



Teachers' Beliefs and Practices of Implementing Secondary English Curriculum Reform in Bangladesh: A Phenomenological Study

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The study focuses on the implementation of communicative English language curriculum reform of four secondary school teachers in Bangladesh. The study is explorative, interpretive, and qualitative in nature. A phenomenology approach, under the qualitative method, was adopted to explore how teachers experience the phenomenon of communicative language teaching (CLT) based curriculum reform. The classroom practices of CLT curriculum were observed for one week for each teacher. Teachers' beliefs regarding the curriculum reform were explored through a semi-structured interview. The finding of the study revealed the existing mismatch between curriculum intention and implementation. The study reflected on the teachers' views of their being teachers and how it enacts with the curriculum. Teachers' prior beliefs regarding English teaching and learning and their practices are found to be barriers to implement the curriculum. Numerous factors such as assessment, lack of teacher training and lack of learners' ability contributed to the phenomenon. Nevertheless, the study shed light on the limited implementation of the CLT reform in the context of Bangladesh, since the cognitive and contextual realities of teachers' work were not taken into consideration while reforming the curriculum.

Keywords: teachers' belief; CLT, curriculum reform, ELT, Bangladesh

Introduction

The need to communicate effectively in the modern world is indisputable, and in this context, there is an ever-increasing demand among non-native speakers of English as it has come to be unanimously considered as an international language (Rahman, Singh, & Karim, 2018). As a result, curriculum change, as indicated by Fullan (2007), has been a common event in non-native English-speaking countries, mainly due to the curricular innovation based on communicative language teaching (CLT) in these Asian contexts (Nunan, 2003). However, studies that have analysed curriculum innovation outcomes have found that there is a

disaccord between the manner in which curriculum is implemented and what curriculum designers have in mind while developing the curriculum (Humphshire & Burns, 2015; Orafi & Borg, 2009; Rahman, Pandian, & Kaur, 2018). The classroom implementation of curriculum by teachers remains the key issue in the implementation of any curriculum (Borg, 2003; Fullan, 2007). Moreover, exploring teachers' beliefs in non-native English-speaking contexts is important where the curriculum has undergone reform (Orafi & Borg, 2009), since teachers in these contexts must adapt themselves to the new features of the curriculum and implement those through their classroom practices.

Teacher Cognition: Teachers' Belief and Practices

In his seminal work on language teachers' cognition, Borg (2003) identified teachers' cognition as a dynamic process that involves a wide range of issues associated with the life and work of a teacher. Teachers' cognition has several psychological constructions, such as belief, knowledge, attitude, perception, assumption, conception and principle (Borg, 2006, 2015). All aspects of teaching and learning in a language classroom are associated with these constructs. According to Borg (2015), these concepts of language teachers together with the aspects of teaching and learning are referred to as teachers' cognition. In the current study, the topic that has been investigated is teachers' belief in relation to their practices concerning implementation of curriculum reform.

Teachers' belief and classroom practices are closely associated. Borg (2006) suggests that teacher beliefs are what teachers know, believe and think. Consequently, teachers' beliefs have a direct implication on the manner in which curriculum is implemented through their practices in the classroom¹. However, contextual factors (e.g., curriculum reform) consciously or unconsciously impact the cognition of a teacher and work as mediating factors both inside and outside the classroom, which gives rise to variations in the cognition and practices or creates tension between teachers' cognition and classroom practices (Borg, 2015). Therefore, teachers' beliefs and practices are often found to be incongruent to each other (see Basturkmen, 2012) as well as to the directive of English.

In addition, Borg (2015) believed teachers' cognition should be studied in relation to specific aspects and issues of teacher cognition and English language teaching. In the present study, we intend to investigate teachers' beliefs and practices in relation to their implementation of the intended CLT-based curriculum reform in the context of secondary schools in Bangladesh. It bears particular significance, as Richards and Rodgers (2014) argue, that pedagogical practices are "subject to the constraints and needs of particular contexts and cultures of learning" (p. 107), and they call for additional research into and documentation about the local practices from underrepresented regions of the world.

Teachers' Beliefs and Practices in CLT Curriculum Reform Implementation

The complex nature of curriculum reform has been addressed in the works of many curriculum theorists who have viewed this phenomenon from multiple perspectives (see Fullan, 2007; Markee, 1997; Rogers, 2003). As stated earlier, the present study particularly intended to reveal the relationship between curricular reform and its classroom implementation, and to analyse how it has played out in the presence of factors that might hinder the curriculum in being implemented as proposed by the curriculum initiators. The issue, however, is not something that is novel in the field of curriculum studies and English language teaching. The reform in English language curriculum from the grammar-translation method (GTM) towards CLT has been the topic of study across various non-native English-speaking settings (e.g., Chapman, 1997; Lee, 2014; Mason & Payant, 2018; Moodie, 2016; Orafi & Borg, 2009; Rahman & Pandian, 2018a). In Japan, a similar phenomenon has been reported by Humphshire and Burns (2015). They have asserted their views against the curricular reform based on CLT and uncovered how it is impossible to adopt CLT-based curricular reform in

¹ For further explanation on curriculum reform, see Fullan (2007).

