THE CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS OF ONLINE EDUCATION IN THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH DURING COVID 19 IN SELECTED PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES IN BANGLADESH

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ABSTRACT

Online education is getting popularity in the last few decades and the pandemic "Covid 19" has fostered this education activities working from distant places around the world including Bangladesh. Technology is the key innovation of the 21st century which has a great influence upon every sector of human life. People in the last few decades have been getting the benefits of using technology in education. In recent time in the Covid 19 situation, the education is provided through online from the primary to the higher education level in many countries. Bangladesh government also has tried to telecast online classes and recorded classes on Bangladesh Television and other various social media. The Public and Private universities have also conducted classes from their respective places through Zoom, Google Meet, Facebook Live, and YouTube and so on. Here a noticeable progress occurred in the private universities in spite of having some challenges. As a faculty member of a private university, the researcher has got some experiences while teaching at university. From this concern the researcher has got the interest on conducting research on the private university students and teachers to check the real scenario of online teaching and learning here in Bangladesh. This research is a quantitative in nature and questionnaire survey would be conducted for collecting data for analysis and finding out the real information. The main focus of this research is to find out the challenges and prospects of online education of the Department of English in the private universities in Bangladesh.

INTRODUCTION

According to WHO, the current outbreak of coronavirus disease (COVID 19) was first reported from Wuhan, China, on 31 December 2019? From then this Covid 19 rapidly has spread out all over the world. In Bangladesh this Covid 19 was identified and noticed on March 8, 2020. The government declared lockdown from March 17, 2020 for a certain period. From then the school, colleges and universities are shut down physically. At that time the private universities come forward to continue teaching learning activities in the end of the March 2020. They took the initiative to teach students through online by the help of technological devices. They first conducted research on the ability of using the online platform and after getting satisfactory response from both the students and teachers, they started teaching through online. Still now the third phases of "Covid 19" like Delta and Omicron variants have been attacking Bangladeshi people. From March 2021, online teaching and learning is going on continuously. There have a lot of challenges and difficulties that have to be faced by this online teaching and learning. After all, this has given a great opportunity to the students and teachers for developing their technological knowledge.

According to UNESCO about 1.5 billion students and youth around the world were affected by school and university closures due to the global outbreak of coronavirus. In Bangladesh, all kinds of on-campus activities and face-to-face educational activities were suspended till September 2020 later on, the suspension was extended till June 2021.

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Online teaching is the process of educating others via the internet. Various methods can be used, such as one-on-one video calls, group video calls, and webinars. Online teaching does this beautifully. Anyone with an internet connection can attend livestream college lectures, learn a language via video-call, or coach themselves through an online video course. Plus, students can participate in interactive discussions through the creation of small groups to examine topics from various perspectives.

Actually "Covid 19" Pandemic has changed every aspect of human life like education, business, economy, health, and communications. In recent years it has been observed that virtual activities are on great progress and due to this pandemic, it has reached to its pick. Especially, education sector has got new shape on the virtual platform. Many universities and colleges across the world including Bangladesh have taken the initiatives to continue education through this platform. Online education has become a new phenomenon in Bangladesh during this pandemic.

Background of the Study

Bangladesh declared that all educational activities would be continuing through online platform from the primary to the higher education level during early period of Covid 19 in the country. The University Grants Commission (UGC) Bangladesh as a responsible body of the government for Higher Education (HE) and policy maker also provided a guideline for running education through online. It is important to mention that online learning is not that easy for a country like ours. It is a big challenge not only for the learners but also for the teachers. Changes to the educational system including technical support, administrative planning, maintaining online schedule and data, all are very much new for the teachers. In this regard along with preparing lectures they must have proper skills and knowledge of using technical properties.

The 21st century has brought about a massive change in the field of education in the present world. Those days gone are when teaching was limited only within the confine of a classroom. Internet has brought about a paradigm shift in the fundamental way in which learning is done. Though there are numerous examples of the usage of machines and tools in education throughout history, e-learning in the modern sense of the term is a relatively new concept. Slide projectors and television-based classes have been in use since the 1950s. However, one of the first instances of online learning in the world can be traced back to 1960, at the University of Illinois, USA. Though the internet wasn't invented back then, students began learning from computer terminals that were interlinked to form a network.

