

**Teaching-Learning Online During Covid-19: Exploring the  
Experiences of the Teachers of Government Primary Schools of  
Bangladesh**

By

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A thesis submitted to the BRAC Institute of Educational Development in partial  
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Education in Educational Leadership & School Improvement

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## Declaration

It is hereby declared that

1. The thesis submitted is my own original work while completing my degree at Brac University.
2. The thesis does not contain material previously published or written by a third party, except where this is appropriately cited through full and accurate referencing.
3. The thesis does not contain material which has been accepted, or submitted, for any other degree or diploma at a university or other institution.
4. I have acknowledged all main sources of help.

**Student's Full Name & Signature:**

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## Approval

The thesis titled “Teaching-Learning Online During Covid-19: Exploring the Experiences of the Teachers of Government Primary Schools of Bangladesh” submitted by

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of Spring,2021 has been accepted as satisfactory in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Education in Educational Leadership & School Improvement on 30.09.2021.

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## **Ethics Statement**

I declare that this study is my work. Guidelines provided by the BRAC Institute of Education Development, BRAC University have been strictly adhered to while conducting the data collection process. The participants of this study were briefed about the study and asked for their consent before proceeding with the data collection process. Their identity is kept confidential throughout the study. I did not let my personal biases affect the data collection process and results of the study. Due to this study, no living beings were harmed.

## **Abstract**

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, educational institutions were closed down around the world. The teachers and students had to shift to online teaching-learning. Their experiences of online teaching-learning may differ based on their context. This study explored the experiences of government primary school teachers' transition to online teaching-learning during COVID-19. This study mainly focused on finding out the initial experiences of the teachers during the lockdown, the challenges they faced and their solutions, and their overall impression of this new practice. The participants of this study were the assistant teachers and the headteachers of government primary schools. They facilitated online learning sessions for their students. They were selected purposefully to conduct this qualitative research. The study found that establishing communication, finding suitable online platforms, adapting to new teaching practices, and supporting the students according to their needs were challenging for the participants. They needed support and training for themselves to face the challenges. With enough facilities such as smart devices, fast internet connections and proper training online teaching-learning can be a great alternative.

**Keywords:** COVID-19; lockdown; online teaching-learning;

## **Dedication**

This work is dedicated to my family who encouraged me to start the journey and supported me till it finished.

## **Acknowledgment**

I want to convey my gratitude towards my advisor Sabira Sultana, for her continuous support, guidance, and encouragement throughout this study. I am also grateful to everyone who helped and supported me throughout this study.

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## List of Acronyms

UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
CAMPE	Campaign for Popular Education
PEDP4	Fourth Primary Education Development Program
MoPME	Ministry of Primary and Mass Education

## Glossary

Pandemic:	A widespread occurrence of an infectious disease over a whole country or the world at a particular time.
Zoom:	A platform for online video conferences, webinars, etc.

# Chapter 1

## Introduction and Background

### 1.1 Introduction

COVID-19 started a world pandemic that was discovered first in December 2019 in Wuhan, China. To stop the virus from quickly spreading, the lockdown was prosecuted for many countries which had a significant impact on different levels of our daily life (Abdulmir & Hafidh, 2020). Due to this outbreak, the education sector is affected significantly. Around the world, different educational institutions began to shut down as well as in Bangladesh (Khan, Rahman, & Islam, 2021). According to (UNESCO, 2020) COVID-19 affected 1,186,127,211 learners worldwide or roughly 67.7% of all registered learners.

Since 17 March 2020, every school, college, and university in Bangladesh has remained closed. Undoubtedly, due to COVID-19, the most apparent loss of the education sector is the loss of learning hours. Around 36.0 million learners (including 17.0 million in the primary) are now out of school. Finance minister AHM Mustafa Kamal, in his finance speech in the country-wide parliament, also stated that Covid-19 has in reality caused the loss of daily learning sessions of around 40 million learners across the country (Uddin , 2020)

Shifting in learning structures pressures educational institutions to implement alternative learning practices such as distance learning, online learning, correspondence education, etc. (Chowdhury & Rohatgi, 2021). According to the Center for Disease control and Prevention (2020), e-learning plans have been implemented, such as digital and distance learning options, as feasible and suitable to ensure students learning continues in the course of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh, some primary school teachers started to facilitate real-time interactive online classes. They used pre-recorded materials for these online sessions. But students living outside the cities and from low-income societies remain out of reach (Hasan, 2020). Therefore, it is really important to investigate their experiences of online teaching-learning during the COVID-19 pandemic which will shed some light to understand the perspectives of government primary school teachers' transition to online teaching-learning.

## **1.2 Research Topic**

### **Teaching-Learning Online During Covid-19: Exploring the Experiences of the Teachers of Government Primary Schools of Bangladesh.**

The teachers of government primary schools of Bangladesh are used to the physical classroom and interacting with the students directly. Everything was done face to face and there was hardly any use of online platforms in day-to-day learning activities. Khan et al. (2021) stated that due to the covid-19 pandemic, the schools were shut down in March 2020 and to date, it's still closed. To support the students with their learning practices some primary school teachers are facilitating teaching-learning sessions online (Hasan, 2020).

Facilitating online learning sessions is a new experience for government primary school teachers. Besides, the extended school shutdown was not preplanned. So, the teachers were not instructed and provided with enough resources beforehand. There were no long-term plans and achieving the academic goals was full of uncertainty ( MoPME & MoE, 2020).

This study tried to explore the experiences that the teachers had to go through while facilitating online learning for the students.

