

**Exploring the Challenges and Possibilities of online assessment amidst
The Covid 19: Perspectives from Bangladesh**

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the requirements for the degree of
Bachelor of Arts in English

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Declaration

It is hereby declared that

1. The thesis submitted is my 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

The thesis titled “Exploring the Challenges and Possibilities of online assessment amidst the Covid 19: Perspective from Bangladesh” submitted by Farha Farzana ID : 16103041 of Summer, 2020” has been accepted as satisfactory in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in English on October 3, 2020.

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Abstract

The main objective of this study is to explore the challenges and possibilities of online assessment, amidst the outbreak of Covid-19 in Bangladesh. This study uses qualitative approach to collect data and analyzes them thematically. In order to achieve the objective of this study, relevant evidence and data have been collected from several teachers and parents of various secondary schools in Dhaka. Therefore, teachers' and parents' perspectives and experiences on online-assessment have been discussed throughout this study. Since this study was conducted during the pandemic, the researcher had to depend on online platforms to collect data. The final result suggested that since this is a very new approach towards appraisals, educators are facing few challenges and barriers. However, educators are trying to create a system where every student participates do not feel overlooked or neglected. Moreover, educators are hopeful about this new approach in assessments, as they believe that it has also brought some positive changes in our system. Therefore, this study aims to help the stakeholders to comprehend the actual picture of online-assessment along with its challenges and possibilities.

Keywords: Assessment; Pandemic; Secondary Schools, Online-assessment; Formative Assessment; Alternative Assessment; Summative Assessment.

Dedication

I would like to dedicate my work to the Almighty, the most gracious and merciful, to my parents.

Acknowledgement

I would like to thank the Almighty Allah (SWT) for blessing me with strength and patience to complete this research successfully. Then, I want to express my deepest gratitude to my father, mother and my younger brother, whose constant support and motivation has inspired me a lot to work harder. I am very much thankful to my supervisor Dr. Al Amin for guiding me throughout the process. I wholeheartedly appreciate that all his advices and assistance for my study was a milestone in the completion of this study. I have learnt a lot from him throughout this whole journey. Lastly, I would like to thank all the faculty members of English and Humanities Department, for their valuable contributions throughout my undergrad journey.

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List of Acronyms

NCTB National Curriculum Textbook and Boards

SBA School- based Assessment

Chapter 1

Introduction

The sudden spread of a deadly virus named corona virus or Covid-19 around the globe was observed in the very beginning of the year 2020. Subsequently, this virus started spreading in Bangladesh by the end of March, 2020, forcing everyone to stay indoors. As a result, all the working places and institutions were declared closed and were instructed to shift all their activities online. This has brought a huge transition in the education system of our country. Majority of the institutions in Bangladesh have resumed their classes and other academic activities online. This transition in turn has made educators and policy makers think of innovative ways to conduct online class and assessment at the same time. Thus, this pandemic at a glance has brought a huge transition in the assessment procedures by making it online. The pandemic, serves as a stimulant to implement alternative assessment tools by replacing the traditional ones. However, since such type of approach in assessment has never been used in our education system previously, it has many challenges and barriers to overcome. Furthermore, as there is always two sides of a story, likewise this online assessment has also brought some possibilities in our assessment system.

1.1 Assessment in Secondary Level Education of Bangladesh:

The most common form of assessment observed in Bangladesh is formal test or examination. The whole education system of Bangladesh mainly relies on this form of assessment. The educators set up class tests, half yearly exam and a year-end exam to appraise students' performance. Hence, they follow the traditional form of assessment which is pen and paper-based. Moreover, students are assessed based on the materials taught in class, which basically reflect their conceptual knowledge. Mohamed and others (2006) state that in our country's context appraisals are mostly based on the contents taught in class, rather than being based on

higher order skills. In such type of appraisal, a series of correct answer is given more preference than logical reasoning. This initiates rote learning and exercising skills.

Furthermore, the assessment procedure of Bangladesh is highly dependent on high-stake exams. These high-stake exams until now only reflect the students' memorization skills and their ability to regurgitate information in their answer scripts. (Das, Shaheen & others, 2014). (Begum & Farooqui, 2008) in their research state that secondary level board exams measure the understanding and memorization ability of the students, and are designed to focus on the materials taught in class. However, to ensure quality education, the government decided to amend the existing assessment system. Therefore, on June 2007, a new system named school-based assessment (SBA) was imposed on VI-IX grade students in every schools of the country. According to this new system, students will be graded based on their whole year performance instead of being graded solely on final examinations. Their performance throughout the entire academic year should be valued while promoting them to the next level. Hence, students' appraisal must be carried out throughout the whole academic year. The author further mentions that the highlighted areas of new SBA system include student's regular attendance and participation in class, engagement in group work and field work, participation in extracurricular activities, oral presentation, assignments, or homework, maintenance of discipline, etc.

Khan, Azim & Ahmed (2009) discusses how class work is evaluated in Bangladesh. After observing secondary level classrooms and taking interviews, they came to know that students are instructed to read the chapter to be taught in next class before entering the class. In order to check if the students have read or not, the educator asks few questions orally and then writes few questions on the board. Students need to finish writing the answers within a specific time frame. On the other hand, in the case of practical work, students work as a group in laboratory, where they are taught to conduct different experiments included in their academic syllabus. In

this case, the teachers assess individual students mainly by following their practical copy and sometimes by oral questioning. Therefore, no such practice of assessing students by any sort of field work, group or pair work, presentation, assignment and project is observed in the system. Hence, very traditional and summative approach is used to appraise students' performance in secondary level education of Bangladesh. Furthermore, as the traditional form of assessment is easy to administer and report, it is considered as the standard form of assessment in Bangladesh. Ali (2011) uncovers the fact that the traditional or summative form of assessment is not only easy to report but also helpful for the students to comprehend their achievement. Therefore, from the existing research, it can be said that the only form of assessment used in our education system is the traditional or summative one. The educators are reluctant to implement alternative assessment tools for appraisals.