Japan. In Malaysia, Pandian (2002) reported that despite the introduction of CLT into the classroom, teachers went back to their old, practised methods of teaching and there was limited innovation. In Taiwan, Wang (2002) also identified a strong tension between the new ELT textbooks featuring CLT activities and the established practices of grammar-translation teaching. These studies highlighted the impediments for the teachers to implement new curriculum and issues in inculcating and practising its innovative practices (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1992).

The literature in curricular reform and/or educational innovation points to the disparity between curricular principles and teachers' beliefs as a major factor in the failure to implement new curriculum or bring changes. If the reform is not in line with the teachers' beliefs, it is less likely to be implemented in the classroom. Chang and Goswami (2011) have pointed out that teachers' existing beliefs impact the English classrooms and inhibit the implementation of CLT in Taiwanese schools. In their study, Orafi and Borg (2009) have pointed out that the factor of teacher belief has been a significant problem in respect of the limitation in curriculum implementation in Libya. In South Korea, Rabbidge (2017) explored how *initial assumptions* based on experience transform into tentative attitudes and then firmer beliefs about the use of language in the classroom, and how these have served as a brake in the implementation process of the government-recommended curriculum. As Breen, Hird, Milton, Oliver, and Thwaite (2001, p. 472) argue, "innovation in classroom practice from the adoption of a new technique or textbook to the implementation of a new curriculum has to be accommodated within the teacher's own framework of teaching principles." Orafi and Borg (2009) reported that contextual impediments such as large class size and students' inadequate ability to communicate do not allow teachers to implement the new curriculum. In China, Zhang and Liu (2014) have identified how the new methods, syllabus, assessments and study materials interfere with the existing cognitions and classroom practices of teachers. Teachers' interpretations, perceptions and beliefs shape and influence their decision-making concerning their choice of teaching techniques (Alwan, 2006). There is also evidence that teachers' interpretation and implementation of curriculum is influenced by many contextual factors including the implementation of change or reform (Borg, 2006).

English Language Education in Bangladesh

Bangladesh has one of the largest English-learning populations in the world (Hamid, 2010). The English language curriculum was changed from GTM to CLT in the mid-nineties by the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) (Chowdhury & Kabir, 2014; Rahman & Pandian, 2018a). Despite the measures taken, CLT curriculum could barely be implemented into practice owing to a range of contextual impediments (Nunan, 2003)—one of the most important factors being, as revealed in Rahman, Pandian, and Kaur (2018), teachers' not allowing the curriculum to be implemented. This eventually resulted in the plummeting of the standard of English language teaching and learning in the country at an alarming speed in recent years (Hamid & Baldauf, 2008, 2011; Rahman & Pandian, 2018b). Therefore, it is a timely need to look for ways to improve English teaching, as a secondary language, in Bangladesh. Problematizing the English language teachers' belief and practices regarding the changed curriculum, this study is going to contribute to the overall literature on and study of ELT and English language teacher development in the context of Bangladesh. Moreover, the findings of the study will contribute to the overall scholarship in teacher cognition research by reporting a new context that remains unexplored largely due to the absence of indigenously nurtured research expertise in ELT, as well as the lack of interest in conducting educational research on the part of researchers from abroad due to scarcity of funds in the country (Sultana, 2014).

The New English Curriculum

The broader scope of NCTB's CLT curriculum was an apparent withdrawal from its predecessor, a GTM-based curriculum, which did not focus on the functional and communicative aspect of language teaching and

learning, for example, speaking and listening². The new curriculum is organized around activities based on communicative principles (see Richards & Rodgers, 2014). The key difference between the teaching approach of the present CLT curriculum and that of the previous curriculum has been the emphasis on meaning over accuracy of the language production of the learners. According to the philosophy of teaching and learning, CLT is contrary to the repetitive drilling of the audio-lingual method (ALM) or the strict grammar rules of GTM. CLT focuses on meaningful communicative activities, both in oral and written forms, to promote communicative competence among the learners (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011). Moreover, the use of the target language has also been encouraged in the curriculum (Richards & Rogers, 2014), which was not done in the earlier curriculum. A CLT classroom also advocates a shift in the centre of power from teachers to students by allowing them to interact and by providing ample opportunities to the students to be involved in pair or group work. By doing so, teachers naturally adopt the role of being a facilitator rather than being the centre force of a language classroom (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011). The main goal of this reform was to prepare students to be in a position to communicate in English fluently (Hamid & Baldauf, 2008). The philosophy behind this is that CLT gives the learners a good opportunity to speak the target language (Rahman & Pandian, 2018b).

