

# Equity and Exclusion: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Minority Teacher Educators in Bangladesh

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*Bangladesh's constitution guarantees equity, yet its education system reflects deep structural inequalities. Despite formal quota-based recruitment policies for ethnic minorities in public services and institutions but they still remain marginalized, particularly within education sector. This marginalization persists amid a political context where affirmative measures have disproportionately benefited privileged groups, such as descendants of freedom fighters, while the constitutional rights of minorities are neglected. Using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), this study explores how teacher educator recruitment practices perpetuate inequality and legitimize exclusion. Analysing interview data from minority and non-minority teacher educators beside policy documents, the research investigates whether barriers stem from bureaucratic inefficiency or deeper socio-structural disparities. Findings reveal that quota policies, while present on paper, function symbolically and are inconsistently applied. Bureaucratic rigidity, insensitive recruitment criteria, and covert discriminatory practices systematically disadvantage minority candidates, limiting their access and career progression. The study highlights an ideological disjuncture between state rhetoric and lived realities, arguing that tokenistic inclusion perpetuates structural inequities. It calls for reimagined equity frameworks that dismantle systemic barriers, ensure accountability, and align policy with Bangladesh's commitment to justice and inclusion for all.*

**Keywords:** Ethnic minority teacher education, Critical discourse analysis, Equity and inclusion, Bangladesh

*"Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world."*  
Nelson Mandela

## *Background of the Study*

Bangladesh, located in South Asia is one of the rapidly growing economies where digital literacy and primary education received greater attention. Bangladesh's constitution promises equity and diversity, but ethnic minority groups continue to face systemic marginalization, particularly in public services and education fields (Sabur & Ahmed, 2010). While the Bengali ethnic majority constitutes over 98% of the population, more than 50 ethnic minorities referred to as 'small tribes' or 'Upajati' collectively make up a small but distinct part of the nation's demographic and cultural fabric (Barman & Neo, 2014; Dhamai & Drong, 2014). Historically, these communities have been politically underrepresented, socially excluded, and economically disadvantaged, facing considerable challenges in having their identities and rights recognized by the state (Mohsin, 2000; Roy, 2009). The marginalization of ethnic minorities is rooted in the state's dominant nationalist ideology. This ideological stance has led to tensions between the state and minority communities, who assert their right to

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cultural and linguistic distinctiveness (Ahmed, 2025). Despite international obligations such as the ILO Convention No. 107 which was signed by Bangladesh in 1972, there has been limited progress in addressing issues of indigenous rights, particularly in education, land ownership, and political representation (IWGIA, 2024; Roy, 2009). The recent nationwide protests over quota (preferential access for disadvantaged groups) reforms in July-August 2024 in Bangladesh have reignited public discourse on equity and representation in state employment (Sombatpoonsiri, 2025), shedding light on the preferential treatment afforded to one specific privileged group, the descendants of freedom fighters, who constitute only 0.12% of the population, while the constitutional rights of minorities remain neglected (Abid, 2025; Ahmed, 2025; Hushen, 2024). These developments underscore a deeper structural inequality that intersects with both bureaucratic and racialized state practices. In this context, the struggles faced by minorities in Bangladesh reflect a critical gap between policy intentions and actual practices. The state's refusal to officially recognize the term "indigenous" and its continued usage of politically loaded terms like "tribes" or "small ethnic groups" reveal a reluctance to accommodate plural identities (Dhamai & Drong, 2014). Furthermore, disparities in educational access exacerbated by poverty, language barriers, and socio-cultural exclusion continue to limit the upward mobility of ethnic minority in the broader aspect of education, especially those from the Chittagong Hill Tracts and plainland regions (Begum et al., 2018; Mahmud, 2022). This study critically examines the processes through which equitable policies are subverted in practice, resulting in the exclusion of minorities and caused for systematic marginalization from educational leadership roles.

### *Overview of Bangladesh's Ethnic Demographics*

Bangladesh is often characterized as an ethnically homogeneous state, with Bengalis comprising approximately 98% of the population and Muslims accounting for 91% (BBS, 2022; Dowlah, 2013). This dominance is rooted in a historical process where the Bangla language emerged as a primary unifying force around 700 A.D., eventually marginalizing the region's ancestral racial and cultural diversity (Sengupta, 2001). Today, linguistic and religious identities remain central to the nation's socio-political and educational landscapes (Islam & Muhammad, 2022). Beneath the surface of homogeneity lies a "rich tapestry" of over 50 distinct ethnic minority groups, representing less than 2% of the total population (Barman & Neo, 2014; Roy, 2009). Bangladesh government officially recognized 50 groups under the Small Ethnic Minority Cultural Institute Act of 2010, but these figures remain a point of scholarly and political contention. Non-governmental organizations and activists estimate the number of minority groups to be between 60 and 69 (Rafi, 2006). Similarly, while the 2022 census records the ethnic minority population at 1.65 million, indigenous forums and minority leaders argue the figure should exceeds 3 million, suggesting significant discrepancies in state published data since past (Chakma & Maitrot, 2016; IWGIA, 2024).

As illustrated in Chart1, the demographic distribution is highly skewed. Large communities like the Chakma (483299, 29%), Marma (224261, 13 %), and Tripura (156875, 9%) maintain a visible presence, primarily in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT). In contrast, "plainland" groups such as the Santal (7.82%) and Garo (4.66%) reside in northern and central regions. Critically, the smallest groups such as the Gurkha and Vill, with populations of approximately 100 individuals are virtually absent from policy analysis and research.

