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The Probable Applicability of Critical Pedagogy in Bangladeshi Classrooms: A Perception from Private University Teachers

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The objective of this study is to understand the range of responses towards critical pedagogy by teachers who do not have much formal training or prior experience with critical pedagogy. The study aims to understand the practicality and feasibility of critical pedagogy to be applied in the classroom. The study was conducted on fifteen teachers of a private university in Bangladesh. The participants were from four departments namely Law, English, Business Administration and Computer Science and Engineering. The data was collected through close ended questionnaire and analyzed through quantitative research method. The study reveals that critical pedagogy can be applied to Bangladeshi Classrooms.

Keywords: *Critical pedagogy, education, society, empower, applicable.*

Introduction

Critical pedagogy is an educational theory based on the idea that schools typically serve the interests of those who have power in a society, by usually unintentionally. Critical pedagogy refers to the means and methods of testing and attempting to change the structure of the schools that allow inequities. It is a cultural tool that takes seriously the notion of human differences, particularly those related to race, class and gender. Critical pedagogy seeks to release the oppressed and unite people in a shared language of critique, struggle and hope and to end various forms of suffering. The critical person is one who is empowered to seek justice and to seek emancipation. Critical pedagogy allows students to develop their own vision for an improved society. It considers how a classroom can serve as a model for promoting democracy. It tries to humanize and empower learners. Critical pedagogy is concerned with the idea of a just society in which people have political, economic and cultural control of their lives. The main goal of critical pedagogy is to emancipate and educate all people regardless of their gender, class and race.

Significance of the Study

In the traditional view of education, teachers are pillars of knowledge, they know everything and students know nothing. Teachers deposit knowledge in students and never ask them to question that knowledge. On the other hand, in critical pedagogy teachers and students act like awareness raising critiques who aim at identifying positive and negative aspects of education. Critical pedagogy is committed to creating a more equitable and just society for everyone. According to Freire (1970), teaching students critical consciousness is the moral responsibility of the teacher and is necessary for positive social change to occur. Teachers following this model value their students as people with unique experiences and knowledge of their own and they work with their students as partners in learning to set goals and expectations. Critical education can increase freedom and enlarge the scope of human possibilities. People need to learn how to express the logic of arguments that underpin our everyday life. Students can be strongly engaged with their curriculum. Students can be empowered through dialogues. Students can express their thoughts on any topic of their interests. Critical pedagogues like Paulo Freire, Ira Shor,

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Donaldo and Bell Hooks reason that by addressing issues that affect students' daily lives, students become more engaged with the ideas they are learning, thereby becoming more critically conscious.

Literature Review

Critical pedagogy first gained popularity in the 1960s through the work of Brazilian educator Paolo Freire. His most renowned publication was "Pedagogy of the Oppressed (1970)" and it was written to empower poor, illiterate and oppressed Brazilians. Henry Girox is also considered, with Freire, the founding father of critical pedagogy and is known for his work on the concept of hidden curriculum (Giroux, 1983). He began writing about the concept of critical pedagogy as a means of fighting oppression. Giroux (1988) says, "The aim of critical pedagogy should be to raise ambitions, desires and real hope for those who wish to take seriously the issue of educational struggle and social justice". The use and practice of dialogue limits teacher talk and encourages learners' voice (Shor, 1992). Many teachers feel that they have undergone a gradual disliking or loss of control of the educational process as the result of the curriculum and materials being dictated by others. Incorporating multiple sources of information can be empowering to teachers by giving them ownership of their own curriculum and classroom (Kanpol, 1994). Sadegui (2008) suggests that critical consciousness does not necessarily urge critical action but it gives participants of the prevalent discourse the chance to resist or change. Ghahremani Ghajar and Mirhosseni (2005) found that students consistently appreciated the opportunity to utilize their English to express dissatisfaction and opinions.