### **1.3 Statement of the Problem**

During this COVID-19 situation, online learning sessions are the available option for teachers throughout the world as it's hard to find any other alternative. For the same reason, in Bangladesh, the Ministry of Education (MoE) has instructed the teachers to facilitate online learning sessions (Alam, 2020). Adapting to an online teaching-learning session can be challenging for both teachers and learners (Jaques & Salmon, 2007). The teachers of government primary schools of Bangladesh might have different challenges and experiences while facilitating online learning for the students.

As the teachers could not get and use the same supports and methods, it affected the learning process. For example, according to CAMPE (2020), only 30% of the students, who also belong to upper socio-economic standard, have afforded to watch the online educational content. As a result, for a teacher who belongs to a community where most of the households cannot afford a smartphone, it's quite challenging to utilize all those online contents. There have to be some other solutions to match the context.

To find appropriate solutions to their contexts the teachers might have to find and adopt new methods to facilitate their student's learning. The teachers might have to adjust their teaching techniques, learn new things like how to use Zoom, Google Meet, Google Classroom, etc., and make new teaching materials suitable for online lessons.

## **1.4 Research Questions**

This study tried to find answers to the following research questions:

1. What are the experiences of government primary school teachers while transitioning to online teaching-learning?
2. What kinds of support do they need to facilitate online teaching-learning for primary school students?
3. What are the limitations and possibilities of facilitating online teaching-learning for primary school students?

## **1.5 Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to explore the challenges of the government primary school teachers faced when they started to teach online, the solutions they figured out. It intended to understand the needs of the teachers such as teaching materials, technical support, professional training, etc. to facilitate teaching-learning online. Also, this study aimed to find the overall perspectives of the teachers towards online teaching.

## **1.6 Significance of the Study**

The government primary school teachers are facing the challenges directly to facilitate and support the learning process during the coronavirus pandemic. Through this research, the actual struggles and possibilities of online learning practice and its impact on the teachers of this particular area were explored. These findings will help the policymakers to perceive this issue from a more practical perspective. As it's uncertain how long the Coronavirus pandemic situation will prevail, the findings of this research will help the teachers, and the policymakers, to prepare for the future. Also, it is expected that these findings can contribute



to studies to be applied in areas like academic technologies and online learning to hold out online learning with efficiency and to form necessary arrangements or improvements.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Literature Review and Conceptual Framework**

I reviewed books, journal articles, websites, and reports from different sources which were related and relevant to the research topic. The reviewed literatures were arranged under some themes.

#### **2.1 What is Online Teaching-Learning?**

“Online teaching and learning are faculty-delivered instruction via the Internet. Online instruction includes real-time (synchronous) and anytime, anywhere (asynchronous) interactions” (Poe & Stassen, 2021). When learning sessions take place at the same time but not in the same place it is referred to as synchronous learning. This term is usually used to refer to various forms of digital, and online learning in which learners learn in real-time but not in person. (The Glossary of Education Reform,2013). When the learning process does not take place at the same time or same place, it is called asynchronous learning. In the case of asynchronous learning, the used learning materials are either pre-recorded or game-based tasks given to students which they have to complete on their own (Great Schools Partnership, 2013). It is by no means a brand-new conception. The sphere has existed for many years as a locality of analysis and follows with lots of students around the world taking advantage of the affordances of online learning before the pandemic. Though the technologies of online learning are relatively new, the concept is quite old. In Great Britain, the instructors used to send the lessons and related guidelines to their students via mail and receive the students' completed assignments. Thus, distance learning was born. Today's online learning courses are the modern version of those practices (Hickey, 2018).

## **2.2 Factors Related to Online Teaching-Learning**

To conduct online classes, some basic aspects needed to be met by the students and teachers. Firstly, smart devices such as smartphones, tab, laptops, etc. Secondly, high-speed internet. Stable and high-speed internet is necessary for online classes as the users may need to stream online videos or go on live. Without stable and high-speed internet, Facebook and WhatsApp may be used but live videos cannot be streamed. Thirdly, a user-friendly platform or learning management system. With enough digital literacy and some training, both teachers and students would be able to use such a platform. If these aspects are ensured for both teachers and students then, online teaching-learning could be commenced (Zaman, 2020).

According to Stern (2004), online learning is initiating an evolution in the process of teaching and learning. This is changing the traditional teacher-centered scenario to a more interactive and collaborative approach where teacher and student both support and sustain the learning process. The obstacles to achieving this change are the lack of knowledge in digital literacy, lack of training in using technologies in the classroom (Gomes, 2005).

## **2.3 Teachers Readiness for Online Teaching-Learning**

The sudden transformation of offline classrooms to online ones has driven teachers to adopt and adapt to concepts and technological skills for conducting remote education because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Many attempts have been made by the teachers to prepare themselves for the challenge of online teaching. According to Pelgrum (2001), the knowledge and the skills of the teachers largely determine whether or not the educational innovations will be successful. Findings by Hennessy et al. (2010) confirm that the teachers who are instructed to facilitate digital/e-learning in many secondary schools lack the needed skills. Which leads them to adopt an attitude of hostility towards ICT learning. When the teachers

achieve competence in operating computers, they can easily integrate ICT into their teaching (Berner, 2003). In support of the argument Peralta & Costa (2007) stated that when teachers use computers in teaching and have more experiences, it makes them more confident. A lot of teachers assumed that students who have less knowledge of computers and experience using them, often become uncomfortable and less confident in online classes (Pelton & Pelton, 1996).

