

Bridging Education and Peace for Sustainable Development: A Policy Analysis of Bangladesh

***Dr. Abdul Bareq**

Abstract

Independence in Cameroon brought fundamental changes in government and administration. The state began with a Federal structure and two state governments that lasted for ten years. On 20 May 1972, President Ahidjo supplanted the Federal arrangement with a unitary constitution, aiming to consolidate national unity and enhance economic, social, and cultural development. This study examines how landmark legislations such as the Local Council Law of 1974 and the Chieftaincy Decree of 1977 impinged on local governance and development. Using primary archival sources from the National Archives Buea (NAB) and Bamenda Provincial Archives (BPA), government decrees, official gazettes, and legal texts, combined with secondary scholarly literature, this research adopts a chronological approach to analyze the evolution of decentralization in Cameroon from 1961 to 2010. The study reveals persistent tensions between centralization and decentralization, between chiefs and state administrators, and between East and West Cameroon institutional systems. In designing new local council regulations, the government harmonized East and West Cameroon structures, but predominantly retained the former East Cameroon managerial system (Instrument de Commandement des Communes Rurales), creating incompatibility issues that persist today in both culture and practice. The concentration of central finance, public service authority, and control of local communities in Yaoundé created structural impediments to effective decentralization. The 1996 constitutional reform introduced the concept of a decentralized unitary state, while the 2004 decentralization laws established frameworks for transferring powers to regional and local authorities. However, implementation gaps between legal provisions and practical reality remain significant. This study concludes that effective decentralization in Cameroon is possible when divergent historical facts are understood and resolved, coupled with genuine political will to devolve power to local communities.

Keywords

Education Policy, Peace Education, Sustainable Development, Social Cohesion, Human Capital Development, Bangladesh

M.phil & Ph.D in Political Science, University of Dhaka., Dhaka, Bangladesh

INTRODUCTION

Contemporary public policy is strongly connected with education, peace and sustainable development. Education is not anymore considered as a service to literacy and skills, it is also perceived as a way of inclusion, civic duty, and social sustainability in the long term. Such a broad policy perspective can be observed in the global development agenda in which Sustainable Development Goal 4 is dedicated to inclusive and equitable quality education, and Sustainable Development Goal 16, is committed to peaceful and inclusive societies and effective institutions (United Nations, 2025).

This relationship is especially important in Bangladesh. Over the past decades, the country has achieved significant advancements in the sphere of widening access to education, but at the

same time, the nation has national development objectives that are associated with the 2030 Agenda. Simultaneously, Bangladesh still experiences issues that impact the educational performance and social solidarity such as inequality, marginalization, unequal quality and susceptibility to interference. These facts render the education policy not only a sectoral issue but a strategic one of peace and sustainable growth (United Nations Bangladesh, 2024).

The magnitude of the problem is also high. According to UNESCO, in 2025 the education system of Bangladesh has over 40 million students with almost 1 million teachers and this demonstrates the extent to which the education policy influences the social and developmental future of the country (UNESCO, 2025). Also, UNICEF states that its collaboration with the Government of Bangladesh is aimed at

***Corresponding Author: Dr. Abdul Bareq**

© The Author(s) 2026, This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC-BY-NC)

establishing an inclusive, relevant, and accessible education system, noting that the necessity to

interlink educational growth with equity and resilience remains (UNICEF Bangladesh, 2025).

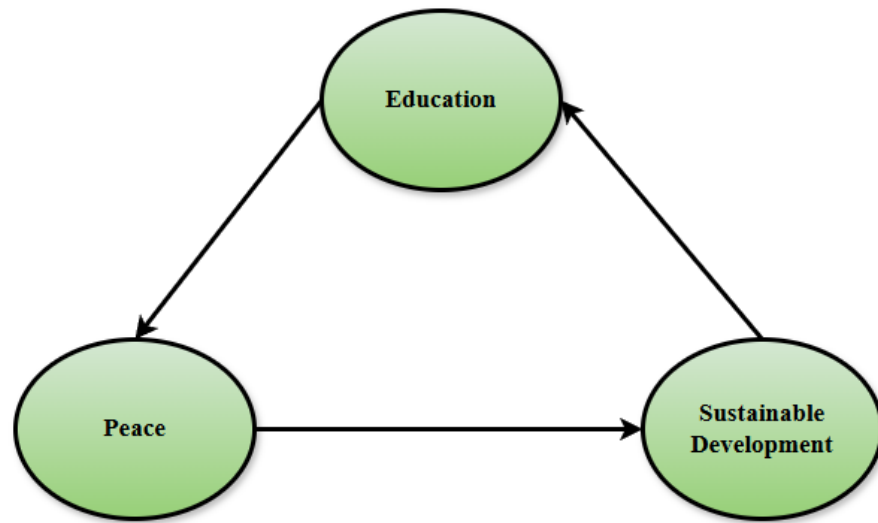


Figure 1. Interrelationship between education, peace, and sustainable development.

