

# Impact of COVID on Online Teaching Platform: Study on IB Curriculum in Bangladesh

**Syeda Aliza Salik**

International baccalaureate PYP Teacher  
Abdul Kadir Molla International School  
Bangladesh  
E-mail: syedaaliza.salik@gmail.com

**Md Rezuan Chowdhury**

International baccalaureate PYP Teacher  
Abdul Kadir Molla International School  
Bangladesh  
E-mail: rez.akmis2020@gmail.com

## Abstract

The sudden upsurge of Covid 19 pandemic has caused an immense effect in all the sectors throughout the world. Likewise, the education sector is no exception. Many countries around the world have decided to keep the educational institutions closed as an attempt to stop the pandemic from spreading. As a result of the outbreak of this pandemic the government of Bangladesh has declared a general holiday since March 23, 2020. In this scenario, most of the educational institutions have called off their on-campus activities and chose online platforms to continue their academic activities. Although the virtual classes initially began at only a few private institutions, the number started to rise gradually. There is an increase in the number of learners and institutions using the internet to continue the learning journey as the days are passing by. This paper aims to discuss the problems and prospects of online teaching in Bangladesh presenting a comparative picture between the mainstream education and International Baccalaureate curriculum applying during pandemic lockdown. This paper uses Abdul Kadir Molla International School to present a partial picture of the online teaching scenario in Bangladesh. The paper discusses some challenges such as unavailability of digital devices, unstable internet connection, lack of teachers training etc. Some queries, concerns and thoughts along with some recommendations are put before your discussion.

**Keywords:** Challenges, Possibilities, Online Teaching Strategies, Comparison.

## 1. Introduction

With the unexpected flare up of COVID 19, the education sector of Bangladesh has been through a significant transition. To combat the unforeseen pandemic Bangladesh government declared a public holiday since March 18, 2020 which brought in a closure in all the educational institutions resulting in thousands of students being away from school for an uncertain period. According to UNICEF, 1.6 billion children throughout the world are unable to attend school physically due to Covid 19, having a remarkable portion of Bangladeshi students. Many schools decided to go for online teaching which led an important changeover in the education system- lessons shifted into virtual classrooms from on campus classes and the learners, teachers and their parents also tried to cope up with the new alteration. In this paper we will try to discuss and present the current scenario of online teaching in Bangladesh, the challenges and prospects of online teaching in Bangladesh and we will also try to suggest some recommendations for an effective online teaching.

## 2. Research Objectives

The major objectives of this study are as follows:

- To identify the practices of online teaching in Bangladesh
- To study the challenges and prospects of online teaching
- To present a comparative study between IB curriculum and national curriculum
- To recommend a solution for a better online teaching

### **3. Research Methodology**

This paper is based on primary and secondary data. Primary data is obtained through teachers, students and parents from both IB and national curriculum schools. The sources of secondary data include different journals, articles, blogs, newspapers and different publications of websites. A quantitative method is used in this study which includes conducting surveys. We conducted a survey among teachers from various schools.

### **4. Literature Review**

According to The Standard Business Portal (August 14,2020), Online education provides a healthy routine in a comfortable environment, but not everyone in Bangladesh can afford it. To help the students continue their education, educational institutions are trying their best to reach out to students through different mediums, including television, radio, and social media platforms like Facebook, Zoom, Google classroom, Google meet etc. Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal, in his budget speech, pointed out that 40 million students are not being able to continue regular academic curriculums across Bangladesh. A survey conducted by BioTED, a novel training and research initiative, revealed that 55 percent of students do not have proper internet connections. In order to attend classes regularly, a student needs to spend at least 300 MB to 1 GB data per day. This being a costly procedure, many students are being deprived of learning opportunities.

According to UCA news, Sumon Roy, a ninth grader of Lalon Shah school in Kushtia district has been trying hard to make up for a valuable time of education lost during the pandemic. He has been at home since school closed on March 17 and his family has no TV, smart phone and internet. He says, "I could catch up a bit if I could attend the online classes, but it is not possible for me. Only God knows what will happen to us if its continues".

