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## Impact of COVID- 19 on Education Sector in Bangladesh

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### Abstract

The purpose of this study was to analyze the challenges and the ways of mitigation of teaching - learning situation at the time of lockdown as the impact of COVID-19 pandemic in Bangladesh. The study was based on the review of secondary data sources such as newspaper articles, recently published journal articles, reports of national and international organizations due to the social distancing precautionary measures outlined by the World Health Organization (WHO) as a means of containing the spread of the virus from person to person. People feel the necessity of remote learning as distance learning in this lockdown situation. People are thinking to use different social sites such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Skype, WhatsApp, Zoom, Instagram, Google Plus etc. for learning. The outbreak of COVID-19 has come as a wake-up call to ensure virtual learning and thus it has transformed the mode of teaching in the education sector. There is a risk of dropping out of a huge number of students from the education because of not meeting up the expenses of digital device and data plan. Discrimination may be created in quality education if it is not possible to bring maximum people under this access within a very short time.

**Keywords:** Impact, COVID 19, Education, Bangladesh

### 1. Introduction

Education in Bangladesh is overseen by the Ministry of Education (MOE). The overall responsibility of management of primary education lies with the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (MOPME). At the tertiary level, universities are regulated by the University Grants Commission (UGC). The colleges providing tertiary education are under the National University. Each of the medical colleges is affiliated with a public university. The Technical and Vocational Education System managed by the Technical Education Board. The Madrasha Education System focuses on religious education, teaching all the basics of education in a religious environment. Besides this, a number of professional organizations such as Directorate of Secondary & Higher Education (DSHE), Directorate of Primary Education (DPE), National Academy for Primary Education (NAPE), National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB), Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics (BENBAIES), National Academy for Educational management (NAEM) and different education boards assist the government of Bangladesh. The main education system of Bangladesh is divided into three levels: Primary Level, Secondary Level and Tertiary Level. At all levels of schooling, students can choose to receive their education in English or Bangla. Cadet Colleges are important in the education system of Bangladesh. Bangladesh conforms fully to the UN's Education for All (EFA) objectives, Millennium Development Goals (MDG) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) as well as other education-related international declarations. Article 17 of the Bangladesh Constitution provides that all children receive free and compulsory education (Wikipedia, 2020a) <sup>[1]</sup>. Recently the literacy rate of Bangladesh has improved as it stands at 73.91%, as of 2018 (UNESCO, 2020a) <sup>[18]</sup>. The number educational institution is 176053 and total students 36811535 (BANBEIS, 2018). The educational system of Bangladesh faces several problems. Public expenditure on education lies on the fringes of GDP 1.99% in 2018 (UNESCO, 2020b) <sup>[19]</sup>. There exist a substantial number of NGO-run non-formal schools, catering mainly to the drop-outs of the government and non-government primary schools. Current government projects promote the education of children in Bangladesh include compulsory primary education for all, free education for girls up to grade 10, stipends for female students and a food-for-education

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literacy movement. Beginning in April 2020, UNICEF and the Government of Bangladesh will enroll 10,000 Rohingya children in schools where they will be taught according to the Myanmar school curriculum (Wikipedia, 2020b)<sup>[2]</sup>.

Owusu, Koomson & Hanson (2020)<sup>[14]</sup> noted that human history has seen a number of notable pandemics including smallpox, cholera, plague, dengue, AIDS, influenza, severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), Ebola virus disease, Nipah virus infection, Zika virus disease and tuberculosis where only the influenza pandemic of 1918-1919 killed more than 20 million people in the world and has been cited as the most destructive epidemic recorded in world's history. Natural disaster, famine, epidemic and war are always mixed with human civilization (Khan, 2020a)<sup>[10]</sup>. Usually, Epidemics in the past have occurred at irregular and unpredictable intervals and have been associated with economic cost where it is important to remember that any person could potentially have disease-carrying organisms, even if they have no signs or symptoms of illness (Dalibor & Slobodan, 2013)<sup>[5]</sup>. As the impact of any epidemic, people fall ill, cannot work, and lose income. Several disease outbreaks have affected badly in the world's economy and education at different times. Across the world, governments have brought different mitigating scheme such as utilizing remote learning to manage and cope with the educational crisis (Mhlanga & Moloi, 2020)<sup>[13]</sup>.