1.2 Context of the study:

This study aims to explore the assessment procedures of secondary level education during the outbreak of corona virus. Secondary level education is considered as one of the most important phases of institutional education. In our education system, the secondary level is divided into three parts: Junior Secondary, Secondary and Higher Secondary. However, this study mainly focuses on the first two parts named junior and secondary level. Therefore, junior secondary starts from grade VI to VIII. After completing this level, students are required to sit for Junior Certificate Exam (JSC). Then, they enter the secondary level which is from grade IX to X. At the end of this level, they attend Secondary School Certificate Exam (SSC). Hence, for attending these two high-stake exams, students are required to pass through several tests and exams to prepare themselves for taking national exams. Therefore, it is important to explore the changes made in their assessment techniques during the pandemic.

1.3 Assessment Techniques during Pandemic:

Considering the pandemic situation, all the educational institutions around the globe have shifted their academic activities online. Similarly, institutions of our country have also resumed their classes and other academic activities online. According to the secondary level educators, the ministry of education has not provided any instruction regarding online classes. However, their decision of taking classes on Sangshad TV (Parliament television channel) from class 1 to 5 has initiated the idea of resuming classes online. In order to conduct classes online, they are using different types of free cloud platform such as: Zoom, Google meet, Google classroom, Facebook, Messenger, and WhatsApp.

Initially, the main motto behind resuming academic activities was only to teach and communicate with the students to maintain regularity by using free cloud platforms. However, since it has been a long time and the situation has remained unchangeable, most of the institutions by then have decided to start assessing the students. Without assessment, it is impossible for teachers to trace their students' achievement and understanding from the lessons taught so far. The researcher, by interviewing teachers from different schools, tried to explore the assessment system of the schools of Dhaka during this pandemic, and was enlightened about the fact that, most of the institutions of Dhaka are using formative assessment tools and reaching the students through different free cloud platforms like: WhatsApp, Facebook, Zoom or Google classroom. Such type of appraisal contains multiple choice questions, short questions, viva or oral questioning tools mainly. Apart from these tests, students are also provided with materials and contents for different assignments and projects. Few schools have designed online-based tests, which include small tests containing multiple choice questions, short and logical questions. Students have to attend 20 marks weekly test on short or logical questions. Then, they must take a monthly exam of 50 marks consisting of short questions, multiple choice questions or logic-based questions. The questions are sent to students via WhatsApp, Messenger group, and even mail if required. The students then write the exam, take

a picture of the exam, and mail or inbox the image to their respective teachers. Moreover, they set the multiple-choice questions in the Google form. The researcher then finds it alluring that, Educators are also using Google forms, typically used for conducting surveys online, for setting multiple choice questions. In the form, the students are required to write their names and ID number at the beginning, mark the correct answer, and submit within the provided time. Moreover, two English teachers from different school shared their method of appraisal, which are almost identical. Both of them said that during the class hour, they provide a topic for writing a composition. Students then write and mail the image of their writing to the teacher. Sometimes, teachers also make the students write a composition during the class hour. After completing the task, the students take the picture and instantly mail it to the teacher within the provided time frame. If someone is late to submit, the teacher would penalize them. Furthermore, they also make the students read a comprehension and write the answers in their copy and send the images. All these activities of the students are then graded. Furthermore, the researcher has also observed that few institutions have included or are planning to include viva or oral tests online. For these viva or oral tests, the student will have to answer the questions orally by keeping the laptop or phone camera on. Additionally, it is also observed that the students are told to keep the copy where they are writing their home task and the exams, so that, after everything gets normal the teacher gets to check those. Therefore, these are some possible ways followed by the schools of Dhaka city to conduct online assessment in this situation.

To conclude, the process of evaluating students through various tests covers a huge part of our country's education system. Educators, learners and their parents are so much worried about assessment that they cannot even think of ending a year without a final exam. However, the pandemic situation has made a huge transition in the system, as a result of which, both the teachers, students and parents have suddenly been exposed to a new environment relating to

assessment procedures. Therefore, the researcher finds it fascinating to explore the field of assessment, considering the pandemic. Due to the sudden closure of all institutions as a result of the outbreak of corona virus, school authorities were unable to train their teachers to implement changes in the assessment system. Therefore, it is obvious that they will face some problems while implementing new forms or methods of assessment. On the other hand, online assessment system has successfully created a room for the educators to assess their students alternatively, which was initially ignored in our system. Hence, the researcher believes that just like the two sides of a coin, this situation also has two sides that need to be explored. This has successfully grabbed the attention of the researcher to explore both the challenges and possibilities of online assessment amidst the pandemic.

Chapter 2

Review of Literature

The following chapter contains the existing literature relevant to this study.

2.1 Overview of assessment:

In a teaching and learning environment, assessment is a continuous process which covers a wide scope of methodological systems. A teacher consciously or subconsciously assesses the students' performance even when they reply to any questions or share any observation or opinion (Brown & Abeywickrama, p.3). Therefore, a teacher is always assessing his/her students during their class hour, which in turn helps him/her to comprehend the understanding level of the students. By doing this, an educator can work on his own improvement regarding course materials or instructions. This also helps the learners to work on their own improvements. There exists a strong belief that both assessment and testing are same in the domain of education, whereas, these two concepts are different from each other in many aspects. Assessment is the umbrella term under which falls the concept of testing. Hence, testing is a form of assessment, a pathway through which a student is evaluated depending on a specific scoring criterion. Therefore, it is more formal and standardized. Whereas, assessment is something which can be done by following any method on any time. No specification of scoring is required and it is never bound by any sort of context. Hence, it allows the educator to gather information about the students' condition and their understanding even in any informal setting (Dikli, 2003).