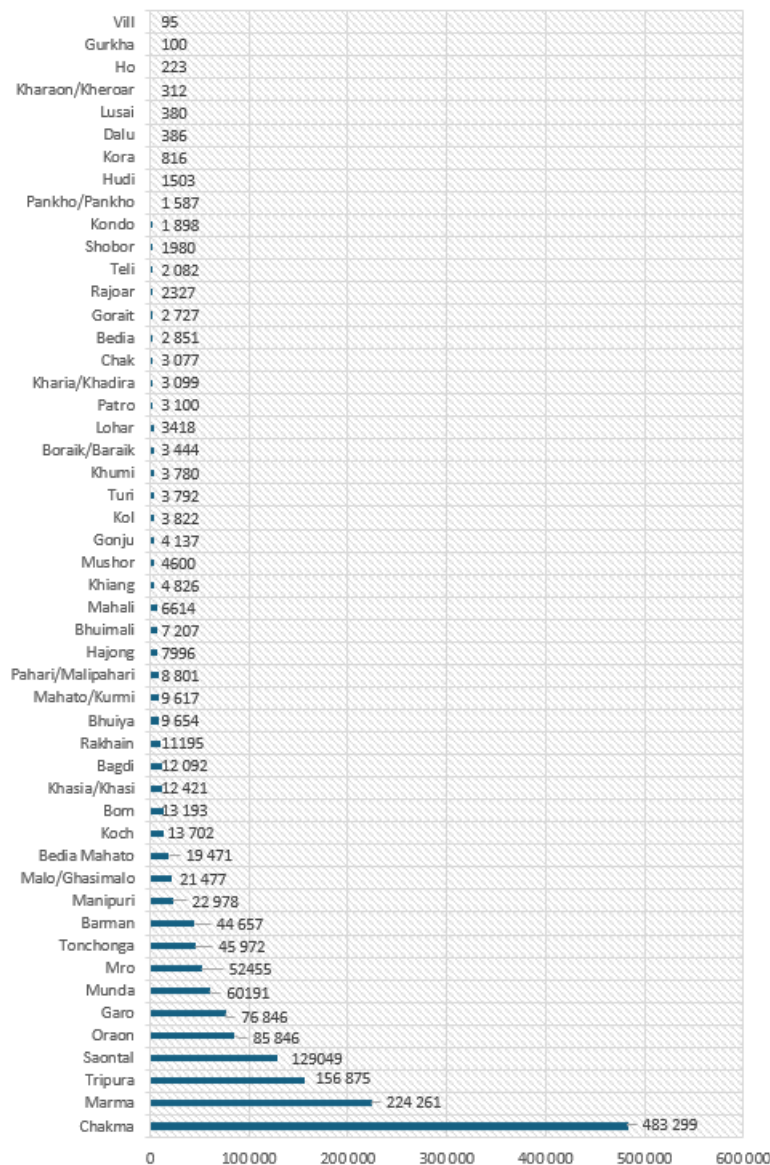


Chart 1. Ethnic Minority Population Distribution in Bangladesh (BBS, 2022). Source: Statistics of Minority Individuals in Bangladesh [Compiled by Author, (BBS, 2022)]

A significant barrier to minority rights in Bangladesh is definitional. The state utilizes terms such as *upajati* (tribes) or "small ethnic groups," consistently resisting the constitutional recognition of "indigenous" (*Adivasi*) status. This refusal is often interpreted as a strategic attempt to limit claims regarding land rights and self-determination (Mohsin, 2000; Roy, 2009). Article 9 of the Constitution further reinforces this by promoting "Bengalee nationalism," an ideological framework that implicitly prioritizes a singular cultural identity over ethnic pluralism (Caf Dowlah, 2013). Religious identity often intersects with ethnicity, compounding marginalization. While the nation is 91.04% Muslim, minority groups including Hindus (7.95%), Buddhists (0.61%), and Christians (0.30%) face unique challenges. Many ethnic minorities in the CHT identify as Buddhist, experiencing a "double marginalization" based on both faith and ethnicity (Barua, 2007). The underreporting and misrepresentation of these demographics in national statistics contribute to the "persistent invisibility" of minor-

ity concerns in state policymaking (Barman & Neo, 2004). This lack of visibility directly impedes access to essential state resources, including representation in the workforce and public education.

### *Historical Exclusion of Ethnic Minorities: Bangladesh Perspective*

The Constitution of Bangladesh formally recognizes equality and non-discrimination, asserting that no citizen shall face unequal treatment in public employment (Articles 27 and 28). In principle, the Constitution does not differentiate between majority and minority populations. However, despite these constitutional guarantees, ethnic minority groups in Bangladesh have experienced a long-standing history of marginalization in public service and public institutions. Empirical evidence suggests that constitutional promises of equality have remained largely unfulfilled for these communities, as demonstrated by their persistent exclusion from public service and broader societal participation (Human Rights Council, 2018). Since independence in 1971, Bangladesh's national identity has been constructed around the ideology of Bengalee nationalism. While this ideology played a unifying role in the liberation movement, it simultaneously marginalized non-Bengali ethnic groups. The first government of independent Bangladesh (Formed in 1972) faced criticism for imposing a monolithic national identity that disregarded the linguistic, cultural, and political distinctiveness of ethnic minorities (Mohsin, 2000). This exclusionary orientation was constitutionally institutionalized through Article 9, which defined the nation primarily through the Bengali language and culture. Consequently, more than 50 ethnic groups who did not identify as Bengalee were rendered politically and socially invisible (Caf Dowlah, 2013). This identity crisis has been further exacerbated by dominant societal attitudes among the Bengali majority, reinforcing everyday discrimination and exclusion of ethnic minorities. The Fifteenth Amendment to the Constitution of Bangladesh (2011) introduced Article 23(A), acknowledging the state's responsibility to protect the culture and traditions of "tribes, minor races, ethnic sects and communities." While this amendment marked symbolic progress, it remained limited to cultural recognition and did not extend to political or socioeconomic rights, including equitable access to public service and education. A fundamental disagreement persists between ethnic minority communities and the state regarding identity recognition (Roy, 2009). Ethnic minorities in Bangladesh are broadly categorized into two groups: Pahari (hill peoples) in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) and Adivasi (indigenous peoples) living in the plains. However, the state has consistently resisted recognizing the term indigenous (Adivasi) in legal and policy frameworks, instead using labels such as "tribes" or "small ethnic groups." This terminological resistance has significant implications for political representation, resource allocation, and policy formulation (Dhamai & Drong, 2014; Roy, 2009).

Despite the introduction of quota-based affirmative action policies, these quotas were amended in 2018 following mass student protests, although the protests were not intended to undermine protections for ethnic minorities (Sombatpoonsiri, 2025). In practice, quota policies have been inconsistently implemented, poorly monitored, and overshadowed by preferential treatment for other groups most notably the descendants of freedom fighters. Although they constitute only 0.12% of the population, this group enjoys disproportionate privileges in public employment (Hasan, 2024; Tanima & George, 2025). Furthermore, opaque recruitment processes, bureaucratic rigidity, and institutional bias have contributed to the persistent underrepresentation of ethnic minorities in public service institutions, including educational institutions (Aziz, 2020; Zafarullah & Kaiser, 2000).

Teacher education is a critical domain for advancing inclusive and equitable education systems. Research highlights the pivotal role of teacher educators in shaping educational values, pedagogical practices, and systemic quality (Bahr & Melor, 2016; Fullan, 1993). However, in Bangladesh, recruitment and access policies in teacher education have failed to adequately address the structural challenges faced by ethnic minorities. Minority can-

didates often encounter disadvantages arising from language barriers, geographical isolation, limited access to preparatory resources, and culturally biased evaluation criteria (Mahmud, 2022; Mina, 2023). As a result, ethnic minority representation in teacher education and in the broader education sector remains minimal, reinforcing long-standing patterns of exclusion and undermining efforts toward educational equity (Table 1).