Being the facilitator of online learning sessions, teachers need to handle the academic components. These include teaching methods, teaching materials, use of pedagogical time associated with the time of practice, and psychological and social elements that appreciably affect teachers' motivation while facilitating learning sessions. Teachers hold duties and responsibilities that are no longer effortlessly transferrable when they ought to alternate from the real-time, physical classroom to an online while not having enough or any experiences. To attain the learning objectives, a teacher needs to suppress the issues that occur in online teaching-learning effectively so that the learning continues (Auma & Achieng, 2020).

The students of highly developed countries like Switzerland and Norway can easily get access to computers, smartphones, and the internet for their online learning. According to Xie et al. (2020) But in developing countries or the rural areas of a country, students might be unable to afford computers or smartphones and internet connections which in turn affecting their online learning. In India, the online learning platform BYJU'S offered free access to the students. In China, almost 250 million students are resuming their study with Tencent classroom. In the UK, 3.5 months long curriculum-based learning opportunities for kids are offered by Bitesize Daily (Li & Lalani, 2020).

## **2.4 The Impact of COVID-19 on Government Primary Schools of Bangladesh**

Globally, at the peak of school closures, the COVID-19 pandemic led to around 1.6 billion children and youth being out of school in 193 countries, representing over 90% of the total enrolled learners (UNESCO, 2020). Education of around 38.6 million students of Bangladesh has also come to a halt with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, when nationwide school closures were declared on March 17, 2020; this is expected to continue in alignment with the national lockdown. It also led to the suspension of all examinations of all primary schools in the country. According to Khan et al. (2021) due to the school closure and disruption of learning, it is expected that there will be multiple levels of impact on learning and human resource development in the country.

The extensive stretch of separation from school and learning activities would upset youngsters' learning gains. The current circumstance is upsetting the pre-planned school year activities and may bring a yearlong gap in the direct outcome imaginable. Keeping kids spurred with learning and keeping up with commitment with exercises, particularly among families with less-instructed guardians and from destitution inclined regions, is likewise a challenge to ensure learning keeps during this emergency. The specialists and instructors will confront hardships tracking down a reasonable answer for national assessments, considering the deficiency of learning because of school terminations and other related factors ( MoPME & MoE, 2020).

When the schools are closed, the communication among the members of the school community has increased. (Eames et al., 2010). In research from Rahman and Matin (2021) parents are concerned about the loss of learning and motivation of their children, increased

burden of out-of-pocket education cost, the continuous uncertainty of school opening, and whether or not the auto pass will affect them in the future.

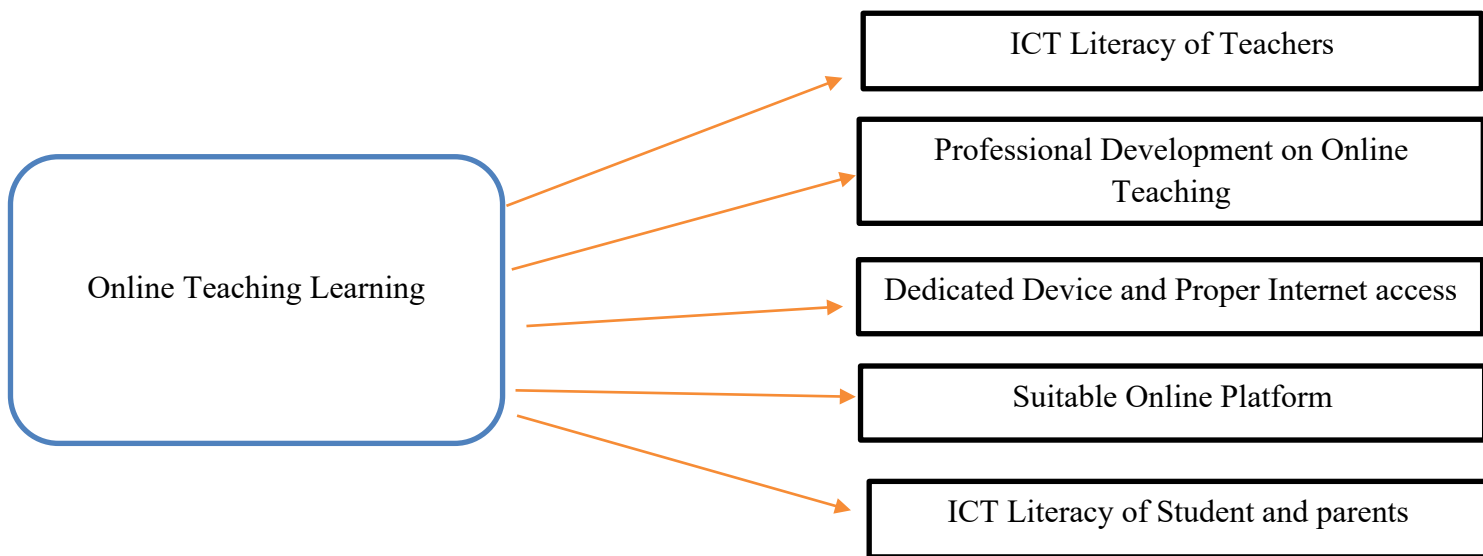
## **2.5 The Effects of COVID-19 on Government Primary Schools' Teachers of Bangladesh**

According to *Implementing the Curriculum with Cambridge* (2020) and Selvi (2010) teachers need dynamic and efficient professional skills as they are responsible for guiding the students to reach educational competency in the classroom. The Fourth Primary Education Development Program (PEDP4) pointed out that for better learning outcomes teachers play the most vital role in a school. It emphasizes that by improving the teacher's pedagogic skills, the quality of teaching-learning practices can be improved. The observation and assessment of teaching-learning practices based on Teacher Professional Standards. The teachers need suitable and effective professional development training which focus on pedagogy and other aspects relevant to teaching. (MoPME, 2018)

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, prolonged absence and disengagement from teaching and ongoing professional training will affect the quality of teaching and motivation of the teachers. To cope up with the changing nature of online learning sessions and scarcity of professional development scopes for school teachers in using the online teaching-learning platform is an added challenge, both during and after the shutdown period. The mode of assessments will also be changed, which will call for solutions to adapt to the recent scenario and breach the assumed increase in learning gaps between students ( MoPME & MoE, 2020).