There are mainly two forms of assessment known as traditional and alternative assessment. Among them, traditional assessment follows the formal and standardized testing method. It is mostly educator dependent, which lacks learner's active participation or proper expression of

thoughts. Moreover, it is always dependent on the contents taught in class and the things important for examination. The most commonly used traditional assessment tools are multiple-choice tests, true/false tests, short answers, and essays (Dikli, 2003). On the other hand, alternative assessment method uses real life experiences and authentic materials for assessing the learners. It is not bounded by any sort of formal setting; rather it initiates learner's autonomy in the classroom. Furthermore, it is more focused on letting student's use their higher order skills to solve different problems. Few alternative assessment tools can be presentation, projects, problem solving and analyzing, conference, journals, lab work, field work, etc.

2.2 Types of Alternative Assessment:

Simonson and others (2019) mention that the three approaches to alternative assessment are: performance-based assessment, authentic assessment and constructivist assessment. The purpose of authentic assessment is to provide relevant and meaningful instructions connecting to their real-life experience of the learners, so the task is required to be designed accordingly. On the other hand, performance assessment refers to when the students are assessed based on their understanding and achievement relating to the things taught during the class hour. Lastly, the constructivist assessment designs task that requires the learner to construct something new based on their pervious knowledge or experience, and thus the learners in this case play an active role in the learning process by using their higher order skills. Further research conducted on alternative assessment uncovered the fact that the types of alternative assessment also follow two methods namely self-assessment and peer-assessment. This helps the students to work more actively. By following these methods, a learner can self-evaluate their work and also get the chance to compare their work by evaluating their peers. Spiller (2012) mentions that in self-assessment method, a student can make a decision about their own progress and can evaluate their own production, which in turn can motivate them for further learning. On the other hand, in peer-assessment, learners can help each other to comprehend the issues in their leaning and

understanding and also modify the learning process accordingly. Therefore, both methods play an effective role in initiating learners' learning autonomy in the teaching and learning environment. However, in this case, the learners must be provided with proper guidelines and instructions so that they can work accordingly.

2.3 Functions of assessment:

The two most important functions of assessment are: summative and formative assessment. The year ending exams, which are designed to evaluate the learning of the student throughout the whole academic year, are examples of summative assessment. The main purpose of such appraisals is to measure the proficiency of the student gained throughout the year. This helps the educator to make the decision about the rank of the students based on their performance in exam. Hence, it can be said that summative assessment possesses norm referencing and placement purposes of test. Furthermore, since the characteristics of the traditional assessment look like the functions of summative assessment, it can be asserted that the traditional form of assessment initiates summative exposure of assessment (Spiller, 2012). On the other hand, assessment which occurs in installment throughout the academic year is the formative assessment. The main purpose of such type of appraisal is to assess the learner's performance on a regular basis and identify the problems to make the students work on their mistakes. Hence, it can be said that formative assessment serves a diagnostic purpose. Moreover, since the functions of the formative assessment are similar to the alternative assessment, it can be asserted that the alternative form of assessment initiates the formative exposure of assessment (Spiller, 2012).

Since, each individual learner does not possess the same level of understanding; an educator has the full freedom to appraise them by adopting different types of assessments. Ramoroka (2007) asserts that since, different students have different ways and stages of learning things,

a teacher should design different types of assessment to appraise all the learner's performance. Therefore, it is not mandatory for an educator to depend on a single form of assessment to evaluate the performance of the all students at a time.

2.4 Effectiveness of alternative or formative assessment:

Assessment is something which measures student's performance in a classroom setting, which can be both formal and informal. However, there exists a strong belief that assessment should always be formal and standardized one to be graded. Apart from these standardized tests, a student can be assessed based on other forms of tests, known as alternative or performance-based assessment. Therefore, the standardized form of testing falls under traditional assessment (Hartman, 2019). According to Huerta-Macias (1995), alternative appraisals are significant because of its direct nature of assessment. Such type of assessment includes considerable and favorable techniques which can minimize countless issues involved in ordinary testing. Hence, alternative assessment has the quality to test what is intended to test. It tests a particular skill by making the students directly perform that skill. Begum & Farooqui (2008) argue that analysis, creativity, understanding, application, synthesis and other higher order skills are barely observed in the assessment system of our country. Mohammed and others (2006) argue that it has been a threat to measure learners' achievement and understanding preciously and reliably. Traditional way of assessment really does not reflect the actual potential of the students; instead, it initiates a scope for the students who are good at giving test. However, it cannot solve any real-life problems and lacks communicative and creative skills. Whereas, alternative assessment is all about measuring higher order skill of the students by making them perform such. Hence, it is a more direct and authentic form of testing compared to traditional one. Furthermore, in traditional form of assessment there is less scope for feedback. The testing is more of achievement test, whereas, the alternative assessment is a diagnostic one. In alternative assessment, there is always a scope to find out the problems and work on that

following an effective feedback. Therefore, students can have a clear idea of their understanding and their areas that need improvement.