Recruitment Year	Total Recruited	Non-minority	Minority	Preservation
2006	15	15	0	5%
2007	50	50	0	5%
2013	17	17	0	5%
2014	56	56	0	5%
2016	2	2	0	5%
2017	205	204	1	5%
2018	52	52	0	1%
2021	13	12	1	1%
2022	73	73	0	1%
2023	108	107	1	1%
2024	19	19	0	1%
Total	610	607	3	

*Table 1. Representation of Ethnic Minority while teacher educator recruitment. Source: Compiled by the researcher from recruitment data*

## Research Problem

This study deals with the discourses which resulted with inequality and exclusion of minority teacher educators in Bangladesh. The issue is outlined by a fundamental contradiction: while national education policy articulates a commitment to inclusive and equitable quality education (Saini et al., 2023), its implementation is systematically undermined by deeper structural inequalities. It investigates the route discourses which may resulted with the barriers for ethnic minorities towards equity and inclusion. The constitutional primacy of "Bengalee nationalism" implicitly denies the recognition of multi-ethnic identities, creating an ideological framework that marginalizes minority (Caf Dowlah, 2013). This is compounded by the state's consistent refusal to recognize the term "indigenous" (Adivasi), opting instead for legally diluted terms like "tribes" or "small ethnic groups" (ISPR, 2022; Roy, 2009).

Affirmative action such as quotas for ethnic minorities in public service, including education, remain largely symbolic. They are compromised by inconsistent implementation, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and a lack of institutional accountability (Aziz, 2020; Sharma, 2000). Furthermore, the benefits of these quotas are not distributed equitably among minority groups; data indicates a significant skew, with the Chakma community capturing a disproportionate share (56%), while other groups like the Marma (14%) and Tripura (9%) also received few benefits but other minorities have mostly remained neglected. This intra-minority disparity highlights a system that fails to address need-based redistribution and perpetuates new forms of marginalization (Dhamai & Drong, 2014). A pervasive "language racism" prevails, positioning ethnic languages as inferior to Bengali (Faruk & Rosenbaum, 2022). Consequently, policy gestures like the publication of primary textbooks in five ethnic languages (2018) have failed due to a critical lack of trained teachers and sustained institutional sup-

port (Karmaker, 2024). The National Education Policy (2010) emphasizes recruiting ethnic minority teachers but does not address the structural equity issues necessary for their meaningful inclusion and professional growth, reflecting a techno-centric and ambiguous approach (Aziz, 2020). The system has "attempted to create opportunities without looking deep into implementation policies," thereby reproducing inequality. This is especially detrimental for ethnic minority teacher educators, whose professional growth is stifled not only by these generic systemic flaws but also by the specific identity-based barriers outlined above. The situation is starkly contrasted by the privileged access granted to other groups (e.g., descendants of freedom fighters) for whom special initiatives had also been seen, underscoring a politically skewed application of affirmative principles (Hushen, 2024; Tanima & George, 2025). Therefore, this study is not simply a question of training provision but also wants to give a wider critical look into how the intersection of ideological denial, skewed affirmative action, linguistic hierarchy, and inequitable professional development structures conspire to exclude ethnic minorities from the crucial field of teacher education.

### *Aims and Research Questions*

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This study aims to uncover the discursive foundations of exclusion in Bangladesh's teacher education sector. It critically analyses how equitable policies are subverted in practice, preventing meaningful minority inclusion and consigning these communities to the peripheries of educational leadership.

The research is driven by two questions:

1. What are the key discourses framing equity in Bangladeshi teacher education, and how do they function in relation to ongoing exclusion?
2. Which legitimizing ideologies and policy narratives underpin the systemic marginalization of ethnic minority teacher educators?

### *Literature Review and Theoretical Framework*

#### *Definition of Minority and Minority Inclusion*

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The UN's human rights framework prioritizes the fundamental freedoms of minority groups, but the Universal Declaration of Human Rights lacks a formal legal definition of what constitutes a 'minority' a conceptual gap that complicates international enforcement. Within international jurisprudence, Article 27 of the 1976 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) provides the primary framework for defining minority status, stipulating that:

*"In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with the other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practise their own religion, or to use their own language."*

Generally, minority understood as a distinct group who coexists with but subordinate to a more dominant group culturally, ethnically, linguistically, religiously or racially. Social Scientists categorized minority being subject to subordination to the majority to be the distinct feature (Guhathakurta, 2022). Within common parlance, the term 'minority' is often understood in a strictly numerical or demographic sense, denoting a group constituting less than half of a given population. In contrast, its application in international law and the social sciences is more specific and relational, focusing on groups that possess distinct ethnic, linguistic, cultural, or religious identities situated within a broader, dominant societal context (Fatemeh & Bahman, 2016). For the pur-

pose of this study, and in alignment with scholarly frameworks that emphasize cultural differentiation, the concept will be operationalized using the more precise term ‘ethnic minority.’ Accordingly, an ethnic minority is defined as a community residing within the sovereign territory that maintains distinct cultural, linguistic, or social traditions, and exists in a non-dominant position relative to the majority population (Masuoka, 2011). Research focused on Minority based on different research arena is abundant, but it didn’t try to give any well acknowledged definition rather provided with numerous concepts on minority. Minority issue is often described as highly political in the contest of Bangladesh thus there has been controversies and debate about the number of minorities (Karmakar, 2024).

### *Theoretical Framework: Critical Race Theory*

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To understand equity and inclusion for minorities in Bangladesh’s educational institutions, this study employs Critical Race Theory (CRT) as its principal analytical framework. While CRT is a relatively established concept that emerged from scholars examining race and racism in legal studies, psychology and also educational psychology (Teo, 2022; Kumar & DeCuir-Gunby, 2022), it has since evolved into a vital tool for deconstructing the presence, power, and impact of racism and its role in creating oppression (Nikolai et al., 2024). CRT provides a powerful perspective for analysing how race and ethnicity intersect with institutional practices to produce and maintain inequality. Central to Critical Race Theory is the assertion that racism is not simply a matter of individual bias; rather, it is structurally embedded within legal systems, institutional policies, and social norms. (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). In the Bangladeshi context, where public discourse often centres on religious and linguistic identity, CRT proves particularly useful for uncovering how state-enforced “ethnic invisibility” and the denial of indigenous identity perpetuate systemic marginalization (Kumar & DeCuir-Gunby, 2022; Roy, 2009). This lens allows the study to critically assess whether the barriers faced by minority teacher educators arise not only from bureaucratic inefficiency but also from deeper, institutionalized racial and ethnic biases.

