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# Factors Affecting Teachers' Implementation of Communicative Language Teaching Curriculum in Secondary Schools in Bangladesh

Mohammad Mosiur Rahman  
*Universiti Sains Malaysia, mosiurbhai@gmail.com*

Ambigapathy Pandian  
*Universiti Malaysia Sarawak*

Manjet Kaur  
*Universiti Sains Malaysia*

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## Factors Affecting Teachers' Implementation of Communicative Language Teaching Curriculum in Secondary Schools in Bangladesh

### Abstract

This study focuses on the selected factors affecting teachers' implementation of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) curriculum in secondary schools in Bangladesh. The study is explorative, interpretivist, and qualitative in nature. A phenomenology approach, under qualitative method, was adopted to explore how teachers experience the phenomenon of CLT based curriculum change. Four schools were chosen, two from Dhaka (Urban), the capital of the country, and two from the villages in Chandpur (Rural). Eight selected participants were chosen from these schools based on a purposive sampling. Semi-structured interviews, classroom observation and document analysis of curriculum, assessment, and teaching materials were the instruments of data collection. The finding of the study suggests that the shift from traditional Grammar Translation Method (GTM) to CLT was needed a positive outlook from all the selected factors in the context of change; however, this did not happen. Numerous factors such as, needs of classroom teachers, complexities regarding the mismatch of teaching syllabus and material with assessment, unequipped classrooms, and quality of teacher development facilities have challenged teachers to implement CLT as it was intended in the curriculum. The study suggests some recommendations to ensure the effective implementation of CLT curriculum. Future research is also recommended based on other factors and stakeholders.

### Keywords

English Language Teaching (ELT), Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), Curriculum Implementation, English as a Foreign Language (EFL), Teacher Quality, Teachers Education, Qualitative Method, Phenomenology Approach

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Mohammad Mosiur Rahman  
Universiti Sains Malaysia, George Town, Malaysia

Ambigapathy Pandian  
Universiti Malaysia Sarawak, Kuching, Malaysia

Manjet Kaur  
Universiti Sains Malaysia, George Town, Malaysia

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## Introduction

The Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) methodology was introduced into the secondary English curriculum in 1996, replacing the traditional Grammar-Translation Method (GTM) by the National Curriculum and Textbook Board in Bangladesh (NCTB, 2012; Chowdhury & Kabir, 2014). Since, curriculum change process is a multi-factorial system (Fullan, 2007), changing the curriculum to CLT from GTM raised complexity among different stockholders and questioned the adaptability of CLT in the existing settings of Bangladeshi classrooms (see. Chowdhury & Kabir, 2014). English language teachers in Bangladesh, however, was found to be unprepared for the change. However, the condition seems to be same after two decades of the introduction of the CLT in the curriculum (Rahman & Pandian, 2018).

Factors associated with teachers' implementation of CLT curriculum in secondary schools, still is a fact, which numerous studies have reported (Ali & Walker, 2014; Hamid, 2010; Hamid & Baldauf, 2008; Rahman & Pandian, 2018). Therefore, the present study was conducted to investigate curriculum implementation factors that are affecting English language teachers' implementation of NCTB's CLT curriculum.

### **Background of the Problem**

Several studies have suggested, as discussed above, that the CLT curriculum was not implemented in the secondary English language classrooms in Bangladesh as it was intended in the curriculum and have identified teachers as the central factor in the implementation of the CLT curriculum. One of the reasons, as Ali and Walker (2014) suggested, that the classroom teachers' needs were not evaluated during the curriculum development. According to them, the national ELT curriculum was designed through a top-down process where teachers' views were not considered.

The curriculum of CLT by NCTB lacks clarity and formed complexities in the implementation. According to Das, Shaheen, Shrestha, Rahman, and Khan (2015), English teachers and head teachers do not have a clear understanding of the CLT curriculum and have a mixed opinion about its implementation. Their belief and practice of CLT have also found incongruent (Rahman, Singh, & Pandian, 2018). And therefore, Chowdhury and Ha (2008) questioned the appropriateness of CLT and its pedagogical suitability in a completely different Eastern context, such as Bangladesh.

The practicality of the CLT curriculum material and assessment has not remained unquestioned. Two major skills of CLT, listening and speaking, remained un-assessed, but ironically highly emphasized in the curriculum materials (Das et al., 2015). Moreover, Kirkwood and Rae (2011) have pointed out that, grammatical and vocabulary selections are key characteristics of secondary English textbooks in Bangladesh, where it should be based on communicative activities.

English language teachers' quality was always considered a key problem in the context of English Language Teaching (ELT) in Bangladesh. Hamid (2010) endorsed that low quality English language teachers exist and stated that necessary pedagogical knowledge is missing. However, teachers also lacked professional support to introduce with the curriculum and implement it in the classroom. According to Islam (2015), English teachers do not receive regular effective training, and only a few teachers have received CLT training in selected schools. There is a significant lack of governmental support or initiatives taken for English teachers' education and training (Hamid, 2010).

Some contrasting studies also reported a positive outlook in some of the aspects in CLT based innovation in the recent years. These studies were the part of English in Action (EIA), a teacher training project, who claims the credit by empirical studies and publications like-conference paper, book chapter, and journal articles. For instances, Kirkwood (2013), mentioned a qualitative enrichment has been observed in the material. The textbooks, named English Today, has been updated with given equal sharing of all skills, including speaking and listening, which was missing in earlier textbooks. The quality of the teachers has been elevated to a regional standard by adding technologies, to assist communicativeness of the teachers and students, and which aided the CLT implementation (Power, Shaheen, Solly, Woodward, & Burton, 2012).

However, such self-reporting of improvement in the pedagogy of English has been questioned by other researchers (See- Karim, Mohamed, Ismail & Rahman, 2018). The effectiveness of such program should be evaluated by independent researchers (Anwaruddin,

2016). It will then allow us to find out the contemporary scenario of English language teaching in Bangladesh and how far teachers could be able to embrace CLT, by side-lining any biases.

Besides, the studies that took place on this issue have well theorized the problem of ELT in Bangladesh through the lens of CLT alone. However, including any change in curriculum, should be understood and analyzed from a curriculum perspective and dissemination process, what, however, is missing in these studies. Therefore, the present study incorporated both, curriculum implementation or dissemination theory in relation to CLT, to highlight the problem associated to the implementation of CLT curriculum from the perspective of secondary English teachers in Bangladesh.

