

Integrating Local Media and Film in Humanities Classrooms in Bangladesh: Pedagogical Approaches and Challenges

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the use of regional media and integration of local film in Arts and Humanities classrooms in Bangladesh as a culturally relevant pedagogic tool with particular emphasis on resource-constrained educational environments. It investigates how Bangladeshi educators can leverage local media and film to enhance critical thinking, cultural awareness, and student engagement while observing the limitations and ethical considerations associated with incorporating these media into pedagogy. Based on classroom observations, teacher interviews, and student feedback, analysis shows diverse Bangladeshi institutions that have integrated media-enriched lessons agree that incorporating media and film can effectively contextualize abstract concepts and enhance student engagement, particularly in disciplines such as history, literature, and cultural studies. Collaborating with existing traditional teaching methods, the discussion aims to develop culturally responsive classrooms within global discourses on media pedagogy that address unique regional challenges and opportunities. This study aims to guide future research and inform policy reforms, fostering more inclusive, engaging, and context-sensitive media integration in developing educational systems while accounting for potential drawbacks such as stereotype reinforcement and biased narratives.

1. Introduction

The integration of local media and film in humanities education offers a transformative approach to culturally responsive pedagogy, particularly in resource-constrained settings like Bangladesh. Based on concepts from critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970) and media literacy theories (Hobbs, 2011), this study explores the ways in which Bangladesh teachers can use regional films (e.g., works by Tareque Masud or Tanvir Mokammel, documentary, movies) and local media (e.g., *Prothom Alo* cartoons, and Natoks) to facilitate student engagement in classes such as history, literature, and cultural studies.

Media integration into humanities teaching presents an informative case study in Bangladesh's educational field. The educational system of Bangladesh holds abundant cultural resources in literature and film that remain underutilized in formal teaching practices. The research carries special importance as it appeared Education decolonization literature continues to expand through publications by Smith (1999) and Paris and Alim (2017).

This paper critically explore issues including digital inequalities (Warschauer, 2004), stereotyped representations (Hall, 1997), and teacher preparedness (Mishra & Koehler, 2006). Drawing on empirical research and theoretical analysis, it aims to build a sophisticated understanding of the both the potential and constraints of media-enhanced humanities education in Bangladesh.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Frameworks

Several helpful concepts aid in the use of local media in humanities teaching. Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995) helps us see how local media can connect general lessons to the real lives of students. Multimodal Literacy (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001) tells us that meaning is not just reading text, but also includes pictures, sound, and electronic media, and therefore films are sophisticated texts requiring particular skills to decipher.

Postcolonial Education Theory (Smith, 1999) is interested in the decolonization of education practice by way of the localization of native knowledge systems and narratives. Local media can then be understood as resistance to cultural imperialism. Also, Critical Media Literacy methodologies (Kellner & Share, 2007) concentrate on developing pupils' capacities in terms of being critical readers of the media when it comes to matters of power, representation, and ideology.

2.2 Local Media in Bangladeshi Context

The diverse and dynamic media environment of Bangladesh functions as an educational resource for humanities education. Through the work of Tareque Masud in *The Clay Bird* (2002) the country's film industry blends historical and cultural storytelling which enables viewers to ponder independence narratives and religious identification (Ahmed, 2015).

The widely watched Natok dramas on television can encourage educational learning according to Hoque (2020) yet they can preserve existing gender stereotypes as warned by scholars. Newspaper cartoons display effectiveness in handling modern-day socio-political matters but researchers should scrutinize their bias perspectives. Research on media effectiveness in educational environments is currently scarce even though potential exists for its useful application in learning environments.

The study by Rahman (2020) indicates that modern educators working in cities acknowledge media integration's worth but struggle with necessary training along with suitable technology. A significant digital divide exists according to Islam and Ahmed (2018) that separates urban and rural areas because rural students encounter major challenges when they try to use educational media.

2.3 Global Views on Media in Humanities Education

International literature suggests that the use of media in humanities education can be valuable. Hobbs (2011) explains how critical engagement with media can be used to improve critical thinking and civic literacy among students. Nevertheless, researchers also suggest some problems. Jenkins' (2009) discussion of participatory culture draws attention to the need to address participation gaps that may reinforce learning disparities that already exist.

These global perspectives must be cast within the specific context of Bangladeshi education. As Sen (2005) argues in *The Argumentative Indian*, South Asian educational innovations must be grounded in local intellectual traditions and not borrowed unthinkingly from Western exemplars.

3. Methodology

A qualitative case study method developed by Stake (1995) served as the foundation to explore how local media and film relate to the humanities curriculum in Bangladesh classrooms. The data collection activities happened at ten educational institutions dispersed across Bangladesh.

- a. Three urban universities in Dhaka and Rajshahi
- b. Two regional colleges in Khulna and Kushtia
- c. Three secondary schools in semi-urban areas
- d. Two rural madrasas (local religious learning institute like schools) with humanities programs

Out of all these institutions 15 humanities teachers participated in semi-structured interviews. A total of 200 students answered surveys describing their background with media-enhanced humanities education. Data collection methods included:

Classroom Observations: Twenty-five instructors taught humanities classes with local media through structured observations of their educational methods while evaluating interaction with students and adaptation practices.