The application of CRT in this research is guided by its core tenets. First, it recognizes that racism is ordinary and deeply embedded in social structures, including laws, institutional practices, and systems of knowledge production. Second, the principle of interest convergence maintains that the advancement of marginalized rights is structurally dependent on its alignment with the interests of those in power. Third, CRT treats race as a social construct, continually reproduced to maintain existing power hierarchies. Fourth, the principle of intersectionality highlights how overlapping identities such as ethnicity, gender, class, and geographic location compound experiences of marginalization. Finally, CRT values counter-storytelling, centring the lived experiences and narratives of marginalized communities as essential evidence that challenges dominant often majoritarian perspectives. By applying this framework, the study moves beyond superficial analyses of policy failure to interrogate how the very architecture of Bangladesh’s education system from constitutional ideology to recruitment mechanisms and quota implementation reflects and reinforces the interests of the dominant ethnic group, thereby structurally excluding ethnic minority teacher educators.

### *Research Gap*

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This study addresses three interrelated scholarly gaps. First, it confronts an empirical-conceptual gap: while discourse on educational equity is growing, there is a critical lack of exploration into the specific challenges faced by minority individuals. A second challenge is the theoretical-operational divide: the intersection of CRT’s systemic focus with the linguistic tools of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) remains under-researched and requires further methodological synthesis. By operationalizing Fairclough’s (1995) model, this study

bridges the gap between micro-linguistic features and macro-sociological structures. This allows for a critical examination of the discursive mechanisms through which core CRT concepts. Third, a contextual-access gap: the politically sensitive nature of minority issues in Bangladesh has created a formidable barrier to rigorous research, leading to a scarcity of studies that can navigate internal access restrictions (Rifat et al., 2024). This study, conducted with appropriate approvals and cultural nuance, offers a rare, critically engaged perspective from within this complex socio-political field.

## *Methodology*

### *Research Design and Rationale for Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)*

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This study employs Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to examine how language reinforces power structures and social hierarchies. CDA provides a systematic framework for linguistic analysis within specific social contexts (Joye & Maesele, 2022), making it well-suited to investigate the socio-cultural dimensions of discourse. The analysis goes beyond the surface-level views of respondents to examine how their answers are embedded within and shaped by broader socio-cultural phenomena. This methodological alignment with prior research (e.g., Shevlin & Gill, 2020) positions CDA as a particularly effective lens for uncovering issues of equity and equality within the data. As the researcher employs CDA which examines linguistic aspects of respondents in certain social contexts where a thorough investigation is carried out. As several researchers increasingly using CDA as CDA can deal with problem-oriented interdisciplinary research. CDA is a form of critical social analysis which studies how social abuse and inequalities are enacted, reproduced, legitimized and resided in certain social and political contexts (van Dijk, 1993). In Bangladesh, socio political context also plays profound impact on teacher education as well as teacher educators. Current political instability and social cultural reality in Bangladesh have been deeply rooted with the essence of such qualitative investigation. CDA is quite newer method which does not follow any single method rather than based on a few fundamental principles (Joye & Maesele, 2022). In this study, the researcher considers the responses from interviews as underlying discourse which is the primary intention of CDA (Hansen & Machin, 2018). However, these narratives are always reshaped due to various historical and socio-cultural practices. Thus, the arguments later being analysed within a broader social context, connected with teacher education institutes and societal ideologies. Since respondents are always taking non-neutral positions, it has persistent bias to take some action which may exclude others (Fairclough, 1995). In this study, the researcher pinpoints such critical issues maintaining critical perspective during investigation (Joye & Maesele, 2022) and have tried to avoid own ideological biases as researcher belong to majority group which may influence this study (Stevens, 2011). CDA is also considered to be a movement or paradigm which follows heterogeneous set of approaches with different theoretical models, research methods and agendas (Sengul, 2024). CDA is seen to judge and intervene on the social issues which seek intervention between right and wrong and to stand on behalf of those who are oppressed. Jenks and Bhatia (2020) also referred to CDA as a theoretical framework representing social issues can help towards societal transformation by analysing disparities. Thus, the researcher is keen to investigate professional development related perceptions and challenges from various theoretical aspects from the viewpoint of equality and equity issues.

## *Data Sources*

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This study adopts CDA framework which leverages the methodological versatility inherent in the approach, enabling the integration of diverse data sources to provide a multi-dimensional perspective on the discourse. In alignment with CDA's foundational principles, there exists no prescriptive or singular mode of data collection; rather, the methodology accommodates a multimodal array of evidentiary materials (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). Here, Primary data had been gathered through semi-structured interviews and discussions with minority and non-minority teacher educators from five Primary Teacher Training Institute's. Participants for these engagements had been selected via purposive sampling strategy, ensuring the selection of informants with direct, relevant experience pertaining to the research inquiry. Alongside, the analysis incorporated a rigorous examination of the socio-historical contexts enveloping the discursive texts. This entails a systematic consideration of genre, rhetorical style, intended audience, communicative purpose, and salient textual characteristics. The analytical focus was directed toward elucidating both the internal linguistic structures and the external relational dynamics between texts and competing discursive formations. That antecedent study seeks to extend this line of investigation through a critical discursive lens (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Semi-structured interviews followed by informal discussion with PTI based teacher educators was carried out to collect primary data. The researcher carried out total (n = 7) seven interviews both online and in person and recorded those interviews. Later those interviews had been transcribed, pseudonymized verbatim transcription was also prepared (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

## *Data Analysis: Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model*

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The analysis is grounded in Fairclough's (2001) three-dimensional CDA model, connecting text, discursive practice, and social practice. At the first level, textual analysis focuses on observable grammatical and semantic features within the data. The discursive practice dimension investigates the institutional mediation of texts. According to Fairclough (1995), an author's linguistic choices are constrained by the social conditions of a text's production, distribution, and reception. This dimension is operationalized through intertextuality, the principle that a text's meaning is derived from its dialogic relationship with existing discourses (Fairclough, 1995). Parallel to this, interdiscursivity provides a lens for analysing the hybridization of diverse discourses within a single text, revealing how competing ideologies may either reinforce or destabilize one another (Lewis, 2006).