The curriculum change generally is a top-down process in Bangladesh (see Fullan, 2007). Teachers do not usually have the ability to raise their voice and policymakers do not listen to them either (Rahman, Pandian, & Kaur, 2018). The other important way to execute curriculum change is to provide effective teacher training and professional development. During the process of change, the training provided to support teachers in the process of implementing the new curriculum is largely unresponsive and brings no changes in the practice of teachers (Karim, Mohamed, Ismail, & Rahman, 2018; Karim, Mohamed, & Rahman, 2017).

Rahman, Pandian, and Kaur (2018) investigated the CLT-based curriculum reform in the context of Bangladesh and found that the factors associated with teachers are the key barriers in the implementation of the new curriculum. In a different study of teachers' beliefs and practices of CLT, Rahman, Singh, and Pandian (2018) observed that CLT is not theoretically congruent to the instructional practices in the context, and there are many instances where teachers' beliefs and practices are divergent in nature. However, neither of the two studies has investigated the implementation of curriculum reform by English teachers from the perspective of teachers' cognition. Therefore, this study aims to address this paucity of research by investigating teachers' belief and practice of implementing secondary English curriculum reform in Bangladesh.

Methodology

The nature of research question should formulate the type of research design (Nunan, 1992). Research questions related to the curriculum and its change, development or implementation are suited to a qualitative inquiry (Janesick, 1994). Qualitative data enable us to understand a problem from the critical and in-depth perspective of the problem, which leads to a better understanding of the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2017). The research questions of this study are exploratory, interpretative and phenomenological; therefore, we approached them qualitatively. A phenomenological approach was adopted for the present study to explore how teachers experience the phenomenon (e.g., curriculum change) in their life (Creswell & Poth, 2017) through the following three questions that are directly related to teachers and curriculum implementation:

1. To what extent are the classroom practices of Bangladeshi secondary English teachers congruent to the CLT curriculum?
2. To what extent are the beliefs of Bangladeshi secondary English teachers congruent with the CLT curriculum?

² See Rahman et al. (2019) for a detailed historical account on the educational policy reform in Bangladesh.

3. What cognitive and contextual factors are responsible where teachers' practices and beliefs are not congruent with curriculum principles?

Context and Participants

We have collected the data from a high-performing school that has an overall pass rate of cent per cent. The CLT-based curriculum is practised in the school to enhance the communicative skills of the learners. The school has 30 English language teachers. Four senior English language teachers who teach at the elementary level were selected for the study. The demographic data regarding the participants of the study has been presented in Table 1. We selected these teachers based on a purposive sampling procedure (Creswell & Poth, 2017), keeping in mind that they need to have experience of over 20 years so that they can explain the process of introduction of the reform and the phenomenon in relation to their extensive experience of teaching under the old and new curricula. Teachers were also informed about the purpose of the study, how the findings of the study will be disseminated, what their rights were, their choice to withdraw from the study, how they will benefit from the study, the guarantee of anonymity and the confidentiality of the study, as indicated by Creswell and Poth (2017).

TABLE 1
Information about the Participants

Teacher's Name	Educational Qualification	Experience
Karim	MA in English Literature	21 Years
Rahim	MA in English Linguistics	25 Years
Kasim	MA in TESOL	22 Years
Bakar	MA in ELT	20 Year

Data Analysis

To collect data, we have administered two semi-structured interviews and semi-structured observations (see Creswell, 2005). We recorded the interviews, which were then transcribed and crosschecked by the participants—this is called member checking, a process that is used to establish validity and credibility in qualitative study (Creswell & Poth, 2017). In addition to semi-structured interviews, classroom practices of eight selected teachers were scrutinized through classroom observations for one week. Observing classes helped to check the veracity of the information furnished by the teachers in their interview and establish its link with what was actually reflected in their practice in the classroom. Field notes were taken during the observation of the classes. These notes described what the observer saw, experienced and thought during an observation (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2009). Accordingly, the duration of the lesson (30 min) was divided into four stages: (a) the start of the lesson, (b) the 10th min, (c) the 20th min and (d) the 30th minute. In document analysis, the curriculum and other documents such as lesson plans, materials and question papers for the secondary school certificate were analysed to show the discrepancies (if any) between the perceptions of individual teachers regarding the curriculum.

