

Research Article

# Teachers' Beliefs on Fostering Democratic Values and Skills in Bangla Language Classroom

Imran Ali Zehadi<sup>1,\*</sup> 

<sup>1</sup> Institute of Education and Research, University of Rajshahi, Bangladesh

\* Correspondence: imranzehadi2984@gmail.com

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**Abstract:** This paper advocates the necessity of developing democratically responsible citizens to build a sustainable society, recognizes the importance of practicing democratic skills and values in building democratic citizens, and subsequently explores the teachers' beliefs and views on fostering democratic values and skills in Bangla language classrooms through teaching-learning practices. In doing so, this paper uses primary data collected from 4 teachers with semi-structured interviews respecting the constructivist perspective. In addition, this study focuses on five democratic values and skills: shared decision-making, knowledge generation, acceptance of diversity, informed decision-making, and participatory evaluation, as necessary for secondary-level students in Bangladesh. This paper finds that the participant teachers highlighted the scope of fostering democratic values and skills through classroom teaching-learning practices and acknowledged the importance of facilitating them in the Bangla classroom in order to develop future democratic citizens. The findings also pointed out some challenges to the seamless practice of those values and skills. This paper calls for policymakers to revise the existing secondary curriculum and a particular intervention in teacher training programs.

**Keywords:** Bangla language classroom; democratic values and skills; teachers' beliefs; teaching-learning practices

## 1. Introduction

Education for Sustainable Development, the most emerging concept in education, has recognized the value of cultivating a sense of citizenship, human rights, social justice and democracy among students to promote sustainable development (Bentham, 2013). In this case, education stands center for facilitating and promoting democratic ideals and values in learners. The literature highlights that the quality of democracy in society is inextricably tied to the quality of education (Biesta, 2007) and that education can activate democratic culture (Acemoglu et al., 2005). However, researchers have explained various significant perspectives for teaching democratic values and ideals through education; where some have considered textbooks and value-based theoretical content as a medium for teaching students democratic values and skills, primarily through social studies courses, while others have thought of making students democratically capable, competent, and responsible citizens by involving them in democratic learning processes and environments (Sant, 2019). The proponents of the second view argue that as children develop through participation in and practice of democratic culture throughout their school years, it will have an impact on both their micro-individual as well as macro-social lives (Pereira, 2016). In this case, the classroom, as a vital organ of a democratic society, can engage students in the democratic process, such as respect for diverse opinions, free expression, peer interactions in cooperative activities, pupils' participation in democratic decision-making, and at the same time, the democratic environment in the classroom plays a crucial role as the key hub for fostering democratic citizenship skills among students (Angell, 1991). Subba (2014) and Daher (2019) argue that democratic values and skills can be gradually developed in students' mindsets by bringing them (democratic practices) into the teaching-learning process, and it also accelerates students' learning. In addition, Dadvand (2015) argues that to promote democratic skills in students, teachers can adopt dialogic approaches in classroom teaching-learning, organize thought-provoking and collaborative activities, and engage them in power-sharing in the

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classroom, all of which are included under the features of student-centered pedagogy. Respecting this thought, the modern student-centered pedagogy as an integrated form of these processes has recently been introduced in various countries with the potential to democratize learning (Sriprakash, 2010) as well as foster democratic skills in students (Altinyelken, 2015; Anderson-Levitt, 2003).

