia, where even wealthier economies adopt a minimalist approach to public welfare, tying livelihoods and entitlements overwhelmingly to employment, and employment to success in an intense one-off competition for educational credentials.

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The greatest damage done by jobless growth, or growth that yields only insecure and low-status employment, is to the sense of self-worth that work imparts”

The greatest damage done by jobless growth, or growth that yields only insecure and low-status employment, is to the sense of self-worth that work imparts. Continuity of work also imparts self-identity, the feeling that ‘this is what I do best; this is who I am.’ When it is reduced to a series of short-lived jobs or tasks, work ceases to play this identity-giving role. Individuals may then feel impelled to seek meaning elsewhere – potentially in ultra-nationalism or other ideologies that blame their predicament on a dehumanised outgroup:

foreigners, minorities, migrant workers, ‘modern’ working women, etc. These and similar struggles often find in violence a visceral affirmation of their ‘truth’. They attract youth, offering them a cause to identify with, and an opportunity to overcome isolation and alienation.

Peace education therefore involves far more than preaching the evils of violence and the virtues of brotherly love; it challenges us to ensure that schooling acknowledges and engages the related moral, civic and economic crises that we face. SDG 4.7 offers us a perspective to redesign curriculum as an exercise in what Schwab (1969), responding to perceptions of widespread youth alienation and pedagogical dysfunction in 1960s America, called the art of the ‘practical’. It rests on the insight that strictly regimented minds tend to respond poorly to crises, grasping at the kind of simplistic, black-and-white visions that lead to conflict and its all-too-familiar refrains: death to the enemy! unmask the saboteurs! Only when citizens are possessed of minds that are open and trained in the exercise of their critical faculties, and of the freedom and confidence to use them, can we hope that the public will truly register the depth and complexity of the crisis posed by ecological destruction and violent conflict. This is why critical inquiry and imagination are crucial in equipping future generations with the intellectual and emotional capacity for dealing with the challenges that face us.

At the same time, as emphasised throughout this report, critical inquiry, curiosity and imagination are more than useful ‘skills’ or ‘competencies’ useful for particular purposes – even worthy ones like tackling climate change or preserving peace. They are qualities intrinsic to education in its fullest sense. Without them, schooling degenerates into a profoundly alienating, dehumanising exercise. SDG 4.7 is typically treated as addressing specifically ‘the social, humanistic and moral purposes of education’ (UNESCO, 2016e, p. 288), implicitly regarded as peripheral to the main business of SDG 4: education’s role in developing human resources

for economic development. SDG 4.7 seems to be regarded as a basket of luxuries to be retrofitted to a model of schooling primarily designed for narrowly conceived economic purposes. However, SDG 4.7 actually challenges us fundamentally to rethink dominant assumptions about the purposes of schooling. That today we are at least thinking about the environment shows that progress is possible. In the 1960s, dubbed the ‘development decade’, concern for the environment was minimal. The fact that it is much more common now owes much to the capacity of education to establish new horizons in public debate. But the further challenge for education today is to move beyond refinements to curricula and textbooks, and confront the regimenting agenda of mass schooling and its role in accentuating inveterate competition at the interpersonal and international levels.

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This is why critical inquiry and imagination are crucial in equipping future generations with the intellectual and emotional capacity for dealing with the challenges that face us
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This requires that we rethink not just the content and orientation of school curricula – on which the analysis for this report primarily focused – but the place of schooling in our broader social and political systems. National discussions of how education can be used to promote sustainability, peace and global citizenship have typically treated the problem essentially as one of ‘thought reform’, to be effected through the top-down tweaking of curricular messages. But approaching the challenge of transforming attitudes as if it were a task of technocratic adjustment is both incompatible with a humanistic understanding of education, and likely to prove ineffective even in terms of a narrow ‘competencies’-based agenda. Such an approach also – not coincidentally – serves to distract from the profound inconsistencies between humanistic understandings of education, and instrumentalist understandings of citizen-state relations that view people as ‘human capital’: as ‘means’ in the service of state-determined developmentalist ‘ends’. If we want schooling to create the foundations for a sustainable, peaceful future grounded in consciousness of our shared humanity, we need to rethink not just how schools teach students, but also how states relate to their citizens – through institutional arrangements, and through the provision of key public goods (including education). Issues of pedagogical practice within the school, and civic practice outside it, cannot be disentangled.

Ways Forward



ENHANCING SYSTEMIC CAPACITY

Both sustainable development and global citizenship are epistemologically incompatible with an outcomes-oriented approach to education. Neither can be pursued in a manner that allows the success of a curriculum to be measured within any short-term planning horizon. These are necessarily long-term goals (Mochizuki with Hatakeyama, 2016; Bower, 2004), requiring planning over a long-term cycle (e.g. 15 years rather than the typical 5) in the following areas:

- Enhancing systemic strength in order to gather and deploy the best available academic resources for designing the curricula, syllabi and textbooks that engage with sustainable development and global citizenship.
- Rebuilding teacher confidence through systemic reforms that bolster teachers' intellectual autonomy, responsibility and capacity for absorbing

sustainable development and global citizenship, and adapting their pedagogical practice appropriately.

- Equipping primary and lower secondary schools with the resources teachers will require to fulfill their pedagogic responsibilities in relation to sustainable development and global citizenship.

Our report demonstrates that juggling new ideas and creating artificially circumscribed space for them within school curricula are strong tendencies in many countries. This may result in the transmission of information, but the impact on learning is likely to be limited. At the same time, acquiring the systemic capacity to develop appropriate curricula and, especially, teaching materials, and to engage teachers in this process, represents an immense challenge for many societies. Many countries across Asia lack sufficient systemic capacity to adapt their curricula and provide appropriate professional development for their teachers; while those that possess a more robust and sophisticated curriculum development and teacher training infrastructure typically organise this in a highly centralised, bureaucratic and conformist fashion. Assistance with the development of systemic capacity in the areas of curriculum development and teacher training is one area in which UNESCO can provide significant help, but this cannot ignore or downplay the significance of the political and social context for educational reform.

Political instability (or the threat of it), conflict and disasters (natural or man-made) can severely erode the capacity of any schooling system to embark on reform, but it can also direct policymaking priorities towards ends that may be diametrically opposed to those with which we are concerned here. Such tensions are highly salient in a number of the societies examined in this report. As is illustrated vividly in the case of post-Soviet Central Asia, and to varying extents elsewhere, political instability tends to fuel the impetus for often militantly nationalistic approaches to education, the possible ‘outcome’ of which risks swamping all other outcomes. The monomaniacal preoccupation with measuring and accountability that animates many globetrotting educational experts and ministerial technocrats often involves willful blindness to these kinds of crucial but unmeasurable factors. This report seeks to highlight, and hopefully correct, that tendency.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE ACTION

Despite the global consensus on the importance of education for peace, sustainable development and global citizenship that SDG 4.7 represents, integration of these concepts in national curricula remains an under-researched and under-theorized area. The aim of this review was not to gather and showcase ‘good practices’ self-reported by countries or those agencies and organisations mandated to promote ESD, GCED and other related areas. The current study affirms that efforts to achieve the necessary educational changes need to

be considered in tandem with reforms to political and social structures, and reappraisal of the cultural or ideological assumptions that underpin them. Education needs to be seen as a process that leads learners to form their own pictures of the world, arousing curiosity and facilitating its transformation into critical inquiry.

1. Rethink the fundamental priorities of education policy. A narrow economism dominates much contemporary educational debate. The potential of education for promoting collective prosperity and individual opportunity is beyond doubt. But schooling is important not just for its capacity to confer job-ready ‘skills’ or build ‘human capital’. It can both divide and unite, oppress and liberate, warp minds and enlighten them, and by promoting unsustainable socio-economic models ultimately impoverish rather than enrich us. Policymakers urgently need to place the promotion of peace, sustainability and a consciousness of shared humanity at the centre of their vision for educational development. In UNESCO parlance, therefore, SDG 4.7 should be seen not just as one of a menu of educational ‘goals’, but as the central goal around which all others revolve.

a. Put education for peace at centre stage in SDG 4.7 implementation.

Despite the explicit reference to ‘culture of peace and non-violence’ in the wording of SDG 4.7, UNESCO is promoting ESD and GCED as discrete pillars of SDG 4.7. The articulation of these goals needs to be rendered more coherent and forceful, and this should be done through acknowledging the central importance of education for peace.

b. Rethink the priorities of subject curricula, particularly with respect to history, civics and language teaching.

The role of history and civics education in political socialisation, and its potential for fostering peace or fueling conflict, has been much analysed and discussed. Less widely acknowledged is the role of language education in this respect – despite the intimate relationship between language, identities and civil conflict in many societies, not least across post-colonial South Asia (Guha, 2007, pp. 186-200; pp. 593-95). Foreign and second language teaching has considerable potential for enhancing understanding across communities and nations. However, opportunities for learning languages other than one’s ‘mother tongue’ (especially where this is the single national language) and English tend to be rare across most of Asia. This is related in part to the heavy curricular emphasis on maths and science. Rebalancing the curriculum to give greater space for the study of other Asian languages, and taking steps (at the level of tertiary education and teacher training) to build capacity for instruction in these languages, are measures that deserve serious consideration for the sake of promoting sustainable peace throughout Asia.

c. Emphasise nature study and arts as a component of basic education:

In addition to freeing up curricular space for the study of other Asian languages, space also needs to be made in school timetables for

other areas of learning that are less susceptible to monitoring and measurement, but are nonetheless crucial to realising a humanistic vision of education. These include the kinds of opportunities to experience the natural environment mentioned above (e.g. through gardening activities at primary level). They also include the teaching of music, art, drama and dance – aesthetic activities with the potential to contribute significantly to fostering appreciation of cultural diversity and a culture of peace. This report has had little to say about such activities, since its focus has been primarily on ‘core’ school subjects. But precisely this fact speaks to the curricular marginalisation of learning in these areas. This is an issue which deserves more research and attention from policymakers and curriculum developers.

- d. **Enhance the role of educational research in informing policy and curriculum development.** Involvement in education policy making of academics from a wide range of social science disciplines is necessary to ground policy discourses and decisions in contemporary social realities. But relevant capacity, or a willingness to use it, is often lacking across Asia, given the highly centralised and bureaucratized nature of policymaking, and the tendency to treat expert advice largely as a source of post-hoc legitimation for official decisions. Especially in developing countries, rigorous academic research into educational issues conducted by local researchers is often scarce. Building capacity to conduct such research, as well as official willingness to respect its findings, is urgently needed to create a sound basis for curriculum reforms.
2. **Create a platform to bring together experts in child-centred education and curriculum design for core subjects at primary and secondary levels.** Sweeping calls for the integration of ESD, GCED and other related concepts across all types and levels of education (formal and non-formal, kindergarten to postgraduate) mean that a necessary focus on the particular challenge of designing curricula for basic schooling has largely been lost. Re-designing the curriculum of core school subjects to promote sustainable development and global citizenship calls for the highest levels of multi-disciplinary academic expertise and awareness. Academic expertise is required not only in the area of curriculum design, but also in the psychology and sociology of education (to investigate how youngsters think and learn in different circumstances), and in the pedagogic sciences.
3. **Promote a participatory model of curriculum development.** Teachers are often treated as functionaries whose job is to execute decisions taken by higher-level experts and officers. It is important to treat teachers as partners in curricular design and planning debates rather than simply as delivery technicians. Lack of professional excitement, interest and autonomy is causing ambitious teachers in many societies to leave the profession. It is crucial to involve teachers in shaping curriculum policy

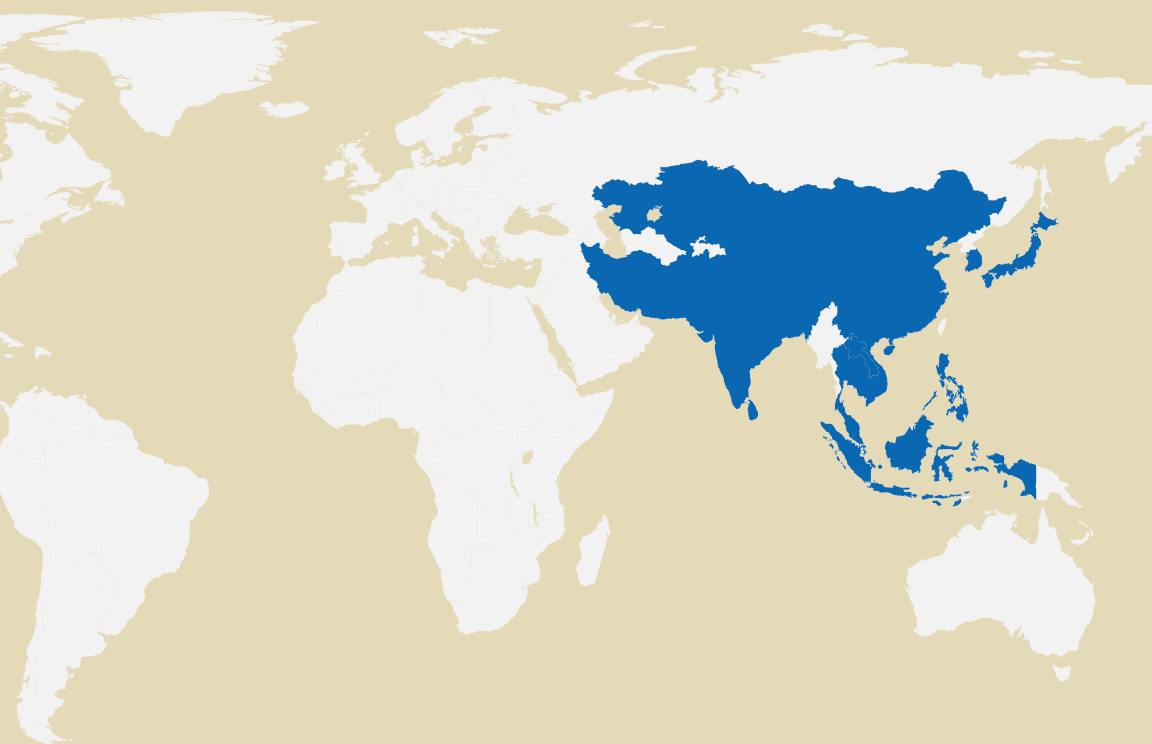
that affects classroom life. Teachers who lack autonomy and freedom to think themselves can hardly enhance these capacities in their students. We must therefore look to restore the confidence of teachers as autonomous professionals modeling the kind of active and engaged citizenship we seek to promote amongst students – rather than treating them as passive minions of controlling authorities. Efforts must also be made to engage with debates over teaching methods and the potential of technology to assist teachers at the level of basic schooling – without seeing technology as a panacea or substitute for critical reflection on the goals of education.

4. **Reassess the international emphasis on monitoring and measuring educational ‘outcomes’.** Policymakers need to work from broader conceptions of the purposes of education, and focus much more on improving *inputs* – such as curriculum development, teacher training and teaching materials – rather than simply on monitoring *outputs*. Competitive mechanisms and testing procedures aimed at securing ‘accountability’ tend to lead to curricular narrowing and reduced teacher autonomy and confidence. In line with 2, 3 and 4 above, involvement in designing these ‘inputs’ also needs to be less centralised and more participatory.

In the case of a concept like sustainable development, learning will mean something worthwhile or life-long if the concept is incorporated into a child’s lived ‘reality’ (Piaget, 1976). This kind of incorporation can hardly be demonstrated by testing at the conclusion of a module, no matter how carefully the test is designed. A long-term view of learning calls for radical review of prevailing ideas about evidence, outcomes and systemic accountability. What constitutes ‘evidence’ in the field of education requires thorough reconsideration if we wish to promote new forms of learning that are really transformative in their impact on lifestyles, behaviour, attitudes and values.

Finally, it must be stressed again that any suggestions for specific actions in the sphere of schooling must take into account the context beyond the school gates. While acknowledging the importance of reconciling curricular objectives and pedagogical approaches with children’s ‘lived reality’, we must also recognise the need to transform that reality in ways that schooling alone cannot accomplish. Preaching the virtues of peace, harmony, tolerance, environmentalism and creative autonomy within the classroom means little if the reality confronting children outside it consists of savage competition for individual, familial or national advantage; denial of shared public responsibility for the less fortunate; impotence in the face of state authority; the branding of political critique as deviant and treacherous; and the habitual demonisation of ‘enemies’ abroad and at home. The young are liable to read the actions of their elders, not just their words. All of us, not just teachers, who wish to nurture in the next generation the qualities required for peace, sustainable development and global citizenship, are going to have to lead by example.

Appendices



Methodology of Content Analysis of Policy and Curriculum

1. OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE

Objectives

The first component of the current review was designed to analyse the extent to which concepts embedded in SDG 4.7 are present in (a) key national education legislation, policies, and (b) national school curricula in 22 countries in Asia (see **Figure 0.2** in the Introduction), with a particular focus on core subjects, i.e. mathematics, science, languages and social studies. Civic/citizenship education curricula (or the equivalent in the national context) have also been examined, where they were separate from social studies. Where possible, textbooks were also examined.

Scope

Geographical Scope

As this review was launched by UNESCO-MGIEP in partnership with UNESCO Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCO Bangkok) and UNESCO Field Offices in the region, the first 15 countries were identified on the basis of UNESCO's geographical presence¹. The selection of the additional countries

1 The Yangon UNESCO Project Office (under UNESCO Bangkok) and UNESCO Apia were not able to participate in the project due to competing priorities. The absence of the latter meant that the study was limited to only Asia, and the Pacific was not included.

to be included in the study was based on a combination of ideal criteria and practical considerations.

In terms of ideal criteria, the study includes countries from different sub-regions of the Asia-Pacific region, and of a variety in terms of national size, the level of economic development, as well as other variables. Given that a similar study conducted by the Global Education Monitoring Report (UNESCO, 2016a) analysed official documents that were only in English, French or Spanish, there was also a conscious effort to cover countries whose official documents were not available in these languages.

With regard to practical considerations, the study includes countries already covered by previous, relevant cross-national studies, to build on and synthesise the findings of existing studies (see UNESCO, 2014d; UNESCO, 2015c; ILO/CEDEFOP, 2011; IGES, 2012; IEA, 2010). Additionally, efforts were made to include E-9 countries located in the Asia-Pacific region, namely Bangladesh, China, India, Indonesia, and Pakistan, given their large population size and the availability of documentation on their activities implemented in the context of Education For All (EFA).

Subject Areas

Given their high weight in the curriculum in terms of time allocation and mandatory and examinable status, mathematics, science, languages, and social studies (core subjects) are critical to enhancing understanding of the scientific and social dimensions of interconnected and interdependent local to global challenges. It is important to not only look at civics and citizenship education which are viewed as ‘carrier’ subject of values, but also at core subjects and knowledge, skills, attitudes and values they attempt to inculcate through curricula (see Introduction for elaboration of the importance of different subject areas).

Grade Level

A particular focus was placed on grade 4 and 8 curricula based on the target populations of the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement’s (IEA) TIMSS (Mathematics and Science), PIRLS (Literacy), and ICCS (Civic and Citizenship Education) studies². Yet this focus was flexible when necessary as per the individual contexts of the nation-states (for example, for Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, grade 5 and 9 were looked at instead).

2 For more information, see http://www.iea.nl/current_studies.html.

2. OVERALL DESIGN OF THE REVIEW AND MEASURES TO ADDRESS THE METHODOLOGICAL LIMITATIONS

The project consisted of five major phases: (1) project initiation; (2) primary data collection; (3) coding; (4) national-level report writing; and (4) synthesis-report writing. Overall, since its inception, the project has taken 2 years, from 2015 to 2017.

The process has involved:

(1) Project Initiation

Once the countries to be covered were identified, primary researchers were selected with the help of UNESCO Field Offices, National Commissions, and academic institutions, based particularly on language ability. Policy and curriculum documents were not always available in UN languages, especially in the Asia-Pacific region. Therefore, national researchers were chosen based on both their understanding of ESD/GCED in their nation-state but also on their fluency in both the national language and English. This was to ensure the possibility of the coding of all relevant national documents, as the majority were not in English. For many countries – Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Iran, Japan, Kyrgyzstan, Malaysia, Mongolia, Nepal, the Philippines, and South Korea – a research team was established to work on the review.