According to Sansa (2020)<sup>[15]</sup>, COVID-19 is the novel corona virus disease which goes with the name severe respiratory syndrome coronavirus-2 (SARS-COV-2) which was first identified at 1 December 2019 in the city of Wuhan, the capital of Hubei province, China. The evidence indicates that the source of the COVID-19 is animals and the virus spreads from human to human transmission (Sansa, 2020)<sup>[15]</sup>. Officials confirm a case of COVID-19 in Thailand, the first recorded case outside of China. Currently, the COVID-19 pandemic is spreading all over the world. The global record up to May 23, 2020, confirmed cases are 5,360,296 and deaths are 341,820 (Worldometer, 2020a)<sup>[24]</sup>. The highest confirmed case up to May 23, 2020 at United States of America is 1,651,937 and death is 97,847 (Worldometer, 2020b)<sup>[25]</sup>. The whole world is in the biggest danger in the recent times due to spreading of COVID-19 that has endangered the worldwide education besides social life (Shahriar, 2020)<sup>[16]</sup>. Owusu, Koomson & Hanson (2020)<sup>[14]</sup> mentioned that the Corona virus pandemic has affected educational systems worldwide, leading to the widespread closure of schools in the affected countries. Highest 1,598,099,008 learners were out of school globally because of the COVID-19 pandemic on 5th April, 2020 which is 91.3% of total enrolled learners (UNESCO, 2020c)<sup>[20]</sup>. Maximum 215 countries, areas or territories have been affected due to COVID-19 (Jagran Prakashan, 2020). Education is a major engine and vehicle of economic and social development (Dalibor & Slobodan, 2013)<sup>[5]</sup>. When education is interrupted or limited, students drop out, with negative and permanent economic and social impacts for students, their families, and their communities (Dalibor & Slobodan, 2013)<sup>[5]</sup>. Owusu, Koomson & Hanson (2020)<sup>[14]</sup> revealed that students have to face many challenges in the close down of schools due to the outbreak of the pandemic Covid-19. Shahriar (2020)<sup>[16]</sup> reported that Scotland has cancelled their terminal examination, Ireland has opted to launch self-evaluation instead of their annual exam, Oxbridge tells about online evaluation, England

announces of giving result of postponed exams on the basis of earlier exams, New Zealand has started to adopt various plans to coordinate the remaining time of the year with the education break. Although Hamish Kotes, the Professor of Educational Institute of the Sinhua University of Japan is presently living in Melbourne, he is giving lessons in online to Japan regularly. Besides protection from COVID-19, UNESCO has emphasized to rearrange examination calendar on the basis of priority. In Finland, while most schools are closed, remote learning and teaching is taking place with the support of educational technology. While schools are closed, many countries have turned to distance learning as a means of mitigating for lost time in continuing education services. Spain is asking teachers to prepare online content and offer online classes. China for example, with robust connectivity, is offering distance learning successfully whereas others with limited penetration of internet, cell phone, or television are finding it difficult to reach all students equally. Singapore is currently rolling out training for teachers on provision of classes online in anticipation of school closings. Lebanon has selected to send kids home with lessons as homework, promoting independent distance learning with the help from peers and parents. In order to reduce the extent of academic disruptions, several learning institutions of South Africa responded by moving some of their courses to online platforms (Mhlanga & Moloi, 2020)<sup>[13]</sup>. Though everybody has found a new alternative to academic delivery as virtual classes but network issues, lack of training, and lack of awareness are the major challenges (Arora and Srinivasan, 2020)<sup>[1]</sup>. Bangladesh is not excluded from the sea of death because of COVID-19. Bangladesh reported its first confirmed case on 8 March, 2020 (Wikipedia, 2020c)<sup>[3]</sup>. The confirmed case up to 23 May in Bangladesh is 32,078 and death is 452 (Worldometer, 2020c)<sup>[26]</sup>. Among several interventions taken for COVID-19, closing down all educational institution from 16th of March onwards is one of them.

**2. Purpose of the study:** The aim of this study was to analyze the challenges in education faced by students, teachers, even government of Bangladesh as schools are closed off due to the impact of COVID-19 pandemic and also its ways of mitigation. The specific objectives of this study are described as follows

- To know about the social sites related to education.
- To know about the challenges of different digital learning.
- To know about the prospects of remote learning in education sector.

**3. Methodology:** The study was mainly based on the review of secondary data sources such as newspaper articles, peer-reviewed journals and recently published journal articles. This study was also benefited for different reports from national and international organizations such as World Health Organization (WHO), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), Ministry of Education (MOE) etc. due to the social distancing precautionary measures outlined by WHO as a means of containing the spread of the virus from person to person.