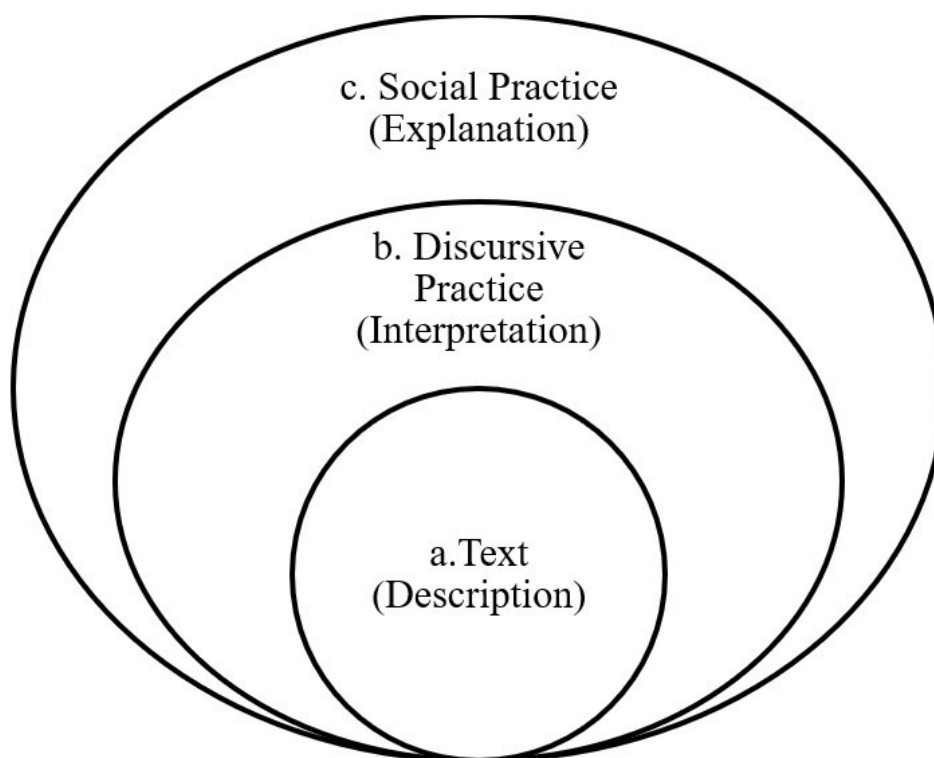


Figure 1. Fairclough's three-dimensional model of CDA

Finally, the dimension of social practice evaluates the systemic forces such as political, economic, and cultural that shape language (Joye & Maesele, 2022). Following Fairclough's (2003) assertion that social practices regulate structural possibilities, this study utilizes the three-dimensional model to provide a comprehensive analysis that extends from textual nuance to social structures. Data analysis was conducted by mapping the linguistic features of the interviews against established theoretical frameworks. By contrasting participant narratives with critical scholarship, the researcher sought to bridge the gap between individual discursive choices and macro-level social structures (Machin & Mayr, 2023).

### *Study Setting and Participant Selection*

This study focuses on primary teacher educators who are known as "PTI Instructors" work in Bangladesh's Primary Teacher Training Institutes (PTIs). The history of the PTI traces back to the first teacher training center established in the Indian subcontinent in 1716, followed by the "normal schools" of the 1880s. At present, there are 67 public PTIs, as the government has ensured at least one PTI in each of the 64 districts in Bangladesh. The author collected lists of all PTI instructors from the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education and verified it with other sources. This list was further cross-checked with the assistance of a key informant a research officer working in the ministry. This list also includes each instructor's date of joining the service and date of retirement. As of July 2025, there were 607 PTI instructors actively employed, who were considered the entire study population.

The study found that only three of these teacher educators are from ethnic minority backgrounds, while the other 604 are from the non-minority group. Consequently, all minority teacher educators were selected as this covers the entire population of minority cohort. The four non-minority participants were selected utilizing purposive sampling strategy (Mortelmans, 2011). This approach was chosen to ensure the inclusion of specific

perspectives relevant to the study's theoretical framework and to better understand the disparities between the two groups (Corbie-Smith, 2004). The researcher also wanted to capture their current roles, with the goal of maximizing the richness of the qualitative data (Jalongo & Saracho, 2016). The study participants are currently working in five different institutes, with an age range between 27 to 43 years. The table below provides further details of the research participants.

Respondent Code	Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Experience
TE-EM-01	Tripura	Female	36	9 Years
TE-EM-02	Marma	Female	33	4 Years
TE-EM-03	Chakma	Male	29	2 Years
TE-NM-01	Kabir	Male	27	3 Years
TE-NM-02	Islam	Male	43	16 Years
TE-NM-03	Akter	Female	37	13 Years
TE-NM-04	Ahmed	Male	33	8 Years

Table 2. Details of the Study Participants. TE: Teacher Educator, EM: Ethnic minority, NM: Non-minority

Including participants from both dominant and minority backgrounds enhances analytical value by revealing diverse perspectives, which improves ecological validity and prevents the development of an incomplete theoretical model (Prior & van Hell, 2021). By choosing respondents from both groups for discourse analysis, the researcher can observe how the dominant group often uses specific discursive strategies to reinforce authority, shape public perceptions, and maintain a positive image (Marlow, 2017). Scholars also recommend that including both dominant and minority perspectives in discourse analysis is crucial to avoid reinforcing biases and to enhance the understanding of minority issues (Perkins, 2016).

### *Ethical Considerations*

This study was conducted with careful attention to ethical considerations. Prior to the interview's, informed consent was obtained, and the researcher ensured the participants' voluntary agreement to participate in interviews and discussions with teacher educators (Tack et al., 2018). The research title, data collection methods, and participant sampling procedures were clearly specified, and prior approval was obtained from the Directorate of Primary Education. Data collection took place between July 2025 and September 2025. Each interview lasted approximately 40–45 minutes, and participants did not receive any remuneration for their participation. The researcher audio-recorded all interviews and produced pseudonymized verbatim transcriptions (Miles & Huberman, 1994). To enhance validity, the interview protocol was piloted with a teacher educator, feedback from this pilot informed minor adaptations to the wording and flow of questions. Each interviewee received an informed consent form outlining the purpose of the study, permission for audio recording, and the right to withdraw at any stage of data collection. No personal identifying information was collected, and no data other than interview audio were recorded. All consent forms were securely stored in a password-protected medium following the completion of the interviews (Mortelmans, 2011).

## *Findings/Results*

The analysis of interview data, guided by Fairclough's three-dimensional CDA model, revealed two predominant discourses structuring the professional world of minority teacher educators in Bangladesh. The first is a discourse of tokenistic inclusion that reinforces systematic exclusion, where symbolic representation masks deeper mechanisms of marginalization. The second is a discourse of ideological disjuncture that legitimizes marginalization, framing minority perspectives as incompatible with dominant institutional norms. These discourses, supported by selected transcript extracts, are shown to actively construct a professional reality that reproduces inequality, ultimately challenging the notion of equity in Bangladeshi teacher education.

### *Discourse One: Tokenistic Inclusion Steering Systematic Exclusion*

The first extract illustrates how tokenistic inclusion measures functioned as a tool for the systematic exclusion of teacher educators from minority backgrounds in Bangladesh. The interviewee, a minority teacher educator, reflects that although a quota-based preferential system exists formally, they themselves underwent the same competitive process as all other candidates. Instead, the primary beneficiaries of the system appear to be another group, arguably due to the state's interest in maintaining exclusionary practices.