### **Role of Teacher in Curriculum Implementation**

Curriculum implementation depends on several factors. However, many researchers hold the belief that teachers reside at the core of successful implementation of curriculum (Borg, 2009; Fullan, 2007). Teachers are also described as the source of curriculum change (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1992). Teachers' interpretations, perceptions, and beliefs shape and influence decision-making concerning the choice of teaching techniques (Alwan, 2006). In the existing literature on curriculum implementation or any change, reform and innovation, teachers are regarded as the key agents. Naturally, it is the teachers who will bring the curriculum into practice in the classroom (Wang, 2008).

Many studies around the world have found how issues associated with teachers affect the successful implementation of curriculum. In Malaysia, in her study, Karim (2004) found that teachers in service training facilities claimed that personal characteristics greatly affect curriculum implementation by serving as facilitating or inhibiting factors. In Ali, Hamid and Moni (2011), the related issues with teacher development (e.g., inadequacy of training). Moreover, they also pointed out the lack of teaching personnel policy, responsible for the poor quality of ELT in Malaysia. In his study at a school district in the Eastern Cape Province in South Africa, Bantwini (2010) noted that teachers' perceptions and beliefs influenced and shaped the meaning of curriculum reform and their acceptance eventually plays a vital role in classroom implementation. According to Stockwell (2015), who explored the UAE curriculum change process, revealed, factors related to teachers (e.g., the nature of which the curriculum was changed, teachers' personal characteristics, teacher development) have impacted the implementation of the curriculum.

One of the major reasons of the teachers' non-implementation of curriculum is the fact that they are not involved in the curriculum development process (Kırkgoz, 2008). The consequence of teachers' non-involvement in curriculum development is simply the lack of understanding of the curriculum change, reform, and innovation (Bantwini, 2010). Curriculum, as a document then lacks clarity and explanation on its complexity (Fullan, 2007). Teachers' involvement and participation is required to not only bridge the gap, but also improve the effectiveness of Professional Development facilities (Fullan, 2007).

### **Theoretical Framework**

Curriculum implementation is a multifactorial process, where different stakeholders are associated. Several theoretical frameworks are available on curriculum implementation. Rogers's theory of Diffusion Model is one of the widely used curriculum innovation models by the curriculum researchers. The model is more than 30 years old, however, adapted to its newest revision in Rogers (2003), he theorized innovation-decision process involves five steps: (1) knowledge, (2) persuasion, (3) decision, (4) implementation, and (5) confirmation. However, even the best of the theory cannot be used in a research until it meets the basic contribution in an

empirical study, addressing the relationship between problem of the study and research aim through variables (Best & Kahn, 2010). The model is not equipped with the necessary variables to describe the phenomenon described above and formulate research questions that are asked below. Besides, Roger's diffusion theory, the other widely used theory in the field is mutual adaptation model by Snyder, Bolin, and Zumwalk (1992). The framework is an explained version of Fulan's (1991) theory of curriculum implementation.

### **Mutual Adaptation Model Curriculum Implementation**

Snyder et al. (1992) proposed 15 factors under four broad divisions that affect the implementation of a curriculum. Among them, six factors from three divisions are particularly related to teachers' implementation of curriculum:

#### (1) Characteristics of the Change

Need and Relevance: the change and the perceived needs of the teachers.

Clarity: Goals of curricular innovation. Can teachers identify essential features of the innovation?

Complexity: What is the extent of the change? How difficult is it to implement?

Quality and practicality: Quality and practicality deal with the material and assessment system of the curriculum. Are teaching and learning materials available, or is adoption more important than implementation?

Practicality: Is the scale of the innovation feasible and manageable?

#### (2) Characteristics at the Level of the School District

Staff development and participation: Is this valued? Are opportunities provided and sustained?

#### (3) School-Level Factors

Teacher characteristics and orientations: Do teachers possess the attitude and expertise to carry out the innovation? This suggest the greater the degree of teacher efficacy, the greater the likelihood of implementation success.

The framework has provided a comprehensive analytical tool that draws the relationship between different stockholders related with the problem with a focus on teachers and formulated the research question of the study. From the background of the study, it has revealed in the implementation of curriculum, the major resistance is coming from the teachers, thus we have selected the factors associated with the teachers from the theoretical framework provided by Snyder et al. (1992). It has provided the necessary variables of the study that have formulated the research question of this study.

### **Communicative Language Teaching**

The present study analyzes the implementation of the CLT curriculum. Therefore, CLT needs to be analyzed to investigate the clarity and complexity surrounding the curriculum. Numerous applied linguists theorized CLT over the years. For the present study, the principles of CLT by Richards and Rogers (2001) were adapted:

- Emphasis should be on the integration of linguistic form, meaning, and function.
- Fluency and accuracy are complementary principles underlying communicative techniques.

- Learners should be engaged in the pragmatic, authentic, and functional use of language.
- The principles of CLT should apply to reading and writing skills.
- Class teaching should emphasis pair or group work.
- Errors are natural and should be tolerated.
- Evaluation of fluency and accuracy should be carried out.
- The student's native language should be avoided.
- The teacher's role is to facilitate students' learning.

The key characteristic of CLT has always been emphasizing meaning over accuracy of language. According to the philosophy of teaching and learning, it is contrary to the repetitive drilling of the Audio-Lingual Method (ALM) or the strict grammar rules of GTM. CLT focuses on the meaningful activities, both oral and written, to promote communicative competence in the learners (Larsen-Freeman and Anderson, 2011). CLT also advocates trial and error by the learners, which suggests teachers should tolerate the error in an effort to motivate students (Richards & Rogers, 2001; Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011). The center of power in a CLT classroom shifts from teachers to students by allowing them to interact and to provide ample opportunities to the students to be involved in pair or groups work. By doing so, teachers very naturally adopt the role of being a facilitator, rather than being the center force of a language classroom

### **Research Methodology and Research Design**

The aim of the present study is to explore the factors affecting English teachers' implementation of the CLT curriculum in secondary schools in Bangladesh. It poses these specific research questions:

1. How do secondary English teachers interpret the characteristics of the CLT curriculum for secondary schools in Bangladesh, on the basis of:
  - a) Need and relevance?
  - b) Clarity?
  - c) Complexity?
  - d) Quality and practicality?
2. To what extent do the characteristics of English teachers in Bangladesh affect the implementation of the CLT curriculum in the classroom, on the basis of:
  - a) Pedagogical Qualification?
  - a) Teaching Experience?
3. What kinds of professional supports are available to English teachers in Bangladesh so that they can implement the CLT curriculum effectively in the classroom?

