



HISTORICISM IN ARCHITECTURAL EDUCATION IN BANGLADESH

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Abstract: Even in today's postcolonial conditions, architectural education in Bangladesh remains profoundly influenced by the western pedagogic framework introduced originally by Texas A&M University in 1961. Especially the history part of the undergraduate architectural curricula suffers heavily from a lack of contextual orientation as western scholarship heavily dominate the classroom lectures. It is against this backdrop; this paper aims to investigate the problems underlying the history/heritage (theory) stream of courses from the architectural curricula in Bangladesh. In order to comprehend the problems, the concept of *historicism* has been used, which provides a framework to assess *historicism* in terms of *contextuality*, *continuity* and *positionality*. Using this framework, a review of history/heritage courses of 12 architectural schools in Bangladesh has been conducted. It is found that modern western scholarly contents for history education are often inadequate for students' understanding of their own context (both past and present). It is also argued that there is a lack of continuity due to the segmentation of historical architectural evidences in geographic and temporal terms. Additionally, the uncritical delivery of scholarly materials in the history classroom is further exacerbated by the overwhelming occurrence of western authors' narratives on architectural events, theories or examples on, about or being in the nations of the west. Four propositions, including the need for being critical to the contents and processes of the western scholarship, and the need for incorporation of more locally produced reference materials (published by local authors) alongside the western ones have been put up.

Keywords: Historicism, contextuality, positionality, architecture, curriculum

Introduction

The West has dominated the political, economic, military, technological and the overall intellectual milieu through the past few centuries of colonization. In the present context of a decolonized world, influence of the West still remains continual and pervasive. This is also evident in today's academic models, language of instruction or foreign-trained academic staff of local universities, and scholastic publications by scholars from the former colonies. These, then indicate of the persisting influence by the institutions, models, philosophies and personnel from the West. Based on Altbach (1989)'s assertion that "In Asia, as in other parts of the Third World, the impact of Western academic models and institutions has been significant from the beginning and it remains important even in the contemporary period", this paper hence sets forth. It aims to explore the state of education in the architectural schools in Bangladesh considering architecture to be a discipline where knowledge and understanding depends to a large extent on the socio-cultural-political-economic context of

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a particular locality. With regard to the authors' affiliation with this education system, it has been realized that the undergraduate architectural education in Bangladesh suffers profoundly from a lack of 'historicism' – a lack of reference to contextuality and criticality toward historian/author's background and the historical contents delivered and taught. It is argued that undergraduate students, through their history education, should also be equally oriented to their local context to fully apprehend and hence appreciate the socio-cultural-political-economic realities behind the heritage of that particular locale which they understand best, and would probably begin their professional practice in. For enhancing students' context-responsiveness, it is proposed that in the academia priority must be given to the comprehensive deliverance of the contextually appropriate history alongside other histories, and amend present curricula accordingly.

Materials and Methods

In terms of methodology, a qualitative approach has been assumed for data collection and analysis, as the reliance mainly being on secondary data – the course curricula/syllabus used by 12 prominent (and older) architectural schools in Bangladesh. For consistency, both government and private schools were selected. Theoretical course materials from the history/heritage stream were delineated, reviewed and categorized, while curricula/syllabus from both public and private, and older and newer schools was considered. In rare occasions, and in order to clarify on reference materials used for lectures, short interviews of the lecturers of concerned history/heritage courses were conducted, which however, were not used for analysis. In terms of organization of this paper, the following section comprises a brief discussion on the historically constructed premise of a West-centric education system, while a comparison between the colonial and post-colonial sources of influence of the West on overall Asian higher education system is carried out. This, although loosely, outlines the conceptual lens of 'historicism' and helps outline a framework. A summary of findings from the review of the selected architectural curricula/syllabus in Bangladesh is presented later, while it is argued that the predominantly Western-biased architectural history education in Bangladesh suffers from a combined lack of *contextuality*, *continuity* and *positionality* – the constituents of 'historicism'. Recommendations to amend the present curricula – particularly the history/heritage courses draws conclusion to this paper.

Results and Discussion

Typically, the West in a myriad of ways has influenced the Asian academia. Issues such as the setting up of schools, teaching methodology, higher education of teaching staff, philosophies, medium of instruction, evaluation structure etc. are all in one way or another correlated with personnel, institutions or philosophies originated in or by the West. The faculty-based medieval *University of Paris Model* as the generic academic framework; the idea that research is a key element of higher education; or the concept of academic freedom – have remained the key source of influence for most universities in Third World. The colonial legacy of many transitioning nations through the ongoing connectedness with the former Colonial Masters can be seen as the primary reason behind this influence. In addition, the urge for modernization (i.e. to 'become' like the Master) by now independent

and autonomous nations has also played a key role in this inclination as they continued to borrow Western models and many forms of educational standardizations. Now to understand a particular context as of Bangladesh, such influence must also be viewed in relation with at least two structural periods – colonial and post-colonial (contemporary). This two-period study is needed for it is during the former Asia came to the initial contact with the West, while during the latter the influence continued to persist. In doing this however, the work of Altbach (1989) work on Asia (focusing on British colonial rule and Indian subcontinent at large) has again been referred to, and summarize in at Table 1.