In an English class in South Korea, Shin and Crookes (2005) employed critical pedagogy by creating projects such as slide presentations, travel plans, discussion groups, poster presentation and written essays. Shin and Crook (2005) point out that students were engaged in dialogue by asking questions, revealing disagreement and clarifying others' comments. Critical pedagogy empowers students to challenge oppressive social condition and work toward a more just society (Foley, 2007). Participants in critical pedagogy classrooms are encouraged to engage in collective action, founded on the principles of social justice, equality and empowerment (McLaren, 2009). Critical pedagogy practitioners approach English as a tool to engage participants in not only being fluent about the language but how a language influences their immediate reality and communities. A critical education encourages students to think for themselves as agents capable of shaping their own education and society (Shor, 2012).

It is clear from the past studies that critical education improves students' performance in the class room activities and promotes language learning. Students can enjoy their classes and learn their lessons more effectively.

Research Questions

1. How practical are the principles of critical pedagogy to be applied in Bangladeshi classrooms?
2. To what extent do teachers apply critical pedagogy in their classes without knowing much about the theory?

Methodology

Participants: This study was conducted on fifteen teachers of a private university in Bangladesh. I decided to take teachers' perspectives because I wanted to understand whether critical pedagogy matches up with the practice. The participants were from four departments namely Law, English, Business Administration and Computer Science and Engineering. Three Assistant Professors, three Senior Lecturers and nine Lecturers participated in this study.

Sampling: The participants were selected by convenience sampling. The study was conducted on the teachers who are available and willing to take part in the research.

Instrument: Data was collected by means of questionnaire. Five point likert scale was used and all the options in the questionnaire were close ended. Attitudinal data was collected and the collected data was analyzed through simple percentage analysis. The method of analysis for the present study was quantitative.

Limitations: The limitation of this study is that it has a very small sample. Only fifteen teachers participated in the research.

Data Analysis

This study focuses on the issues of critical consciousness, society, politics, roles of teachers and students, students' prior knowledge, curriculum, empowerment, emancipation and peer learning.

Critical Consciousness

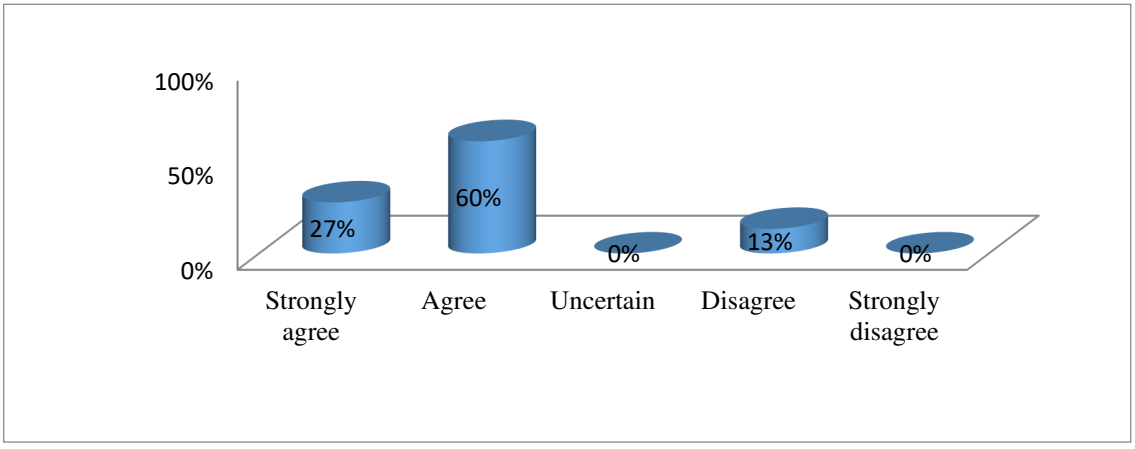
The respondents were asked whether they raise critical consciousness among students and whether they question their world inside and outside the classroom. The respondents were also asked whether they tell their students to be doubtful about social norms and customs and whether they question their students to find out the reasons of learning.

Instilling Critical Consciousness

Teachers can instill critical consciousness into their students so that they can become critically thinking citizens. 27% teachers strongly agree and 60% teachers simply agree that they raise critical consciousness when they teach. On the other hand, 13% teachers disagree about raising critical consciousness among students. However, none of the participants are uncertain or strongly disagree about instilling critical consciousness.

