

# Contextualized Pedagogical Strategies for Marginalized Primary School Students in Bangladesh: Examining the Role of Teachers in Enhancing Learning Outcomes.

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## Abstract

*This qualitative research paper explores the ways in which teachers frame pedagogical approaches to marginalized primary school students in Bangladesh and the effects of these pedagogical approaches on student learning outcomes. The study was carried out in four government primary schools within Sreemongol and Borlekha upazilas of the Moulvibazar district and it included 20 students (Grades 4 and 5), four head teachers and eight assistant teachers. The data was gathered by using classroom observations, semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. The results demonstrate that instructors proactively change the teaching methods to accommodate the local language, cultural examples, and adaptable instruction. Such accommodation contributes greatly to the student involvement, understanding, and involvement. Nevertheless, the systemic barriers like inflexible curriculum, lack of training and availability of resources are impeding successful implementation. By highlighting the importance of teacher agency in the process of policy-practice gap, the study adds to the rapidly expanding body of research in inclusive and contextualized pedagogy. It suggests specific professional growth, curriculum adaptation, and policy changes to make the context-responsive teaching practices institutional in Bangladesh.*

**Key Word:** *Inclusive Education, Pedagogy, Bangladesh, Marginal Children, Primary Education.*

## 1. Introduction

The provision of fair learning outcomes to the marginalized students is also a major issue in the Bangladesh primary education system. Despite the policies that are aimed at inclusive education, inequalities exist because of the socio-economic, linguistic, and geographic disparities. Disadvantaged students, especially the tea garden communities, ethnic minorities, and low-income families, experience structural constraints that make them less successful in their studies. Studies show that conventional teaching methods that are marked by memorization and standardized instructions have the tendency to fail to meet the varied needs of such students (Acharja et al., 2021). The teachers, therefore, are significant in accommodating the teaching practices to local contexts. Contextualized pedagogy is defined as the process of adapting the teaching strategies to the life experiences, cultures and linguistic realities of the students. In rural Bangladesh, which has very heterogeneous classrooms, these methods would be crucial to effective learning. Nevertheless, the research indicates that the educators do not have sufficient resources and training to engage in the process of inclusive and context-sensitive practice (Acharja and Begum, 2025). Moreover, teacher agency is limited by institutional issues like overcrowded classrooms, lack of resources and inflexible curricula. The purpose of this research is to understand how the teachers in Sreemongol and Borlekha adjust their teaching methods to the local conditions and the way these adjustments influence the learning experience of marginalized students.

## Research Question

*Main Research Question*

What is the contextualization of pedagogical strategies in primary schools in Sreemongol and Borlekha upazilas of Moulvibazar to help marginalized students in learning outcomes?

### *Sub-Research Questions*

- ✚ How does pedagogy practice by teachers in classrooms of marginalized students in primary schools?
- ✚ What are the experiences and reactions of the marginalized students to these contextualized teaching practices?
- ✚ Which difficulties do teachers experience in applying contextualized pedagogy in such classroom settings?

## **2. Literature Review**

### *2.1 Marginalization and Educational Inequality in Bangladesh.*

Marginalization in education is the institutionalization of learners in meaningful education because of disadvantages in socio-economic, cultural, linguistic, or geographic aspects. In Bangladesh, the marginalized learners are usually the children of tea garden communities, ethnic minorities and low-income rural families. Poverty, parental illiteracy, and the inability to access educational resources are the compounded barriers that such learners experience (Acharja et al., 2021). According to recent literature, even though the rise in primary school enrollment is rather significant, the issue of learning inequality is still major, and it affects especially the rural and disadvantaged locations. A thorough analysis by Rahman and Alam (2025) represents that even though the policies of Bangladesh are synchronized with the international frameworks, such as SDG 4, a considerable segment of the deprived children is unable to receive quality education because of structural and contextual factors. Moreover, children with learning disabilities and communication barriers are overall marginalized in the quality participation in the classroom, which supports the cycles of educational inequality (Rahman and Alam, 2025). Acharja and Biswas (2025) also state that institutional support and socio-cultural marginalization are structural inequities that are still determining unequal learning outcomes in Bangladesh.