Table 1: Colonial and contemporary times compared in terms of impact on higher education by the West (Altbach, 1989)

Impact sector	Colonial Period	Contemporary Period
Academic system	No active promotion of the cause for establishing large academic systems by colonial authorities; they only attempted to control and shape local initiatives as required	American models have been particularly attractive for being the largest, successful and significantly involved in mass higher education system. Continuous classroom assessment, creation of multidisciplinary centres to stimulate creative thinking and research, prioritization of applied research and service, linking university and industry etc. made this model widely adhered to
Academic model and structure	Academic structure based on British models; governance structure, organization of the academic profession, research system etc. were copied directly from the master. The best models (e.g. Cambridge or Oxford models) were not sent to colonies	Academic hierarchies, structure of curriculum, system of examination (and evaluation), and the very rhythm of academic life is Western in origin and feeling. Innovations in the West also have a direct relevance with rapidly growing Asia to adopt more to Western models
Language, Medium of instruction	Local language was undermined; entire academic structure – teaching and learning, textbooks, research, communication with colleagues overseas, was built on English. Western language was also required to flourish in commerce and trade	Pervasive and continual use of English as a scientific language; it also reflects a specific scientific culture as it holds a monopoly on the international distribution of scientific knowledge, databases and journals, international scientific meetings, and number of students studying in English-speaking nations

Impact sector	Colonial Period	Contemporary Period
Curricula and materials	Much of the curriculum did not have any relevance with the host society; again, ‘watered down’ curriculum was promoted – science or research was not stressed for; course contents were reduced significantly compared to British mainland’s	Influence of Western books (in original versions and translations), concepts, orientations and curricular approaches is particularly evident. Western academic journals remain standard of excellence and most respected source of knowledge where Asian academics publish frequently to have access to international knowledge network; these journals also set agenda for research. Western scientific products, technological inventions, equipments and textbooks are considered to be the best
Teaching and learning	Highly formal	Less hierarchical and more participatory teaching-learning structure (characteristic of American models)
Academic Staff	Domination of the expatriate academics and chair-holding professors; little scope for local academics to ascend in the hierarchy	Local staff educated abroad; impact of foreign training is found in continuing links, network with colleagues and orientation to Western scholarship. Foreign training also influences local universities upon staff’s return to home. Academic planning committees frequently have Western advisors. Expatriate professors and visiting Western researchers is frequent
Academic freedom	Limited academic freedom and strict control over staffs and students; concern about the loyalty of universities and its graduates and students. Efforts put in to ensure loyalty and weed out ‘undesirable’ elements	Frequently constrained and intervened by local political authorities, who are often worried about the loyalty of the academic community

Understanding historicism: One of the key meanings of ‘historicism’ implies the “importance of specific historical contexts to the interpretation of cultural texts and practices” (Gregory, 2009). In literary studies, historicism refers to that particular approach to literature which sets it *in the context of the ideas, conventions and attitudes of the period in which it was written*. It points out to *the social and intellectual climate within which every writer has to work, and which his writing reflects in some degree, is subject to change* (Palmer 2006). For Arnold (2010), *historicism is defined as the theory and practice which privileges historical explanations on the grounds that ideas, values and practices are discrete products of particular cultures rather than trans-historical manifestation of essential, universal features of human identity and society*. Thus the concept of

historicism can be seen as a critique to any sort of absolutism about value and knowledge, and as a conception that rejects the positivist ideas about the past and universalization or generalization of any sort. 'Historicism' hence undermines *objective historical knowledge* since *all human endeavours are historically contingent (while) any historian's account of the past must reflect a particular cultural perspective*. In addition, historicism's reliance of the ideas of *endless varieties of cultures* and relativism, there is also the assumption that *all historical knowledge is relational knowledge, and can only be formulated with reference to the position of the observer* (Arnold, 2010). As notions such as closed systems, totalities and universalities are frequently called into question, historicism continues to acknowledge differences between and within cultures (Arnold, 2010). It hence remains interested in all marginal or minority culture – usually outside the realm of elitist account of history. As for Michael Foucault, understating of an historical phenomenon requires the examination of the *margins and peripheries of situations* rather looking at and take for granted *power's description itself* (Gregory 2009). In short, historicism remains critical of any sort of determinism and opts for a more open-ended view of human history. In contemporary social enquiry, historicism stresses for the essentialness of *historical context and historical specificity* (Gregory 2009).

From above definitions, four aspects of historicism become evident. First, with its reference to specific timelines in which events and phenomena tend to occur, a clear suggestion of history is noted. History in architectural curricula is ubiquitous, covering at once the areas of design theory, technology, materials, planning etc. History is a subject that draws lessons from the past, provides the student a range of experience that enriches the student's mind and gives confidence to tackle problems of their own time (Howarth 1957). Ideas are fundamental to architecture and the sources behind and possible constituents of those ideas remain elusive; history provides an essential source to inspire such ideas. *History and architecture share a common idiographic foundation for which history remains an essential part of architectural curriculum*. The laws of architecture are made each time architecture is created, as these laws are constantly re-defined based on individual, particular and unique occurrences. Whatever project is studied – be it un-built and built, essentially in an historical fashion. As soon as a project is completed, it becomes history (Weiner 2005). Professionals or organizations targeting particular individuals or communities may design a building or the overall settlement. Yet all these components of the built environment are social objects since the society remains party to their construction, maintenance, use and environmental effects. History reveals the relation between architecture and society – hence the politics, economics and religion that shape the society. Architecture in its many scales is studied as the history of a certain society and hence, (i) in terms of its tangible and non-tangible values for its particular user, (ii) in terms of its artistic and technical/technological significance, and (iii) in terms of a socio-political objects (Crook 1984). History remains the *supportive ground* of the course of events in which the present is rooted and keep its cultural relevance ongoing (Stara 2010).