Moreover, the teaching and learning environment of alternative assessment is mostly learner based, where the learners have the full freedom of expressing and participating in the process. Janisch and others (2007) claim that students are the most important and core part of alternative assessment. Such types of assessment also encourage students to do self-assessment and even peer-assessment. This helps them to work on their own improvement. Self-assessment helps the students to look into their own work more carefully and to follow the given instructions strictly. It also helps them to find out their areas of improvement. As a result, it initiates the willingness of learners to look at their work more critically than before (Hanrahan & Isaacs, 2001). On the other hand, peer-assessment plays an important role in initiating cooperative learning among the learners. Hence, they can help each other to comprehend the holes in their leaning and understanding also can modify the learning process accordingly. Hence, both the assessment plays an effective role in initiating learners learning autonomy. They are given the floor to make decision either about their own work or their peers' production. Hence, educators should create a situation of trust inside their classrooms (Spiller, 2012). Therefore, such types of assessment procedures also play a vital role in motivating the students to learn more.

Moreover, it is designed in a way that allows students' skills, values and knowledge to be assessed. Thus, no type of formal setting, time frame or any standardized process is required to assess students existing knowledge. Lastly, according to Simonson and others (2019) all the three approaches of alternative assessment serve different purposes of assessing skills and knowledge of the students. Authentic and performance-based assessment approach allows the teacher to design relevant and meaningful task to make the students connect it to their real-life experience. Also, it can measure the understanding level of the students on the things taught in class through their performance. Moreover, constructivist assessment design task requires

learners to construct something new based on their previous knowledge or experience. Hence, alternative tasks are designed in such a way that by denying the rote learning tradition, it focuses exercising the higher order skills of the students.

2.5 Challenges faced by teachers in implementing alternative assessment in

Bangladeshi context:

Brown (2004) states that though the teaching procedure of many countries has gotten progressively communicative, the traditional testing procedure is still being followed. Hence, it is more dependent on rote learning, which in turn focuses on form without knowing its use in real context. In the domain of education, the assessment system actually assesses what is easy to assess and report. Hence, they end up using traditional approach to appraise student's achievement throughout the academic year. Rahman (2018) conducted a study in secondary level classroom in which educators stated that due to limited class hour, it is difficult to check every student's written work, so they assess them orally most of the time. Also, it is essential to provide equal opportunity and time to every student to answer during oral assessment. However, during the interview they informed that because of time constraint and large classroom, they are unable to provide such opportunity to the students. As a result, most of the students are found wordless, as they presume that they will not be able to respond within the time in which other few students will do. However, teachers from their part are incapable of rectifying the existing situation (Rahman, 2018). Moreover, because of large number of students in a classroom, a teacher fails to make them exercise necessary skills. Furthermore, the assessment system of Bangladesh is largely affected by negative backwash effect. Al Amin & Greenwood (2018) reveal, by interviewing an educator, that even if an educator attempts to teach all the chapters from the book, they end up teaching the important questions for the exams. There exist a constant pressure from both the guardians and school authority to make students do better in the national exams. As a result, teachers get less scope to use any other

approach to assess the students. Moreover, there is a huge gap in the administrative support and a proper monitoring. Because of this teachers are reluctant to use alternative assessment. Furthermore, the guardian of the students is so preoccupied with the examination that they are not satisfied with any other assessing approach (Janisch, Liu & Akrofi, 2007).

Rahman (2018) reveals the fact that teacher's perception about alternative assessment is not sufficiently clear to make them practice in class. No proper training in educational assessment is provided to the educators so that they can make the best use of it. Hence, teachers are more reluctant to use new assessment systems like self and peer assessment. After the whole discussion, the author points out few reasons behind the teacher's reluctance of utilizing new appraisal technique can be: burden of extra work, class time and class size, lack of proper monitoring by school authority. He further suggested that to get rid of the educator's misbelieve regarding classroom assessment; a proper guideline should be given. Besides, modification in curriculum, textbook and teaching method is essential.

2.6 Research related to the suggestions regarding the implementation of alternative assessment:

Rahman (2018) reveals the fact that teacher's perception is not sufficiently clear to make them practice in class. Therefore, it is necessary to provide training in educational assessment to the educators so that they can make the best use of it. Hence, training and short courses should be introduced to encourage the educators to implement it in their classroom situation. Also, educators ought to be enlightened about the interrelationship of instructional method, evaluation and educational plan (Mohamed, Abdullah, Ismail, 2006). (Dietel, Hermanb& Knuth, 1991) suggest that students need to be provided a clear instruction of the assessment techniques, scoring criteria. While designing these, students' proficiency level and their opinion must be taken into account. The assessment must include task where students are

required to create or produce something by themselves. Hence, their active participation must be encouraged. Tasks must be meaningful and must relate to students' real-life experience. The classroom environment should be supportive, motivating students to experiment and take risks. Lastly, educators should be provided with the scope to look at their colleagues' work and help or train them if required. Further, the assessment must be followed by an effective feedback. Rahman (2018) suggests that students should be provided with descriptive feedback, which should not be biased in any possible way and not reflect any sort of competitive comment. Instead, it should be based on the specific work of the students and advice for further improvement.

