

Implementing CLT at Higher Secondary Level in Bangladesh: A Review of Change Management

Md Shidur Rahman

A doctoral student at School of Education, Queen's University Belfast, UK

Email: shidureh@yahoo.co.uk

Abstract

CLT (Communicative Language Teaching) was substituted for GTM (Grammar Translation Method) at higher secondary level in Bangladesh in 2001. This replacement of ELT method was a significant change in the English curriculum. This study aimed to determine that the mismanagement of the change is a prime cause of not getting expected CLT outcomes at higher secondary education in Bangladesh. Having been qualitative in nature, this research used secondary sources of information and interpreted the findings in words to present the reality of CLT in Bangladesh. The major findings were: clarifying possible change to employees through communication, involving employees in the change process, and training them so that they can cope with the change. The study also found that the present CLT situation in Bangladesh is not in a satisfactory level. The result of the study demonstrated that proper change management principles were not followed when introducing CLT into education system. The study presents some suggestions for retrieving the current CLT situations in Bangladesh.

Keywords: communicative language teaching; change management; communication; implementation; Ministry of Education; Bangladesh

1. Introduction

Change has become one of the powerful themes in management studies and practice since the 1980s (Hotho, 2013). Change, also a common and continuous phenomenon in our life, is always inevitable (Firoozmand, 2013). This change occurs not only to our personal life but to an organisation. Dawson (1994) indicates that, "A change in an organisation can refer to any alteration in activities or tasks." Such an alteration had taken place in the English curriculum in Bangladesh — the emergence of CLT (Communicative Language Teaching) as an approach to English language teaching. However, CLT has been launched into ESL contexts since the 1970s (Raissi, Nor, Aziz, Saleh & Zainal, 2013), and it is concerned with diverse methods and approaches (Wong, 2012). It, for instance, focuses on communicative competence, linguistic competence, accuracy and fluency, contexts and so on. Therefore, the CLT is known as an umbrella term (Harmer, 2001). The core aim of this term is to build up learners' communicative competence (Richards and Rodgers, 1986). Nevertheless, many, if not all, claim that CLT is not compatible with every context. Bax (2003), for example, argues that CLT is not suitable for everywhere in the world, and recommends a context approach to language teaching. Moreover, CLT encounters difficulties in Taiwan, Indonesia, China, and so on (Adi, 2012; Chang and Goswami, 2011; Chowdhury and Le Ha, 2008).

Having considered the positive views of CLT—developing students' communicative competence (Littlewood, 1981) in particular, the ministry of education (MoE) in Bangladesh adopted the approach. But, the practice of CLT in Bangladesh does not demonstrate the expected results—will be mentioned further in section three.

The MoE in Bangladesh performs many activities — such as dealing with secondary and higher secondary education; managing educational research and training; making policy and reformations; developing curriculum; and so on (MoE, 2007-8). In order to implement any change for developing the curriculum, the NCTB (National Curriculum and Textbook Board), a department of MoE, plays a major role. For example, a change in English curriculum—introducing CLT to higher secondary level was propelled by the NCTB (MoE, 2007-8).

This study seeks to address the mismanagement of change as a root cause, rather than anything else, of CLT being unsuccessful at higher secondary level in Bangladesh. This study first presents a context of change, current situation of CLT in Bangladesh, and then literature review including definition of change, positive and negative effects of change, managing change, and CLT as a change at higher secondary level in Bangladesh; after that, methodology and summary of findings; and finally analysis.

2. The Context of Change

There are three main tiers of education in Bangladesh— primary, secondary and higher secondary (MoE, 2014). This study focuses on the higher secondary tier in which the learners of 16-17 years age group learn English. The key purpose of learning English of this age group is to become proficient in communication for different purposes. One of these, for example, is to interact with native or non-native speakers for accessing to higher education sectors (Sultana, 2014). Besides, English proficiency is a vital issue in terms of higher studies

in aboard, as well as of working in multinational, foreign and even national companies. In job recruitments, priority is given to those who have excellent command in English (Hossain, 2012). In order to meet these purposes of learning English, the Ministry of Education in Bangladesh has included English as a core and compulsory subject in the curriculum from years 1-12. This MoE action for English language learning also indicates that there is a necessity of English in Bangladesh. Particularly, communication in English is prioritised because national and international organisations in Bangladesh use English as the medium of communication (Ahmed, 2013). However, currently the situation of ELT in Bangladesh is in the doldrums. Many complain that CLT is not functioning as expected prior to implementing it (Arefeen, Akter & Haque, 2013). So, the higher secondary learners in Bangladesh are experiencing the biggest challenge of developing their communicative competence in English.