Second, history implies continuity – cross-referring to things in the 'past' to facilitate the understanding of the *present*. Architecture shapes and is shaped by the particular realities of a place, and of a particular time in the context of a particular cultural condition. For architecture to be considered a response to such conditions and aspirations, it needs to be grounded *in the continuity of place and shared identity* hence in ongoing history. Because of culture's very nature, understanding culture demands its historical understanding (Stara,

2010). Our ongoing present constantly asks for new relationships with both near and distant past, and present problems demand for historical research. For example, Rem Koolhaas (2002)'s *Africa Comes First*, Ananya Roy (2011)'s *Subaltern Urbanism* or Asef Bayat (2002)'s *Silent encroachment of the ordinary* and similar literature by local scholars could provide much needed insights for both students and lecturers to help grasp the contemporary forms of urbanism in Bangladesh and its spatio-physical transformation. These could be done in terms of styles, values, ideas and practices to guide contemporary ideas and debates that continue to fuel future works of architecture. Beginning in the 19th century, these have been missing particularly from the objectively driven, and ahistorical and acultural definitions of nature, reason and rationality promoted by modernist scholars of architecture (Kahane, 1996). History highlight the ways which show how space used to matter in the past and still matter in the present day focusing on the physical properties (e.g. volume, material, details, technique etc.). Architectural history implies more that the study of histories of buildings, landscapes or cities – particularly considering the flexible and shifting boundaries of the discipline due to shifts and changes in a range of intellectual and cultural forces. Modernity, which began after European enlightenment, then can be criticized for being reductive – for analysing, conceptualizing and practicing architecture in absolute disconnection with the history of a place.

Third, the study of history must maintain reference to context. Pertaining to a particular context, questions of labour, finance, tenure, material culture and everyday use of buildings – all demand for a rethinking of traditional disciplinary boundaries (Harris, 2011). History in essence is read in lieu with a certain locale in the acts of a certain society during a particular timeline, against which events or phenomena must be understood. Events and phenomenon impart their true meaning only when assessed against the particular social, cultural, political and/or economic realities of particular geographic locations at particular times. In this, differences between cultures are acknowledged, while multidisciplinary and accommodation of others' perspectives become necessary. *Architecture is palpable history, culture in three dimensions. It cannot be created in vacuo*. It is a combination of structural techniques, aesthetic preference and social values – particular to a certain locality. *History adds a fourth dimension to the three dimensional language of architecture* (Crook, 1984).

Fourth and finally, history, although essential, remains subject to the interpretation of the author (Arnold, 2002). It is not uncommon for authors to be selective of facts and factual arrangements, and setting priorities depending on his/her background, intensions and perspectives. For example, feminist Joan Scott asserts that *traditional history effaces the historical particularity and specificity of all human subjects by figuring the elite (white male) as a universal representative for the diverse populations of a culture* (Arnold, 2010). In Raymond Williams' words, a given society comprises of *dominant, emergent and residual cultural tendencies* (as in Kohane, 1996). Thus, due to the historian's (and often the elite patron's) cultural superiority, the dominant evidences of architecture could assume the *mainstream* label while the other ideas and practices being seen as *residual*. Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978), criticizes both 19th and 20th century Western-borne scholarships for being imperialist, hierarchical and an instrument for maintaining a post-colonial global order. The dominant architectural culture coming out of this hence comprise of reductive theories (Kohane, 1996). These we have seen for example with the modernist focus on Cartesian Space defined by grids and axes, while discarding ornamentation in the name of decoration etc.

This asymmetrical representation of architectural history has been mentioned in Pyla (1999)'s work on an influential undergraduate textbook – *A History of Architecture*, where the author (Spiro Kostof) admits that in the depiction of architectural history “non-western traditions have always held a secondary place” compared to the western. Yet, Kostof himself becomes guilty of an ahistorical analysis of buildings in the same book. On another occasion, Kostof uses objectively decided western architectural standards (formal and stylistic as in Renaissance) as a yardstick for measuring the architectural quality of non-western buildings disregarding their subjective (religious, spiritual, socio-political etc.) dimensions (Pyla, 1999). He also overlooks subtle (but significant) cultural differences that are incommensurable; architecture is often analysed in reference to certain cultures and considering them as being static. In general, this important textbook suffers from being too generous toward western superiority over eastern; it does not highlight the need for a broader and deeper exploration of the others' history. Furthermore, only the most famous monuments are touched upon, while leaving vernacular examples grossly neglected. Similar has been echoed in a more recent book by Ching *et al.* (2011). The many definitions these books produce appear to be indisputable and de-historicized – failing to provide an unprejudiced framework for understanding different interpretations and meanings associated with architecture particularly from non-western world (Pyla, 1999). Lu (2011)'s work is also premised on the criticism of the “canonical architectural historiography that identifies the West as the sole yardstick to measure the beginning and end, success and failure, of modernism”. Modernism in the third world, she asserts, *took trajectories radically different from those in the developed societies during the same period* (Lu, 2011).

