

## THE PROBABLE APPLICABILITY OF CRITICAL PEDAGOGY IN BANGLADESHI CLASSROOM

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**ABSTRACT:** *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 the 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.

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### INTRODUCTION

Critical pedagogy is an educational theory based on the idea that schools typically serve the interests of those who have power in the 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. They can express their thoughts on any topic of their interests. Critical pedagogues like Paulo Freire, Ira Shor, 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 Paulo Freire. His most renowned publication was "Pedagogy of the Oppressed (1970)" and it was written to empower poor, illiterate and oppressed Brazilians. Henry Giroux 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 (1998) 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 I., 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, 1998). 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.

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, 2013). 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 scales 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.

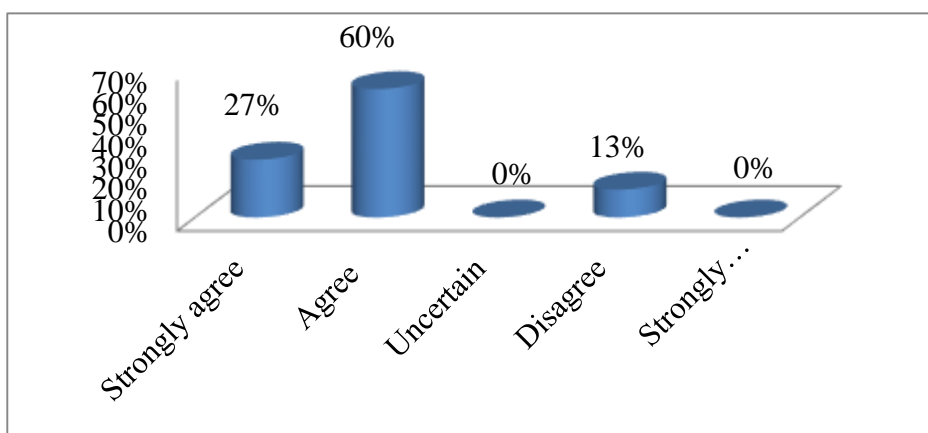
## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

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 tell their students to 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 ask their students to find out the reasons of learning.

### Instilling Critical Consciousness



**Figure-1: Level of Critical Consciousness**

Teachers can instill critical consciousness into their students so that they can become critically thinking citizens. 4 teachers (27%) strongly agree and 9 teachers (60%) simply agree that they raise critical consciousness when they teach. On the other hand, 2 teachers (13%) disagree about raising critical consciousness among students. However, none of the participants are uncertain or strongly disagree about instilling critical consciousness among their students.

### Questioning the World inside and outside the classroom

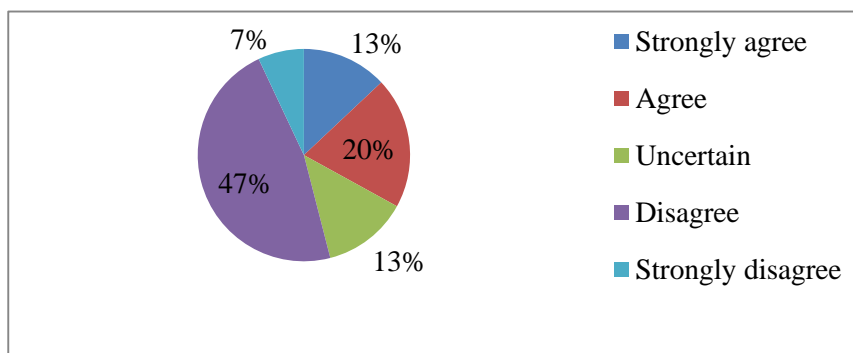
To implement critical pedagogy teachers can tell their students to question their world inside and outside the classroom. 6 teachers (40%) strongly agree and 9 teachers (60%) simply agree about this opinion that they encourage their students to ask questions in the class.