3. The Current situation of CLT in Bangladesh

Many people have expressed their concerns over the current CLT situation in Bangladesh. One of these concerns is, for example, that CLT at a new English curriculum in Bangladesh does not seem to be successful when students cannot communicate efficiently in English (Kirkwood and Rae, 2011) although the approach (CLT) refers to building up students' communicative competence. Additionally, Abedin, Mojlis & Akter (2009) contend that the use of CLT in Bangladesh is only written in the curriculum—no practical employment of it is obvious either inside the classroom or outside the classroom. Then, teachers have not coped with CLT approach as they still employ the traditional GTM (Abedin, 2012) for teaching. Finally, Huda (2013) argued that, “with the introduction of CLT, the quality of English language teaching and learning has remarkably deteriorated in the country.” All these anxieties reveal unsatisfactory CLT consequences.

As causes of the above consequences, researchers have underlined some issues. Haque (2014) and Ahmed (2014), for instance, claim that the low proficiency of teachers and students in English is responsible for the failure of CLT. Ali & Walker (2014) emphasise on the problems of CLT approach itself; Ansarey (2012) addresses inadequate communicative materials in Bangladesh; Haider & Chowdhury (2012) have discovered that the present testing and assessment system is incompatible with CLT. Furthermore, Tarannum (2012) researched on teachers roles in a CLT classroom; Chowdhury & Mustaque (2014) suggest the need for alternative method to CLT.

However, no research has been found that explored ‘mismanagement of change’ as a principal reason for CLT to be failed at higher secondary level in Bangladesh. Therefore, this study seeks to fill up this gap. Investigating this gap is significant because this will help the change agents (Educators) to diagnose the real problems with CLT as well as to show them the exact mechanisms of recovering those problems.

4. Literature Review

4.1. Defining Change

There is a need to clarify what is meant by ‘change’ because change management is a subject matter of this study. According to Cohen, Fink, Gadon and Willits (1995 cited in Ramanathan, 2008:20), “change means moving from the known to unknown, from relative certainty to uncertainty, from the familiar to unfamiliar.” The similar view held by Buchanan and Badham (2008) that change produces uncertainty and ambiguity. However, Beerel (2009) regarded change as pervasive, continuous and intermediate. Chang (1993, p.1) also argued that, “change is no longer a choice. It has railroaded its way over all organisations, impacting CEOs, middle managers, and entry-level employees alike.” All these definitions seem to underline that the change creates anxiety and tensions for employees; on the contrary, as is mentioned at the beginning of this study, change is inevitable because it is a persistent phenomenon.

4.2. Positive and Negative Effect of Change

Implementing a change into any organisation has positive and negative effects. One of the positive effects is that change leads to innovation and adaptation (Charney, 2006). Another advantage of change is that it gains competitive advantages (Paton and McCalman, 2008). Then, change usually helps developing organisation—for example, the use of ICT (Information Communication Technology) for teaching and learning literature in Malaysian secondary schools has modernised the education system. Teachers and students also have accepted this change positively (Yunus and Suliman, 2014). Another example is that a change came into force in the UK education system—running placement courses for undergraduate students. These new courses have provided students a great opportunity for earning money as well as experience. Subsequently, this experience assists them to understand their final project (Balta, Coughlan and Hobson, 2012). All these examples suggest that change advantages the organisations.

Along with these positive effects of introducing change into organisations, some negative influences need to be considered. First, change sometimes dissatisfies employees, and increases employee turnover: the employees' job leaving rate (Bordia, Restubog, Jimmieson, and Irmer, 2011). This problem of employee