Similar is found in Baydar and Nalbantoglu (1998)'s critique of Sir Banister Fletcher's *History of Architecture* – the most read book on global architecture to date. In its earlier editions (until 4th), architectural examples were categorized according to rather discriminatorily *Historical Styles* and *The Non-Historical Styles* referring to Western (read *colonial*) and non-Western (read *colonized*) examples respectively. *These non-historical styles* Sir Fletcher claims, *can scarcely be as interesting from an architect's point of view as those of Europe, which have progressed by the successive solution of construction problems, resolutely met and overcome; for in the East decorative schemes seem generally to have outweighed all other considerations* (Baydar and Nalbantoglu, 1998). Although he realizes the incompleteness of Western examples he uses and hence includes the non-western examples in his *History of Architecture*, he yet does not intend to designate them as ARCHITECTURE *per se* to uphold the superiority of the colonial masters. To his rational mind, *beauty becomes unacceptable (and even 'bizarre!') when it cannot be ordered by reason only* (Baydar and Nalbantoglu, 1998). Although more inclusionary titles are used in the later editions, this objectively driven, and only form- and style-focused analytical framework optimized for investigating Western architecture remains unchanged. Fletcher's positionality hence upsets the continuity of knowledge and questions his normative use of western architectural standards for establishing order and judging a general architectural history. His rather crude and almost arrogant categorization of history also demonstrates a subjective position he proclaims (Baydar and Nalbantoglu, 1998).

History, context and authorship in the architectural curricula of Bangladesh On the basis of the above framework, six (06) comparative tables have been constructed. Focusing mainly on the courses which touch upon issues related to both present and past history,

these tables categorize and summarize courses according to terms/semesters wise courses, covered subject area, covered timelines by courses, geographic focus of courses, authors' list and authors' comparison. Trends appearing in these tables are analysed in the following section to identify problems related to historicism. The names of the reviewed architectural schools are coded as: Stamford University (1); North South University (2); BRAC University (3); State University of Bangladesh (4); Shahjalal University of Science and Technology (5); University of Asia Pacific (6); Bangladesh University (7); American International University Bangladesh (8); BUET (9); CUET (10); Khulna University (11); Ahsanullah University of Science and Technology (12).

History education in relation to contextuality, continuity and positionality : Overall, most of the present architectural curricula/syllabus in Bangladesh can be criticized for falling short in terms of historicity. Largely, their western-centricity becomes apparent although a few newer amongst the schools demonstrate signs of shift in their curricula compared with the modernist BUET-Model founded essentially in the spirit of the then American Architectural education, and with support from Texas A&M University. This trend in teaching and learning history did not change much as Howarth (1957)'s decades-old account suggests. The ways these curricula are prepared for undergraduate classrooms do not contribute much to students' understanding of his/her *own* context – both present and past. Exaggerated attention, for example, to the *Greco-Roman* architectural traditions early in their studentship actually overshadows the philosophies and architectural accomplishments of *Buddhist* or *Sultani* periods in Bengal. In terms of delivery, what was happening in other parts of the world at a particular period of time or what scholars from other geographic origins express about the same historical phenomenon hence is seldom taken into account. So as the lecturer refers to the 'Dark Age' in European history and uncritically promotes it as 'the' only history available to articulate that particular age, the students largely fail to notice that this age actually coincides with, for example, the most glorious times in Middle Eastern architectural history, or with the history of socio-architectural brilliance of a *Sultanate* Bengal.

The student often gets baffled about his/her contemporary *way of life*, (borrowed from Lewis Wirth (1938)'s *Urbanism as a way of life* developed in the context of 20th C mass urbanization in US cities) since a large number of the offered courses fails to articulate anything that suggest what urbanism actually means in his/her particular context of Bangladesh (Table 2).

Table 2: Semester/term-wise urban history and theory courses as taught

Year-Term	Theory courses on history/heritage/theory as taught
1-1	- History of architecture: ancient period (3,6,7,5,8,9,10,11), Art & architecture I (5,8,9), Architectural heritage I (11), History of art & architecture-I (3), Introduction to architecture (3), Architecture of ancient civilization (10) - Bengal history, society & culture (3,4)
1-2	- Art & architecture II (5,8,9), Art & architecture-Early period (3,4,5,6,8,9,7,11), History of art & architecture II (3), Architectural heritage

Year-Term	Theory courses on history/heritage/theory as taught
	II (11), History of architecture: Europe (6,7) - Society & architecture of Bengal (8) - Society & development (3)
2-1	- Art & architecture III (5,8,9), History of art & architecture III (3), History of architecture: ancient period (8,9,12,1,2,5,4,3), Architectural heritage I (1,2) - Basic planning I (8,9,11,12) - Art & architecture-Indian (4), History of architecture: Indian Buddhist & Hindu (6,7) - Introduction to urban design & environmental planning (6,7) - History of Western world (10)
2-2	- History of architecture: Indian Muslim period (6,7,10,1,2,11,3,8,9), Architecture of Indian sub continent (10) - Art & architecture IV (5,8,9), History of art & architecture IV (3), Art & architecture-Europe (4), Architectural heritage II (1,2,11) - Physical Planning II (12) - Urbanism (3)
3-1	- Art & architecture-Modern (4), History of architecture-Modern (6,12,1,11,3,4,5,8,9); Modern architecture (1,11), History of art & architecture V (3) - Art & architecture V-Muslim period (5), Architectural heritage-Indian (2) - Urban design (3,9) - Architecture of Bengal (10) - Tropical architecture (3) - Theory & practices of planning (8)
3-2	- Art & architecture VI (5), Contemporary architecture (1,11), History of architecture-Contemporary (6, 7, 4) - Art & architecture-contemporary South and South-east Asia (4) - Architecture of modern period (10,12, 5) - Urban design: space & form (6,7, 8, 9,10) - Urban anthropology (8, 9,10) - History of Bengal Art & architecture (3, 2), Architectural heritage-Bengal (2) - Architecture & society (8, 9) - Building heritage & conservation (2)
4-1	- Urban design (1, 7, 9, 10,11) - Housing (7,10,12); Housing & human settlements: policy & planning (2) - Society & Architecture of Bengal (5, 6), Architecture of Bengal-I (11) - Art & architecture – modern architecture (8,9) - Architecture & conservation (3) - Bangladesh studies (1), Urbanism & local context (2) - Basic planning (10,11)

