

IMPACTS CONSEQUENCES AND RESPONSES TO COVID-19 IN BANGLADESH : A HUMAN SECURITY APPROACH



Background

Corona has affected the global educational systems, causing many to shut down as the crisis ensues, mandating social distancing. In Bangladesh, educational institutions have been closed since March 17, 2020. For higher education institutions, the journey to tackle this 'black swan' has not been easy so far, due to the interconnected factors of the economy being under threat. To prevent the higher education

system ceasing to sustain, it is important to formulate and implement new innovative, flexible approaches and methods.



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HIGHER EDUCATION CHALLENGES IN BANGLADESH DUE TO COVID-19



Challenges

- 1.3 billion learners have been affected due to college/university closures
- Household finances have been torn asunder as incomes have reduced significantly and, in some cases, there is no longer a flow at all
- The 'informal student loan system' which exists in Bangladesh through students' relatives might not sustain either due for long due to this pandemic
- In Bangladesh, of about 150 universities only 63 among the Private Universities tried to offer online lectures during the last semester and only 7 among public, all with varying degrees of success
- Due to the shutdown of the campuses in such a short period of time, it has not been possible to train everyone on how to take effective online lectures
- There is a lack of necessary infrastructure for online classes throughout Bangladesh, especially in the rural areas where proper technical support is not available
- There is a wider gap among students of different universities, due to different income levels as not all of them can get access to the necessary equipment for the online platform
- The traditional demand for having a 'campus life' is under threat for the unforeseeable future
- Due to the diminishing income level, student's might no longer be able to afford private universities. It will be challenging for the public universities to tackle the extra demand
- All private universities might not survive due to the economic situation. Either they will have to close down or merge. Unfortunately, the merger and partnership practice in Bangladesh has only a limited record of success



Recommendations

- We need to keep on maintaining social distancing to survive first and then try to adapt and find ways to improve life through education and other infrastructures
- University of Cambridge took all of its lectures online, over the course of the next academic year due to the corona virus. Universities in Bangladesh too need to have this ambition to keep the lifeline going
- Even when normalcy is regained, some gains from online will become a permanent feature of our education system. It is important we adapt to this change as a nation and tackle its current issues to make it better
- Institutions will need to think outside the box to make up for the 'campus life' that won't be available for a long uncertain period
- As income levels are decreasing, private universities can reduce their fees and provide some cushioning for the students
- Public universities will need to restructure their approaches and prepare for the rise in demand of the private university students shifting there due to affordability
- As government keeps working towards improving the technological infrastructure, the universities will need to explore an expansion opportunity of the education system.

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Because, as the classroom size is no longer a factor, it might hence be relatively much less expensive and more accessible to lower socio-income groups, rural groups and remote area dwellers

- Universities will need to re-imagine the technique of delivery, rethink how to take exams online
- Smaller private universities will need to be proactive enough to think about merging together all their resources, acquire the expertise and the finance to survive and keep on providing education to the students
- As the government goes on to improve the infrastructure, ensure easier accessibility of smartphones -- universities will need to keep on working simultaneously with whatever best practices they have