The research questions led the way for the collection and analysis of data. When all the observations and interviews were transcribed, these, along with the field notes, were coded and analysed for emerging themes. Findings from the different sources were validated through a triangulation process (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The transcripts were scanned repeatedly for recurring themes (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Once this was concluded, they were compared with the other types of data (classroom observation notes and field notes) to discover similarities. Observations were checked against the transcripts before any conclusions were drawn. Table 2 has a detailed information of the codes and themes of the study, in relation to the research questions.

TABLE 2
Themes and Codes of the Data Analysis

RQs	Themes	Codes
To what extent are the classroom practices of Bangladeshi secondary English teachers congruent to the curriculum?	Teachers' and students' role in the classroom; Communicative activities in the classroom; Use of English in the classroom	Teachers' talk; students' pair work/group work; instruction; translation of the text; use of Bengali; interaction between T-S and S-S
What are the beliefs of Bangladeshi secondary school teachers regarding the new aspects of the curriculum?	Teachers' and students' roles in the classroom; Communicative activities in the classroom; Use of English in the classroom; Understanding of curriculum; Impact of examinations	Student-centredness; facilitator; communicative activities; memorization; curriculum goals
What cognitive and contextual factors are responsible where teachers' practices and beliefs are not congruent with curriculum principles?	Established belief and practices; Impact of examinations; Teachers' professional development; Classroom reality	Assessment; examination-based; translation; teacher talk; training; teaching of grammar

Findings

As mentioned earlier, the fundamental principle of the new ELT curriculum by NCTB is to teach the communicative aspect of language to English language learners. Teachers, therefore, need to incorporate and adapt in their own belief and practices the major changes in the new curriculum, such as the use of English, communicative activities and the roles of teachers and students in the classroom.

Findings on Research Question 1

Our first research question aimed to find out the extent to which classroom practices of Bangladeshi secondary English teachers are congruent to the CLT curriculum implemented by NCTB as a curriculum reform. We have observed the same lesson from different teachers so that the practices of individual teachers could be distinguishable. Lesson 1 'Can You Live Alone' from the *English for Today* textbook was the material of observed classes.

Teachers' and students' roles in the classroom

Teacher-centeredness prevailed in the observations of secondary school classrooms. A clear lack of teacher-student (T-S) and student-student (S-S) interaction in the classrooms was evident. The lessons had no warm-up activities whereby teachers are supposed to ask some questions regarding the previous classes. The teachers' classroom instructions were dominated by lecture-type teaching, which was found to be a common characteristic during the whole class. Also, these instructions were given using Bengali. Three activities by teachers were prominent in the classroom: (a) reading from textbook and translating, (b) using the whiteboard to explain a topic and (c) asking close-ended questions. Students' activities were found to be merely passive. However, every now and then, they answered some close-ended questions and read aloud from the textbook contents. These are the indication of traditional teacher-centered classroom, where teacher's role is primary and active. On the other hand, students play a passive role in the classroom.

In Table 3, the classroom activities were explored through the observation protocol.

TABLE 3
Sample Classroom Activities by One of the Teachers

Time Lapse	Teachers Activities	Students Activities	Note
Opening-10 Minutes	Greeting (Walikum Assalam: Muslim greeting answer)	Greeting (Assalamu Walikum Maam: Muslim greeting)	In the five classroom observations, teachers and learners exchanged Muslim greeting, where students greeted first.
	Good morning, Students	Good morning, Teacher	In three classrooms, teachers greeted first in English.
	Calling names/specified the goal of the lesson.	Present, Sir/ Ma'am	Teachers called out students' names in their classroom. Two teachers, however, did not. Instead, a goal-oriented start was observed. They described the aim of the lesson.
	Asking for homework, e.g., Have you finished the homework? Any problem?	Yes. (in a chorus)	Five teachers asked about previous day's lesson and exercises in English but three teachers asked in Bengali. However, teachers did not check the homework.
	Reading from the textbook/Teaching from the blackboard	Students acted passively/Remained silent	All the teachers initiated their lessons from the book or blackboard and four teachers asked close-ended questions to learners. Learners were found to be passive anyway.
10-20 Minute	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Asking close-ended question * Go to page number... * Teaching from book and blackboard * Listening to students read aloud * Forming pairs to read the textbook together * Moving around the class and seeing students working * Translating text and questions to Bengali 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Passively listening to teachers and often answering close-ended questions * Reading in a pair * Occasionally asking for the meaning 	Teachers mostly remained as the prominent workforce in the classroom. Book- and blackboard-based teaching remained salient. Pairs were assigned by some teachers in the classrooms. No tasks were instructed to be performed other than reading the books aloud. The pair work is noted as an initiative to read the book aloud in the classroom.
20-30 Minute	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Teaching from the blackboard: making notes on the board to support explanation of a concept or topic * Asking close-ended questions based on the textbook * Correcting some of the responses of the students. * Explaining something in Bengali * Listening to students as they were reading aloud from the textbook * Giving written exercises and explaining on the exercises for homework. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Passively listening to teachers and often answering the close-ended questions * Receiving corrective feedback from the teachers on their responses, e.g., grammar and vocabulary choice * Reading in a pair * Occasionally asking teacher for the meaning * Doing written Exercises 	The classes were still teacher-centred. Mostly, students stayed as mere listeners. Occasionally, they spoke in Bengali to clarify on the teacher's explanations and answer questions in yes/no. However, no communicative work was witnessed in the classes. During the 30-minutes' time, it was very hard to manage the class and conduct communicative activities since most of the lessons needed more time to finish.