Year-Term	Theory courses on history/heritage/theory as taught
4-2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Housing (5,4,1,8,9,11,3), Housing & development (3), Human settlements (6,4,3,2) - Human geography & development (4), The city in development (3), Geography, settlement & development (2), Urban anthropology (1) - Architectural conservation (1,8,9,10) - Architecture of Bengal-II (1,11) - Art & architecture-modern art & architecture (8,9)
5-1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Contemporary architectural theory (8,9)
5-2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Architecture of contemporary world (10) - Social & urban anthropology (4)

Considering the *present* as an ongoing episode of history, today's urban-biased global developments in relation with rapid urbanization, very few classroom deliveries (apart from two) actually talk about the way in which the student can situate him/her-self within this milieu, formulate design ideas, and prepare accordingly. As Table 2 suggests, only two schools actually offer courses about the society and architecture of Bengal (and Bangladesh) in the first year. For a typical undergraduate student in his/her formative years raised in the context of Bangladesh, apprehension of the exact nature of urbanization he/she is part of becomes quite difficult depending on what he/she learns from the classroom deliveries prepared primarily on Western experiences and ideologies. With the predomination of contents from and on Euro-American instances (Table 3), and a lack of discussion on comparable cases, for example from Latin America and Africa, a partial and myopic account of history is only delivered.

Table 3: Comparison between topics on history/heritage according to timeline

Topics on history & heritage	Timelines covered by history/heritage courses
Contemporary history (Post <i>World War II</i> decades - Present times)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Housing (1, 4, 5, 8, 9,11), Housing (7,10,12), Housing & human settlements: policy & planning (2), Housing & development (3), Human settlements (6) - Urban design (3,9), Urban design (1,7, 9,10,11), Urban design: space & form (6,7,8, 9, 10), Theory & practices of planning (8) - Art & architecture-VI (5), Contemporary architecture (1, 11), Architecture of contemporary world (10), History of architecture-Contemporary (6, 7), Contemporary design precedents & analysis (2), Contemporary architectural theory (8, 9) - Art & architecture-contemporary South, South-east Asia (4), Tropical architecture (3), Design for tropical vernacular (2), Urbanism & local context (2), Urbanism (3) - Architectural conservation (1, 8, 9, 10), Architecture & conservation (3)

Topics on history & heritage	Timelines covered by history/heritage courses
<p>Modern history (Industrial revolution in Europe - <i>World War II</i>)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Art & architecture-modern art & architecture (8, 9), Art & architecture-Modern (4), Art & architecture-V (5, 8, 9), History of art & architecture-V (3), History of architecture-modern (6,12), Modern architecture (1, 11), Architecture of modern period (10, 12) - Urban anthropology (1, 8, 9,10), Social & urban anthropology (4), Architecture & society (8, 9), Society & development (3), Human geography & development (4), The city in development (3), Geography, settlement & development (2) - Introduction to urban design & environmental planning (6, 7), Basic planning-I (8, 9, 11, 12), Physical Planning- II (12), Basic planning (10, 11)
<p>Middle-age history (Roman Period to industrial revolution in Europe)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - History of art & architecture-II (3), History of architecture: Europe (6, 7), Art & architecture-II (5, 8, 9), Art & architecture-III (5, 8, 9), History of art & architecture-III (3), Architectural heritage-I (1, 2), History of Western world (10), Art & architecture -Europe (4), Art & architecture-IV (5, 8, 9), History of art & architecture-IV (3), Architectural heritage-II (1, 2,11) - Society & architecture of Bengal (8), Bengal history, society & culture (4,3), Architecture of Bengal-II (1, 11), Architecture of Bengal (10), Society & Architecture of Bengal (5,6), Architectural heritage-Bengal (2), Bangladesh studies (1), History of Bengal Art & architecture (3) - History of architecture: Indian Muslim period (6, 7)
<p>Ancient history (Egyptian, Mesopotamian, Assyrian, Greek, Roman, Hindu, Buddhist etc.)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - History of architecture: ancient period (6, 7, 12), Art & architecture - Early period (4), Architecture of ancient civilization (10), Art & architecture-I (5, 8, 9), History of art & architecture-I (3), Architectural heritage-I (11), Art History(10) - History of architecture: Indian Buddhist & Hindu period (6, 7), Architectural heritage-Indian (2), Art & architecture - Indian (4), History of Architecture: subcontinent tradition (10), Architecture of Indian sub-continent (10)