Interestingly, as being a part of global sustainable development with high expectations for democratizing society, Bangladesh National Education Policy 2010 clearly states “the development of a democratic culture” as one of the educational goals (p. 2). To actualize the policy goal, the national curriculum 2012 has incorporated theoretical issues of democratic values and skills, particularly in the “Bangladesh and Global Studies” subject; however, though student-centered pedagogy has the potential to foster democratic values and skills in students, there is no clear indication of facilitating democratic values and skills in the classroom through teaching-learning practices. It can be expected that the student-centered pedagogy recommended in the newly developed National Curriculum Framework 2021 exposes the students to engage in learning activities, participate in democratic culture in the classroom, and get experiences that will help them to become democratically responsible citizens in the future. In this research context, it is to be mentioned that secondary schools in Bangladesh are entrusted with conveying the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for children to integrate successfully into society and contribute to its sustainable development (Rahman et al., 2010). At the same time, Bangla is a compulsory subject for students of all streams (general, madrasah, and English medium) in every class up to the lower-secondary level and for madrasah and general stream students up to the higher secondary level. Therefore, it seems that practicing democratic values and skills in the Bangla classroom will help students from all streams to participate in the democratic culture. Having said that though, globally, there are some research studies on fostering democratic values and skills among students in language classrooms, particularly in English language classrooms (e.g., Gimenez & Molinari, 2019; Serrano, 2008), and regionally here in Bangladesh in ‘Bangladesh and global studies’ classrooms (e.g., Jahan et al., 2022), however, there is no research on fostering democratic values and skills in Bangla classrooms. In addition, it is indisputable that the effective implementation of teaching-learning in the classroom (Borg, 2006; Stuart & Thurlow, 2000) and the seamless practice of democratic values and skills (Dadvand, 2015) is significantly impacted by the teachers’ perceptions. Knowles (2018), for instance, discovered a positive link between instructors’ perceptions of citizenship education and their actual teaching practices.

Under this reality, this research explores how Bangladeshi secondary school teachers perceive the scope of facilitating democratic values and skills in Bangla classrooms using student-centered and active learning techniques, which (their perceptions) act as a prerequisite for its effective implementation in the classroom. In doing so, the researchers incorporated the following research objectives:

1. to explore the teachers’ perception of fostering democratic values and skills in Bangla classroom
2. to underline the challenges to ensure seamless facilitation of democratic values and skills in Bangla classroom

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. *Conceptualizing teaching-learning practices and fostering democratic values and skills*

Fostering democracy in the classroom refers to aligning democratic values and skills with pedagogical practices, incorporating techniques in teaching that allow pupils to be engaged in various democratic practices, and offering a safe classroom atmosphere where pupils can actively participate in the learning process (Subba, 2014). Diverse teaching-learning approaches have been labeled democratic in classroom contexts (Jacobs & Power, 2016). Most scholars claimed that active learning (de Baessa et al., 2002; Subba, 2014) and student-centered approaches (Altinyelken, 2015; Jacobs & Power, 2016) ensure a democratic environment in the classroom and hence students can learn particular democratic values and skills by participating in an ongoing process. As mentioned earlier, this paper incorporated five democratic values and skills, for example, shared decision-making, knowledge generation, acceptance of diversity, informed decision-making and participatory evaluation, as essential for Bangladeshi secondary school students. This section conceptualized the relations between these democratic values and skills and their teaching-learning practices in the classroom.

Decision-making in a democratic society refers that everybody, as a democratic citizen,

should have the scope to participate in decisions made for society (Jacobs & Power, 2016). Similarly, to cultivate future democratic citizens, students should have the opportunity to engage in decision-making processes with instructors in the classroom. They further argued that in classroom teaching-learning practices, this is a matter of power-sharing that can be executed by encouraging students' active engagement and providing opportunities for their choices. In addition, teachers should create spaces in the classroom that are more dialogical (Dadvand, 2015), in which students can participate in decision-making, and learning will be a collective matter more than any one individual (Altinyelken, 2015). Students and teachers can work together to develop shared learning experiences (Cohen et al., 2010), and the classroom should give space for meaningful peer-to-peer interaction (group work, peer work, etc.) (Jacobs & Power, 2016), which helps them develop shared decisions.

Knowledge generation in a democratic culture refers to the realization that both learners and teachers have a role in developing the knowledge that society and individuals require rather than relying totally on teachers and textbooks (Jacobs & Power, 2016). Therefore, teachers should not be the sole source and authority of knowledge but mere facilitators who encourage children to learn and facilitate learning in diverse ways (Subba, 2014). This concept connects with the element of student-centered learning, teachers as co-learners (Jacobs & Power, 2016), and can be implemented in a classroom teaching-learning context using classroom discussion (Richards & Schmidt, 2013). In a classroom discussion, the emphasis is on understanding the viewpoints of others, engaging in collaborative reasoning, and exploring ideas as a group collaboration. Thus, classroom discussion provides scope for students' participation in their own learning (Schuitema et al., 2018) as co-constructors with teachers (Schweisfurth, 2011).