The paper contends that education is a policy bridge that should be implemented between peace and sustainable development in Bangladesh. It looks at how much the present policy trends are inclusive, socially cohesive and geared to long term development and also the major gaps that restrain a more holistic national strategy.

CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Education is traditionally perceived as one of the pillars of development since it increases human capacity, enhances agency and increases access to economic and social opportunity. Policy wise, education does not mean formal education or learning of literacy. It also involves development of values, critical thinking, involvement and competence to constructively interact in the society. This broad interpretation is significant to Bangladesh, where the policy of education has to answer not just the labour-market demands, but much broader questions of equity, citizenship, and national development. The United Nations acknowledges this extensive role and identifies quality education as inclusive, equitable, and geared towards lifelong learning as opposed to a limited academic achievement (United Nations, 2025).

In this paper, peace has been addressed in terms of a positive policy. It does not simply imply the lack of open conflict or violence only. It is also associated with social cohesion, fairness, institutional trust, inclusion, and the ability of citizens to solve differences without any form of exclusion or intimidation. In this view, social systems that ensure reduction of grievance and encourage dignity will sustain peace. The Recommendation on Education for Peace and Human Rights by UNESCO gives this connection a clearer meaning by introducing education as a tool of mutual understanding, collaboration, human rights, and peaceful coexistence among different societies (UNESCO, 2023).

The third pillar of the framework is sustainable development. It is defined as socially inclusive, economically enduring and intergenerational institutionally stable development. In this regard, education and peace do not exist outside the concept of sustainable development, but they are the circumstances that render them possible. A system of education that expands access and disregards inequality, values or social belonging can result in growth without unity. In comparison, an education system that facilitates inclusion, civic

accountability and opportunity can lead to peaceful society and long term development capacity. This reasoning can also be seen in the international SDG system in which peaceful institutions and inclusive education are discussed as complementary components of sustainable change (OHCHR, 2025).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Education and Peacebuilding

According to the recent literature, education is becoming an important tool of peacebuilding since it determines the social opportunity as well as shared values. Education would decrease structural inequalities, marginalization, and exclusion, which in most cases are key contributors to social tension and instability. UNESCO (2023) argues that education of peace extends beyond academic education and also the human rights, global citizenship, tolerance, dialogue, and mutual understanding is promoted. This view is very applicable in the case of Bangladesh, where social harmony and inclusion will always be the policy issues of concern.

Nevertheless, it is not always the case that through education one becomes peaceful. According to scholars, the role of education in peacebuilding would rely on curriculum design, pedagogy, and institutional environment at large. Education systems that contribute to division instead of diminishing it might do so when they are unable to deal with inequality or advance exclusionary stories. Thus, the policy needs to be well supported to educate peace through curriculum development, teacher training, and inclusive institutional practice (UNESCO, 2023).

The other significant branch of the literature links education and civic responsibility and participation in democracy. Education systems which teach citizenship values, cooperation and moral responsibility would stand a better chance of bringing peace in the long term and social cohesion. This is especially important in the developing world where the education policy usually focuses on the growth of enrolments but does not pay much attention to civic learning and the social values.

Education and Sustainable Development

The sustainable development literature always places education as the key contributor to the economic and social development in the long run. Education enhances the human capital, increases productivity and promotes innovation, which are very critical to sustainable growth. Meanwhile, education is also a contributing factor to national development policy as it can lead to wider development results, including poverty reduction, gender equality, and health, among others (United Nations, 2025).

Recent research also believes that education is to be perceived as a multidimensional development instrument. It promotes sustainable development by not only contributing to the development of skills but also by means of social learning, ethical awareness, and resilience of institutions. In this respect, education helps the individuals and community to adapt in terms of economy, social, and conditions. This general framework is crucial to Bangladesh, where the development issues demand the economic change and enhanced social inclusion.