*"I had been working as instructor in PTI from tribal community which are not common even we have many students in IER who graduated from education field (Institute of Education and Research, University of Dhaka). We are only three persons from our community, but we are now working in three different places. I became instructor in 2017, before that I graduated from University of Dhaka. I was selected from the merit list, and I have been selected by competing same as with all candidates. I think in PTIs teacher recruitment quota benefited freedom fighter mostly. You might have seen there was circular two time in PTI when DPE didn't found enough candidates belong to freedom fighter group. even one full batch of PTI instructors selected from freedom fighter quota but we were always deprived, for our case DPE haven't taken any steps.....hm, what I experienced we have taken it as written our fate." (Respondent: TE-EM-02)*

Applying Fairclough's (2001) three-dimensional model, the minority teacher educator exposes how institutional recruitment policies produce and naturalize ethnic minority exclusion. If we look on the text level, the minority teacher's grammar encodes systemic blockage. The concessive clause "I have been selected by competing same as with all candidates" asserts individual merit, yet the passive construction "we were always deprived" shifts agency away from the speaker to an unnamed institutional actor (DPE). A similar study which examined how minority teachers are positioned and reproduce themselves within power structures, potentially encoding systematic blockage in their narratives (Mahrouse, 2005). We can also see interdiscursivity emerges through the collision of two competing discourses: *meritocratic fairness* "selected from the merit list" and *quota-based entitlement* "freedom fighter mostly". The respondent provides a concrete example: "one full batch of PTI instructors selected from freedom fighter quota" while DPE "haven't taken any steps" for tribal (Minority) candidates. This juxtaposition reveals how state reparative policy operates as active redistribution while minority underrepresentation is met with institutional silence. Similar phenomenon also observed in some other studies, where locally developed policies reduce underrepresentation of marginalized groups, but underrepresentation persists despite these efforts (McBee et al., 2012). Fairclough's (2003) claim that social practices regulate structural possibilities. In Bangladesh's public sector, the freedom fighter quota functions as a politically entrenched mechanism. The respondent's concrete example multiple recruitment circulars where

DPE failed to find enough freedom fighter candidates yet still prioritized that quota over minority inclusion shows how one form of historical redress actively forecloses another. The speaker's final resignation "written our fate" is not mere emotion. The researcher views it is the linguistic trace of a political structure that offers no procedural pathway for minority educators to contest their systematic exclusion.

The social practice dimension situates these discourses within Bangladesh's wider socio-historical context. References to the "merit list" reflect a recruitment culture rooted in colonial legacies, where examination-based selection systematically disadvantages minorities. The prioritization of the freedom fighter quota further illustrates how preservation mechanisms disproportionately benefit dominant groups, reinforcing structural injustice. Ultimately, the discourse reflects a social reality in which minority inclusion remains contingent on political will rather than institutional commitment. Applying the theoretical framework of Critical Race Theory, we can focus on the core tenet that racism is both ordinary and structural, particularly in instances where the state prioritizes a singular national identity (Inefuku, 2021). In Bangladesh, this phenomenon is often obscured by a discourse centred on religious and linguistic identity, which has historically dominated the concept of Bangladeshi independence. Similarly, Dixson et al. (2006) posit that racism is systemic and deep-rooted yet frequently appears normal and unexceptional; this aligns with the core tenet regarding the permanence of racism, a phenomenon strikingly similar to the current context in Bangladesh.

At the same time, the extract below from the counterpart group, the non-minority teacher educator opined as,

*"Instructor (Teacher Educator) recruitment of PTI mostly need based and sometimes takes a very long time with a 5-year record. Due to ministry's time-consuming procedure, PTIs often fall out of required instructor and final process are done hurriedly. Are such cases, the recruitment committee sometimes overlooks the disadvantaged group issues. Not only minorities but also disable candidates are disregarded from the preferential system of recruitment. The time taking process also many tribal candidates go for other job, and they really don't care about this job. While selection process there are many criterions such as candidates should have a B.Ed. degree from authorised institution also appears as barrier to access for minorities and disable candidates. For the case of freedom fighter quota, this was actually due to the previous government's priority. DPE (Directorate of Primary Education) need to follow the Ministry's guideline and cannot avoid the political interest of the government. We have many minority candidates from Hindu who mostly seen as religious minority, but the fate of ethnic minority remained unchanged." (Respondent: TE-NM-01)*

In the first layer of the extract the words 'time consuming' 'recruitment committee overlooks' 'disregarded' suggests the concurrent scenario of access issues of minority teacher educators. The system itself also contributing as a barrier in accessing in teacher education profession not only minorities about also candidates with disabilities. We can also reflect the long practiced bureaucratic mechanism which mainly hinder disadvantaged group while only benefiting the majorities. In the second layer of discursive practice, the participants mentioned about Hindu minority, but the word chosen 'we' while mentioning them. This reflects the respondent's closer ownership towards the Hindus even though their status is higher compared with ethnic minorities. The application of quota preference system which benefited one certain group, this phenomenon also taken as granted in the respondent's tone as mentioned 'previous government's priority'. From the social practice view, the extract is seen as obvious and clearer dominance of majority where tokenistic measure doesn't work at all. Thus, the broader social practice is also contributing to the factor of systematic exclusion. If any comprehensive initiatives are not taken, such fragmented system will never be changed, and exclusion will be produced again and again. These phrases can be viewed through the tenet of the permanence of racism, as the phe-

nomenon is deeply embedded within "merit-based" committees and "time-consuming" bureaucracies. In this context, systemic exclusion does not manifest as overt "hate"; rather, it is perceived simply as "the way things are done." Racism is ingrained in bureaucratic structures and practices, which are permeated by racial meanings and hierarchies that lead to the inequitable treatment of minorities (Byron & Roscigno, 2019).

## *Discourse Two: Ideological Disjuncture Resulting Legitimized Marginalization*

The following interview data draws the second discourse where ideological disjuncture has repeatedly created legitimized marginalization:

*"The immediate past government always tried to establish their political ideology that they are most favourable party for disadvantaged group but unfortunately the regime tried to favour people with stronger political connection. In Bangladesh education sector is the largest place of employment where we can see how govt. policies are implemented. For ethnic minority there is clear provision to provide preferential access but in reality, the teachers or teacher educators who got appointed are mostly selected based of the competitive recruitment process but not the preferential system. The notion of providing their right and access is merely seen. That's why you can see most of the teacher and teacher educator working in minority dominant areas comes from the majority group. In 2018 when govt. tried to implement the Textbook to be taught in minority language, the shortage of minority came into discussion. Ministry sometimes take initiatives but if there are not enough teacher from the concern community or if we don't have teacher educator from the minorities, how we can ensure the implementation? These issues are sometime not well connected"* (Respondent: TE-NM-03).