Figure-1

Level of Critical Consciousness



Questioning the World inside and outside the classroom

To implement critical pedagogy teachers can tell their students to question their world inside and outside the classroom. 40% teachers strongly agree and 60% teachers simply agree about this opinion that they encourage their students to ask questions in the class.

Table-1

Questioning the World Inside and Outside the Classroom

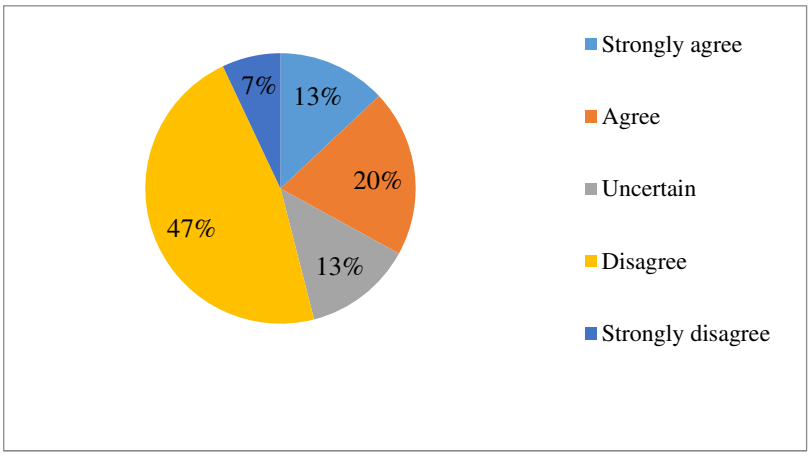
Strongly agree	40%
Agree	60%
Uncertain	0%
Disagree	0%
Strongly disagree	0%

Being Skeptical about Norms and Traditions of Society

Teachers following critical pedagogy can urge their students to be skeptical towards commonly accepted norms and traditions of society. 13% participants strongly agree and 20% participants simply agree that they tell their students to question social norms and customs. On the contrary, 47% participants disagree and 7% participants strongly disagree about making their students doubtful about the norms and customs of society. Again, 13% participants are uncertain about the statement and it means that they do not know whether their teaching makes their students doubtful about social norms and customs or not. Here the majority of the participants (47+7=54%) do not follow the one of the principles of critical pedagogy.

Figure-2

Percentage of Growing Criticality among the Students



Questioning the Reasons of Learning

To apply critical pedagogy in the classroom teachers can ask their students to question the reasons why they are learning and what they are learning.40% respondents strongly agree and 60% respondents simply agree that they tell their students to find out the reasons of learning. None of the participants disagree about this statement.

Table-2

Questioning the Reasons of Learning

Strongly agree	40%
Agree	60%
Uncertain	0%
Disagree	0%
Strongly disagree	0%

Society and Social Issues

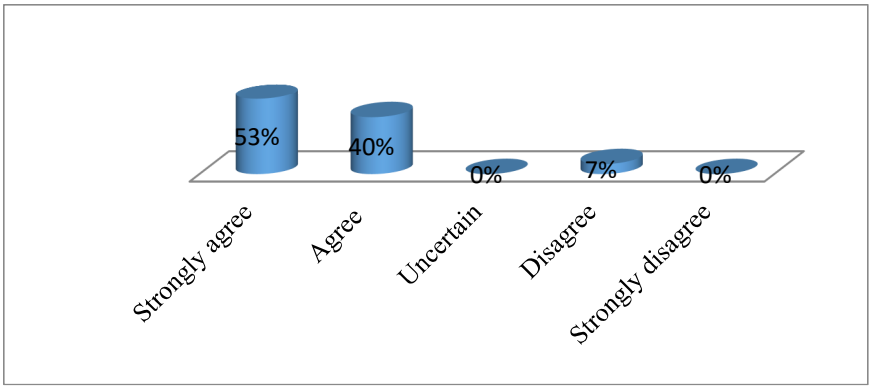
The teachers were asked about whether they teach their students to fight oppression in society, whether they include social justice issues in their teaching. They were also asked about whether they can transform the social inequalities and change the society into a just one.