It hence comes to no surprise that in the latter years of studentship, successive courses continue to offer even more foreign architectural history and planning theories, leaving only a handful of those offering materials to understand the same against local socio-economic-political context. Indeed, architecture produced by the ordinary (vernacular, rural, traditional or informal) is not too frequently elaborated topics in the undergraduate classroom (see Tables 2-4). From authors' own experience as academics, and also from the interviews taken from lecturers of other schools, it can be affirmed that there is also a serious deficiency of contextual knowledge pertaining mainly to the urban experiences in Bangladesh – both in terms of architectural (and planning) history. Indeed, statistical data remain plenty that cover

various facets of urbanization in Bangladesh, yet a clear scarcity of theorization of this particular nature of urbanism is what leads to the persisting ‘poverty of conceptualization’ in, and bafflement of the academia. There is indeed a need to overcome this epistemic dependency, i.e. the need confronting the “limits of theorizing and thinking, that which made the world unthinkable beyond European (later North Atlantic) epistemology” (Roy, 2011). Prominent local research organizations (such as *Centre for Urban Studies*) also fail to provide any theoretical orientation on urbanism although having owned ample data. The latter hence has generally failed to produce any such reference point theoretically (with some very little exceptions such as Ghafur (2010)’s work for future architects to help situate him/herself in a position that facilitate his/her research or professional practice.

A disrupted continuity can also be noticed in the history education of these schools. It is not hard to find that history/heritage courses are commonly taught in a disconnected and segregated manner. Most schools of architecture fail to teach history in a simultaneously ‘global’ manner in which history of architecture would be delivered according to a timeline – not in a manner where vague and disjunctive categorizations such as *Indian Architecture* or *Roman Architecture* (as in Sir Fletcher’s book) point to architecture’s geographical ‘otherness’ and a disconnection from global forces. Such views do not adequately allow students to grasp the enormous varieties that qualify architecture produced all across India, for example, during the past five millennia. It also raises political questions regarding the *geographic* extent of India, and whether or not to include, for example, the Architecture produced in Bengal in the study of *Indian Architecture*. One becomes sceptical about the ‘authenticity’ of Indian architecture, particularly considering the fact that the so called ‘Indian architecture’ has been systematically influenced by successive waves of colonization (most prominent would be the Mughals and the English) and their building practices. Acceptance of this superficial homogenization and classroom deliveries hence impede students to critically assess such varieties and acknowledge the global/external forces that shape the particular architectural practice and products of a certain locale. Additionally, as Table 4 shows, despite having a broad geographic coverage, most curricula leave out the important architectural/planning histories of Africa (except for Egyptian), Latin America, and East and South-East Asia – which are comparable to the context of Bangladesh in numerous terms including, but not limited to both past and present forms of urbanization, and for having a similar Colonial past. This lack of continuity hence hinders students from building insights about a larger socio-political-economic-cultural context for architecture to be understood.

Teaching staffs’ often uncritical and ‘taken-for-granted’ delivery of history is further exacerbated by the overwhelming occurrence of Anglophone authors (Table 5) describing architectural events, theories or examples on, about or being in the nations of the West (chief amongst them being the pre-*WWII* history of urban Europe and post-*WWII* history of urban US).

Table 4: History courses with reference to different geographic areas

Geographic area focused	Course titles
Asia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - History of architecture: Indian Buddhist & Hindu period (6, 7), Architectural heritage-Indian (2), Art & architecture - Indian (4), History of Architecture: subcontinent tradition (10), Architecture of Indian sub-continent (10) - Society & architecture of Bengal (8), Bengal history, society & culture (4,3), Architecture of Bengal-II (1,11), Architecture of Bengal (10), Society & Architecture of Bengal (5,6), Architectural heritage-Bengal (2), Bangladesh studies (1), History of Bengal Art & architecture (3) - History of architecture: ancient period (6, 7, 12), Art & architecture - Early period (4), Architecture of ancient civilization (10), Art & architecture-I (5, 8, 9), Architectural heritage-I (11) - Art & architecture-contemporary South, South-east Asia (4), Tropical architecture (3), Design for tropical vernacular (2) - Housing (1, 4, 5, 8, 9,11), Housing (7,10,12), Housing & human settlements: policy & planning (2), Housing & development (3), Human settlements (6) - History of architecture: Indian Muslim period (6,7)
Europe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - History of architecture: ancient period (6, 7, 12), Art & architecture - Early period (4), Architecture of ancient civilization (10), Art & architecture-I (5, 8, 9), History of art & architecture-I (3), Architectural heritage-I (11), Art History(10) - Art & architecture-modern art & architecture (8, 9), Art & architecture-Modern (4. 8. 9), Art & architecture-V (5, 8, 9), History of art & architecture-V (3), History of architecture-modern (6, 12), Modern architecture (1, 11), Architecture of modern period (10, 12) - History of art & architecture-II (3), History of architecture: Europe (6, 7), Art & architecture-II (5, 8, 9), Art & architecture-III (5,8,9), History of art & architecture-III (3), Architectural heritage-I(1,2), History of Western world (10), Art & architecture - Europe (4), Art & architecture-IV (5, 8, 9), History of art & architecture-IV (3), Architectural heritage-II (1, 2, 11)
United States	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Art & architecture-modern art & architecture (8, 9), Art & architecture-Modern (4), Art & architecture-V (5, 8, 9), History of art & architecture-V (3), History of architecture-modern (6, 12), Modern architecture (1, 11), Architecture of modern period (10, 12) - Art & architecture-VI (5), Contemporary architecture (1, 11), Architecture of contemporary world (10), History of architecture-Contemporary (6, 7), Contemporary design precedents & analysis (2), Contemporary architectural theory (8, 9) - Urban design (3,9), Urban design (1,7, 9,10,11), Urban design: space & form (6,7,8, 9, 10), Theory & practices of planning (8) - Housing (1, 4, 5, 8, 9,11), Housing (7,10,12), Housing & human settlements: policy & planning (2), Housing & development (3), Human settlements (6)
Africa/Latin America	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - History of architecture: ancient period (6, 7, 12), Architecture of ancient civilization (10), Art & architecture-I (5, 8, 9), History of art & architecture-I (3), Architectural heritage-I (11)