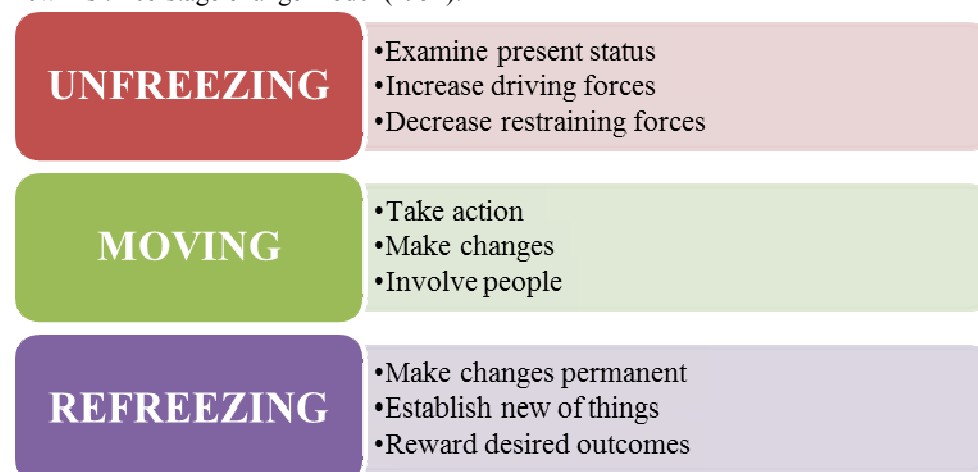
‘dissatisfaction and turnover’ may sometimes be impossible to mitigate even if effective management strategies are employed. Second, change, as is elucidated in the preceding section, develops concerns, frustrations, and scepticism among employees. Last, change provides an overload of work to employees (Kanter, 2012a). So the evidence clarify that change is sometimes likely to be a troublesome aspect of an organisation.

Nevertheless, change can be found to be a positive activity as this is an era of globalisation; everything is moving forward; and so organisations need change for future development. Mitchell (2013) stated that change is vital for progression. This is not to say that every change becomes successful. Success or failure depends upon how a change is managed.

4.3. Managing Change

Prior to embarking upon any organisational change, some fundamental aspects are needed to be taken into account. These aspects are current situation analysis, change drivers, resistance to change, change agents and receivers, responses to change, involving people in the change process, and monitoring success and/or failure to change. All these aspects contribute to carrying out a change successfully in an organisation. However, there are some theory frameworks for implementing change, notably—Lewin’s three step change-model (1951); change-model by Lippitt, etal. (1958); and Kotter’s eight-stage process. Among these frameworks, this study is concerned with Lewin’s change model in which the basic activities are applied for a successful change management, because this model appears to be as a prototype for all change frameworks, for example—the framework of Lippitt and Kotter is based on Lewin’s change model (Cummings and Worley, 2014). Besides, Lewin’s change model is an organisational change model (Kanter, 2012b) rather than an individual or a team change model. The change of teaching method (From GTM to CLT) at higher secondary level in Bangladesh is also categorically an organisational change as the entire English language teaching system has been reengineered. Therefore, Lewin’s change model is an appropriate theoretical framework or strategy or tool through which the management of implementing CLT as a change can be evaluated.

Lewin’s three-stage change model (1951):



4.3.1. Stage One: Unfreezing (Before implementing change)

This step involves analysing current situation, increasing driving forces, and decreasing restraining forces.

Analysing Current Situation

An organisation’s present situations analysis helps a manager decide whether the change is needed and/or feasible to implement or not. In order to take this decision properly, a commonly used decision making support tool: SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) is usually employed (Kajanus, Leskinen, Kurttila and Kangas, 2012). By using this tool, an organisation can uncover negative and positive situations (Gao and Peng, 2011): for example, finding out problems with a prevailing method or policy or system in an organisation. However, strengths and weaknesses of the tool focus on internal issues of an organisation, whereas opportunities and threats emphasise on externals’ (Burnes, 2009). Furthermore, strengths and opportunities are useful in achieving the objectives of a particular task, while weaknesses and threats are harmful (Allassaf, Eddeen, Khoury, Harfoushi and Abushanab, 2013). But in terms of change management, strength factors — such as an experienced change management team may facilitate change agents to implement a change. Weaknesses are the constraining factors, for instance the barriers of change. Opportunities are the benefits of change. Lastly, notable threats are the employees’ inability to cope with and to reject a new change.

Despite the above merits of applying SWOT, few drawbacks are found. This tool, for example, does not present how to recognise the problems with an existing operation (Takahashi and Maeno, 2011). Another

disadvantage is that many think - SWOT is not enough for strategy analysis. Helms and Nixon (2010) suggest applying other different tools or methods along with SWOT.

Although the SWOT framework has drawbacks, this is still a chief tool for recognising strengths and weaknesses of an organisation (Coman and Ronen, 2009). The first reason is that enhancing strengths and maximising opportunities assist the managers to overcome the weaknesses and threats (Munoz-Baell, Alvarez-Dardet, Ruiz-Cantero, Ferreiro-Lago and Aroca-Fernandez, 2011). Then, it also helps managers understand where the organisation is now, and where it needs to be. In other words, this is a useful framework used for deciding a major change.