**Table-1: Questioning the World inside and outside the classroom**

Opinion	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	6 participants	40%
Agree	9 Participants	60%
Uncertain	0	0%
Disagree	0	0%
Strongly disagree	0	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. 2 participants (13%) strongly agree and 3 participants (20%) simply agree that they tell their students to question social norms and customs. On the contrary, 7 participants (47%) disagree and 1 participant (7%) strongly disagrees about making their students doubtful about the norms and customs of society. Again, 2 participants (13%) 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 (8 participants which is 54%) do not follow the one of the principles of critical pedagogy.



**Figure-2: Percentage of Growing Criticality among 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. 6 respondents (40%) strongly agree and 9 respondents (60%) 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**

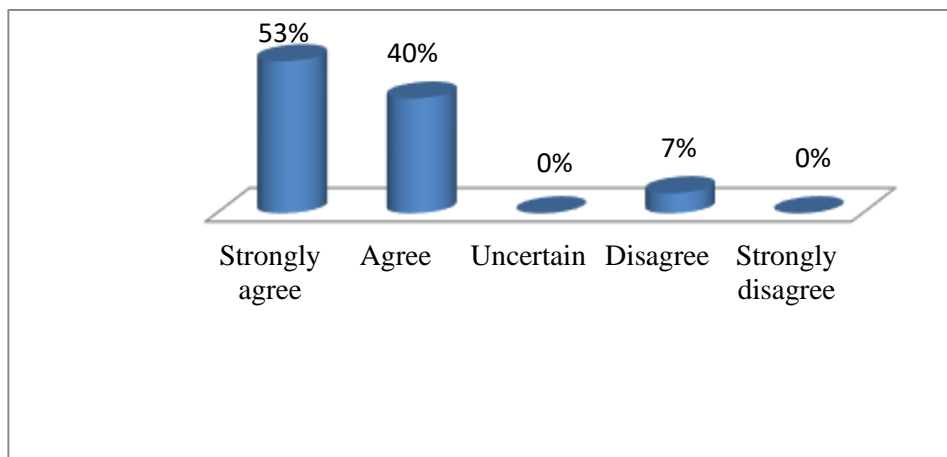
Opinion	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	6 Participants	40%
Agree	9 Participants	60%
Uncertain	0	0%
Disagree	0	0%
Strongly disagree	0	0%

### 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. 8 teachers (53%) strongly agree and 6 teachers (40%) simply agree about this principle. However, 1 teacher (7%) disagrees that he does not teach about fighting oppression in society.



**Figure-3: Levels of Agreements on Teaching Students about fighting Oppression in Society**

### Social Justice Issues

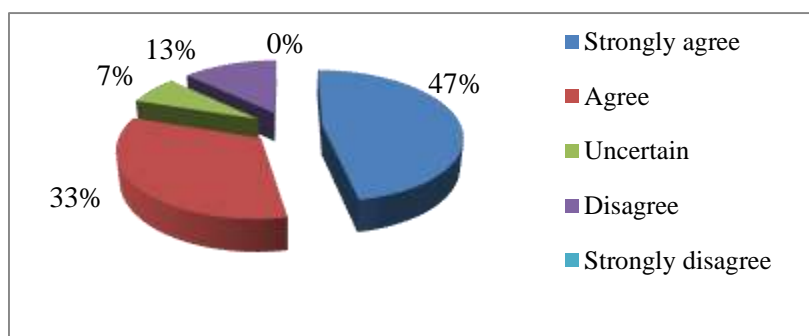
Teachers in their class can incorporate learning about social justice issues with the aim of improving society. 7 respondents (47%) strongly agree and 5 respondents (33%) simply agree about teaching justice issues in society. On the other hand, 2 respondents (13%) disagree that they do not want to include the issue of social justice in their teaching. However, 1 (7%) respondent is uncertain about this statement.