#### 4. Findings of the study

**4.1 Different digital systems related to education:** There are so many social sites for communication and most of them are related to education such as Television, Radio, Mobile Platforms and applications, Internet, Facebook, Twitter, Remote Learning (Online learning), YouTube, Skype, WhatsApp, Zoom, Instagram, Google Plus etc.. A virtual classroom is an online learning environment that allows for live interaction between the tutor and the learners as they are participating in learning activities. Distance learning is a method of study where teachers and students do not meet in a classroom but use the Internet, e-mail, mail, etc., to have classes. Again remote learning occurs when the learner and instructor, or source of information, are separated by time and distance and therefore cannot meet in a traditional classroom setting. Radio and television have been used in education since the early 20th century. Radio plays a vital educational role as the sole medium for formal and non-formal education. When Facebook is incorporated into the educational setting, all of these skill areas can be developed. Facebook can also be used to help students develop their writing and communication skills. YouTube is an excellent resource for e-learning. Google plus is an upraising star for social learning. Twitter can use in education as tweet homework and assignments and get important educational resources. Skype in the classroom is a free community that connects teachers with educators and guest speakers from around the world. Whatsapp can be used for education as borrowing notes from friends and interacting with teachers to clarify doubts. Zoom is a video conferencing tool for virtual meetings and hangouts. It can be used for work and to live stream things like classes while we're all in self-isolation. Teachers can also use Instagram to help students to post homework and project reminders. To get the benefits from all the digital modern system we have to overcome some challenges.

**4.2 Challenges of on-line teaching-learning in Bangladesh:** Recently the teaching through television started in Bangladesh is not reaching everywhere because every people are not connected with digital access (Billah, 2020) <sup>[20]</sup>. There is a risk of dropping out of a huge number of students from education because of not meeting up the expenses of digital device and data plan (Billah, 2020) <sup>[20]</sup>. After the closure of all the educational institutions in China since 24 February, Beijing University is conducting more than five thousand courses of undergraduate and graduate level through distance learning by using the live streaming app named 'The Course Hub'. Such types of classrooms are rare in the educational institutions of Bangladesh, especially in primary and secondary level. Kabir (2020) <sup>[12]</sup> said that the main problems for a smart classroom are set up issues and maintenance expenditure. Among the recent advices provided by the UNESCO warning is being given on digital division and inclusive education complexities (Shahriar, 2020) <sup>[16]</sup>. Discrimination may be created in quality education if it is not possible to bring maximum people under this access within a very short time which has been defined as digital division by the experts. The digital literacy and its consciousness are very low although Bangladesh is progressing digitally. In order to cope up with the possible changing world education because of corona, there is no alternative for creating efficiency. Hossain (2020) <sup>[7]</sup> mentioned that by transforming more than five thousand

courses online, Zhejiang University of China succeeded in bringing all their students under the procedure of e-learning within two weeks. Till now, the practice of e-learning has not increased noticeably in Bangladesh. Owusu, Koomson & Hanson (2020) <sup>[14]</sup> claimed that parents are incapable of assisting their wards on how to access online learning platform, even e-learning is also challenge to majority of the students because of the limited access to internet and lack of the technical knowledge at Ghana. It is also true for Bangladesh. It has been found from the rural area of Bangladesh that teachers' qualification is not very high in the secondary schools as half of them have bachelor degree and only one-fourth teachers have masters degree and teachers' professional training is rare among teachers working as a result only 15% boys and 24% girls have passed successfully in last year at SSC exam in those areas. Though it is a big challenge for Bangladesh it has to overcome it by using technology in our education sector. In the beginning of civilization, the way of acquiring knowledge was never easy even from time of the Greek philosopher Socrates the knowledge seekers had to face various barriers (Hossain, 2020).