Driving forces and Restraining forces

Apart from the current situation analysis, the stage one encompasses driving and restraining forces. The change-driving forces are globalisation, new technology, legislation, competition in the market, failure of existing method or system, economic conditions, and demographic changes (Melia, 2010). In other words, these forces drive a manager to make a change in an organisation. However, Whelan-Berry, Gordon and Hinings (2003) state that change drivers entail events, activities, or behaviours that make the change successful. Examples of these drivers are clear change vision and leader's change related actions, communication, training, employee participation, and positive outcomes (Whelan-Berry, 2013). There seem two types of change drivers: external and internal. The earlier (globalisation, technology...) appears to be external drivers because those ones are broken out outside the organisation; on the other hand, the later (motivation, training, communication...) appears to be internal drivers as they are generated within the organisation.

However, believing that every action has its opposite reaction, restraining forces are counter to driving forces. Most people usually reject and dislike change as the change moves to unknown and threatens their interests (Dunphy, Griffiths and Benn, 2007). Beyond this argument, there are few other reasons. Kanter (2012) presents ten reasons why people resist change. These are loss of control, excess uncertainty, surprise, everything seems different, loss of face, concerns about competence, more work, ripple effects, past resentments, and sometimes the threat is real.

The above discussion so far indicates that there is a need to introduce change but people oppose it. It seems that a conflict arises between people when managing change. Nonetheless, Charles Darwin observed that adaptation to change is the key to survival (Thomas and Hardy, 2011). So, a truce needs to be negotiated which can be conducive to implementing change. In this respect, many people advocate some measures to mitigate this conflict. Lewin (1951) has suggested increasing driving forces and decreasing restraining forces (See Lewin's model). Likewise, Marquis and Huston (2009) have also stressed on strengthening driving forces through increasing positive factors such as remuneration, promotional incentive, and better recognition. Similarly, the study of Agboola and Salawu (2010) has shown some possible methods for managing resistance to change. These are identifies proper education, effective communication, facilitation, motivation, negotiation, manipulation, co-operation and coercion.

However, Lewin's (1951) force field analysis focused upon that restraining forces cannot be removed—they can be countered only by increasing driving forces. For example, a teacher does not believe that the CLT is better than the previous GTM. The change agent cannot remove this restraining force but can bolster the driving force by explaining why CLT is more effective than GTM and by organising training for how to use the CLT approach. Lewin's observation of this kind is supported by many, for example, Andrea (2012) expresses that resistance to change can be decreased by communicating with employees and engaging them in the change process. Furthermore, barriers of change can be curtailed by showing benefits of a new change to stakeholders; by establishing a consensus or negotiations between change agents and receivers. In other words, a democratic atmosphere is necessitated. Lastly, the change agents need to clarify the objectives and visions of change in order that employees perceive — that they have ability to achieve the vision or it is viable to do so (Carnal, 2007).

4.3.2. Stage Two: Moving (Implementing change)

Having familiarised with how to reconcile driving forces with restraining forces, concerned parties need to involve in performing the change. These parties are of change agents and of change receivers. Change agents are generally those who bring a change into an organisation such as HR professionals (Caldwell, 2001) or a principal of a college. On the other hand, change receivers are those who the change is imposed on to, for example—employees, teachers, students, parents. These two parties usually appear to involve in confrontation on the issue of implementing change. However, it could be argued that recipients' response to change plays a crucial role in its future success (Bartunek, Rousseau, Rudolph, and DePalma, 2006; Oreg, Vakola, and Armenakis, 2011). Concurrently, the change agent's role is significant when managing a change.

The change agents' role is to communicate with the change receivers and to engage them in the change process. In this regard, communication plays a prominent role for a successful change implementation (Robb, 2004; Bull & Brown, 2012). Moreover, change agents need an interpersonal skill to motivate change (Melville and Weinburgh, 2012). Furthermore, Buchanan and Boddy (1992 cited in Willams, et al., 2002) discovered some

necessary competencies for change agents, for instance— networking skills, team building abilities, communication, motivating employees, negotiation skills, gaining commitment to the goals, etc. So, change in this stage moves on with the consent and involvement of everyone in the respected organisations. Pettigre and Whipp (1993) say that, “Leading change involves linking actions by people at all levels of the business.”