Acceptance of diversity is a comprehensive notion that encompasses all aspects of difference, such as gender (Sanders & Downer, 2012), variety of lifestyles, and diversity of thoughts (Jacobs & Power, 2016), which all are crucial to developing a democratic society. Jacobs and Power (2016) discussed that the classroom could facilitate students' versatile ideas (as a means of listening and respecting others' views) by designing tasks or questions that have multiple logical replies and engaging in group work. Participation in group collaborations and classroom activities improves students' communication skills (Hashimoto & Fukuda, 2011) and develops a sense of community (Jacobs & Power, 2016). Recognizing the potentiality of group-work, de Baessa, Chesterfield, and Ramos (2002) argued that using student-directed small groups is linked to the evidence of democratic personality among children with diverse genders and cultures. In addition, relationships between student-student and student-teacher are significant in education for democracy since they are analogous to the relationships between citizens, and what is practiced in school will undoubtedly transfer to behaviors outside of school. Therefore, teachers should strive to foster healthy and constructive relationships between students, with particular attention to gender relations and the treatment of minority groups or vulnerable children (Carr, 2013). When teachers treat students fairly, it fosters a sense of being empowered in the students and teachers can persuade them to acquire democratic attitudes, which will eventually manifest themselves in their daily lives (Kesici, 2008).

As a democratic component, informed decision-making refers to proactive skills that enable individuals to make decisions based on reliable information. In addition to developing creative and critical thinking abilities about knowledge and surface realities (Wolk, 1996 as cited in Alajlan, 2015), which primarily foster a sense of meaning-making and ultimately lead students to make informed decisions, teachers can begin with explaining their objectives (why students should learn a particular topic or issue) for the class to make students well-informed about certain topics (Jacobs & Power, 2016). Moreover, Hosgorur (2002) argued that teachers should provide learners with the essential information, should explain to pupils the purpose of the learning activity and what is expected to be accomplished from the activity in order to help them develop abilities to make an informed decision in a democratic classroom.

Additionally, in a genuinely democratic society, as a form of participatory evaluation, everyone can join in figuring out the effectiveness of efforts to develop a particular society (Jacobs & Power, 2016). They argued that this could be visualized in the classroom as an image of society when students take an active role in evaluating their own learning and their peers' responses. In a similar vein, Subba (2014) asserted that teachers should support their pupils to evaluate their own work. This participatory evaluation, compared to conventional pan-paper-based tests, boosts student engagement, improves their capacity for self-monitoring (Jacobs & Power, 2016), and promotes fairness and a sense of justice (Carr, 2013).

## 2.2. Teachers' Beliefs and Democratic Values and Skills in Teaching

Research on teachers' beliefs showed mixed results towards democracy teaching, among which most of the research revealed teachers' positive attitudes toward teaching democracy to students through participatory classroom activities, and in contrast, a little research indicated teachers' unwillingness to adapt the new pedagogy and pointed the practice of antiquated teacher-centered learning approaches. In a qualitative study conducted in the Bangladeshi context, Jahan, Sarker, and Ali (2022) indicated teachers' positive mindsets towards facilitating and teaching democratic values and norms using interactive classroom activities and also pointed out some challenges as internal factors such as large class sizes, high workloads, and relatively limited time slots for large classes. Likewise, regarding practice and teaching democratic ideals to young pupils, Gomes's (2020) research from the similar context highlighted teachers' willingness and desire to improve their practices for developing future democratic individuals and classrooms. Altınyelken (2015) conducted a study on democratizing Turkey through student-centered approaches and showed that the teachers hold a positive mindset and recognize the democratizing potential of student-centered classroom activities. In addition to the challenges pointed out by Jahan, Sarker, and Ali (2022), this research further highlighted classroom management as a critical challenge to promote democracy through increased student participation. Güleç & Balçık (2009) further argued that teachers believed students engaging classroom activities (group work and collaborative activities) would help their students to gain democratic skills, for example, effective discussion, critical thinking, the ability to combat inequity, cooperation, and collaboration, and showing respect and empathy for diversity. Similarly, taking into consideration the significance of teachers' beliefs, Sarwar, Yousuf, and Hussain (2010) also investigated secondary school teachers' perceptions of the development of democratic values and strategies to enhance the democratic system, as well as their attitudes toward democracy, and explored that an open climate and appropriate active teaching methods were the most effective methods for the development of democratic values in secondary school students.