### **Context of the Study and Rationale**

The context of the study is Bangladesh. According to Kachru (1992), "World Englishes" fall into three categories: Inner circle (who speak English as their native language); outer circle (their native language is not English, but use English as an additional institutionalised, official language); and expanding circles (very little institutional uses and refers to English as a foreign language). Kachru (1992) favours keeping Bangladesh in the outer circle, where most of the South and South East Asian countries belong.

Eight schools in Dhaka (urban) and Chandpur (rural) were approached, but only five responded. One school, however, prohibited outsiders from entering the classroom, so it was

excluded from the study. Finally, four schools, School A and B, were chosen from Dhaka (Urban), the capital of Bangladesh, two other schools, school C and D, were chosen from two villages in Chandpur (Rural). These schools are not similar to each other in terms of facilities and achievement, which is a natural phenomenon in Bangladesh, among rural and urban setting (Hamid and Honan, 2012). The urban schools are the high performing ones with an overall passing rate of 97% and 93%. In contrary to this, overall passing rate of the rural schools are 72% and 69% respectively.

CLT has been incorporated into the curriculum replacing GTM in the mid-nineties. The classrooms were not ready to adopt CLT at that time. And created problems that have been discussed in the background. The first author has the extensive experience of the context, being an English language learner in the school of Bangladesh, and also being a teacher educator and researcher. He has faced the problems being a part of the whole system how teachers teach while in schools. Also get to see real problem in the lens of researcher and teacher educator while working with the teachers closely. The second author, has worked with Bangladesh English Language Teacher Association (BELTA), went several times to Bangladesh to work with English language teachers, both rural and urban areas. He has an extensive experience as a researcher in Bangladeshi context. This study, therefore, is based in a familiar context to the researchers (us), and being a part of the context, they (we) know the significance of the study in the context of English language teaching in Bangladesh.

## Research Design

The nature of research question should formulate the type of research design (Nunan, 1992). Research questions related to the curriculum, its change, development, or implementation are suited to a qualitative inquiry (Janesick, 1994). Qualitative data enable us to understand a problem from critical and in-depth perspective of the problem that leads us to a better understanding of phenomenon (Creswell & Puth, 2017). The research questions of this study are explorative, interpretivist and phenomenological; therefore, we approached them qualitatively. An exploratory research satisfies a curiosity and explores or familiarizes the researcher with the phenomenon that is under investigation, leading to a better understanding (Babbie, 2013). Qualitative research is an inquiry process into how people understand social or human problems and form meanings from them (Creswell, 2007). According to Patton (1990), a phenomenological approach to a study allows teachers' difference in experience and perception to arise. The research questions of our study are constructed to know the experience of teachers due to the change of the curriculum in the everyday life setting. Such change or reform has impacted their lives. A phenomenological approach was adopted to present study to explore how teachers' experience the phenomenon (e.g., curriculum change) in their life (Creswell & Poth, 2017), through these three questions that are directly related to teacher and curriculum implementation.

## Sample

The research population of this study is secondary English language school teachers in Bangladesh. The sample selected for the study was on the basis of purposiveness. This deliberate intervention on the sampling process is termed as purposive sampling (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2013; Silverman, 2001). The selection of schools and participants was made on the basis of accessibility and purposively (Burton, 1996; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Eight schools in Dhaka were approached, but only five responded. One school prohibited outsiders from entering the classroom, thus it was excluded from the study. The selected



participants received an invitation letter with a consent form to declare their willingness to participate in the study.

The basic educational qualification of a secondary school teacher is a Bachelor degree (regardless of the background), and within a year of recruitment, they are required to enroll to obtain a B.Ed. (Hamid, 2010). In rural areas all the teachers hold a Bachelor of Arts degree with the Certificate-in-education and one of them holds a Bachelor of education. In urban areas all the teachers hold a post graduate degree from English and ELT related subjects. Thus, the teachers have fulfilled the minimum level of education as indicated in the recruitment policy. However, the minimum experience we intended the teachers must possess was 20 years and above, therefore we have selected the most senior teachers of the schools. The rationale behind the criterion was that, they have the experience of the curriculum change of CLT and after that they have seen the innovations that CLT has brought and its impact on their practice and implementation of the curriculum.

The ideal sample size is very ambiguous in the literature, however, is perceived as the characteristics of a qualitative research (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). This is because the aim of the researcher is to explain, describe, and interpret, thus reaching saturation is the goal of qualitative research, not to make generalizations (Maxwell, 2013). However, Creswell (2013) studied large amounts of previous qualitative studies and recommended that a case study should have no more than five cases; grounded theory methodology should be limited to 30 cases; narrative inquiry should be limited to two cases; and phenomenology should be limited to ten cases.

Teachers were also informed about the purpose of the study, how the findings of the study will be disseminated, what their rights were, withdrawal from the study, how they will benefit from the study, anonymity and confidentiality of the study, as indicated by Creswell and Poth (2017).

### **Data Collection**

We have administered two semi-structured interviews and semi-structured observations, as recommended by Creswell (2005). Two semi-structured interviews were conducted before and after the classroom observation. The interview protocol was adapted from Stockwell (2015) and Wang (2008). Moreover, the instruments were piloted before data collection, where some of the questions were excluded due to redundancy and arranged in the structured way under each research question, thus it became easy to analyze data in the thematic manner (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2013). It is essential part of the study since the quality of the findings depend on the quality of instruments that are used as well as validate the expected results (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2013).

We have recorded the interviews, transcribed and cross checked by the participants, which is member checking, a process that is used to establish validity and credibility the qualitative study (Creswell & Poth, 2017). The transcription was crosschecked by the teachers. In addition to semi-structured interviews, eight selected teachers' classroom practices were explored through classroom observation. Observing classes established the link between the information that teachers provided in their interview and whether it was reflected in their practice. Field notes were taken during the observation of the classes. Field notes describe what the observer saw, experienced, and thought during an observation (Gay & Airasian, 2003). Accordingly, the duration of the lesson (30 min) was divided into four stages: (1) the start of the lesson, (2) 10<sup>th</sup> min, (3) 20<sup>th</sup> min, and (4) 30<sup>th</sup> minute. In document analysis, curriculum and other documents, like lesson plans, materials, and question papers for Secondary School Certificate, were analyzed to show the distinctions (if any) between the teachers' perceptions regarding the curriculum.

## **Interpretation of Data**

The first step of data analysis is reading and writing the memos containing all the data, including field notes, transcripts, observer and interviewer's comments (Gay & Airasian, 2003). According to Gay and Airasian (2003), it is important to keep notes in the margined area, as these will allow researchers to record initial interpretations of the data. The interview data will be organized thematically. The analysis was divided into two phases: vertical analysis and horizontal analysis (Flores, 2005). In vertical analysis, data from each respondent is analyzed separately and relevant information based on the keywords will be arranged into themes. In horizontal analysis of data, all the interview responses will be analyzed together forming a comparative analysis or cross-case analysis (Flores, 2005). Through the comparative analysis of data, a new list of data will be produced.