## 2.6 Conceptual Framework

According to Massy (2002), teachers who are facilitating online teaching-learning find themselves bearing the responsibilities of content experts, learning process design experts, process implementation managers, motivators, mentors, and interpreters. They need to be familiar with online platforms and be able to use them to their advantage. They should be available for the students, provide support and feedback as needed.



To facilitate online learning sessions, it is a must for a teacher to have enough knowledge and skills in ICT. Without it would be difficult to prepare teaching materials, lesson plans for online learning sessions.

Facilitating online teaching-learning is different than regular classroom teaching. The primary school teachers receive 1.5 years of training from PTI. Similarly, there should be some practical training sessions for teachers which would help them with online teaching.

For online teaching-learning, both students and teachers required dedicated devices such as smartphones, laptops, tab, desktops, etc. Also, a properly working internet connection should be available. Without these, access to online teaching-learning would be hindered.

Also, the students and their parents must be knowledgeable enough to navigate online platforms and apps for education purposes. Without the teacher's supervision missing, the parents need to support their children's studies.



## **Chapter 3**

### **Methodology**

#### **3.1 Research Approach**

The qualitative research approach tends to be quite flexible and adaptive. According to Merriam (1997), qualitative research is “an umbrella concept covering several forms of inquiry that help us understand and explain the meaning of social phenomena with as little disruption of the natural setting as possible”. It can add more depth while collecting data. While collecting data it is possible to adapt to new patterns or the context.

My study aimed to explore the experiences of govt. primary school teachers while they facilitated online learning sessions during COVID-19. I aimed to achieve an in-depth understanding of the participant's context, their opinions, their motivations, and their thoughts. Rather than getting a 'yes or no' answer, I would need more detailed responses. That is why I chose the qualitative approach.

#### **3.2 Research Site**

The research site was located in Gulshan Thana of Dhaka city, capital of Bangladesh. The selected three schools in the research site had on average 500 students in the primary section and 6 to 10 assistant teachers. The schools have facilitated online classes from May 2020 and are continuing.

#### **3.3 Research Participants**

The participants selected for this study were assistant teachers of the government. Primary schools. I had 2 male and 7 female participants. On average they had more than 8 years of teaching experience in government primary schools and they have already completed their

BA degree. Some of them also have an M.Ed. degree. They completed the PTI training and other relevant training related to the subjects they teach in schools.

The selected participants had facilitated online learning sessions during the pandemic situation. Each of the participants had unique experiences while facilitating these sessions. Some of these experiences were similar to others, some were different. Their participation helped me to explore my research topic.

Selected participants were briefed about this research, its purpose, and its significance. Then if they were interested to participate, only then they were provided with a consent letter and proceeded as a participant of the research.

### **3.4 Sampling Procedure**

The sampling procedure was concluded through purposeful sampling. As the topic of the study aimed to explore the experiences of government primary school teachers, facilitating online learning sessions, it was not suitable for me to use random sampling. I selected the schools because I had easy access and the schools continued the practice of online teaching during the pandemic. The teachers have facilitated online sessions. Based on these criteria and available participants, I conducted the sampling procedures

### **3.5 Data Collection Methods**

I used interviews to collect my data. According to Johnson & Onwuegbuzie (2004), interviews can provide in-depth information of the participants such as emotions, attitudes, and way of thinking. I wanted to understand the situations the primary school teachers had gone through, how they had cope with the challenges, what was their past mindset, what's their current mindset. To explore these aspects and acquire data from them, the interview was the most suitable process for me. In total, I have facilitated 9 interviews. Three of them were face-to-face interviews and the rest were telephone interviews.

**Face to Face Interview:** Three of my participants were not comfortable with telephone interviews. They preferred face-to-face interviews. So, by taking proper safety measures and keeping social distance, I conducted face-to-face interviews with them to collect data from them. I recorded the conversation with their permission.

**Phone Interview:** In different research fields, carrying out interview sessions over the phone is a much-utilized method of data collection (Thomas & Purdon, 1994). Due to the COVID-19 situation, six of my participants attended the phone interview. I recorded the phone conversation with their permission.

### **3.6 Role of the Researcher**

From March 1, 2021, I started to communicate with the schools that are located on my selected research site. I tried to gather information regarding the school's practice of online teaching. I found a total of five schools that conducted online teaching sessions for their students. But only three schools were ready to participate in my study. Others refused to participate. So, I exclusively communicated with the three schools, shared details about my study, sought permission from the school authorities, and proceeded with my interviews. My first interview was on March 8th, 2021 and my last interview was on 1st April 2021. While facilitating interviews, either face to face or via telephone, I maintained an emphatic mindset. I never acted as superior towards my participants. I tried to be as flexible, adaptive, and supportive as I could be. I never tried to influence the participant's responses, only guiding them if they were speaking out of the context. Because this is a qualitative study, it is important that the biases, values, and judgment of the researcher become stated explicitly in the research report (Creswell, 1994).