2.7 Assessment during Covid-19:

With the outbreak of Covid-19, popularly known as corona virus, all the institutions around the globe were declared closed until the pandemic calms down. As a result, all sorts of academic activities were shifted online since face to face communication in education was banned. Since most of the country's education system is very much focused on assessments, students and parents cannot even think of ending the year without an exam. However, due to the pandemic, year-end exams and other physical exams has been suspended or cancelled by many examining bodies globally, which in turn has left the students in the lurch (Daniel, 2020). In this regard, Liberman and others (2020), considering the situation, state three approaches towards the high-stake and year-end exams, which includes exam cancellation, postponing or using modified method. Besides, apart from the high-stake and year-end exams, all sorts of appraisals is being measured online by adapting formative assessment tools. Therefore, a transition in the assessment procedure is observed in the domain of education, educators all over are appraising their student's performance digitally by adapting formative assessment tools. However, since home and classroom environment are not the same, tests given at home might not be equivalent to those given at school. In such circumstance an educator can provide instruction, but not

compare students taking tests under different situations. Also, they must provide guidance for properly administering the test and for incrementing transparency in assessment, and for this parent's active participation in their children's assessment should be ensured. Furthermore, institutions should also gather information beyond the appraisal's score of the student which must include checking their attendance and health reports every week. Furthermore, if students have a proper access to technological or electronic devices and reliable internet connection should also be ensured (Lake, & Olson, 2020). On this regard, Verma (2020) states that, engaging students in online class and assessment is a challenge, so a few changes can be made in the rubric. For instance: a student will be marked on their response and responsibility regarding online class and assessments, their behavior. Henceforth, this pandemic has created a wide range of scope for the educators to use the alternative assessment tools in appraisal. Wal (2020) states that this pandemic situation is working as a stimulant for the domain of education worldwide to find an alternative to the existing system in a very short period. Hence, it is shifted to online around the globe, and many new approaches towards the assessment techniques are taking place. The writer further provides few examples like how some schools are assessing the students based on their previously earned marks while some are using different online platforms to assess.

Similarly, the education system of Bangladesh is also going through a huge transition. (Wal, 2020) in his contemporary article stated that this pandemic situation is working as a stimulant for the domain of education worldwide to find an alternative to the existing system in a short period. Hence, it is shifted to online around the globe, and many new approaches towards the assessment techniques are taking place even in our country. The writer further provided few examples like how some schools are assessing the students based on their previously earned marks and some are using different online platforms to assess. Since no instruction is provided to follow any specific approach to assess, the institutions are trying to sort it out all by

themselves. Lastly, after a thorough research the researcher could not locate any article further that deals with online assessment during Covid-19.

Chapter 3

Methodology

This chapter briefly describes the methodology that the researcher has used for this research. It first discusses the purpose of the study in secondary level education of Bangladesh. Then, it gradually moves on to the method used for this research. Along with this, the researcher also provides a research question which is to be answered throughout the study. The following sections discuss the data collection and analysis procedures and ends with the limitations and ethical considerations of this research.

3.1 Purpose of the Study:

This research has been designed to document the challenges and possibilities of online assessment, amidst the outbreak of Covid-19 in Bangladesh. Most of the schools have resumed their classes online, and are following the similar approaches in assessment also. Therefore, online assessment techniques of few schools of Dhaka are representing the mostly used approaches of this domain. Hence, this study aims to explore the views and experience of the practitioners, the challenges and barriers they experience in online assessment and the possibilities they can think of. In addition, since students are attending their classes and appraisal from home, it was also essential to know about their parents' perspective on this issue. The focus is on the secondary level because the researcher believes that the students of this level are matured enough to be assessed digitally than the primary level students. Therefore, in light of the setting of the study, this research endeavors to explore and record the response of the secondary level teachers and parents regarding online assessment.

3.2 Research Design:

For this research a specific design aligning with a research question has been followed to fulfill the aim of this study. The step by step procedures of the research design helped the researcher

to conduct the study systematically. The research question helped her (R) to fix the focus of this study. The research question is given below:

1. What do educators think of the challenges and possibilities of online assessment amidst Covid-19?
2. How do educators perceive the blending of alternative or formative assessment with traditional or summative ones?
3. How do parents perceive the online assessment system, considering the pandemic?

Since this research was conducted in a pandemic situation, the researcher was unable to collect data physically. Hence, she (R) had to collect data by staying indoors and had to depend on digital platforms. The researcher, thus, followed the qualitative approach to collect data through the interview in a natural setting, and tried to study things as they are. In addition, the narrative approach of qualitative research has been followed in this study. The narrative approach allows the researcher to explore the real-life problems to gain in depth information or data (Elkatawneh, 2016). Therefore, the data were collected from the spoken words of the participants' real-life experiences while conducting online assessment. In this case, since it was not possible to observe, the researcher has to rely on the participants. The participants were few in number but provided detailed information and discussions of each of the questions asked to them. This study is based on the experience, perspective and self – observation of both the educators and parents dealing with online assessment in the pandemic situation. According to Bogdan & Biklen (1997), a qualitative researcher set up methodologies and techniques to empower themselves to scrutinize the experiences from the participant's point of view. Data will be collected mainly through the use of interview protocol. This helps the researcher to gather an adequate amount of information and reactions from a relatively small number of people through different digital platforms by utilizing the similar set of questions. Therefore, the participants were asked few open-ended and opinion-based questions and their responses

were used as the primary data in this study and later the data were analyzed thematically. Apart from these, some secondary resources were used, which is the study and analysis of the books, electronic publications and articles.

3.3 Setting of the study:

This study was conducted in a situation when everyone was forced to stay indoors and as a result, all academic activities were carried online. Hence, the researcher was unable to visit the institutions physically; instead she (R) took the interview through digital platforms or electronic mail. Additionally, the researcher was much concerned that the teacher should be from the secondary level schools of Dhaka and must be involved in online assessment. Since the main focus is on the online assessment, it was important to explore the perspectives of the parents as well. Thus, the researcher also interviewed the parents of secondary level students, who are taking online assessment during the pandemic. Therefore, the study has focused on the secondary level education context of our country and was confined within the schools of the capital.