Fighting Oppression in Society

Teachers following critical pedagogy can teach their students how to fight oppression in society. 53% teachers strongly agree and 40% teachers simply agree about this principle. However, 7% teachers disagree that they do not teach about fighting oppression in society.

Figure-3

Level of Agreement on Teaching Students about Fighting Oppression in Society



Social Justice Issues

Teachers in their class can incorporate learning about social justice issues with the aim of improving society. 47% respondents strongly agree and 33% respondents simply agree about teaching justice issues in society. On the other hand, 13% respondents disagree that they do not want to include the issue of social justice in their teaching. However, 7% respondents are uncertain about this statement.

Table-3

Social Justice Issues

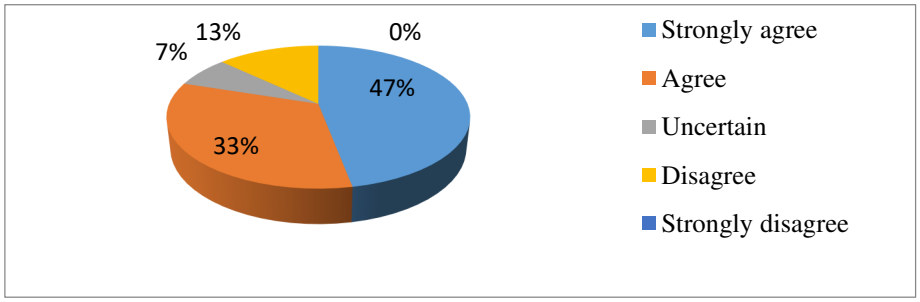
Strongly agree	47%
Agree	33%
Uncertain	7%
Disagree	13%
Strongly disagree	0%

Transforming the Existing Inequalities in Societies

Teachers who follow critical pedagogy believe that they have the knowledge and skills to transform existing inequalities in society. 47% participants strongly agree and 33% participants simply agree that they can change the prevalent inequities in society. On the other hand, 7% participants are uncertain and 13% participants disagree about the statement that they can transform the inequalities in society.

Figure-4

Teachers' Belief regarding their Ability to Transform the Inequalities in Society

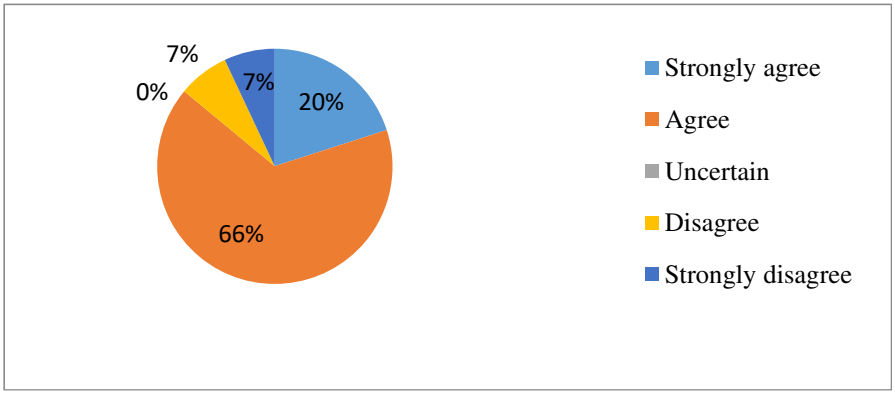


Transforming the Society into a Just One

In critical pedagogy the primary purpose of education is to transform the society into a just one. 20% respondents strongly agree and 66% simply agree that education can make the society just for everyone. On the other hand, 7% respondents strongly disagree and 7% respondents simply disagree about the role of education to change the society into a just one.

