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By Mohammed Humayun Kabir
International Islamic University, Bangladesh

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NCTBENGLISHCURRICULUMANDIMPLEMENTATIONOFTHETEXTBOOKATPRIMARYLEVELINBANGLADESHANASSESSMENT

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I. Introduction

English teaching and learning was introduced in Indian sub-continent during the British rule in the region. Gradually English language became a vital medium of communication during colonial period. ''It began with the necessity to meet the commercial needs, and reached a place where it had to meet the demands of employment, enlightenment, scientific and technological advancement, political identity, and modernization'' Kabir (2011:157). Even after the departure of the British colonizers, both India and united Pakistan did not undermine the necessity of English language. However, Bangladesh Government decided to minimize the use of English after achieving the independence from Pakistan in 1971.But very soon it was proved that abandonment of English will be suicidal. So Government revised the decision when the educated society of Bangladesh advocated to reintroduce English language teaching.

The Government of Bangladesh introduced Communicative Language Teaching(CLT) in the late 90s.The curriculum development of National Curriculum Textbook Board (NCTB) clearly puts emphasis on the development of the communicative competence of the learners in English as Ministry of Education (MoE) decided to implement Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in Primary, Secondary and Higher Secondary levels. ''Hence, it is of paramount importance to look at the successful implementation of CLT as it is related to the overall human development agenda of Bangladesh as stated in the curriculum document.'' Haider & Chowdhury (2012:12). The objective behind introducing CLT is stated in the NCTB document, which states, ''English needs to be recognized as an essential work-oriented skill that is needed if the employment, development and educational needs of the country are to be met successfully. English should, therefore, be taught as something to be used, rather than as something to be talked about,'' (NCTB, 1996: 135-136).

In Bangladesh, formal schooling starts from Primary level in the public schools. So, to improve the whole education system, we have to give importance to primary education. In order to comply with the international obligation as well as implement the constitutional provision for free, universal and compulsory education, the Government launched the compulsory primary education program during the early 90s. In 1991, the government declared primary education free for all children in government run schools. The primary level of education is managed by the directorate of primary education and textbooks are designed by National curriculum and textbook board. Before the introduction of CLT, grammar translation method was followed in our country.

As a practising teacher, I have observed that English language teaching is not properly carried out in our schools. It is true that the syllabi, curricula, and textbooks have been revised in line with the CLT principles in Bangladesh but other vital issues like classroom teaching, assessment policy, etc. remained largely unchanged. We feel that we need to assess the implementation of English Language Teaching (ELT) textbooks as our students get the chance to learn English only by using those textbooks in their school life.

a) Background to the study

The main objectives of teaching English in Primary level education in Bangladesh are to enable students to understand simple commands, instructions and requests in English and also carry them out (National Curriculum and Textbooks Board, 2012). But real scenario is different from their objectives. In city

Author: Associate Professor, Department of English Language and Literature, International Islamic University Chittagong, College Road, Chawak Bazar, Chittagong, Bangladesh.
e-mail: arshad.mayar@gmail.com

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area due to the awareness of the guardians, children can communicate in English especially in the private schools. However, this is not achievement of the schools, indeed. But in the remote rural areas, the situation is miserable. Teachers lack the necessary skill to teach English as per the requirement of CLT. There is a huge gap between curriculum and textbook implementation.

i. *NCTB curriculum statement*

The main objectives of learning English at Primary level are:

a. To understand simple commands/ instructions/ requests and carry them out.

b. To use English to talk about day to day life and fulfill communicative functions.

c. To read and understand different types of texts appropriate to the learners' level.

d. To write in English, to describe persons, objects, places and events and to express needs and feelings.

The new English curriculum has taken the word 'globally' into consideration and hence set the teaching-learning activities in a more global context.