Policy Perspectives from Developing Countries and Bangladesh

The literature often demonstrates the discrepancy between the ambition and implementation results of policy in developing countries context. Education policies have been embraced by many countries that focus on equity, quality and inclusion, but practical issues like regional disparities, institutional capacity and access disparities have continued to compromising the outcomes. This is a general trend in Bangladesh.

According to the Ministry of Education of Bangladesh (2020), quality improvement, equity, and institutional strengthening are included in the national education planning framework. Meanwhile, UNICEF Bangladesh (2025) states that the priority of the policy should be to ensure inclusive, accessible, and relevant education. These views indicate that Bangladesh has achieved a lot in terms of access and participation, but the point of concern is now trying to match education with the goals of peacebuilding and sustainable development.

BANGLADESH EDUCATION, DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT: PEACE, AND

The example of Bangladesh offers a valuable context in understanding the connection between education, peace, and sustainable development since the country has been relying on high developmental aspirations and ongoing structural predicaments. The national planning documents put education in a wider transformation agenda that is connected with equity, productivity, and social long term development. The Education Sector Plan of fiscal years 2020/212024/25 clearly highlights access, quality, equity, governance, and system efficiency indicating that the sector of education is a strategic area of national development and not just a service-delivery role (Ministry of Education, 2020). Meanwhile, the World Bank still defines the direction of development in Bangladesh in terms of better human capital, employment, and institutional capacity, which is why education becomes the key to future social and economic stability in the country (World Bank, 2025).

Bangladesh has a great diversity in education as it shows significant advances and inequality. Over the years, Bangladesh has greatly increased the enrolment and has developed one of the biggest education systems in the area. Cases such as the education system in the country have over 40 million students and almost 1 million teachers which were reported by UNESCO in the year 2025 and this explains the magnitude of the policies coverage and the significance of educational governance to the nation (UNESCO, 2025). But, expansion in itself has not eliminated all barriers. According to UNICEF Bangladesh, in 2025, policy focus will be on establishment of inclusive, relevant, and accessible system particularly to the disadvantaged children due to poverty, disability, disruption, or social exclusion (UNICEF Bangladesh, 2025).

Such education facts are closely related to the issues of peace. The concept of peace in this paper is not confined to the lack of violence alone but is also considered to be social cohesion, fairness, inclusion, and institutional trust. Bangladesh has

achieved significant progresses in the field of social development, but the disparities in the region, class, and vulnerability remain to have an impact on life opportunities and popular trust. Educational opportunity inequality does not affect only the outcomes of education but also the sense of belonging, participation, and justice views. That is why the peacebuilding meaning can be attached to the education policy in Bangladesh even when it is not defined as such (United Nations Bangladesh, 2024).

This argument is supported by the development context. The overall policy agenda of Bangladesh aims at ensuring an inclusive, resilient growth in accordance with the Sustainable Development Goals. This implies that education does not just become judged by the number of enrolment or completion rates. It should also be evaluated on the basis of whether it can be employed, socially inclusive, have civic values and long term institutional resilience. In that regard, Bangladesh is not merely an educational expansion case. It is one of the cases where the effectiveness of the country to connect the social stability with the sustainable development in the future may be determined by the quality and direction of education policy (United Nations, 2025).

Policy Landscape: Education and Peace-Related Policy in Bangladesh

The education policy environment in Bangladesh is characterized by a high level of formal focus on access, equity, quality, and national development, and a lower and less apparent one on peacebuilding. The National Education Policy 2010 is still a significant point of reference since it introduces education as a way of human resource development, moral formation, non-communal values and national progression. Its language implies that education must play a role in social peace and responsible citizenship despite the fact that these objectives are not put within a specific peacebuilding agenda of the policy (Government of Bangladesh, 2010). This is a significant beginning point of the policy analysis since it demonstrates that the correlation between education and peace exists in Bangladesh in the form of implicit policy and not direct policy.

The same trend is reflected in the Education Sector Plan of the fiscal years 2020/21 2024/ 25. The plan is centered around the performance of the system, quality improvement, equal access, teacher development, governance, and the enhanced institutional capacity. These priorities are very pertinent to the issue of peace and sustainable development since more inclusive and efficient education systems can alleviate the lack of inclusivity and build a stronger trust among people. Nonetheless, the strategy remains largely structured on the basis of educational service and administration purposes as opposed to a well-defined peace-and-cohesion structure. This has meant that the role of education in social cohesion has ended up being entrenched in the larger objectives of equity and quality instead of being a policy pillar on its own (Ministry of Education, 2020).