The common coding scheme was developed based on the GEMR (UNESCO, 2016a) and IBE-APCEIU (IBE-UNESCO and APCEIU, 2016) studies' coding schemes, as well as the preliminary coding scheme that MGIEP had piloted using the data sources from India and Hong Kong. Feedback from representatives from UNESCO Field Offices and national consultants, provided during the capacity-building workshop (see below), was also taken into consideration. In particular, concerns were raised regarding the possibility of subjective and context-based interpretations of the concepts. As we were looking for *meaning* rather than specific key terms³, it was imperative to ensure that a certain degree of objectivity was maintained in the coding process through a shared understanding of the concepts amongst coders. Thus, the coding guide – which also outlined the coding scheme and the overall process of coding – included definitions of all categories and sub-categories. Therefore, even though most documents analysed were not in English, a common understanding left less room for subjective interpretation. The coding scheme was not translated into local languages, with the exception of Uzbekistan where the research team was not comfortable in coding in English.

3 Rather than an exact word match (i.e. looking for 'human rights' within a text), if a certain example was *referring* to the concept of human rights it would be coded. See Figure A.2 for examples.

The primary objective of the capacity building workshop (May 2016, New Delhi) was to discuss and build a common understanding of the coding scheme. In attendance were representatives from 18 countries including UNESCO Field Office officials and national consultants.

By the end of the two-day workshop, the Technical Support Group was also established (as part of the overall governance structure (see **Figure 0.2** in Introduction), consisting of MGIEP, UNESCO Bangkok, IBE, and select national experts. The coding scheme was finalised in consultation with the Technical Support Group.

(2) Primary Data Collection

Education legislations, policies, strategic documents, curriculum frameworks, overall curricula and syllabi are all very diverse in nature, and differ from country to country in terms of their structure, content, etc. In order to ensure a certain level of homogeneity, a data source collection template was developed, and what to code was agreed upon between MGIEP and the research team. This ensured that – although a variety of documents was coded for each country – all relevant documents were a part of the study (in one way or another). With the assistance of the UNESCO Field Offices, National Commissions, and Ministries of Education⁴, the researchers were able to access and obtain these documents.

(3) Content Analysis through the Common Coding Scheme across the Selected Countries

The approved common coding scheme was used to analyse legislation and policy documents pertaining to education, curriculum frameworks, and overall curricula and syllabi. A separate document was developed for the analysis of textbooks, which was taken up by a few countries⁵ depending on the accessibility of textbooks in digital format.

The methodology required the in-depth reading of the documents (as opposed to a simple ‘word search’) and understanding ESD/GCED concepts thoroughly in a relatively short period (for an average duration of 5-6 months). The process of coding itself proved tedious as researchers had to manually insert sentences into the relevant sub-categories, and then analyse them further (for more information on the process of coding, see Coding Procedure in the next section).

4 Policy and curriculum documents were not always available in the public domain, or online. There were many instances where our research teams were coding from hardcopies obtained by Ministries of Education, which was a tedious, time-consuming process. Access to national documents was, therefore, ensured by working with UNESCO Field Offices and National Commissions for UNESCO as necessary and appropriate.

5 Researchers from Bhutan, India, Lao PDR, Mongolia and Sri Lanka were also coding textbooks.

Content analysis of this kind also implied the risk of subjective interpretation and biased analysis.

Box A.1: Measures taken to reduce the level of subjectivity and ensure inter-coder reliability

In order to reduce the level of subjectivity:

1. a detailed coding guide was developed;
2. a capacity building workshop was held in Delhi in May 2016 to ensure a common understanding of the coding scheme;
3. a Technical Support Group was established;
4. in several countries, a research team was established and more than one individual was coding, which verified the coding results;
5. national research teams underwent a pilot coding before they formally began coding;
6. national research teams underwent a mandatory coding exercise of an excerpt of the NCF of Malta, in order to further enhance shared understanding amongst coders;
7. the MGIEP team (consisting of 1 international staff and 2 national officers) reviewed the submitted coding sheets and inquired the national research teams when there were doubts about coding results; and
8. the MGIEP team also responded to all queries received and concerns raised from the national research teams, both via email and Skype calls.

(4) The Development of a National-Level Background Paper

For each country covered by the study, a country-level report (ca. 10,000 words) was developed, partly based on the content analysis of the data sources, and partly on the review of secondary source materials and interviews with relevant stakeholders as necessary and appropriate. Researchers were provided with an outline of 22 questions under the following sub-headings: context; understandings of ESD/GCED concepts in the country; the notion of the ‘ideal citizen’ and the self-image of the country manifested in policy and curriculum; ESD/GCED integration into policy; ESD/GCED integration into curricula; and, discussion and ways forward.

Each report went through an extensive review process, both internally and externally. In particular, most final reports were sent to external peer reviewers (experts who had knowledge of ESD/GCED at the national level, and were in a position to provide adequate advice to improve the quality of the reports) to ensure that the nature of ESD/GCED at the national level was accurately captured.

(5) The Development of a Regional Report (Current Report):

The outline of a regional synthesis report was agreed upon during a Core Drafting Group meeting in New Delhi in January 2017 (a list of the Core Drafting Group members can be found in the Acknowledgements).

A Review Committee, consisting of five independent scholars, was also established which independently reviewed the report and approved/endorsed it (see **Figure 0.4** in Introduction; a list of the members can also be found in the Acknowledgements).

3. CODING SCHEME

Coding Scheme Design

The Coding Scheme consisted of the following 14 categories:

ESD/GCED themes		Competencies
1. Economic dimension of sustainable development		11. Cognitive skills/critical and systemic thinking
2. Environmental dimension of sustainable development		12. Attitudes, values and dispositions
3. Good health and well-being		13. Behaviour and action
4. Human rights		13.i. Transversal/Cross-cutting skills
5. Gender equality		13.ii. Responsible lifestyles
6. Culture of peace and non-violence		13.iii. Activism
7. Justification and general orientation about global citizenship		
8. Global systems, structures and processes		14. ESD, GCED and other educations
9. Global issues		
10. Interconnectedness		

Table A.1 outlines the overall structure of the coding scheme and the studies from which each component is derived.

Table A.1 Overall structure of the coding scheme

	Learning Domains	Core Concepts	Category	Study from which it is derived
Learning to Live Together	Learning to Know (Cognitive)	Economic Dimension of Sustainable Development	1	GEMR MGIEP team
		Environmental Dimension of Sustainable Development	2	GEMR
		Social Dimension of Sustainable Development	3-6; 7-10 (Global Citizenship)	GEMR (3-6, 10) IBE-APCEIU (7-9)
	Learning to Be (Socio-emotional)	ESD and GCED Competencies	11 (Cognitive skills)	MGIEP team GEMR
			12 (Attitudes, values, and dispositions) ⁶	MGIEP team GEMR IBE-APCEIU
	Learning to Do (Behavioural)		13 (Behaviour and action)	GEMR IBE-APCEIU MGIEP team
N/A	ESD, GCED and other educations (adjectival educations)	14	GEMR MGIEP team	

The vertical axis of the coding scheme is divided into three major parts: the dimensions of sustainable development (1-10); ESD and GCED competencies (11-13); and, the ‘educations’ (14). Most of the cognitive concepts encompassing the three dimensions of sustainable development (economic, environmental, and social) were adopted from the GEMR study; the categories covering global citizenship (7-10) were primarily from the IBE-APCEIU study; and, the overall ESD and GCED competencies and educations were derived from both the GEMR and IBE-APCEIU studies, as well as certain additions from MGIEP⁷.

- 6 In the coding scheme of the IBE-APCEIU study, under the ‘attitudinal (socio-affective) domain’ coding categories, the concept of multiple identities included three categories: ‘humanity as privileged referent of identity (category 14)’, ‘nation as privileged referent of identity (category 15)’ and ‘embedded identities: local, national, regional (supra-national) and global (category 16)’ (IBE-UNESCO and APCEIU, 2016). The three categories have been included as 12h, 12i and 12k in the category ‘attitudes, values and dispositions’ (see Appendix II-12).
- 7 On the top, category 0 (objective/vision) was added to allow coding of teaching and learning approaches and assessment (see curricular components) that were referred to in the overall aims of the document, without particular reference to any of the key ESD/GCED concepts (categories 1-14).

In retrospect, the approach of the current review is similar to that of a comparative study on education for sustainability content in nine European countries, which aimed at ‘finding out what exists in the national education curricula that is relevant for sustainability’ in the Eastern European region (Domazet et al., 2012, p. 6).⁸ We came to know about this study only after data collection was completed for the present study. As in this study, the coding scheme of the current review was divided into themes and topics (categories 1-10) and competencies (categories 11-13) which roughly correspond to ‘cognitive content elements’ and ‘skills and values elements’ of this European study (Domazet et al., 2012, p. 12)⁹. Similarly, the cognitive content elements were divided into economic, environmental and social content (p. 12).

On the horizontal axis, the coding scheme requested the coder to assess the extent to which ESD/GCED specific topics and competencies are present in the coded document across the four curricular components (see **Figure A.1**):

- 8a. objective/ vision;
- 8b. content;
- 8c. teaching and learning approaches; and
- 8d. assessment

Figure A.1 The horizontal axis of the coding scheme

7. Rationale/ Justification/ Context		8. Curricular Components											
		a. Objective/Vision	b. Content	c. Teaching/ Learning Approaches					d. Assessment				
				Type(s) of assessment of learning mentioned in Policy or Curriculum Framework					Assessment tasks in Syllabus and Textbooks				
		Student/ learner centred	Respecting learners' diversity	Inter-disciplinary	Whole-school approach	Use of ICTs/ social media	Traditional	Other	Conventional	Standardized	Constructivist (alternative)	To test uncritical absorption of information	To encourage thinking/ forming of own views on the concept

- 8 The national curricula of the nine participating countries: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Estonia, Georgia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Romania, Slovenia and UK/England.
- 9 In Domazet et al.'s (2012) study, ‘skills and values’ elements were further grouped into five groups: 1) values of respect and responsibility; 2) reflexivity and complexity understanding; 3) managing change and uncertainty; 4) community cooperation; and 5) basic science skills (p. 12).

Whereas UNESCO's (2015d) guidelines for integrating an Education for Peace curriculum into education sector plans and policies define curriculum as 'everything students learn in school, intentional and unintentional, planned and unplanned', this project takes a different approach. The curriculum of an educational programme comprises a statement of the **goals** of the programme and **means** to achieve those goals. The curriculum can therefore be unpacked as (i) educational philosophy/purpose/vision; (ii) educational goals (specified as learning outcomes)/syllabus design; and (iii) pedagogical choices, including teaching-learning resources (e.g. textbooks), classroom activities, assessment, educational policies and infrastructure (Mohanani and Mohanani, 2016). Additionally, if the example was contextual – the validation or justification for a particular action – it was coded under 7. Rationale/ justification/ context. A full version of the coding scheme, including definitions of all sub-categories and coding components, will be available from UNESCO MGIEP upon request.

CODING PROCEDURE

As mentioned earlier, the scheme is applied by searching for *meaning* of the key concepts rather than key words and terms – meaning that is derived from the shared understanding of the brief definitions of the sub-categories and coding components. While coding key words or terms and their variants ensures accuracy of data, by searching for meaning and idea we were able to access more context-based examples – albeit also inviting a higher degree of subjectivity.

If an idea was present, a code of '1' was inserted in the appropriate cell. Additionally,

- Space was provided (20 rows, and more could be added if necessary) for coders to insert each sentence that refers to a sub-category (e.g., climate change, critical thinking, tolerance);
- For each reference, coders were asked to insert page numbers; multiple page numbers could also be inserted if an exactly the same phrase or sentence was repeated more than once;
- Each category was given an 'Other' sub-category to code sentences that were not necessarily covered by the existing sub-categories but fit the overall category (this could also be country-specific; for example, 'Buddhist education' was Thailand's version of values education);
- If an example was relevant in more than one sub-category (for example, gender equality and human rights), it could be coded twice;
- There was a 'notes' section provided at the end of every row for coders to add thoughts and observations, as well as interesting trends and developments that they may have noticed; and
- At the end of each sub-category and category, there was a 'total' count.

Figure A.2 shows examples of coded data. For illustrative purposes, only those marked as objective/vision are cited below to keep it simple.

Figure A.2 Sample coding (excerpts from coding of Basic Education Act, 2006, Japan)

3. Categories	4. Sub-categories	5. Sentences/ Long Phrases	6a. Page Number	6b. Repetition Count	7. Rationale/ Justification/ Context	8a. Objective/ Vision
3. Good health and well-being	b) physical health/activity/ fitness	第一条 教育は、人格の完成を目指し、平和で民主的な国家及び社会の形成者として必要な資質を備えた心身ともに健康な国民の育成を期して行われなければならない。Article 1 Education must be provided with the aim of fully developing the individual character, as we endeavor to cultivate a people that is <u>sound in mind and body</u> and imbued with the qualities that are necessary in the people who make up a peaceful and democratic nation and society.	1	1	0	1
4. Human rights	c) freedom (of expression, of speech, of press, of association/ organisation); civil liberties	第二条 教育は、その目的を実現するため、学問の自由を尊重しつつ、次に掲げる目標を達成するよう行われるものとする。Article 2 To realize the aforementioned aims, education is to be provided in such a way as to achieve the following objectives, while <u>respecting academic freedom</u>	2	1	0	1
12. Attitudes, values, and dispositions	h) humanity as privileged referent of identity	我々日本国民は、たゆまぬ努力によって築いてきた民主的で文化的な国家を更に発展させるとともに、世界の平和と人類の福祉の向上に貢献することを願うものである。We, the Japanese people, wishing to further develop the democratic and cultural state we have built through tireless efforts, also hope to contribute to world peace and to <u>improving the welfare of humanity</u> .	1	1	0	1

The same sentence or long phrase was coded more than once when it referred to more than one sub-category. In the example above, Article 1 'Education must be provided with the aim of fully developing the individual character, as we endeavour to cultivate a people that is sound in mind and body and imbued with the qualities that are necessary in the people who make up a peaceful and democratic nation and society' was coded also in the sub-categories 3c) mental, emotional health; psychological health, 6a) peace, peaceful, and 4e) democracy/ democratic rule; democratic values/principles. On average, researchers reported spending 4 to 200 hours coding per document. The sizeable range can be attributed to length and type of documents coded, and overall understanding of researchers. Coding English-language documents was reported to take twice as long, but that can also be due to the fact that English translations were only available for the more significant policy and curricular documents which tended to be larger in size.

4. DATASET

The dataset consisted of:

- **Education laws:** The binding regulations/frameworks pertaining to education that all federal and state bodies must adhere to.
- **Strategic plans/ education policies:** Strategy-based documents that mainly focus on the broader aspects of the national education system, including issues pertaining to access, retention, enrolment, gender parity, quality of teaching, school facilities, education sector structures/ bodies, and costs and financing.
- **National curriculum frameworks (NCFs):** A general plan or set of standards, outlining what is important in a country's national education system. 'Each includes an overview of learning content and learning outcomes, which shape subject curricula and school syllabi. NCFs are generally prepared by the Ministry of Education, often in consultation with a variety of stakeholders, including national and international education experts, teachers, students and parents. NCFs may cover both primary and lower secondary education (broadly termed "basic" education) but it is equally likely that primary and secondary are separated. Some NCFs provide a clear and comprehensive plan or outline of subject and learning content, while others give a much more general outline and discuss learning content and outcomes in somewhat theoretical terms.' (UNESCO, 2016a, p. 10).
- **Curricula of core subjects:** The guidelines for the academic content to be covered, which, other than knowledge, skills, and competencies, also include teaching methods, lessons, assignments, exercises, activities, projects, study material, tutorials, presentations, assessments, test series, learning objectives, and so on. In the absence of curricula, syllabi were examined which provide a general overview of all the topics and units to be covered (often the terms 'curriculum' and 'syllabus' were used interchangeably, and

without distinction). The core subjects include math, science, languages and social studies. The civic/citizenship education curricula (or the equivalent in the national context) were also examined, where they were separate from social studies. In particular, the curricula of grade 4 and 8 were looked at (see section 1 for more details), but these were flexible as per the individual contexts of the nation-states.

A total of 172 documents were coded from 22 countries. Category-wise ‘heatmaps’ presented below (also see **Appendix II**) are based on the coding data of these 172 national-level policy and curriculum documents. A list of all the documents coded can be found in the **Appendix IV**. In total, 19,197 excerpts were coded as relevant to concepts embedded in SDG 4.7 (on average, 872 excerpts per country). The number of excerpts coded varies significantly from country to country partly due to variation in the volume of documents coded.¹⁰ Additionally, 7 state-level curricula and curriculum frameworks were also coded for India, given the decentralised nature of education in the country. Using a coding scheme developed specifically for textbooks, 49 textbooks were coded from Bhutan, India (national and state), Sri Lanka, Lao PDR, and Mongolia to further augment the findings of this study.

5. NORMALISING THE DATA

Given the variability in the number of documents and excerpts coded for each country, there was a need to normalise the data for cross-country comparison. UNESCO Bangkok normalised the data from this review by taking the frequency of a category or concept counted in a document, multiplying it by 100 pages and dividing it by the number of actual pages of the document¹¹. This had the purpose of standardising each and every document as *if* it was written on 100 pages. While conclusions drawn by UNESCO Bangkok based on this method were largely aligned with our observations that are presented in **Chapter 2**, analysis based on this method risks misrepresenting a weight given to each category or concept by either over- or under-representing page numbers for the following reasons.

- a. Different languages can represent same idea in different text length i.e. some languages use shorter sentences whereas others use longer sentences. Thus, page numbers depends on the language.
- b. The same document can have multiple versions and number of pages can be different for different versions.

¹⁰ The number of excerpts (long phrases and sentences) coded is as follows: Afghanistan 1235, Bangladesh 757, Bhutan 653, Cambodia 766, China 1453, India 630, Indonesia 150, Iran 1430, Japan 1535, Kazakhstan 1677, Korea 1112, Kyrgyzstan 406, Laos 1706, Malaysia 464, Mongolia 357, Nepal 832, Pakistan 408, Philippines 1641, Sri Lanka 358, Thailand 445, Uzbekistan 416, Viet Nam 756.

¹¹ See Day 3, Session 13, Slide 13 at <http://bangkok.unesco.org/content/3rd-asia-pacific-meeting-education-2030-mainstreaming-sdg-47> for an analysis conducted by UNESCO Bangkok for the Third Asia-Pacific Regional Meeting on Education 2030 (APMED2030 III), 4-7 July 2017, Bangkok, Thailand.

- c. Page numbers depend on type and size of the font, margin and line-spacing used.
- d. Curriculum is in a tabular format for some countries, while very few tables are used by others. For example, Bangladesh presented the curriculum in a tabular format; Bhutan included few tables. Using tables increases the page numbers.