The semi-structured observation used a pro forma with four columns to write field notes. The first column includes the time and structure, where the time of the each event and the part of the lesson is recorded. The next column includes the Activity/Lesson/Activity Description (strategy used, students' engagement and interaction, assessment, etc.). The third column is for students. The fourth column is used to write comments during the class. The intention was to record an interpretation of the class dynamic together with examples of communicative activities in the classroom by the teacher. Field notes were taken simultaneously with observation. Field notes described what the observer saw, experienced, and thought during an observation (Gay & Airasian, 2003).

## **Ethical Consideration and Validity of Qualitative Research**

The key issue in qualitative inquiry is ethical consideration and validity. In the present study, the most structured, systematic and updated procedure of ethical consideration by Creswell and Poth (2017) has been followed, where they explained six stages of data collection to publication process with their each ethical consideration. Prior to commence the study, the institutional approval was taken, the first author went for several meetings with the principles of the schools and explained every procedure of the study. He also submitted the official letter of conducting higher degree research by the School of Languages, Literacies and Translation, Universiti Sains Malaysia to the schools. During the beginning of the study he contacted and explained participants about the study and disclosed the ways of maintenance of their privacy by obtaining consent letter. During collecting data, researcher made the highest effort to avoid leading questions, personal or sensitive questions, and stored data in the secure location for future uses. During analyzing the data, to hide the identity of the participants, numeric number was assigned. In the study, multiple perspectives have reported and interpreted, including the contrary findings. In reporting, effort was made to report honestly, use composite stories so that individual cannot be identified. Researchers also allowed the participants to assess consistency of interpretation and reporting of the data.

The issue of validation was tackled carefully. Creswell and Poth (2017) described the validity of qualitative data from three perspectives (see Figure 1 for details).

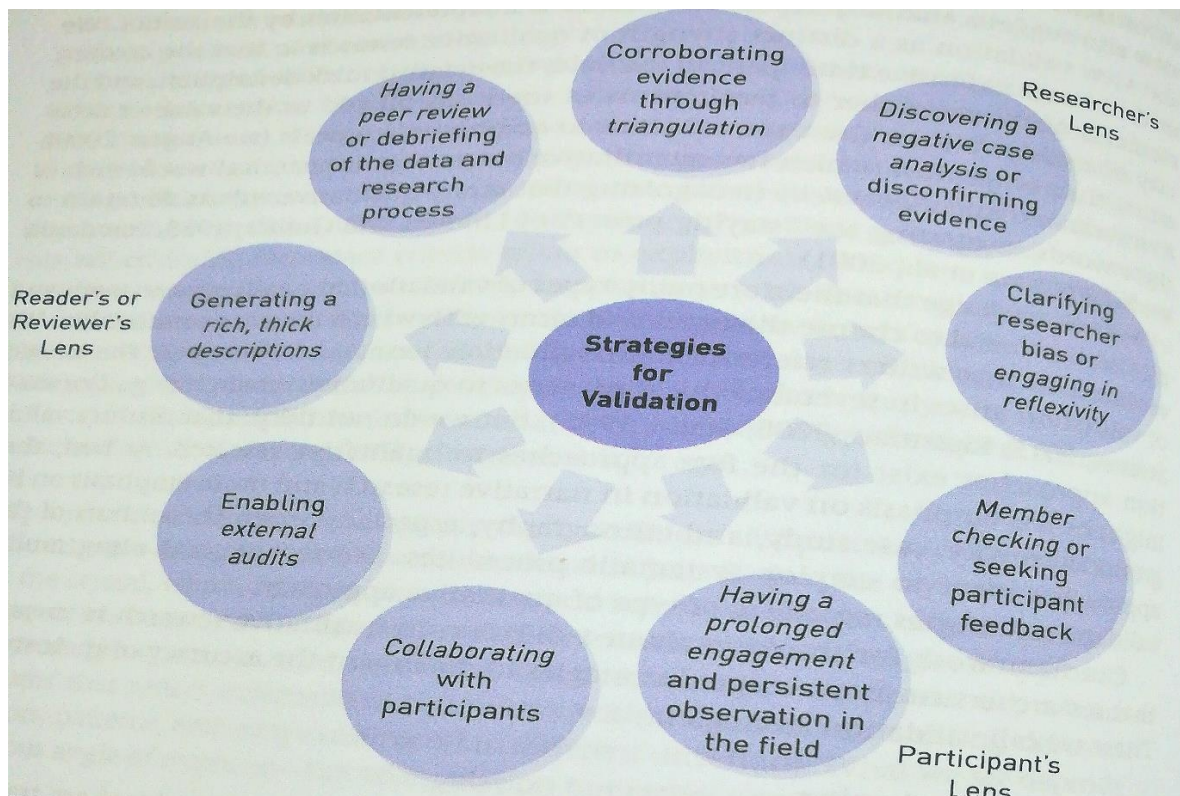


Figure 1: Strategy for validation in qualitative research (Creswell & Poth, 2017, p. 260)

Use of these multiple data collection tool enables the methodological triangulation of data in the study to establish rigor and validity of the qualitative study. Alongside the methodology, the, theoretical triangulation was established by adapting multiple theories. In the results, the negative results such as what was discussed in other literature and as the identified problem in the present study is acknowledged, besides the disclosure of the limitations of the study at the end. Among three authors, two of them are from different context from the study, and the other author has no personal biases in the study, since he has no relation with any of the participants and schools, neither is he currently working in any of the institutions there.

Validation from the participant's lens is related and discussed in ethical consideration above. And for the validation in reader lens, present study has presented and thick rich description of research context, site, participants, data collection procedure, analysis, validation and ethical consideration. Other two strategies and not implacable during the writing process, it is a criterion that related with publication and oral examination of academic thesis.

## Research Findings

### Research Question 1

In the first research question, the rationale behind the curriculum change, teachers' needs and orientation to the curriculum, clarity of curriculum, complexities of CLT curriculum, practicality of material and assessment of the curriculum were investigated, to explore the nature of the curriculum change to the teachers.

