CHALLENGES AND IMPROVEMENT OF ONLINE LEGAL EDUCATION FOR THE LAW STUDENTS IN PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES

By

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Declaration

It is hereby declared that

1. The thesis submitted is my/our own original work while completing 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.

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Approval

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Abstract

University students from around the world are stuck home and continuing study using available resource and systems. Students are experiencing changes in the teaching-learning mechanism where internet became primary mode of connectivity. Using in-depth interview and classroom observation of private university law students, the study explored perspectives of the students regarding sudden paradigm shift in legal education due to pandemic. The research was conducted with using purposive sampling technique to target students with similar experience and background. It identified the persisting challenges of online legal education in private universities of Bangladesh like connectivity, resource, engagement, teaching-learning method and assessment. The research brought out improvement scope which includes incorporation of blended learning system and mental health support for students as well as teachers. The study paints a picture of current practices from the perspective of law students in private universities of Bangladesh.

Dedication

This Thesis is dedicated to my family who were always there for me and Shamnaz Arifin Mim who provided continuous motivation and support with utmost patience while conducting the research.

Acknowledgement

It is a pleasure to thank my thesis supervisor Shamnaz Arifin Mim for her insightful guidance during the research and Thesis writing process.

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List of Acronyms

FGD   Focus Group Discussion

GPS   Government Primary School

UGC   University Grand Commission

UNESCO   United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

Chapter 1

Introduction and Background

1.1 Introduction

Law schools in Bangladesh have always practiced traditional lecture-based teaching-learning formats (Hoque, 2012). Despite having the need for an overhaul and recommendation from the law commission (Review of Legal Education in Bangladesh, 2006), the legal education system has stayed the same for decades. In recent years since the Pandemic started, the educational system in primary, secondary, and tertiary levels has shifted towards a distant learning platform using digital means of communication. According to UNESCO, 1.5 billion school and university enrolled students and youth all over the world are affected by the global manifestation of COVID-19 (UNESCO,2020).

The need for a National Council of Legal Education as proposed by Qudrat-e-Khuda Education Commission Report, 1974 is yet to be considered for the development of Legal Education scenario in our country. In 2020, COVID has shifted the workflow of the mass into a remote setup. Business, Shopping, customer support, health, and Education are witnessing a transformation. Online workflow is getting incorporated into the offline way of lifestyle. Law schools in our country are no different. Most of the private universities have shifted to online classes and assessment systems since April 30, 2020 with flexible operational guidelines (Hossain, I. 2020, April 30). They have continued classes through online pre-recorded classes and assignments to keep the academic progress at a comfortable pace (Mahtab, 2021, April 23).

This study was constructed to understand the general perspective of law students in the private universities of Bangladesh on online legal education. The study has a constructive paradigm and follows a qualitative research design through multiple semi-structured interviews as well as classroom observation. The research was conducted online with 12 participants. Data analysis of the research was conducted using the thematic analysis method. The study has shed light on current method, routine, lecture, and evaluation practices in online legal education at three private universities which included challenges faced by the law students and their expectations. The study proposed a way forward for the present system in light of collected data.

1.2 Research Topic

Challenges and improvement of online legal education for the law students in private
universities

Online education in recent times has upgraded itself to adapt to new communication tools and
mediums to facilitate students. The legal profession and education revolve around practical
and theoretical knowledge to create confident graduates. Law students are now facing digital
limitations and network issues alongside difficulties to cope up with the new curriculum and
assessment system. Private university law students have gone through multiple changes in the
communication method and lesson delivery system. Even after more than a year of digital
education, students are far from getting used to the new system

1.3 Statement of the Problem

In April 2020, all private universities received the green signal to carry out academic
procedures using online medium but, a shift came to light after UGC reported based on a
mass survey including 19,000 students and 7,000, that universities are not yet ready to
conduct online education (Abdullah, M. 2020, June 5). Learning and practicing legal skills
through engagement to the community by providing legal service is an integral part of legal
education (Review of Legal Education in Bangladesh, 2006). Online education in private
universities is lacking in the systems with bold shortcomings like accessibility of digital
devices, internet access, network issues as well as financial drawbacks (Shahriar, 2021). Law
schools have always followed traditional lecture-based andragogy. Law is a subject especially
for extroverts which operates through interactions and discussions along with research. Due
to the pandemic, the learning process has solely become online. But universities of
Bangladesh still lag behind other countries in conducting online education. After shifting to a
fully digital workspace and communication system, students started discovering problems
with keeping attention, use of devices, issues with the internet, availability of electricity, and
lesson delivery methods. students and teachers are still trying to get used to the digital way of
communication (Shahriar, 2021). A visible communication gap can be seen between teacher
and student. Furthermore, the student evaluation mechanism is still under construction where

institutions are trying to create their own system to build a benchmark for standards. The study intends to learn about the impact of this paradigm shift on the law students of private universities through acknowledging their voices and analyzing their perspectives.