- It has included 'filling out forms', interviews, etc. in the planned learning activities in class-5.
- Some basic routine expressions needed for social interaction have been introduced at every level.
- Emphasis has been given to Listening and Speaking as the foundation on which to develop Reading and Writing skills. Content for pronunciation, stress and intonation have been specified for each class.
- Topics/themes have been suggested in a way that would help students address the needs of real life situations, for example, authentic texts such as announcements, instructions with or without signs/symbols, medical instructions, etc.
- Suggestions have been made to include audio video materials for the development of Listening and Speaking skills, particularly for pronunciation.
- Planned activities against most of the learning outcomes have been presented in a way to indicate teacher and student activities.
- Teacher's Training with prior emphasis on developing Teacher's own language skills has been strongly suggested as what the teachers are expected to do in classroom to involve and engage the students in communicative language activities is directly linked with the teachers' own competence in the language skills.
- Inclusion of the English sound symbols with examples and explanations in the Teacher's Guide has been suggested.
- Suggestion has been made to include a section on sample classroom language in the Teacher's Guide.

Rahman (2012) states the key issues of Primary English curriculum in the Preface of the English Textbook in the following manner:

The primary curriculum ''emphasizes learning English as an international language for communicating locally and globally. The *'English For Today'* textbooks have been developed to help students attain competence in all four language skills in English through meaningful and enjoyable activities. Emphasis has been given on listening and speaking skills as the foundation on which to develop reading and writing skills. Topics and themes have been selected in a way that would not only help students address the needs of real life situations, but would also inculcate humanistic values in them as well as broaden their mental horizon. Grammar points and planned activities to develop students' competence in all four language skills have been presented within contexts in a systematic and graded way.''

ii. *Primary Education*

The importance of primary education in our national life is beyond description. Primary education is the starting process of building up a skilled citizenry. It is considered as the foundation stone from where our future generation launches its golden start of education. So, equal opportunities will be created to ensure access of all sections of children to primary education irrespective of ethnicity, socio-economic conditions, physical or mental challenges and geographical differences. This is the constitutional responsibility of the state. Since this stage forms the foundation of subsequent levels of education, so delivery of quality primary education is a must. It was declared that ''by 2010-11, 100% enrollment of primary education will be ensured. At least one primary school will be established in the villages that have none.''

Bangladesh has one of the largest primary education systems in the world with an estimated 16.4 million students studying at different primary schools (aged 6 to10 years). There are 365,925 primary school teachers (approximately 53% of teachers and 23% of head teachers are women), working in more than 82,218 schools (with ten different types of schools, including Madrasahs).

b) Research problem

It has been more than a decade since CLT was introduced in the Primary EFL classrooms of Bangladesh in the place of GTM. However, the impact of this methodological change has been under-researched. This study looks at the English language teaching and learning practices in selected primary schools and attempts to relate them to the features of CLT as mentioned in the NCTB curriculum document. The study also aims to identify the problem areas that

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impede the successful implementation of CLT in the classrooms of Bangladesh and offers suggestions to deal with them. Most of the researchers worked with implementation of textbooks but we found hardly any study on NCTB English curriculum and textbooks implementation at primary level. Curriculum implementation success depends on textbooks and other teaching materials. Environment is another factor for success of a curriculum. This study is on NCTB curriculum and textbooks implementation at primary level. We hope by carrying out this study we can explore the existing scenario at primary school level.

c) Research Question

i. How much our teachers are able to implement our curriculum?

ii. Is there any gap between English curriculum policy and its implementation?

II. Literature Review

a) Formal and effective education can only be ensured if there is a balanced and well planned curriculum. A syllabus is designed in line with the curriculum statement. So the principles of a curriculum are reflected in a syllabus, indeed. A syllabus is a specification of the contents of a course of instruction and it lists what will be taught and tested. Thus the syllabus for primary level might specify the four basic skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) and ensure that it can be practiced by all students with proper materials. ''A syllabus describes the major elements that will be used in planning a language course and provides the basis for its instructional focus and content'' (Richards, 2001:152).