In 1984 the University of Toronto offered completely online course for the first-ever. In 1986, the Electronic University Network was established for being used in DOS and Commodore 64 computers. Three years later, the University of Phoenix became the first educational institution in the world to launch a wholly online collegiate institution, offering both Bachelor's and Master's degrees. The Open University in Britain was one of the first universities in the world to begin online distance learning, in the early 1990s. Currently, the Indira Gandhi National Open University in India is the largest university in the world with around 4 million students enrolled, most of whom currently receive education via online methods.

Online learning is no longer just limited to colleges and universities. The recent Covid-19 pandemic further illustrates the importance of online learning in today's school system, as it has proven to be a boon to both students and teachers alike who are unable to attend school due to the risk of disease spread.

Significance of the Study

The pandemic is an unexpected situation when people have to face lot of problems in every spare of life. Every section like economical, commercial, social, religious, as well as educational activities are strongly hampered. This Covid 19 has given many restrictions to do the normal activities like before. After the declaration of WHO this Covid 19 as Pandemic, almost all the activities of the world have got a new shape and changed a lot. In education section, this impact also has strikingly affected. Observing the situation many researchers suggested the policy makers and educationists to continue education through online platform. Bangladesh has also taken this initiative seriously from various education sections. Many private universities started continuing their educational activities from late of March 2020 when the country got lockdown from March 17, 2020. Although the public universities firstly did not encourage continuing education through online but later on, they also started teaching online to their students. This study is really essential to find out the challenges in running education work from home through online. It is also necessary to bring out various prospects that have been also visible in education sector.

Research Objectives

- To identify the challenges of online education of the Department of English amongst the selected Private Universities in Bangladesh during the Covid 19 pandemic.
- To study the prospects of online education of the Department of English amongst selected Private Universities in Bangladesh.
- To analyze the rate of success of online education of the Department of English amongst the selected Private Universities in Bangladesh.
- To justify the online education of the Department of English amongst the selected Private Universities in Bangladesh.

Research Questions

- What are the challenges of Online Education during any crisis moment like "Covid 19" Pandemic?
- What are the prospects of online education of the department of English in Bangladesh?
- How successful this online education of the department of English in Bangladesh?
- How online education is justified in the department of English amongst the selected Private Universities in Bangladesh?

Scope of the Study

The researchers from different corner of the world have conducted study on Online Education in the world including Bangladesh. They have done overall survey at the beginning of this pandemic whether this online platform could be continued for teaching and learning here. Most of the researchers have conducted research on Public Universities as well as Private Universities. There have some specific purpose and the sample was different. Sometimes the participants were the students and sometimes it was the faculty members. Therefore, the researchers have tried to focus on the specific department of the Private universities namely the Department of English amongst selected private universities in Bangladesh.

Limitation of the Study

This study is not a large sample study and there is a huge opportunity to conduct study on many others Departments at Private and Public universities.

Hypothesis of the study

- H_1: Online Education leads to Physical hazards / Health problems.
- H_2: Low quality Internet / Wi-Fi connection is the cause of less student's attendance in the online classes.
- H_3. Low salary and extreme work load leads to lack of motivations of the faculty members.
- H_4: Null: Lack of experience and training of the faculty members make students dissatisfied in the online class.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Tabassum et al. (2021) has brought the teacher's perception about the online education of private and public universities in Bangladesh during this pandemic. According to their findings, about 88.5% of the participants take online classes during the pandemic among them majority (91.3%) of them were staying at home and continue their online educational support to the students.

Dutta and Smita (2020) also have found some challenges from analyzing the data findings. Such as: University Closure, Disruptions in Learning, Loss of Social Interaction, Physical Health Problems, and Mental Health Problems, Shifting to Online Education, and Financial Crisis and Parental Involvement. The study recommended that urgent steps should be taken to provide technical resources and improve internet connection for ensuring uninterrupted online education in Bangladesh to fulfill the education needs of tertiary level students in this crisis period of COVID-19 pandemic.