1.4 Research Questions

Key Question 1:

What are the practices of conducting online legal education in private universities during the pandemic?

Sub-questions:

    a) What are the minimum resources required to attend a regular class?
    b) What method of lesson delivery is being used in the class?
    c) What is the evaluation method to evaluate learning(assessment)?

Key Question 2:

What are the challenges faced by the students in private universities to participate in online classes during the pandemic?

Sub-questions:

    a) What are the common challenges students face while attending an online class?
    b) What challenges do students face in the classroom lesson delivery method?
    c) How do students experience a regular class?

Key Question 3:

What areas of improvement for online Legal Education are proposed by law students in private universities during pandemic?

Sub-questions:

    a) What approaches to online teaching are useful?
    b) What tactics of online teaching need to change?
    c) How do students envision the future of online legal education?

1.5 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to find out the perspective of the law students regarding practice, challenges and possibilities of improvement of online legal education in different private universities on the recently shifted paradigm of education that is virtual education.

Due to the rise of the COVID-19 pandemic, virtual education has become the primary option to access education at all levels since the governments' instruction to keep up the teaching-learning process through online medium. All educational institutions were shut down in March 2020. Though several private universities have been successfully regulating educational functions virtually, focus on legal education in light of adaptability and morphing of andragogy to better support educational purpose has yet to be explored. Moreover, student movements at Shahjalal Science and Technology University, Jahangirnagar University were also prominent proof of the suffering of the students attending classes virtually.

1.6 Significance of the Study

The results of the study can measure the impact of the pandemic on legal education through analyzing the perceptions of the law students and the data can be used by policymakers, implementers, and teachers to address the issues of attending virtual classes. The areas that are necessary to work on can be identified through the findings of this research. The perspective analysis will provide information for further studies on the effectiveness of the current virtual legal education practices.

By analyzing the current practice portion of the study, concerned entity can paint a broader picture of the unregulated methods used by teachers and students to have an idea about what process is useful and which can be modified for better output

Through observing the challenges, policymakers can know about the exact barriers existing in the system to modify and incorporate mechanisms to combat the problems.

Teachers, students and policymakers can have a depth of understanding and possibilities through the suggested reformation remedies proposed by the research subjects and the author which will significantly change the course of teaching learning in the online realm of education.

Chapter 2

Literature Review and Conceptual Framework

Context of educational institutions in Bangladesh during COVID-19 pandemic

Bangladesh diagnosed its first three cases of COVID-19 on 8th March, 2020 (World Health Organization, 2020). All educational institutions were closed under the nationwide lock down since 17th March, 2020. The closure of the educational institutions is continued to be longer than other institutions to ensure social distancing and to protect the students from critical transmission (Dutta, S., & Smita, M. K. 2020). According to UNESCO. (2020, March 26), due to nationwide closure of educational institutions around 60% of the world's student population are being negatively impacted. Bangladesh is not far behind due to uncharted territory of online education and drawbacks.

Teaching-learning strategies in law schools

Law schools have focused on input— faculty pedigrees, publications, citations, library volumes, ranking, physical plants, and a steady build-up of administration and staff. Their objective is "to train students to think like a lawyer" and teach doctrinal law (Cohen, M. A. 2020, August 20). In Bangladesh, the practice of memorizing and delivering statutes for law students has long been challenged. However, due to the nature of Bar and Judiciary exams

which heavily rely on memorization of statutes, the input-oriented mechanism still exists. The question remains, whether the traditional model is effective in digital classroom setup (Islam, M. R. 2018, March 27).

Challenges of online teaching-learning

Virtual or online education is a form of education that is highly dependent on the electronic media and internet to conduct the process of education remotely. Most of our learners lack the required motivation to learn from online classes. Teachers pursue students to join online classes; however, unavailability of internet and low bandwidth are referred as root causes (M. Nehreen, Jamal G. R. A, Kabir M. R. 2020, July 28). They have also shared about their survey conducted among the university students that says only 44% of the surveyed students use the Internet as a medium of communication, learning and other academic purposes. Some students mentioned that their homes are not the best place to study with all interruptions. In addition, they have been burdened and had to cope with the cost of investment necessary to acquire proper equipment and fast internet connection. Students started relying on mobile data in place of wifi for reliability and access, which is expensive (Mahtab, R. T. M. A. M. 2021, April 23).