Figure-5

Teachers' Opinion on the Purpose of Education is to Transform Society



Politics and Democracy

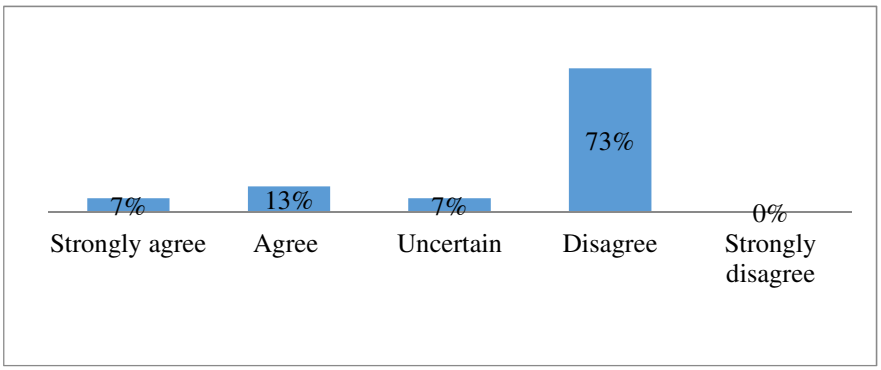
The respondents were asked whether they want to turn their students into political radicals and whether they believe that their classroom can serve as a model for democracy.

Turning Students into Political Radicals

In critical pedagogy teachers turn their students into political radicals. 7% teachers strongly agree and 13% teachers simply agree that they can make their students aware of politics. On the other hand, 73% participants disagree that they do not want to discuss politics in their class. However, 7% participants are uncertain about the statement.

Figure-6

Teachers' Opinion on Turning Students into Political Radicals

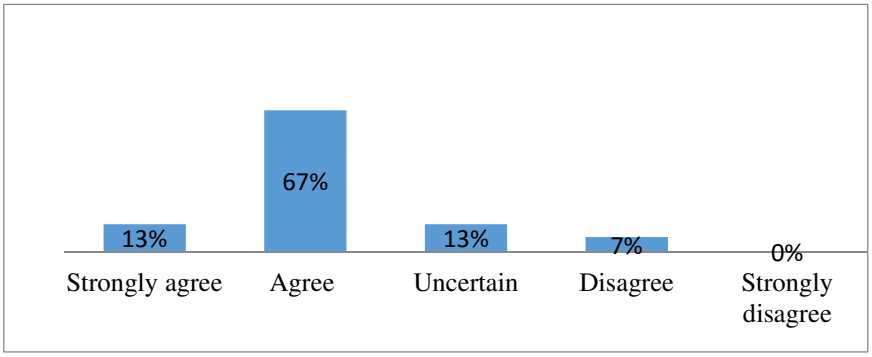


Classroom as a Model for Democracy

Teachers practicing critical pedagogy believe that their class can serve as a model for democracy. 13% participants strongly agree and 67% participants simply agree about this statement. On the other hand, 13% teachers are uncertain and this means that they do not know whether their class makes their students democratically aware or not. Again, 7% disagrees about the role of a classroom to promote democracy in real life.

Figure-7

Teachers' Opinion on Classes as Models for Democracy



Authoritarian Figure

Teachers practicing critical pedagogy are not authoritative in the classroom. 13% teachers strongly agree and 54% teachers simply agree that they do not practice authority in the classroom. On the other hand, 13% teachers strongly disagree and 7% teachers simply disagree about not being authoritative in their classes. However, 13% teachers are uncertain about the statement.

Table-4

I am not an authoritarian figure

Strongly agree	13%
Agree	54%
Uncertain	13%
Disagree	7%
Strongly disagree	13%

Prior Knowledge

The respondents were asked whether they connect new lessons with what students already know and whether they consider their students as whole persons with complex experiences.

Connecting New Lessons with Prior Knowledge

60% teachers strongly agree and 53% teachers simply agree that they discuss previous lessons when they teach a new lesson. However, 7% teachers disagree that they do not connect new lessons with students already know.

