

# "Reforming School Management: A Comprehensive Policy Proposal by Policy Watch Bangladesh"

## Introduction

Policy Watch Bangladesh envisions bringing about a school governance system that embodies features of transparency, accountability, and political neutrality in Bangladesh. The structure of school governance has already been grossly affected by the politics of interference, corruption, and mismanagement. This shows up as less-than-desired learning outcomes. This paper throws light on an elaborate reform proposal of the school governance structure to address these challenges and thereby further enhance a merit-based, transparent, and efficient education system.

## Current Structure and Issues

### 1. School Managing Committee (SMC)

#### Composition:

- **Chairperson:** Too often a local political leader.
- **Parents' Representatives:** Elected from among the parents, but influenced by local politics.
- **Teacher Representative:** Elected by peers; subject to political pressures.
- **Headteacher (Principal):** Serves as an ex-officio member.
- **Donor's Representative:** Influenced by the political connections.
- **Local Government Representative:** From the ruling party.
- **Member Secretary:** Typically the headteacher, responsible for executing committee decisions.

#### Problems Identified:

1. **Political Interest:** The decisions are mainly motivated by the political connection of the chairperson, rather than the educational priority of the school. For instance, Viqarunnisa Noon School has been criticised because decisions are made based on political grounds, rather than paying heed to the needs of the school, due to the political character of the chairperson. This has been damaging to the integrity of school governance and a distraction from educational priorities.
2. **Politically Influenced Recruitment:** Most of the time, teachers are recruited on political grounds rather than based on merit. The relevant example is the Viqarunnisa Noon

School recruitment scandal in 2020, which has been reported to occur based on political influence that often demoralises the process related to the recruitment of teachers on a merit basis. This ultimately results in the recruitment of less-qualified teachers and negatively affects the quality of education provided.

3. **Corruption and Mismanagement:** This has given a loophole for the occurrence of a lot of financial mismanagements in one way or another. Recently, in 2021, a case of financial misappropriation against the Viqarunnisa Noon School reported that funds meant for school development projects were embezzled to personal accounts. For sure, such mismanagements not only put the school in jeopardy in respect of finances but also retard its capacity in terms of maintaining and improving facilities and resources.
4. **Lack of Transparency:** The existing governance is not transparent as often decisions are taken without informing the public about the details of such decisions. In 2022, Transparency International Bangladesh found unclear decision-making processes and a lack of accountability in Viqarunnisa Noon School and received wide criticism, causing stakeholders to lose confidence.

### Consequences of the Current Structure

1. **Lower Quality of Education:** Instead of qualifications, political connections have become a priority. This has brought down the quality of education as less qualified personnel are hired, affecting places such as Viqarunnisa Noon School in terms of the performance of the students. It defeats the very purpose for which an education system exists and cripples the learning process among the students completely.
2. **Corruption and Waste of Resources:** Financial mismanagement results in the inability of proper utilisation of funds and resources, thereby affecting the overall performance of institutions negatively. The inappropriate allocation of funds within Viqarunnisa Noon School-leading to decaying facilities and the absence of some forms of resources-adds to the greater context of corruption and its specific diabolical consequences for schools.
3. **Political Exploitation:** The involvement of politicians in the administration of schools led to the exploitation of the institution for political ends and hence defeated the very purpose of education. That Viqarunnisa Noon School has been used for political rallies and personal gain brings discredit to it and renders the institution less effective as an educational centre.

---

### Proposed New Policy Structure

Addressing these challenges, we have proposed a revised governance framework that aims at openness, meritocracy, and political neutrality. It aims at removing political patronage, developing efficient recruitment methods, and accountability.

#### 1. School Governing Board (SGB)

##### Composition and Election Procedures:

- **Education Professionals (2–3):**
  - **Selection Criteria:** Applicants with experience in education policy, curriculum development, or pedagogy.
  - **Appointment Process:** The appointments are done through an advisory committee that consists of representatives of the higher education institutions with the approval from the Ministry of Education. That means it ensures these professionals have a super-high level of expertise and is not politically biased.
- **Parent Representatives (2):**
  - **Selection Criteria:** Representatives of Parents or Guardians of currently enrolled students, selected for outstanding commitment to excellence in education.
  - **Election Procedure:** The members are elected by the Parent-Teacher Association through a free and open vote. The election procedure will be monitored to ensure fairness and freedom from political interference.
- **Retired Teachers (2):**
  - **Selection Criteria:** Those retired from the school with service and commitment that can be shown in their history.
  - **Appointment Process:** It invites nominations from the alumni association and present employees. Selection Committee carefully examines the nominations and selects appointments, making sure that people coming into appointment do not have any current political affiliations.
- **Alumni Representatives (1–2):**
  - **Selection Criteria:** Alumni of the institution with professional achievement and capability for active contribution to the management of the institution.
  - **Mechanism of Election:** Direct election through an online-based voting mechanism by the alumni association. It must be highly transparent and inclusive to attract wide participation.
- **Community Representatives (2):**
  - **Selection Criteria:** Highly respected individuals in the community with long service records within the community and not attached to any political party.
  - **Appointment Process:** The community organizations nominate, with the selection committee serving and making the appointments in a manner to keep the candidates non-partisan and independent in their commitments to educational improvement.
- **Donor Representative (1):**
  - **Selection Criteria:** Major donors to the school who will have something at stake in its success.
  - **Appointment Process:** Appointed through and by the financial oversight committee, by way of their continued support and investment in the mission of the School. By doing so, this keeps the nature positive with the donors and aligns their involvement to the school's educational mission.
- **Headteacher/Principal:**
  - **Role:** This position is an ex-officio member, does not vote, contributes operational insight, and acts as a liaison between the SGB and school administration.