Communicative activities in the classroom

The classroom activities of the teachers were observed to find out what communicative activities are taking place in the classroom. We identified pair work and speaking and listening practices of the students as the key forms of communicative activities that take place in the classrooms. The teacher's book instructs the teacher to roam around the class, ask questions and assess students' answers, and join in and encourage their discussions in pairs. Students were not asked to work together; rather, teachers asked questions to selected individual students to reply. This phenomenon was detected in all the teachers' classrooms.

Use of English in the classroom

The activities in the textbook provided constant opportunities for English to be spoken, and in the observation, evidences of the extent to which these speaking scopes were exploited in the classroom were analysed. There were pair works where teachers could promote the English practice. However, no discussion of such kind took place. The teacher typically read out the passage from the book and translated it into Bengali. Students wrote down the Bengali translations in their course book. The predominant use of Bengali was evident in the classroom in many instances. There were some instances when teachers initiated English speaking, however, students could not be brought along to get involved in the process. Given the lack of pair work noted earlier in the classroom, the observational data from this study collectively indicates that the uptake of the communicative practices in the new English curriculum was very limited. Therefore, there is a clear disharmony between the practices recommended by the NCTB's English curriculum and what teachers were practising in the classroom.

Teachers' practices as noticed in the classroom observations are not in line with the curriculum directives. Three instructional aspects observed in the classroom- roles of teachers in the classroom, communicative activities in the classroom and use of English in the classroom were the key reforms that teachers were supposed to execute in the classroom. The findings suggest that teachers conducted their lessons in the traditional teacher-focused manner, with the students having a minimum role to play in the classroom. Although students are supposed to be involved in the group work and in conversations, there were hardly any such instances noticed. The teachers' lecture dominated the class time, and the use of Bangla was salient in the teachers' talk and interaction with students.

Findings on Research Question 2

Our second research question investigated the beliefs of Bangladeshi secondary school teachers regarding the new aspects of the curriculum. The following section presents the interview data collected from teachers about their beliefs regarding the new aspects of curriculum and the reform process.

Belief regarding the roles of teachers and students in the classroom

In the interview, teachers stated that the curriculum demands that classroom should be learner centred. They also understand that they are the ones who should initiate tasks in the classroom and act as the facilitator of activities in the classroom. Furthermore, the curriculum instructs that learners should be involved in meaningful collaborative work through the means of group work and paired work. As Rahim mentioned, "Classes should focus on being student-centred. Students should be involved in different tasks in groups or in pairs." However, the teachers have also explained that their own beliefs are largely contradictory to the views corroborated by the curriculum views. As Kasim stated, "My role in the classroom in accordance to the curriculum is that of a facilitator, however, in reality, I do everything." This is a phenomenon of the Bangladeshi classroom where teachers are historically treated as the storehouse of knowledge. As Bakar explained, "We are the centre of focus in the Bangladeshi classroom, and it is not only in the English classroom, but also in classrooms of other subjects."

Communicative activities in the classroom

The new curriculum emphasized communicative activities in the form of pair work and practising listening and speaking skills. Teachers were able to explain their viewpoints, such as Rahim explained, “NCTB promotes CLT, which is an integrated approach to language learning. It incorporates four skills of language learning. It allows learners to learn the functions of the language.” However, their belief regarding pair work is perfectly in line with their practices that have been reported earlier in the article, which are mostly wide ranging. For instance, Kasim believes, “Even though the pair work is meant to encourage the communicative activities, I will not advocate its use. Students will always use Bengali in the pair and as a consequence these pair works will lose their objectives.”