**Table 3: Issues of Social Justice**

Opinion	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	7 Respondents	47%
Agree	5 Respondents	33%
Uncertain	1 Respondent	7%
Disagree	2 Respondents	13%
Strongly disagree	0	0%

### Transforming the Existing Inequalities in Societies

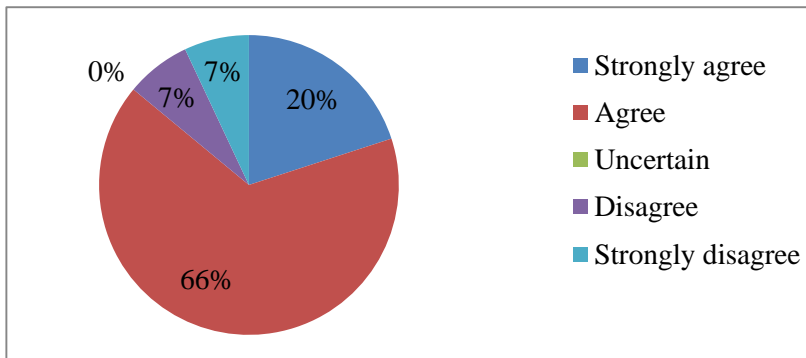
Teachers who follow critical pedagogy believe that they have the knowledge and skills to transform existing inequalities in society. 7 participants (47%) strongly agree and 5 participants (33%) simply agree that they can change the prevalent inequities in society. On the other hand, 1 participant (7%) is uncertain and 2 participants (13%) disagree about the statement that they can transform the inequalities in society.



**Figure-4: Teachers' Belief regarding their Ability to Transform 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. 3 respondents (20%) strongly agree and 10 respondents (66%) simply agree that education can make the society just for everyone. On the other hand, 1 respondent (7%) strongly disagrees and 1 respondent (7%) simply disagrees about the role of education to change the society into a just one.



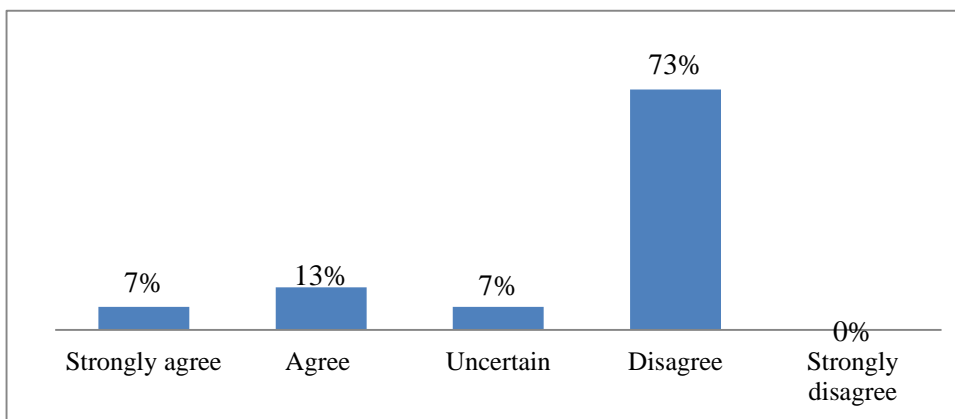
**Figure-5: Teachers' Opinion on 'The Purpose of Education is to transform Society'**

### 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. 1 teacher (7%) strongly agrees and 2 teachers (13%) simply agree that they can make their students aware of politics. On the other hand, 11 participants (73%) disagree that they do not want to discuss politics in their class. However, 1 participant (7%) is uncertain about the statement. Here, the majority of the teachers (12 teachers which is 80%) do not want to follow this principle of critical pedagogy.



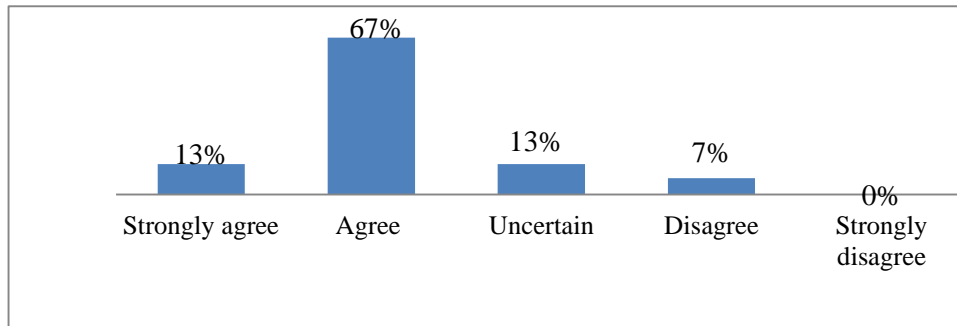
**Figure-6: Teachers' Opinion on Turning**