### *2.2 Inclusive Education: Policy Promises and Practice Lapses.*

Bangladesh has also given good policy commitments on inclusive education by policy frameworks like the National Education Policy (2010). Nevertheless, there is a lack of consistency in the conversion of policy to practice. The studies indicate that inclusive education is theoretically integrated into the national policy but cannot be implemented due to the infrastructural constraints, the absence of trained teachers, and the unavailability of teaching resources (Acharja & Begum, 2025). This is in line with the results Siddik (2025) lists teacher inefficiency, limited resources, and infrastructural barriers as some of the challenges to the provision of the inclusive education into primary schools. In the same way, previous research has shown that teachers tend to believe that inclusive education is not very easy to apply because of big classes and the lack of assistance, which does not allow them to pay any attention to children individually (Chowdhury & Hasan, 2013). Also, the curriculum analysis research shows that teacher education programs in Bangladesh are not always inclusive of pedagogy, and teachers are not well prepared to work in diverse classrooms (Haider & Ferdous, 2019). Such discrepancy between the school policy and classroom life is what makes context-sensitive pedagogical strategies important.

### *2.3 Teacher Agency, Teacher Role, and Classroom Practice.*

Educators play an important role in the creation of inclusive learning. Their thoughts, values, and habits have a great impact on the implementation of pedagogy in actual classrooms. Acharja (2021) points out that the perception of teachers is a significant factor in the way marginalized students are treated and helped in the classrooms. Educators

who perceive diversity as a problem are less prone to practicing inclusion, and the ones who embrace diversity are apt to change their teaching styles. Empirical studies in the recent past have shown that inclusive pedagogy training among teachers has the potential to significantly enhance the classroom practices such as student involvement and decreased absenteeism (Zinnah et al., 2024). The paper also indicates that teachers that participate in action research become more pedagogically aware and become more competent to respond to issues in the classroom through contextual adjustment. Nevertheless, systemic forces like curriculum inflexibility and examination-driven instruction frequently restrict teacher agency, so they cannot be innovative.

#### *2.4 Culturally Responsive and Contextualized Pedagogy.*

The contextualized pedagogy is the modification of instructional practices in accordance with the cultural, linguistic and socio-economic background of the learners. It has a close relationship with the culturally responsive teaching and an inclusive pedagogy. Studies have indicated that learning is better achieved when teaching is related to the experience that the students go through in their lives. The authors emphasize that child-centered and context-sensitive frameworks enhance the involvement and understanding of the marginalized learners (Acharja et al., 2021). This point of view is also supported by international literature. Differentiated instruction, collaborative learning, and culturally relevant teaching are the key elements of inclusive pedagogy, which is aimed at meeting the needs of diverse learners (Florian, 2014; Ainscow, 2020 as cited in Lin et al., 2026). Right-based pedagogical approaches have also been discovered to facilitate quality education in Bangladesh situation by providing participation and equity (Islam, 2023). Contextualized pedagogy is not a systematically implemented practice despite its efficiency. Rather, teachers tend to apply such strategies on a personal experience basis and not through training.

#### *2.5 Language, Culture and Learning.*

Language is a very important thing in learning process, especially to the disadvantaged students. In a multilingual setting such as Moulvibazar, many students use local dialects or native languages at home thus creating a gap between home and standard Bangali education. Research shows that there is a strong impact on the comprehension and the participation of linguistic differences between the home and school language. The gap can be filled by using contextualized teaching that includes the use of local language and improving learning outcomes (Acharja et al., 2025). The culturally relevant pedagogy also facilitates learning through relating abstract concepts to the known ones. This is especially relevant to students belonging to tea garden society, in which formal education may seem out of touch with life in general.