In contrast, Karim believes, “Pair work is a good way to increase communicative activities. In pair work students get used to conversation and, thus, they get used to speaking.” The time allocated for the pair work is hard to implement in a single-class time for a relatively big classroom, which also influenced teachers’ belief regarding the effectiveness of pair work in the classroom. Nevertheless, though the teachers are aware about the effectiveness of pair work, they felt that lack of student motivation and ability, and in addition the limited class time and enormous class size, do not always encourage them to conduct pair work in the classroom.

Use of English in the classroom

The native language of learners has a crucial role to play in the instruction of L2. “We use Bengali purposively for the benefit of students,” as held by Karim. Teachers mostly used native language for three purposes: instructing, explaining and translating. And this has to be done due to the deficient vocabulary of the learners in L2. There was some attempt here made by the teacher to encourage the students to speak English, but in real practice the only English spoken was by the teacher (and eventually he himself asked the question in Bengali). The delivery of teachers’ lessons was similarly characterized by the use of Bengali with minimal contributions in English by the students in response. According to Rahim, “They (students) want us to translate the meaning to Bengali. And they want us to explain the grammatical rules too in Bengali, so that they can understand it further.” Teachers’ beliefs regarding the proficiency of their students in English were a significant influence on their practices. Rahim explained that “I understand the curriculum instructs to use English inside the classroom; however, this idea is not practicable, because I know that the students are very weak in English.” It was realized from the interview that the perceived proficiency of students by the teachers has influenced their beliefs and practices in implementing the curriculum in a way that is contrary to what the curriculum postulates, namely encouraging the use of English in the classroom.

Clarity of new curriculum to the teachers

Curriculum clarity was an important aspect of our present study. To what extent the curriculum is clear to the participants was inquired. Whether they could articulate the major features of the old and new curricula, and point out the distinguishing factors would reveal the clarity. Teachers expressed their concern over their own ability to use English and apply it in communicative activities, especially, due to their poor understanding regarding pair work and other tasks that encourage use of English. As Bakar explained, “Teachers are not proficient in English, moreover, teachers are not clear what they need do in the classroom.” Karim addressed the issue of poor familiarization, “Teachers are not familiar with the critical aspects of the curriculum; moreover, there were no training sessions for the teachers to make them understand.” Other teachers have reinforced the need for further training sessions, focusing on teaching communicative aspects of the curriculum and teachers’ proficiency.

Findings on Research Question 3

The third research questions aimed to unearth what cognitive and contextual factors are responsible where teachers' practices and beliefs are not congruent with curriculum principles. From the interview and the classroom observation these issues were revealed.

CLT curriculum reform and established belief and practices of teaching

Teachers are really influenced by the existing belief that they have formed from the context. They believe teachers are the source of knowledge in the classroom and in actual practice play a likewise role while instructing. As Bakar said, "Our students are passive, we need to ask questions and sometimes need to answer them ourselves. Students often repeat after us." In the observation several such question answers were found to be held, where teachers have asked questions and students have answered. The image of a good teacher to them was one in which the teacher has the ultimate control over the class. As Karim articulated, "As a teacher you must have the supreme command on the class." Moreover, teachers' practices were also found to comply with teachers' beliefs. They have advocated the importance of exhaustive and methodical teaching of grammar which neither the curriculum aimed, nor is included in the lesson. These practices were perfectly in line with the previous GTM curriculum. However, to be commensurate with the new curriculum, teachers must adopt new behaviours, which focus on learner-centred classroom where communicative activities will be conducted.

Teachers' Quality and Professional Development

Fullan (2007) identified that the more the knowledge the teachers possess, the greater the chances of executing the curriculum into practice. In the observation, it was revealed that quality of teachers and teaching is not up to the standard that was needed to put into practice the curriculum reform. Teachers' slender ability of teaching CLT was frequently found to be a barrier, especially when communicating and instructing students in English. Teachers were found to use Bangla in most occasions in the classroom. Furthermore, teachers were not aware about the CLT method they were teaching through. As Kasim pointed out, "There were no training sessions on familiarization to the curriculum for the teachers to make them understand what was new in the curriculum." The present study has found that the same problem still persists. Even after all these years, professional support is a key issue for the English teachers in the context of Bangladesh. Moreover, the new curriculum made demands not only on teachers' pedagogical expertise, but also challenged their own communicative skill in English and teaching ability. Furthermore, the support they needed to draw level with the curriculum has also been found to be missing in the current state.