3.4 Participants of the study:

Due to the pandemic, the researcher was unable to visit some selected schools to interview the teachers and parents of those institutions. So, she (R) opted for asking her relatives, friends and acquaintances to see if they know any teachers who are involved in teaching and assessing secondary level students online. After getting positive response from them, the researcher collected the email addresses and phone numbers of the teachers referred by them. The researcher further requested these participants to ask their collages or any other teacher they know from any secondary schools of Dhaka, and finally, allowing her (R) to manage more participants. On the other hand, the study also explores the perspective of the parents whose children are from secondary level and are taking online assessments. For this, the researcher

requested help from her relatives and neighbors mainly. She (R) could successfully interview few of her relatives and neighbors who were able to meet the requirement of participating. Therefore, both the parents and teachers of secondary level education were interviewed. There were in total 17 teachers and 12 parents, from different schools of Dhaka. All the participants were from secondary level, having experience on online assessment both directly and indirectly. Throughout the study, the information provided by the participants has been included anonymously.

3.4.1 List of Participants:

Teachers:

SL.	Name	School	Subject
1.	Mr. Saif	South East School and College	Physics
2.	Miss. Prova	Residential Model School and College	English
3.	Mrs. Ripasaha	Holy Cross School and College	English
4.	Mrs. Khodeza	Mohammadpur Model School	Marketing
5.	Mr. Toufiq	Mohammadpur Preparatory School and College	Physics
6.	Mr. Prakash Kumar	Mohammadpur Model School and College	ICT
7.	Mr. Azhar	Residential Model School and College	Biology
8.	Mr. farooq	Holy Cross School and College	General. Science
9.	Miss. Nasima	Saint Joseph School and College	General. Science
10	Mr. Bashir	South Point School and College	English

11.	Mrs. Afrina	Mohammadpur Preparatory School and College	ICT
12.	Mrs. Romana	Milestone School and College	Bangla
13.	Mr. Wahab	South East School and College	English
14.	Mrs. Das	Holy Cross School and College	Management
15.	Mr. Farhan	Mohammadpur Model School and College	Bangla
16.	Mr. Hasan	Residential Model School and College	Biology
17.	Mr. Moin	Milestone School and College	Marketing

Table: 1 List of the participants (teachers)

Parents:

SL.	Name	Occupation
1.	Mrs. Nahar	House Wife
2.	Mr. Sohel	Business man
3.	Mrs. Airin	House Wife
4.	Mrs. Forkhunda Shahid	Service Holder
5.	Mrs. Meherrunnessa	Business Woman
6.	Mrs. Shoily	Gov. Service Holder
7.	Mr. Shamsu	Doctor
8.	Mrs. Afroza	Primary School Teacher
9.	Mrs. Hasina Bequm	House Wife
10.	Mr. Rafiqzaman	Service Holder

11.	Mrs. Rimi	Gov. Service Holder
12	Mrs. Nazma	House Wife

Table: 2 List of the participants (parents)

3.5 Data Collection Procedure:

For this qualitative research, data was mainly collected through interviews. For the interviews two sets of questions were prepared, one for the teachers and other for the parents. The questions were kept open-ended, as it provides a scope for the participants to answer from their own perspective and experience. Every participant was interviewed individually through personal contact, electronic mail or online platforms. All the responses were recorded and transcribed individually and then analyzed on the further sections of this study.

3.5.1 Interview:

Interview for this study was conducted during the pandemic situation, so the researcher had to use the free cloud or online platforms to collect the responses. Initially, all the participants were asked for their consent regarding their participation. Then, the questions were sent to them. Both set of questions had the Bangla translation in it, so the participants were given the full freedom to choose any of the codes or mix them. Then, some of the interviewees recorded their answers, whereas most of them agreed to do it over phone call or zoom meeting. In this case, while taking the interview over the phone or zoom meeting, the interviewer was able to ask some extra questions spontaneously. Therefore, it can be said that the interview was semi-structured, as the researcher asked few extra questions along with the previous ones. The researcher tried to have an open conversation in a friendly manner in order to get authentic information. Additionally, the whole interview was recorded both in phone call and in zoom with the participants' permission.

3.6 Data Analysis Procedures:

Firstly, secondary level school teachers and parents were interviewed for this study, and the recorded interviews were transcribed individually for better analysis. One of the transcriptions is provided in the appendix as a sample. Later, by analyzing those transcriptions, the researcher tried to come with up some themes. Lastly, by looking at the transcriptions she (R) came up with some sub-themes, containing the key words and other important information from the interview. In this regard, Bryman (2012) states that the theme and sub themes can only be identified by reading the transcriptions of the data repeatedly. Therefore, the researcher, by rereading those transcripts along with the sub- themes, finally selected some boarder themes and analyzed. To conclude, the data of this study were analyzed thematically by following the procedures of thematic analysis. This helped the researcher to answer the research question successfully, as the themes were based on the focus of the study.

3.7 Limitation to this study:

Since this study was conducted during the outbreak to the novel corona virus, the focus was on online assessment. The researcher was unable to go for any observation physically and had to depend on the words of the participants for data. Since the interviews were taken online, the researcher faced many problems in both searching and contacting the participants. Few of the teachers and parents at that time were outside Dhaka so while conducting the interview through digital platforms, both the parties faced internet issues. This created disturbance in the middle of the discussion. Furthermore, the researcher always had to be considerate about the time allocated by the interviewee to come online. However, in spite of having few difficulties, the researcher had always tried to make something good out of it to make this study a reliable one.