### **5. Data Analysis and Interpretation**

#### ***5.1 Online Teaching in Bangladesh***

With the declaration of public holiday by the government in mid-March educational institutions also called off their academic activities. Some schools decided to start online teaching for their learners. Though a remarkable number of schools are conducting online classes in the cities still it is not happening commonly in remote areas. Schools located in the city are able to offer online teaching to their learners but for the learners habituating in the villages or remote areas are still not able to be blessed with this facility. Holy Cross Brother Ranjan Purification, headmaster of St. Mary's Junior High School in Alikadam in hilly, forested Bandarban district, is anxious about the fate of his 364 students. "There is no electricity in most houses among the hills, so TV or online classes mean nothing to the students" he says. A better picture is seen in the schools prevailing in the city areas. Being blessed with all the modern facilities such as the internet it is a bit easier for them to offer online classes to their learners and a bigger number of students are able to continue their study virtually with this facility.

#### ***5.2 A comparative study of IB curriculum and national curriculum***

Though it is difficult to figure out the exact number of national curriculum schools offering online classes to their learners as more schools are using the online platforms such as Google classroom to teach, we would like to present a comparative picture between the schools of IB curriculum and national curriculum. A number of schools from the national curriculum have already started online teaching and everyday more schools are joining in. Sangsad TV, a government owned TV channel also telecasts recorded classes for primary learners. There are few groups such as Sylhet online school, Dhaka online school that have taken initiative to provide support to the learners of primary and secondary schools through Facebook live. These groups prefer Facebook as a platform to continue academic activities as this is the most used platform and is convenient for everyone which does not require a high ICT literacy. Learners are attending classes and participating classes through Facebook live. In comparison with the schools that are following national curriculum a better picture can be found in IB schools. There are seven IB schools in Bangladesh. The Aga Khan School, International School Dhaka, Pledge Harbor International School, Australian International School Dhaka, American International School Dhaka, Crans-Montana International School and Abdul Kadir Molla International School.

All the seven schools are conducting online classes among all of them Abdul Kadir Molla International School being the first school in Bangladesh to start conducting online classes from 18th March 2020 right from the cancellation of on campus school. To have a close look at the online teaching scenario we have conducted a survey where 47 people from 34 schools participated including teachers, coordinators, principals, admins and other personalities related to schools gave answers to different questions such as how long they have been conducting online classes, what percentage of students attend, what curriculum are they following and what platform they are using to conduct online classes. The survey result shows that all the seven IB schools in Bangladesh are conducting

online classes. These schools are using various online platforms to offer online teaching such as MS Team, Zoom, Google Classroom, Hangout, Google Meet to conduct classes. The questions were as follows:

- Are you a.....Teacher/Coordinator/Principal/ Other?
- Which institution are you working in?
- Which curriculum does your institution follow?
- Is your institution conducting online classes?
- How long is your institution conducting online classes?
- Rank your and the parents 'gratification of online teaching.
- What platform are you using for conducting online classes?
- How many students are attending the online classes?
- What device is the student using and what device are you using to conduct the classes?
- How many periods do the students attend per day?
- Does your institution arrange any in house workshops for online teaching? Did you personally attend any workshop on online teaching?
- How do you report your students' progress to the parents?