Semi-structured Interviews: Fifteen humanities professors engaged in one hour semi-structured interviews that examined both their reasons as well as their methods and obstacles yet noticed outcomes with media incorporation.

Student Surveys: Quantitative and qualitative data were collected from 200 students regarding their engagement with local media, perceptions of media-enhanced learning, and assessments of learning outcomes.

Document Analysis: An examination of curricular materials together with lesson plans institutional policies and media resources revealed the frameworks that control media integration. A thematic analysis based on Braun and Clarke (2006) conducted data analysis through repeated coding processes that interconnected themes among all sources of information. The analysis proceeded using theoretical constructs from the literature review that included culturally relevant pedagogy and critical media literacy.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1 Pedagogical Benefits

4.1.1 Enhanced Engagement Through Cultural Relevance

Throughout different institutional settings, teachers frequently mentioned the presence of local media amplified student involvement in humanities content. In literature workshops, pupils found more relevant when the abstract theories of the canonical book were compared to their cinematic turns of events. One Dhaka University professor described how students who had initially struggled to engage with Rabindranath Tagore's philosophical perspective in *The Postmaster*, *Monihara (The Lost Jewels)*, *Samapti (The Conclusion)* (1891, 1898, 1893) became deeply invested after viewing scenes from the film adaptation *Teen Kanya* by Satyajit Ray

"The film transformed their understanding. Visual means to implicate Tagore's metaphysical thoughts from remaining abstract and students started relating these abstract ideas with their life and cultural background." (Teacher Interview #7)

Survey conclusions confirmed this finding, as 78% of student respondents reported that media integration "greatly increased" their interest in humanities courses. Qualitative comments frequently mentioned the motivational impact of seeing local contexts and experiences represented:

"When we studied Akhtaruzzaman Elias's novel alongside clips from its television adaptation, I felt for the first time that our literature class was connected to my real life and the world around me." (Student Survey #42)

Classroom observations showed very high level of student engagement in media-related conversation. It was in an isolated rural secondary school that a routine lesson of theirs erupted in an animated discussion as students studied political cartoons from Prothom Alo which looked into the environmental concerns in the Sundarbans.

4.1.2 Development of Critical Thinking Skills

In addition to motivation rewards, media integration encouraged complex analytical skill-bases. Documentary films were also very useful for building analytical skills. Students at a local college in Sylhet got into elaborate discussions following watching of Kamar Ahmad Simon's documentary *Are You Listening!* (Khadija, 2016), that looks at the impacts of climate change on coastal communities:

"Students began analyzing whose voices were centered in the documentary and whose were marginalized. They questioned narrative techniques and evidence presentation. These are sophisticated media literacy skills that transfer to their analysis of other texts." (Teacher Interview #3)

The evaluation of student work samples revealed improvements in their analytical ability to compare subjects. The essays revealed detailed comprehension of how different media formats transform the meaning of the Liberation War narratives in Bangladesh. According to the findings of Jenkins (2009) media literacy creates critical thinking abilities which students can use regardless of their subject area.

4.2 Challenges and Constraints

4.2.1 Resource Gaps and Infrastructure Limitations

Financially unstable institutions encounter multiple barriers when implementing multimedia integration. One projector maintains service responsibilities for the entire teacher staff of

twenty members. Students must reserve films in advance while transporting their personal laptops to complete screenings.

“Our school has only one projector shared among twenty teachers. To show a film, I must reserve it weeks in advance and often carry my personal laptop to class. Many of my colleagues simply give up trying.” (Teacher Interview #11)

UNESCO (2022) report regarding Bangladesh educational technology access issues shows rural institutions faced the most serious barriers to technology. The two investigated madrasas lacked specialized audiovisual equipment which led the staff to undertake creative solutions for teaching purposes.

“I download clips to my phone and have students gather in small groups to view them. It's not ideal, but it's the only way to incorporate visual media.” (Teacher Interview #14)

Survey results highlighted these disparities, with 82% of students in rural institutions reporting “rarely or never” having access to proper viewing equipment, compared to 34% in urban universities. Limited hardware capabilities and insufficient bandwidth problem together with unstable power supply system made it difficult for teachers to successfully integrate media into their lessons.

4.2.2 Cultural Sensitivity and Content Concerns

Media integration faced extra barriers because of cultural elements. Teachers needed to choose content material carefully between respecting religious diversity and cultural preferences and ensuring students developed their critical thinking abilities:

Some students in our study objected to the mystical traditions of Hason Raja presented in the film because they believed these religious perspectives deviated from orthodox traditions. The discussion required me to present it as cultural study rather than religious teaching.” (Teacher Interview #8)

Cultural identity perceptions that clash with traditional perspectives and progressive viewpoints emerge from Bangladeshi responses to folk media according to Karim (2018). A few teachers pointed out their apprehension with regards to maintaining inaccurate cultural stereotypes by blindly watching media content. Some teachers struggled with using popular Natoks because these productions targeted young students well yet maintained gender-stereotypical portrayals:

“I hold concerns about the negative portrayals of women which label them either selfless or controlling when students watch popular drama shows. The development of critical awareness needs to accompany classroom activities involving educational materials.” (Teacher Interview #5)

The classroom observations confirm Hall's (1997) theory about media representation as an influence on cultural perceptions especially when using popular media.