3.8 Ethical Consideration:

The researcher tried her best to maintain the ethical issues of this research. The participation of this research was kept voluntary so no one was forced to participate. Rather, the interview was conducted with their consent. Moreover, each and every interviewee was initially notified that the collected information will only be used for this research and subsequent publications. Also, the data will be kept in a secured place so that it is not misused. Hence, the provided information will be included anonymously. Furthermore, the questions were prepared in both Bangla and English language so the participants were provided with the freedom to use the language that they are comfortable with. Moreover, the participants had the full freedom to choose the medium of interview. They could either record and send their answers or come on zoom for live interview or even on phone call. Lastly, since the researcher does not know the participants personally, it can be said that no biasness exists in the study.

Chapter 4

Challenges and barriers in online assessment during Covid-19

The education system of our country has always been the traditional one in which there has to be a proper classroom setting, face to face communication and pen and paper-based exams. Hence, everything is usually physical, allowing educators to appraise the students face to face. However, the sudden outbreak of corona virus has made a huge transition in our system by shifting it online. This has made the practitioners to think of the solution, challenges and possibilities while assessing online, as they are the ones who are making it happen. The researcher thus tries to explore the thoughts and experience of the practitioner, to perceive the actual picture of online assessment procedures.

4.1 Confirming practicality in assessment:

For attending the online classes, the availability of technological equipment and devices with proper access to internet connection is the first and foremost thing to ensure. Mr. Toufiq stated that “There are several issues to be taken into account while conducting any online assessment, I think. Most importantly, issues regarding internet, electricity and financial problem should be taken into account at the first place. It is difficult for us to ensure, if every student has got access to online platforms or not.” Furthermore, Miss Ripasaha mentioned that “One of my students said that she lives in Naraygonj, where the internet connection is not up to the mark. Also have electricity problems so it sometimes gets difficult for her to submit assignments or the answer scripts on time. Then by considering this fact I had to make the timing of the tests flexible. There are many more students in our school who lives in Dhaka suburbs, so it gets difficult for us to ensure everyone’s accessibility to online classes and assessments.” Subsequently, difficulties in internet connection are also responsible for creating a barrier in online assessment techniques. This problem can be on either side, both the teacher and the student can face this

problem, while taking any oral appraisal; teachers have to go through such problems. Mrs. Khodeza while sharing her views said that “I used to mute other students while asking questions to an individual, during oral appraisals. But what happens is, there are students who have the tendency to mute themselves as well, and not answering or not coming to the video and eventually disappearing. Now if they are doing it intentionally or facing net problems we don’t know. Since, it is not possible for me to trace their doings behind the camera.” Moreover, agreeing to this, the other participant said that “While taking viva we face net problems mostly. Sometimes the connection becomes too much slow or gets disconnected. So, we being on the other side are unable to detect if they are taking the advantage of such inconveniences or it is actual situation.” Not only in oral tests but also in written exams, when the students are instructed to complete the exam and send the image of the script or submit in Google classroom within a specific time, internet issues were rising up. Miss Ripasaha said “due to disturbance in net connection, some students are unable to submit their script on time. Hence, we have to extend the exam time.” In this case also, internet is working as a barrier to appraise students’ performance accurately. In fact, it gets difficult for a teacher to understand, if the student is taking the opportunity to use the internet as an excuse or not. Yet, teachers are not denying the fact that in our country the internet connection is not smooth enough to depend on. So, any sort of inconvenience regarding the internet connection can occur at any time. However, since they are unable to trace the student’s doings behind the camera, many questions regarding student’s integrity are raising on educator’s mind. As a result of which various questions regarding the practicality of online assessment are arising. Therefore, regarding the practicality issues of the current assessment techniques, majority of the participants said that they as a practitioner are trying to ensure that it is accessible to most of their students. They are even providing them enough time, so that the learners can respond properly to a particular task. Hence, they are aiming to create a system where everyone will be able to participate.

4.2 Availability of technological devices:

Since Bangladesh is a lower-middle income country, it is quite expected that not every student here is privileged enough to sustain online education. Moreover, the current economic disruption due to the pandemic has threatened the financial condition of many families. As a result of which some students are facing difficulties in participating in academic activities online due to lack of suitable devices. Considering the situation, a well-reputed school located in Mohammadpur, Dhaka has launched a project to help those students. They have taken the initiative to provide electronic devices like: (smart phone/laptop/ tab/desktop) at affordable prices and easy installments to the students who are in need of these. To access this facility, the interested students are needed to fill up a form officially. This initiative has been taken mainly for the convenience of the parents, so that they can afford to buy those devices for their children. The researcher, thus, finds it much effective to halt students from dropping out because no one knows when this pandemic will calm down and when everyone will be able to get back to their normal life. Miss Prova stated that “One day I got a phone call from one of my students to change the time of the test I had scheduled the following day. When I asked him the reason, he said they have one smart phone at their home and on the same time her elder sister also has an exam to attend. Then in consideration, I had to reschedule the time of the test.” Furthermore, Mr. Toufiq added that he gets phone calls from parents also regarding these issues. Hence, considering this fact, every institution can take required initiative to ensure their student’s active participation in their regular academic activities online. This, will help them to create a system, in which every students will be able to participate, nobody will fadeout. Later, in the follow-up questions, the participants were asked if they support such kind of initiative or not. All their responses were affirmative in this regard. Furthermore, they shared some of the problems or barriers they face mainly during assessing the student. One of the participants said that “All the students in my class are not privileged to have high or a minimum resolution

smart phone, which in turn, creates problem in class, also in assessment. Since we take the image of the answer scripts from the students, it gets difficult for us sometimes to view the picture clearly, if the resolution is not much good. It is actually a case in which we can't blame anyone, rather face difficulties." Most of the participants raised this issue in which they are genuinely facing problem, but are unable to solve. Therefore, the teachers have to face many challenges and barriers while conducting online classes.