#### *2.6 Classroom Implementation Structural Constraints.*

As teachers strive to contextualize pedagogy, their attempts are usually limited by the systemic aspects. The studies recognize the following major problems such as, overcrowded classrooms, rigid curriculum requirements, limited instructional time, and inadequacy of teaching materials. According to Siddik (2025), educators are torn between the idea of inclusiveness and the demands of the institution, especially in institutions that lack resources. In the same vein, Acharja and Begum (2025) emphasize that teachers have poor professional development which restricts them to use effective pedagogical practices. These limitations imply that the achievement of better learning outcomes cannot be achieved through the work of teachers alone, but also the systemic changes.

#### *2.7 Research Gap*

The analyzed literature highlights several valuable aspects: marginalized students face serious obstacles to learning, inclusive education policies are present, however, they are not effectively implemented, and teachers are also of paramount importance even though they do not have much support. Although contextualized pedagogy has been shown to be effective, it has not been fully utilized, and the classroom is often constrained by structures. Nevertheless, there is a significant gap in empirical and classroom-based qualitative studies that investigate the active real-time

adaptation of teachers in rural Bangladesh to teaching. Specifically, not many studies have been devoted to tea gardens and ethnically diverse communities, micro-level classroom practices, or the attitude of students to the approach to teaching. The research will fill these gaps by presenting thorough qualitative data of Sreemongol and Borlekha with the insights that can be applied in the theoretical framework and practice of inclusive education.

### 3. Research Methodology

#### 3.1 Research Design

This paper embraces qualitative research design with ethnographic orientation, in a bid to examine how teachers formulate and execute contextualized pedagogical plans in actual classroom situations. Qualitative approach is suitable as the research aims at comprehending meanings, experience and practices, as opposed to quantifying variables. The ethnographic aspect facilitates close interaction with the classroom culture, teacher student interaction, and the socio-cultural realities that inform pedagogical choices. The paper also uses a micro-level intervention approach, in which naturally occurring pedagogical changes are seen as implicit interventions.

#### 3.2 Research Setting

The study was carried out in Sreemongol and Borlekha upazilas of Moulvibazar district situated in northeast Bangladesh. The selection of these areas is based on Tea Garden communities, Ethnic minority communities (e.g., Khasi, Manipuri, Tripura), and High levels of poverty and educational disadvantage. In such areas, schools are characterized by infrastructural constraints and language heterogeneity and are therefore the most suitable settings to investigate contextualized pedagogy.

#### 3.3 Research Participants

The research used the purposive sampling method to identify respondents who had direct teaching and learning experiences in marginalized settings. A sample of 20 students in Grade 4 and 5, 8 assistant teachers, 4 head teachers and 4 government primary schools were used. Students were selected based on the underserved backgrounds such as children of tea garden laborers, low-income families, and teachers had to have at least three years of teaching experience. To reflect the different classroom dynamics, schools with different students were given priority. This purposive methodology guaranteed that information-rich cases were included and this offered the depth required in qualitative analysis.

#### 3.4 Data Collection Methods

To guarantee data triangulation, several qualitative techniques were employed, which added validity and credibility.

##### Classroom Observation

The classroom sessions observed differed in the teaching approach where most of the teachers adopted the lecture-based approach to teaching with some adopting interactive teaching approaches that allowed students to be more involved. The teachers mostly spoke standard Bangali but often translated to local dialect to explain something and help students to understand it. The involvement of students in the classroom was greater in the case of interactive methods, and the less involved classroom sessions were lecture-based. The level of interaction between teachers and students was mostly respectful yet usually teacher-centered with minimum student-initiated interaction. In general, participatory techniques and adaptable language practices seemed to improve student involvement and understanding.

##### Semi-Structured Interviews

Interviews were flexible and the participants were able to give detailed experiences.