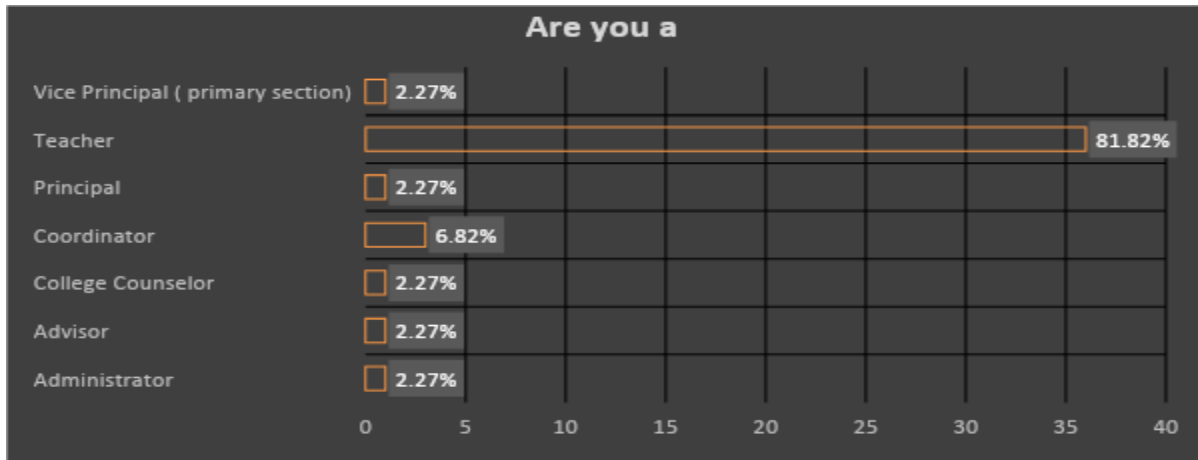


Figure 1. Number of participants and designation

Figure 1 shows the number of participants presented in a bar graph. 38 teachers, 1 vice principal, 1 principal, 3 coordinators, 1 advisor, 1 councilor and 1 administrator participating in the survey.

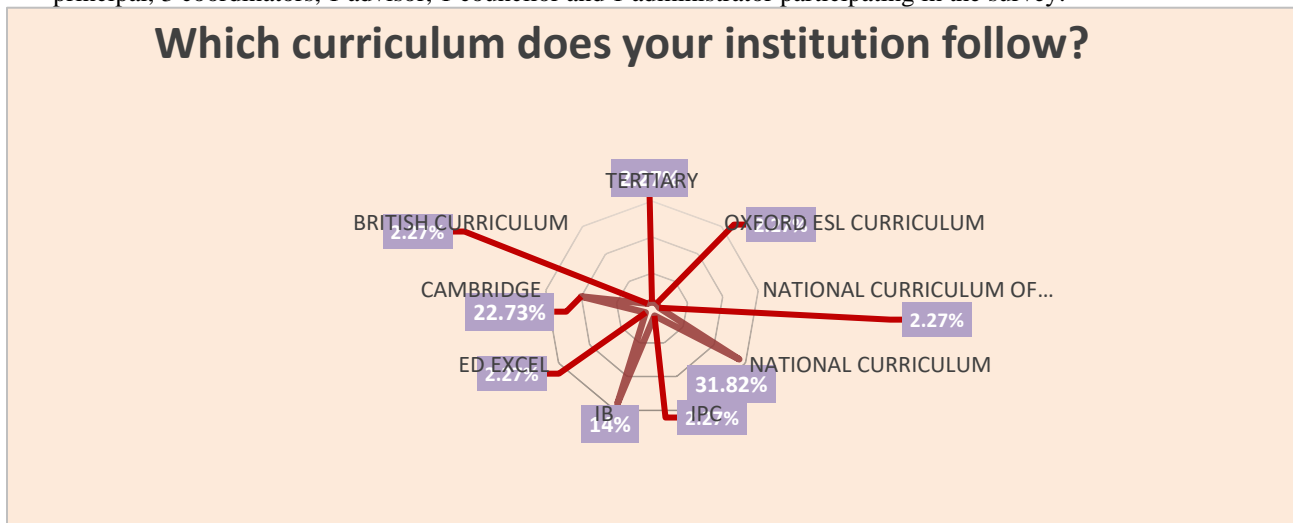


Figure 2. Curriculum followed by survey participant schools

From figure 2 we see the curriculum followed by various schools that participated in the survey. 2.27% schools follow the British curriculum, 22.73% schools follow the Cambridge curriculum, Oxford ESL curriculum being followed by 2.27 schools, 31.82% schools follow national curriculum, 2.27% schools follow the Edexcel school and 14% of the schools follow IB curriculum.