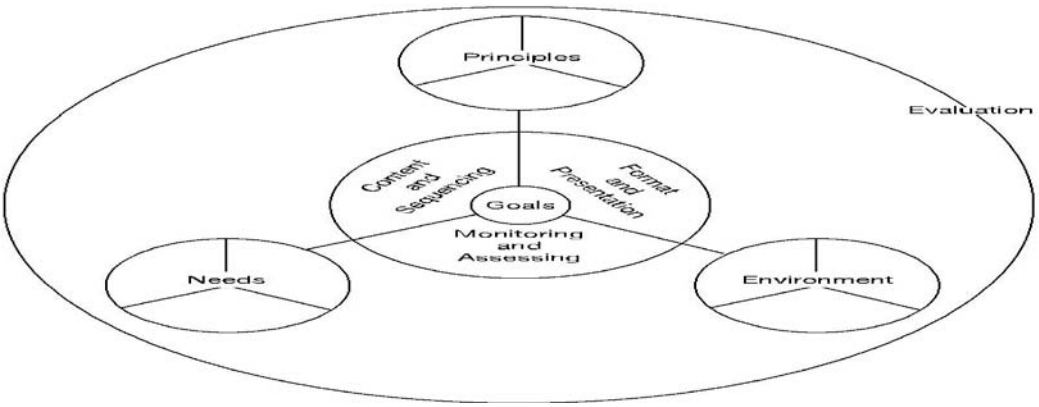
Curriculum development is a process that are used to determine the needs of a group learners, to develop aims and objectives for a program to address those needs, to determine an appropriate syllabus, course structure, teaching methods and materials and to carry out an evaluation of the language program that results from these processes. Curriculum development in language teaching began in the 1960s (Richards, 2001:2).

b) Curriculum Design

According to David Nunan (1988)), curriculum is the principles and procedure for the planning, implementation, evaluation and management of an educational programme. Curriculum embraces syllabus design and methodology. ''There has been a comparative neglect of systematic curriculum development. There have been few attempts to apply in any systematic fashion, principles of curriculum development to the planning, implementation and evaluation of language programmes. Language curriculum specialists have tended to focus on only part of the total picture – some specializing in syllabus design, others in methodology and yet others in assessment and evaluation'' (Nunan, 1988:3).

Nation & Macalister (2010:1) maintain that ''Curriculum design can be seen as a kind of writing activity and as such it can usefully be studied as a process. There is a wide range of factors to consider when designing a course. These include the learners' present knowledge and lacks, the resources available including time, the skill of the teachers, the curriculum designer's strengths and limitations, and principles of teaching and learning''. They opined that if the above factors are not considered, the course may be unsuited to the situation and learners for which it is used. In the end, the curriculum may be ineffective and inefficient as a means of encouraging learning.

Nation & Macalister (ibid) illustrate a curriculum design model which consists of three external circles (principles, environment and needs) and a subdivided internal circle (goals of the curriculum) .Nation & Macalister (2010:2) vividly show that ''the three-part shape that occurs in each of the outer circles (the ''Mercedes'' symbol) also occurs in the large inner circle, and also occurs in the way the three outer circles connect to the inner circles''.



[A model of the parts of the curriculum design process, adopted from Nation & Macalister (2010)]

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It is possible to imagine a large circle drawn completely around the whole model. This large outer circle represents evaluation. Evaluation can involve looking at every aspect of a course to judge if the course is adequate and where it needs improvement. It is generally a neglected aspect of curriculum design.

Richards, Platt & Weber (1985:70) hold that a curriculum is an educational program which states.

''a. the educational purpose the programme (the ends)

b. the content, teaching procedures and learning experiences which will be necessary to achieve this purpose (the means)

c. some means for assessing whether or not the educational ends have been achieved.''

c) *CLT and its implications in curriculum and syllabus design*

Nunan (1988:11) states ''during the 1970s, communicative views of language teaching began to be incorporated into syllabus deign''. In CLT "the heart of the language lesson is the communicative activity itself" (Howatt, 1984: 279). The idea of communicative language teaching emerged following Hymes' (1972) philosophy of 'communicative' competence, which greatly emphasized learners' ability to use language appropriately in context, mainly, in terms of "social demands of performance" (McNamara, 2000: 116). ''It emphasizes students' initiatives and interactions rather than teacher-centred interactions'' (Maley, 1986: 86).