Four head teachers and eight assistant teachers were interviewed to achieve a variety of opinions. The talks were centered around the main themes of instructional methods, attitudes towards disadvantaged students, difficulties in the classroom, and adapting strategies. A question that guided one of the questions was how teachers adjust the students

with the problem of understanding the language of the textbook. The interview was quite flexible, and the questions enabled the participants to expound more on their experiences and give detailed information. This method was useful in documenting rich and detailed information concerning classroom practices and difficulties.

#### Focus Group Discussions (FGDs).

The four groups of students were engaged in focus group discussions to understand their common learning experiences. The discussions focused on the teaching methods preferred, difficulties in comprehending the lessons, and the experiences in the classroom in general. Most students stated that they learn better when teachers provide examples of real-life situations. The group discussion helped students to discuss and think about shared challenges and interests. Consequently, the FGDs emphasized group viewpoints and commonalities in the experiences of students.

#### 3.5 Data Analysis Procedure

The study employed thematic analysis through a systematic process that began with data transcription, followed by initial open coding. The codes were then organized into broader categories and developed into key themes. These themes were interpreted to generate meaningful insights from the data. The analytical process was iterative, involving continuous movement between the data and relevant theoretical perspectives.

#### 3.6 Trustworthiness of the Study

The study enabled rigor by addressing credibility by triangulating data sources, such as observations, interviews, and FGDs. Transferability was supported by providing a detailed description of the research context. Reliability was ensured by systematic and transparent records of the research procedures. Conformability was provided using direct quotations of the participants to reinforce the findings.

#### 3.7 Ethical Considerations

The ethics was maintained through informed consent, which was taken out of all the participants before data collection. The study was conducted in a strictly confidential fashion. The identities of the participants were safeguarded by use of pseudonyms. Also, the school authorities of the respective schools were consulted prior to the research.

### 4. Findings

The analysis produced five themes that are interconnected and they explain how the pedagogy is contextualized by teachers and the impact of these practices on the learning outcomes of marginalized students. The presentation of each theme is based on the thick description, quotations of the participants, and the interpretations.

#### *Theme 1: Linguistic Mediation to Learning.*

One pattern that was predominant in all the four schools was that language and dialects were used as a mediating strategy in classroom instructions. The teachers never strictly accepted standard Bangali, they instead moved in and out of formal and informal linguistic forms in accordance with the level of understanding of the students. An assistant teacher at Borlekha described how when he begins with the textbook language, many students appear to be confused, so he then begins to explain the language in their own language and then immediately they answer. This door opening metaphor is symbolic in the sense that language is not just a means of communication, but it is also a kind of gateway that leads to cognitive interaction. Observations conducted in classrooms were able to confirm that students who were initially silent started to engage in classroom activities when their teacher switched to local dialects. In focus group discussion one Grade 5 student mentioned, when we are at home, we do not talk about the book. When sir talks to us in our language, I can hear and I can respond. It means that there is no interrelation between school language and home language, and teachers are trying to connect the two languages in an informal manner. Nonetheless, these

practices were not established and organized. One of the head teachers at Sreemongol commented, “There is no official instruction to use local language, but when we do not, many of the students will be left behind.

#### Interpretation

This theme shows that language adaptation is one of the key features of the contextualized pedagogy in marginalized environments. Teachers are linguistic intermediaries who not only translate words but also meanings. The use of local language can be seen to be a measure of teacher responsiveness and systemic weaknesses, where the formal curriculum fails to support linguistic diversity.