## 3. Materials and Methods

As the goal of the research was to rely as much as possible on the participants' views of the lived life being studied, the research nature was respectively under constructivism, which is typically seen as a guiding approach to qualitative research (Creswell, 2014) and the qualitative design was considered for this study. Creswell (2014) argued that constructivism helps to explore the participants' subjective meanings of their experiences, and the meanings are varied and multiple. Under the constructivist perspective, qualitative design permits researchers to examine a topic in-depth and in detail (Patton, 2015) and is more suitable to understand a phenomenon from the participant's point of view (Lincoln & Guba, 1986).

To collect research data, semi-structured interviews were applied in this study, as "semi-structured qualitative interviews are best suited for addressing research questions that center on participants' meaning-making, reflections on experiences, life stories, and opinions on events and activities" (Roulston, 2012). For the interviews, four secondary-level Bangla teachers were purposively selected in this study from different schools. Kesici (2008) argued that purposive sampling significantly appeared in qualitative research. The participants had at least four years of experience in teaching Bangla at secondary schools. The interview questions were open-ended, and the participants were asked some follow-up questions where necessary. The researcher conducted face-to-face interviews at the suitable location with the permission of the informant teachers. Each interview lasted between 45 to 60 minutes, and all the interviews were recorded by phone recorder. In addition, all the interviews were conducted in Bangla, the first language of the participants, and were later translated into English during the transcriptions of the data.

In developing the interview questions, five democratic values and skills were considered, and a total of eleven guiding questions were formulated for the teachers' interviews. The questions were developed from the different scholarly theories and perspectives discussed in the literature on the distinctive and similar features of teaching practices of democratic components. In qualitative research, piloting is frequently seen as the primary trial to evaluate its validity (In, 2017). Therefore, to check the validity of the instruments, a pilot study for interviews was undertaken before implementing the tool, and the items of questions were modified and redeveloped where necessary.

This study strictly maintained the ethical considerations guided by the British Educational Research Association (BERA) (2018). Further, to ensure confidentiality, the

participant teachers were coded as PT1, PT2, PT3, and PT4 for representing interviews 1, 2, 3, and 4, respectively.

The data gathered was analyzed through an inductive approach. An inductive approach is a significant method in qualitative research, which helps to extract concepts and theories from the grounded level in the process of data collection and analysis; however, it acknowledges the use of pre-existing theories as a foundation of investigation (Bryman, 2016). Therefore, pre-existing theories of democracy in accordance with classroom teaching-learning practices have been considered as the basis, and the data transcribed has primarily been coded according to the theoretical aspects. The data analysis process followed the sequence of (phase 1) transcribing the data, (phase 2) pre-coding and coding, (phase 3) recording growing ideas-memos, profiles, etc., and finally (phase 4) interpreting the data to draw conclusions suggested by Dornyei (2007).

## 4. Results and Discussion

### 4.1. Fostering Democratic Values and Skills in Bangla Classroom

The participant teachers admitted the scope of teaching democratic values and skills via classroom teaching-learning practices and acknowledged the importance of facilitating them in the classroom in order to develop future democratic citizens. This major finding is similar to the study by Jahan, Sarker, and Ali (2022), Altinyelken (2015), and Dadvand (2015), where they explored teachers' positive mindset to facilitate democratic values and skills in the classroom. The significant findings pointed out in this study are discussed under each theme.