**The philosophy behind the change.** The aim of the curriculum, understandably, focused on teaching language through CLT. In 2012, NCTB suggested that the CLT curriculum was the best methodology to develop learners' communicative ability (NCTB, 2012). In line

with the aim of the curriculum, NCTB determines the role of the teachers in the classroom. To achieve this NCTB (2012) stated that, “The successful implementation of a language curriculum, especially a communicative language curriculum, depends mainly on properly trained teachers. This is because in a communicative language curriculum, ‘how to teach’ is more important than ‘what to teach’” (n.p.).

**Teachers’ needs and orientation to the curriculum.** Teachers were asked about the extent to which their needs were reflected in the curriculum and whether they were oriented to the curriculum beforehand to familiarize them with new changes in the curriculum. T-3 explained:

I came to know about the new curriculum after joining the school training session. Our needs were not reflected in the curriculum, particularly on the aspects of speaking and listening, which most of us have problem in practicing.

Teachers expressed unevenness in the orientation of curriculum document during the training session. The teaching personnel who were interviewed in the study were veterans, with 20 to 25 years’ experience. They witnessed the implementation of both GT and CLT curriculum. Their long-standing practice was reading and writing through the teaching of grammar and vocabulary. However, the change of curriculum demanded the skills of speaking and listening, which was missing in them at that time.

**Clarity of curriculum.** 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 old and new curriculum, and distinguishing factors would reveal the clarity. T-8 explained:

Textbook topics are different now as they are related to practical life, thus, making them so much more informative. Tasks are different and based on CLT method. Previously, assessment procedure was memory-based but now it is creative-based, and the overall teaching methods have been changed entirely.

Although the needs of the English teachers were not recognized, teachers still could articulate most of the curriculum aim and objectives clearly. However, according to teachers, due to poor management and preparation by the policy makers, teachers failed to understand CLT initially. In fact, that is still evident amid the rural English teachers in secondary schools. However, the situation has improved positively in urban areas. The dissemination process is smoother due to more organized training programs.

**Complexities of curriculum.** Our one of the major endeavors of the study was to reveal the complexities that teachers face regarding the curriculum. In order to achieve it, two instruments were used: interview and classroom observation. In interview, teachers were asked about different aspects of CLT to understand whether they understand the approach, and whether it bears any complexities. In classroom observation, their complexity in practice, if any, will be exposed. Some most common complexities that they have mentioned are presented below:

In the interview, teachers expressed their difficulty in dealing with the curriculum in various ways and one of them was students’ unwillingness to participate in task.

Students show unwillingness to participate in the tasks, and they would rather learn grammar by conventional GT method... If the tasks cannot be practiced, then how the curriculum would can be implemented? (T-1)

Though teacher could articulate importance of the task and group work in CLT, the complexities are visible when the observations took place in the classroom. Teachers were not found to be implementing CLT in the classrooms. And they rather blamed the unwillingness of students and emphasized the importance of deductive grammar practice.

Teachers were asked about the reason of teacher-centeredness, and their view regarding the student-centeredness what CLT has emphasized most. According to T-3:

I personally tried to allocate group works and take answers from the students. I want to conduct pair works instead of group works but, was not able to conduct due to time constraints. In the eight formed groups of five people, you can ask eight people to stand up and talk on behalf of the group, but you can't do that in pairs. Moreover, students hardly motivate to talk in the classroom. They need help from teachers and teachers have to explain everything. Students need to translate everything. In our classrooms, students have always been passive, and it is teachers who have to play active roles.

In the observation too, the problem of big class size was evident and the allocated time for each class was only 35 minutes. Conducting any group work and allowing learners talk is not feasible. According to them, an ideal class size and appropriate class time are needed for these activities, which will establish the class as a student-centered one. Moreover, they believe, these issues also contributed to the lack of practice of CLT in the classroom, which caused teacher-centeredness.

Using target language in the classroom is an important CLT characteristics. In the classroom observation, the use of native language was dominant. Both teachers and students spoke Bengali in the classroom in rural areas. The condition is better in urban English classrooms where teachers have good command over language and they have used fair amount of English with the translation of few words. Teachers were asked about their belief of using English in the classroom and why they did not use the target language in the classroom. According T-7,

CLT emphasizes speaking in English, but we cannot do that often in the classroom. The classroom has its own demand. Mixing both of the languages makes it easier for our students to understand. Policy makers can say anything; it is us who knows how to adapt. So we should be permitted to use Bengali to an extent.

Most of the teachers explained that due to the poor proficiency of students, they needed to use Bengali. What they emphasized is, a mix mode of language use, both Bengali and English. However, teachers own English proficiency, especially in rural areas found to be the key barrier to implement an English only classroom.

Another important characteristic of CLT is error correction. Observation in the classroom has revealed that teachers were giving feedback on student errors orally, and in writing as well. The approach of feedback was rather deductive. Teachers were asked about their actions, why they corrected students directly, which CLT does not permit. According to T-2:

Students' errors should be corrected. Otherwise, they will be permanent. In written language, you cannot commit errors as marks will be deducted in the exam. In speaking, sometimes, minor errors can be tolerated; however, not often.

Most teachers, both rural urban, have the similarity in giving corrective feedback. They believe, these errors can be fossilized if not be corrected now. Even though, they know it is not allowed in CLT, and can be discouraging for the learners.

CLT is meant for communicative activities. The CLT curriculum provided by NCTB emphasizes speaking and listening activities. Therefore, teachers were asked about their lack of communicative activities in the classroom. The phenomenon as described by T-5:

Needless to say, textbooks came with a CD that contains minimum listening skill exercises. However, we are still unable to practice it in the classroom because we do not even have the technology that is needed to play the CD.

Teachers should have the access to technologies (e.g., to run audio and visual aspects of the curriculum material in the classroom). However, this was clearly absent in the classrooms, and teachers, therefore were not practicing the communicative aspect of the curriculum (e.g., listening).

**Curriculum material and assessment.** Teachers were asked about their adaptation of curriculum material and assessment, and whether there is any mismatch between the curriculum material and assessment. As described by T-8:

When we first used the new material, we were merely sure about the type of contents to teach in the classroom. They were completely foreign to us as well as to the learners. Now, with several revisions, materials are more contextualized, making them more suited for the students' needs and learning process.

According to the teachers, initially, due to poor orientation to the CLT curriculum, teachers found it hard to understand the materials, since most of the elements were adopted from the west, which was unfamiliar in Bangladesh. However, in the document review and the agreement of the interviewed teachers, the material elements were found to be contextualized on the basis of the Bengali socio-culture elements. However, as described above regarding their complexities to held communicative activities, what they have pointed out as the lack of supplementary material (e.g., CD-ROM to run the CD), is equally contributed to the disorientation of the curriculum material to be practical.