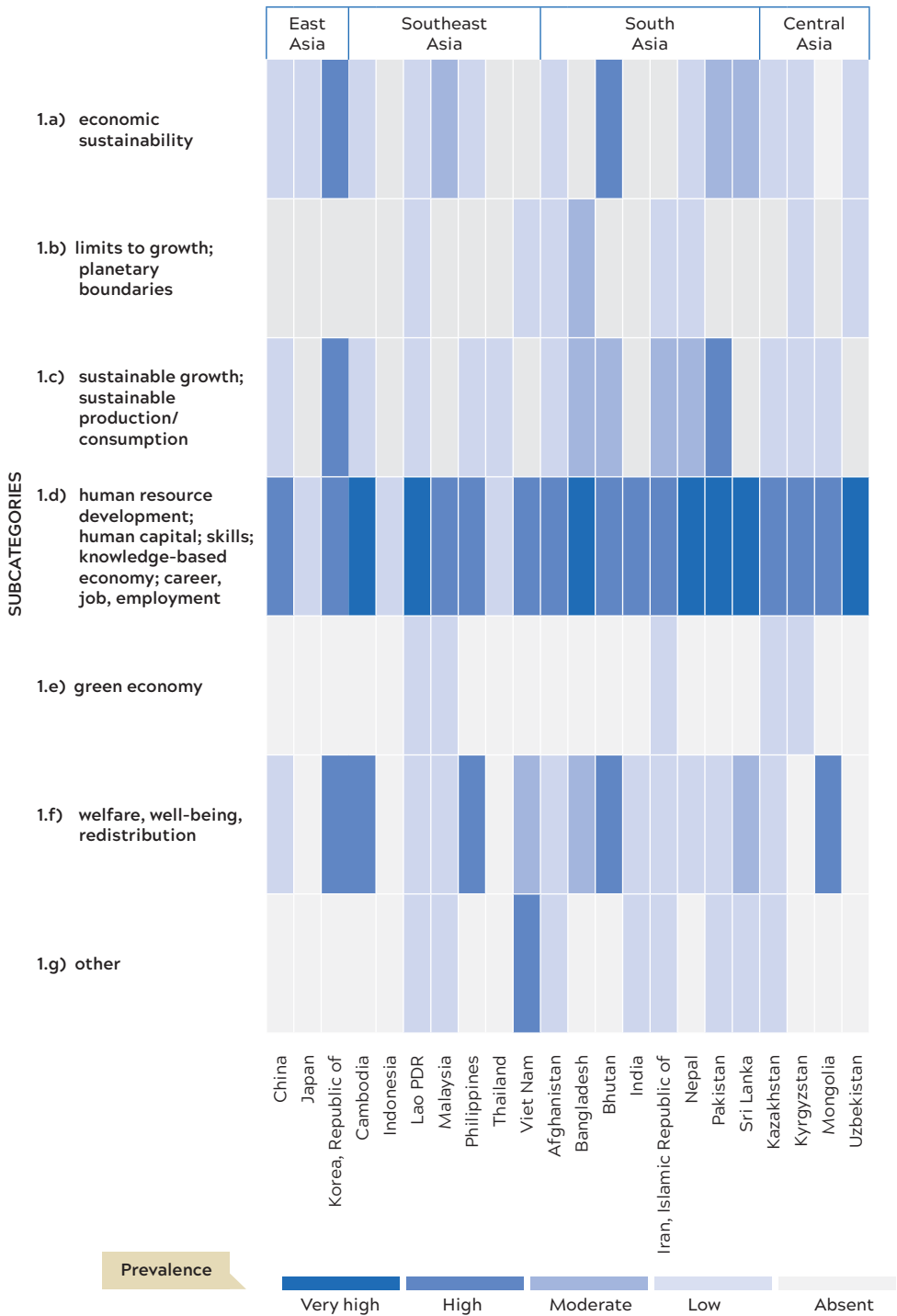
Additional procedures for normalising the data were attempted. It was not possible to use the highest frequency (number of times the concept or the sub-category was coded) as the normalising factor, given that the volume of documents coded varied significantly across countries. The numbers could have been transformed or normalised to lie between 0 and 1, with 0 denoting no citations and 1 denoting full coverage; but this way of normalisation was not optimal. Attempts were also made to establish the 'ideal ESD/GCED content' based on the SDG document (United Nations, 2015) and to measure policy coherence between the curricular content and the ideal content, following the method used by a study aimed at measuring policy coherence among the multilateral environmental agreements and the Millennium Development Goals (Duraiappah and Bhardwaj, 2007). We, however, came to the conclusion that it would not make sense to establish a universal or deal ESD/GCED content, as the curricular content should be context specific and culturally and locally relevant.

For the purpose of this regional synthesis report, the data for each sub-category were thus normalised by the total number of excerpts coded for each country (see **Figure 2.1** in **Chapter 2** and **Appendix II**). The weighting used is mathematically simplistic, given that a benchmark – from which we can infer high prevalence, zero prevalence (complete absence) or some level between the two – is dependent on the total number of excerpts coded for each country. It must be acknowledged, however, that using a weightage (calculated as percentage of excerpts coded under a sub-category out of all excerpts coded for all documents for a country) provided a good base point for comparison across sub-categories *within a country* as well as *across countries*. Although the weighting used is simple, it is useful in illuminating the prevalence of concepts embedded in SDG 4.7 across 22 countries.

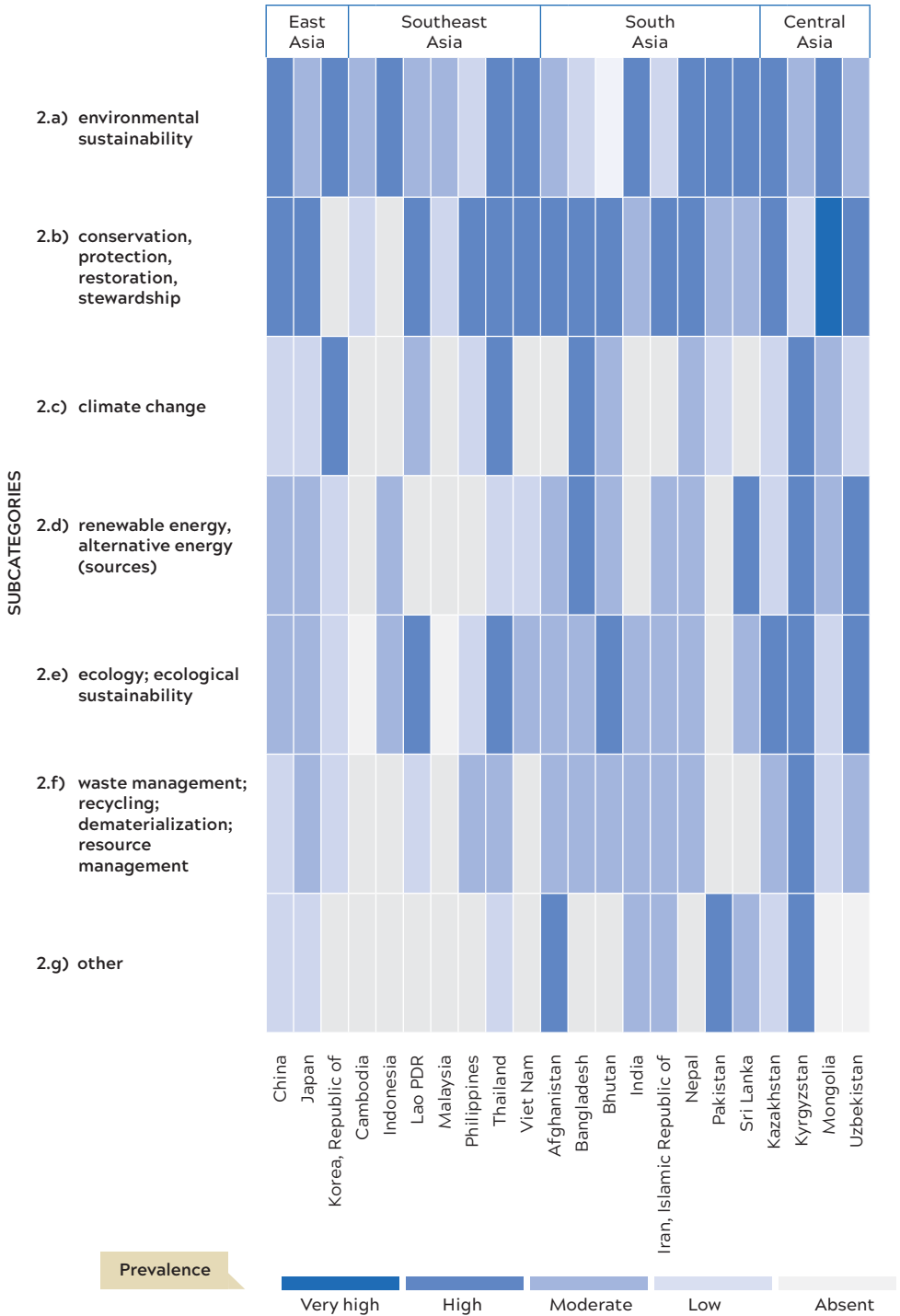
APPENDIX II

Sub category- wise heatmaps

1 Economic dimension of sustainable development



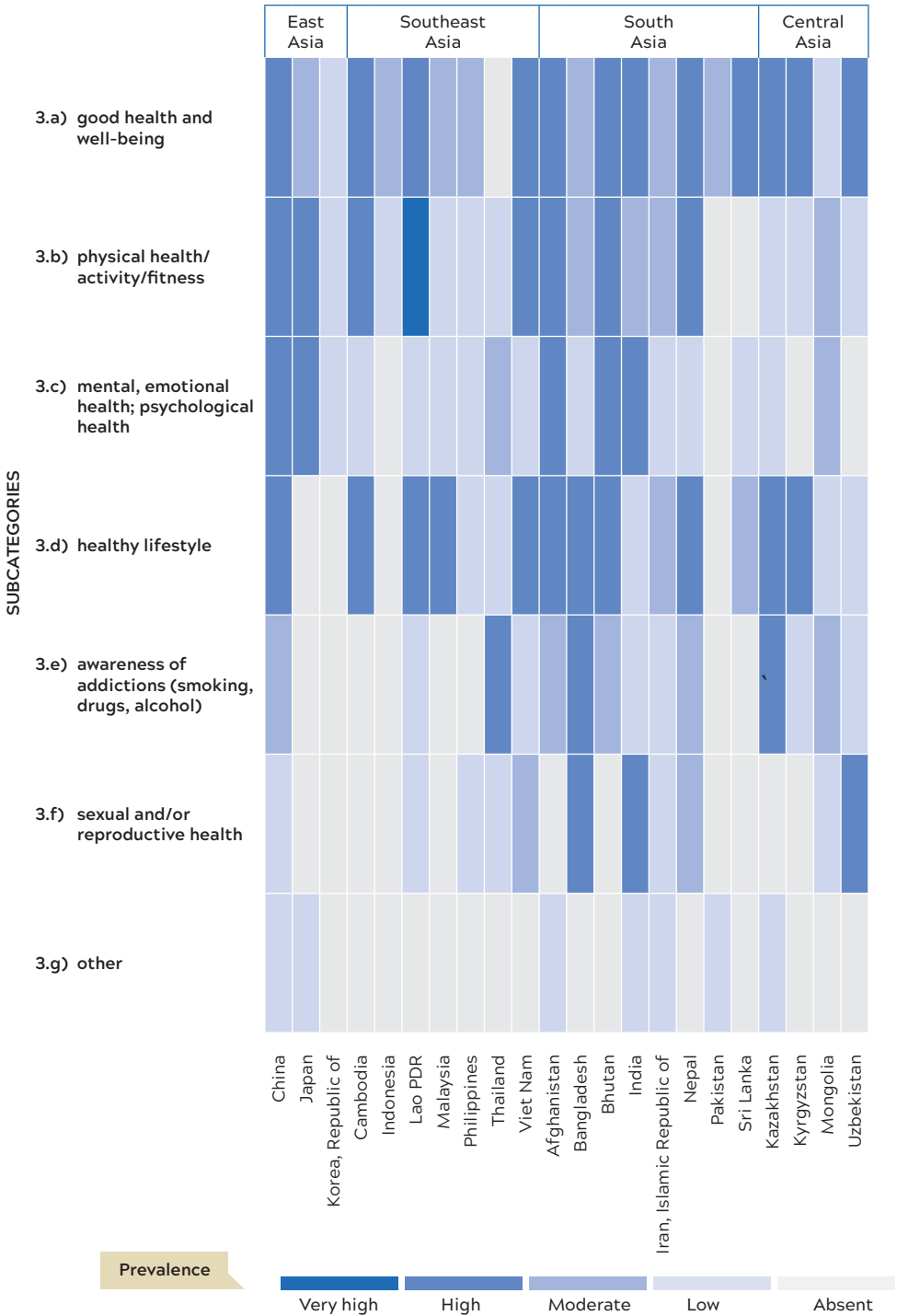
2 Environmental dimension of sustainable development