### 3.7 Data Analysis

According to Rossman & Rallis (2017), data analysis is a procedure for sorting, categorizing, and grouping the collected data into chunks or parts to make them more meaningful. I conducted my data analysis process by following some steps. First, I transcribed the voice recordings from the interviews to acquire data. Then, I marked the reviewed data with different colors to separate them based on their relevance with my research data. I reviewed the marked data over and over to find answers to my research questions. Then I divided the reviewed data into different themes and sub-themes.

### 3.8 Ethical Issues and Concerns

Research ethics refers to the code of conduct that's mandatory to abide by. For example, being respectful towards the participants, providing original information, being conscious about one's biases, etc. Breaching these codes of conduct is considered 'unethical'. I consciously tried to maintain these ethical issues.

**False information:** Before selecting them as research participants, I collected data on them from the schools. I took this step to prevent any made-up stories. Also, I encouraged the participants to be as authentic as possible with their responses. I directly quoted from the participants to keep it authentic for the readers.

**Consent:** Before collecting data, a consent letter was sent to the participants to claim their permission. They were shortly briefed about the research and its purpose. After they understood it and agreed to participate, only then data was collected from them. The participants held the right to withdraw from the research whenever they wished.

**Biases:** I tried to be unbiased towards the participants, consciously. As I had been a part of the government primary school, I was empathic and optimistic towards them.

**Disclosing the identity of the participants:** I must keep the identities of my participants a total secret for their safety. No data regarding their identity, workplace, etc. will be disclosed. They were given code names and their real identity was omitted from the documents.

### **3.9 Credibility and Rigor**

As a part of my Master's study, I completed two courses on 'Research Methodology'. I gained knowledge from these courses. Before proceeding with my research work, I had read through quite a few qualitative researches of other authors to understand the details of it. I took notes, made a detailed plan, and reviewed it time after time to ensure the most optimum effect.

As a Teach for Bangladesh fellow, I had to teach and support grade 4 students online for 9 months. So, I had my own experiences facilitating online learning sessions. This experience helped to design my research. I understood this was a topic worth exploring based on my own experiences. I tried to create interview guidelines that may resonate with the participants' contexts.

In my interviews, I asked similar questions to different participants. Their answers were often unique to their contexts or quite similar to others though they didn't know each other or had access to interview guidelines beforehand.

### **3.10 Limitations of the study**

Although I tried to design a flawless plan for my study, while executing it, there were shortcomings. These were the limitations of my study.

**Specific Area-based:** The study is limited to the Gulshan Education Thana area. I had access to schools in this area. So, I had to conduct my research in this specific area.

**COVID-19:** Due to this pandemic, I was not able to visit more schools, couldn't reach out to more teachers, couldn't take more interviews. I had limited access to resources.

**Time Management:** I have struggled with time management, especially while collecting data. Though the schools are still closed, my participant had their workload at the beginning of the year. Though they agreed to participate, it had to be at their convenient time. So I had to continuously adjust my schedule to match theirs.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Results**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter consists of the findings of the researchers during the in-depth semi-structured interviews of the research participants. These findings have been organized into three main themes and different subthemes.

#### **4.1 Covid-19 Lockdown and Initial Experience**

When the lockdown started due to the Covid-19 pandemic back in March 2020, schools were closed for an indefinite time. Assistant teachers and headteachers of different Govt. primary schools stated their initial experience when the lockdown started and the schools were closed for a long time. As one of the participants from school B stated, “We expected the closure will last at most 2 weeks. But it just kept extending as the pandemic situation kept getting worse” (Personal communication: Interview #4, 24.03.20). Then the Govt. notified the teachers that they have to support the students with their studies while maintaining proper health regulations. As per the instruction, the primary schools had taken some initial steps with the active participation of assistant teachers and headteachers to support the students with the continuation of their learning.

##### **4.1.1 Establishing Communication**

The assistant teachers tried to reach their students over phone calls. They collected the numbers from the school database and tried to reach out to them. When asked, what was the outcome of the process, one participant from school A stated,

As we wanted to reach them over the phone, we called them over and over again. But some of the students didn't pick up the phone or their phone number was switched off. In this case, we left a text message to call us back or give us a missed call when they see the text. Even if they don't call back, we tried to reach them out with the help of the neighbors or the students who live nearby. This way we were able to reach out to most of the students but some were unreachable as they migrated to their villages and changed their contact numbers. (Personal communication: Interview #6, 28.03.21)

#### **4.1.2 Exploring the Suitable Online Platform**

According to the participants, phone calls are costly compared to the number of calls they have to make each week and there was no reimbursement. Also, it was not easy to check on the progress of the students through phone calls. According to a participant from school B

I cannot check the errors of the student's homework. For example, the mistakes in Math or the spelling mistakes of English through phone calls. All I can ask is if you have done it or not and they will answer yes teacher but I can check what have they done. (Personal communication: Interview#5, 25.03.21).

To save up on the cost of the phone call and to ensure a more sustainable way of supporting the students, the participants started to explore online platforms for alternative solutions. Online platforms such as IMO, Viber, WhatsApp, Messenger, Google Meet, etc. were promising and quite affordable. One of the participants of school C stated,

The majority of the households who have smartphones have IMO installed in their phones. Some had messengers and the rest of them had WhatsApp and Viber. So, we started to give lessons in IMO. If any of the students don't have IMO, we use their preferred platform. (Personal communication: Interview#8, 01.04.21).



These online platforms are easy to use. They consume less internet and have a user-friendly interface. The user can easily send photos and audio messages through them.