The assessment's aim in the curriculum transpires to be a formative one that will assess four language skills. Teachers have pointed out that this continuous assessment framework is not attainable since the goal is the final outcomes of the exam. According to T-3:

Continuous assessment is only written on paper. It has no implication in the present context. It is not feasible since the only formula of assessment in practice is the final or public exams.

Therefore, considering the environment and its deep-rooted practice, the formative or continuous assessment remained unimplemented.

One other aspect that came out in the interview is the fact that the assessment system of English in Bangladesh neglects two skills (listening and speaking) that are included in the curriculum. This was explained by T-7:

They call it communicative English, but the skills that are most needed are skipped in the exam. Consequently, we do not teach them in the classroom

either. In the exam-based system that we practice, we teach what is needed for the exam.

The whole mismanagement regarding impractical assessment of the NCTB curriculum impacted the whole system. Since the assessment aims at final or public exams, teachers are less encouraged in classroom communicative activities and focused more on the exam contents that will help students to obtain a good result.

From teachers' interview, observation and document review of material and secondary school certificate exam, it is evident that, there is a clear mismatch between the material and assessment. The washback effect of assessment does not encourage teachers to teach communicative aspect of language teaching. Since, it is already excluded from the assessment, many of them have added.

## Research Question 2

In second research question, we explore how the teacher characteristics such as, their pedagogical qualification and experience has helped them to implement the curriculum.

**Quality issue of teachers.** CLT required new qualifications, such as a TESOL or ELT, to ensure teachers' ability to teach. Teachers were asked whether they have acquired the pedagogical qualification as suggested by Ministry of Education which is an undergraduate degree with B.Ed. T-4 pointed explained:

It is true that we did not have the specialized qualification on English teaching, nor had the experience. Moreover, no preliminary test or consultation to us was made before the introduction. However, the responsibility does not rest solely on the teachers' shoulders, but rather on the fact that there were no provisions of trainings, imported materials, and formalized assessment procedures, which all played major roles behind the ineffective implementation. We have heard enough of these stereotype statements pointing out that teachers are not qualified. Perhaps, we are the only country in the world whereby teachers changed drastically.

However, teachers' in Bangladesh has managed to gradually improve themselves as ELT professionals. Currently, they have the educational qualification demanded by the Ministry of Education, In the interview, teachers pointed out that the quality of teachers was not up to the mark initially to implement CLT. Both urban and rural teachers admitted the importance of a Pedagogical Qualification. Pedagogical qualification gives them an extra advantage over non-qualified teachers. They viewed that, masters from a relevant background should be the minimum level of qualification. They believe that a relevant postgraduate background will elevate the standard of English teaching, specifically in rural areas in Bangladesh.

Teachers were asked about the significance of experience. Whether they feel more adapted with time and experience gathered and what is their views on recruiting inexperience teachers to the school. As suggested by T-3

Initially, we did not know what CLT is; however, over the course of time, things have clearly changed. Learning to teach is an attribute that teachers need to master. Secondary teachers should understand the basic of teaching... At least two years of primary school experience would bring good teaching qualities.

Teachers agree that experience should be given priority. According to them, the lack of experience in CLT has created initial resistance in the implementation, especially in rural areas. However, experience gave them a better understanding to adopt new materials and the assessment system.

### Research Question 3

In the third research question of the study, we have efforded to know what facilities teachers are provided as the professional development to implement the CLT more effectively. We conducted interview with teachers to reveal the phenomenon.

**Issues in professional development to implement the curriculum.** Teachers were asked the type of teacher education they were provide during the curriculum change and afterword. T-4 expressed:

We were asked to join a general teacher training with those who are teaching different subjects. There was only information about the new curriculum that... you have to teach using CLT from now on, as well as new textbooks and assessment procedures that will be introduced in the classrooms.

The only form of professional support that the teachers in Bangladesh received is teacher training. However, the adequacy and effectiveness of training are questioned, especially by the rural teachers.

According to the teachers, training sessions ware not held regularly. Training was based on the availability of trainers and program. Moreover, teachers questioned the impact of these programs. T-2 explained:

Training has been in an ad-hoc basis program for us. However, in recent years, the adequacy has improved, but still not up to the standard. The effectiveness depends on both program and trainers. In both criteria, there are ample room for improvement. The professionalism level among the trainers needs to be improved. The structure and needs analysis of the teachers training program also needs a re-evaluation.

The teachers in the present study were the most experienced teachers; hence, they could able to compare and evaluate the training condition from their own experience. They have pointed out that general teacher training is an issue, as it provides minimal information on the CLT method and the practice. Moreover, the regularity should be maintained in the teacher development, as teachers have pointed out. It should be permanent and mandatory.

## Discussion

This study was set out to assess the factors affecting teachers' implementation of NCTB's communicative language teaching curriculum in secondary schools in Bangladesh. In this section, the factors affecting the teachers' implementation of CLT curriculum are discussed in relation to the theories adapted in the study and available literatures in the field.

### Teachers' Need

Secondary English teachers needed most support when the CLT curriculum was first introduced, to eliminate the existing beliefs, practices, methods, materials, and assessment



system that was inherited in GTM. However, teachers were not given the necessary support, and as a result, the curriculum could not be disseminated effectively.

According to Fullan (1991), the needs of teachers are important for any educational changes. Situation analysis should be at the core of curriculum implementation (Richards, 2003). The finding of the present study is also aligned with the previous study conducted by Ali and Walker (2014), whereby they expressed the same view on teachers needs that are not recognized during the curriculum implementation. The curriculum should also reflect the needs of the teachers, where without proper support and orientation, CLT implementation is not a feasible idea.

### **Addressing Clarity and Complexity**

According to Fullan (2007), a curriculum that lacks clarity will be resulted failure. Das et al. (2015) reported that teachers lack clarity regarding the curriculum document. However, the present study demonstrates an improvement among urban teachers, in this regard. They could able to articulate features that distinguish CLT from GTM, and to some extent they could able to demonstrate their statements in their classroom practice.

