

Challenges and Possibilities of Online Education during Covid-19

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Abstract:

Online class now is the demand of the day as little scopes are to find out alternatives to online class in these unprecedented days caused by corona pandemic across the globe. The study was qualitative in approach and data were collected from secondary sources i.e. different newspapers and journals in the recent times along with a mini interview with students of private universities studying in different subjects over mobile phone by the researcher. Findings of the study show that though online education has a number of challenges faced by two main stakeholders; students and teachers, handling all these challenges carefully can have the chance to create a positive atmosphere in the field of education as an alternative teaching learning resulting in positive outcomes in all regards.

Key words: online education; corona crisis; challenges; possibilities

Introduction:

Online education is a form of education where students use their home computers through the internet staying away academic institutions. In recent time online teaching learning has become a buzz word in the field of education as finding no other alternatives to providing education to the students in the class. Due to the emergence of the pandemic of Covid-19, the whole world is experiencing huge death toll along with widespread panic and uncertainty. Countries of the world are trying to shun the gap and minimize the losses of students caused by the ongoing pandemic. However the outcomes of online education are not always a blessing to the learners' community as revealing a number of pitfalls to the context of online teaching and learning resulting in wide spread concerns over the controversial issue of teaching learning – online education during covid-19. With the consideration to the fact the present study tries to illustrate the challenges and possibilities of the countries which are not as advanced in technology as the countries blessed with high tech technology.

Online education at tertiary context of Bangladesh:

Like other countries educational institutions in Bangladesh have been shut down where social distancing matters. To ensure uninterrupted education among the students, the Ministry of Education (MoE) has encouraged the teachers to conduct online classes and apart from this, for the free flow of education the concerned authority has started telecasting distant learning programs for the students of schools and colleges. Online education has been mainly focused at higher level of education in the country. In Bangladesh there are 46 public and 105 private universities offering higher education for the students. Besides almost 1500 colleges affiliated to national university of Bangladesh are offering a wide range of courses and programs in higher education. In these unprecedented days online teaching learning is the only way of solving academic crisis happening across the globe due to the pandemic of coronavirus.

Internet services in Bangladesh for online ground:

In Bangladesh of the total internet subscribers, the BTRC data showed that there were 93.681 million mobile internet users and 5.742 million broadband internet users and the rest were WiMAX users. The total number of internet subscribers has reached 99.428 million at the end of December 2019. According to statistics, the mobile internet users are the greatest in number of who the majority are students, the sources said. For mobile internet use they depend on mobile operating companies. The source also said that though many of students use laptop or desktop, in these days as they are staying at home, they prefer to use smart phone to access to online class. However, online access does not guarantee that they are getting desired internet services.

Possibilities:

Online media can ensure multiple benefits for both students and teachers in supporting teaching and learning (Graham & Misanchuk, 2004). Different studies reveal that online courses have been found to be conducive to students who favor self-regulated learning (You & Kang, 2014). The most important thing to discuss that there is an ample opportunity to make students have cognitive and metacognitive strategies to accomplish their learning goal. Besides they need not have additional preparation to get themselves connected online and so at any circumstances they can be ready to attend class disregarding their time and place. As there is an uncertainty everywhere in regard to reopening educational institutions, the minimum outcomes can easily be found that can make students keep standing in the right track of learning. Students in Bangladesh who attend classes online giving their opinions that attending class online has helped them finish their courses timely getting them confident to appear at online examinations though for the first time they are heading to online class and exams. Online class amid the crisis has established a strong communication between students and teachers that creates good impression rendering a positive result which helps students to avert from all kinds of anxieties they have usually while passing the unprecedented corona crisis. According to Thomson (2010), students and teachers alike expressed the importance of prompt and supportive feedback when working to “establish a

rapport of trust and level of comfort". In the same vein, students have the flexibility to provide increased options for interaction and participation (Broadbent, 2015). Besides the more the country digitalized the more the possibilities contributing to creating digital native and to them online exposing and managing everything standing on virtual platform is always easy-going (Orlando & Attard, 2015).

Challenges:

It is the first time in Bangladesh the online trend of education has been introduced at a wide scale but in regard to teaching learning along with assessments this online trend has meanwhile encountered some avoidable circumstances that were also referred to the previous literature. According to William, Cameron & Morgan (2012) in regard to online education assessment, practices are limited in the variety and modes in which they are allocated in online environment. Data reveal as expressed by students and teachers regarding online classes that they are experiencing a number of challenges. First of all, it is their first experience to get connected with online class, so they are found to be struggling with the proper adaptability with this trend as switching from traditional classroom to computer-based training in a virtual classroom makes the learning and teaching experience entirely different for them. Secondly, during the shutdown most of the students are staying home in different areas of the country as still in the rural areas internet facilities are hardly found, students use mobile internet which interrupts the online connectivity due to poor internet signal. Besides the internet is still expensive in our country. Thirdly, there are some technical issues like poor literacy on handling computer and smart phone. Moreover students and teachers have to download some apps like Zoom, FoxFi, Audioboo, etc., sometime seem challenging due to not having prior experiences and these apps have limited time to be connected online. Fourthly, time management has been a crucial thing as for example Zoom can each time connect people online for 40 minutes but students take time to respond to the class due to some technical interruptions. When students join at the middle of the class, have the chance to understand a little. Fifthly, it is difficult for the teachers to manage feedback from every individual as well as to let them engaged in materials. According to Jaques & Salman (2007) adapting to online environment can be a challenge for both facilitators and students. Previous literature found that technical issues, complexity, sequencing of activities were among

the major obstacles to the incorporation of multimedia application in the learning (Boyles, 2011, Fahy, 2004).

Conclusion:

Despite a number of challenges encountered by students and teachers in case of teaching learning online, the great news is that no doubt conducting online classes is a praiseworthy initiative taken by the present government to minimize the loss of students' academic activities. For the proper implementation of this task students and teachers should be encouraged and take it as a challenge to implement in a befitting manner. Students should bear in mind that they are the key stake holders and so they should be self-motivated to have greater interest getting response to online classes with their all efforts.

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