Washback effect of assessment on curricular reform implementation

Teachers have called attention to the mismatch between the curricular aim and objectives and its impact on their practices, which eventually gets reflected in their beliefs. According to Bakar, "Continuous assessment is something which is only written on paper. It has no practical implementation in the present context, if truth be told. It is not feasible since the only formula of assessment in practice is the final or public exams." It also impacts the practices of teachers. The assessment system of English at the secondary level in Bangladesh neglects two major skills of listening and speaking; however, they are included in the curriculum. According to Karim, "In the exam-based system that we practise, we teach what is needed for the exam." Therefore, the communicative practices, for example, pair work, are often neglected in the classroom. Presently, teachers have reached a cognitive state where they have started to believe that ultimately a teacher will be evaluated through the performance of the students which is again based on the assessment that aims at final or public exams. Therefore, they feel less encouraged to engage in classroom communicative activities and focus more on the exam-oriented contents that will help students to fare well and obtain good results in school-level competitive exams.

Classroom reality and curriculum implementation

Classroom situation such as students' ability and class size have contributed in the problem of implementing CLT curriculum. Students are the most important stakeholders when it comes to implementing a reform in the curriculum. In the interview, teachers repeatedly reported that the proficiency in English was below the standard and this deterred them from participation and engagement in the communicative activities. The backdrop of the lack of communicative activities in the classroom, as believed by the teachers, is this deficiency in the students' ability to communicate in the target language. Therefore, what they need is to practice speaking more and more in English. As Bakar explained:

CLT advocates classroom interaction, using the target language, group work and so on. It is important to understand the situation of the classroom. We have a large class size. We cannot accommodate everyone in a single class.... In most of the instances, these activities eventually end up with no discussion in the group, and even within the group, students use Bangla.

From the observation of the classroom pattern, it was also found that the class size is not ideal for CLT classroom. There were over 50 students in the classrooms that were observed. The students were reluctant to communicate in the classroom fabric.

Discussion

The findings from the data indicate the limited uptake of the CLT curriculum in Bangladesh. Interviews with participating teachers highlighted numerous interrelated factors which the teachers referred as the causes of the discrepancy between the intended curriculum and that which they have actually enacted. In enunciating their views, teachers harped mostly on the factors external to themselves, which they rarely investigated for their practices with reference to their existing belief that they held about aspects of language teaching and learning. As indicated earlier in the finding, in the context of Bangladesh, several factors are affecting the implementation of the curriculum through the teachers' practice of CLT in the classroom. Teachers practise the new features of the curriculum based on their own beliefs and convenience. In the process, in several ways, the current form of implementation did not represent the envisioned major departure from the GTM curriculum that it had replaced.

The curriculum reform is a multifactorial process as indicated by Fullan (2007). In the present study, we looked into the cognition of teachers provided they are considered to be the most important stakeholders in this process, and often referred as the agent of change. Although the study investigated curriculum reform from the perspective of teachers' belief, which has been done in only a few other studies in the context of Bangladesh, the findings of the current study are congruent to studies conducted in other contexts. The study of Humphries and Burns (2015) indicated and discussed similar beliefs and practices reported by the non-native English teachers of Japan when they were asked to implement the reformed curriculum. In South Korea, teachers' past beliefs and practices regarding language teaching were found to have strong hold on their implementation of curriculum reform (Rabbidge, 2017). In the same vein, teachers in Bangladesh have been found to be more inclined towards the beliefs and practices of GTM, instead of CLT, due to their longstanding practice which seemed to have influenced their deep-set beliefs. The phenomenon is conceptualized by Borg (2015). According to him, the way teachers' cognition impacts their practices in the classroom, likewise, their practices can also impact their cognition. A few studies such as that by Rahman, Pandian and Kaur (2018) found curriculum implementation abrupt due to certain factors associated with teachers. This study is a further testament of the fact that teachers' beliefs and practices regarding the key reforms, namely use of native language, teacher-centredness of the classroom and lack of communicative activities, contributed to the limited implementation of the curriculum by rendering the reformation of the curriculum to be an unclear and complex process.

Teachers' practices have been found to be deviated from the curriculum goals due to the contextual factors that curriculum reform has contributed. This contextual factor has contributed to the practices of teachers. Previous literature in the context of Bangladesh (e.g., Rahman, Pandian, & Kaur, 2018) illustrated similar findings where teachers were not able to practise what they believed due to typical contextual practices of CLT, which were more identical to those of GTM. They found that communicative activities could not be held due to large class size and owing to that they would not be able to handle the class effectively. Findings of the current study also found in a similar way that where the new practices of CLT curriculum are not popularly accepted by other teachers, teachers' own practices were impacted. Orafi and Borg (2009) in their study have indicated a similar finding in the context of Libya. It can therefore be concluded that it is impossible to enforce a change if the school environment has not positively adopted the reform (Fullan, 2007). Another significant aspect that Fullan (2007) identified as a key element of curriculum implementation is the teachers' quality with regard to implementing the curriculum successfully. Thereby teachers' quality has been presented as one of the aspects that has remained weak in the ELT landscape of Bangladesh in the current study. However, it has been typically referred as a weaker aspect in curriculum dissemination. Ali and Walker (2014) questioned the teachers' content knowledge and proficiency in English. Therefore, Carless (1999, p. 355) has noted that "if teachers are to implement an innovation, it is essential that they have a thorough understanding of the principles and practices of the proposed change." Unfortunately, it did not happen in this process. Teachers were neither aware on their own, nor were they informed through training sessions. This is not surprising given the facts about the limited training that the teachers received when the curriculum was introduced (Rahman & Pandian, 2018a).