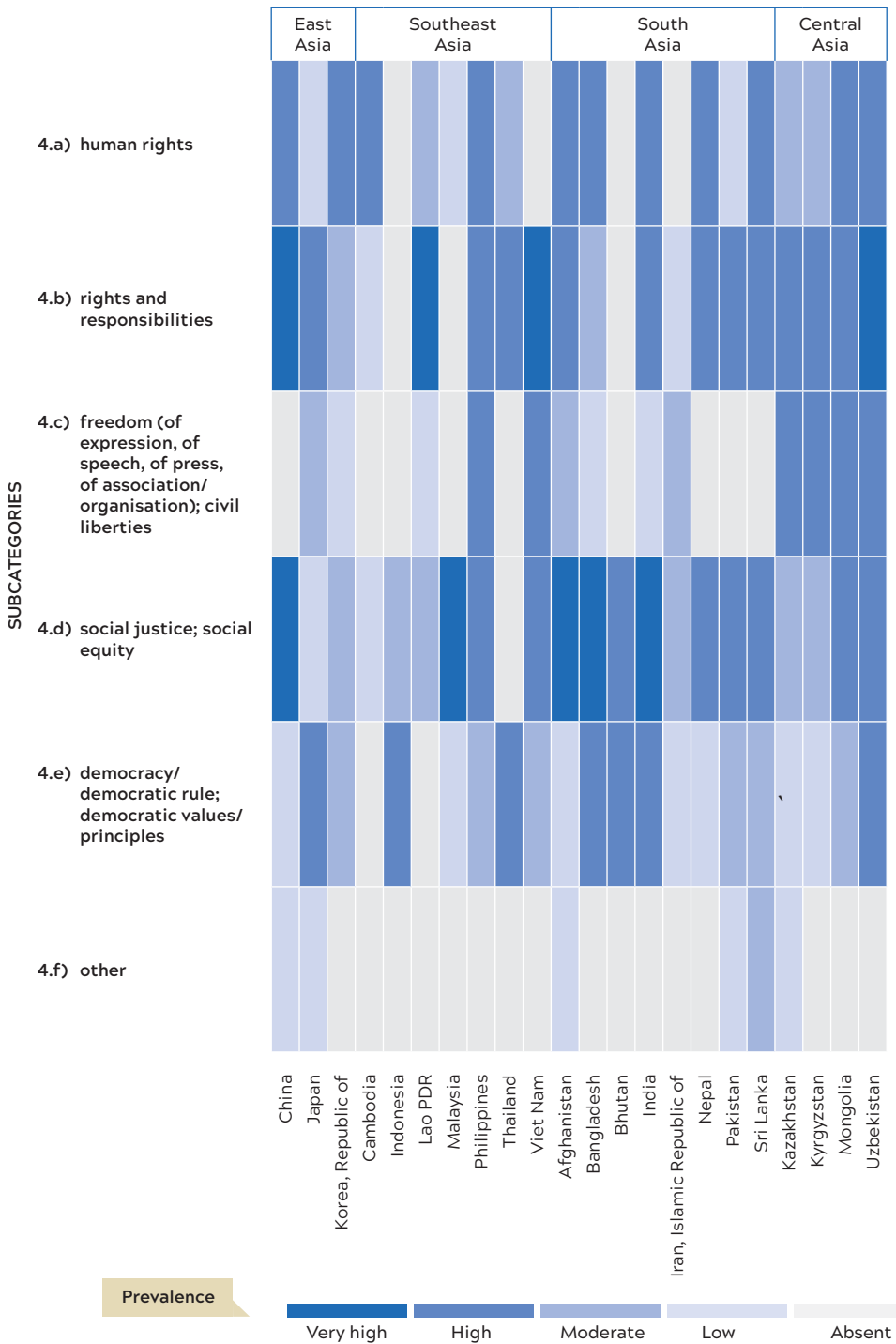
Prevalence



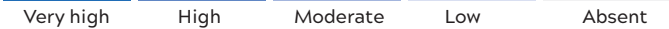
3 Good health and well-being



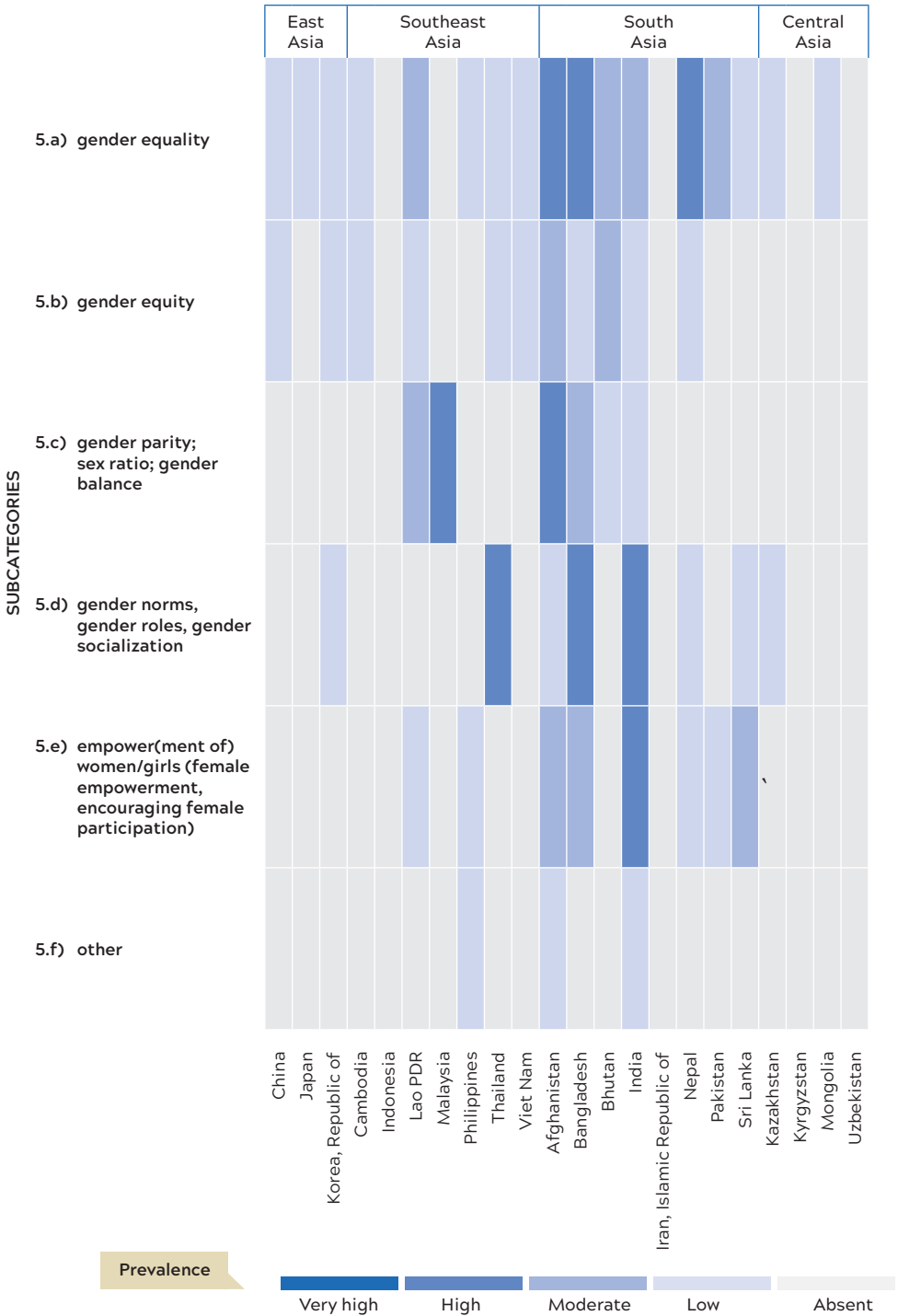
4 Human rights



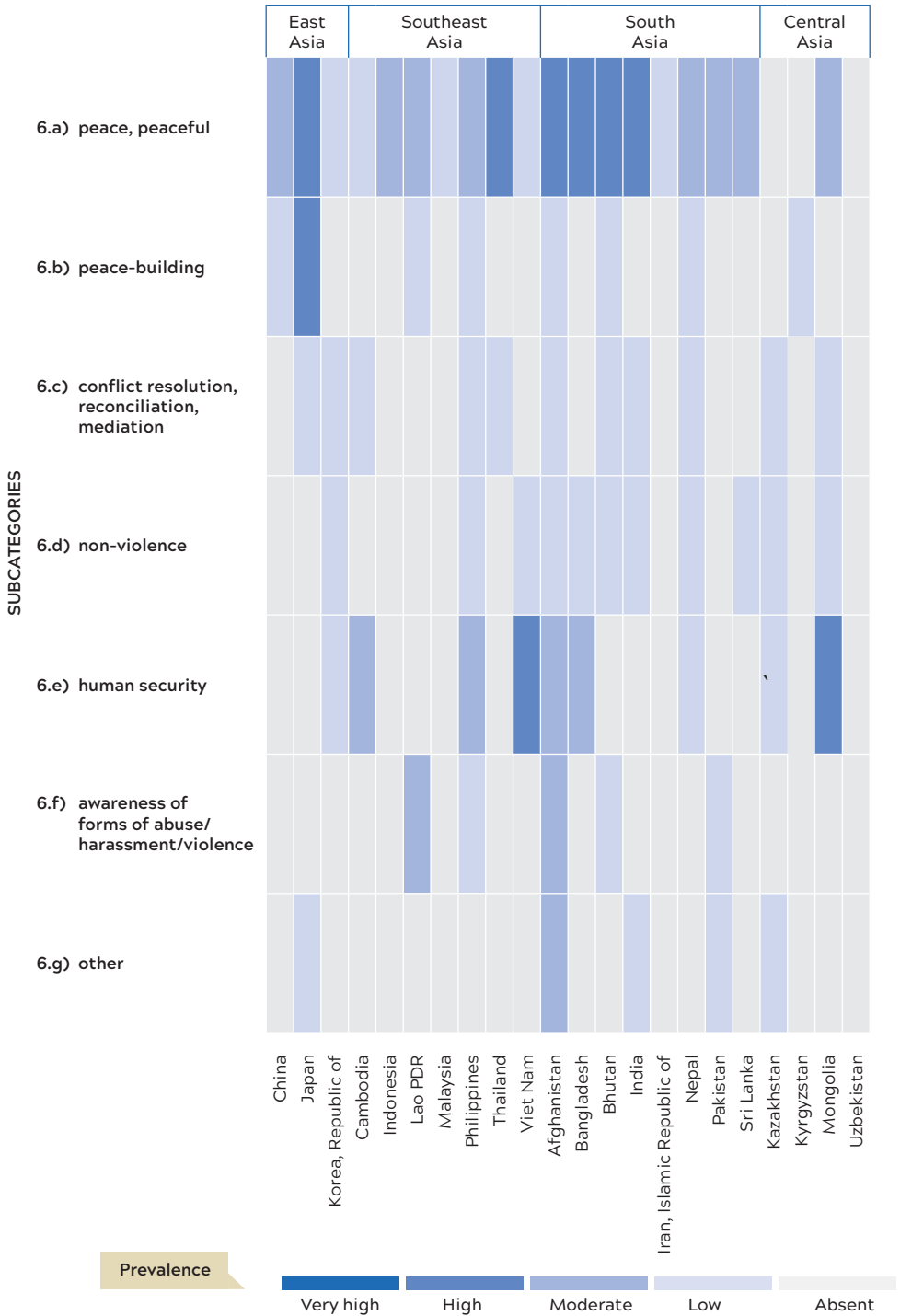
Prevalence



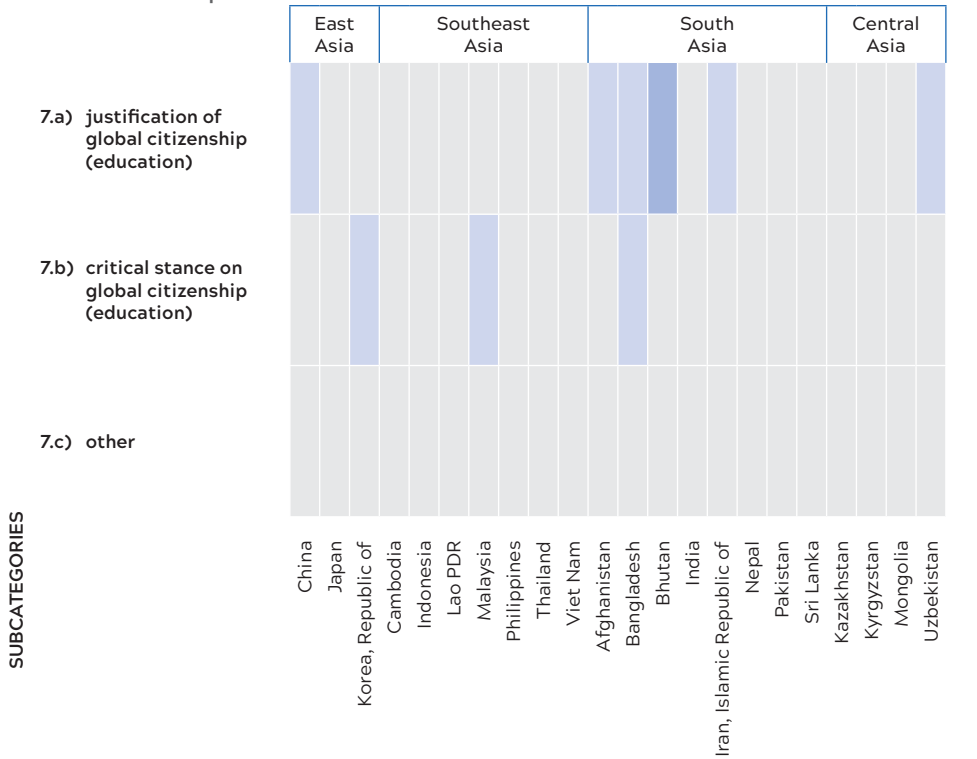
5 Gender equality



6 Culture of peace and non-violence



7 Justification and general orientation about global citizenship



Prevalence

Very high

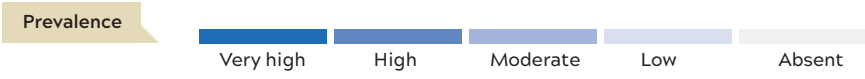
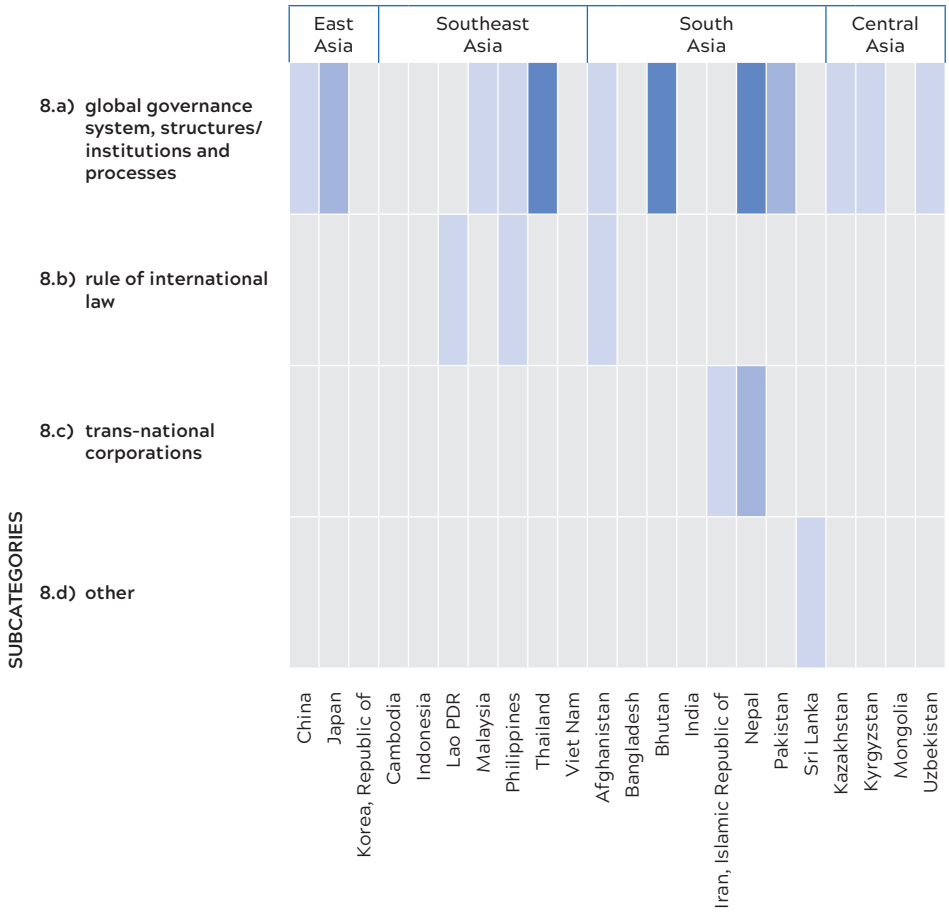
High

Moderate

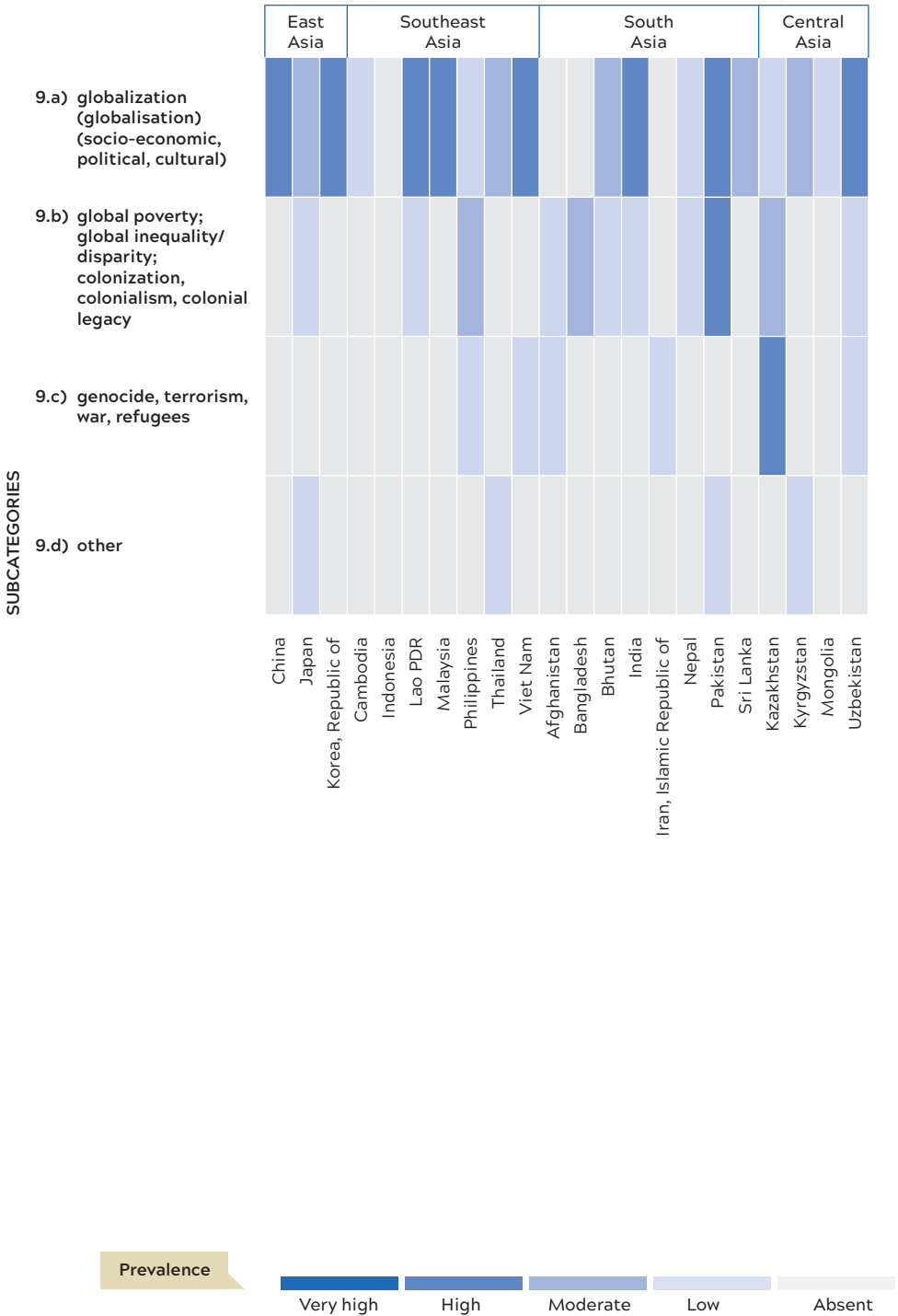
Low

Absent

8 Global systems, structures and processes



9 Global issues



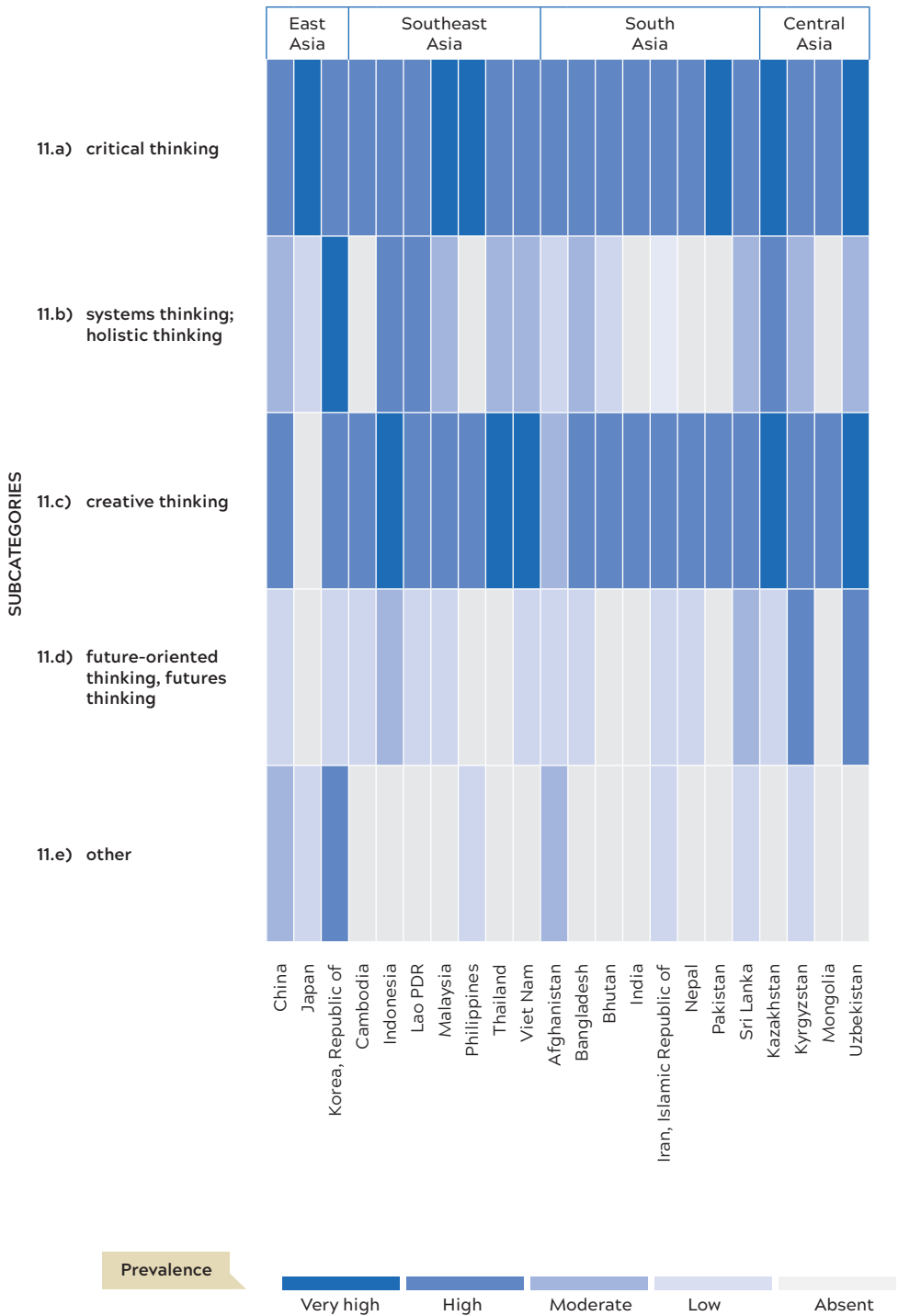
10 Interconnectedness



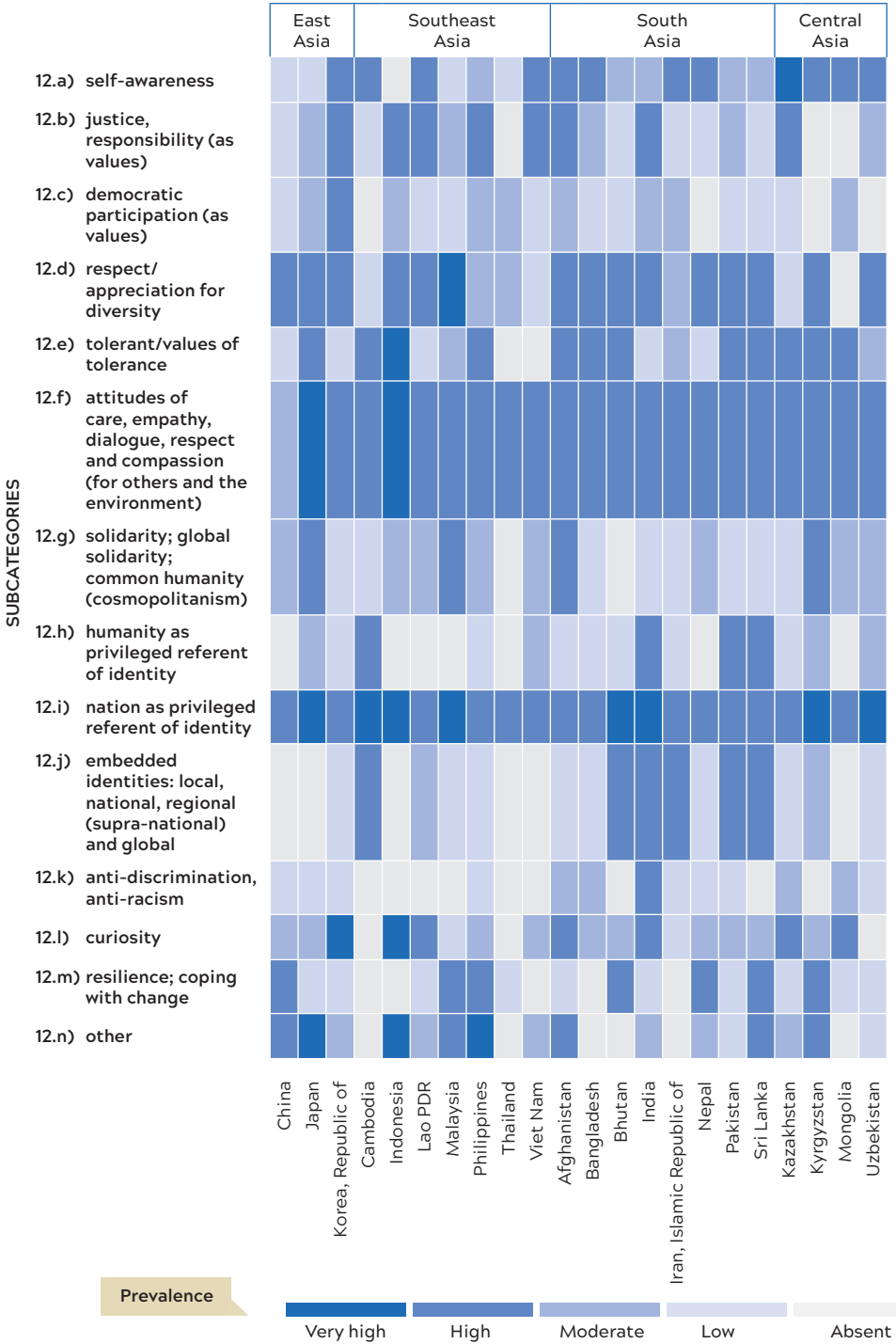
Prevalence



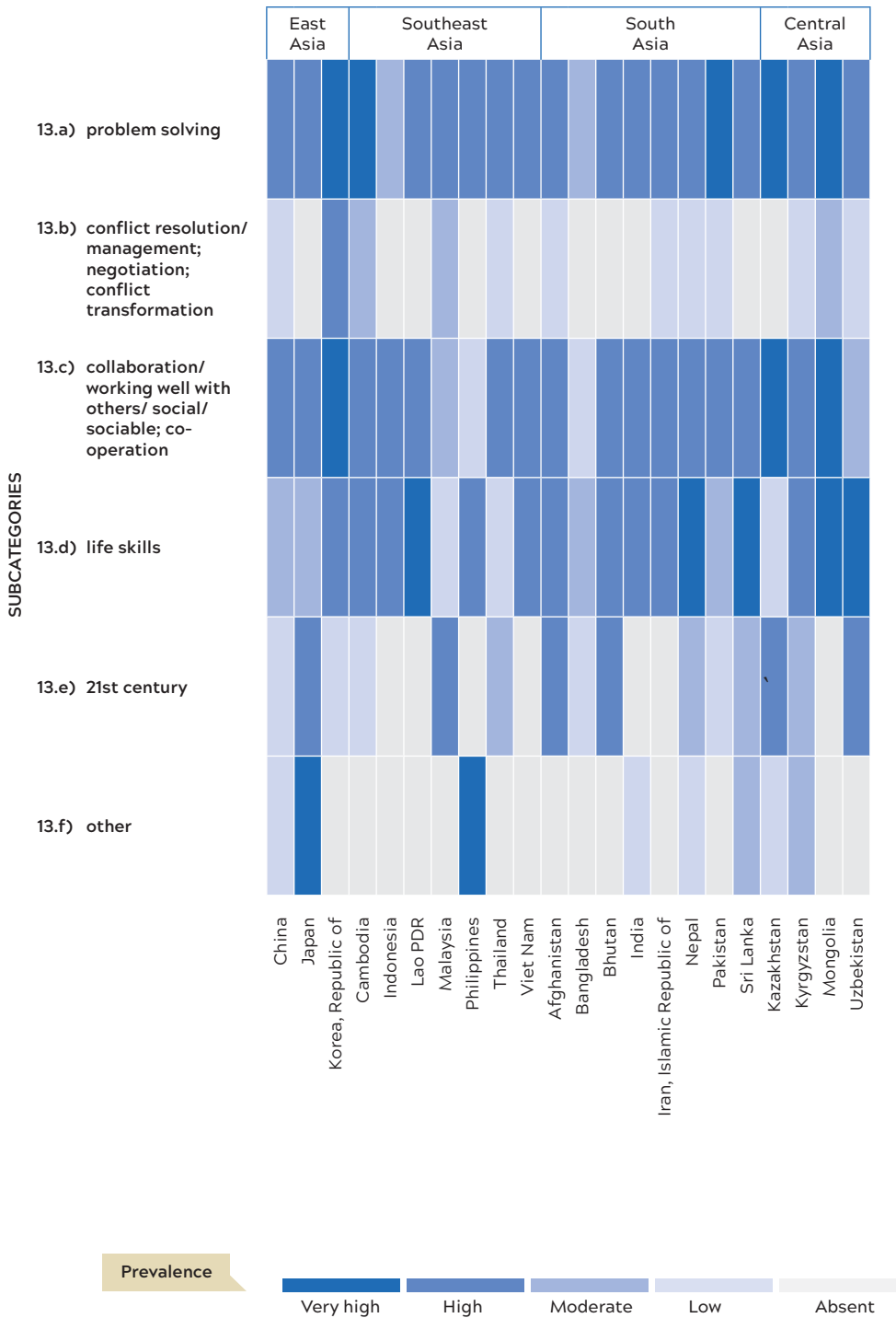
11 Cognitive skills/critical & systemic thinking