4.3.3. Stage Three: Refreezing (After implementing change)

Introducing a change into an organisation is not a one-time job — it is an open-ended process. Fullan (1993:35) said, “Change is a Journey, Not a Blueprint.” This means that change is a continuous process in a dynamic environment in particular. Consequently, some further actions are to be taken to uphold a new change, even though the change has already been inaugurated (Sims, 2010). That is to say, refreezing stage is concerned with institutionalising the newly introduced change (Pollack, 2011) and with making the new equilibrium situation persistent (Abdel-Raouf and Hanafi, 2014). Examples of such actions, in order to install change permanently, are monitoring people’s responses to change and observing change’s success and failure. Once the change has begun, the change agents need to communicate with the staff and to know the change progress (Bull and Brown, 2012) and to monitor their responses to the new change. Monitoring staff’s responses is significant, so that they do not go back to the initial state of change or to their comfort zone. The people usually do not want to get out from their comfort zone as they are accustomed to a new system (Stonehouse, 2012). The next section represents the management of introducing CLT, as a change, at higher secondary level in Bangladesh.

4.4. CLT as a Change at Higher Secondary Level in Bangladesh

Before the advent of CLT, the ELT practitioners in Bangladesh had used to teach their students by using Grammar Translation Method (GTM). However, the government substituted CLT for GTM in 2001 with the expectation of that students can be more proficient in communicative English (Mondal, 2012a). In other words, the desire to make students competent in communication provided further impetus for the change of teaching method. Beyond this, it was also felt that GTM did not work well to meet the goals of learning English (Ullah, 2013). Nevertheless, this replacement for GTM is a significant change in English curriculum at higher secondary education. The English Language Teaching Improvement Project (ELTIP) — supported by both the Bangladeshi Government (MoE) and the UK Department for International Development (UKDFID) — first embedded the CLT approach in English curriculum in 2001 (Mondal, 2012b). The NCTB (National Curriculum and Textbook Board) in Bangladesh also had worked in collaboration with ELTIP. However, in this perspective, the MoE is a change agent, and the teachers and students are change receivers as they are directly affected by the change. Thus CLT was introduced to the higher secondary English curriculum in Bangladesh.

5. Methodology

The secondary sources of data are used in order to accomplish the aim of this study. These sources are books, journal articles, websites, and personal experience. A considerable amount of literature has been reviewed in order to substantiate the argument in this paper. The collected data through literature review were analysed by comparing the CLT change management process in Bangladesh with the theoretical framework of change management procedure. The study is qualitative in nature as the data analysis was interpreted in words—not in numbers.

6. Summary of Findings

The literature highlights a wide range of themes. Some salient areas are found pertaining to the theme of this study. Firstly, change is continuous and difficult to avoid it. Secondly, installing change into an organisation is not always harmful—sometime it is beneficial too. Thirdly, a careful situation analysis concludes whether change is to be applied or otherwise. Fourthly, involvement of everyone in the change process is required to see the success of a change. In order to get all employees engaged in, communication is a precondition. Next a change agent needs to anticipate the possible factors which might impede the change, and to prepare to hurdle those factors. Then few preventive measures can help lessening the obstruction for change such as motivating employees, developing negotiation and consensus, arranging training and development programme, and so on. Another finding is that the change vision and objective must be clear and sensible to the employees. Finally, there is an emphasis on monitoring change when it moves forward. The change agents are to be vigilant about the change movement – whether the change is static or moving forward or backward. They also need to understand the employees’ state of mind – if they are happy with the change or otherwise. Within all these issues, communication is profoundly highlighted throughout the whole change process, and every staff’s involvement in every stage of change process is significant.

7. Analysis

This section is concerned with the strengths, limitations, and opportunities of managing implementation of CLT as a change. The process of implementing CLT can be shown based on Lewin’s theory.

Table 1: CLT implementation at higher secondary level in Bangladesh using Lewin's change model:

Stage	Lewin	Description	Implementing CLT
1	Unfreezing	Requirement of change	-Assessing present situation: such as problems with existing method (GTM), compatibility of CLT with Bangladeshi context, linguistic level of students, ability to supply enough teaching and learning resources, teachers' capability to teach communicative language, cultural barriers, classroom size, challenge of curriculum design, teaching hours, facilities of assessment and testing instruments. - Force-field analysis: a possibility of resistance to CLT from teachers and students alike. Planning for how to tackle the resistance: increasing driving forces particularly showing the benefits of CLT approach to the teachers and students; arranging teacher training scheme in order to make teachers ready for CLT.
2	Moving	Stage in which change is introduced	-CLT moves on with the consent and involvement of the stakeholders: teachers, students, guardians. The teachers start using CLT in a classroom setting.
3	Refreezing	Change is established	-In this stage CLT must work well, be stable and persistent smoothly. -The change agents need to ensure that CLT is permanent and established.