Mishra, Gupta, and Shree (2020) conducted another study on "Online teaching-learning in higher education during lockdown period of COVID-19 pandemic." This study is a portrayal of online teaching-learning modes adopted by the Mizoram University for the teaching-learning process and subsequent semester examinations. It looks forward to an intellectually enriched opportunity for further future academic decision-making during any adversity.

Hasan and Islam (2020) focused on the views of the teachers of private universities in conducting online classes during the corona pandemic in Bangladesh. It is found that significant differences in the uses of technology, internet, and equipment by the teachers before and during the corona pandemic. Online teaching has significant effects on teachers' training, student's punctuality in attending classes, interactions between teachers & students. It also helps authority in monitoring the classes.

Arora and Srinivasan (2020) mentioned that the internet is keeping the world somehow walking in the darkest hours of the Covid-19 pandemic. And mobile telephony is the tool that is keeping Bangladesh limping. The support of technology cannot be denied in this pandemic situation.

Hasan and Islam (2020) conducted a research on the Academic, Financial and Administrative Issues of Online Teaching during Corona Pandemic. According to them, private universities conducted online classes which affect positively to resume the classes. The study found class monitoring becomes easier by the authority during the corona pandemic through the online class system. It is agreed upon and strongly agreed by 63% of teachers. Only 5.3% of teachers strongly disagreed with this argument. Moreover, about 43.9% faculty members strongly agreed on the work from home during this pandemic. In a circular, UGC stated that during the coronavirus situation, the salaries and allowances of all the teachers/ officers/ employees of the university are to be paid regularly as before (UGC, 2020). The study also finds that at least 16% of teachers have purchased new equipment to conduct online classes. That means modernization and technological awareness are increased and improved by the faculty members. Many of the universities of Bangladesh had arranged online training programs for the teachers after the corona pandemic. Technology and network-based interactions between teachers and students are significantly improved through online teachings.

Arora and Srinivasan (2020) conducted a study on student's acceptance of Mobile learning on higher education in Saudi Arabia. Here the researcher has found many positive advantages. For example: Learners can interact with each other and with the practitioner instead of hiding behind large monitors. It's much easier to accommodate several mobile devices in a classroom than several desktop computers. Mobile phone devices can be used anywhere, anytime, including at home,

on the train, in hotels - this is invaluable for work-based training. These devices engage learners - young people who may have lost interest in education - like Mobile phones, gadgets and games devices such as Nintendo DS or Playstation Portable. This technology may contribute to combating the digital divide, as this equipment is generally cheaper than desktop computers.

Morales et al. (2020) has conducted a research on "Depression and anxiety among university students during the COVID-19 pandemic in Bangladesh". Here they found that around 15% of the students reportedly had moderately severe depression, whereas 18.1% were severely suffering from anxiety. Comparing to the earlier studies, their study suggests that university students in Bangladesh are experiencing an unparalleled growth of depression and anxiety under the current global pandemic situation.

In the first phase of Covid 19 Dhaka University was reluctant to go online class system thinking of the inconvenience of the students. Some teachers expressed their opinion about taking academic activities online as the university was closed due to the Corona outbreak, but not everyone from remote areas of the country thinks that equal participation was possible in online platforms. The top authorities of the university expressed their concern about the student's family's financial condition, access to healthy life style, social distancing, mental state, and ability to buy internet and compatible device during this COVID outbreak to continue online class (Bangla Tribune, 2020).

The main argument against online class in developing countries is lack of proper internet connection with stable speed. Even if they are able to attend classes, the experience is extremely inefficient because they have trouble following the lecture because the network breaks down frequently not able to communicate properly with the teachers. This problem becomes worse for the students who have visited or resided in the village during Pandemic due to poor internet connection. Online classes also discourage class participation because most of the students do not own laptop or computers. It is not possible to do assignments and tasks in a smart phone. In this situation, students cannot use cyber cafes or fix their computers if there is a malfunction. Students are also expressed their opinion that online classes are not the same as in-person classes because it is less engaging than normal cases. The concerned gets even worse when it comes about conducting online exams, quizzes, presentations or any sort of graded activity through online platforms. Students from engineering background are also concerned about the way they are being taught in online. They faced difficulty understanding equations and doing Math's online because not all the course instructors are using white boards. Many students also have concerns regarding the mental pressure such classes and exams are putting on the students during a global pandemic.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Design of the Study
This research is a quantitative in nature. The questionnaire has been made in the Google doc form and sent to the faculty members of different private universities through email and messenger. There are some demographic questions and two focused questions related to the topic. The questions are mostly close ended (Yes/No) and two are open ended. The other seven questions are in the form of 5 Points Likert Scale. Among the Private Universities of Bangladesh, twelve university faculty members responded to this questionnaire.