CLT conveys a new viewpoint of language learning which focuses ''what does the learner want/need to do with the target language? Rather than, what are the linguistics elements which the learner needs to master?'' Nunan (1988:11). Therefore, it is thought that ''the goal of communicative teaching is to develop an ever-improving capability to use English to communicate with others and to develop and apply an increasing understanding of how English is organized, used and learned'' (Clark et al., 1994: 37).

CLT gives priority to the environment/ context where the acquired language will be used which is also very much synonymous with situation. The following discussion will include this issue.

i. *Environment analysis*

Environment analysis is also known as situation analysis. Situation analysis is an analysis of factors in the context of a planned or present curriculum project that is made in order to assess their potential impact on the project.

Richards (2001: 91-106) mentions some factors that might be encountered in implementing a curriculum. These factors are

- Societal factors
- Project factors
- Institutional factors
- Teacher factor
- Learner factor
- Adoption factor

The goal of situation analysis is to identify key factors that might positively or negatively affect the implementation of a curriculum plan. (Richards, 2001:106)

Environment analysis involves looking at the local and wider situation to make sure that the course will fit and will meet local requirements. There is considerable research data on many of the important environment factors, including class size, motivation, learners of mixed proficiency and special purpose goals. Good environment analysis draws on both analysis of the environment and application of previous research and theory. In some models of curriculum design, environment analysis is included in needs analysis (Macalister and Nation, 2010:20-21).

ii. *Needs analysis*

The term used to refer to wants, desires, demand, expectation, motivations, lacks, constrains and requirements. But linguistically it means difference between what a learner can presently do in a language and what he or she should be able to do (Richards, 2001:54).

Nunan (1988, 14-17) said that techniques and procedures for obtaining information from and about learners to be used in curriculum development is called needs analysis. Information will need to be collected not only on why learners want to learn the target language but also about such things as societal expectations and constraints and the resources available for implementing the syllabus.

III. Methodology

In this part we are going to discuss the research methodology including research setting, method, instrument, data collection procedure, data analyses etc.

a) *Method*

Mixed method is followed in this study. Mixed method is the combination of quantitative and qualitative method. Mixed method research is recognized as a legitimate research methodological form of inquiry in the social science. ''Qualitative and quantitative principles can also be combined at the data analysis stage'' (Dornyei, 2000:45).

b) *Instruments*

I have used three instruments to collect data. I prefer questionnaire, interview and class observation for my study. I have used questionnaire for quantitative data, interview for qualitative data and for real situation of my participants I choose observation.

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c) Questionnaire

The questionnaire survey is a versatile technique that allows us to collect a large amount of data in a relatively short time. The questionnaire is relatively easy to construct, extremely versatile and uniquely capable of gathering a large amount of information. The result of questionnaires survey is typically quantitative, although the instrument also contains some-open ended questions that will require a qualitative analysis. We received 65(sixty five) responses from 90 students participants.

d) Interview

Interview helps a researcher to collect data directly from the participants. There are four types of interview: single or multiple session, structured, unstructured and semi-structured interviews (Dornyei, 2000:134-136). Because of shortage of time we chose structured interview. In this format we arranged a pre-prepared interview with twenty five (25) teachers which contained a list of questions related to my study.

e) Observation

Observing the world around us is the basic human activity to help us learn the world we want to explore and gain understanding. Observation is the fundamentally different from questionnaire because it provides direct information rather than self-report accounts (Dornyei, 2000:178). There are two types of classroom observation, participant versus non-participant and structured versus unstructured. For this study we took twenty six (26) classroom observations of twelve (12) schools.