The CLT change management at higher secondary level in Bangladesh were needed to be carried out as the above table indicated, but the facts regarding CLT change management are in need of investigation.

In the unfreezing stage, an inadequate attention had probably been paid on to current situation analysis when introducing the change. More than a decade has passed since beginning the CLT approach in Bangladesh. Nevertheless, not enough facilities are of computer, of photocopier, and of audio-visual support in every school; classroom size is very large – more than 200 students in one class (Nasrin, 2008). Teacher's reaction: it is evident by Quader (2001 cited in Nasrin, 2008) that many teachers, students, and parents expressed their resistance to CLT approach in a training programme arranged by ELTP and NCTB. Another weakness is that the change agents have not taken enough steps to diminish the resistance. Evidently, Islam (2003) and Rahman (2010) argued that the ELT teachers in Bangladesh received inadequate support and training from the authority in order to cope with the changes in the curriculum. But, it has been suggested that driving forces should be enhanced with a view to moving the change forward (See section 4.3).

In moving stage, it seems that the MoE did not consult with the teachers and students about CLT implementation process. This means communication was inadequate for informing the change to the stakeholders (Students, Teachers, and guardians). As a result, the stakeholders' opinions were not reflected in the change process. Additionally, the authority invested more time for preparing the teaching materials (text book) rather than for qualifying the teachers for the new approach. Notably, the MoE spent three and a half years to finish preparing the text book (MoE, 2007-2008). All these mean that the change management was not participatory.

In refreezing stage, the MoE is supposed to administer how CLT approach works. If the new approach does not serve right, there is a need to identify the problems and to repair those for keeping the approach durable. This watchdog role of change agents is also suggested by many (See section 4.3, stage 3). However, the opposite has happened to CLT change management in Bangladesh. For example, most of the teachers do not use CLT approach for teaching - still they apply GTM in the classroom (See Section 3). This indicates that teachers have not been able to adjust to CLT approach. In other words, the change has not been established because the teachers have gone back to their comfort zone.

Despite the above limitations of managing CLT as a change, there is a light at the end of the tunnel. The Bangladeshi Government has commenced a ground breaking 9 year-project (2008-17) named English in Action (EIA), which aims to supply communicative language teaching resources and to train the teachers (Shaheen, Walsh, Power & Burton, 2013). This step may work out the problems with CLT.

Beyond this project, the findings and analysis suggest that the MoE should adopt some action plans in order to retrieve CLT approach. Firstly, the MoE can provide CELTA (Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults) training. This is an effective training programme. The MoE can manage this training programme in collaboration with British council Bangladesh. Secondly, providing training is not enough—it is also vital to supervise the teachers so that they maintain the class according to the training instructions. Thirdly, the MoE ought to incentivise the teachers as well as students for teaching and learning communicative English, for example, providing benefits such as job opportunities, handsome remuneration, working opportunities in multi-national companies, and so on.

8. Conclusion

This study sought to show the mismanagement of change as a main cause for CLT not to have implemented successfully at higher secondary level in Bangladesh. Now it is rational to claim that the unsuccessful of CLT resulted from the mismanagement of change as this study has argued that quite a few inconsistencies are found between the actual change management procedure and the way the CLT approach was introduced into Bangladesh. Moreover, the current CLT situations in Bangladesh, comparing with the successful change management principles, suggest that change management strategies had not been employed properly when initiating CLT. Notably, Lewin's change theory indicates that driving forces are required to increase for decreasing the restraining forces, but it had not happened to the CLT change process. It is also found that the participation of teachers and students in the change process was not adequate; nonetheless many people including Lewin advocate that the involvement of every employee in the change procedure is important for an effective change management. Furthermore, change is not successfully embedded in the education system of Bangladesh, because it is stagnant in the unfreezing stage – teachers are still seen to use GTM. So, change management has central importance to implementing CLT successfully at higher secondary level in Bangladesh.

The study, however, provides a new understanding of failure of CLT approach in Bangladesh. The study also contributes to filling up a gap in the current literature of change management need for implementing CLT at higher secondary level in Bangladesh. Unlike these contributions, this study has some limitations. First, the current study has been conducted only based on secondary research. Second, the study has analysed the importance of change management in light of only Lewin's theory. So, further investigation needs to be done employing primary or observational research strategy. More change management theory frameworks are needed to be incorporated into the future research.

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