#### **4.1.3 Response from Students and Their Parents**

When asked about the responses and reactions from the students and their parents about the initiative of online teaching-learning, the participant responded that there were mixed responses and reactions from them. From school C, one participant expressed,

The majority of them were not concerned about the education of their children. Due to this pandemic, most of the working parents have lost their jobs and their businesses were devastated. So, they were more concerned about sustaining their livelihood rather than sending their children to school or maintaining their education process. (Personal communication: Interview#7, 30.03.21)

Another participant from school A quoted,

Without any job or source of income, the families were not able to sustain themselves in Dhaka city. As a result, the majority of them who can't find an alternative option to sustain their livelihood in the city migrate to their villages in hope that they will be able to survive there easily. This resulted in many of our students dropping out of school and we can't reach out to them. This situation made our teachers and students who knew about this, quite upset. (Personal communication: Interview#2, 13.03.21).

## **4.2 Challenges Faced while Facilitating Online Learning Sessions and Solutions**

The participants stated that they faced challenges when they tried to facilitate online learning sessions. The challenges they faced differed from other schools according to the context and some challenges were common between schools in the same area.

According to one of the participants from school C,

Challenges? There were too many to count. Yes, the Government gave us guidelines to follow. But are the guidelines enough for every situation we face? NO!!! We have a plethora of situations. Yes, the guidelines were helpful, but it's not the ultimate solution. I, myself, have to come up with convenient solutions in different situations. (Personal communication: Interview #6, 28.03.21)

The majority of the participants conveyed that they faced the same situation. The challenges they faced were mostly different from each other, even in the same school. So, they had to adapt to their context. While most of the challenges were unique to the said participants, they had some common challenges. "...for the common challenges that we share among other schools we used to have conversations over phone or Zoom meetings to discuss and find a solution"(Personal communication: Interview #3, 13.03.21) shared one of the participants from school B.

#### **4.2.1 Preparing Teaching Material**

According to the participants, the teaching materials they used in classrooms previously were not suitable for online learning sessions. They needed to think of new materials and find new sources to make them. Although there were sources to collect teaching materials on the internet, they were not suitable to use in their context. They needed to modify it and adjust it to the student's level of understanding. Doing so needs time and effort. To proceed with the process, according to the participants, they often communicated and discussed with other teachers from different primary schools and divided the work among themselves.

It was quite time-consuming and stressful for me to develop a new set of lesson plans for my students during the pandemic situation. So, I contacted other teachers who taught the

same grade and the same subject in different schools. We shared ideas to develop a new set of lesson plans for our online learning sessions and divided the workload among us to have a fast and efficient suitable teaching materials developing process. (Personal communication: Interview #9, 01.04.21)

stated one of the participants from School C.

#### **4.2.2 Lesson Delivery and Student Interaction**

When asked about the teaching sessions the participants informed that they had to adapt to the new aspects of the online platform as it was not similar to the regular classroom. " We have to deliver the lessons in a way so that the students can understand it easily. If it wasn't easy enough for them then they will have trouble while doing your homework at home" (Personal communication: Interview #4, 24.03.21).

Also, some of the participants mentioned that as these online learning stations were new for the students, they were not much active at the beginning of the sessions. But as time passed on, they became more familiar with these sessions and their response rate increased.

Students were not proficient enough with online platforms. They were not as comfortable as they were in the classrooms. They did not know how to turn on the mic or how to send voice messages. As time goes on and they are more adapted to the online platform students are beginning to respond more and more. (Personal communication: Interview #6, 28.03.21).

#### **4.2.3 Checking Student Progress**

While teaching it is important to check on the students' progress. When asked about how they check on their students' progress the participants mentioned that they cannot check on the progress of their students as easily as they did in classrooms. One of them from school A stated, " In classrooms, we could check the students' copy daily and provide them with guidelines and corrections. But in online teaching sessions is not possible for us to do it

easily"(Personal communication: Interview #1, 08.03.21).

When asked about the solution to this challenge, a participant from school A suggested,

Well, the students were given some tasks per week. They have to complete these tasks and write down the corresponding parts in predetermined notebooks before next week's tasks. We verbally check on them if they have completed the tasks or not. After a certain time, we collect those notebooks and check the completed works. We keep a track of every student's progress like this. (Personal communication: Interview#2, 13.03.21)

#### **4.2.4 Internet Connection and Technological Aspects**

According to the participants, one of the most common challenges faced during facilitating online learning sessions related to internet connection and technological aspects. The majority of students didn't have any dedicated smartphones for them and they didn't have access to adequate internet connections. Even if they had smartphones at home in most cases the working person of the family would take that smartphone with them. At most, they have a feature phone at home. Besides, students and their parents were not familiar with online platforms and their uses in the study. To find a solution to the situation one of the participants came up with an idea. According to the participant from school C,

I made small groups among my students. Each group had one student who had access to the internet and a smartphone. I gave each group a different schedule to participate in online learning sessions. Each group member will visit the student who had a smartphone and internet connection before the scheduled time and attend the learning sessions. They will also ask questions to have a clear understanding and will send photos of their completed tasks. This way we can maximize the use of available minimum resources. (Personal communication: Interview#8, 01.04.21)

#### **4.2.5 Proper Training on Facilitating Online Teaching**

The participants expressed that, to properly facilitate online learning sessions, the teachers need some skills and practical knowledge, such as making videos, PowerPoint presentations, setting up groups in online platforms, etc. As there were no training sessions or workshops for teachers to help them build up these skills, they had to learn from trials and errors. Some of the participants mentioned that their more knowledgeable colleagues shared their knowledge with them. This helped them a lot.