Less or no access to technology is creating an achievement gap among the learners, higher access without monitoring is also a source of hindrance to education (Mahtab, R. T. M. A. M. 2021, April 23). The ICT infrastructure in Bangladesh is below the mark whereas the primary cost for infrastructural development is very high. On the other hand, reliability on technology use is not regulated and another concern is the rapid rise of unregulated usage of the technology by the learners.

The rise of pandemic and shifting the lifestyle from a society centered paradigm to an online based paradigm has a very vast impact on the education process. According to Dutta, S., &

Smita, M. K. (2020)), the respondents shared that absence of definite schedule or routine for study has a disruptive impact and they felt less interested to participate in the virtual classes. Disruptions in learning like noisy atmosphere, not having particular space to attend classes, loss of social interactions like group studies, library-based studies are considered among some of the root challenges of this shift of education to virtual world during the lockdown due to the pandemic outburst.

Chapter 3

Methodology

3.1 Research Approach

A qualitative research design was followed for this study. The method was chosen because it can provide an explanatory understanding of the nature of a particular phenomenon through its comprehensive tools (Awasthy, R. 2019). The purposive sampling technique was used to select participants for the study due to the nature of communication, accessibility, and availability to draw out information rich cases relevant to the study. Interpretivism paradigm was selected due to the existence of multiple reality in multiple settings which is subjected to interpretation. Participants were chosen based on their access to the internet and availability as well as experience of online teaching-learning engagement. The study dives into the innate perspective of the private university law students to understand the system and drawbacks of the practice using a set of generalized questions aiding to the research outcome. Grounded theory was selected to analyze the qualitative data. Therefore, the qualitative approach was best suited for the study.

3.2 Research Site

The research is focused on the Universities located in the capital and the port city as most of the private universities are located in Dhaka and Chattogram. According to UGC, there are 11 private universities in Chattogram and 79 private universities in Dhaka (University Grants Commission, 2020). As these two cities have the most private universities, one being the port city and the other being the capital of the country, these two cities have the most number of students. This research was conducted online to abide by health and safety guidelines to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

3.3 Research Participants

Research participants are all similar in qualification, who are solely chosen for being private university law students as the study aims to find out the perception on the status of online legal education process during the lockdown due to pandemic. 12 Law students from University A, B, and C was invited to participate in the online interviews. As the students who had access to online services and education were experiencing the practices and challenges. All students were within 21-25 of age. Gender equality was hard to maintain and, in the end, 9 male students and 3 female students were chosen to be part of the study.

3.4 Sampling Procedure

Primary criteria of the research subjects were to be a law student currently enrolled in a private university. There were 9 male and 3 female research subjects from age 21-25. The nature of sampling mechanism was chosen to be purposive sampling as the process call for deliberate choice of participants due to their shared qualities aiding to the research (Etikan, I. 2015, December 22). The participants were homogenous as they all shared traits as,

1.   The students were enrolled in LL. B program in their respected institutions.

2. Research subjects ranged from 1st year students up to final year students to keep the enrollment range in the institution broad and to address issues of new learner as well as old students to cover the majority of the demography.

3. Students with stable internet connections were chosen to represent as they had the most insight about the practice, challenges and suggest improvement ideas in light of experience.

4. Classroom observation subjects were chosen based on availability and consent to participate in the research.

3.5 Data Collection Methods

The interview guideline was designed to understand the process and practice of the students and teachers. Total 19 items were listed that address the current condition of the teaching learning process, challenges and improvement ideas to understand perspectives of the selected participants. To stay aligned with the research topic, I chose 12 private university law students from 3 universities to understand their perspectives. Students were selected to sit for only one interview. Participants were communicated through phone first to set up the online interview. After initial verbal consent a Zoom interview was organized. The interview ranged from 35 minutes to 77 minutes based on the responsiveness of the participants. The interview was recorded and transcribed based on the given answers and observation notes.

