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## Collaborative Governance and Civil Society: A Comparison between Japan and Bangladesh Educational Policies

### Abstract

This study is aimed at addressing the concept of collaborative governance and civil society on matters pertaining to educational policies, from a comparative perspective between Japan and Bangladesh. The research addresses collaborative governance efforts that are in place to enhance education in both Bangladesh and Japan, which include the private sector, government, and the community coming together to contribute to the formulation and implementation of educational policies. Similarly, the study addresses the role of civil society in both Bangladesh and Japan in terms of contributing to the formulating and implementation process of educational policies. A thorough literature review, which constitutes theoretical and empirical work, provides an excellent source of additional information for answering the research questions. An analysis and discussion of the results is pivotal to providing insights into the differences between Japan and Bangladesh in terms of the collaborative governance and civil society on matters regarding educational policies. The recommendations, which include ideas to be adopted by both nations and those to be adopted by future researchers, accompanied by the conclusion, complete the research.

Keywords: collaborative governance, civil society, Japan, Bangladesh, educational policies, comparative analysis

### Introduction

Collaborative governance and civil society are essential aspects in the education sector because of the role, they play in ensuring that the formulation and implementation of policies is successful. Collaborative governance refers to the coordination between government, private sector and community, in working together to ensure that they achieve a common goal, that would have otherwise been difficult for individual sectors working alone to attain. In other words, it constitutes:

*... a governing arrangement where one or more public agencies directly engage non-state stakeholders in a collective decision-making process that is formal, consensus-oriented, and deliberative and that aims to make or implement public policy or manage public programs or assets (Ansell & Gash, 2008, p. 544).*

Civil society refers to the range of organizations such as those that are non-governmental, charitable companies, and labor unions, which influence the actions that policy-makers engage in, to ensure that the best courses of action are taken for the betterment of the country.

It is widely acknowledged that the concepts of collaborative governance and civil society can combine efforts to influence the education sector of a nation significantly. Bangladesh and Japan are some of the nations that benefit from the collective effort from civil society and collaborative governance because these aspects fast track the formulation and implementation of policies, as well as

ensuring that the policies are worth formulation and action, in that they help the citizens. The primary difference that makes the education sectors of many countries distinct, other than the resources available, is the level of engagement of civil society and collaborative governance. Therefore, conducting a comparative analysis of the collaborative governance and civil society participation from a perspective of educational policies is essential in uncovering and understanding the differences that exist between the two countries.

## **About the research**

### *Research objectives*

The research objectives for this study aim at creating an understanding of the difference that exists in the education sectors between Japan and Bangladesh, by examining the participation of collaborative governance and civil society in both nations. Furthermore, the study seeks to establish, which nation between Bangladesh and Japan is advanced on matters regarding education, so that one country can be a benchmark for the other.

### *Rationale of the research*

The rationale for this research was motivated by the need to find out the role of collaborative governance and civil society in educational policy formulation and implementation, as well as the need to compare Bangladesh's education sector to that of a more developed country namely, Japan.

### *Research questions*

This research seeks to address several questions as outlined below:

1. What is the role of collaborative governance and civil society in educational policy formulation and implementation in Japan?
2. What is the role of collaborative governance and civil society in educational policy formulation and implementation in Bangladesh?
3. How do Japan and Bangladesh compare in terms of their educational policies' preparation, bearing in mind the concepts of collaborative governance and civil society participation?
4. What are the recommendations for Bangladesh for it to ensure that it raises its education standards through policy change and utilization of collaborative governance and civil society in that process?

### *Research background*

A wide range of information exists, which discusses the issues revolving around collaborative governance and civil society in the context of educational policies in Japan. Education in Japan is relatively enhanced because of the role that collaboration between the government, private sector and civil society groups plays.

Similarly, Bangladesh demonstrates a comparable case to Japan, with the only difference appearing in the performances that students in schools exhibit. Research has been done in the past to examine the education system in Bangladesh, how policies are formulated and how they affect education and the role that collaborative governance processes and civil society participation, contributes to bettering

education in the country (Tasnim, 2017). With the presence of such kind of information, it becomes easier to analyze the situation and assess the impact that collaborative governance and civil societies have on policy formulation processes, in the Bangladesh education sector.

## **Literature review**

### *Japanese collaborative governance and civil societies from a perspective of the educational policies*

Collaborative governance in Japan has played an essential role in ensuring that educational policies are formulated and implemented in the best way possible. According to Pekkanen et al. (2014), Japan utilizes collaboration opportunities more than does Bangladesh, because of a belief that this has a positive effect on the processes involved in ensuring policies are formulated and implemented. Collaborative governance constitutes the coming together of different sectors that have an interest in education where technical, managerial, political, and financial capacities are utilized optimally. According to Mustary (2021), the collaboration will also concentrate on developing a stronger and better curriculum that will allow teachers and students to display their best results in teaching and learning respectively. Japan's educational policies indicate that education is mandatory for every school- aged child. This has been implemented over several years, which have seen most of the students perform well, partly because of the presence of sufficient resources.