Sampling
The researcher has adopted Snowball Sampling Technique for collecting date for this research. As this research is about the challenges and prospects of online education of the department of English at private universities in Bangladesh, the researcher has chosen the university faculty members as the participants. In fact, they have been working in this Pandemic situation and have gathered a lot of experiences by this time.

Research Instrument
As the study is a quantitative in nature and hence as a survey tool questionnaire method has been used for collecting data from the faculty members of different twelve private universities of Bangladesh.

Data Collection
The researcher has sent questionnaire on Google doc form to the faculty members through Email and Facebook Messenger and what's App. The total responders of the questionnaire were twenty. Among them 50% was female and other 50% was male. They were from eleven different private universities of Bangladesh. The responders working position were mostly Lecturer and Assistant Professor.

Survey
This study conducted survey through the questionnaire format with help of internet technology. The questionnaire was made in the Google Doc form and sent the faculty by email for collecting the responses.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS
Table 1. The question regarding Internet and other issues.

SN	Justify the following statements.	Yes	No	Maybe
01	Do you have a proper Internet/ Wi-Fi connection in order to continue your online classes and exams work from home smoothly?	70%	10%	20%

02	Do your students find it difficult using software applications in attending online classes and exams?	25%	25%	50%
03	Do you think the current classroom size is convenient for online classes and exams?	60%	20%	20%
04	Do you agree that distance learning or online education could be set as an institutional form in order to keep up to date to the developed countries?	75%	5%	20%

Table 2. The question regarding Online Education and adoption of technology.

SN	Justify the following statements.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
01	Online teaching and learning can be an alternative to the education system during the unexpected situation like Covid 19.	30%	45%	10%	10%	5%
02	Online education during these unexpected situations can fulfill the targeted goal of your students in order to meet the digital vision of the country.	-	42.1%	21.1%	26.3%	10.5%
03	Adopting technology in education in the normal and new-normal situations is essential for the 21st century.	40%	55%	5%	-	-
04	The implementation of online education during unavoidable circumstances like this Pandemic.	30%	50%	20%	-	-

Table 3. The question regarding using software, maintaining standard, and health issues

SN	Justify the following statements.	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
01	Facing any difficulties in using software applications in conducting online classes and exams	-	-	80%%	10%	10%
02	Online teaching leads your health problem.	15%	5%	60%	15%	5%
03	Online evaluation is maintaining standard.	5%	45%	20%	30%	-

Based on response of the questionnaire the study found that most of the faculty members which were 55% think that online education work from home is effective and other 15% believes that it is mostly effective. The rest 20% state that it is more effective. Very few faculty members responded that this is less effective. From the real observation it was really difficult make online education effective at the beginning. But later on, the students and faculty receive some practical knowledge of online education and finally almost all have got to know the proper application of the different technological tools like Google Classroom, Zoom, Google Meet, Messenger, What's App, and Internet technology. Networking is a crucial issue for Bangladesh especially for the rural area. Regarding the Internet and Wi-Fi Connection, the study has found that 70% of the responder has proper connection while some others 10% has no proper internet connections. And the rest 20% has no idea about the internet connection.

In response to the open-ended questionnaire, this study has found a wide range of mixed opinions and suggestions from the faculty members. To mention about the challenges, they have found as given below:

- Technical issue like lack of proper internet connections/ Wi-Fi, Devices, and Electricity.
- Student's participation in the class is not satisfactory like before.
- Lack of Motivations regarding online class from the authority and governments as well.
- Miscommunications are other key problems to continue online education in this crisis moment.
- Health Issues like Headache, Dizziness, High Pressure, Stress and Anxiety are the difficulties faced by the faculty members.
- Maintaining standard on evaluation system. There are questions regarding online education and evaluations.
- Family Issues like Bothering, No proper place and Disturbing's from others.