3.6 Role of the Researcher

From February 2, 2021, I started conducting online interviews with law students from three private universities. I have been a law student and a student mentor for the department during my time as a student. I have been a teacher who taught in government primary schools for 2 years. Therefore, I have a keen interest in the teaching-learning process. During the pandemic I struggled to connect with my students and provide adequate academic guidance, which struck questions regarding the legal education in the uncharted online realm. Throughout the interview process, I kept myself under check from influencing participants with my knowledge of the situation. During classroom observation, I found myself reverting back to the teacher version of myself where I was eager to suggest ideas to battle online teaching-

learning problems. However, I kept my bias along with enthusiasm aside so that it cannot affect the research data. My ultimate focus was to incorporate all my findings into the research without any bias.

3.7 Data Analysis

In-depth interview of the participants was recorded and transcribed to get a visual understanding of the data based on interview guidelines. To have a better understanding of the data, thematic analysis was chosen due to the large body of data to compile similar answers into groups. I scored through the items of all the participants and compiled similar opinions and views to better represent the perspectives of the participants. Research questions and items were left untouched due to the data collection method and reviewing barriers due to large statements. After compiling similar answers and opinions, I started analyzing the answers to pinpoint challenges, practice and improvement recommendations.

3.8 Ethical Issues and Concerns

I was a law student in a private university and actively participated in the departmental teaching-learning issues. After finishing law school, I started my career as an Assistant Teacher in a Government Primary School. When conducting my research, I acknowledged my bias as my research participants were in a similar situation to what I encountered during my role as a GPS teacher during school closure. After identifying my bias, I started to be mindful about my interaction with the participants during the interview. Interview guidelines helped me to be on track. I tried not to interrupt participants as they answered the questions during the interview.
I maintained the confidentiality of the research subjects by assigning them interview numbers and dates.

3.9 Credibility and Rigor

I am a student of education with a bachelor's degree in law. In my professional life, I was a teacher for 2 years in 3 GPS schools in Dhaka and Chattogram. During my time as a student of law in a well renowned private university, I witnessed the shortcomings that a student faces during 4 years of law school especially in my university. When studying as a student of education, I discovered the popular teaching techniques and learned how to conduct qualitative and quantitative research.

The knowledge of conducting research and prior experience of being a law student, I identified the growing problem of online education. Due to having a network of law students currently enrolled in different universities around the nation, I was able to reach targeted research subjects and include them into the research.

At first, I developed the research questions and sought approval of my supervisor. After getting the approval I formulated research guidelines for in-depth interview and observation checklist. I contacted participants over phone and internet after selecting them. After getting consent from the subjects, I conducted the interview. The data was transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis and compiled to make sense of the enormous pool of data. I contacted lectures from 3 universities and attended their class with the observation checklist. The observation data added an extra layer of credible information aiding the findings from the interview.

3.10 Limitations of the study

The study is focused on only 12 participants and 3 universities. To understand the broader perspective of the mass it is essential to include more participants. The study carries a moderate amount of rigor in terms of research participants; it would be essential to include participants from more than 3 universities to keep diversity in the final result. During the research, communication was the core limitation as the research aims to understand the participants' perspective during COVID-19 pandemic. Health and safety were the primary issue while the research was conducted. The whole research was conducted remotely to keep participants safe from harm. Therefore, the nature of data collection raised limitation of observing expressions of the participants for which a valuable string of data based on visual observation during in-depth interview was absent.

Chapter 4

Results

Bangladesh has seen a rise of online communication during the nation-wide lockdown. Legal education in the midst of the pandemic has shifted to different online platforms to facilitate the learning. The collected data from Law faculties of three private universities showcase a low online attendance rate in contrast to face to face classes. In-depth interview of 12 participants revealed their frustration regarding lecture-based classes, lack of resources,

technical barriers and lack of structured teaching-learning system. The results are categorized in light of the research question and themes.

4.1 Present Practices

4.1.1. Attendance

Private universities have transformed their teaching method through countless trials and adjustments to facilitate their students and shifted to an online teaching learning system. Students thus, complied with the system and adjusted with the method. University A holds 8 classes per week; spread out to 4 days of class and 2 classes per day. University B and C holds 10 classes per week; spread out to 5 days of class and 2 classes per day. University A and B holds classes for 45min, University C holds 1-hour classes.

Out of 12 participants, only Interview #9, 24/2/2021 attends all online classes set up by the university. Maximum of 80% students join regularly in Interview #7, 1/3/2021 class and lowest regular attendance rate is 50% in the class of Interview #5, 18/2/2021. High attendance rate is visible in classes having limited number of students as cited in Interview #7, 1/3/2021 having 10 students in the class.