### 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. 2 participants (13%) strongly agree and 10 participants (67%) simply agree about

this statement. On the other hand, 2 teachers (13%) are uncertain and this means that they do not know whether their class makes their students democratically aware or not. Again, 1 teacher (7%) disagrees about the role of the classroom to promote democracy in real life.



**Figure-7: Teachers' Opinion on Classes as Model for Democracy**

### Authoritarian Figure

Teachers practicing critical pedagogy are not authoritative in the classroom. 2 teachers (13%) strongly agree and 8 teachers (54%) simply agree that they do not practice authority in the classroom. On the other hand, 2 teachers (13%) strongly disagree and 1 (7%) teacher simply disagrees about not being authoritative in their classes. However, 2 teachers (13%) are uncertain about the statement.

**Table-4: I am not an Authoritarian Figure**

Opinion	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	2 Teachers	13%
Agree	8 Teachers	54%
Uncertain	2 Teachers	13%
Disagree	1 Teacher	7%
Strongly disagree	2 Teachers	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

9 teachers (60%) strongly agree and 5 teachers (33%) simply agree that they discuss previous lessons when they teach a new lesson. However, 1 teacher (7%) disagrees that she does not connect new lessons with what students already know.

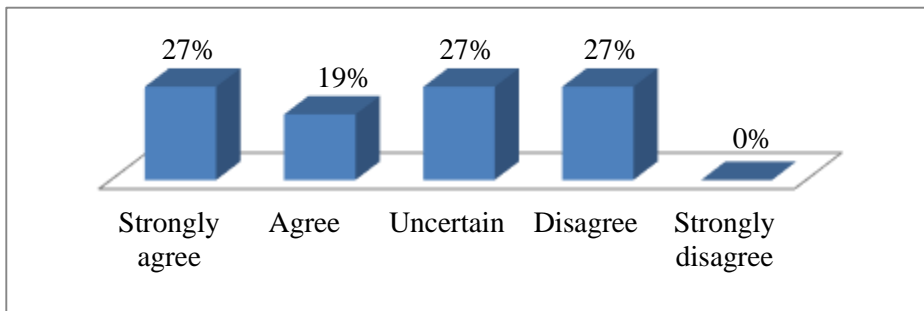


**Table 5: Connecting new lessons with prior knowledge**

Opinion	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	9 teachers	60%
Agree	5 teachers	53%
Uncertain	1 teachers	0%
Disagree	0	7%
Strongly disagree	0	0%

### Considering Students as Whole Persons

In critical pedagogy teachers consider their students as whole persons with previous experiences. 4 participants (27%) strongly agree and 3 participants (19%) simply agree that they consider their students as whole persons. On the other hand, 4 participants (27%) disagree and 4 participants (27%) 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

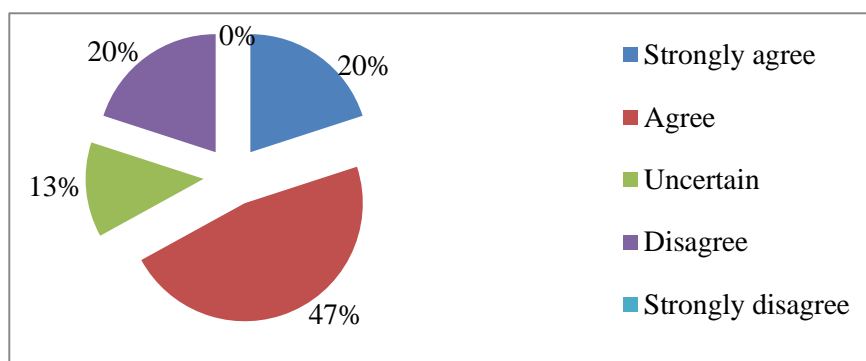
9 teachers (60%) strongly agree and 4 teachers (27%) simply agree that students' needs, interests and realities of their lives should be included in the curriculum. However, 2 teachers (13%) are uncertain about whether students' needs and interests should be included or not.