Table 5: Comparison between authors' origin whose books are used as references

Courses on history/heritage taught and a list of authorship	
History of architecture: Ancient period (3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11)	
History of architecture: ancient period (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 12)	Fletcher,1996; Fleming,1974; Raeburn, 1980;
Art & architecture - Early period (3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11)	Wittkower, 1971; Ching & Eckler,2006; Snyder & Catanese, 2012
Art & architecture: Europe (4)	
History of Western world (10)	
Introduction to architecture (3)	
History of architecture: Indian Buddhist & Hindu period (6,7)	Grover,1981; Thapar, 1990; Brown,1949; Tadgell,1994; Basham,1975; Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 2007.
History of architecture: Indian Muslim period (1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11)	
Architecture of Bengal-I (11)	Majumdar & Sarkar, 1943; Ray, 1994; Chakrabarti, 1992; Zakaria, 1984; Stein,1969;
Architecture of Bengal-II (1, 11)	Michell, 1984; Ahmad & Sanday, 1984;
Bengal history, society & culture (4, 3)	Ahmad, 1986; Hasan, 1979, 1983, 1989;
Society & architecture of Bengal (8)	Hasan, 2007;
Basic planning - I (8,9,11,12)	
Physical Planning - II (12)	Faludi, 1973; Misra & Achyutha, 1989;
Introduction to urban design & environmental planning (6,7)	Singh, 1993; Gallion & Eisner, 1975; Clair, 1969; Lévy, 1982; Ratcliffe 1974;
Theory & practices of planning (8)	
Urban design (3, 9)	Lynch, 1960a,1960b, 1995; Spreiregen, 1965;
Urban design: space & form (6, 7, 8,9, 10)	Paul, 1965; Skerweani; N. Cohen; R. Headman; E. G. Mapelli
Urbanism & local context (2)	D. Kelbaugh; K. McKullough
Urbanism (3)	
History of Architecture-Modern (1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 11, 12)	Jurgen, 1985; Zucker & Paul, 1944; Charles, 1973; Jencks, 1978, 1987; Ventury, 1977;
Contemporary architecture (1, 4, 6, 7, 11)	Kenneth, 1992; Taylor, Reweal & Peter, 2001; Akyüz, & Yılmaz, 2002; Curtis 1987, Chakrabarti, 1992;
Tropical architecture (3)	
Contemporary architectural theory (8, 9)	
Architecture of contemporary world (10)	
Housing (7, 10, 12)	Sharma, 2004, Correa, 1999, Hamid,1985;
Housing & human settlements: policy & planning (2)	Doshi, 1995; Alexander, Ishikawa & Silverstein, 1977; Alexander, 1979;
Human settlements (2, 3, 4, 6)	Strassmann, 1982; Turner and Fichter, 1972; Report, 1980; Veona, 1985
Urban anthropology (1, 8, 9, 10)	
Social & urban anthropology (4)	Hannerz, 1980; Basham, 1975
Architecture & society (8, 9)	Fox,1977; Leeds, 1994
Society & development (3)	

Their presence remains frequent in almost three-quarters of the entire reference material (Table 6) on local history and heritage as well.

Table 6: Course-wise list of reference materials compared.

Course	Western authors	Non-western authors
History of architecture: Ancient period (3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11)	Ching & Eckler, 2006; Snyder & Catanese, 2012;	
History of architecture: ancient period (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 12)	Brown,1949; Tadjell,1994; Basham,1975;	
Art & architecture - Early period (3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11)	Fletcher,1996; Fleming,1974; Moffett,	
Art & architecture: Europe (4)	Fazio & Wodehouse, 2003;	Grover, 1981; Thapar, 1990
History of Western world (10)	Pollio, 1914; Raeburn, 1980; Pevsner, 1942;	
History of architecture: Indian Buddhist & Hindu period (6,7)	Donat, 1966; Wittkower, 1971	
History of architecture: Indian Muslim period (1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11)		
Introduction to architecture (3)		
Architecture of Bengal-I (11)		Ahmad & Sanday, 1984; Ahmad, 1986;
Architecture of Bengal-II (1, 11)	Stein,1969; Michell, 1984	Hasan,1989; Hasan, 1983; Hasan, 2007; Hasan, 1979; Hasan, 1989;
Bengal history, society & culture (4, 3)		Majumdar & Sarkar, 1943; Ray, 1994; Chakrabarti, 1992; Zakaria, 1984
Society & architecture of Bengal (8)		
History of architecture-Modern (1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 11, 12)	Jurgen, 1985; Zucker & Paul, 1944; Charles, 1973;	
Contemporary architecture (1, 4, 6, 7, 11)	Jencks, 1978; Jencks, 1987; Ventury, 1977; Kenneth, 1992; Taylor, Reweal & Peter, 2001; Akyüz, & Yilmaz,	Zahiruddin at el. 1990; Bhatt & Seriver; (1990); Hassan,1995; Doshi & Alexander, 1966
Tropical architecture (3)		
Contemporary architectural theory (8, 9)		
Architecture of contemporary world (10)	2002; Curtis 1987	
Basic planning - I (8,9,11,12)	Mumford, 1945; Faludi, 1973	
Physical Planning - II (12)	Keeble, 1969; Ratcliffe 1974; Chapin, 1965; Anal 1990; Gallion & Eisner, 1975; Clair, 1969; Lévy, 1982	Singh, 1993
Introduction to urban design & environmental planning (6,7)		Misra & Achyutha, 1989
Theory & practices of planning (8)		