4.2.3 Teacher Preparedness and Pedagogical Support

Literature analysis identified a wide gap in teacher preparation regarding their capability to use media properly. Media literacy education training was limited to three of fifteen teachers while most teachers developed their approaches independently by experimentation.

“Through my continuous mistakes I learned new approaches. My initial efforts to analyze films proved unsuccessful because students saw those sessions only as entertainment opportunities. No teacher had given me any recommendations about critical viewing activity organization. (Teacher Interview #10)

The absence of training led to observation-based findings in classrooms. The teachers who showed mastery in fostering critical analysis through established frameworks performed well but many educators experienced challenges when their approach meant using media content only as demonstration or leisure material. The level of institutional backing which aimed to develop these capabilities differed vastly between education settings which in turn led to an uneven application of media-enhanced teaching methods.

4.3 Adaptations and Innovations

Despite these challenges, the study revealed creative adaptations developed by Bangladeshi educators to overcome constraints. Teachers in resource-constrained environments demonstrated remarkable ingenuity, including:

- Creating media analysis activities using print materials when digital equipment was unavailable
- Utilizing audio-only content as alternatives to video when visual display options were limited
- Developing collaborative viewing arrangements where small student groups shared mobile devices
- Assigning media viewing as homework when classroom viewing was impossible

A particularly innovative approach was observed at a semi-urban secondary school, where the teacher created a "media corner" with newspaper clippings, printed screenshots from films, and magazine advertisements related to course themes.

To address cultural sensitivities, teachers developed strategic framing approaches that acknowledged diverse perspectives while encouraging critical engagement:

"Before analyzing political cartoons, I establish that our goal isn't to judge the political positions but to understand the visual and rhetorical techniques used to communicate viewpoints. This helps separate analytical skills from ideological agreement." (Teacher Interview #9)

Several teachers described employing comparison as a strategy for navigating culturally sensitive content, aligning with Gay's (2010) principles of culturally responsive teaching.

5. Recommendations

5.1 Policy Recommendations

Curriculum Reform: State curriculum frameworks need to include media literacy outcomes within humanities areas. As Buckingham (2019) recommends, these reforms should put media analysis on the centre and promote, rather than treat media analysis as an enrichment activity. **Funding Allocation:** Initiatives of targeted financial investments should tackle existing digital inequalities between urban-rural institution type. Instead of concentrating solely on hardware provision, these initiatives should speak the same language as Warschauer (2004) and move towards a more holistic perspective, regarding human and social resources, as well as hardware.

Assessment Alignment: Examination systems should be reformed to value media analytical skills alongside traditional text analysis. Including media analysis components in standardized assessments would legitimize these pedagogical approaches.

5.2 Institutional Recommendations

Teacher Professional Development: Schools need to have wide-ranging professional training programs minion TPACK model (Mishra & Koehler, 2006), which involves combination of technological, pedagogical and content knowledge.

Content Development: Educational institutions allied with media companies should produce educational content that serves academic requirements without promotional standards.

Ethical Framework: Institutions should set up rules for evaluating media material, making certain choices do not perpetuate damaging stereotypes or sensitize certain truths. The following guidelines should be based on engaged pedagogy principles from hooks (1994).

5.3 Pedagogical Recommendations

Scaffolded Analysis: Teachers will utilize organized analytical frameworks; one that is systemic and leaves students go from conceptual understanding to media text analysis. For those institutions with limited media availability these frameworks should have a pre-viewing, viewing, post-viewing segment. **Student Production and Local Media:** Student production of basic media texts, where resources are available, promote critical and creative media literacy. Even in environments with limited resources, projects of collaborative production using existing technologies (e.g. mobile phones) can also investigate students' knowledge for media construction. **Collaboration Across Disciplines:** Humanities teachers should team up with media studies colleagues, ICT teachers and other relevant staff to develop integrated approaches making full use of diverse expertise.

6. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that local media integration in Bangladeshi humanities classrooms has the advantage of pedagogy while it poses great challenges. The results indicate that successful implementation involves reconciling cultural relevance (Gay, 2010) with critical media literacy (Kellner & Share, 2007), especially in environments marked by scarcity and cultural provision. "Bangladeshi educators forge ingenious solutions, transcending infrastructural limits to create contextual media-enhanced teaching models. Yet barriers persist: the digital divide, inadequate training, and tension between radical and traditional pedagogies. Further inquiry must assess media-enriched teaching's enduring impact on students—both academically and in critical thinking development. As Bangladesh evolves scientifically, arts education must extend beyond current boundaries through positive media integration."

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