#### 4.1.1. Shared-decision making

To cultivate future democratic citizens, students should have the opportunity to participate in decision-making processes in the classroom (Jacobs & Power, 2016). Discussing the issue, the participant teachers highlighted the potential of group-work to develop shared decision-making skills among students. For example, one teacher stated:

*"Through group-work, students will express their opinions or write in notebooks. After then, they will come to a conclusion by combining everyone's views. That's why we should create opportunities for discussion among themselves."* [PT4]

This finding is similar to Crosby (2018), who thinks group work is a collaborative task that necessitates students to engage in intensive interaction with their peers and helps them reach a decision based on shared understanding. Thus, by offering group-work, teachers can develop a sense of power sharing and respect in students.

#### 4.1.2. Knowledge Generation

Knowledge generation in democratic culture refers to the realization that both learners and teachers have a role in the knowledge formation process, which society and individuals require, rather than relying totally on teachers and textbooks (Jacobs & Power, 2016). In a democratic classroom, it refers, in general, to the two-way follow of learning and classroom discussion. Like Jacobs and Power (2016), the participant teachers show a positive mindset toward students' participation in classroom discussions. For instance, talking about sharing experiences between teachers and students in the classroom, **PT1** stated:

*"I personally think that the teacher should not follow the jug-mug theory all the time. ... I think the teacher and student sharing (discussion) should be in the classroom. I think that when my students make an argument, I should take the argument. ... I also have a lot to learn from them."*

Evaluating the statement, it seems that the teacher also recognized students' abilities and believed that through active participation in the discussion process, students could share their ideas and experiences in the classroom, and everyone could actively participate in learning. The perception of PT1 has aligned with Schuitema, Radstake, van de Pol, and Veugelers' (2018) arguments. She explains that in a classroom discussion, the emphasis is on understanding the viewpoints of others and engaging in collaborative reasoning. Thus, classroom discussion provides scope for students' participation in their own learning (Schuitema et al., 2018) as co-constructors with teachers (Schweisfurth, 2011).

#### 4.1.3. Acceptance of Diversity

Discussing acceptance of diversity, Subba (2014) argued that teachers should not give any student priority over others under any circumstance, and there should be equal opportunities for all students from different backgrounds to participate actively in classroom discussions and activities. Fairly treating students fosters a sense of being empowered in the students (Kesici, 2008). In this regard, the participant teachers also pointed out the matter of

gender equality to teach students democracy. They assumed that both male and female pupils should have equal opportunities in the classroom, which would promote the value of equality among students. As **PT2** highlighted this message in discussing acceptance of diversity in an interview:

*“What is the job of a teacher? To change their (students) perspective, to break down their narrow-mindedness, and to create a new one so that they can learn to be generous. It is normal that there will be boys and girls in the class. In this case, girls should not be given fewer chances than boys. Everyone should be treated equally, and then they will learn to treat everyone equally.”*

Carr (2013) supports **PT2**'s assumption of gender equality. He argues that social relationships are significant in education for democracy since relationships between students are analogous to the relationships between citizens, and what is practiced in school will undoubtedly transfer to behaviors outside of school.

Respect for and consideration of different ideas is another integral component of acceptance of diversity in the classroom. According to Jacobs and Power (2016), students' versatile ideas can be facilitated in the classroom through group-work and structuring tasks or questions with multiple valid responses. Similarly, in this research, the participating teacher expressed an optimistic view for transferring the value of diversity acceptance and cooperation among students through group-work in the classroom. **PT1**'s perception is a good example here:

*“I think, through teamwork (group-work), a good relationship is formed between them, i.e., if I make a group of 5 members among them, a friendly atmosphere develops between them, and they become one of five without fighting or competing with each other, and all together they try to reach a conclusion with mutual understanding.”*

**PT1**'s perception of group-work is parallel with the findings of de Baessa, Chesterfield, and Ramos (2002) who showed that the degree of democratic behaviour among children of diverse genders and cultures was positively associated with the utilization of student-directed small groups.