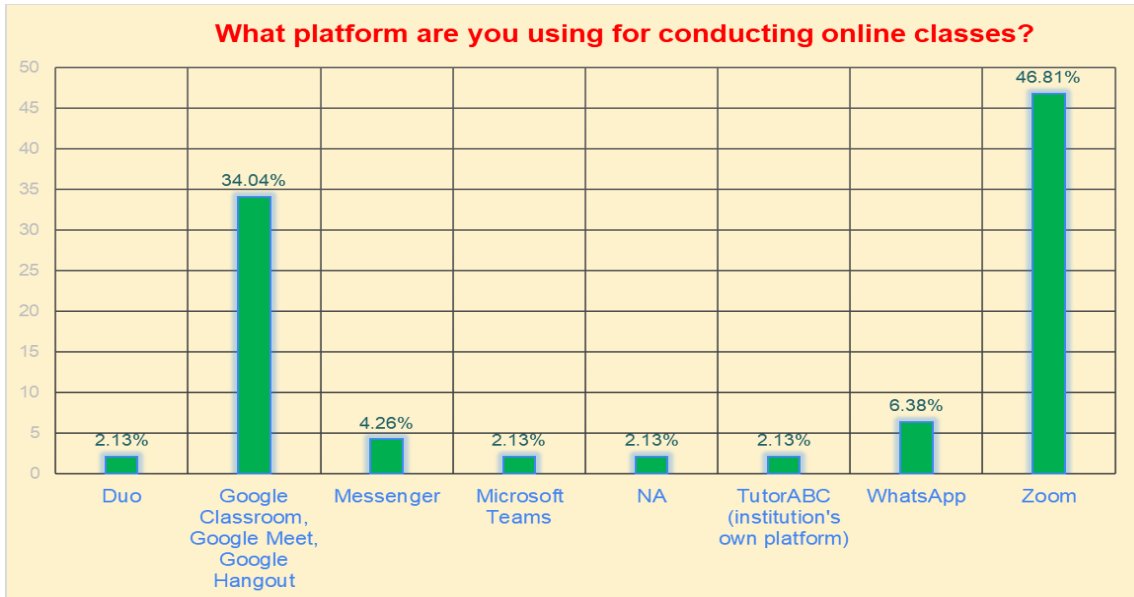


Figure 3. The online platforms used by the participant schools

Figure 3 shows us the platforms used by schools to conduct online classes. Zoom, Google classroom and Meet is being used the most.



Figure 4. Percentage schools conducting online classes

From figure 4 we see the percentage of all the participant schools conducting online classes. It was found all the 34 schools participated in the survey were conducting online classes.