A special concern in the policy focus on equity is the Bangladeshi situation. Inequality in education has been among the primary inhibitors of equitable opportunity especially in cross-regional, cross-income and social susceptibility. The current examination of Bangladesh reveals that unequal access and achievement of education remain the source of constrained social mobility and extend socioeconomic inequality, indicating that education policy has immediate effects on the inclusion and sustainability in the long run (Ahmed, 2024). In light of this, the policies that are meant to cut down dropouts, enhance basic learning and increase access to the disadvantaged learners are not only reforms in education but they also act as preventative factors to prevent the tension of exclusion.

The other significant policy aspect is one that deals with citizenship, values, and civic participation. Moral, social and civic aspects have been part of school programs in Bangladesh since ancient times, although they have not received as much analytical focus as access or examination results. According to recent findings in rural Bangladesh, more educated people tend to engage in civic life and contribute to community participation, which points to the theory that education has a social payoff that can be quantified other than labour-market performance (Murshed,

2025). It is significant to policy analysis since this finding can be used as an argument to establish that education can reinforce peace indirectly by the involvement of the masses, trust-building, and social responsibility, though the word peace is not explicitly mentioned in the official policy language.

Simultaneously, the policy environment is not contradictory in nature. Research on education reform in Bangladesh has indicated that there has been a long-standing disjuncture between national policy pledges and practice particularly in the quality, teacher capacity and institutional consistency. Rouf (2021) states that, though the National Education Policy provides far-reaching directions, they have been rather unequal in their practical application. This implementation gap undermines the peace-and-development possibilities of education due to the fact that the social benefits of policy are not achieved fully when there is an expansion of access but inadequate quality, relevance or fairness.

Another indicator of the increased significance of employability and skills towards the future is the policy landscape. In Bangladesh, the linkage between education and sustainable development is becoming more reliant on how education system is able to equip the young people in economic participation. Recent studies of higher education and sustainable employment in Bangladesh demonstrate that the matters of employability are the focus of the developmental role of education and that the lack of alignment of education and labour-market requirements can deter the overall national development (Hasan, 2024). There is also a peace aspect in this problem, as the youth frustration, hampered mobility, and skills mismatch may undermine social trust and boost the feeling of alienation.

In general, the policy environment in Bangladesh offers a number of building blocks to connect the peace and sustainable development of education, particularly, equity, civic learning and human capital development. But even the connection is not fully assimilated. The policies are also stronger in acknowledging that education is a development strategy as opposed to clearly stating it as a peacebuilding strategy.

ANALYTICAL DISCUSSION: HOW EDUCATION CAN BRIDGE PEACE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Education can be used as an intermediary to both peace and sustainable development in the sense that, it does not only increase access to schooling, but also equity, participation and opportunity. This policy-wise entails the fact that education must be evaluated in terms of its capability to decrease exclusion and enhance the social circumstances under which individuals live with dignity. The studies of the correlation between peace and sustainability indicate that the two objectives are closely related to each other and that sustainable development is hardly attainable in the situations, in which inequality, distrust, and institutional frailty are prevalent. In this sense, education is important since it may impact on all these three aspects simultaneously: it may expand the opportunity, enhance the social cohesion, and enable long-term development capacity (Simangan, 2021).

Social inclusion is the first mediating role of education. The issue of unequal education is not just a learning problem in countries like Bangladesh but it is also a distributional problem that impacts on life chances, voice and belonging. The impact of poorer access to quality learning by some groups is usually felt through increased perceptions of injustice, a perception that might manifest themselves in the future through labour-market exclusion, lack of trust, and frustrated social feelings. Recent research about the quality of learning and inequality holds that development is not determined by average levels of learning alone, but also by the level of unequal distribution of learning among a population. This argument is the most pertinent to Bangladesh as it implies that education policy is the most efficient way of promoting peace when it leads to fewer disparities as opposed to the increase in enrolment or formal completion only (Piao, 2024).

The second bridging role is development of the civic values and peace-oriented behaviour. Education contributes to the process of forming the way of how people perceive diversity, collaboration, accountability, and civic existence.