IV. Data Presentation and Analysis

I analyzed my findings from questionnaire, interview and observation in the following part of discussion:

a) Quantitative data presentation and analysis

I got my quantitative data from teachers and students questionnaires. The following section contains the analysis of the data we collected from different sources:

i. *Questionnaire for student*

a. Speaking skill

Can you speak English?

The data reveals that only 2% percent student-participants can speak English fluently, 5% can speak well and 93% cannot speak in English at all. But according to our curriculum, students of class 3-5 are supposed to speak in English.

b. Writing skill

Can you write letter, composition, dialogue, etc.?

20% student participants replied that they can write letter, composition and dialogue well and 40% of the participants can write a little. But it is very frustrating that 40% students think that they cannot write letter, composition and dialogue at all.

c. Reading skill

Comment on your reading ability

From the collected data we found that 40% student-participants can read well whereas 60% students face problem while they read.

d. Comprehension level

Do you enjoy your English textbook?

94% students enjoy their textbook. It is success of NCTB that they can make books according to students' comprehension level.

e. The lessons student like most

What areas of your textbook do you enjoy most?

More than 30 students said that they likes story. Less than 10 students like poem and a few likes dialogue. Textbooks board should be more careful about selecting topic.

f. Speaking practice

Do you practice speaking activities in your class?

89% student participants said that they do not practice speaking in classroom, 11% stated that they engage themselves in language activities classroom.

g. Listening practice

Do you practice listening activities?

14% students said that they practiced listening activities in their classroom, 29% said a little while 57% participants stated that they never got any listening class.

ii. *Questionnaire for Teacher*

a. English Background

What subject have you graduated from?

The data exposed that only 3% English teachers are English graduate and 97% English teachers are from other disciplines like Bengali, sociology, history, geography, etc.

b. Teacher's feeling to teach English

Do you enjoy teaching English?

90% teacher- participants are interested to teach English. 10% feels as usual.

c. Idea about English curriculum

Do you have clear idea about Primary English curriculum?

37% teachers said that they had clear idea on curriculum but 63% said that they didn't have any idea about Primary English curriculum.

d. Training

Do you have training on curriculum?

28% teacher-participants say that they have training on recent curriculum and 72% said that they do not.

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e. Delivering lecture

Do you deliver lecture in English?

All of my participants say that they deliver their lecture in English language.

f. Curriculum provides appropriate primary foundation

Recent curriculum provides appropriate primary foundation

80% teachers agree to this statement. 10% strongly agreed and 10% stated that they are not sure.

g. Usefulness of textbooks

Existing textbooks are useful for the implementation of the curriculum

70% teachers agree to that and 30% strongly agreed to this statement.

h. Student's reading ability

40% agree that students can read the texts aloud with proper pronunciation, 10% strongly agree. It is worrying that 50% teachers do not believe that students can read properly.

i. Student's writing ability

40% teachers agree that students can write short and simple composition, personal letter and fill up form. But 60% teachers do not agree.

j. Student's speaking ability

Only 40% teacher agree that students can take part in conversation practice session. However, 60% respondents do not find interest in speaking session.

k. Audio-video materials

In response 85% teachers said that schools do not have audio-video materials for practicing speaking and listening skills but 15% said that they have a some materials.

l. Teacher's guide

85% teachers say that they do not have teacher's guide. Only 15% say that they have it.

m. Group or pair works for student

25% teacher participants state that students practice group or pair work for practicing speaking skill in classroom.

n. Students enjoy the lesson

60% teachers think that students enjoy the lesson a little and 40% think that they like the lesson very much.

b) Qualitative data presentation and data analysis

The qualitative data that we gathered through interview and open ended question from questionnaire is presented in the following part:

i. *Our teacher's ability to implement our curriculum*

They have a very superficial idea about English curriculum. Some of them do not also know that CLT approach is followed in recent curriculum. A few teachers know about CLT. Most of the teachers do not have training on CLT. Without training on CLT they are not able to understand the curriculum and without having thorough idea about the curriculum, they cannot teach well. So they cannot implement the declared curriculum. They are not sure about fulfilling the aims and objectives of the course. They said that they are trying their best but the environment does not support them. Only class work is not enough for implementation of the curriculum. Students are not getting English speaking zone outside the class room.