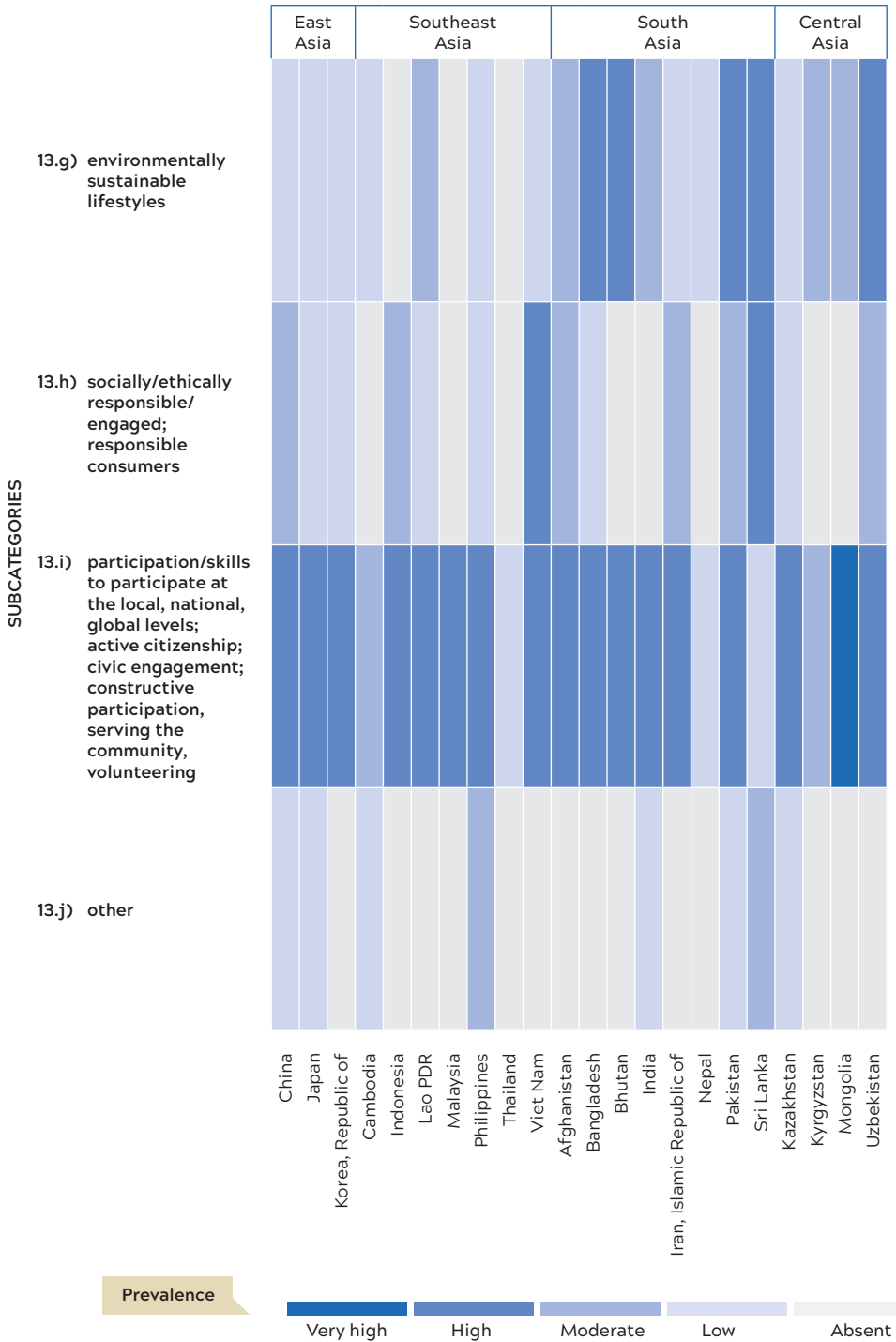
12 Attitudes, values, and dispositions



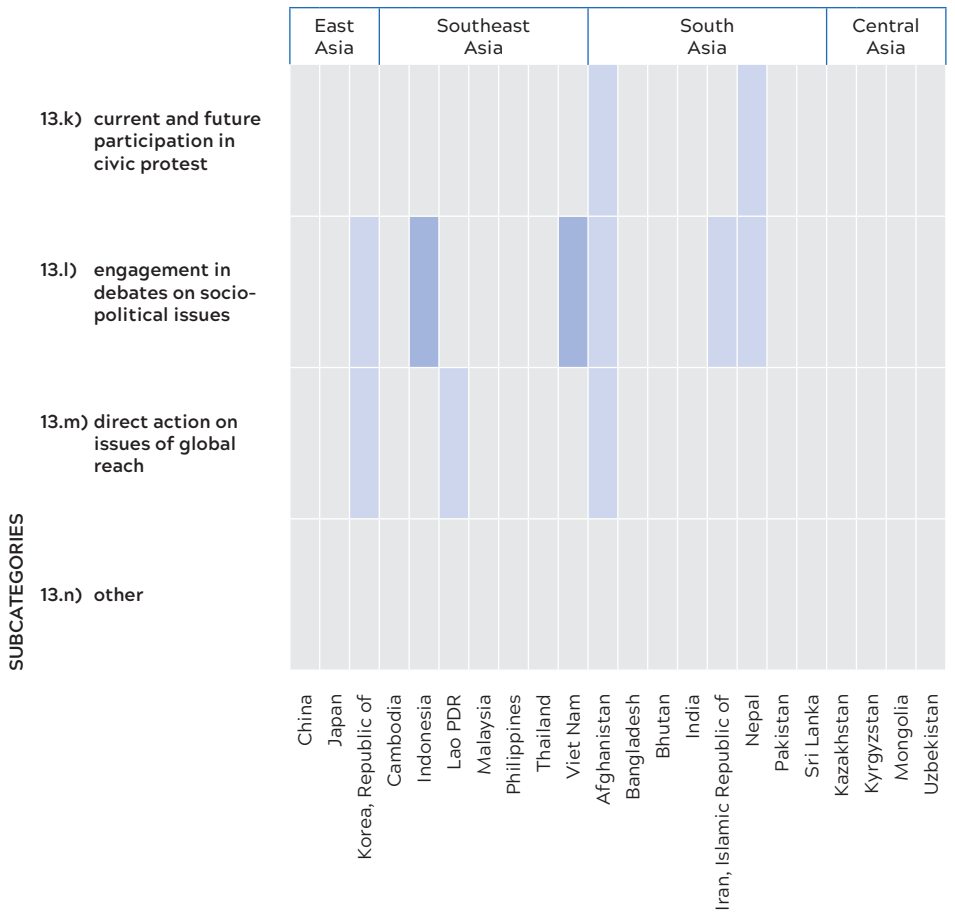
13.i Behaviour and action (Transversal/Cross-cutting skills)



13.ii Behavior and action (Responsible lifestyles)



13.iii Behavior and action (Activism)



Prevalence

Very high

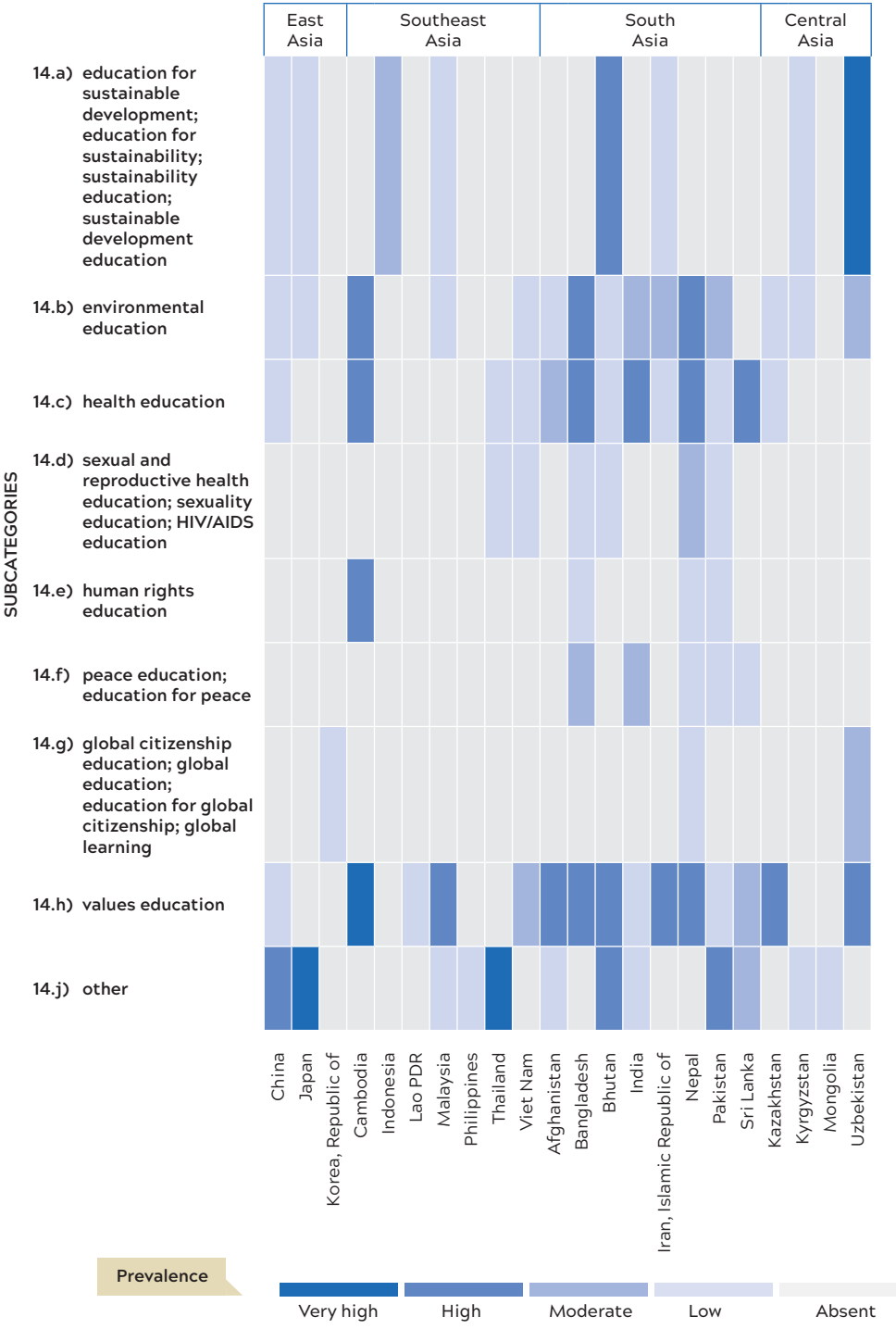
High

Moderate

Low

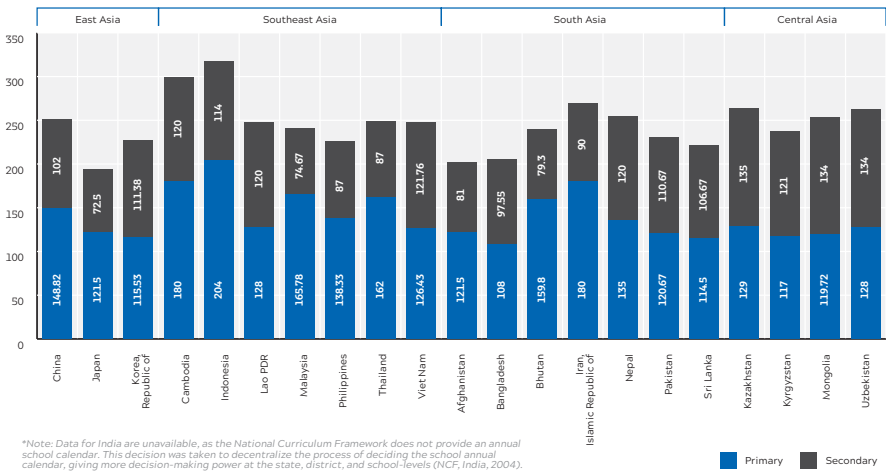
Absent

14 ESD, GCED and other educations



Instructional hours

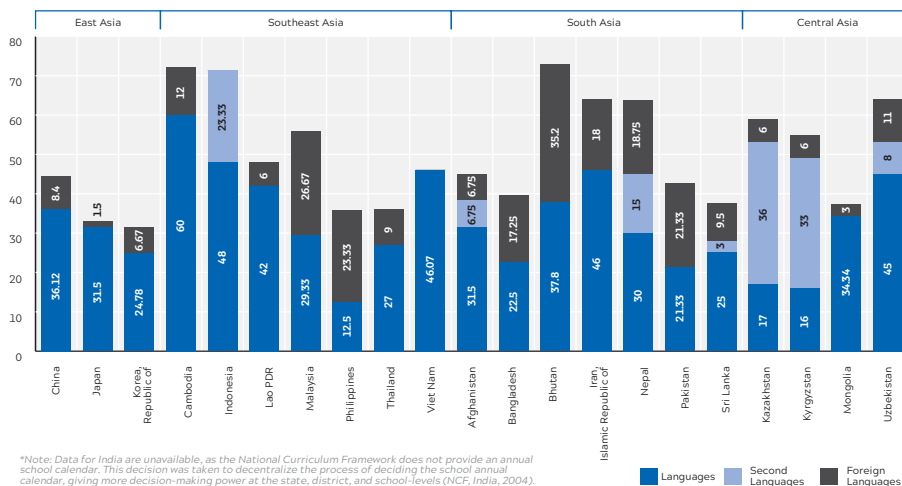
TOTAL INSTRUCTIONAL HOURS PER WEEK ACROSS GRADES 1-9



Note: Official time tables have been collected for all countries (except India, where the time table is not provided at the national level) by country research teams. In the ‘Subject’ column are the original names used in the source document or the English translation of them. ‘Subject category’ has been adopted from Benavot’s (2004, p. 11) re-classification of curricular subjects.

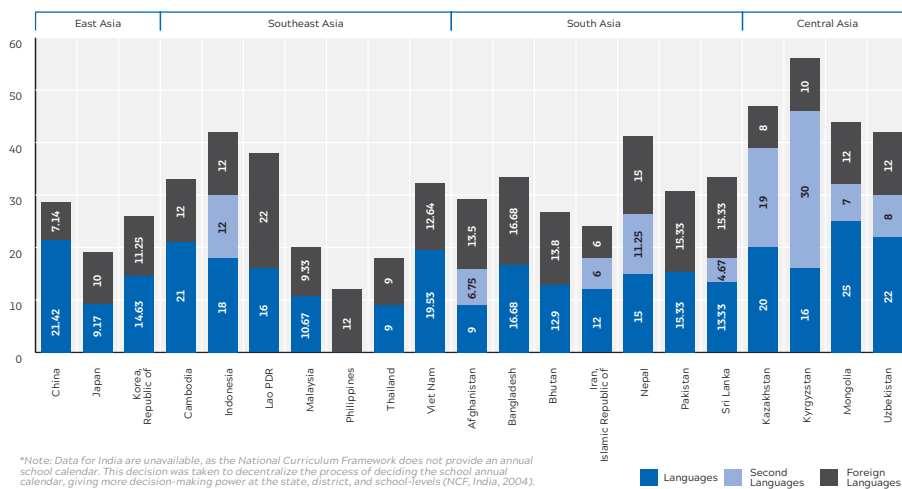
TOTAL INSTRUCTIONAL HOURS FOR LANGUAGES PER WEEK

Primary Grades



*Note: Data for India are unavailable, as the National Curriculum Framework does not provide an annual school calendar. This decision was taken to decentralize the process of deciding the school annual calendar, giving more decision-making power at the state, district, and school-levels (NCF, India, 2004).

Secondary Grades



*Note: Data for India are unavailable, as the National Curriculum Framework does not provide an annual school calendar. This decision was taken to decentralize the process of deciding the school annual calendar, giving more decision-making power at the state, district, and school-levels (NCF, India, 2004).

TOTAL INSTRUCTIONAL HOURS (PER WEEK)

Region	Country	Subject	Subject Category	Grades									No. of weeks/ days per year	
				1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9		
1	Central Asia	Kazakhstan	Russian language	Second Language	7	4	4	4	3	3	3	3	2	35 weeks (34 weeks for grades 3-4, 6, 8-11)
			Russian literature	Second Language	N/A	4	4	4	2	2	2	2	2	
			Kazakh language	Language	2	2	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	
			Kazakh literature	Language	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1	1	1	1	1	
			Foreign language	Foreign Language	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	
			Mathematics	Mathematics	4	4	5	5	6	6	5	5	5	
			IT	Technology	2	2	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	
			Science	Science	1	1	1	1	1	2	4	6	6	
			Geography	Science	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	2	2	2	2	
			History of Kazakhstan	Social Science	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1	2	2	2	2	
			World History	Social Science	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1	1	1	1	
			Person. Society. Law	Social Science	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1	
			Self-awareness	Social Science	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
			Art (music and fine arts)	Aesthetic Education	2	2	2	2	2	2	N/A	N/A	N/A	
			Technology (+ mechanical drawing)	Technology	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1	1	1	1	3	
Sports	Sports	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3				
Total					23	24	27	27	28	33	32	34	36	

Source: Ministry of Education and Science of the RK. 2012. Об утверждении типовых учебных планов начального, основного среднего, общего среднего образования Республики Казахстан (National Standard Curriculum for elementary and secondary education in the republic of Kazakhstan). <http://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/V1200008170#z22> (Accessed 10 October 2017).