In this respect, schools and universities are also not only the locations where the transfer of skills takes place; they are also the locations where the social norms are reproduced or even challenged. Recent research on positive peace education points out that peacebuilding demands that education systems should not focus on limited educational objectives, but that they should also focus on structural and cultural circumstances that work in favor of justice, empathy, and non-violent coexistence. This is important to Bangladesh as a development strategy that cherishes peace cannot be based solely on infrastructure or growth statistics but needs individuals who are willing to conduct themselves in a sensible way in a plural social setting (Arystanbek, 2025).

The third channel links education and civic activity and community involvement. The Bangladeshi evidence indicates that education is connected to more solid types of local civic engagement, such as confidence in speaking in the public and contributing to community life. This is because it is not only the state institutions that help to maintain peace, but also ordinary involvement, and social trust. Education can help in enhancing the social backgrounds that would lead to peaceful development by enabling citizens to speak, organize, and participate. In such a manner, education can be seen as an intermediary between personal growth and national stability which, in particular, is important in a developing country context where formal institutions may not have the additional responsibility of cohesion (Murshed, 2025).

Peace and sustainable development is also achieved through education in form of employment and future security. The disparity between education desires and economic prospects is among the greatest causes of social dissatisfaction in most developing nations. Recent studies on Bangladesh show that the role of higher education in development is still the focus of employability and skills development is the key to the sustainability of the employment outcomes. There is also a peace aspect of this since social stability is enhanced when youths consider education as a viable path to a meaningful

engagement in the life of the economy (Hasan, 2024).

Meanwhile, the bridging role can not be played automatically by education. A system that increases access but condones poor quality, inequality of learning, prioritisation of a limited curriculum or implementation loopholes can be inadequate in relation to peacebuilding as well as sustainable development. Whether or not Bangladesh invests in education is thus not the policy problem, but whether the system is designed in such a manner as to make education expansion social inclusion, civic capacity and long-term resilience. This is the reason why education must be viewed as a strategic link in the policy arenas as opposed to being a standalone ministry issue. When education is made more equitable, peace-oriented and focused on future livelihoods, it is likely to turn national development ambition into a more stable and inclusive social order (Löhr, 2022).

Policy Gaps and Challenges

Nevertheless, despite the apparent ambition in the policies, Bangladesh continues to have a number of gaps that undermine the ability of the education sector to act as an intermediary between peace and sustainable development. The initial problem is the gap that is always there between access and quality. The enrolment in Bangladesh has increased in a commendable way although the quality of learning is not evenly distributed throughout the different institutions and social groups. The recent studies on Bangladeshi education reveal that in spite of the increased education system, exclusion can still be reinforced through the use of test-based practices, unequal access to tutoring and the differences in how institutions are provided (Hardy, 2025). This is important since a system that introduces students in school without a guarantee of equal learning outcomes cannot sustain both social cohesion as well as sustainable development.

The second obstacle is that there is little direct incorporation of peacebuilding into the education policy. The present policy frameworks put a lot of emphasis on quality, equity, and efficiency, but they are not so explicit in entrenching the notions

of peace education, conflict sensitivity, democratic dialogue, and social cohesion as the noticeable policy goals. Thus, such values as tolerance, cooperation, and responsible citizenship can be found only indirectly. This undermines the policy strategic clarity, since the outcomes of the peace-support are viewed as assumed, instead of being planned, measured, and implemented systematically. This in practice implies that education can also help to bring about peace but not in a well organized national system.

A third difficulty is related to the implementation and coordination. Studies on technical and vocational education in Bangladesh demonstrate that policy intentions usually face institutional divisiveness, poor profile to labour-market requirements, and uneven practical implementation (Kabir, 2024). These same issues are reflected in wider education reform, in which high-sounding policy rhetoric is not necessarily accompanied by teacher training, administrative capacity or quality of local delivery. The Bangladesh pandemic-related learning disruptions are also evidence of the way in which vulnerability and inequality rapidly compound in case of limited resilience in systems in spite of the fact that specifically targeted support can mitigate the loss of learning considerably (Hassan et al., 2024). Combined, these gaps indicate that policy design is no longer the major issue, but policy translation. To better ensure peace and sustainable development, Bangladesh needs to enhance quality, become more explicit in its peace-related goals, and enhance the implementation in institutions.