c) Classroom observation

We took 26 class observations from twelve (12) different schools. We find that most of the class size is large where teachers are to teach 65 to 80 students in a section. It is tough for one teacher to conduct a class of 40/45 minutes. In every class teacher read the text aloud and then student also read aloud which makes a huge noise. There is no possibility to find out who is wrong and who is right. Then teachers find out some difficult words from the text and show some words which are written in white paper with colour pen and told meaning of the words. Then again they use Bangla to make them understand. Some teachers cannot instruct in right way. Most of the teachers' English pronunciation is miserable I am doubtful whether they can communicate in English. Students do not ask any question from teacher. We did not find students to practice group or pair work that their English textbooks contain. Teachers do not have lesson plan. Teachers are only following the textbooks. Only one school has audio materials which are also not enough. Teacher faces problem to use technology and waste class time. Students memorize the word meaning and write down it.

d) Gap between English curriculum and its implementation

The majority of the Primary schools are unaware of Primary English curriculum. Most of the teachers lack training, they fail to implement CLT in classrooms. Many teachers complained that most students are reluctant to participate in group/pair work, presentation activities, etc. They complain that they do not have proper materials in their school which hinders the process of the implementation of primary English curriculum in Bangladesh. They want audio-video materials in their schools to implement listening activities. On the other hand, students complained that teachers are harsh and unfriendly to them in the classrooms. They hardly encourage them to participate in different language activities. Students are found to be dependent on guide books (Note books) greatly to learn/understand English lesson. Moreover, their (students) dependence on private tutors or coaching center is also noticeable.

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V. Summary of the Findings

Most of the teachers do not have proper knowledge about English curriculum and it certainly hampers their teaching, indeed. Most of the teachers stated that they did not take any subject related training on recent curriculum. But two of the interviewees told that they had English subject based training. As they do not have idea about it, how will they conduct classes in line with the curriculum and how can they fulfill the objectives of it? It is frustrating that students cannot speak much. Because of large class size, teachers cannot find out everyone's problem. There is lacking of teaching materials. For proper implementation of curriculum teachers need audio-video materials.

Teachers try to make active the students. They tell them to read, write and ask question. Very rarely they arrange group/ pair work, dialogue practicing.

VI. Recommendations

This research found that primary school teachers are a little aware of the aims, objectives of English curriculum. When most of the teachers do not know the aims and objectives of English curriculum, it is tough to achieve expected curriculum goal. Due to this lacking of curriculum knowledge, teachers become unable to conduct English language class in a proper way and this may affect English language classes. So, teacher training is crucially important. Training would help teachers to enrich their knowledge about teaching methodology, using teaching materials, accurate evaluation system, and management etc. It also helps them fulfill the aims and objectives of the curriculum.

Teachers' guide is an important instructional material. It helps teacher to follow proper teaching methods and conduct classroom activities perfectly as desired in the curriculum document. Authority concerned should make teachers' guide available for every teacher. A stimulating atmosphere for language teaching can be created by supplying proper materials. Audio-video materials are necessary for the implementation of curriculum.

VII. Limitation

My data sample was too small in comparison with the real scenario of our country wide Primary education network. If we could have included wider sample, we might have generalized the findings of the research.

VIII. Conclusion

Since English is the foreign language to the people of Bangladesh, students of our country find it a complex task in their education. Considering the global needs, English was introduced as a compulsory subject since 1977 at primary level in this context. It is a matter of great worry that effective implementation of English curriculum is still far behind from the desired goal. To achieve the curriculum goals and objectives, government and non-government organizations should take some short and long terms plan by considering existing condition of English language learning and teaching.

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