The relationship between teaching practices and assessment is well established (Li, 2001). However, the assessment can mould the teaching practices and eventually impact the implementation of any curriculum reform (Orafi & Borg, 2009). In this study, the mismatch between the aim of curriculum and the assessment is evident. Curriculum instructs the implementation of CLT through promoting the use of English, communicative activities and two major language skills, namely listening and speaking, which should be practised by the teachers. However, teachers ultimately focus only on reading and writing, and prepare students accordingly for the exam. Moreover, teaching techniques and activities such as memorization of vocabulary and grammar are still very much in practice, instead of organizing and conducting communicative activities such as pair work. This phenomenon of impacting classroom teaching and learning by assessment is known as the washback effect of assessment in classroom practices (Harmer, 2007). However, in assessment, the focal skills that are assessed are reading and writing. The present study is a further testament to the one by Das, Shaheen, Shrestha, Rahman, and Khan (2015) where they had noted a similar relationship between the teachers' implementation of CLT and the assessment system in Bangladesh. However, in a recent study, Ali, Hamid, and Hardi (2018) singled out the contextual barriers, which they hold to be the most important contributor in this gap between assessment and teaching. According to them, paper setters often have to take the contextual realities into account, and that does not allow them to incorporate points or questions pertaining to evaluation of communicative elements, such as listening and speaking, in the examination paper.

The finding of the current study has reported the low proficiency level of learners as well as teachers as a contributing factor in curriculum implementation. Similarly, Hamid and Honan (2012) has reported a similar finding among the rural learners regarding CLT. However, in this study, the problem has been found among the teachers too. In the observation, it was evident that teachers' do not practice communicative activities and conduct classes due to their own lacking about language. In the interview, they explain their such action as the need of student. Such claim must need to be based on evidence, which currently is not evident, since we feel both the parties, students and teachers, have contributed equally in the problem.

Conclusion and Implications

In this study, our effort was to portray some of realities that the CLT based curriculum reform has brought in the life of the English teachers of Bangladesh. The experiences of the teachers studied here reflect their reactions to a curriculum which promotes novel practices they feel ill-equipped to implement, which challenge their beliefs and experiences such as teachers' and students' role, communicative activities and use of English in the classroom which threaten their authority and cannot cope adequately with, and which are not supported by the assessment system too. The combined factors enable us to make sense of the gap, which demonstrated by the classroom observations in this study.

To end on a positive note, acknowledging this gap and the reasons for it is an important initial step, we forward few broad recommendations. Firstly, a thorough feasibility analysis of CLT based curriculum reform in the context of Bangladesh is a timely need. Curriculum reform should focus both on the pedagogical practices it wants to promote in the classroom as well as the extent to which these are aligned with teachers' traditional practices and beliefs. Undoubtedly, the CLT curriculum is one of the most dominant language teaching approaches in the world today. Thus, changing or reforming curriculum entirely is not a feasible implication. However, policy makers and curriculum developers should recognize this gap between what is intended and the current situation. Analysing such gap would assist to inform the support systems such as developing teacher education program for teachers and facilitate curriculum implementation. This leads us to the second recommendation. Teacher development is essential in such large-scale curriculum reform. As Wedell (2003) explicated the need for continuous systems through which teachers are supported in making sense of the new curriculum. When teachers do not receive training well in advance and regularly, these problems would be automatic outcomes. Therefore, if the existing curriculum is to be successful, an all-inclusive teacher training programme should be operated. Again, such support would need to promote changes in both instructional practices and teachers' beliefs (Borg, 2015). Lastly, a reform of assessment is needed to eradicate the mismatch between curriculum goals, assessment target and classroom practices. Although assessment practices are hard to change; if initiatives to change the current practices are not taken, they will remain unchanged which will ultimately preclude the adoption of time-appropriate learning styles by the students. Moreover, the policy makers must think of alternative forms of assessment, at least alternatives in assessment. One probable way could be emphasising classroom-based assessment and its integration to the overall assessment scheme. It is essential as classroom plays a crucial role in successful language learning in an EFL context like Bangladesh. In fact, continuous formative assessment in the classroom helps students make their learning more sustainable

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