There was another open-ended question regarding the most important aspect of Online Evaluations. To this question the responders have given their real perceptions they follow in evaluating the students during this pandemic. It is found that many questions arose at the beginning of the Online education at private university regarding the proper evaluations of the students through online platform which leaded face a lot of challenges. After one year and four months of online activities, the faculty members have expressed their way of evaluation. Here mentioned some of important formats of examining the students.

- Written exam both Broad and Short type of Questions.
- Open Book Exam, Take Home Exam and Creative Exam
- Google Doc MCQ, Quiz Test and Short Question Answer
- Viva, Presentation, Making Video Lesson, Book Review, and Documentary Making
- Assignment, Term-Paper, Research Based Work, Projects and Case Study

- Surprise Test, Sudden Test, Class Test, Group Work, and Pair Activities.
- Class Response, Attendance and Participations

CONCLUSIONS

Online Education or E-learning has become one of the most talked topics of the present world. Due to "Covid 19" most of the countries of world have taken initiative to continue education through online platform. Bangladesh has also taken such measure to run the educational activities during this crisis moment. This study focuses on the challenges and prospects of online education activities of the Department of English at Private Universities in Bangladesh. The finding of this research has a great importance for understanding and realizing the present situation of the educational activities during the crisis moment or during any kind unexpected situations. The study has found a lot of challenges which are pointed out through the questionnaire analysis. Such as: Technical issues like lack of proper internet connections/ Wi-Fi, Electricity Problems, Fewer attendance of the students, Lack of Motivation for learning, Health issues like Headache, Stress and Anxiety, and Quality Maintenance. In addition, regarding the experience and effectiveness of the online education the study noticed that this education and learning is mostly effective and the faculty has got a very good experience of it. Adopting new technology in the 21st century is also essential which is also found in the study. Thus, there are a lot of scopes for analyzing and modifying the context. By this research finding it can be projected to the educationists and researchers for the proper concern. The government and higher authority can get the benefits of the essence of this research for better understanding and initiating effective steps in this field.

This study has not added the students' perception and observations regarding Online Education. It is also mentionable that this study has not conducted in large scale from both public and private university. There is a scope for further study in this field.

Recommendations

Based on the analysis of the finding, the study recommends to the two important bodies closely associated with Private University. The most important and powerful body is the Government Republic of Bangladesh and another one is the Private University authorities. There should have taken effective steps from both of these bodies. For example:

- The government should ask the Mobile Networking companies to ensure their internet providing service throughout the whole country.
- The government must make a strong policy for developing the online education.
- The government should encourage the students and teachers for the online education.
- Especial encouragement also should be given to the faculty members and students to adopt technology to keep balance with the developed nations of the world.
- The government also needs to monitor the current phenomena keenly and take proper step to control everything.
- Private university should arrange training, seminar and workshops for both the teachers and students.
- They also need to encourage the faculty members by providing salary in time and extra performance bonus which will enhance the activities.
- They should have built up relationship with the developed countries for getting some potential support in this regard.
- They should also maintain standard of evaluations through discussing with the experts.
- They should also be careful about the health issues of the faculty members and students. For this reason, they can raise fund and arrange medical facilities for all the students, teachers, administrative and staffs.
- After all, they should reduce the payment and offer scholarships for the students those who need serious financial help during this pandemic.

Contributions of the Study

This study helps us to get a real picture of Online Education Work from Home and the challenges of the new phenomena. It also tries to check the true experience of these activities in Bangladesh. Like other researches this study has also a great significance in the field of education during this pandemic. Bangladesh is a least developed nation (World Bank Overview 2020). According to them, the pandemic may also have long term economic implications as a result of reduced female labor force participation, learning losses, and heightened financial sector vulnerabilities. Therefore, it has become a matter of a great concern to make proper investigation for implementing new ideas in education, business, health and other sustainable issues.

Data Availability Statement: The data presented in this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to restrictions.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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