According to Young (2000), the essence of the local and national government of Japan working together, is that local governments vary in terms of the context of the community they represent. Hence, educational policies in one local government could slightly differ with others from a different local government. This disparity can only be detected when the national and local governments together with other stakeholders enforce educational policies. Similarly, during the policy formulation processes, local governments that have teamed up with the national government can raise any problems and air their grievances that are related to the individual contexts of their educational needs. This enables them to negotiate on what should be included in the policies, to suit the conditions in their respective regions. Young (2000) asserts that collaborative governance in Japan has significantly yielded excellent results in terms of assisting in the formulation and implementation of educational policies.

In Japan, the concept of collaborative governance arises from the idea that the municipalities need to collaborate with governmental agencies to ensure that the process goes through smoothly. Such kind of governance is visible when the municipalities lack the necessary funds to hire teachers, for example, and resort to looking for financial help from the local or national government (Takayama & Lingard, 2019). Therefore, collaborative governance in Japan's education sector seems to be working well, especially when it comes to implementing the policies.

The institutions of higher education in Japan are constituted in such a way that the policy governing them requires that decision-making be a shared responsibility, between the institution and the government. The concept of collaborative governance manifests itself at that point, because the government is cooperating

with an institution of higher learning to make decisions (Ahn & Ha, 2014). The Japanese government through the Ministry of Education, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT), regulates the standards that Japanese universities need to adhere to during their establishment and cooperates with the institutions involved. Collaborative governance makes work easier in the Japanese education sector by ensuring that the right decisions are made and the implementation of policies is done effectively, which is commonly evident in the collaboration between finance and education sectors (Huang, 2018).

In Japan, there is significant evidence from the involvement of the local government in conjunction with the schools, of collaborative governance. The two bodies, the schools and local governments, come together through an educational board, to evaluate education systems and ensure that everything is operating as smoothly as possible (Yonezawa, 2011). Collaborative governance, therefore, constitutes different sectors coming together to ensure that the policies of education in Japan are formulated and implemented correctly. According to Mustary (2018), the Japanese educational system holds the view that the system is to be used to the advantage of all students, despite their age, color and gender. Therefore, it provides equal learning opportunities to all children willing to learn. The system envisions continuing to be the best in the world by constantly improving the curriculum to fit global changes. On the other hand, civil societies in Japan equally play a critical role in ensuring that educational policies are formulated and implemented successfully and in the right manner. The Japanese education system is more focused on moral education, such that as students develop into professionals, they still maintain proper behavior in their course of duty. This is important in formulating and implementing educational policies because NGOs provide financial support to the relevant programs that promote morality. Japanese educational policies are keen on discipline and the development of moral values.

During the process of policy formulation, many requirements arise for the formulation process to be completed. As such, civil societies in Japan often play the role of seeking to raise awareness of the need to fund education. Japan is more developed than many countries in the world and as such, the people understand the significance of education (Marginson, 2011). In Japan civil societies play a crucial role in acting as advocacies for education and students as well. The more, civil societies engage in education the more they gain experience regarding the components of an educational policy and therefore it becomes easier for them to contribute to policy formulation. Considering the huge number of civil societies present in Japan, it is impressive that their voice and contribution in the education sector is always recognized, through being allowed to participate in policy formulation and implementation processes so that their ideas can be captured in the final policy formulation activities.

Since most of the civil societies in Japan have direct contact with schools and, therefore, understand the challenges and needs the institutions require fulfilled, the civil societies are critical in presenting such issues in policy formulation dialogues (Rohlen, 1983). This has made Japan's education system strengthen over the years and the results have been visible through the excellent performances displayed by students at all school levels.

### *Bangladeshi collaborative governance and civil societies from a perspective of the educational policies*

The education system in Bangladesh is not as advanced as that in Japan. It is to be expected that the policies in Bangladesh do not have much influence on education compared to those formulated in Japan, because the latter country is more developed. According to Thornton (2006), collaborative governance plays a vital role in ensuring some strides are made in the education sector through the formulation and implementation of educational policies. Collaborative governance in Bangladesh is evident in most of the high schools because of the introduction of formal programs that are undertaken in classrooms (Thornton, 2006). The education standards and level in Bangladesh is quite low compared to that of Japan. A significant number of the population are illiterate and that is why the Bangladeshi government is working hard to ensure collaborative governance takes effect across the country.

However, the concept of collaborative governance is not as effective in Bangladesh as it is in Japan for various reasons. The difficulty of the Bangladeshi curriculum contributes to the difficulty in promoting the culture of different sectors collaborating, in terms of offering governance in the education sector. Despite the idea that education in Bangladesh is satisfactory and consumable, the difficulty in the formulation of the curriculum is that there is insufficient collaboration between different sectors including the government.