4.1.2. Discussion based class vs Lecture based class

Interactive discussion-based classes are preferred by 11 participants and lecture-based class is a preferred primary choice for Interview #9, 24/2/2021. According to Interview #5, 18/2/2021, "Lecture based classes are rigid and one sided. Teachers only entertain questions after the lecture"

During weekly classes, based on the preferred by the teacher; a shift on the lecture and discussion-based classes is visible. In classes with greater numbers of students, teachers tend to float into a lecture-based system to conduct classes and, in class with a lower number of students; teacher approaches towards conducting interactive discussion based classes. For example, Interview #9, 24/2/2021 has 48 students in her class. In her class, the teacher conducts 75% of the class through common lectures and 25% of the class in an interactive manner. On the other hand, Interview #7, 1/3/2021 has 10 students in his class. In his class teachers conduct 80% discussion based interactive classes and 20% Lecture based classes.

4.1.3. Classroom activity and materials

Online classes are conducted through different platforms. Use of materials and platforms are similar across every course in their institution. University A uses Skype, University B uses a paid Zoom account and University C uses Google Meet and their very own online learning management system based on a blended learning method.

A pattern is visible in the classes where there are less than 20 students. Teachers tend to conduct interactive classes with books, notes, slides and videos. In a class with more than 20 students, teachers use minimal resources and slides to conduct lecture-based classes. Universities with their own online learning management system provide online supplementary aid in the form of notes, books and media along with recorded class on the platform.

4.1.4. Resources to join online class

All the interviewed participants exclaimed the minimum required resource as, a smartphone and good internet to join a class. As for communication methods, different faculty members prefer different social media platforms to communicate with the students. Most common platforms are Facebook Messenger and WhatsApp. Most online resources are shared through the pre-created course groups.

4.1.5. Assessment

Students experience different assessment systems in different private universities as the university determines the grading and assessment system. In University A, students are assessed through Chapter based review, Quiz, monthly presentation, Course viva and assignments. University B and C heavily rely on chapter-based assignment, presentation and weekly quiz. Only University C conducts open book exams through their online learning management system.

4.1.6. Advantage of online learning

According to Interview #8, 24/2/2021; "Online classes are scheduled and on time, it saves a lot of time". Interview# 12, 2/3/2021; he was always late for class because he lives 15km away from his university. Online classes are easy to join and now he is always on time. Interview #4, 19/2/2021, said that, "We can pass the degree on time" as an advantage of online classes. Interview #1, 2/3/2021, is happy to be able to attend classes from wherever he is. Interview #7, 1/3/2021 exclaimed that online classes save money and time. Interview #6,

18/2/2021 said that learning and using tech helps him to be more connected with the advanced world.

4.2 Challenges faced

4.2.1. Barriers of online learning

According to Interview #4, 19/2/2021, "Teachers are not ready to conduct online classes". She also added that the new online learning system is not helpful for the students from the village. Interview #9, 24/2/2021 cited that students using unfair means to pass exams are barriers of online learning. Interview #2, 24/2/2021 said, "Teachers and students have less time to interact outside the class. Students only attend class to get attendance marks and are not learning". The most common barrier is cited as network/Internet issues and device problems. Lack of tech knowledge is also regarded as a barrier by Interview #11, 2/3/2021. According to Interview #7, 1/3/2021; keeping attention during online class is a barrier along with network and sudden change of schedule. Interview #3, 24/2/2021 cited lack of motivation as a barrier of online learning. Class Observation #6 portrayed a similar picture where students were encouraged by the teacher to spark discussions but students refrained from engaging into discussions.

4.2.2. Online learning experience

According to online learning experience of Interview #3, 24/2/2021, "Online classes are not effective at all". Interview#5, 18/2/2021 said, "Boring, I don't like it. It is irritating". Interview #2, 24/2/2021 exclaimed that online classes are less effective than face to face classes. Interview #10, 2/3/2021 exclaimed his frustration to stay connected with the class while staying in his village with poor network and electricity issues. Interview #4, 19/2/2021 said that she suffers from mental stress due to using electronic devices for a prolonged period of time. Interview #8, 24/2/2021, said that her online learning experience was good as she can join from home. During Class Observation #2, students were demotivated after experiencing bad internet connection and lecture-based class focusing on reading slides by the teacher.