#### *Theme: 2: Integrating Learning into the Lived Realities of students.*

The other important theme was the application of contextual and culturally relevant examples, mostly based on tea garden life, agriculture and day-to-day household experiences. In a lesson observed in mathematics in Sreemongol, the teacher described multiplication by describing the collection of tea leaves: “Suppose that one worker gathers 5 baskets and there are 4 workers, how many baskets in total?” Students were keen to participate, providing responses and even continuing the example. One student said, when it comes to tea garden, I can visualize it, it becomes easy. In the same way, one teacher told me how they do it, “When I provide them with examples of life in the city, they fail to connect, but when I discuss their job, their family, they learn very fast. This shows how abstract ideas are made to have a sense when based on the familiar contexts. The teachers were aware of contextual pedagogy, as they deliberately substituted the textbook examples with the ones that were relevant to the area. Nevertheless, there was also a limitation mentioned by one teacher: “The book does not suit their lives, so they must change, although it consumes additional time.

#### Interpretation

The theme brings out the fact that contextual relevance increases cognitive accessibility. Teachers can connect new knowledge with prior experiences, hence facilitating students to make more meaning. Meanwhile, the necessity of a continuous adjustment to a discrepancy between the national curriculum and the local realities refers to the need to adapt to them.

#### *Theme 3: Resource-Constrained Classrooms Pedagogical flexibility and Improvisation.*

Educators in all schools were flexible in their teaching methods and tended to improvise as they did not have the necessary resources and had different learners. The observations indicated that teachers often used various teaching methods to involve the students. These were group work, peer learning and storytelling which promoted collaboration and participation. Lessons were also more relatable and accessible as teachers used materials available in the area. These practices not only facilitated learning but also related learning to daily experiences of the students. In general, these strategies indicate the context-sensitive and flexible approach to teaching. The assistant teacher replied that not all students can be taught in the same manner: some learn faster, some learn slower, thus I split them into groups. In a monitored lesson, learners were divided into small groups to find solutions to the problems, and more competent learners assisted less competent learners. This interaction among peers led to a more inclusive learning environment. One of the students told about having this experience: When we work collaboratively, friends come to my assistance. I am not that afraid to ask. Storytelling was also an instructional tool of teachers: “Sometimes I tell stories connected with the lesson. Students like and remember better. But teachers stressed that these practices are not systematically instructed: We do it because we have a thought. Training does not educate us in this.

#### Interpretation

The theme emphasizes the agency of teachers in practice, in which teachers change practices according to the needs of the situation. Pedagogical flexibility is not a result of systematic training but rather through experience and need. This highlights the creativity of teachers as well as the absence of institutional support.

*Theme 4: Emotional Safety and Relational Pedagogy in Learning.*

The emotional aspect of instruction has become one of the main issues that have a disadvantaged impact on student engagement and participation. Those teachers who were more successful in engaging the marginalized learners were those who provided supportive and respectful relationships. One student said that he likes the teacher who does not get angry, so he is able to talk without fear. Some other student added, the teacher shouts, and I get nervous and am unable to respond. Teachers knew about such dynamics: many students are already shy, and if we are strict, they are going to be silent. This is why we must be friendly. Observations in the classrooms established that positive teacher behaviors like smiling, encouraging responses, and giving gentle feedback- led to increased participation by students. One of the head teachers remarked: Learning is not so much about books, but when students are safe, they learn more.

*Interpretation*

Such theme is indicative of the value of relational pedagogy, in which emotional safety emerges as a precondition of learning. In the case of marginalized students, who might be already socially marginalized, a positive classroom atmosphere can be instrumental in confidence and engagement creation.

*Theme 5: Pedagogical Effectiveness Limitations by Structures.*

Systemic and institutional influences greatly limit the practices undertaken by teachers although they have tried to contextualize pedagogy. The research found that there were several common issues encountered by educators within the schools. The classes were large, which could not allow personal attention to be given to students. There was also pressure on teachers to cover the stipulated syllabus which left little room to be flexible or creative in teaching. The insufficient teaching materials also limited the delivery of lessons, and the professional training was also inadequate, and teachers were not well equipped to meet various learning needs. These aspects were in the way of successful application of inclusive and contextualized pedagogy.