Table-5

Connecting New Lessons with Prior Knowledge

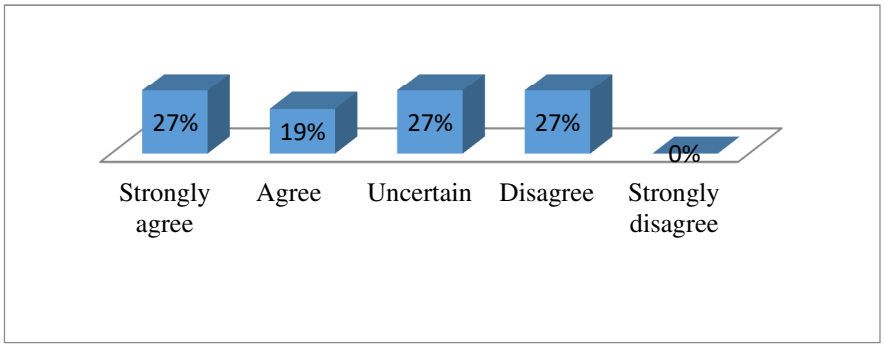
Strongly agree	60%
Agree	53%
Uncertain	0%
Disagree	7%
Strongly disagree	0%

Considering Students as Whole Persons

In critical pedagogy teachers consider their students as whole persons with previous experiences. 27% participants strongly agree and 19% participants simply agree that they consider their students as whole persons. On the other hand, 27% participants disagree and 27% participants are uncertain about this principle of critical pedagogy.

Figure-8

Percentage of Teachers' Opinion on Considering Students as Whole Persons



Curriculum

The participants were asked whether the curriculum should be based on students' needs and interests and whether social and political life should be included in the curriculum.

Students' Needs and Interests in Curriculum

60% teachers strongly agree and 27% teachers simply agree that students' needs, interests and realities of their lives should be included in the curriculum. However, 13% teachers are uncertain about whether students' needs and interests should be included or not.

Table-6

Students' Needs and Interests in Curriculum

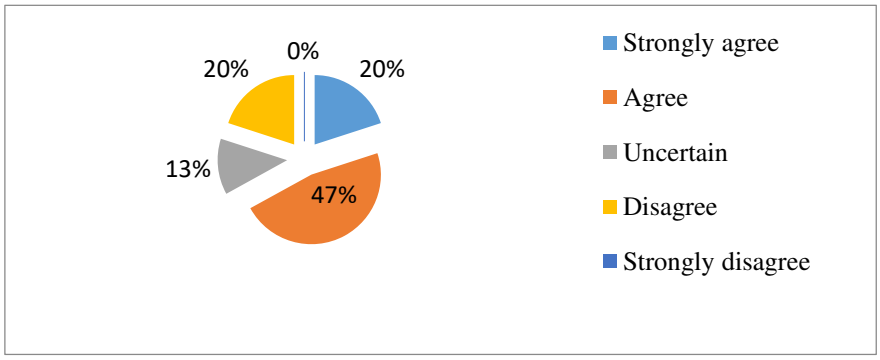
Strongly agree	60%
Agree	27%
Uncertain	13%
Disagree	0%
Strongly disagree	0%

Social and Political Analysis in Curriculum

20% teachers strongly agree and 47% teachers simply agree that social and political issues should be included in the curriculum. On the other hand, 13% teachers are uncertain and 20% teachers disagree about this statement.