#### 4.1.4. Informed Decision Making

Establishing and maintaining democracy requires the development of critical and reflective citizens. For this reason, one of the primary purposes of education in a democratic society is to strengthen students' capability to make informed and well-reasoned decisions on the relevant local, regional, and global social challenges (Yilmaz, 2009). However, to make students well-informed about certain topics, teachers can begin with explaining their objectives (why students should learn a particular topic or issue) for the class (Jacobs & Power, 2016). Similarly, in this study, the participating teachers demonstrated a positive attitude toward explaining the objectives of any learning activities and content to facilitate this skill in the classroom. In addition, they believe that explaining the purpose of a lesson in the classroom creates meaning in students and makes them interested and engaged in the lesson. **PT2**'s statement is reflective of that:

*“Of course, it (explaining objectives) is necessary because every activity has a purpose. If students do not know why they are doing something, then they will not get interested in that work, or their effort will not be 100%.... If the learners understand why they are learning or the lesson's purposes, then learning becomes easier for them, and their interest and effort will be higher than before.”*

It is clear from the above statement that **PT2** thinks that by knowing the lesson's purpose, the students can realize the meaning of learning and learn how learning affects their lives, which builds their critical thinking skills and enables them to make informed decisions. This finding is also supported by Hosgorur's (2002) concept, which underlines that teachers should provide learners with the essential information, should explain to pupils the purpose of the learning activity and what is expected to be accomplished from the activity in order to help them develop abilities to make an informed decision in a democratic classroom.

#### 4.1.5. Participatory Evaluation

In a truly democratic society, everyone, as a citizen, can take part in determining the efficacy of the work to improve society (Jacobs & Power, 2016). They argue that students can acquire this skill when they have opportunities to participate in assessing themselves and their peer's responses in the classroom as a reflection of a democratic society. Jacobs and Power's (2016) conceptualization of assessment is similar to the study's finding that indicated that the participant teachers expressed the potential of students' active participation in the evaluation process, which directly makes them capable of participating in a broader social context. They also think it inculcates democratic values of justice in them. For instance, **PT2** talked about

the scope and advantage of students' active participation in classroom assessment:

*"Yes, it is more effective when we give him/her a notebook of one of his/her classmates and ask him/her to read it. Then he/she comes to comparison, and he/she himself/herself is forced to admit that 'it is better than me'. He/she is comparing it to himself/herself. What happens through this is that he/she no longer thinks of himself/herself as the best. He/she recognizes good writing as good, and from there, he/she realizes and corrects his/her own mistakes. It is also a democracy."*

The above statement of PT2 is parallel to the finding of Mussawy, Rossman, and Haqiqat (2021), which underlines teachers' willingness to participatory assessment and shows that teachers were open to giving students opportunities to review their peers' work as well as to provide constructive feedback. The finding is also supported by Carr (2013), who argued that teachers should engage students in assessment through self, peer, and collaborative assessment since this can enhance their critical thinking ability, help them develop judgmental standards, and foster a sense of justice.

#### 4.2. Challenges

The teachers gave insightful views on facilitating democratic values and skills to students through day-to-day interactive and student-engaging classroom activities, and at the same time, they mentioned some required conditions and pedagogical challenges for their smooth execution. The finding pointed out large class sizes, limited class time, and high workloads as significant barriers to democratic practices in the classroom. Below the two statements reflect this:

*"Democracy can be practiced in the classroom, but the number of students should be limited. Suppose, when there are 70-80 students in a classroom; then it is seen that 5-6 students have to sit on a bench... Then Do I give time in front, give time in between, or give time in the back of the class? ...teacher-student ratio should be low. Then it will be possible to make everyone participate equally." [PT4]*

And

*"In just 40 to 45 minutes giving them (students) group-work, doing that group-work, and then giving them a presentation (presentation of group-work), I can't complete it in a class." [PT1]*

This finding is similar to Jahan, Sarker, and Ali (2022), who highlighted large class sizes, limited time slots for large classes, and high workloads as impediments to practicing democracy in secondary classrooms from the teachers' point of view. Where the first two challenges consistently support PT4 and PT1's statement above, the last challenge (high workloads) is consistent with the opinion of PT2. **PT2** expressed his understanding by saying that:

*"As many classes as having in a year, we (teachers) get many opportunities that is not. There is also a matter of our preparation. In addition, we have also to do some schoolwork. Consequently, it gets difficult."*

In addition, most of the participating teachers discussed the challenges of classroom management for practicing democratic values and skills. Whereas current views of curriculum and instruction emphasize students' active participation, comprehension, problem-solving, and independence, the term classroom management involves issues of a supportive relationship, active participation, group management method, nature of task activities as well as promoting social skills (Evertson & Weinstein, 2011) which are required to foster democratic values and skills in the classroom. For instance, **PT2** talked about managing diverse students and ensuring their participation in the classroom as a formidable challenge:

*"Some students play a very passive role in the classroom. ... They are silent. They will not give you any opinion. Whatever you say, they will accept it in silence. Even if they have problems, they won't tell you."*

Furthermore, the data analysis reveals that the extensive Bangla curriculum and the pressure to cover it in a short amount of time inhibit democratic activities in the classroom. Due to the wide range of curriculum, the length of class time, and the large number of classes scheduled annually, there is not enough opportunity for doing such activities in the classroom. At the same time, the participating teachers strongly criticized the result-oriented competition and noted the pressure from parents to cover the syllabus in their responses. In this case, the statement of **PT3** is a good example:

*"In fact, if you consider the obstacles, then there is a competition going on in our country. How is the competition? - Good results should be done. And under a certain curriculum, we have a syllabus every year and a plan that we have to finish this topic by this time (this year). ...in that case ... the duration of each class, and the number of classes that we have annually, it is not that we get a lot of opportunities for doing interactive classroom activities. ... Plus ... you have to evaluate these things. Then, the fear of not completing the syllabus comes into play. Again, if the syllabus is not completed, it is usually not accepted by the parents."*

The above-mentioned challenges that teachers assumed as significant concerns of practicing students engaging classroom activities to facilitate democracy in students reflect

Yilmaz (2009), Altinyelken (2015), Hemmati and Azizmalayeri (2022). Yilmaz's (2009) study pointed out that teachers faced challenges regarding classroom management and time management issues to ensure students' active participation and lack of skills that required intervention in teacher training. Interestingly, the challenges Altinyelken (2015) highlighted from the teachers' perspective are consistent with the majority of the challenges in this study. The study included large classroom sizes, time pressure and stress to cover curriculum topics on time, classroom control, complaints from parents and their expectation only of exam-oriented performance, as well as seating arrangements and space limitations that hinder organizing group activities.

## 5. Conclusions and Implication

Bangladeshi policy makers and educators quite often emphasize the value of fostering critical and democratic citizenship among the learners. The significance of this study lies with the fact that the participant teachers recognized the opportunities to teach democratic values and skill in the classrooms, highlighting the need to cultivate future democratic citizens. The research findings focus on the notes delivered by the teachers on the issues which are conducive for facilitating democratic skills, however a few teachers' beliefs and articulations reflected their ignorance and unawareness towards the teaching of democratic values. This research indicated that there was always scope for facilitating democratic values and skills given in the existing teaching-learning practices in the Bangla classroom context, and group-work, classroom discussion, bias-free instruction, life-oriented classroom activity, and active participation in the assessment process helped to serve these values and skills into the students. The findings further pointed out large class sizes, limited class time, high workloads for teachers, extensive Bangla curriculum, and classroom management as challenges to seamless facilitation of these values and skills in the classroom. This research opens up the opportunity for further research direction. For instance, this study focuses on teachers' perceptions. A similar study can be conducted to investigate the students' perceptions.

The study findings shed light on some essential policy suggestions. Policymakers should focus on particular interventions in teacher training programs and should revise the secondary curriculum to explicitly introduce the relationship between teaching-learning practices and fostering democratic values and skills in the classroom. They should take significant action to minimize high teacher-student ratio as per-class into 1:30 suggested by national education policy and establish balances between Bangla curriculum and class hour allotted annually considering classroom democratic practices. Further, policymakers should incorporate the qualitative evaluation approach (record keeping, narrative report writing) to assess positive changes in students' democratic behavior.

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