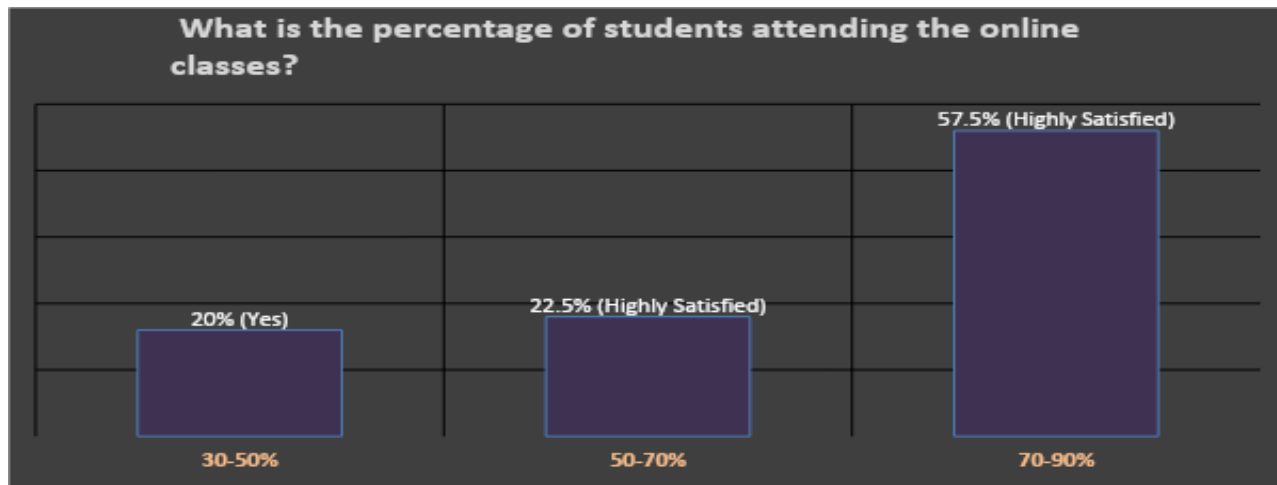


Figure 5. Percentage of students attending online classes among participant schools

The percentage of students attending online classes is shown in figure 5. In 8 schools, 30-50% students are attending online classes. In another 8 schools the percentage is 50-70% and in 23 schools the percentage of student’s attendance is 70 -90%.

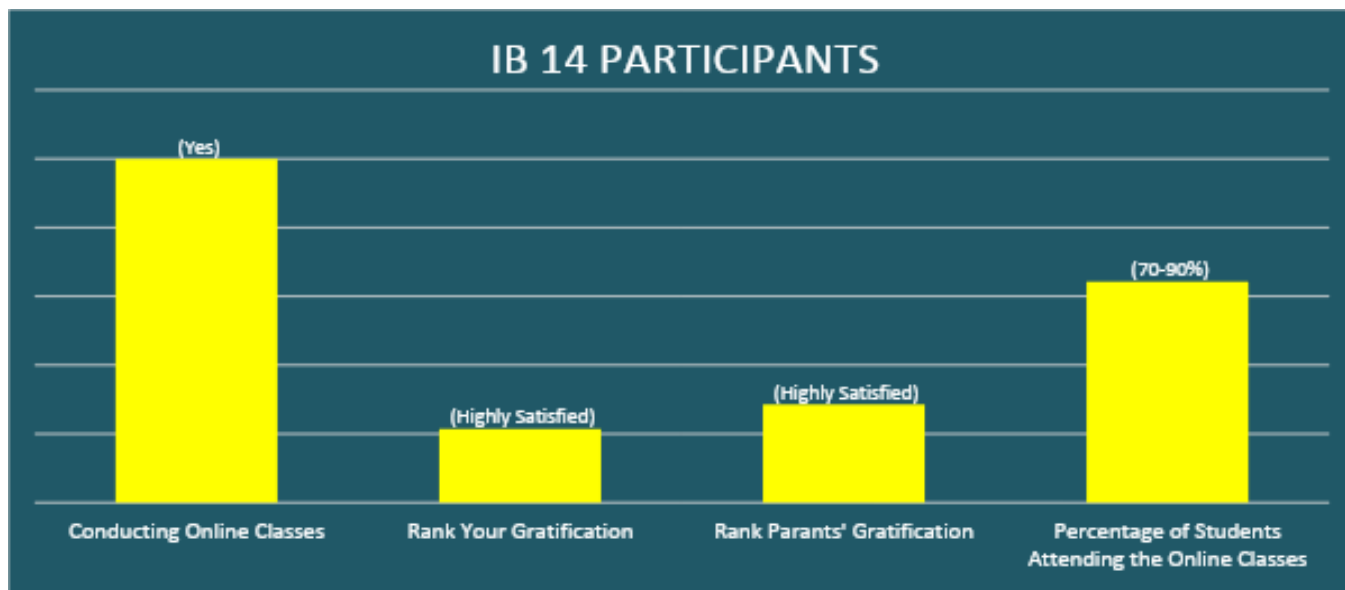


Figure 6. Parents gratification with children’s online classes

Figure 6 shows parents’ gratification in bar graphs. We can see that all the 4 IB schools conducting online classes, 28.57% of the parents are satisfied with their children’s study, 21.42% of the teachers are satisfied with online teaching and in all these four schools 64.28% students are attending the online classes which indicates the number of 70-90% of the total students attending the classes.