#### **4.2.6 Systematic Support and Feedback**

The participants mentioned that the school started to build up a support system to support the teachers with their facilitation of online learning sessions. The headteachers of State schools would observe the learning sessions themselves. Often other teachers would participate as observers. Then in the virtual meeting, the teachers and the headteacher would give feedback and offer support to the teachers who needed them. This practice made it possible for the teachers to gradually improve themselves and support their students more effectively.

### **4.3 Overall Impression**

The participants had mixed impressions as a whole towards this new practice of online teaching-learning. At present, some of them had their perspective towards online teaching-learning developed positively. Thus, improving their current impression than the initial one. On the other hand, some participants found it less suitable for their context. Their impression didn't improve, in some cases, it decreased.

### **4.3.1 Initial Impression**

Participants stated that in the beginning, they had to shift their usual teaching setup from offline to online. This transition was a challenge for them. One of the participants from school C stated,

I didn't even have a Facebook account. Then suddenly I was instructed to take online classes. I, who even struggle to dial a number on my 'smart' phone, would conduct online learning sessions. It was so challenging and I was quite nervous. I felt like this online teaching was just a waste of time. (Personal Communication: Interview #7, 31.03.21)

Participants mentioned similar situations such as their students and their parents didn't respond enthusiastically towards online teaching-learning. This raised more challenges for the participants. A participant from School A explained, " I often tried thousands of times to explain the topics in the video calls. Students seems more interested to my background than my lectures. They were easily distracted. It was a letdown." (Personal Communication: Interview #2, 13.03.21)

### **4.3.2 Current Impression**

As the participants kept on facilitating online learning sessions, some of them felt that their skills improved and they became more experienced with this new practice. Some find this new practice quite effective. A participant from school B shared, " Now, somehow, I need less time to prepare for my classes. I am more comfortable. I watch YouTube and sometimes keep notes. Later I use those notes in my lessons which makes my lessons more interesting." (Personal Communication: Interview #3, 13.03.21)

While some participants had a different perspective as well. A participant from School A conveyed,

Online learning sessions are good. Some of us support our students. It has potential. But it's not a long-term solution. My students are poor. Most of them don't have smartphones or proper internet connections. They might be interested but lack the basic requirements. So where is the benefit if my invested time and effort only support a few while most can't even participate? (Personal Communication: Interview #2, 13.03.21)

## **Chapter 5**

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

#### **5.1 Discussion**

In this chapter I would like to put forth my observation and learnings from the collected data and the analysis of these data which are already described in the previous chapter. In Chapter Two, the literature review part, I gathered findings from other studies related to this research. I would like to compare my findings with this result from other studies.

As the participants stated that they didn't foresee the long closure of the schools. As per the instruction from the government they started to prepare themselves for online classes to support their students. The first thing they had to do was establish communication with their students and their parents. But it wasn't easy for them. For example, participants from school A shared a similar experience that they tried to reach their students over and over, but for some cases, they couldn't reach them. The reason behind this was the recorded number was switched off, the number was changed or migrated to another place. Although the scenario in the other two schools was not this severe, they did have similar cases.

Due to increased costs, loss of work from quarantine, and subsequent unemployment during COVID-19, it is assumed that there will be more dropouts next year (Dietrich, 2020). When the participants eventually started establishing communication with the students and their parents to start their practice of online teaching-learning, they had different types of responses from the students and their parents. Among the three schools, school A and school B had a similar situation. According to the participants from these two schools, a lot of parents had very unstable economic conditions and they been struggling to maintain their families. This led to their negligence of their children's education. Also, without a physical classroom and classmates, the students were least interested in these online classes. Also due



to the economic condition, most of the families were not able to provide a smartphone and long-term uninterrupted internet connection for their children. This had impacted their initial interest and impression towards online teaching-learning. Still, the participants tried their best to improve the situation.

After establishing the initial communication, the participants needed to find and introduce a suitable online platform to conduct online teaching-learning. Calling over the phone frequently was not a suitable option for the participants. The cost was quite huge and it was not effective enough. Relatively cheap yet more functional options were online platforms like Zoom, Imo, etc. While finding suitable online platforms, they needed to keep in mind about required configuration in devices and internet usages. As some platforms require high configuration devices and strong internet connections. Also, the technological literacy level of the students and their parents was not that high. So, the online platform had to be user-friendly and less demanding. Participants from different schools preferred different online platforms as per their students' preferences.

As teachers facilitate online learning sessions, they become more proficient and learn to prepare teaching materials using different software (Bruke & Dempsey, 2020). When the participants started to facilitate the online learning sessions, they needed to prepare their teaching materials based on the new setting. When the instructions from the government couldn't solve their problems totally, they needed to adapt to their situation and find the solutions. For similar situations, the participants often exchanged ideas among themselves. As schools A and C were situated nearby, the participants often exchanged their concerns and solutions with each other. School B participants also did the same with other nearby schools. To sustain and support any type of new practice, it is necessary to have an in-depth understanding and knowledge regarding it. Teachers are gradually grasping the potential of

online teaching-learning (Rose, 2020). The participants shared similar thoughts regarding online teaching-learning. Making teaching materials, delivering lessons, supporting students, and checking their progress, teachers shoulder these important responsibilities. The participants did the same. But when they had to fulfill their responsibilities online, they faced challenges. Although some of them had ICT training, they didn't have any practical training or experience in facilitating online learning sessions. Some of them had some knowledge on how to operate Zoom and make video calls, but it was only at surface level. They expressed they needed some proper training or participated in workshops to improve their skills.