Based on the available policy frameworks, the government and non-governmental organizations in Bangladesh often combine efforts to ensure that the implementation of educational policies occurs smoothly. For example, in Bangladesh, early childhood education in most schools is offered on the basis of a collaboration between NGOs and the national government. This is an educational policy that aims at building a strong foundation for education for the young children. This is an example of how collaborative governance in Bangladesh works well. Analysis of the level of educational collaborations in Bangladesh demonstrates that it can hardly be compared to that in Japan. Collaborations in Bangladesh yield results on a small scale only, because the government is not fully investing in the education sector as it is in other sectors. At present, the investment is similar to that of previous years, where education was given less attention (Panday, 2018).

Policy formulation and implementation processes in Bangladesh also rely on the collaborative governance, because the government through its agencies holds consultative meetings with various stakeholders in the education sector, to establish the needs that people and schools have in terms of what is required to ensure that education continues and improves. In Bangladesh, the implementation of educational policies is not as effective as is the case in Japan because individuals are only gradually beginning to embrace the importance of attending school.

On the other hand, civil societies exist in Bangladesh, which play a role in contributing to the formulation and implementation of educational policies. The Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE) is a coalition in Bangladesh, which began as a network of non-governmental organizations that seek to contribute in the education sector in different ways. Today, CAMPE has over 1000 NGOs that support education matters in Bangladesh (Hossain et al., 2017). The role of CAMPE in helping in the formulation of educational policies is that it reaches out to its

members for ideas that can be helpful in bettering educational policy proposals. This is a critical move for the civil society in Bangladesh because it indicates that the NGOs mind about educational policies, since they have an impact in the corporate world in which the NGOs operate.

CAMPE occasionally conducts surveys aimed at finding out about the progress of the Bangladesh education sector. This process of monitoring is important because it ensures that CAMPE can contribute at an appropriate time, in the processes involved in formulating educational policies. The coalition fulfills its monitoring mandate using a mechanism known as education watch (Hossain et al., 2017). This mechanism helps civil society in Bangladesh to stay alert and ready to act whenever there are any educational policy issues that are being discussed. Through the monitoring process, CAMPE can submit the recommendations from its members regarding the policies of the country's education sector. Consequently, policy formulation and implementation processes become part of CAMPE's work, which means that civil society in Bangladesh is actively involved in educational policies.

The campaigns for the increase in resources, especially for the public schools in Bangladesh, has been one of the primary efforts that CAMPE has been displaying over recent years.

### **Research design and methodology**

The research design adopted in this research was the mixed method approach. This approach was ideal for this study because it constitutes the use of data from different sources, which results in the generation of credible information (Dunning, 2008). The descriptive methodology was ideal for use in this study because of its ability to accommodate quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative data is addressed in the results section of this study, whereas qualitative data is addressed in the empirical data section.

### **Empirical data**

This study constitutes empirical data that was obtained from online interviews and surveys. The surveys constituted 12 participants in total (6 apiece from Japan and Bangladesh), whereas the interviews constituted 20 participants (10 apiece from Japan and Bangladesh). The participants for the interviews constituted 5 men and 5 women from Japan and a similar set of participants from Bangladesh. Similarly, those who participated in the surveys constituted 3 men and 3 women for both Japan and Bangladesh. All participants were over 18 years and all signed an online consent form. Their contacts were obtained via Facebook pages in, group forums of their respective nations.

### **Results and discussion**

The study uncovered the idea that in Japan, collaborative governance is more effective than is the case in Bangladesh. Out of 10 interviewees who attended the interview issued, 8 of the participants from Japan (80%) argued that collaborative governance is extremely effective in bringing different sectors together to contribute in the educational policy formulation and implementation. Six out of the 6

participants (100%) who took part in the online survey indicated that Japan utilizes civil society to influence policy formulation and implementation. Four out of 10 participants (40%) from Bangladesh of an online interview indicated that collaborative governance is an idea that is still picking up pace, but is showing signs that it can help in educational policy formulation and implementation. All the 6 participants (100%) from Bangladesh, of an online survey said that civil society through CAMPE is extremely effective in articulating the educational policy issues that affect Bangladeshi schools.

Japan utilizes collaborative governance more than Bangladesh does. This explains to some extent why Japan experiences more success in education. Collaborative governance is important because it brings together many different sectors, which then pull resources and expertise together to handle the issues in the education sector. The civil society in Japan is sufficiently cooperative and that explains why more NGOs are willing to invest in education policymaking and implementation processes. On the other hand, Bangladesh has invested more in civil society through CAMPE, which has yielded fruits in terms of finding representatives who can speak on issues at the policy formulation table, on behalf of many people in the education sector.

## Conclusion

Therefore, this study concentrated on the establishment of the role that collaborative governance and civil society play in the formulation and implementation of educational policies in Japan and Bangladesh. Therefore, collaborative governance and civil society play a crucial role in the context of educational policies in Japan and Bangladesh. There is still a need to research more in the future, because of some uncertainties such as of how collaborative governance will work out in the future of Bangladesh. It is to be recommended that Bangladesh utilizes collaborative governance more in educational policy formulation and implementation. This will help the country's education sector improve significantly. Bangladesh government officials and all stakeholders in the education sector should widen their thinking to produce better policies that will guarantee faster growth of the education sector. Japan should continue utilizing collaborative governance to maintain the high standard and level of education that it offers to its students.

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