These schools are conducting their academic activities extensively. The orientation program at the beginning of the session is also happening virtually which is allowing the parents, teachers and the learners to meet and know each other without requiring any physical visit in the school. Along with conducting classes IB schools are also conducting assessments regularly. Schools are arranging summative and formative assessments virtually which is allowing to know the level of the learners. IB schools are celebrating PYP Exhibition virtually where learners demonstrate their learning through various activities. These schools are also inviting mentors from different countries to groom the learners. IB teachers from Bangladesh have also mentored PYP Exhibitions in other

countries. One of the teachers from Abdul Kadir Molla International School Mr. Rezuwan Chowdhury has mentored a PYP Exhibition in Domuschola, a school in the Philippines. Apart from these, regular workshops for teachers are also being arranged. Abdul Kadir Molla International School arranges workshops for teachers twice every week - Wednesday and Thursday as per the on-campus school schedule where teachers from other countries are invited through zoom. Two of the teachers were invited by an association named “English Medium School Association of Bangladesh” and “UK-Bangladesh Education Trust” to share their online teaching practices. (Voluntary action taken by IB teachers to promote online teaching) Among all the IB schools Abdul Kadir Molla International School has been conducting full-fledged academic activities virtually and was honored to be an authorized IB school. The authorization process was completely virtual and Abdul Kadir Molla International School was the first virtually authorized IB school in Bangladesh. The IB schools are also celebrating different national and international events virtually. Abdul Kadir Molla International School celebrated World Principals’ Day virtually on 01.05.2020.

### ***5.3 The challenges of online teaching***

- Unavailability of internet in urban areas: The most important challenge for conducting online classes in Bangladesh is that the internet is still not accessible to a huge number of people living in the remote areas. The BD Bureau of Statistics Multiple Cluster Survey 2019 shows that only 37.6 percent of households in the country have access to the internet. It is also found that only 5.6 percent of households have a computer.
- Interrupted power supply: Availability of electricity is another challenge. Many hilly and water side areas are still not having electricity. Some areas are having interrupted power supply because of load shedding. These are having impacts on flawless online classes.
- Lack of ICT literacy: Online teaching requires ICT skills such as using the Google classroom app, using apps and platforms such as zoom, meet etc. In Bangladesh these platforms, for many of the learners and teachers also, is a new phenomenon. Teachers are not yet properly trained to conduct online classes.
- Lack of trained teachers: Conducting online teaching requires ICT literacy. Our country is lacking tech-savvy teachers. Many of the teachers do not have the expertise and are not comfortable in using apps such as Google classroom, hangout or meet.
- Not enough support from the education ministry: There has been a little step taken by the education ministry of Bangladesh to promote and facilitate online teaching.

### ***5.4 Prospects of online teaching in Bangladesh***

Despite the various limitations there has been a noticeable progress in online teaching of Bangladesh. Learners and teachers are adjusting themselves to remote learning at home using the devices. Both learners and teachers are exploring the endless possibilities of online teaching through using the various platforms. Everyday new schools are starting to offer online classes, conducting assessments virtually. There was a rapid growth in the number of educational institutions coming ahead with virtual classes. UNICEF is also working with the government of Bangladesh to offer effective remote learning programs using TV, radio, mobile phone and internet platforms to reach the maximum number of students. The English Medium School Association of Bangladesh arranged a free webinar on online classes for teachers.

## **6. Recommendations for effective online teaching**

- To make the online classes effective ICT literacy is a must do thing for teachers. Teachers should have expertise in the technological know-how of using online platforms. Schools should arrange training and workshops for teachers. Each school should offer basic ICT courses for students as well.
- Government of Bangladesh should focus on providing internet connection in remote areas also. People living in the far- off areas should have internet access. ICT ministry should take steps to ensure internet facilities in those areas.
- Attending online classes requires devices such as laptop, tab, mobile, desktop. These devices are expensive and still many people cannot afford these. The price of IT devices should be reasonable so that mass people can afford it.
- Government has taken some initiatives to telecast recorded classes for primary students on a government owned TV channel. But more TV channels and radios should telecast recorded classes for the students of different grades.
- Mass media can play the most important role in raising awareness of attending online classes. TV and radio channels should invite educators and facilitators to discuss, motivate and inspire the learners to attend online classes. Print and electronic media both have to work on this issue.