4.3 Suggestions to improve participation and learning impact

Students emphasized on using positive reinforcements to increase participation in the class. Interview #4, 19/2/2021 suggested that motivation and mental health support needs to be added in the system. She also suggested that class can be interactive and fun where students

get motivated to learn and attend classes. According to Interview #8, 24/2/2021, "Legal Education needs to be face to face where practical knowledge is nurtured. Students also emphasized on accessibility and availability of online resources. Students suggested use of practical experience and discussion-based learning by the teacher during online classes. Moot Court, Mock trial and practice of case study in opposed to lecture based monotonous classes. Interview #9, 24/2/2021 suggested frequent assessment and policing to keep students active during class. Students also exclaimed the need of pecuniary support from the respected institutions for online connectivity. He further exclaimed a dire need of student counseling to motivate them to join classes and stay active.

Chapter 5

Discussion and Conclusion

5.1 Discussion

From the compiled research data, it is seen that students are not well connected in the online classes due to issues like network disturbance, lack of devices with smart capabilities and electricity issues. During the lockdown and university closure, students mostly moved to their home out of the cities. While students staying in the cities are enjoying adequate internet and electricity, on the other side of the spectrum students staying out of the city have to go to the local bazaar to have access to the internet during class time. According to the research findings conducted by BRAC Institute of Governance and Development (BIGD), 59 percent in rural households have no access to a smartphone and 49 percent doesn't have computers (The Daily Star, 2020, September 13). In Bangladesh, mobile data is not cheap thus, students face difficulties to buy internet to stay connected. According to a survey led by UGC, 87% students in public universities have access to smartphones but does not have support or ability to buy internet data (Jasim, M. E. M. S. 2020, June 23). As the online communication system and learning is relatively new in practice, students are coping up with it and discovering entirely new drawbacks in the system.

From the in-depth interview and online classroom observation, a visible attendance gap is seen in the class. Students who are connected mostly suffer from technical and network difficulties. Minimum of 20% loss of total attendance is visible in every class observed. As

the online legal education persists to make valuable contributions to keep the learning going in distant learning capacity, the method to make the system effective is yet to be discovered.

After conquering initial hurdles of getting acquainted with the system, teachers took the lecture-based method in contrast to discussion-based classes to facilitate large classrooms. In classrooms with less than 20 students, the teacher is flexible enough to spark discussion based on the topic to further connect students. It is also seen in the findings that students are likely to attend discussion-based classes rather than monotonous traditional lecture based read-aloud classes.

Students see the lecture-based classes as boring and participation in the classes is lesser compared to discussion based interactive classes. Teachers are prone to try innovative teaching methods with fewer students as it is easier to communicate and connect with 10-20 students in a limited time frame of 45min to 1hr. Students are usually bombarded with homework and assignments to cover the syllabus in the lecture-based classes. The universities with online learning management portals have ample resources based on lessons and recorded classes to refer back to. However, this is a rare scenario as the majority of the private universities don't have that system. Even one of the leading private universities only recently adopted Learning Management System for the university (NSU launches new Learning Management System, 2021, May 30).

The research discovered that students stay connected with the classmates and the teachers through social media platforms like FB and WhatsApp. As network and electricity issues prevail in rural and village areas, staying connected is a privilege for many. The ones who are not connected with the class often float away from the system due to lack of motivation and support.

When it comes to assessment, the system is far from fair. Students appear in online quiz and assessments along with viva, presentation and open book exam; there are more than a few ways to cheat in the process. Assignments are not well thought of and most participants are against the unfair system to grade the students. Although, there is ample scope for innovative assessment systems like competency-based assessment; universities are yet to determine a comprehensive method.

Universities in the west have discarded the debate on whether law be taught online and even top universities have exclusively started to take online classes. (Thomson, David I. C.,

Elements of Effective Online Instruction in Law, August 25, 2021). From the research findings it is clear that participants thinks time and money saving opportunities as one of the leading advantages of online learning. Students are able to join a class from anywhere and quench the thirst of knowledge with just a few taps on a smartphone. Participants also sighted the advantage of continuous learning opportunity as one of the most important benefits of the system.

Along with technical issues, students find lack of face-to-face connection as one of the leading barriers of online legal education. Legal education in its peak incorporates practical knowledge amidst theoretical learning. The process requires incorporation of applied and active learning, real world sequencing, narrative storytelling and persuasive advocacy based on practice and precedent. However, the skill development system is absent in the system. Thus, students are ultimately memorizing. On top of it, according to the students, the online assessment system is not effective. If the system is incomplete and the assessment system is not fully assessing the learning outcome then the system needs an overhaul. Students lose motivation in the online class arrangement when the system does not cater to the purpose of the structure. Thus, Students find the classes boring and monotonous.

