

Global Perspectives
in Education
ECIE6004

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Essay – Choose one country in the majority world (low- or middle-income country) and critically explore the barriers to accessing good quality, consistent education for children and young people in your chosen country. Refer to national, regional, and international policies and reports; and apply their throughout.

Education makes an essential contribution to building inclusive and democratic societies, where differences of opinion can be freely expressed and where the wide range of voices can be heard, in pursuit of social cohesion and in a celebration of diversity (UNESCO, 2020). Education is a fundamentally key component of any child's development and progress without it we limit and restrict children's opportunities to explore, grow and develop the necessary skills they will need in later life. However, it is clear across the globe that disparity appears in terms of what good education looks like and more importantly how those children can access it in addition to looking at the quality and content of the education provided. Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world (Mandela, 1994). If this is the case, we need to understand and remove the barriers to education that children face across the globe. It could be argued that governments should have a centralised approach to ensuring all children regardless of socio-economic status, backgrounds and ethnicity have the right to an education to enhance and grow their lives. Children's rights are outlined in the United Nations Convention on Children's Rights and countries join and agree these rights which include the right to an education and learning. Education must develop every child's personality, talents and abilities to the full (United Nations, 1989). It is clear that education provides the foundation and development to enable all children to build skills, experiences and opportunities in their lives, without it could be argued that they do not reach their full potential or growth.

Article 28 of the UNCRC clearly outlines that all children have the right to an education and that governments are responsible for making primary education available and free for all of those children (United Nations, 1989). Whilst it is clear the fundamental importance of education for all children and access to that it is also important to consider that there are barriers that prevent, detract and prevent this right from being accessible to all children around the world. For example, if a country has signed up and ratified themselves to the UNCRC that is one step further embedding, funding and resources required to make these opportunities a reality. It is clear that funding is an issue and continues to stop education being accessible to all. Many countries could fail to reach their national education targets for 2030 unless they receive an extra \$97 billion in funding (World Economic Forum, 2023). Funding is a key issue within countries that prevents and stops children from having access to education and without that aid they are unable to learn and develop.

A child's right to education is cemented in the legislation that activates it every day. The key pieces of legislation are Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR, 1948), The UN Convention of the

rights of a child, (UNCRC, 1989), International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR, 1966) and UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD, 2006). These key pieces of legislation all state and specify that children across the world have the right to an education. The legislation protects children and ensures that their needs must be addressed and met otherwise they have failed to comply with the law and will face the consequences. Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality (UDHR, Article 26). This links to Bronfenbrenner's theory about educating the whole child by having a holistic approach and this is how the legislation reflects the theory by also considering the child as whole person who is allowed to learn and develop and grow. The legislation should not be disregarded it underestimated as it ensures that those needed to be held to account are if the needs of the children are not met. It allows and prepares for the fact that they can be held accountable for not providing education.

Inclusion means to include all children and young people within an education system. Some countries still exclude learners and in doing so prevents them from gaining the education that they should have by right. Fewer than 10% of countries have laws that help ensure full inclusion in education. This could be due to poverty, disability, gender or displacement (UNESCO, 2020). These barriers prevent inclusivity and all children being able to access education to ultimately improve their lives and contribute to society. Communication is also integral to education, and a recent study has revealed that more than 40% of the global population does not provide education in a language they understand and this could rise to 90% in low to middle income countries (India Today, 2025). This statistic in itself raises questions about the equity of education across the globe and in particular those low to middle income countries that cannot fund, resource or embed education systems to ensure all children get access to an education.

Bangladesh is a densely populated South Asian country with a young population, rapid economic growth, and significant social and environmental challenges. Bangladesh was colonised by the British and later became part of British India under the Raj. This period was from 1757-1947 (Reference). British rule ended and since then Bangladesh has experienced many transitions of democratic and military rule. It is still a country recovering and discovering itself after colonialism. Bangladesh has a population of 173.56 million which provides a significant workforce, but this puts significant pressure on the social infrastructure such as jobs, schools and hospitals (World Bank, 2024). Key industries are textiles and garments and agriculture. Over 91% of the population are Muslim and identify as such. Bangladesh is considered a low to middle income country with a limited structure and resources to embed educational systems across the country. Bangladesh has many challenges to overcome when ensuring all children regardless get access to an education. Despite this, there is evidence to suggest a significant improvement in recent years in terms of children's access to education in Bangladesh and equity and inclusion of all children. Only 19 per cent of children aged 3–5 attend an early childhood

education programme (UNICEF, 2025). Despite this number being low it represents a steady increase over the last decade.

Bangladesh has a free education system from ages 6-10. (Reference) Bangladesh funds a state run and government funded education system. (Reference). Compared to Wales there are more children in education from the age of 3 until 18. There is a significantly higher number of children able to access education in Wales than Bangladesh. It could be argued that Bangladesh has made significant improvements in terms of girls and boys attending schools and staying in education and this in terms of improving year upon year. (UNICEF, 2022). In comparison Wales has children attending schools from the age of 3 and over 90% of all, boys and girls are in education primary, secondary of further education. (ONS, 2025). Around 468,400 children are recorded on the Schools Census in Wales (Welsh Government, 2024). Whilst this is it could be argued open to interpretation for example it does not include those not within education still of a school age it does provide a comparison with Bangladesh which in 2024 had 106.5% of children in education (CEIC Data, 2025). However, this figure is slightly skewed as it includes all ages and not just those children in the primary sector.