**Table 6: Students' Needs and Interests in the Curriculum**

Opinion	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	9 teachers	60%
Agree	4 teachers	27%
Uncertain	2 teachers	13%
Disagree	0	0%
Strongly disagree	0	0%

### Social and Political Analysis in Curriculum

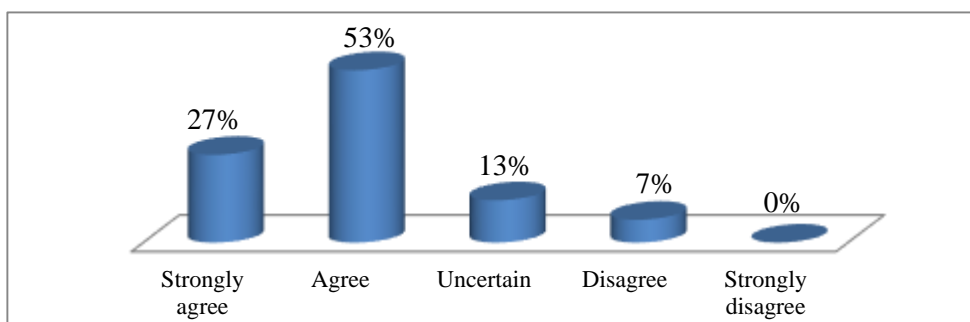
3 teachers (20%) strongly agree and 7 teachers (47%) simply agree that social and political issues should be included in the curriculum. On the other hand, 2 teachers (13%) are uncertain and 3 teachers (20%) disagree about this statement.



**Figure-9: Teachers' Opinion on Inclusion of Social and Political Issues in Curriculum**

### Role of students from Passive to Active

4 respondents (27%) strongly agree and 8 respondents (53%) simply agree that the role of their students should be changed from passive to critical subject. On the other hand, 1 respondent (7%) disagrees and 2 respondents (13%) are uncertain about this principle of critical pedagogy.



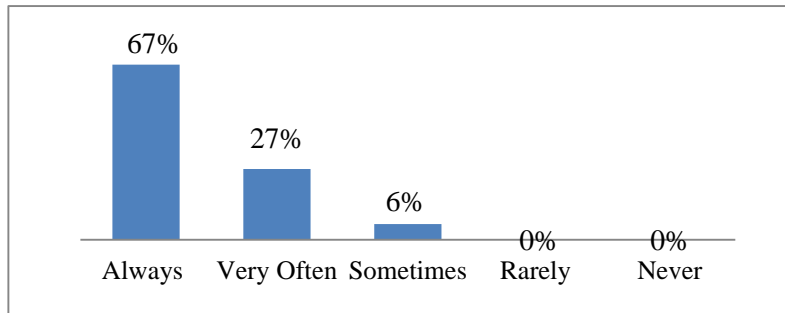
**Figure 10: Teachers' Opinion on Roles of Students**

### 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

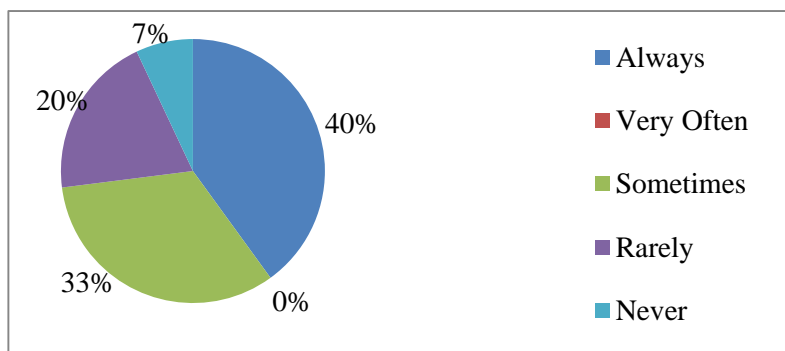
10 teachers (67%) say that they always empower their students whereas 4 teachers (27%) say that they very often empower their students. Again, 1 teacher (6%) says that she sometimes empowers her students.