Course	Western authors	Non-western authors
Urban design (3, 9)	Spreiregen, 1965; Paul,	Hamid,1985
Urban design: space & form (6, 7, 8,9, 10)	1965; Lynch, 1960a, 1960b, 1995	
Urbanism & local context (2)		
Urbanism (3)		
Housing (7, 10, 12)	Alexander, Ishikawa & Silverstein, 1977;Alexander,	Sarma, 2004
Housing & human settlements: policy & planning (2)	1979; Strassmann, 1982;	Correa, 1999
Human settlements (2, 3, 4, 6)	Turner and Fichter, 1972; Report, 1980; Veona 1985	Doshi, 1995
Urban anthropology (1, 8, 9, 10)	Fox,1977 ; Leeds, 1994;	
Social & urban anthropology (4)	Basham, 1975; Hannerz,	
Architecture & society (8, 9)	1980	
Society & development (3)		

Although sometimes the local teachers (especially the senior Professors and subject experts from older schools) compensate for such historical contents by using their personal experiences and interpretations, most classrooms (especially from the newer schools) suffer from the deficiency of any available standard scholarly material. Thus with almost the entire range of authorship belonging to the West, all that a student or lecturer gets to learn from a classroom is a certain version of history of architecture and urbanization through the narrative of a certain individual originating in a certain geographic location. These have already been found in the cases of prominent architectural historians such as Sir Fletcher and Spiro Kostof.

Conclusion

What, then, should be the 'ideal' blend of historical knowledge for today's architectural curriculum in Bangladesh? Considering that architects need to be 'market-ready' and that is in complete acceptance that *regionalism* must be accompanied by *universalism* (similar is voiced by H U Khan (1987)'s view of the architectural education in developing countries), there are ample scopes as well to amend the existing course curricula. Especially in today's globalized world, it is also true that a total rejection of Western ideas and experiences are not expected to benefit the rejectionists (by Muslim elites in India in late 18th and early 19th centuries or by the Chinese during the reform era), and globally there has been an intensification of a desire *to actively reconnect with culture and heritage without having to completely forsake the benefits of colonial education* (Gupta, 2006). Examples remain plenty where various adaptations took place by tailoring and customizing Western academic models to accommodate indigenous realities, needs and practices. In India, British-based academic system has not been altered but modified; in Malaysia, ethnic requirements prompted the change in the medium of instruction (Altbach, 1989). Or, in the whole of Latin America an overall reform to the architectural curricula took place prompted by a need to revoke national identity, and hence incorporate country- and region-specific social, artistic and architectural history (Torre, 2002).

Additionally, writing history is political, for not only because it is shaped by politics but also since the *dissemination of new histories is political action with historical consequences* (Arnold, 2010). Historicism views history as something that is politically created and articulated accordingly. It then is only natural that a Western historian writing a piece of architectural history of the Indian subcontinent during British rules would uphold the political ideologies of his own regime by articulating a personal version of history. Bunnell and Maringanti (2010)'s work highlights the inclination and 'personal' politics of the author in terms of his/her "positionality, habitus, body and subjectivity". Therefore, in today's globalized world in which nations are constantly struggling to outline an architectural identity, a critical, comparative and connected view of architecture, supplemented by scholarly works of local authors could just help compensate the shortcomings and scarcities. Especially since the modernist western cultures often overlooked the *residual* regional evidences of architecture – particularly in regions that they colonized (Kohane, 1996), in the post-Colonial Bangladesh, a previously residual culture of *Bengal* – i.e. the native elements of architecture now must be taught in a balanced combination with the dominant modernist, i.e. western contents. Inquiry into the former is necessary since students' knowledge of their own context provides the best starting point in their understanding of the world they are going to build one day (Torre, 2002; Ara *et al.*, 2011). Historicism in the architectural curricula thus should not only benefit the study of architecture, but also help better comprehend the true history of architecture of once-*residual* culture in present globalized milieu.

With all these in mind, the following four commendations draw an end to this paper. First, a classroom lecturer must assume a critical and comparative method for his/her teaching methodology considering the contents and authorship of the reference materials written during both colonial and *Neo-Colonial* milieu. By *Neo-Colonialism*, we mean to refer to our contemporary time when the ex-colonial powers and newly emerging superpowers continue to play a decisive role in the past colonized nations' cultures and economies through new instruments of indirect control (e.g. international monetary bodies, multinational corporations, educational and cultural interventions, NGOs etc.). It also signifies the inability of developing economies to develop an independent economic and political identity under the auspices of globalization (Ashcroft 2007). Second, scholarly materials written by local historians/architects must be used, promoted and encouraged alongside the western ones. Third, a critical history of local architecture as a powerful cultural tool hence could be used in comparison (and complementary) to the global. It in all likelihood should become an essential reference point for developing the world view for young students. Fourth, local history could be introduced early in the studentship – simultaneously or prior to the western examples to facilitate a comparative reading of architectural history. Such plurality in contemporary architectural curricula – in terms of its content, reference material, and authorship should enable the necessary construction of critical theories to inspire both students and young academics alike.

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