Figure-9

Teachers' Opinion on Inclusion of Social and Political Issues in Curriculum

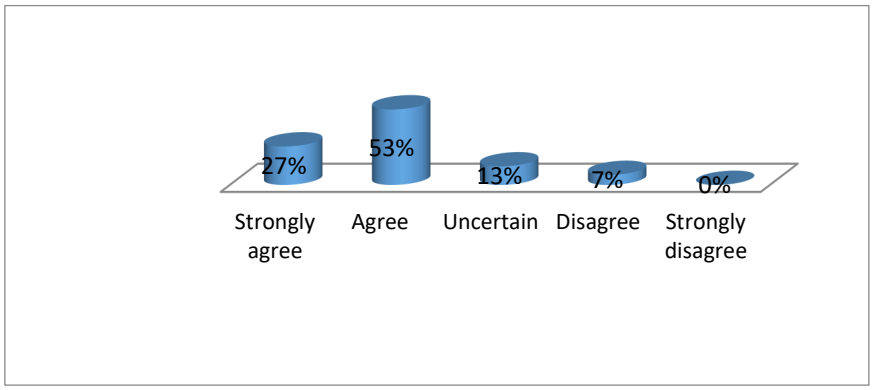


Role of students from passive to active

27% respondents strongly agree and 53% respondents simply agree that the role of their students should be changed from objective to critical subject. On the other hand, 7% respondents disagree and 13% respondents are uncertain about this principle of critical pedagogy.

Figure-10

Teachers' Opinion on Role of Student



Empowerment and Emancipation

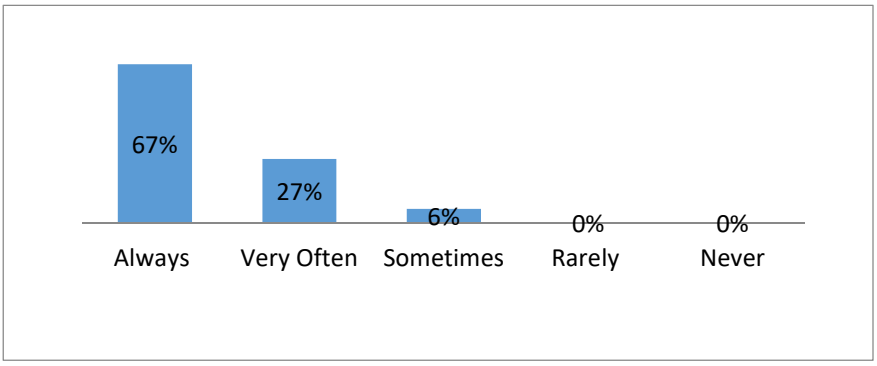
Teachers practicing critical pedagogy empower and emancipate their students irrespective of their class, gender and race. They encourage their students to voice their struggle in society and politics. They also encourage their students to challenge authority in the classroom.

Empowering Students regardless of class, gender and race

67% teachers say that they always empower their students whereas 27% teachers say that that very often empower their students. Again, 6% teachers say that they sometimes empower their students.

Figure-11

Empowering Students

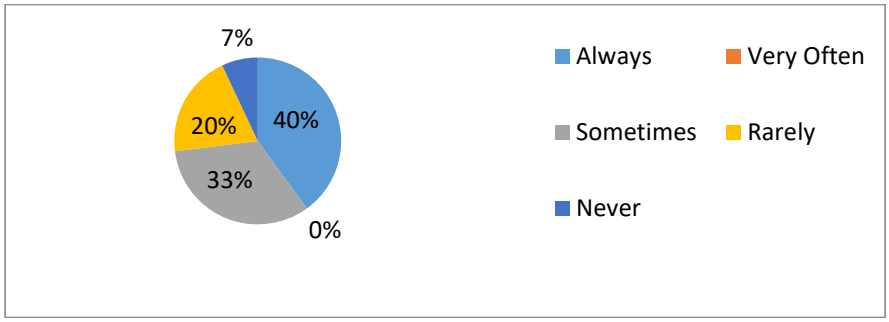


Encouraging Students to Voice their Struggles

40% teachers always encourage their students to voice their struggle in political, social and economic spheres whereas 33% teachers sometimes encourage their students to voice their struggle. However, 20% teachers rarely encourage and 7% teachers never encourage.