When discussing possibilities and suggestions, students came up with proposals like student mental health counseling, increase of teacher student interaction, incorporation of practical experiences, case study, proper frequent online assessment system, more discussion-based class, effective policing system to keep students active in the class, learning management system and incorporation of teacher training to use online tools for teaching learning system to make the process more effective. Students also suggested pecuniary support from the institutions to get online connectivity available to all students. Further research is needed to determine an outcome-based assessment system and feasibility of complete online legal education.

5.2 Recommendations

The online legal education system has just started to take shape. After months of research and data compilation, I see hope in the system. Due to the relatively new structure and learning curve, the method is struggling to get acceptance. This does not mean that the system is full proof without any flaw. Rather a light of possibility can be seen as technological and curriculum advancements are visible. Here are few recommendations that in my belief can further develop the system and tackle a few existing hurdles:

a. Incorporation of online and offline blended learning system

Students will have online classes as well as offline face-to-face interaction, assessment, skill development sessions thus, creating a comprehensive teaching-learning structure.

b. Training teachers to use online resources and tools to make interactive discussion-based class

As teachers are not well equipped with knowledge of online resources and teaching-learning methods, teachers and students need to be trained to cope up with the advancements.

c. The assessment system has to be fair and effective to assess the learning outcomes of students

Online assessment is not proper as there is no definitive method to conduct a fair assessment without certain equipment. Therefore, it is required to develop a full-proof system for taking an assessment that is fair and accepted by all.

d. Virtual court visits and skill development workshops for law students

Virtual court visits can be conducted to acquaint students with the court system and environment. Weekly or monthly workshops can be conducted to develop drafting, argument framing, communication, and research skills.

e. Internet data pack for students at a low cost can be an option to bridge the communication gap

f. Mental health support for students and faculty

Prolonged use of digital devices and lack of personal connection caused depression and anxiety among students. Students and teachers should have access to mental health experts and councilors to deal with stress, anxiety, frustration, trauma, depression and other mental health related issues.

g. Existence of learning management system

Students need a platform that can be used for academic aid. A place where all the documents, books, additional digital teaching aid, recorded class and instructions are compiled. Students can have access to their panel where they can track their own progress.

Through the collected data and observation, I discovered that these are a few recommendations which will be helpful for law students in private universities to better support their academic progress. A deeper dive into each segment is required to understand the best suited mechanism for development of online legal education. As we move back to the in-person classes, there are opportunities to develop the online learning system to access opportunities which were never explored before through global connectivity through internet.

5.3 Conclusion

The research aimed to determine the perspective of law students regarding online education during pandemic. Although the research compiled a set of data from a limited number of research subjects, the clear perspective is valid in terms of teaching-learning experience and challenges. Students in the pandemic are facing difficulties with the changing educational system. Some might say that online education is a barrier, and some might support the system. However, it is seen that online classes alone cannot cope up with the ever-changing and demanding legal academia.

The practice and possibilities indicate inclusion of innovation as well as mindfulness regarding the adverse effect of online engagement, which causes depression and anxiety.

A structure of online and offline teaching-learning systems is a must for the proper development of young lawyers. Law students are missing out on group discussions, case studies, court visits, research, and interaction with professionals in the legal field. As legal education is based on practical and theoretical knowledge, we can't rule out the fact that students are missing out on the scope of developing their lawyering skills.

The study identified flawed practices like rigid lecture-based classes and opportunity to use unfair means during graded assignments by the students as well. The challenges of network accessibility and internet availability are common around the subjects and require alternative solutions. Yet, resource availability and accessibility are tougher than usual in rural areas.

However, if we are again resorted to online learning then the question comes, whether law students can become law graduates through an online teaching-learning system alone? The answer is subjected to trial and revision of innovative teaching methods to identify the best possible one. As the rapid change in the teaching-learning method is constant and there are more than theoretical elements required to forge a social engineer. Till that day comes, we can definitively rely on a blended hybrid legal education system that incorporates online and offline methods of learning so that students can acquire practical skill development space.

