

Executive Summary:

Toward Ethics, Law, and Society (ELS) Education in Bangladesh: A National Curriculum Framework for Ethical Citizenship

To the would-be education leaders of the Bangladesh and The World

Bangladesh has made remarkable progress in education, economic development, and digital transformation since independence. Today, the country possesses one of the world's largest labor forces—approximately 71 million people, representing nearly 2% of the global workforce—and an increasingly important source of talent for the global economy. Investing in the ethical, legal, and civic competencies of this workforce represents an investment in Bangladesh's long-term human capital, global competitiveness, and sustainable development. However, the nation also faces increasingly complex societal challenges, including corruption, misinformation, artificial intelligence (AI), cybersecurity, environmental sustainability, and the need for stronger civic participation. Addressing these challenges requires citizens who possess not only knowledge, but also ethical judgment, legal awareness, and civic responsibility.

1. Evolution of Education

Since independence, Bangladesh has pursued successive education reforms to support nation building, scientific progress, economic development, and cultural identity. The **Qudrat-i-Khuda Commission (1972)**, **National Education Advisory Committee (1978)**, **Mafizuddin Commission (1988)**, **Shamsul Haque Commission (1997)**, and **Kabir Chowdhury Commission (2009)** progressively expanded educational priorities to include moral education, citizenship, constitutional values, human rights, ICT, and quality improvement.

These reforms significantly strengthened Bangladesh's education system. However, **Ethics, Law, and Society (ELS)** education has remained largely fragmented. While moral and religious education has received sustained emphasis, ethical reasoning, legal literacy, and structured civic education have received comparatively limited and piecemeal attention.

Educating the mind without
educating the heart is no
education at all."

— Aristotle

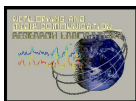
2. Why a National ELS Framework?

Many education systems—including **Singapore, Finland, Denmark, Australia, Japan, South Korea, the United Kingdom, and the United States**—have progressively expanded beyond traditional moral education to cultivate four complementary educational competencies:

- **Character** – honesty, integrity, empathy, and responsibility.
- **Ethics** – ethical reasoning and responsible decision-making.
- **Law** – constitutional principles, rights, duties, and the rule of law.
- **Society** – citizenship, democratic participation, and civic responsibility.

This white paper¹ proposes that Bangladesh similarly evolve toward a comprehensive **Ethics, Law, and Society (ELS)** framework while preserving the important role of existing Religion and Moral Education.

¹ Full white paper: <https://www.medianet.cs.kent.edu/techreports/TR2026-0801-BD-EthicsEducation-JK.pdf>



3. Proposed Framework

The proposed framework is organized around a simple **Guide to Personhood**, encouraging every learner to answer four lifelong questions:

- **Who should I be?** → Character and values.
- **How should I decide?** → Ethical reasoning.
- **What does society require of me?** → Law and legal responsibility.
- **How should I contribute?** → Society and civic responsibility.

Rather than replacing Religion and Moral Education, the proposed framework complements it by systematically developing practical reasoning, legal awareness, civic competence, and professional responsibility throughout a student's educational journey.

Character answers *who we should be*; ethical reasoning teaches *how we should think*; law defines *what society requires*; and civic responsibility guides *how we should contribute*. Together, these four dimensions prepare individuals not merely to follow existing rules, but to make sound judgments when new situations arise in the fast-evolving world we live in for which no rules yet exist.

4. Curriculum and Implementation

The proposed framework follows a developmental pathway from **primary education through university**, progressively introducing character development, ethical reasoning, legal literacy, civic responsibility, public policy, AI ethics, cybersecurity, and discipline-specific professional ethics.

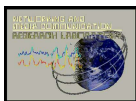
Approximately **60–80%** of the proposed competencies can be integrated into existing subjects with only modest additions to instructional time. The paper also provides **illustrative curricula, classroom activities, university examples, and a phased national roadmap** for implementation.

5. AI-Enabled National Digital Platform

To make nationwide implementation practical and affordable, the paper recommends establishing a **National AI-Enabled ELS Digital Platform** to support teachers and students through:

- standardized lesson plans and teaching resources;
- Bangladesh-specific ethical, legal, and civic case studies;
- interactive simulations and classroom activities;
- online teacher certification and professional development;
- competency-based student assessment; and
- continuous curriculum improvement using anonymized learning analytics.

Rather than replacing teachers, AI serves as a **national educational support system** that improves quality, consistency, accessibility, and scalability.



6. Expected National Benefits

The proposed framework is expected to:

- strengthen ethical reasoning and responsible decision-making;
- improve legal awareness and respect for the rule of law;
- increase civic participation and democratic engagement;
- better prepare students for AI, cybersecurity, and the digital economy;
- strengthen professional integrity across public and private sectors;
- enhance graduate employability and global competitiveness; and
- contribute to good governance and sustainable national development.

Education alone cannot eliminate corruption or institutional weaknesses. However, it can cultivate ethical judgment, legal awareness, and civic competencies that enable future citizens, professionals, and public officials to recognize, question, and resist unethical conduct.

7. Guiding Principles

The proposed ELS framework is intended to **complement—not replace—existing Religion and Moral Education** and should be guided by four principles:

- **Politically neutral**
- **Respectful of religious and cultural diversity**
- **Grounded in the Constitution and the rule of law**
- **Evidence-based and academically rigorous**

Curriculum development should involve educators, legal scholars, ethicists, policymakers, religious representatives, employers, and civil society to ensure transparency, inclusiveness, academic independence, and long-term public trust.

8. The Road Ahead

The detailed paper (Scan the QR Code) presents a five year **practical roadmap** for designing, piloting, implementing, and continuously improving a national Ethics, Law, and Society (ELS) curriculum for Bangladesh.

The time is therefore opportune for Bangladesh to establish an independent National ELS Task Force to evaluate existing curricula, identify integration opportunities, and guide phased implementation.



The roadmap presented in the detailed paper provides a practical pathway for strengthening ethical reasoning, legal literacy, civic responsibility, and professional ethics while preserving the nation's longstanding commitment to moral and religious education.