In this extract, we can see the contradiction between political rhetoric and practical reality through specific semantic choices. The participant uses evaluative language such as "unfortunately," "merely seen," and "not well connected" to signal a critique of the state's performance. Grammatically, the use of rhetorical questions, such as "how we can ensure the implementation?", serves to highlight the logical fallacy in government planning, where policies are created without the necessary human infrastructure (minority teachers) to support them. The second dimension examines how this text is shaped by institutional mechanisms and intertextuality. The respondent directly engages with the discourse of "preferential access" (quota systems) and "competitive recruitment process," which are central to Bangladesh's civil service and educational hiring frameworks. There is a clear sense of intertextuality as the speaker refers to the 2018 government initiative regarding minority language textbooks: the text gains meaning by being positioned against this specific historical event. The third dimension explains these textual and discursive patterns within the broader context of power and hegemony in Bangladesh. The participant describes a system where "merit-based" competitive recruitment effectively functions as a tool for the majority group to maintain dominance. This points to a social reality where systemic barriers prevent ethnic minorities from accessing the very "rights" promised by the state. The mention of the 2018 textbook policy illustrates a "top-down" approach to governance where the Ministry takes initiatives that look inclusive on paper but fail in practice due to a lack of investment in minority human capital. The findings in the above extract strongly align with the CRT tenet of Interest Convergence which posits that progress of the marginalized groups occur only when it aligns with the interest of dominant group (Starck et al., 2024). The non-minority respondent's critique of the 2018 textbook policy illustrates it perfectly. While the policy serves as a symbolic gesture of inclusion for the state, the lack of 'minority human capital' ensures that the ac-

tual power structure remained unchanged. We can view it such 'top-down' approach demonstrates that such initiatives are often designed to maintain the state's positive image rather than to facilitate genuine systemic equity (Christensen, 2007).

On contrary to the previous extract one respondent from minority group unfolded his opinion as:

*"Among the PTI Instructors, we (minority) are very few in number. If the recruitment criterions were not so strict then there might be more tribal instructors in PTIs. One problem is many graduates from our community don't have B.Ed. degree and also, they don't know very well about PTIs. There are many teachers from us, but the number is not sufficient enough in many hilly schools. Our students face difficulties to learn Bangla language and this also a big problem in primary schools. I also saw the books written in Chakma, Marma, Garo, Tripura and Sadri languages but we don't have teacher trainer in PTIs from those communities except Chakma. If there was teacher trainer from those community, then they can train those teachers. I think we need to decide first what ministry actually want to do with us? (Respondent: TE-EM-01)."*

Through the lens of Fairclough's (2001) three-dimensional model, the minority respondent illustrates how institutional frameworks systematically normalize the exclusion of ethnic minorities. At the textual level, the respondent used "we (minority)" builds a collective identity rooted in marginalization, while labelling recruitment criteria as "strict" reframes standard bureaucratic hurdles as active systemic barriers. Rubin (2021) similarly asserts that minorities tend to build collective identities rooted in marginalization by erecting boundaries to protect their values while reframing these bureaucratic hurdles. A breakdown in discursive practice is further evident through a lack of intertextuality; despite the publication of textbooks in minority languages, the absence of community specific trainers in PTIs with the sole exception of the Chakma reveals a significant disconnect between policymaking and its practical execution (Ahmed, 2024). To better understand this phenomenon, we may refer to the CRT tenet of interest convergence, which suggests that Bangladesh's formal recognition of minority languages serves as a symbolic gesture of progress while avoiding substantive structural changes. Consequently, at the level of social practice, the respondent's final question regarding the ministry's true intentions challenges institutional hegemony, implying that rigid entry requirements and recruitment obstacles are not merely administrative oversights, but rather social practices that sustain majority dominance at the expense of minority educational realities. A similar phenomenon has been studied in the United States, where researchers found that social practices often normalize the status of powerful groups and facilitate their ability to sustain majority dominance (Pratto & Stewart, 2012).

The closing question, "What [does the] ministry actually want to do with us?" is a direct challenge to the state's intent. It suggests that the lack of representation is not an accident, but a potential lack of political will to achieve true inclusivity. This extract aligns with the CRT tenet of the voice of color, where the minority respondent identifies merit as a tool for majority dominance that maintains the status quo. Such a perspective is restated in many recent academic studies. Srijani Roy (2025) challenges that meritocracy functions as a potent ideology to legitimize inequality under an egalitarian surface, where merit is naturalized as innate ability rather than a reflection of caste, class, and accumulated capital. In another study, Jean Clarke et al. (2024) distinguish three discursive strategies utilized by leaders to uphold the meritocracy myth in academia, which reinforce gender inequality through the application of gender-neutral language and individualization. This these findings also appeared to be similar to Bangladesh perspective too.

## *Discussions and Reflective Remarks*

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This study reveals that the systemic exclusion of teacher educators from minority backgrounds in Bangladesh is sustained through two interrelated discourses: tokenistic inclusion steering systematic exclusion and ideological disjuncture resulting in legitimized marginalization. These discourses, emerged from both minority and non-minority participants extracts, expose a profound chasm between de jure policies of inclusion and de facto practices of exclusion, rooted in the socio-political apparatus in Bangladesh. This finding is consistent with Wodak (2007), as that study revealed a gap between official inclusion policies and actual exclusion practices in EU organizations. Another study by Atkins (2016) also examined how inclusive education practice can unintentionally reproduce forms of exclusion and marginalization. The analysis of Discourse One demonstrates how ostensibly inclusive policies, such as quota systems, function paradoxically as instruments of exclusion. The formal existence of quotas for ethnic minorities creates an institutional facade of equity, while in practice, recruitment is dominated by a "competitive process" (Respondent: TE-EM-02) that demands adherence to majoritarian norms. The recurring beneficiary of preferential treatment is revealed to be the "freedom fighter" quota, a category aligned with the nationalistic majority. This selective application of reservation mechanisms illustrates what can be termed performative inclusion where policies are enacted not to redistribute opportunity but to legitimize the existing social order. The discursive practice here is crucial. The non-minority participant's explanation (Respondent: TE-NM-01) framing exclusion as a consequence of bureaucratic delay ("time-consuming procedure") or minority candidates' alleged disinterest ("they really don't care") serves to naturalize inequitable outcomes. Scholars argue that liberal equal opportunities policies fit comfortably with the interests of the dominant educational, economic and social order and function to select marginalized individuals for mobility within the existing system rather than transforming it (Lynch, 1997). The similar scenario also viewed in the context of Bangladesh were dominant belief always fits in terms of policies but approach towards minorities aimed only to provide a gateway of mobility but not transformation of the ongoing bias. It shifts blame from systemic bias to procedural inefficiency or minority deficit, thereby depoliticizing exclusion. Conversely, the minority participant's use of collective pronouns ("we are only three persons") and passive resignation ("we have taken it as... our fate") points to an internalized marginalization, where tokenistic measures lead to fragmentation rather than solidarity. This discourse circulates within a colonial legacy of "merit," where standardized criteria (like a mandatory B.Ed. degree from authorized institutions) become structural barriers, systematically filtering out minorities while upholding a myth of neutrality. Discourse Two further unpacks this systemic failure by highlighting an ideological disjuncture between political rhetoric and material practice. The state publicly commits to inclusivity, as seen in initiatives like minority-language textbooks (Respondent: TE-NM-03), yet simultaneously fails to cultivate the necessary human infrastructure minority teachers and teacher educators to implement such policies. This disjuncture is not a failure of planning but a feature of governance. As one participant critically notes, policies are "not well connected" (Respondent: TE-NM-03), creating a cyclical problem: a lack of minority teachers is cited as the reason for the failure of inclusive policies, yet the recruitment system itself perpetuates that very scarcity. However, in other cultural contexts, different scenarios emerge; for instance, Ingersoll et al. (2019) studied schoolteachers in the USA and found a higher turnover of minority teachers despite successful recruitment efforts. Consequently, Bangladesh could adopt similar initiatives to recruit more teachers and teacher educators from minority backgrounds while also addressing the systemic issues that hinder their retention.