**4.3 Opportunities of remote learning in Bangladesh:** Hossain (2020) <sup>[7]</sup> mentioned that the helpless condition of this world makes us to think that it is high time to change our education more realistic. In this case online education depended on modern technology or e-learning might play a vital role. The process of giving lessons by using electronic device through internet from any place is called e-learning. More than 80% lessons given in e-learning are depended on internet, so it is also known as distance learning. In this case if learners do not understand any topic he/she can just watch the replay of the class. Billah (2020) <sup>[20]</sup> reported that the educational institutions in Bangladesh have been closed since 17<sup>th</sup> march. Virtual classes has been started which is an alternative way of teaching although it is not a substitute of original class. Many people have started taking classes including assignment in online by using digital classroom 'Zoom' free of cost. In most of the countries of the world, COVID-19 has a long term impact in the life of students. Kabir (2020) <sup>[12]</sup> said that the use of technology in education in the last decade is a revolutionary step and the classroom which uses it is called 'smart classes'. Bangladesh has also started various online classroom platforms like 'Ten minute school', 'Repto', 'Shikhok bataion', 'e-learning', 'Studypress'. Students can receive these lessons from their respective positions when they get time. There is a digital school namely 'Urban Academy', situated in Purbodhola of Netrokona district in Bangladesh which has been established in 2011 under complete private initiative. Daily Ittefaq (2020) <sup>[6]</sup> reported that Bangladesh has 'Skype' masters like Rayhana Haq who is the Head Teacher of a govt. primary school situated in Bashgari, Vairob of Kishoreganj district using platforms like 'Skype', 'Zoom' etc. for the learning of students. The report also added that she earned the international recognition of 'Skype Master Teacher' from the Microsoft Education Community as the only Bangladeshi in 2019. World famous Universities and Institutes are providing degree through online teaching. Online live classes are also spreading along with recorded classes. Edutec. or digital education is helping a student according to need in his own speed. As a result it is more helpful. Billah (2020) <sup>[20]</sup> noted that according to Geneva

based World Economic Forum; almost 120 million students of China are getting learning materials through television broadcasting sitting at home. Mhlanga & Moloi (2020) <sup>[13]</sup> claimed that the outbreak of COVID-19 came as a wake-up call to ensure virtual learning as a reality during the nationwide lockdown to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on the education sector everywhere. Mhlanga & Moloi (2020) <sup>[13]</sup> also mentioned that the reality of the lockdown has forced to switch remote learning and has transformed the mode of teaching in the education sector. Hamish Kotes, the professor of Educational Institute of Sinhua University in Japan said, "Our traditional education structure can be changed widely by this recent COVID-19 as after the outbreak of SARS virus China gave attention to online teaching". According to the statistics of University Grand Commission, university teachers of Bangladesh can continue their teaching in online by using 'Zoom Application', Bangladesh research and education network (BDREN) would help them in this case all the time (Hossain, 2020) <sup>[7]</sup>. Sagor (2019) <sup>[17]</sup> thinks that there is no alternative of changing the school model to face the problem that will be raised around the world in the next two decades and importance should be given on creative education instead of memorization or exam based education. According to Khan (2020b) <sup>[11]</sup>, the motive of education should be made towards the entrepreneurs by rotating it 180 degree because there is no scope of ensuring employment of more than 1 million people including both govt. and non-govt. sector. Presently, around 2.6 million unemployed people who are educated in our country are not getting jobs due to lack of skills. WEF (2020) <sup>[27]</sup> estimated that 65% of children entering primary schools today will end up working in entirely new occupations or jobs that do not exist now. Experts are saying that the education policy of Bangladesh is such a policy which is of world level, can bring revolutionary change in quality of education if it is possible to implement.

## 5. Conclusion

Today the whole world is captive in the hands of an invisible enemy corona virus. With a population of around 170 million, Bangladesh is not free from COVID-19. All the educational institutions are closed off since 17 March onwards. In this corona epidemic situation, around 40 million students of Bangladesh are passing their time idly sitting at their home at present. To sum up, the education is in a messed up situation. Necessity is the mother of invention. Different social sites are used for remote learning as distance learning in this lockdown situation. Though there is lot of challenges/limitations in digital education such as access, technological knowledge, technological expenses, sufficient trained and experienced teachers etc. Digital education can help a student to learn in his/her own speed according to need. Bangladesh needs more digital schools like 'Urban Academy' of Netrokona district. It is a matter of hope that govt. has taken the initiative of a pilot project to change the education of 510 schools digitally in 2020. Bangladesh has also started various online classroom platforms like 'Ten minute school', 'Repto', 'Shikhok bataion', 'e-learning', 'StudyPress'. Bangladesh needs many more teachers like 'Skype master' Rayhana Haq. Even after huge decay, the world will go ahead along with the hands of people after corona period. Therefore, Bangladesh needs various planning in education sector after corona crisis. So,

this study recommends that it is an opportunity to improve the education of Bangladesh as world level for future by developing technology properly.

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