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Appendices

Appendix A. Consent Letter

Thank you for your interest. This research aims to understand the perspective of the private university law students on online education during the COVID -19 pandemic. Confidentiality of your data will be strictly maintained and you will have right ask any queries during interview, to choose not to answer or withdraw your participation anytime. A copy of the interview will be sent to you for your further consideration.

Mark the box:

I confirm that I have read and understood the above statement

☐

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason and without there being any negative consequences. In addition, should I not wish to answer any particular question or questions, I am free to decline.

☐

I understand that my responses will be kept strictly confidential. I understand that my name will not be linked with the research materials, and will not be identified or identifiable in the report or reports that result from the research.

☐

I agree for this interview to be tape-recorded. I understand that the audio recording made of this interview will be used only for analysis and that extracts from the interview, from which I would not be personally identified, may be used in any conference presentation, report or journal article developed as a result of the research. I understand that no other use will be made of the recording without my written permission, and that no one outside the research team will be allowed access to the original recording.

☐

I agree that my anonymized data will be kept for future research purposes such as publications related to this study after the completion of the study.

☐

I agree to take part in this interview.

☐

_____   _____   _____
Name of participant   Date   Signature

Appendix B. Interview Guide

No.	Questions	Answers	Observations
	Qualitative Questionnaire		
	1. Name: 2. Age: 3. University: 4. Department: 5. Semester:		
	How many online classes does your university hold in a week? (routine)		
2.	Do you attend all online classes of your university? If not, why?		
3.	What is the process to participate in your regular online classes?		
4.	What is the minimum amount of resource required by the students to attend a regular online class? (Device, Connection)		
5.	How many students are in your class?		
6.	How many students regularly participate in online classes?		
7.	Why students in your class don't attend regular classes?		
8.	What are the activities assigned to be performed by the students in the online class? (Discussion/Lecture based class)		
9.	Do you feel connected with the topic in interactive discussion-based classes or in lecture-based classes?		
10.	What are the resources required to participate in the online classes? (Supplementary teaching aid: Sheets, media, interactive online tools)		
11.	What is the process of evaluation of your learning? (Assessment and grading method)		
12.	How is your experience participating and learning from the online classes?		
13.	What are the advantages you felt learning online?		
14.	What are the barriers you felt learning online?		

15.	What approaches of online teaching you think to be useful?		
16.	What approaches and processes you think requires to be changed?		
17.	What are your suggestions to increase participation in online education?		
a.	What are your suggestions to increase the learning impact in online legal education?		
18.	What do you envision for online legal education facilities for higher studies in Bangladesh?		

Appendix C. Classroom Observation Checklist

Institution: _____   Date: _____

Lecturer Name: _____   Gender: M / F

Semester: _____   Number of students present: M: _____   F: _____

Course: _____   Session: LL. B/ LL. M   Lesson time start-finish: _____

Sn	Classroom Observation Checklist	YES	NO	NOTE
1	The class started on time			
2	The teacher speaks in a friendly tone.			
3	The teacher takes time to check if every student is present in the class			
4	The teacher allows students to be off video			
	Instructor communicates no learning goals for the class session and/or each lesson activity			
5	The teacher calls students to check for understanding			
6	The teacher praises students			
7	The class session demonstrates clear signs of planning and organization, and follows a logical flow			
8	The teacher invites question from the class			

		YES	NO	NOTE
9	The teacher asks questions to the students to test understanding of the topic, not just repeating or saying yes or no.			
10	The teacher asks questions to individual students (not just chorusing).			
11	Students are given a chance to ask the teacher questions.			
12	The teacher uses relevant example/case law for topics			
13	The teacher encourages discussions in the class			
14	The teacher does not insult students			
15	The teacher leaves at the end of the lesson time, not before.			
16	Lesson objectives are clear to students			
17	The teacher gives a summary at the end of the lesson.			
18	The teacher knows the subject content.			
19	The teacher delivers the subject content without mistakes.			
20	The teacher is presentable and smart.			
21	The teacher uses clear and simple language.			
22	The teacher stimulates learning through teaching aids and relevant examples			
23	The teacher has a timetable for the day / week's classes and activities are drawn from various curriculum areas			
24	The teacher keeps a learning record			
25	The teacher keeps record of classroom attendance			

Participation Assessment Assess whether the lesson fulfills the criteria fully	**YES**	**NO**	**NOTE**
1	The majority of the students are involved in the lesson (listening and taking part).			

2	The teacher makes an effort to involve students who are not listening or taking part.			
3	The teacher emphasizes on understanding the content rather than memorizing statutes			