Policy Recommendations

Peace-oriented learning should be more entrenched in the mainstream education policy of Bangladesh. This need not involve separate subject in all cases. Rather, peace-related skills including tolerance, dialogue, civic responsibility and respect of diversity can be included in curriculum material, teacher education and classroom experience. This would reinforce the social purpose of education and can be able to make policy commitments to inclusion more visible and measurable (UNESCO, 2023).

A second concern is to not only decrease inequality in access but also inequality in educational quality. The disadvantaged learners, schools in rural areas and institutions with low learning conditions should be targeted in receiving the support. According to recent studies, the disparate quality of learning can create exclusion despite increasing the enrolment, which restricts the achievement of social cohesion, as well as the subsequent outcome of sustainable development (Piago, 2024).

In Bangladesh, education should be brought closer to employability and skills to the future as well. The reforms in technical, vocational and higher education should be more closely coordinated with the realities of the labour-market in order to make education a viable route to mobility and economic engagement. It is particularly noteworthy since the lack of skills can undermine the trust in education as well as development policy (Hasan, 2024).

Lastly, coordination and monitoring of the policies need to be enhanced. The policy of education must be more related to the youth, labour, and social development planning, and the progress indicators must encompass the inclusion, participation, and resilience instead of the enrolment and completion rates only (Ministry of Education, 2020).

CONCLUSION

This paper has put the argument that education can be seen as a strategic balance between peace and sustainable development in Bangladesh. The review of the policy demonstrates that Bangladesh has achieved significant advances in the growth of education and its association with the national development objectives. Nevertheless, the analysis indicates that the role of education in the peacebuilding process is more implied than it is expressed in the existing policy frameworks. To be able to play a more productive role in the sustainable development, policy should not focus on access only but should focus more on equity, civic values, quality and implementation capacity. That way, education can help not only the

economic development, but also more inclusive and peaceful social order (UNESCO, 2023).

REFERENCES

1. Arystanbek, A., et al. (2025). Implementing positive peace education in schools. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 104, 102945.
2. Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. (2010). *National education policy 2010*. Ministry of Education.
3. Hasan, M., Rahman, M. M., & Karim, S. (2024). The role of higher education for sustainable employment in Bangladesh. *Discover Sustainability*, 5(1), 112–126.
4. Hassan, H., Islam, A., Siddique, A., & Wang, L. C. (2024). Telementoring and homeschooling during school closures: A randomised experiment in rural Bangladesh. *The Economic Journal*, 134(662), 2418–2448.
5. Kabir, A. H. (2024). The policies and practices of technical and vocational education and training in Bangladesh. *Journal of Vocational Education and Training*, 76(2), 198–215.
6. Löhr, K. (2022). Integrating the concept of peacebuilding in sustainability impact assessment. *Environmental Impact Assessment Review*, 93, 106733.
7. Ministry of Education, Bangladesh. (2020). *Education sector plan for Bangladesh fiscal years 2020/21–2024/25*. Government of Bangladesh.
8. Murshed, R. (2025). Are educated individuals more likely to be civically engaged? Evidence from rural Bangladesh. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 131, 102436.
9. Piao, X. (2024). Learning quality, its inequality and sustainable development. *Discover Sustainability*, 5(1), 89–101.
10. Simangan, D. (2021). Positive peace pillars and sustainability dimensions. *International Studies Review*, 23(4), 1789–1812.
11. UNESCO. (2023, November 20). *Recommendation on education for peace and human rights, international understanding, cooperation, fundamental freedoms, global citizenship and sustainable development*. UNESCO.

12. UNESCO. (2025). *Public digital learning platforms: Learning Bangladesh's lessons for digital transformation*. UNESCO.
13. UNICEF Bangladesh. (2025). *Education*. UNICEF.
14. United Nations. (2025). *Goal 4: Quality education*. United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.
15. United Nations Bangladesh. (2024, February 28). *Toward 2030: Strategies for SDG success in Bangladesh*.
16. World Bank. (2025). *Bangladesh human capital and development overview*.

Conflict of Interest: No Conflict of Interest

Source of Funding: Author(s) Funded the Research

How to Cite: Bareq. A. (2026). Bridging Education and Peace for Sustainable Development: A Policy Analysis of Bangladesh. *Humanities and Society Review*, 2(2), 1-09.