- **Appointment Process:** Appointed through the normal appointment procedures to ensure the Principal is not biased but focused on the running of the school.
- **Chairperson of the SGB:**
  - **Role:** The Chairperson shall provide leadership and shall represent the SGB in relations with other agencies. The person shall oversee policy development and implementation, apart from providing assistance in bringing conflict within the Board to a close.
  - **Selection Process:** There shall be an election for the Chairman among members of SGB. The election shall be conducted in accordance with a procedure laid down by the bylaws of SGB so as to ensure justice and equity.
  - **Term Period:** The term period shall be as set out in the bylaws of SGB. Normally, this is between two to four years; re-election is based on performance and consensus.

## 2. Independent Teacher Recruitment Panel

### Composition and Selection Procedures:

- **Representative from the Ministry of Education:**
  - **Selection Criteria:** A person with specialized knowledge in educational standards and policies.
  - **Selection Process:** Appointed by the Ministry of Education to maintain the criteria of national education.
- **Academic Expert:**
  - **Selection Criteria:** A qualified educator or a delegate from an academic institution.
  - **Appointment Process:** Academic institutions nominate, and the appointment is made by the Ministry of Education to add weight to the recruitment process.
- **Non-Voting Observer:**
  - **Selection Criteria:** A representative from civil society organizations that are concerned and involved in the issues of educational transparency and integrity.
  - **Appointment Process:** An open call for applications ensures monitoring prevents subjective recruitment of candidates.

### Responsibilities:

- **Recruitment Criteria Design:** Development and refinement of the merit-based, qualification-based, and experience-based criteria necessary to ensure an open and effective recruitment process.
- **Recruitment:** Observe recruitment with a view to ensuring it is free from political or local influence and based only on merit.
- **Transparency Monitor:** Recruit regularly to review the recruitment practices to uphold transparency and non-partisanship.

## 3. Committee of School Performance Review

## Composition and Selection Procedures:

- **External Education Specialists:**
  - **Selection Criteria:** Experts with extensive experience in the evaluation of schools and education programs.
  - **Appointment Process:** Appointed based on nominations from the educational institutions by a selection panel, which includes representatives from the Ministry of Education. The process guarantees an impartial review process.

## Roles:

- **Performance Evaluation:** Evaluate the teaching standards and performance of students and management of the school through empirically informed indicators.
- **Improvement Recommendations:** Provide actionable recommendations to enhance performance based on the findings, to overcome issues identified.

## 4. Code of Conduct and Accountability Mechanism

- **Code of Conduct Development:** The code of conduct was to be developed by a committee comprising SGB members, education professionals, and lawyers so it can be fully comprehensive and within legal parameters.
- **Approval and Implementation:** The code of conduct shall be approved by the SGB and implemented into a system of training made available to all staff and board members.
- **Grievance Redressal System:**
  - **Formation:** A committee comprising SGB representatives, parent representatives, and one legal advisor shall ensure a just and transparent grievance mechanism.
  - **Function:** It enables a system of anonymous reporting of any unethical activity or discriminatory act, provides channels for investigation of such activities, and settles them with justice.

## 5. Periodic Audits and Transparency

- **Annual Audits:** All financial and operational practices will be audited every year by independent auditing firms or governmental bodies. All audit reports are to be made publicly available on the school's website for transparency and accountability.
- **Public Reports:**
  - **Report Writing:** Reports shall be prepared by the auditing firm or oversight body; details regarding financial management, recruitment process, and overall school performance.
  - **Accessibility:** Reports shall be made accessible to parents, other community members, and other stakeholders for informed participation in the affairs of school governance.

## Conclusion

Thus, the new governance will address political interference, mismanagement, and non-transparency in school affairs. A new policy framework comprising merit-based appointment systems, transparency in decision-making, and tough accountability would mean a milieu in which educational priorities remain paramount and the political influence is reduced to the bare minimum. A model of governance that aspires to reform by excellence, integrity, and public trust in education. The comprehensive and detailed policy document is now available at [policywatchbd.org](http://policywatchbd.org) for review and further discussion. We believe that with the implementation of the proposed changes, the challenges we have been facing in the existing system will revisit a far stronger and more effective future educational environment.

*Summarized by: Ronty Chowdhury*