Figure-12

Encouraging Students to Voice Their Struggles

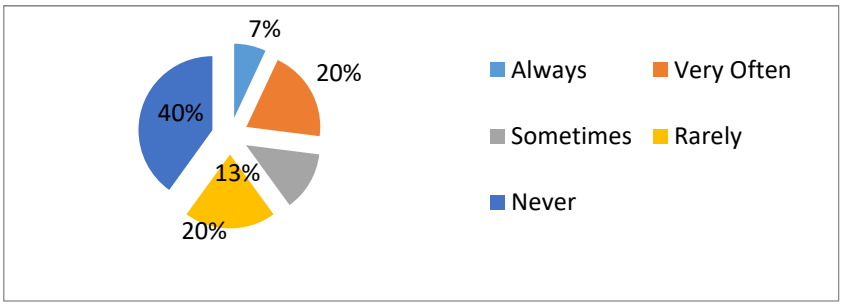


Encouraging Students to Challenge Authority

7% teachers always encourage their students to change authority in the classroom whereas 20% teachers encourage very often. On the contrary, 40% teachers never inspire their students to challenge authority in the classroom and 20% rarely inspire. However, 13% teachers sometimes encourage.

Figure-13

Encouraging Students to Change Authority in the Classroom



Peer Learning

The participants were asked whether they encourage their students to learn from each other and whether they believe that both students and teachers are educators and learners.

Encouraging students to learn from each other

87% teachers always encourage their students to learn from each other in the class. Again, 13% teachers inspire very often.

Table-7

Encouraging students to Learn from Each Other

Always	87%
Very Often	13%
Sometimes	0%
Rarely	0%
Never	0%

Students and teachers are both educators and learners

47% teachers strongly agree and 53% teachers simply agree that students and teachers are both learners and educators and they can learn from each other.

Table-8

Students and Teachers are Both Educators and Learners

Strongly agree	47%
Agree	53%
Uncertain	0%
Disagree	0%
Strongly disagree	0%

Conclusion

The teachers who participated in this research mostly agree with the principles of critical pedagogy. However, they do not agree with some of the principles of this theory. For example, most of the teachers

(73%) do not want to discuss political issues in their classes and do not want to turn their students into political radicals. They (60%) also do not like their students to challenge authority in the classroom. It is clear that the participants knowingly or unknowingly follow many principles of critical pedagogy.

Recommendation

Critical pedagogy can enable learners to develop their speaking skills by focusing on their real life problems. The application of this approach can make teaching more enjoyable by focusing on students' needs, interests and opinions. Teachers can integrate critical pedagogy in their classrooms in a range of ways. Rather than relying on traditional text-books, teachers can use multiple sources, including online materials, comic books, current music, television and film, as well as other forms of popular culture. It is recommended that teachers should focus on a critical awareness approach when teaching a language.

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Appendix

Questionnaire

The objective of this questionnaire is to find out *"The Probable Applicability of Critical Pedagogy in Bangladeshi Classrooms".* It is a theory related to English language teaching. You do not need to agree with all the principles of this theory. Please tick the options that you think correct.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I instill critical consciousness into my students so that they can become critically thinking citizens.					
I tell my students to question their world inside and outside the classroom.					
I urge my students to be skeptical towards commonly accepted norms and traditions.					

I ask my students to question the reasons why we are learning and what we are learning.					
I teach my students how to fight oppression in society.					
In my class I incorporate learning about social justice issues with the aim of improving society.					
I believe that teachers have the knowledge and skills to transform existing inequalities in societies.					
I think the primary purpose of education is to transform the society into a just one.					
I want to turn my students into political radicals.					
I think my classroom can serve as a model for democracy.					
In my class I am not an authoritarian figure.					
When I teach I connect new lessons with what students already know.					
I consider my students as whole people with complex experiences.					
I think the curriculum for my students should be based on their needs, interests and realities of their lives.					

	Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I think that social and political analysis of life should be at the centre of the curriculum.					
I believe that the role of a student should be changed from objective to active critical subject.					
I believe that students and teachers are both educators and learners.					

	Always	Very Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
In the classroom I try to empower my students through dialogues and involvement of their communities.					
I teach my students to empower and emancipate them regardless of their gender, class and race.					
If I get marginalized students, I encourage					

them to voice their struggles in political, social, and economic spheres.					
I encourage my students to challenge authority in the classroom.					
I allow my students to express their thoughts on any topic of their interest.					
In my class students can give opinions and express dissatisfaction.					
I encourage my students to learn from each other in the classroom.					