Despite having a clear idea about CLT curriculum, teachers could not implement it in the classroom due to several complexities. In innovation literature, complexity refers to the extent that teachers are faced with the application of new materials, application of the learning of new skills, and the expectation that they will alter their existing beliefs regarding teaching and learning (Fullan, 1991, 2007; Snyder, Bolin, & Zumwalt, 1992). In the observation and interviews, the teachers' complexities regarding CLT were very visible. The features of GTM classrooms are still in practice by teachers, mostly in rural areas. Most of the teachers could not demonstrate CLT classroom activities. The findings also enabled us to comprehend some cumulative complexities regarding CLT that are reported widely. However, the environment in the observation table reflects traditional didactic pedagogies, also referred to as "orderly restrictive learning environment" by Johnston and Hayes (2008, p. 117). The complexities that were evident in the interviews and observations are:

- The class time and size are not conducive to conduct communicative language teaching, especially given the fact that teachers and students were not interested in forming groups or pairs to perform tasks. This finding is similar to an earlier study by Kirkwood (2013) where he explained that the classrooms in Bangladesh are reluctant to perform tasks due to the class time and size and the teachers' attitude.
- The present study was found to be in line with earlier studies by Das et al. (2015), Kirkwood and Rai (2011), and Ali and Walker (2014), where they have reported that, listening and speaking remained unpracticed in the classroom. We have revealed that the primary reason behind this is exam orientation. Teachers are very exam-oriented or at least, we can say they must be. Thus, they only concentrate on grammar and comprehension to cope up with the exam needs. Then, there is the issue of lack of classrooms resources (i.e., CD player) to practice listening. In consequence, the communicative aspects of CLT (speaking and listening) remain unpracticed.
- Power et al. (2012) expressed a development in teachers' quality. Relevant to his finding, we found in urban areas, teachers were fluent and mostly spoke in the target language. However, the present study also revealed that teachers in rural areas seemed to use Bengali and English together. Teachers were found to use both languages simultaneously, instead of using English alone.

- In a communicative classroom, a teacher plays the role of a facilitator who will instruct a task that students will complete (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). In this study, the classrooms were found teacher-centered and learners hardly spoke, other than replying with a yes or no. Yasmin (2009) pointed out the same problems in the English classroom in Bangladesh. According to Kirkwood (2013), teacher centeredness alone is responsible for the lack of communicative activities in the classroom. However, in the post observation interview teachers revealed that the class time and pressure of exams do not allow them to provide students as much time as they would have wanted to give.
- In CLT classroom, errors should be handled with caution (Richard and Rodgers, 2001). In the context of a secondary classroom, principles, like grammar teaching, error correction, or the use of the mother tongue, were performed in a manner that signifies GTM. It was found in previous studies too, whereby Abedin (2012) claimed the CLT is nothing but a disguised mode of GTM, especially in the way errors were being corrected. It appeared that teachers were still holding their old belief of language teaching in the classrooms of Bangladesh.
- Grammar teaching has remained the same in the teachers' classroom practice. They still teach grammar the way they used to teach it before. Memorization of rules was found to be one of the key forms of instruction. In his observation, Islam (2015) found very similar views of the teachers. In the memorization of grammar and vocabulary, Kirkwood (2013) held the textbooks responsible for that. However, in the document review in this study, the new textbooks were found to be more generic in elevating CLT in the classroom practices. Therefore, we consider, it is teachers' existing practices that were responsible for teaching grammar deductively in the classroom.

Numerous previous studies concluded that CLT has raised complexities amid teachers in Bangladesh (Ali & Walker, 2014; Hamid, 2010; Kirkwood & Rai, 2011). However, the present study revealed some underlying explanations for this complexity. The short class time, big class size, lack of classroom infrastructures, exam-oriented system, memorization, as well as the lack of proficiencies of the teachers and students do not allow CLT to be practiced in the classroom.

### **Resourcing Classrooms**

According to Fullan (2007), the instructional materials and assessment make the curriculum practical. Mismatch was found between these two. The textbook that was used in the classroom is "English for Today." Teachers revealed in interview that the textbook is effective in incorporating all of the skills. However, the concern they expressed is regarding practicing their listening skills in the classroom. The textbook comes with a CD for listening activities, but they cannot use as classrooms lack of technological devices. Besides, the suggested group or pair works were not held as directed in the textbook primarily due to the lack of class time and large class size. From the classroom observations, it is visible that teachers and students are not proficient enough to comply with the present textbook's tasks. Therefore, an eclectic approach of blending the mother tongue with English was suggested in the materials by the rural teachers.

The present study brought some new findings regarding the innovation in instructional material. According to Tomlinson (2011), contents in the instructional material should be contextualized so that it can be meaningful in practice. As suggested by Chowdhury and Ha

(2008), the material contents were not contextual, as they are borrowed from abroad. In the document review, it was revealed that the new textbooks are more contextual, and the topics were selected based on the culture and history of Bangladesh. The other aspect that Kirkwood (2013) pointed out was that grammar and vocabulary selections were the key characteristics in “English for Today.” In the document review and interview, it was also found that the textbook was updated, and all the four skills were incorporated into the textbook. The only problem that teachers explained regarding the resources is that they need technological support (e.g., CD player to run the CD), in order to teach the skills effectively. Similar results were reported by Power et al. (2012), where poor resourcing of the classroom was discussed, which is not allowing listening activities to take place.

### **Innovation in Assessment**

Few changes were incorporated in the English language assessment system. However, a mismatch was found between the curriculum aim and the textbook with the assessment system. The major problem is, two skills (listening and speaking) were entirely excluded from the Secondary School Certificate (SSC) exam. Apart from that, the curricula’s aim expresses the need of continuous assessment for the learners, but this has no scope in the Secondary Exam. That makes teachers feel that they do not need to bother teaching listening and speaking skills that much since the two skills will not be evaluated in the final exam.

Technically, the class size and class time were not conducive for holding continuous assessments. According to Quick, Holtzman, and Chaney (2009), many problems are commonly associated with large classes. For example, some issues include arranging frequent assessments to monitor the students’ understanding and progress, inequalities among students that result from differences in meta-cognitive skills, facilitating students’ self-assessment and feedback, encouraging class attendance, generating participation in a non-coercive learning atmosphere, and challenging students to engage with course materials actively.

The present study is in line with previous studies conducted by Das et al. (2015) and Ali and Walker (2014). Similarly, they expressed their views on the absence of speaking and listening skills in the assessment system, which, according to them, is responsible for the ineffective CLT implementation. Needless to say, in the present assessment system, teachers and students do not focus on communicative activities in the classroom as they know that they will not be evaluated on them.