Region	Country	Subject	Subject Category	Grades									No. of weeks/ days per year	
				1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9		
2	Central Asia	Kyrgyzstan	Russian	Second Language	6	7	7	7	4	4	4	3	2	Grade 1: 33 weeks; Grades 2-11: 34 weeks (36 weeks for grade 9 and 11)
			Kyrgyz	Language	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	
			Foreign language	Foreign Language	N/A	N/A	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	
			Mathematics	Mathematics	4	5	5	6	5	5	4	4	4	
			Motherland studies /regional studies (Родиноведение)	Social Science	1	1	1	1	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
			Science	Science	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1	2	3	6	7	
			Geography	Science	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	2	2	2	2	
			Russian Literature	Second Language	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	2	2	2	2	3	
			Kyrgyz Literature	Language	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1	1	1	1	1	
			Art (music and drawing)	Aesthetic Education	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	N/A	N/A	
			History of Kyrgyzstan	Social Science	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1	1	1	1	1	
			World history	Social Science	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1	1	1	1	
			Human and society Introduction to Economics	Social Science	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1	
			Ethics	Religion and Moral Education	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	N/A	N/A	
			Sports	Sports	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	
			Basics of Life Safety	Skills and Competencies	1	1	1	1	1	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
			Labour activity/Draftsmanship	Skills and Competencies	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1	1	
Information technologies	Technology	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1	2	2				
Labour activities	Skills and Competencies	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1	1	1	N/A	N/A				
Total				20	22	24	25	26	29	30	30	32		

Source: Kyrgyzstan. 2017. Базистик окуу планы 2016/ 2017-окуу жылынын (The basic study plan (Basic curriculum) for the 2016/2017 school year). <http://edu.gov.kg/ru/for-parents/save-schools/shkolnoe-obrazovanie/school-books/bazisnyj-uchebnyj-plan-na-20152016-uchebnyj-god/> (Accessed 27 November 2016).

Region	Country	Subject	Subject Category	Grades									No. of weeks/ days per year	
				1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9		
3	Central Asia	Mongolia	Preschool Curriculum	Others	1.875	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Grades 1-2: 32 weeks; Grades 3-5: 33 weeks; Grades 6-12: 35 weeks
			Mongolian	Language	6.344	7	7	7	7	7	6	6	6	
			Mathematics	Mathematics	3.625	5	5	5	5	5	4	4	4	
			Information technology	Technology	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1	1	1	1	
			Human and environment, society, nature	Social Science	2.719	3	3	3	4	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
			Science	Science	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	3	6	6	6	
			Geography	Science	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1	1	1	
			History	Social Science	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1	2	2	2	
			Social Science	Social Science	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1	1	1	
			Art (music, painting)	Aesthetic Education	3.625	4	4	4	3	2	2	2	1	
			Design and Technology	Technology	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	2	2	2	2	
			Physical education	Sports	1.813	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	
			English	Foreign Language	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	3	3	3	3	3	
			Russian	Second Language	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	2	2	3	
			Civil education (Ethics)	Religion and Moral Education	0.906	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
			Extra-curricular activities	Others	1.813	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
			Learning activities for life skills	Skills and Competencies	N/A	N/A	N/A	1	1	1	1	1	1	
	Total		22.719	23	23	24	27	29	35	35	35			

Source: Mongolia. 2016. The structure of school year and holidays 2015-2016. <http://www.mecss.gov.mn/хичээлийн-жилийн-бүтэц> (Accessed 10 October 2017).

Region	Country	Subject	Subject Category	Grades									No. of weeks/ days per year			
				1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9				
4	Central Asia	Uzbekistan	Native language and literature	Language	8	8	10	10	9	7	5	5	5	Grade 1: 33 weeks; Grades 2-11: 34 weeks		
			Uzbek/ Russian language	Second Language	N/A	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2		2	
			Foreign language	Foreign Language	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	3	3		3	
			History	Social Science	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	2	2	3	3	3		3	
			Basics of state and law	Social Science	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1	1		1	
			Basics of economics	Social Science	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1	1		1	
			Mathematics	Mathematics	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5		5	
			Computer science	Technology	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1	2		2	2
			Science	Science	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1	4	6	6	6		6	6
			Natural history and geography	Social Science	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2		2	2
			ABCs of ethics	Religion and Moral Education	1	1	1	1	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A		N/A	N/A
			Feelings of motherland	Social Science	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1	1	N/A	N/A	N/A		N/A	N/A
			Idea of national independence and basics of spirituality	Social Science	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1	1	1		1	1
			Music, painting art, mechanical drawing, handicraft	Aesthetic Education	3	3	3	3	4	4	4	2	2		2	2
			Gym class	Sports	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2		2	2
Total						22	24	26	26	30	32	33	34	35		

Source: Uzbekistan. 2017. Давлат таълим стандартлари ва ўқув дастурлари (5-11-синфлар учун) (The State Teaching Standards and Guidelines Grades 5-11). Tashkent, Ministry of Education.

	Region	Country	Subject	Subject Category	Grades									No. of weeks/ days per year	
					1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9		
5	East Asia	China	Morality and Life/ Morality and Society/ Ideology and Morality	Religion and Moral Education	2.08	2.08	2.4	2.4	2.4	2.4	2.4	2.72	2.72	2.72	35 weeks
			History and Society	Social Science	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1.19	1.19	1.19		
			Science	Science	N/A	N/A	2.4	2.4	2.4	2.4	2.72	2.72	2.72		
			Chinese	Language	5.46	5.46	6.3	6.3	6.3	6.3	7.14	7.14	7.14		
			Mathematics	Mathematics	3.64	3.64	4.2	4.2	4.2	4.2	4.76	4.76	4.76		
			Foreign Language	Foreign Language	N/A	N/A	2.1	2.1	2.1	2.1	2.38	2.38	2.38		
			PE/ Sports and Health	Sports	2.73	2.73	3.15	3.15	3.15	3.15	3.57	3.57	3.57		
			Arts	Aesthetic Education	2.6	2.6	3	3	3	3	3.4	3.4	3.4		
			Integrated Practical Activity/ local and school based curriculum	Others	N/A	N/A	5.4	5.4	5.4	5.4	6.12	6.12	6.12		
			Total		16.51	16.51	28.95	28.95	28.95	28.95	34	34	34		
Source: China. 2001. The experimental scheme for the curriculum in compulsory education. http://www.moe.edu.cn/publicfiles/business/htmlfiles/moe/moe_711/201006/xxgk_88602.html (Accessed on 20 September 2017).															
6	East Asia	Japan	Japanese Language	Language	6.75	6.75	5.25	5.25	3.75	3.75	3.333	3.333	2.5	Grade 1: 34 weeks; Thereafter: 35 weeks	
			Social Studies	Social Science	N/A	N/A	1.5	1.929	2.143	2.25	2.5	2.5	3.333		
			Mathematics	Mathematics	3	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.333	2.5	3.333		
			Science	Science	N/A	N/A	1.929	2.25	2.25	2.25	2.5	3.333	3.333		
			Life	Skills and Competencies	2.25	2.25	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A		
			Music	Aesthetic Education	1.5	1.5	1.286	1.286	1.071	1.071	1.071	0.833	0.833		
			Arts	Aesthetic Education	1.5	1.5	1.286	1.286	1.071	1.071	1.071	0.833	0.833		
			Home economics/ Domestic science	Skills and Competencies	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1.286	1.179	1.667	1.667	0.833		
			Physical Education	Sports	2.25	2.25	2.25	2.25	1.929	1.929	2.5	2.5	2.5		
			Moral Education	Religion and Moral Education	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.833	0.833	0.833		
			Foreign Language	Foreign Language	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	0.75	0.75	3.333	3.333	3.333		
			Period of Integrated Studies	Others	N/A	N/A	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.190	1.667	1.667		
			Special activities	Others	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.833	0.833	0.833		
			Total		18.75	19.5	20.25	21	21	21	24.167	24.167	24.167		
Source: Japan. 2008. 小学校学習指導要領 (Primary School Course of Study). http://www.mext.go.jp/component/a_menu/education/micro_detail/_icsFiles/afieldfile/2010/11/29/syo.pdf (Accessed 2 October 2017).															
Source: Japan. 2008. 中学校学習指導要領 (Middle School Course of Study). http://www.mext.go.jp/a_menu/shotou/new-cs/youryou/chu/_icsFiles/afieldfile/2010/12/16/121504.pdf (Accessed 3 October 2017).															

Region	Country	Subject	Subject Category	Grades									No. of weeks/ days per year	
				1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9		
7	East Asia	Korea, Republic of	Korean Language	Language	4.392	4.392	4	4	4	4	4.875	4.875	4.875	34 weeks
			Social Studies/ Moral Education (Moral, Inquiring and Pleasant Life in G1,2)	Social Science	6.902	6.902	2.667	2.667	2.667	2.667	5.625	5.625	5.625	
			Mathematics	Mathematics	2.510	2.510	2.667	2.667	2.667	2.667	4.125	4.125	4.125	
			Science/ Practical Arts	Science	N/A	N/A	2	2	3.333	3.333	7.5	7.5	7.5	
			Physical Education	Sports	N/A	N/A	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	
			Arts (Music/Fine Arts)	Aesthetic Education	N/A	N/A	2.667	2.667	2.667	2.667	3	3	3	
			English	Foreign Language	N/A	N/A	1.333	1.333	2	2	3.75	3.75	3.75	
			Creative Experiential Activities	Others	3.294	3.294	2	2	2	2	3.375	3.375	3.375	
			Elective Subjects	Others	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1.875	1.875	1.875	
			Total		17.098	17.098	19.333	19.333	21.333	21.333	37.125	37.125	37.125	
Source: Korea, Republic of. 2015. 개정 교육과정 총론 National Guidelines for the Elementary and Secondary Curriculum. Sejong, Ministry of Education.														
8	South Asia	Afghanistan	Holy Quran	Religion and Moral Education	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	0.75	0.75	0.75	36 weeks
			Islamic education	Religion and Moral Education	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	
			Sayings of the Prophet	Religion and Moral Education	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	0.75	0.75	0.75	
			First language (Pashto/Dari)	Language	6	6	6	4.5	4.5	4.5	3	3	3	
			Second language (Dari/Pashto)	Second Language	N/A	N/A	N/A	2.25	2.25	2.25	2.25	2.25	2.25	
			Arabic Language	Foreign Language	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1.5	1.5	1.5	
			Foreign Language	Foreign Language	N/A	N/A	N/A	2.25	2.25	2.25	3	3	3	
			Mathematics	Mathematics	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	
			Natural sciences (Men and environment, later: Physics, Chemistry, Biology)	Science	N/A	N/A	N/A	1.5	1.5	1.5	4.5	4.5	4.5	
			History and social studies (History, geography, social studies, ethics, civics, economics)	Social Science	N/A	N/A	N/A	1.5	1.5	1.5	4.5	4.5	4.5	
			Life skills	Skills and Competencies	1.5	1.5	1.5	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
			Arts, practical work and technology (Calligraphy, drawing and home economics)	Aesthetic Education	3	3	3	3	3	3	0.75	0.75	0.75	
			Physical education and sports	Sports	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	
Total		18	18	18	22.5	22.5	22.5	27	27	27				
Source: Afghanistan. 2003. Curriculum Framework. http://www.ibe.unesco.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Publications/WDE/2010/pdf-versions/Islamic_Republic_of_Afghanistan.pdf (Accessed 3 October 2017).														

Region	Country	Subject	Subject Category	Grades									No. of weeks/ days per year	
				1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9		
9	South Asia	Bangladesh	Bangla	Language	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.17	4.17	4.17	4.17	192 days
			English	Foreign Language	3	3	3.75	3.75	3.75	4.17	4.17	4.17	4.17	
			Mathematics	Mathematics	3.75	3.75	4.5	4.5	4.5	3.33	3.33	3.33	3.33	
			Bangladesh and Global Studies	Social Science	0.75	0.75	2.25	2.25	2.25	2.5	2.5	2.5	N/A	
			Science	Science	0.75	0.75	2.25	2.25	2.25	3.33	3.33	3.33	N/A	
			Religion and Moral Education	Religion and Moral Education	1.5	1.5	2.25	2.25	2.25	2.5	2.5	2.5	1.67	
			Physical education	Sports	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.67	1.67	1.67	1.67	
			Arts and crafts	Aesthetic Education	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.67	1.67	1.67	N/A	
			Music	Aesthetic Education	0.75	0.75	1.5	1.5	1.5	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
			ICT	Technology	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1.67	1.67	1.67	1.67	
			Career and life skills education	Skills and Competencies	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1.67	1.67	1.67	0.83	
			Total				18	18	24	24	24	26.68	26.68	

Source: Bangladesh. 2013. Annual Scheme of Work Plan and Class routine. Dhaka, National Curriculum and Textbook Board.

Bangladesh. 2012. National Secondary Curriculum. Dhaka, National Curriculum and Textbook Board.

10	South Asia	Bhutan	Dzongkha	Language	6	7.2	7.4	6	6	5.2	4.4	4.4	4.1	36 weeks
			English	Foreign Language	5.2	6.4	6.4	6	6	5.2	4.4	4.4	5	
			Maths	Mathematics	6	6.4	6.4	6	6	5.2	4.4	4.4	5	
			Environmental Studies	Social Science	3.2	6	6	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
			Physical Education	Sports	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	N/A	
			Values Education	Religion and Moral Education	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.5	
			Science	Science	N/A	N/A	N/A	4.4	4.4	4.4	6.4	6.4	7.1	
			Social Studies	Social Science	N/A	N/A	N/A	3.2	3.2	5.2	N/A	N/A	N/A	
			History	Social Science	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	2.4	2.4	2	
			Geography	Social Science	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	2.4	2.4	2	
			Arts and Crafts	Aesthetic Education	N/A	N/A	N/A	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	N/A	
			Library	Others	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	
			Socially Useful Productive Work/ Agriculture/ Social Forestry (7/8)	Skills and Competencies	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	
Total				22	27.6	27.8	27.6	27.6	27.2	26.4	26.4	26.5		

Source: Bhutan. 2016. Syllabus Books. <http://rec.gov.bt/blog/category/downloads/syllabus/> (Accessed 21 February 2017)

Region	Country	Subject	Subject Category	Grades									No. of weeks/ days per year	
				1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9		
12	South Asia	Iran, Islamic Republic of	Holy Quran	Religion and Moral Education	2	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	2	37 weeks
			Religious Studies/ Theology	Religion and Moral Education	N/A	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	
			Writing and Composition	Language	N/A	2	2	2	2	5	4	4	4	
			Dictation	Language	3	3	2	2	2					
			Persian Lang. (farsi)	Language	8	3	4	3	3					
			Arabic language	Second Language	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	2	2	2	
			Social Studies	Social Science	-	-	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	
			Math	Mathematics	5	5	4	4	4	5	4	4	4	
			Science	Science	3	3	3	3	3	2	3	3	3	
			Art	Aesthetic Education	2	2	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	
			Sport	Sports	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	
			Technology and Research	Technology	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1	N/A	N/A	N/A	
			Business and Technology	Technology	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1	N/A	N/A	N/A	
			English language	Foreign Language	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	2	
			Computer science/ ICT	Technology	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	
			Professional sport	Sports	2	2	2	2	2	2	N/A	N/A	N/A	
			Thinking and Lifestyle	Skills and Competencies	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	2	2	2	
Total				30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30			

Source: Iran, Islamic Republic of. 2012. 1391- هم رویه‌ش - ش‌روپ و ش‌زوم‌آ‌ی‌ل‌ع‌ ی‌اروش ب‌وص‌م - ی‌لم‌ ی‌س‌رد هم‌ان‌رب - (National Lesson Plan (approved by the Supreme Court)).

Region	Country	Subject	Subject Category	Grades									No. of weeks/ days per year		
				1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9			
13	South Asia	Nepal	Nepali	Language	6	6	6	6	6	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	32 weeks	
			English	Foreign Language	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75		3.75
			Mathematics	Mathematics	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.5	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75		3.75
			Social Studies	Social Science	4.5	4.5	4.5	6	6	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75		3.75
			Science, health and Physical Edu.	Science	3.75	3.75	3.75	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A		N/A
			Science	Science	N/A	N/A	N/A	3	3	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75		3.75
			Health and Physical Education	Sports	N/A	N/A	N/A	3	3	2.25	2.25	2.25	N/A		N/A
			Moral Education	Religion and Moral Education	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1.5	1.5	1.5	N/A		N/A
			Health, Population and Environment	Social Science	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A		3.75
			Profession, Occupation and Technology	Skills and Competencies	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	3.75	3.75	3.75	N/A		N/A
			Local Subject/ Mother Tongues	Second Language	3	3	3	3	3	3.75	3.75	3.75	N/A		N/A
			Elective Subjects	Others	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A		7.5
			Total				25.5	25.5	25.5	29.25	29.25	30	30		30

Source: Nepal. 2009. कृषि शिक्षण विभाग (Primary Education Curriculum (English version) (Grades 4-5)).

Nepal. 2012. कृषि शिक्षण विभाग (Basic Education Curriculum (Grades 6-8)).

Nepal. 2015. शिक्षण विभाग (National Curriculum Framework of School Education (2005) (revised in 2015)).

Region	Country	Subject	Subject Category	Grades									No. of weeks/ days per year			
				1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9				
14	South Asia	Pakistan	Urdu	Language	4.667	4.667	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	3.333	210 days	
			English	Foreign Language	4.667	4.667	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4		3.333
			Mathematics	Mathematics	4.667	4.667	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4		4
			Islamiat/ Alternative (for non-Muslim)	Religion and Moral Education	N/A	N/A	3.333	3.333	3.333	3.333	3.333	3.333	3.333	1.333		1.333
			General Knowledge (Science and Social Studies) + Pakistan Studies G9	Social Science	5.333	5.333	4	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1.333		1.333
			Science	Science	N/A	N/A	N/A	3.333	3.333	3.333	3.333	3.333	3.333	N/A		N/A
			Social Studies (History/Geography)	Social Science	N/A	N/A	N/A	3.333	3.333	2.667	2.667	2.667	2.667	N/A		N/A
			Physical Training (Games and Sports)	Sports	1.333	1.333	1.333	2	2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A		N/A
			Arts and Crafts	Aesthetic Education	1.333	1.333	1.333	0.667	0.667	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A		N/A
			Computer Education (Applied Technology)	Technology	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	2	2	2	2	N/A		N/A
			Arabic/Persian/Regional/Language/ Drawing/Health& Phy Edu./Home Eco/ Agriculture/ Intro Technologies	Others	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	2	2	2	2	N/A		N/A
			Practical Experience in Social and Environmental Edu.	Skills and Competencies	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1.333	1.333	1.333	1.333	N/A		N/A
			Library	Others	1.333	1.333	1.333	0.667	0.667	1.333	1.333	1.333	1.333	1.333		1.333
			Elective Subjects	Others	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	12		12
Total				23.333	23.333	23.333	25.333	25.333	28	28	28	26.667				

Source: Pakistan. 2007. Scheme of Studies Grade 1-12. Islamabad, Ministry of Education Curriculum Wing.

Region	Country	Subject	Subject Category	Grades									No. of weeks/ days per year	
				1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9		
15	South Asia	Sri Lanka	First Language	Language	5	5	5	5	5	3.333	3.333	3.333	3.333	185 days
			Mathematics	Mathematics	3.5	3.5	5	5	5	5.333	4	4	4	
			Environment Related Activities	Others	6	6	6	6	7.5	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
			Science	Science	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	3.333	4	4	4	
			Religion	Religion and Moral Education	1.25	1.25	2	2	2	1.333	1.333	1.333	1.333	
			Second national language (Sinhala/Tamil)	Second Language	N/A	N/A	1	1	1	0.667	1.333	1.333	1.333	
			English	Foreign Language	N/A	N/A	3	3	3.5	5.333	3.333	3.333	3.333	
			Co-curriculum	Others	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
			Assembly and Religious practices	Others	1.25	1.25	1.25	1.25	1.25	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
			History	Social Science	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1.333	1.333	1.333	1.333	
			Geography	Social Science	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1.333	1.333	1.333	1.333	
			Civics	Social Science	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1.333	1.333	1.333	1.333	
			Aesthetic subject	Aesthetic Education	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1.333	2	2	2	
			Technical skills/Design and Technology	Technology	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1.333	2	2	2	
			Physical health activities	Sports	1.25	1.25	1.25	1.25	1.25	0.667	1.333	1.333	1.333	
Total				18.75	18.75	25	25	27	26.667	26.667	26.667	26.667		
Source: Sri Lanka. 2003. Envisioning education for human development: Proposals for a national policy framework on general education in Sri Lanka. Colombo, National Education Commission.														
16	Southeast Asia	Cambodia	Khmer language	Language	11	11	11	9	9	9	7	7	7	31-33 weeks
			Mathematics	Mathematics	7	7	7	6	6	6	7	7	7	
			Sciences	Science	3	3	3	3	3	3	6	6	6	
			Computer/ICT	Technology	N/A	N/A	N/A	1	1	1	7	7	7	
			Social Studies	Social Science	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	2	
			Arts	Aesthetic Education	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	
			Sports	Sports	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	
			Health	Skills and Competencies	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
			Foreign languages	Foreign Language	2	2	2	2	2	2	4	4	4	
			Life skills	Skills and Competencies	N/A	N/A	N/A	2	2	2	2	2	2	
			Total				30	30	30	30	30	30	40	
Source: Cambodia. 2015. ក្រមខណ្ឌគម្របវិធីសិក្សាអប់រំចំនួនទូទៅនិងអប់រំបច្ចេកទេស Curriculum Framework for General Education and Technical Education. Phnom Penh, Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport.														