In response, an assistant teacher replied that we want to pay attention to all the students, and there are too many in a single class. As one more teacher said, we must complete the syllabus on time. That is why sometimes we cannot employ various methods. A head teacher identified areas of training deficiency, "Training exists, but it is generic, not specific to our local issues. Teachers were frequently compelled to go back to the old lecture-based techniques by these constraints, when they were aware of their weaknesses.

*Interpretation*

The theme unveils a conflict between institutional structure and teacher intention. As willing and creative as teachers are, the systemic barriers inhibit sustainability and effectiveness of contextualized pedagogy. This is an indication that individual effort cannot work without structural support.

*Theme 6: Student Learning Outcomes, perceived change.*

When there were contextualized strategies, participants always noted an increase in student engagement and learning. Teachers noted, "Those students who were silent previously are now responding to questions. They get to know better when we teach them in their manner. There was also an improvement in confidence among students, "I was not so sure before I said. I attempt to answer now. These were supported by classroom observations that showed the observable improvements in case of inclusive strategies. Students became more active and participated in the lessons more. An increase in enthusiasm was also noticeable, as students reacted enthusiastically to questions and activities. These observations also affirm that the practices of teaching that are contextualised and interactive have a positive impact on classroom dynamics. Overall, the evidence shows the practical advantages of implementing flexible and student-centered strategies. But teachers admitted that the progress was not even, "Some students make progress fast, others still have problems with it.

### Interpretation

This theme suggests that contextualized pedagogy positively but disparately influences. Although it improves engagement and understanding, there are larger learning outcomes that are affected by other elements like home environment and socio-economic status.

### *Overall Analytical Insight*

In all themes, there was a distinct trend of the study. Teachers are actively modifying and contextualising their pedagogy, but in an informal manner. The lessons based on familiar language, relevant examples, and emotional support were always positively received by students. But the limitations of structures like big classes, inflexible curriculum and insufficient training prevent uniformity and expanded application. The results also show that contextualized pedagogy does not exist in vacuo; it is already present in practice at the grassroots level, being mostly guided by the experience and initiative of teachers, but not by the policy. This highlights the possibilities and the constraints of the existing classroom practices.

## 5. Discussion

The results reveal the significance of contextualized pedagogy in enhancing the learning outcomes of marginalized students. Educators who can adjust local conditions are successful in mediating between curriculum and student realities. Use of local language is in line with theories that underscore the significance of linguistic accessibility in learning. On the same note, teaching methods that are flexible are also in line with constructivist ideologies, as learners actively build knowledge based on previous experiences. Nonetheless, the systemic factors of teacher agency include inflexible curricula and resource shortage. This implies that individual initiatives can provide value, but institutional backing is required to achieve sustainable change.

## 6. Recommendations

### ❖ Teacher Training

Offer contextualized and inclusive pedagogy professional development.

Highlight effective classroom techniques that educators can use right away.

### ❖ Curriculum Flexibility

Give teachers freedom to modify content to fit the needs of their students.

Promote reactive teaching is sensitive to cultural, linguistic, and social backgrounds of students.

### ❖ Resource Support

Supply teaching resources and materials are relevant to local contexts.

Make resources available, flexible and culturally friendly.

### ❖ Policy Support

Implement contextualized pedagogy into local education policies and national education policies.

Give guidelines and frameworks to guide teachers to implement inclusive practices.

### ❖ Community Engagement

Engage the parents and members of the community in the learning process.

Encourage collaborations that enhance learning and facilitate contextualism in schools.

## 7. Conclusion

The current paper shows that contextualized pedagogical approaches are important in promoting the learning outcomes of marginalized primary school learners in Bangladesh. Teachers are pivotal agents of changing teaching to reflect local demands, yet systemic constraints often restrict their actions. In order to attain fair education, there is a need to acknowledge and embrace the importance of teachers in placing pedagogy into context. The education system can do this by ensuring that teaching practices match the realities of the students and thus become inclusive, effective, and responsive.

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