Significant barriers hinder the true realisation of inclusive education in Bangladesh, particularly at the primary level (Sarker and Unzum, 2023). This is apparent when you consider the barriers for learning and getting an education in Bangladesh. Some barriers are in terms of the government and funding available, resources, poverty and inequality, gender norms as and climate issues such as flooding. All of these are barriers to providing and getting children a fair opportunity at an education and ensuring that all children have the opportunity to stay in education until they are 18. There are several factors which hinder children's ability to access and stay within education in Bangladesh. Factors include economic pressures and child labour, climate disruption, resources and infrastructure, barriers for children with disabilities, drop-out rates linked to poverty, child marriage and child labour. There are significant barriers that will be explored in this essay which will include climate disruption and economic pressures and child labour. Both of these issues are extreme barriers to children having access to the education that they deserve and should have.

Climate disruption has had a major effect on the children being able to access education and learning for a variety of reasons. 35 million children in Bangladesh had their schooling disrupted by climate crises in 2024 (UNICEF, 2025). This means that children could not attend a school or college to learn due to climate disruption which included heatwaves, cyclones, and floods repeatedly interrupting learning and attendance. This barrier is becoming more of an issue year on year due to climate change and the effect it is having on the weather in that area. The lost learning time, repeated school closures, health risks continue to ensure deepening inequalities which are cracked open further by the devastating effects of the weather. Children in Bangladesh were among the worst affected globally, with some losing up to 8 weeks of learning due to climate hazards such as heatwaves, cyclones and floods

(UNICEF 2025). The impact that the severe weather has had on the children being able to attend school demonstrates the fragile environment they live in.

In addition, economic pressures and child labour are another serious issue which impacts children's education and their ability to attend school and get the education that is their right. Whilst it can be argued that Bangladesh as a successful and increasing enrolment programme to schools it is clear that children in particular girls drop out of education in secondary school due to child marriages and boys due to child labour. Either gender is limited by these choices and not able to undertake studies as part of their education. It should be argued that education is the right of every child not just the few and countries need to be more pro-active and independent in protecting this right and ensuring they have the infrastructure and resources available to ensure that every child has access to education and not just the few. Despite progress, child labour in Bangladesh persists... This achievement is strongly associated with an expansion in school enrolment... Despite progress, Bangladesh is not on track to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal target 8.7 of eradicating child labour by 2025 (UNICEF, 2025).

These barriers illustrate the complexities surrounding applying legislation across the above. The UNCRC provides the Articles 28 and 29 to ensure the right of education (UNICEF, 2025) to every child and to ensure the governing country provides that however it is difficult to implement across the world if every country is at different stage in terms of poverty, economics, infrastructure and resources. All of these factors heavily intertwined with each other to provide education for all children and when one element not there unfortunately there is limited education available for those children who need it. Despite the difficulties in Bangladesh there is much evidence to suggest there have been improvements in providing education to as many children as possible including the enrolment for primary school which is increasing year on year. Bangladesh has expanded access to education at an impressive rate since the 1990s (UNESCO, 2022). This is encouraging and further work is needed to continue this increased engagement. Bangladesh has made remarkable progress in improving access to education and achieving high levels of enrolment (World Bank, 2023).

Any motivation theory must take account of the fact that a person who is lacking food, safety, love, and esteem cannot be expected to pursue knowledge (Maslow, 1943). Maslow's theory of hierarchy needs clearly shows how the very basic needs must be met before any further learning or engagement can take place. Those basic needs of food, water, and security if they are not met then they cannot go onto the next level which in this instance would be getting ready to learn if they have experienced trauma due to climate issues, poverty or child labour. The environment is not a static backdrop but a set of nested structures, each inside the next (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Similar to Maslow's hierarchy of needs Bronfenbrenner's theory argues that there are many layers to this complex issue and that poverty, economic issues, child labour and marriages all play their part in children in Bangladesh

dropping out of secondary school later on in their school lives. These are complex issues that cannot be resolved easily but Bronfenbrenner's theory suggests that they are all interconnected and cumulative which means that they can improve if changes and approaches are changed to ensure that all children get to have an education that is meaningful and purposeful.

In conclusion it could be argued that the lack of good quality education is due to historic circumstance beyond the control of Bangladesh. When the British colonised and then eventually left, this country had to restart and redevelop itself without the infrastructures and investment from its previous era. Bangladesh's progress is both impressive and fragile foundations for equitable education are clearly in place, but systemic barriers continue to limit children's opportunities. Addressing these barriers is essential not only for improving learning outcomes, but for fulfilling the internationally recognised rights that underpin all children's development and learning. The issues facing children in Bangladesh are more than some other children in other countries would have to undertake however the progress and development of the education system, training for teachers and improvements in literacy and numeracy demonstrate that the processes are working and change can be made it just takes time and willingness to engage and change. Future generations should now be able to fully benefit from the incremental changes that have been made over the last forty years. However, further work still needs to continue around poverty, child labour child marriages and climate disruption.

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