Overall the initial and current impressions of the participants were mixed. The interest in online learning is increasing among the students who find this process highly convenient as they can continue their studies while staying in a safe place. For the teachers, it's easier to hold a one-to-one session with the students and support them individually (Zhou et al.,2020). The whole online teaching-learning has some key factors such as smart devices, internet connection, etc. determining its effect. Some of the participants find it quite effective during this school closure. As they explored the internet, they found new teaching aids and their preparation time for classes decreased quite a bit. Despite these aspects, some of the participants expressed a different opinion. According to them, if the students didn't have access to a smart device or proper internet, then they could not participate in online sessions. According to *CAMPE* (2020), only 30% of the students, who also belong to upper socio-economic standard, have afforded to watch the online educational content. , As a result, for a teacher who belongs to a community where most of the households cannot afford a smartphone, it's quite challenging to utilize all those online content. If the students could not even participate, then what's good about interesting online lessons? Then online teaching-

learning loses its effect. If it was possible to balance these issues, then online teaching-learning can bring sustainable development to our primary education sector.

## **5.2 Conclusion**

This research aims to explore the experiences of government primary school teachers facilitating the online learning sessions during the COVID-19 pandemic. This pandemic situation has been challenging for the teachers, their students, and their families. To support their students with their education the teachers had to face a lot of challenges. They needed to change their teaching style, teaching platform, support the students to get adapt to the change, etc. While doing so the teachers needed to support themselves. Sometimes they got it from the authorities, sometimes from their peers. In different situations, they needed to adapt and find out their solutions.

Communicating with the students, conversing with parents, motivating the students to continue the study, finding a suitable and efficient online platform that has fewer requirements to operate, exploring the internet for suitable teaching materials, delivering lessons, checking students' understanding, and recording their progress. These are some of the current practices the teachers needed to go through, a mix of old and new responsibilities. As Massy (2002) stated, teachers who are facilitating online teaching-learning find themselves bearing the responsibilities of content experts, learning process design experts, process implementation managers, motivators, mentors, and interpreters. The findings of this study explored the challenges online teaching-learning may bring with it. Also, there are possibilities and potential this new practice contains in the future.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

Here is some recommendation after analyzing the data from the study-

- > Before arranging training sessions for the teachers and headteachers, there should be some surveys to collect data about their needs. Based on these data, need-based training should be designed. This will improve practical knowledge and skills.
- > Schools should have a strong internet connection and build an internet hub for the students who don't have an internet connection at home.
- > A suitable, easy to accessible, and efficient online platform should be developed and introduced to the masses.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A. Consent Letter

Dear .....,

I am a Master's student of BRAC IED at BRAC University. In fulfillment of my Master's program, I have to conduct research. The title of my research is "**Teaching Learning Online during Covid-19: Exploring the experiences of the teachers of government primary schools of Bangladesh.**". This research aims to explore the experiences of govt. Primary school teachers facilitating online teaching-learning during the lockdown.

Your participation in this research will be willing and voluntary. Your participation will be entailed in an interview. The interview will be 45 minutes long. If necessary, the time will be extended with your permission. The interview will be recorded and confidentiality will be maintained for your safety. I will protect the identity of the respondent through the use of pseudonyms in it and any further publications or presentations. The statements of the respondent will be quoted anonymously. All data will be stored in a secure location for the specific time-being of the research. Please understand that you may withdraw from the study at any time, without prejudice.

If you have any questions, please feel free to ask me at (01521253811) or (faisal.amin@teachforbangladesh.org).

Thank you.

I have read the above and discussed it with the researcher. I understand the study and I agree to participate.

\_\_\_\_\_ (Signature)

\_\_\_\_\_ (date)

## **Appendix B. Interview Guide**

### **Interview Guideline for Assistant Teachers**

1. How did you stay connected with your students during the lockdown?
2. How was your access to the internet and technologies during the lockdown?
3. Did you have any ICT skills or training beforehand that helped you during this situation?
4. How did you adapt to online teaching-learning?
5. To facilitate what type of pedagogy and methods you used? Was there anything new that you adopted?
6. How did you manage the resources and materials for online lessons? Were they readily available or you had to find/create them?
7. How frequently you facilitated online learning sessions?
8. How was the ratio of student engagement during online lessons compared to regular classrooms?
9. How did you assess your students to check their progress?
10. Which consumes more time, online teaching or regular classroom teaching? How?
11. Overall, what is your current perspective regarding online teaching-learning?
12. “Online teaching-learning can bring vaster possibilities in our govt. primary school classrooms.” Share your thoughts.
13. Feel free to add any other points.

## **Appendix C. One Page Transcription from Interview**

Me: So, did you used lesson plans in a regular classroom?

Participant: Certainly. We have a goal to finish a certain amount of lessons within a fixed time. Otherwise, how will we finish the syllabus?

Me: So, when you started teaching online, did you used the same lesson plans?

Participant: I wish that was possible. It would have been less stressful. It was quite time-consuming and stressful for me to develop a new set of lesson plans for my students during the pandemic situation. So, I contacted other teachers who taught the same grade and the same subject in different schools. We shared ideas to develop a new set of lesson plans for our online learning sessions and divided the workload among us to have a fast and efficient suitable teaching materials developing process

Me: So, you partnered with others to reduce the pressure. That's a really good initiative.

Participant: Well, to cope up with this current situation, it's necessary to cooperate. I can't solve all the problems by myself. I often discuss with my colleagues for their advice and ideas. I also try to offer my help when needed.