Region	Country	Subject	Subject Category	Grades									No. of weeks/ days per year	
				1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9		
17	Southeast Asia	Indonesia	Religion and Ethics	Religion and Moral Education	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	3	3	32-36 weeks
			Civics Education	Social Science	5	5	6	4	4	4	3	3	3	
			Indonesian Language	Language	8	9	10	7	7	7	6	6	6	
			Mathematics	Mathematics	5	6	6	6	6	6	5	5	5	
			Science	Science	N/A	N/A	N/A	3	3	3	5	5	5	
			Social Study	Social Science	N/A	N/A	N/A	3	3	3	4	4	4	
			English Language	Foreign Language	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	4	4	4	
			Arts and Culture	Aesthetic Education	4	4	4	5	5	5	3	3	3	
			Health and Physical Education	Sports	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	3	3	
			Handicraft	Aesthetic Education	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	2	2	2	
Total				30	32	34	36	36	36	38	38	38		

Source: Indonesia. 2002. Keputusan Menteri Pendidikan Nasional Republik Indonesia Nomor 125/U/2002 Tentang Kalender Pendidikan Dan Jumlah Jam Belajar Efektif Di Sekolah (Decree of the Minister of National Education of the Republic of Indonesia Number 125 / U / 2002 About Educational Calendar and Amount of Effective Learning Hours in School). Jakarta, Ministry of Education and Culture.

Region	Country	Subject	Subject Category	Grades									No. of weeks/ days per year	
				1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9		
18	Southeast Asia	Lao PDR	Lao language and literature	Language	12	10	8	6	6	4	4	4	4	N/A
			Maths	Mathematics	3	4	5	6	6	4	4	4	4	
			Moral education (civil education G6-9)	Religion and Moral Education	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
			World around us	Social Science	2	2	2	3	3	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
			Science	Science	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	4	4	4	4	
			Social science	Social Science	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	3	3	4	4	
			Arts	Aesthetic Education	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	
			Music	Aesthetic Education	1	1	1	1	1	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
			Handicraft	Aesthetic Education	1	2	2	2	2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
			Physical education	Sports	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	
			English	Foreign Language	0	0	2	2	2	4	4	3	3	
			French	Foreign Language	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	2	2	2	2	
			Activities	Others	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	
			Basic vocation/ IT	Technology	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	2	2	2	2	
Total					25	25	26	26	26	30	30	30	30	
Source: Lao PDR. 2010. ຫຼັກ ກຳ ນົດ ລູ ຊັ ນຸ ບຸ ຖ ັ ມ ສ ັ ກ ລ າ Curriculum for Primary Education. Vientiane, Ministry of Education and Sports, Research Institute for Educational Science.														
Source: Lao PDR. 2010. ມ ັ ດ ັ ມ ັ ອ ັ ມ ດ ັ ນ ັ ມ ັ ມ ັ ມ ັ Lower Secondary Curriculum. Vientiane, Ministry of Education and Sports, Research Institute for Educational Science.														
19	Southeast Asia	Malaysia	Malay Language	Language	5.333	5.333	5.333	4.444	4.444	4.444	3.556	3.556	3.556	43 weeks
			English	Foreign Language	4.444	4.444	4.444	4.444	4.444	4.444	3.111	3.111	3.111	
			Science	Science	1.333	1.333	1.333	1.778	1.778	1.778	3.111	3.111	3.111	
			Mathematics	Mathematics	2.667	2.667	2.667	2.667	2.667	2.667	3.111	3.111	3.111	
			History	Social Science	N/A	N/A	N/A	32	0.889	0.889	1.778	1.778	1.778	
			Moral Education	Religion and Moral Education	2.667	2.667	2.667	2.667	2.667	2.667	1.778	1.778	1.778	
			Islamic Education	Religion and Moral Education	2.667	2.667	2.667	2.667	2.667	2.667	2.667	2.667	2.667	
			Physical Education and Health Education	Sports	1.333	1.333	1.333	1.333	1.333	1.333	1.778	1.778	1.778	
			Visual Arts and Music Education	Aesthetic Education	1.333	1.333	1.333	1.333	1.333	1.333	0.889	0.889	0.889	
			Design and Technology/ ICT	Technology	N/A	N/A	N/A	0.889	0.889	0.889	1.333	1.333	1.333	
			Geography	Social Science	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1.778	1.778	1.778	
			Total					21.778	21.778	21.778	54.222	23.111	23.111	
Source: Malaysia. 2016. Circular Professional Education Ministry Malaysia. Number 8. http://www.moe.gov.my/images/pekelling/2016/circularfile_file_001419.pdf (Accessed 2 October 2017).														

Region	Country	Subject	Subject Category	Grades									No. of weeks/ days per year	
				1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9		
20	Southeast Asia	Philippines	Mother Tongue	Language	4.167	4.167	4.167	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	192 days
			Filipino	Second Language	2.5	4.167	4.167	4.167	4.167	4.167	4	4	4	
			English	Foreign Language	2.5	4.167	4.167	4.167	4.167	4.167	4	4	4	
			Science	Science	N/A	N/A	4.167	4.167	4.167	4.167	4	4	4	
			Mathematics	Mathematics	4.167	4.167	4.167	4.167	4.167	4.167	4	4	4	
			Social Studies (AP)	Social Science	3.333	3.333	3.333	3.333	3.333	3.333	3	3	3	
			Technology and Livelihood Education	Technology	N/A	N/A	N/A	4.167	4.167	4.167	4	4	4	
			Music, Arts, PE, Health	Aesthetic Education	3.333	3.333	3.333	3.333	3.333	3.333	4	4	4	
			Values Education	Religion and Moral Education	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2	2	2	
			Total		22.5	25.833	30	30	30	30	29	29	29	
Source: Philippines. 2012. Department Order No. 31, s.2012 or Policy Guidelines on the Implementation of Grades 1 to 10 of the K to 12 Basic Education Curriculum (BEC) Effective School Year 2012-2013. Manila, Department of Education.														
21	Southeast Asia	Thailand	Thai Language	Language	5	5	5	4	4	4	3	3	3	40 weeks
			Mathematics	Mathematics	5	5	5	4	4	4	3	3	3	
			Science	Science	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	
			Social Studies	Social Science	3	3	3	3	3	3	4	4	4	
			History	Social Science	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
			Religion, Morality and Ethics, Civics, Culture and Living in Society, Economic, Geography	Religion and Moral Education	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	
			Health and Physical Education	Sports	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	
			Arts	Aesthetic Education	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	
			Occupations and Technology	Technology	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	
			Foreign Languages	Foreign Language	1	1	1	2	2	2	3	3	3	
			Learner Development Activities	Others	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	
			Total		27	27	27	27	27	27	29	29	29	
Source: Thailand. 2008. หลักสูตรแกนกลางการศึกษาขั้นพื้นฐาน Basic Education Core Curriculum. http://www.act.ac.th/document/1741.pdf (Accessed 16 October 2017).														

Region	Country	Subject	Subject Category	Grades									No. of weeks/ days per year	
				1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9		
22	Southeast Asia	Viet Nam	Vietnamese	Language	10.714	9.643	8.571	8.571	8.571	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Grades 1-5: 35 weeks; Grades 6-9: 37 weeks
			Literature	Language	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	4.595	4.595	4.595	5.743	
			Mathematics	Mathematics	4.286	5.357	5.357	5.357	5.357	4.595	4.595	4.595	4.595	
			Moral education	Religion and Moral Education	1.071	1.071	1.071	1.071	1.071	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
			Citizenship education	Social Science	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1.149	1.149	1.149	1.149	
			Nature and Society	Social Science	1.071	1.071	2.143	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
			Science	Science	N/A	N/A	N/A	2.143	2.143	3.446	3.446	5.743	6.892	
			History	Social Science	N/A	N/A	N/A	2.143	2.143	1.149	2.297	1.723	1.723	
			Geography	Social Science	N/A	N/A	N/A			1.149	2.297	1.723	1.723	
			Music	Aesthetic Education	1.071	1.071	1.071	1.071	1.071	1.149	1.149	1.149	0.574	
			Arts	Aesthetic Education	1.071	1.071	1.071	1.071	1.071	1.149	1.149	1.149	0.574	
			Handicraft	Aesthetic Education	1.071	1.071	1.071	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
			Basic Techniques	Technology	N/A	N/A	N/A	1.071	1.071	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
			Technology	Technology	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	2.297	1.723	1.723	1.149	
			Physical Education	Sports	1.071	2.143	2.143	2.143	2.143	2.297	2.297	2.297	2.297	
			Foreign languages	Foreign Language	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	3.446	3.446	3.446	2.297	
			Class activities	Others	2.143	2.143	2.143	2.143	2.143	2.297	2.297	2.297	2.297	
					Total		23.571	24.643	24.643	26.786	26.786	28.716	30.439	

Source: Viet Nam. 2006. Chương trình Giáo dục Phổ thông Cấp Tiểu học Curriculum Framework: Elementary level. Hà Nội, Ministry of Education and Training.
Source: Viet Nam. 2006. Chương trình Giáo dục Phổ thông Cấp Trung học Cơ sở Curriculum Framework: Secondary level. Hà Nội, Ministry of Education and Training.

APPENDIX IV

List of coded documents

No.	Region	Country	Education Law/ Legislation Documents	Strategic Plans/ Education Policies	National Curriculum Framework (NCF)/ Overall Curriculum	Subject Curricula/ Subject Curriculum Framework/ Teachers Guide	Textbooks
1	Central Asia	Kazakhstan	Закон Республики Казахстан Об образовании Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan on Education (2007)	Государственная программа развития образования и науки Республики Казахстан на 2016-2019 годы State Program for Education and Science Development in the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2016-2019 (2016)		Типовая учебная программа по предмету Математика для 1-4 класса уровня начального образования General curriculum for Mathematics subject for 1-4 grades of primary school level (2013) типовых учебных программ по общеобразовательным предметам, курсам по выбору и факультативам для общеобразовательных организаций Standard curricula in general subjects, elective courses and electives for general education organizations (Grade 4 Math, World-Awareness, Self-Awareness, Kazakh Language, Literature Reading, Russian Language, Foreign Language) (Grade 8 Algebra, Geometry, Biology, Physics, Chemistry, Geography, History of Kazakhstan, World History, Kazakh Language, Kazakh Literature, Russian Language, Russian Literature, Foreign Language, IT, Self-Awareness, Person, Society, Law) (2013)	
2		Kyrgyzstan	Закон Кыргызской Республики об образовании Educational Law of the Kyrgyz Republic (2003)		Рамочный национальный curriculum среднего общего образования Кыргызской Республики; National Curriculum Framework for Secondary Education in the Kyrgyz Republic (2010)	Государственный образовательный стандарт среднего общего образования Кыргызской Республики State Educational Standard of Secondary Education in the Kyrgyz Republic (2014); Предметный стандарт по математике Math (5-9) (2015); Образовательный стандарт по кыргызскому языку Kyrgyz Language (5-9) 2014); Образовательный стандарт по русскому языку Russian Language (5-9 & 10-11) (2015); Образовательный стандарт по иностранному языку Foreign Language (3-9) (2014); образовательный стандарт по предмету Химия Chemistry (7-9) (2015); образовательный стандарт по предмету Биология Biology (7-9) (2015); образовательный стандарт по предмету Естествознание Natural Sciences (5) (2015); History and Geography (7-9) (2015)	
3		Mongolia	Боловсролын тухай хууль Law on Education (2002) Бага, дунд боловсролын тухай хууль Law on Primary and Secondary Education (2002)	Төрөөс боловсролын салбарт баримтлах бодлого (2014-2024) State Policy for the Education Sector (2014-2024) (2015)	Бага боловсролын цөм хөтөлбөр Framework of the Primary Education Core Curriculum (2014)	(4 дүгээр анги, Математик, Хүн ба байгаль, Хүн ба нийгэм, Монгол хэл, Гадаад хэл, Иргэний боловсрол, Амьдрах чадварт суралцах үйл ажиллагаа) (Grade 4, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, Mongolian Language, Foreign Languages, Civic Education, Learning and Life Skills) (2014)	Математик Mathematics Grade 4 Байгалийн ухаан (Физик, Хими, Биологи, Газарзүй) Science Grade 4

No.	Region	Country	Education Law/ Legislation Documents	Strategic Plans/ Education Policies	National Curriculum Framework (NCF)/ Overall Curriculum	Subject Curricula/ Subject Curriculum Framework/ Teachers Guide	Textbooks
	Central Asia						<p>Нийгмийн ухаан Social Studies Grade 4</p> <p>Монгол хэл Mongolian Language Grade 4</p> <p>Гадаад хэл (Орос хэл, Англи хэл) Foreign Languages Grade 4</p> <p>Иргэний боловсрол Civic Education Grade 4</p> <p>Физик 8 дугаар анги Physics Grade 8</p> <p>Хими 8 дугаар анги Chemistry Grade 8</p> <p>Газарзүй 8 дугаар анги Geography Grade 8</p> <p>Нийгмийн ухаан 8 дугаар анги Social Studies Grade 8</p> <p>Иргэний боловсрол 8 дугаар анги Civic Education Grade 8</p>
4		Uzbekistan	Закон Республики Узбекистан Об Образовании The Education Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan (1997)		Дунд боловсролын цөм хөтөлбөр Framework of the Secondary Education Core Curriculum (2015)	(8 дугаар анги, Математик, Байгалийн ухаан, Нийгмийн ухаан, Монгол хэл, Гадаад хэл, Иргэний боловсрол, Амьдрах чадварт суралцах үйл ажиллагаа) (Grade 8, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, Mongolian Language, Foreign Languages, Civic Education, Learning and Life Skills) (2015)	Государственный образовательный стандарт и учебная программа State Educational Standard and Curriculum in Mathematics (1-9), Physics (6-9), Chemistry (7-9), Biology (5-9), History (5-9), The World Around Us (1-4), Geography (5-9), Mother Language and Reading (1-9), English (1-9), The ABC of Ethics (1-4), The Idea of National Independence (5-9), The Basics of State and Law (5-9), The Fundamentals of Economic Knowledge (8-9), Informatics and Computer Science (5-9) (2010)

No.	Region	Country	Education Law/ Legislation Documents	Strategic Plans/ Education Policies	National Curriculum Framework (NCF)/ Overall Curriculum	Subject Curricula/ Subject Curriculum Framework/ Teachers Guide	Textbooks
5	East Asia	China	中华人民共和国义务教育法 Compulsory Education Law of the People's Republic of China (1984)	国家中长期教育改革和发展规划纲要 (2010-2020年) National Outline for Medium and Long-term Education Reform and Development (2010-2020)	基础教育课程改革纲要(试行) The Basic Education Curriculum Reform Outline (2001)	义务教育数学课程标准(2011年版) Mathematics Curriculum Standard for Compulsory Education (2011)	
				中国儿童发展纲要(2011-2020年) China National Program for Child Development (2011-2020)		义务教育小学科学课程标准(2011年版) Science Curriculum Standards of Primary School (1-6) for Compulsory Education (2011)	
			中华人民共和国未成年人保护法 Law of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of Minors (1991)	国务院关于深入推进义务教育均衡发展的 意见 Opinions of the State Council on Promoting the Balanced Development of Compulsory Education (2012)		义务教育初中科学课程标准 Science Curriculum Standards of Junior High School (7-9) for Compulsory Education (2011)	
				中共中央关于全面深化改革若干重大 问题的决定 The Decision of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on Major Issues concerning comprehensively Deepening the Reform (2013)		义务教育品德与生活课程标准(2011版) Morality and Life Curriculum Standards for Compulsory Education (1-2); 义务教育品德与社会课程标准(2011版) Morality and Society Curriculum Standards for Compulsory Education (3-6); 义务教育思想品德课程标准(2011版) Ideology and Morality Curriculum Standards for Compulsory Education (7-9) (2011)	
			中华人民共和国教师法 Teachers Law of the People's Republic of China (1993)	教育部关于全面深化课程改革落实立德 树人根本任务的意见 Opinions of the Ministry of Education on comprehensively Deepening the Curriculum Reform and Implementing the Fundamental Task of Morality Education (2014)		义务教育语文课程标准(2011年版) Chinese Curriculum Standard for Compulsory Education (2011)	
		国家贫困地区儿童发展规划 (2014—2020年) National Child Development Plan for Poverty-Stricken Areas (2014—2020)					
		中华人民共和国教育法 Education Law of the People's Republic of China (1995)	中华人民共和国国民经济和社会发展第 十三个五年规划纲要 The 13th Five-Year Plan for Economic and Social Development of the People's Republic of China (2016)			义务教育英语课程标准(2011年版) English Curriculum Standard for Compulsory Education (2011)	

No.	Region	Country	Education Law/ Legislation Documents	Strategic Plans/ Education Policies	National Curriculum Framework (NCF)/ Overall Curriculum	Subject Curricula/ Subject Curriculum Framework/ Teachers Guide	Textbooks
6	East Asia	Japan	教育基本法 Basic Act of Education (2006)		小学校指導要領 The Courses for Study for Primary Schools (1-6) (2008) (General Provisions, Moral, The Period for Integrated Studies, Special Activities, Japanese, Social Studies, Math, Sciences)	小学校指導要領解説 Commentary on the Courses for Study for Primary Schools (1-6) (2008) (General Provisions, Moral, Japanese, Social Studies, Math and Sciences)	
					中学校指導要領 The Courses for Study for Middle Schools (7-9) (2008) (General Provisions, Moral, Foreign Language, The Period for Integrated Studies, Special Activities, Japanese, Social Studies, Math and Sciences)	中学校学習指導要領解説 Commentary on the Courses for Study for Middle Schools (7-9) (2008) (General Provisions, Japanese, Math, Social Studies, Sciences and Foreign Languages)	
7	South Asia	Republic of Korea			2015 개정 교육과정 총론 National Guidelines for the Elementary and Secondary Curriculum (2015)	수학과 교육과정 Mathematics Subject Curriculum (2015)	
과학과 교육과정 Science Subject Curriculum (2015)							
사회과 교육과정 Social Studies Curriculum (3-4) (2015)							
사회 교육과정 Social Studies Curriculum (7-9) (2015)							
국어과 교육과정 Korean Language Curriculum (2015)							
영어과 교육과정 English Subject Curriculum (2015)							
도덕 교육과정 Ethics Subject Curriculum (1-9) (2015)							
8	South Asia	Afghanistan	فراعم نوناق (2008) Education Law	The National Education Strategic Plan 2017 - 2021 (NESP III) (2016)		هيوئادتا با هرود يسرد باصن (2012) Subject Curriculum for Primary Education ۷ فنص زا يونات تاميلعت هرود يسرد باصن هودوسم (۲۰۱۲) Draft Curriculum for Secondary Education (2006) (grades 7-12) يونات و هطسوت ميمومع تاميلعت يسرد باصن General Education Subject Curriculum for Secondary Education (2012)	

No.	Region	Country	Education Law/ Legislation Documents	Strategic Plans/ Education Policies	National Curriculum Framework (NCF)/ Overall Curriculum	Subject Curricula/ Subject Curriculum Framework/ Teachers Guide	Textbooks	
9	South Asia	Bangladesh		Non-Formal Education Policy (2006) National Education Policy (2010)		National Curriculum (Mathematics, Science, Global Studies, Bangla, English, IT) (2012)		
10		Bhutan			Bhutan Education Blueprint 2014-2024 (2014)	National Education Framework (2012)	Mathematics Curriculum Framework for Classes PP-12 (2005)	Understanding Mathematics, Textbook for Class IV, and Class VIII (2008)
							Science Curriculum Framework for Classes PP-XII (2012)	Science Class IV, and Science Class VIII (2012)
							EVS Curriculum Framework, Classes PP-III (2013)	A History of Bhutan, Course Book for Class VIII (1991)
							Environmental Science Curriculum Framework PP-XII (2014)	Social Studies, Class IV Student Book (1992)
							Dzongkha Curriculum Framework for Classes PP-XII (2006)	Aspects of World History, Book III (1976)
							English Curriculum Framework for Classes PP-XII (2005)	A Geography of Bhutan, Our Man-made Environment, Course Book for Class VIII (1991)
							Health and Physical Education Curriculum Framework, Classes PP-VI (2008)	Earth and its People, Book 3, for Class VIII (1987) Bhutan Civics, A Supplementary Text for Classes VII and VIII (2009)
							Information and Technology Curriculum Framework, Classes IV-XII (2014)	Tsomrig dang Kedyig Loprim Zhipa/ Gyepa Reading and Literature, Dzongkha Class IV, and Class VIII (2006) Reading and Literature, English Class IV, and Class VIII (2007)