### **Teacher Quality and Professional Development**

Fullan (2007) pointed out that the more knowledge that teachers possess, the greater the chances of disseminating the curriculum into practice. Teachers’ quality was presented as one of the aspects that has remained weak in the ELT landscape of Bangladesh. The urban areas’ teachers viewed the minimum qualification should be a master’s degree from an English discipline, what most teachers in the urban schools possess. However, in the rural areas, the qualifications of teachers were found to be low. These teachers stated that they are equally capable to teach as they had to complete the B.Ed., as it was mandatory for all the teachers. However, according to Hamid (2010), the problem with these one-year B.Ed. is, it lacks specialization. Teachers, therefore, attend a generalized B.Ed. program with the teachers of other disciplines, which will not be helpful and may lead to a lack of content knowledge and language proficiency in English teachers. It was reported widely in Selim and Mahboob (2001), they have expressed teacher qualifications as a critical issue that contributes to the failure of CLT in Bangladesh, especially during the initial stage of the curriculum implementation. Similarly, Ali and Walker (2014), questioned the content knowledge and proficiency of English

and found that was a problem with English teachers in the classrooms. The finding of the study reported significant development in urban areas in terms of teacher quality, then what was reported in the earlier studies. It is primarily because of the teachers training programs were greatly initiated and effectively implemented in the urban areas, especially, in Dhaka.

The core issue that is associated with the implementation of any curriculum is the scope of professional development for the teachers. Therefore, continuous training opportunities for teachers are considered to be a fundamental part of their professional development. According to Fullan (2007), district level change implementation relies on the professional development of the teachers and further emphasizes that professional support has to be provided to teachers so that they can bring the change into the practice.

The present condition is much more improved than before however, the teachers' existing practice of GTM needs to be changed. As Guskey (2002) suggested, if change in teachers' attitudes and beliefs need to be occurred primarily before the implementation of a new program or innovation, the quality of initial training would be crucial. Present study provides a further development compared to the studies by Ali and Walker (2014) and Hamid (2010), whereby they addressed these issues more critically. The overall practice and quality of the teachers could not be improved due to the poor support that was provided to the teachers initially. However, more training programs were introduced as an aid for teachers. And finding of the present study reveals teachers are more developed now, utilizing these support, particularly in urban areas. However, the approach of the teacher training program should be revisited as the current study and recently, Karim, Mohamed & Rahman (2017) have maintained the same views regarding the effectivity of those programs in the context of Bangladesh, especially, in rural areas.

### **Implications and Recommendations**

The pedagogical approach of English language teaching in secondary schools in Bangladesh is CLT. In the context of Bangladesh, as findings suggest, several factors are affecting the curriculum to be implemented through the teachers' practice of CLT in the classroom. The implications of this study are presented as follows:

(A) Teachers' voice in curriculum development should be incorporated. The uncontested top down mandate of policy makers needs to be challenged. This will result in the teachers' clearer understanding of the curriculum, and similarly, will reduce complexities. Furthermore, the learners also do not get the benefit from the CLT curriculum. Therefore, there is a need to review the goals of the NCTB's CLT curriculum to make it more compatible with the classroom needs. NCTB should seek teachers' consent and participation in this issue, regardless of whether they are from the rural or urban division. New materials and the assessment system needs to be developed with the teachers, as their participation will help the curriculum to disseminate.

(B) The complexity regarding CLT was found in the practice of the curriculum. It is inevitable then, to implement the CLT curriculum in the classroom, the scenario of classroom needs to be changed first. The big class size needs to be cut down to a smaller size and, class time should ideally be increased to allow activities in the classrooms, and resourcing classroom with technologies to implement the communicative aspects of curriculum and textbook.

(C) The assessment system needs an immediate reform, whereby the continuous assessment system should be practiced. The exam, therefore, needs to include this scope. The two major skills need to be re-evaluated. It will automatically have an impact on classroom practice. Teachers do not feel the urge to practice the communicative aspects of curriculum in the classroom since these skills are not a part of the assessment process. Accordingly, some valuable changes need to be made in the material. The lesson plans should consider the time

constraints and the tasks should be short and effective, so that they can be completed within the allocated class time.

(D) In the present study, teachers suggested that those without a relevant background (e.g., English degree) did not have any experience while start teaching English. Therefore, the teacher recruitment policy in Bangladesh needs to make some necessary changes. To gain experience, teachers should first start teaching at lower level (e.g., primary schools for at least two years) before proceeding to teach at secondary schools. In secondary schools, as urban teachers recommended, teachers should have a postgraduate degree in ELT or a related subject, such as a Masters in TESOL/TEFL/ELT or CELTA.

(E) Professional development should be regular and based on the needs of the teachers to implement CLT. Besides, the training sessions are kept far from their school area, mostly in a particular place in the middle of the city. However, this is not an ideal form of training. In-service teachers need more school-based training sessions that are more effective. For such training, the authentic setting of the school helps teachers to learn more. Teachers' practice can be observed and navigated instantly. In rural areas, more professional support is needed. Teachers claimed they do not receive regular effective training, which has been explained as the organized hypocrisy on the part of those donor funded programs by Karim, Mohamed, Ismail, and Rahman (2018). The present study indicated a positive development in urban areas, however, more useful measures should be taken to reach a satisfactory level, particularly in rural areas.

### Limitation and Future Research

Curriculum implementation is a multi-factorial process, where different stakeholders are associated (Fullan, 2007; Snyder et al., 1992). In the present study, we could only able to concentrate on the factors that are related with the teachers' implementation of CLT curriculum in Bangladesh with selected data. However, similar studies on other stakeholders (e.g., policy makers, curriculum developers, principles of schools, students, parents) need to be piloted in future.

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### Author Note

Mohammad Mosiur Rahman (MRes) is a graduate research student at the School of Languages, Literacies and Translation, Universiti Sains Malaysia. His research interests are the interdisciplinary issues in language education and applied linguistics. From the macro level language policy, curriculum development and implementation to micro level classroom language teaching, he has published widely. He is currently holding the prestigious Graduate Assistantship for the year of 2016–2017. Any correspondence should be redirected to following email: [mosiurbhai@gmail.com](mailto:mosiurbhai@gmail.com)

Dr. Ambigapathy Pandian is a Professor and Dean at the Faculty of Language Studies and Communication Studies, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak in Kuching, Malaysia. He was former Professor and founding Dean of School of Languages, Literacies and Translation. His field of research interests are wide-ranging- they include language and literacy education, TESOL, Sociolinguistics and more recently on higher education. He is very well published, being the author and editor of more than 40 books and many articles featured in local and International journals. Currently, Professor Ambigapathy is also a Professorial Fellow with Charles Darwin University, Australia and Visiting Professor at Ramkhamheng University, Bangkok, Thailand.

Manjet Kaur (Ph.D.) is the Deputy Dean of Research, Postgraduate & Networking at the School of Languages, Literacies and Translation, Universiti Sains Malaysia. Her areas of specializations are wide-ranging- they include applied linguistics, multiculturalism, and higher education. Being an active author in the field of language Education and applied linguistic, she has published numeral articles in the national and international journals.

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