- Non-government organizations such as UNICEF can arrange training and workshops for teachers for the underdeveloped countries.
- To provide more information to the student's schools should have websites and blogs which should be updated on a regular basis.
- UGC (University Grant Commission) of Bangladesh has conveyed the message to the education ministry and requested them to provide the students with free or low-cost internet facilities (The Daily Star, August 11, 2020). Schools also should come up as an association and recommend the same sort of facilities to the government for the students to enhance their learning.
- To make online teaching organized and systematic a well written policy should be made. Government of Bangladesh should work on a policy on online teaching.

## 7. Limitations

There are some limitations of this study. One of the limitations is time. The research had to be conducted within a short period of time. Accessibility of data was another limitation. Enough data on the impact of Covid on online teaching platforms was not available. The third limitation was the inability to move or travel because of the pandemic. The survey used in this research and other information had to be collected virtually. We could not visit the schools physically.

## 8. Conclusion

As it is said an online class can never be a substitute of a brick and mortar class, but still an online class has some opportunities as well. Despite the challenges online teaching has been practiced by a Bangladeshi YouTube channel "Ten Minutes School" which has been uploading recorded classes on you tube. This channel has also played an important role in familiarizing online teaching in Bangladesh. Taking them as an example other initiative should be taken to promote online teaching. Online teaching can be made interactive by providing students age appropriate contents rather than teaching only with the textbooks. The drawbacks and the challenges can be overcome, and online teaching can be made effective with a well written policy.

## References

- Ahmed, S. F. (2014). *Potentials of e-learning in Bangladesh: An Analysis*. Dhaka: Bangla Vision.
- Alamgir, M. (2020). *Schools in Shutdown: Virtual classes not reality yet*. Dhaka: The Daily Star.
- Alamgir, P. D. (2020). *A national online education policy is the need of the hour*. Dhaka: The Daily star.
- Bangladesh, U. (2020). *Students in Bangladesh adjust to remote learning via national TV during COVID-19*. Dhaka: Bangladesh, UNICEF.
- Chowdhury, M. S. (2020). *Making best of COVID-19: Pushing online learning in higher education in Bangladesh*. Dhaka: bdnews24.com.
- Fami, S. B. (2020). *Is online education system suitable for Bangladesh?* Dhaka: The business standard.
- Hassan, A.-S. K. (2020). *E-LEARNING: CAN IT HELP THE EDUCATION IN BANGLADESH?* Dhaka: North South University, Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC).
- Howlader, K. C. (2020). *Prospects and perils of online education in Bangladesh*. Dhaka: Newage Youth.
- Hasan, Z., & Islam, K. M. A. (2020). Academic, Financial and Administrative Issues of Online Teaching During Corona Pandemic: The Scenario of Private Universities in Bangladesh. *International Journal of Accounting & Finance Review*, 5(1), 116-122. <https://doi.org/10.46281/ijafr.v5i1.630>
- Ní Shé, C. F. (2019). *Teaching online is different: Critical perspectives from the literature*. Dhaka: Dublin City University.
- Ronald, S. U. (2020). *Covid-19 disrupts education in rural Bangladesh (Pupils and teachers lament lack of access to online classes to poverty)*. Dhaka: UCANEWS.
- Schools, A. K. (2020). *Bangladesh: Parents commend online classes*. Dhaka: Aga Khan Schools.
- Wal, M. (2020). *COVID-19: Introducing a strange transition in our education system*. Dhaka: The Daily star.

## Copyrights

Copyright for this article is retained by the author(s), with first publication rights granted to the journal. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).