No.	Region	Country	Education Law/ Legislation Documents	Strategic Plans/ Education Policies	National Curriculum Framework (NCF)/ Overall Curriculum	Subject Curricula/ Subject Curriculum Framework/ Teachers Guide	Textbooks
11	South Asia	India			National Curriculum Framework (2005)	<p>Syllabus Volume 1 Elementary Level (Math, Environmental Studies, Science, Social Science, Languages) (2006)</p> <p>State Curriculum and Syllabi for Elementary Stage of School Education developed in the light of NCF-2005 (for Class I to VIII) (Assam) (2012)</p> <p>Primary Education Curriculum (Maharashtra) (2012)</p> <p>Samacheer Kalvi Standard Curriculum Std 1-10 (Tamil Nadu) (2011)</p> <p>Samacheer Kalvi Maths Curriculum Std 1-10 (Tamil Nadu) (2011)</p> <p>Samacheer Kalvi Science Curriculum Std 1-10 (Tamil Nadu) (2011)</p>	<p>Math Magic (Grade 4) (2007)</p> <p>Mathematics (Grade 8) (2008)</p> <p>Looking Around (Environmental Studies, Grade 4) (2007)</p> <p>Science (Grade 8) (2008)</p> <p>Our Pasts 3 (History, Grade 8) (2008)</p> <p>Resource and Development (Geography, Grade 8) (2008)</p> <p>Social and Political Life (Political Science, Grade 8) (2008)</p> <p>Marigold (English, Grade 4) (2007)</p> <p>Honeydew (English, Grade 8) (2008)</p> <p>It So Happened (English, Grade 8) (2008)</p> <p>Mathematics (Grade 4) (2014)</p> <p>Mathematics (Grade 8) (2008)</p> <p>Environmental Studies Part 1 and 2 (Grade 4) (2014)</p> <p>General Science (Grade 8) (2009)</p> <p>Geography (Grade 8) (2009)</p> <p>History of Modern India (Grade 8) (2008)</p> <p>India and the World (Civics and Administration) (Grade 8) (2009)</p>

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	South Asia					Samacheer Kalvi Social Science Curriculum Std 1-10 (Tamil Nadu) (2011)	My English Book 4 (2014)
							My English Book 8 (2007)
	South Asia	Islamic Republic of Iran		و ش زوم آ ن د ا ی ن ب ل و ح ت د ن س ش ر و ر پ Fundamental Reform Document of Education (2011)		م ر ا ه چ ه ی ا ب ی ض ا ی ر Mathematics Teachers' Guide Grade 4 (2014)	English Balbharti (Grade 4) (2014)
						م ت ش ه ه ی ا ب ی ض ا ی ر ی ا م ن ه ا ر Mathematics Teachers' Guide Grade 8 (2014)	
12	South Asia	Islamic Republic of Iran		و ش زوم آ ن د ا ی ن ب ل و ح ت د ن س ش ر و ر پ Fundamental Reform Document of Education (2011)		م ر ا ه چ ه ی ا ب م و ل ع ی ا م ن ه ا ر Science Teachers' Guide Grade 4 (2015)	English Balbharti (Grade 8) (2009)
						م ت ش ه س ا ل ک م و ل ع Science Teachers' Guide Grade 8 (2015)	
12	South Asia	Islamic Republic of Iran		و ش زوم آ ن د ا ی ن ب ل و ح ت د ن س ش ر و ر پ Fundamental Reform Document of Education (2011)		م ل ع م ی ا م ن ه ا ر ب ا ت ک ی ا د ت ب ا م ر ا ه چ ه ی ا ب ی ی ا م ت ج ا ت ا ع ل ا ط م Social Studies Teachers' Guide Elementary Level (2015)	
						م ت ش ه ه ی ا ب ی ع ا م ت ج ا ت ا ع ل ا ط م ی ا م ن ه ا ر Social Studies Teachers' Guide Grade 8 (2014)	
12	South Asia	Islamic Republic of Iran		و ش زوم آ ن د ا ی ن ب ل و ح ت د ن س ش ر و ر پ Fundamental Reform Document of Education (2011)		م ر ا ه چ س ا ل ک یر ا ت ش و ن ی س ر ا ف م ل ع م ی ا م ن ه ا ر Persian Writing Teachers' Guide Grade 4 (2014)	
						م ت ش ه س ا ل ک ی س ر ا ف Persian Language and Literature Grade 8 (2014)	
13	South Asia	Nepal		School Sector development Plan 2016-2023 (2016)	l j b b f n o l z l f f s f n f l u / f l i 6 0 k f 7 0 j i d k l j k @ ^ # (k l / d r h g @ !) National Curriculum Framework of School Education (2005) (revised in 2015)	k f y l d s l z l f k f 7 0 j i d @) % s l f f \$ - % Primary Education Curriculum (English version) (Grades 4-5) (2009)	
13	South Asia	Nepal		School Sector development Plan 2016-2023 (2016)		c f w f / e t l z l f k f 7 0 j i d - s l f f ^ - * Basic Education Curriculum (Grades 6-8) (2012)	

No.	Region	Country	Education Law/ Legislation Documents	Strategic Plans/ Education Policies	National Curriculum Framework (NCF)/ Overall Curriculum	Subject Curricula/ Subject Curriculum Framework/ Teachers Guide	Textbooks
14	South Asia	Pakistan		National Education Policy (2009)		National Curriculum for Mathematics Grades I-XII (2006)	
						National Curriculum for General Science Grades IV-VIII (2006)	
						National Curriculum for Social Studies Grades IV-V (2007)	
						National Curriculum for Geography Grades IV-VIII (2006)	
						National Curriculum for History Grades IV-VIII (2006)	
						National Curriculum for English Language Grades I-XII (2006)	
						National Curriculum for Islamiat Grades III-XII (2006)	
National Curriculum for Ethics for Non-Muslims Grades III-XII (2007)							
15	Sri Lanka		National Policy (Reforms in General Education) (1997)	National Curriculum Policy Sri Lanka (2000)	Grade 7 Mathematics (2016)	Grade 7 Mathematics Teacher's Guide (2016)	Grade 7 Mathematics (2016)
					Grade 7 Science (2016)	Grade 7 Science Teacher's Guide (2016)	Grade 7 Geography (2016)
16	Southeast Asia	Cambodia	Policy Curriculum Development 2005-2009 (2004)	Education Strategic Planning 2014-2018 (2013)	កម្មវិធីបឋមសិក្សាសម្រាប់កម្រិតមូលដ្ឋាន Curriculum for Primary Education (1980)	Learning Outcomes and Model Lessons of Maths for Basic General Education, Grades 1-9 (2006)	Grade 7 English Reading Book (2016)
					កម្មវិធីសិក្សាគោលសម្រាប់បឋមសិក្សា Basic Curriculum for Primary Education (1996)	Detailed Course Syllabus for Science for Basic General Education, Grade 4 and 8 (2006)	Grade 7 Civic Education (2016)
					ក្រមខណ្ឌកម្មវិធីសិក្សាអប់រំសម្រាប់កម្រិតមូលដ្ឋាន Curriculum Framework for General Education and Technical Education (2015)	Detailed Course Syllabus and Learning Standard for Social Studies and Moral-Civics education, Grade 4 and 8 (2010)	
						Detailed Course Syllabus for Khmer Language, Grade 4 and 8 (2006)	
		Detailed Course Syllabus for English Language, Grades 4-9 (2012)					

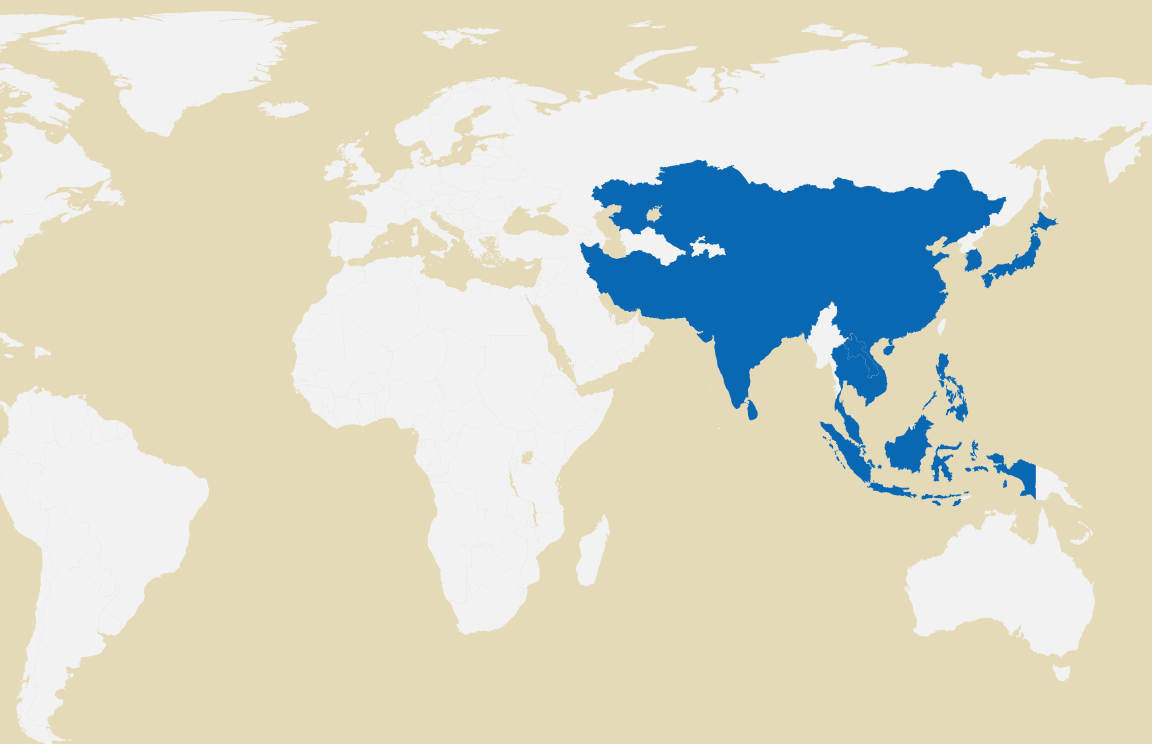
No.	Region	Country	Education Law/ Legislation Documents	Strategic Plans/ Education Policies	National Curriculum Framework (NCF)/ Overall Curriculum	Subject Curricula/ Subject Curriculum Framework/ Teachers Guide	Textbooks
17	Southeast Asia	Indonesia	Undang-Undang Republik Indonesia Nomor 20 Tahun 2003 Tentang Sistem Pendidikan Nasional Law Of The Republic Of Indonesia Number 20 Of 2003 Concerning The National Education System (2003)	Peraturan Menteri Pendidikan Pendidikan Dan Kebudayaan Nomor 70 Tahun 2013 Tentang Kerangka Dasar Dan Struktur Kurikulum Sekolah Menengah Kejuruan/ Madrasah Aliyah Kejuruan Decree of the Minister of Education and Culture No. 70 about Framework and Structure of Indonesian Curriculum (2013)	Kurikulum 2013 Kompetensi Dasar Sekolah Dasar (SD)/Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI) Basic Competency Curriculum Elementary School/ Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (2013) Kurikulum 2013 Kompetensi Dasar Sekolah Menengah Pertama(SMP)/Madrasah Tsanawiyah (MTs) Basic Competency Curriculum Junior High School/ Madrasah Tsanawiyah (2013)		
18		Lao PDR	ກົດໝາຍວ່າດ້ວຍການສຶກສາ Education Law (2015)	ວິໄສທັດ ຮອດປີ 2030, ທີ່ປະກອບດ້ວຍວາງສູນ ຂອງ ສາມາດ ຮອດປີ 2025 ແລະ ແຜນພັດທະນາຂະແໜງສຶກສາ ແລະ ກວດ 5 ປີ ຄັ້ງທີ VIII (2016-2020) Education Sector Development Plan (2016-2020) (2015)	ຫຼັກສູດລຸ້ນ ນັບຖື ມັດສິກສາ Curriculum for Primary Education (2010)	ຄະນິດສາດຄູ່ມືຄູ່ Mathematics Teachers' Guide (2009) ໂລກອ້ອມໂຕ World Around Us (Science Grade 4) (2009) ວິທະຍາສາດທຳມະຊາດ Science Teachers' Guide (Grade 8) (2016) ພູມສາດ Geology Teachers' Guide (2012) ພາສາລາວ Lao Teachers' Guide (2009)	ແບບຮັບ ຄະນິດສາດ Mathematics Grade 4 (2009) ຄູ່ມື ມັດສິກສາ ໂລກອ້ອມໂຕ Moral Education and World Around Us Grade 4 (2009) ພູມສາດ Geology Grade 8 (2012) ພາສາລາວ Lao Grade 4 (2009) ພາສາລາວ English Grade 4 (2012)
				ມັດທະຍົມຕົ້ນ Lower Secondary Curriculum (2010)	ພາສາອັງກິດ English Teachers' Guide (2012) ສຶກສາພົນລະເມືອງ Civil Education (2012) ຄູ່ມື ມັດສິກສາ Moral Education (2009) ພາວະສຶກສາ ແລະ ຫົວຖະກຳ Physical Education and Handicrafts (2009) ພື້ນຖານວິຊາຊີບ Basic Vocations (2012) ສິລະປະກຳ ແລະ ສິລະປະດື່ນຕີ Arts and Music (2009)	English Grade 8 (2012) ສຶກສາພົນລະເມືອງ Civil Education Grade 8 (2012) ພື້ນຖານວິຊາຊີບ Basic Vocations Grade 8 (2012)	

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19	Southeast Asia	Malaysia	Laws of Malaysia, Act 550, Education Act 1996 (2006)	<p>Dasar Pendidikan Kebangsaan National Education Policy (2012)</p> <p>Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025 (2013)</p>		<p>Kurikulum Standard Sekolah Rendah, Dokumen Standard Kurikulum dan Pentaksiran Matematik Tahun 4 Primary School Curriculum Standard, Mathematics, Grade 4 (2013)</p> <p>Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Menengah, Spesifikasi Kurikulum Matematik Tingkatan Dua Integrated curriculum for Secondary School National School Mathematics, Grade 8 (2011)</p> <p>Kurikulum Standard Sekolah Rendah, Dokumen Standard Kurikulum dan Pentaksiran Sains Tahun 4 Primary School Curriculum Standard, Science, Grade 4 (2013)</p> <p>Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Menengah, Spesifikasi Kurikulum Sains Tingkatan 2 Curriculum Specifications Grade 8 Science (2011)</p> <p>Kurikulum Standard Sekolah Rendah, Dokumen Standard Kurikulum dan Pentaksiran Sejarah Tahun Empat Primary School Curriculum Standard, History, Grade 4 (2014)</p> <p>Huraian Sukatan Pelajaran, Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Menengah Sejarah Tingkatan 2 Integrated curriculum for Secondary School National School History, Grade 8 (2002)</p> <p>Kurikulum Standard Sekolah Rendah, Dokumen standard Kurikulum dan Pentaksiran, Bahasa Malaysia Sekolah Kebangsaan, Tahun Empat Primary School Curriculum Standard, National School Malay Language, Grade 4 (2013)</p> <p>Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Menengah, Huraian Sukatan Pelajaran Tingkatan Dua, Bahasa Melayu Integrated curriculum for Secondary School National School Malay Language, Grade 8 (2011)</p> <p>Kurikulum Standard Sekolah, Dokumen Standard Kurikulum dan Pentaksiran Bahasa Inggeris Tahun Empat Primary School Curriculum Standard, National School English, Grade 4 (2013)</p> <p>Huraian Sukatan Pelajaran, Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Menengah, Bahasa Inggeris, Tingkatan 2 Integrated curriculum for Secondary School National School English Education, Grade 8 (2003)</p>	

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						Kurikulum Standard Sekolah Rendah, Dokumen Standard Kurikulum dan Pentaksiran Pendidikan Moral Tahun Empat Primary School Curriculum Standard, Moral Education, Grade 4 (2013) Dokumen Standard Prestasi Pendidikan Moral Tingkatan Dua Integrated curriculum for Secondary School National School, Moral Education, Grade 8 (2013)	
20	Southeast Asia	Philippines	Philippine Constitution (1987) Republic Act 9155 of 2001 or Governance of Basic Education Act (An Act Instituting a Framework of Governance for Basic Education, Establishing Authority and Accountability, Renaming the Department of Education, Culture and Sports as the Department of Education, and for Other Purposes) (2001) Republic Act No. 10533 or An Act Enhancing the Philippine Basic Education System by Strengthening its Curriculum and Increasing the Number of Years for Basic Education (Implementing Rules and Regulations) (2013)	Department Order No. 36, s. 2013 (DepEd Vision and Core Values) (2013) AmBisyon Natin 2040: A long-Term Vision for the Philippines (2016)		K to 12 Curriculum Guide: Mathematics (Grade 1 to Grade 10) (2016) K to 12 Curriculum Guide: Science (Grade 1 to Grade 10) (2016) K to 12 Gabay Pangkurikulum (Curriculum Guide): Araling Panlipunan (Social Studies) (Grade 1 - 10) (2016) K to 12 Gabay Pangkurikulum (Curriculum Guide): Filipino (Grade 1 - 10) (2016) K to 12 Curriculum Guide: English (Grade 1 to Grade 10) (2016) K to 12 Gabay Pangkurikulum (Curriculum Guide): Edukasyon sa Pagpapakatao (Values Education) (Baitang 1 - 10) (2016)	

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21	Southeast Asia	Thailand	พระราชบัญญัติการศึกษา แห่งชาติ 2542 National Education Act (1999)	นโยบายงบประมาณ พ.ศ. ๒๕๖๐ สู่ สำนักงานคณะกรรมการการศึกษาขั้นพื้นฐาน Office of the Basic Education Commission Policy 2017 Fiscal Year (2016)	หลักสูตรแกนกลางการศึกษาขั้น พื้นฐาน Basic Education Core Curriculum (2008)	Subject curricula for math, grades 4 and 8 (BECC, 2008)	
						Subject curricula for science, grades 4 and 7 (BECC, 2008)	
						Subject curricula for social studies, grades 4 and 7 (BECC, 2008)	
						Subject curricula for Thai language, grades 4 and 8 (BECC, 2008)	
						Subject curricula for foreign languages, grades 4 and 8 (BECC, 2008)	
22	Southeast Asia	Viet Nam	Luật Giáo dục Education Law (2005)	Chương trình mục tiêu quốc gia giáo dục và đào tạo giai đoạn 2012 - 2015 National Target Program on Education and Training in 2012-2015 (2012)	Chương trình Giáo dục Phổ thông Cấp Tiểu học Curriculum Framework: Elementary level (2006)		
			Luật Giáo dục sửa đổi Education Law (amended) (2009)		Chương trình Giáo dục Phổ thông Cấp Trung học Cơ sở Curriculum Framework: Secondary level (2006)		
			Chiến lược Phát triển Giáo dục 2011-2020 The 2011-2020 Education Development Strategy (2012)		Dự thảo Chương trình Giáo dục Phổ thông tổng thể Draft of the exclusive curriculum framework (2015)		

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Rethinking schooling for the 21st century

Calls to gear up schools for the 21st century are ubiquitous today. Dominant international educational discourse hails the potential of 'the youth dividend' and digital technology for enhancing growth. Some Asian education systems are held up as models for an innovation-led utopian future. But across much of Asia, neither the reality of schooling nor the patterns of development with which it is associated give cause for blithe optimism.

This study is informed by UNESCO's commitment to realising the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through educational reform worldwide. Since its inception, UNESCO has championed a humanistic vision of education – a vision today encapsulated in SDG 4.7. These ideals need to be strongly restated and defended in an era when educational debate worldwide has come to be framed by a narrowly economic and instrumentalist agenda.

Deriving urgent significance from this broader context, the present report analyses how far the ideals of SDG 4.7 - of 'education for peace, sustainable development and global citizenship' - are embodied in policies and curricula across 22 Asian societies. At one level, it seeks to develop benchmarks against which future progress can be assessed. It also argues forcefully that conceptions of the fundamental purposes of schooling need to be reconfigured, if the ideals to which the global community has subscribed are actually to be realised.



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