This discourse legitimizes marginalization by framing it as a practical, rather than political, problem. The minority participant's poignant question, "what ministry actually want to do with us?" (Respondent:TE-EM-01), challenges the state's underlying intent. It suggests that the "strict" recruitment criteria and the absence of minority teacher trainers are not oversights but symptoms of a hegemonic social practice. The system maintains majority dominance by controlling the gates to the profession while outsourcing the blame for exclusion to minorities perceived lack of qualifications or to the complexities of bureaucracy. This mechanism exemplifies the Critical Race Theory tenet of the critique of liberalism, where "neutral" bureaucratic standards function as a colourblind veil that masks systemic exclusion. Scholars like Inefuku (2021) also found similar prevalence of racism through 'neutral' standards that mask racial bias which prioritizes white supremacy in United States. Through a Critical Discourse Analysis lens, this practice is naturalized via institutional hegemony, where the language of merit and policy effectively shifts agency away from the state and places the burden of underrepresentation on the marginalized groups themselves (Mijar & Giri, 2025).

The intertextual reference to specific minority languages (Chakma, Marma, etc.) alongside the admission that there are no trainers from those communities starkly illustrates how symbolic gestures (multilingual textbooks) are hollow without commensurate investment in minority human capital. Together, these discourses reveal a self-reinforcing cycle of exclusion. Tokenistic measures (Discourse One) provide ideological cover, allowing the state to claim inclusivity while operationally defaulting to "meritocratic" norms that favour the majority. The resulting ideological disjuncture (Discourse Two) then legitimizes the status quo, as the failure of inclusive policies is blamed on a lack of "available" minority candidates—a lack produced by the very system claiming to address it. This cycle is embedded within Bangladesh's broader socio-historical context, where colonial administrative legacies intertwine with post-independence political priorities to consolidate the cultural and professional dominance of the majority. Ultimately, the discussion points to a need to move beyond tokenism and disjointed policy initiatives. Meaningful inclusion requires a fundamental restructuring of recruitment discourses and practices. This would involve not only the faithful implementation of quotas.

### *Limitations of This Study*

This study acknowledges several inherent methodological limitations that contextualize its findings. A critical consideration is the selective nature of the Critical Discourse Analysis employed. The choice of texts and participant responses is inevitably guided by the researcher's analytical focus, making it difficult to claim a purely 'objective' standpoint. While the inscriptions of these texts provide a rich, contextualized perspective, their insights are necessarily bounded by the study's specific scope and theoretical horizon. Several pragmatic constraints further delineate the boundaries of this research. First, the extremely limited population of minority teacher educators in Bangladesh restricts the generalizability of the findings. To maintain a balanced sample design, the number of non-minority participants was also intentionally limited, which may not fully capture the spectrum of majority perspectives. Second, the absence of direct voices from key policy and decision-makers curtails a holistic understanding of the institutional logic behind exclusionary practices. Third, reliable longitudinal data on recruitment and professional access is only available from 2006 onward, following a major restructuring of the Primary Training Institute (PTI) organogram, thus limiting historical analysis. Finally, as noted by Rahmat (2021), the tendency within minority studies to focus on aggregate challenges can obscure intra-group disparities. This study, while highlighting systemic barriers, may not have fully captured the nuanced and differing experiences among various ethnic minority communities, which could yield different, more granular insights into the mechanisms of marginalization.

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## *Egyenlőség és kirekesztés: kritikai diskurzuselemzés a bangladesi kisebbségi tanárképzőkről*

Banglades alkotmánya garantálja az egyenlőséget, oktatási rendszere azonban mély strukturális egyenlőtlenségeket tükröz. Annak ellenére, hogy a közszolgálatban és az oktatásban hivatalos kvótarendszer alapján zajlik a felvételi, az etnikai kisebbségek továbbra is marginalizált helyzetben vannak, különösen az oktatásban. Ez a helyzet olyan politikai kontextust tart fenn, ahol a pozitív diszkriminációt célzó intézkedések aránytalanul kedveznek a kiváltságos csoportoknak – például a szabadságharcosok leszármazottainak –, miközben a kisebbségek alkotmányos jogait elhanyagolják. A kritikai diskurzuselemzés (CDA) módszerét alkalmazva ez a tanulmány azt vizsgálja, hogy a tanárképzők toborzási gyakorlata hogyan tartja fenn az egyenlőtlenségeket, és hogyan legitimálja a tanárképzés a kirekesztést. A kisebbségi és nem kisebbségi származású, tanárképzésben dolgozó oktatókkal készített interjúk adatait, valamint a szakpolitikai dokumentumokat elemezve a kutatás azt vizsgálja, hogy az akadályok a bürokratikus hatékonyság hiányából vagy mélyebb társadalmi-strukturális egyenlőtlenségekből fakadnak-e inkább. A vizsgálat eredményei rámutatnak, hogy a kvótarendszer – bár papíron létezik – csupán szimbolikus szerepet tölt be, és alkalmazása következtelen. A bürokratikus merevség, az érzéketlen felvételi kritériumok és a burkolt diszkriminatív gyakorlatok szisztematikusan hátrányos helyzetbe hozzák a kisebbségi származású pályázókat, korlátozva ezzel hozzáférésüket és karrierlehetőségeiket. A tanulmány kiemeli az állami retorika és a valós élet közötti szakadékot, és azzal érvel, hogy a pusztán látszatintézkedésként alkalmazott befogadás csak fenntartja a strukturális egyenlőtlenségeket. Olyan újragondolt méltányossági rendszerre van szükség, amely lebontja a rendszerszintű akadályokat, biztosítja az elszámoltathatóságot, és összhangba hozza a politikát Banglades azon elkötelezettségével, hogy igazságosságot és befogadást biztosítson mindenki számára.

**Kulcsszavak:** *etnikai kisebbségek a tanárképzésben, kritikai diskurzuselemzés, egyenlőség és befogadás, Banglades*