**Figure-11: Empowering Students**

### Encouraging Students to Voice their Struggles

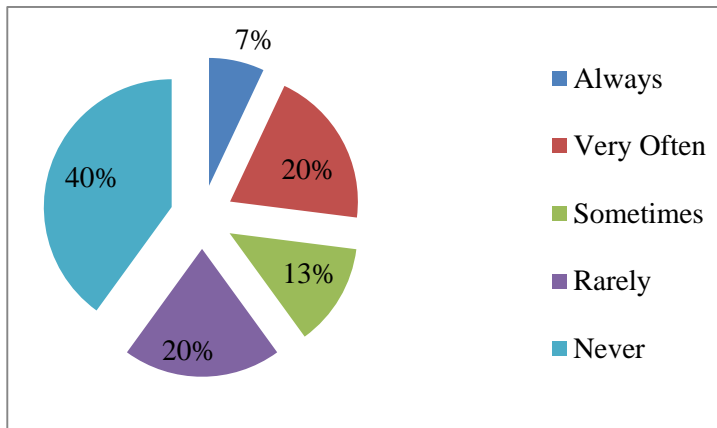
6 teachers (40%) always encourage their students to voice their struggle in political, social and economic spheres whereas 5 teachers (33%) sometimes encourage their students to voice their struggle. However, 3 teachers (20%) rarely encourage and 1 teacher (7%) never encourages her students to change the society.



**Figure 12: Encouraging Students to Voice their Struggles**

### Encouraging Students to Challenge Authority

1 teacher (7%) always encourages her students to challenge authority in the classroom whereas 3 teachers (20%) encourage very often. 2 teachers (13%) sometimes encourage their students. On the other hand, 6 teachers (40%) never inspire their students to challenge authority in the classroom and 3 teachers (20%) rarely inspire. Regarding challenging authority, the majority of the teachers (9 teachers, which is 60%) do not follow this principle of critical pedagogy



**Figure 13: Encouraging Students to Challenge Authority**

### 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

13 teachers (87%) always encourage their students to learn from each other in the class. Again, 2 teachers (13%) inspire their students very often for peer learning. So, all the teachers who participated in this research follow this principle of critical pedagogy.

**Table 7: Encouraging Students to Learn from each other**

Opinion	Frequency	Percentage
Always	13	87%
Very Often	2	13%
Sometimes	0	0%
Rarely	0	0%
Never	0	0%

#### Students and teachers are both educators and learners

7 teachers (47%) strongly agree and 8 teachers (53%) simply agree that students and teachers are both learners and educators and they can learn from each other. Here again, all the teachers believe in this principle of critical pedagogy.

**Table 8: Students and Teachers are both Educators and Learners**

Opinion	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	7 teachers	47%
Agree	8 teachers	53%
Uncertain	0	0%
Disagree	0	0%
Strongly disagree	0	0%

### Implication to Research and Practice

Critical pedagogy can enable learners to develop their learning skills by focusing on their real life problems. As the application of this approach makes teaching more enjoyable by focusing on students' needs, interests and opinions, practitioners can apply this method in their teaching and see the potential of this method to change the whole education system in Bangladesh. The researchers can also identify if there are any inequities prevalent in the schools, colleges and universities of Bangladesh and specify what the inequities are and how we can overcome them. As this study finds that the majority of the teachers believe in the most of the principles of critical pedagogy, the academic practitioners can apply this method in the classes of Bangladesh and observe to what extent critical pedagogy is fruitful.

### 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% teachers) also do not like their students to challenge authority in the classroom. However, it is clear that the participants knowingly or unknowingly follow many principles of critical pedagogy.

### Acknowledgement

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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.

<b>Principles of Critical Pedagogy</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Uncertain</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>
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.					

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.					
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.					

**Thank you very much for your kind participation.**