Lastly, due to lack of previous experience or any sort of training on conducting academic activities digitally teachers are facing problems. Besides, the students are not also trained to continue their education digitally. Nevertheless, this transition from traditional class to online class has exposed both the students and teachers to a very new platform to deal with. One of the participants named Miss Ripasaha said "Having never been in an online class like this before, I had to face a lot of problems at first, but I was a little worried about how to explain to the students or how they would take it. However, I have tried my level best to make them accept the changes comfortably. Nevertheless, my students are still seen talking about their problems whenever there is an assessment coming or going on. They mainly face problems in operating the apps like while submitting their assignment or tests on Google classroom." Moreover, there were few participants who also have talked about their own problem in operating the apps. Mr. Azhar said that "Initially, an online platform like zoom was like a zombie to me, who will take all my information and will trace my doings. Later, with the flow of time, I realized how useful it is for sustaining online classes. Thus, not being a tech savvy, both the teacher and the students and parents are facing problems while operating different online apps. To conclude, this is also one of the challenges faced by an educator while assessing students online. However, in this crucial situation, teachers are trying their level best to provide quality education to the students. Besides, they are trying to find innovative ways to assess their performance and to comprehend the outcome of their teaching.

4.3 Ensuring credibility in assessment:

Both the educators and the learners heavily rely on the formal or traditional form of assessment. As these are considered credible to appraise the learner's performance. Where there was a particular setting of class tests, half yearly exam and a year-end exam to appraise students' performance. However, the spread of the novel corona virus has stopped everything and kept everyone indoors. Because of this, it is now impossible to follow traditional assessment techniques. Therefore, different questions and thoughts regarding the credibility of the new online assessment procedure are rising as the students and teachers are on the either side of the camera.

While assessing online, a teacher is unable to keep an eye on the examinee, and the learners are free. Thus, there exists a big question of how the learners are maintaining their dignity – whether they are plagiarizing or copying from their peers or not. In this regard Mr. Bashir mentioned that “Yes, a student can gather knowledge from any source, but they have to digest it and need to reproduce something from their own. So, we can't allow them to plagiarize.” On this note, Miss Prova said that when a student googles something, they get to learn something new. This facilitates indirect learning, but not fair assessment. The researcher also agrees to the fact that if the questions are set in a way that even if they Google for the answer, they will end up writing their own opinion by their own words.

However, it is also necessary to take into account that in our education system, a considerable number of students prioritize good marks over gaining knowledge. So, it is difficult to understand who has actually attended the test with honesty. As a result of which there remains a high possibility that the same test written at two different times might not give the same result. Therefore, these tests have got some problems in terms of administering. According to research, if a test has such type of lacking in it, then it is said to be an unreliable test. Besides, since these online tests are unreliable, so a students' future performance cannot be

comprehended from their current performance. Hence, the test also lacks predictive validity. Therefore, it can be said that these online assessment technique lacks predictive validity and reliability issues. In this regard, the participants were asked if these alternative assessment procedures are measuring the learner's actual performance or not. All of their responses were pessimistic about the creditability of these assessment techniques. One of the participants mentioned that "Considering the situation, we teachers are unable to proctor. So, we don't know if they are copying or taking help from others or not. As a result, an honest student might not get a good score but a dishonest one will end up getting more. So, I think such types of online appraisals are not effective enough, to evaluate students." Moreover, Mr. Saif said that "Since we are depending on parents to invigilate their child, while taking exam. They also have to put their signature in the answer script as a proof of their proctoring. But we are not sure if they are providing the real signature of their parents or forging it." Furthermore, majority of the participants mentioned that there is a high possibility that three to four students are either sitting together or making groups on social media and are taking the exam together which is totally prohibited in a classroom setting. Hence, while appraising students' performance by any means, either by test or any other activity, there must be a proper setting where the teachers themselves will be able to invigilate the test taker. Moreover, according to the participants, these types of formative assessment based on short questions and multiple-choice question are not enough to assess the student's performance. Miss Ripasaha said that "We are unable to take 100 marks exam instead, we are taking short tests containing multiple choice questions and short questions, which is not enough to assess. Earlier we used to set creative questions consisting of both the broad and short questions and multiple-choice question. Where the broad questions were mainly opinion or analysis based. So, back then we could easily measure the understanding of the student by these exams. Which is not possible while online, so there remains a gap?" Hence, most of the educators believe that these new methods of online

assessment are not effectively measuring the actual performance of the students. Nevertheless, the Covid-19 situation has made them find and use the conventional ways for the time being.

Moreover, in this regard, the participants also suggested few techniques to assess students online, which can be more trustworthy than they are using now. One of the participants named Mr. Moin said that they can check the authenticity of the students work by taking individual viva, or by using any sort of one to one assessment tools. However, Miss. Prova disagreeing to this said that in a class there are almost 40 to 50 students, so for a teacher it is quite impossible to assess each student separately or arrange viva regularly. Instead, they can set open book exams, opinion-based questions or make students solve case studies. On the other hand, another participant said that “I think exams taken through app where they have to type the short answers or choose the correct answers instantly and submit are more reliable compared to the writing the exam at home and sending the picture.” The researcher also agrees to the fact that if the written exams or test are made app based, then to some extent it can be dependable. Therefore, no one knows when the curve of the pandemic will be flattened and when they will be able to get back to their physical classroom. The educators, in spite of facing many challenges, are trying their level best to minimize those for the betterment of their students.

Chapter 5

Blending alternative or formative assessment with traditional or summative ones

The form of assessment used in our education system is a very traditional and summative one in which the teachers set up set up class tests every month, half yearly exam in the middle of the year and a final examination at the end of the year to appraise students' performance. However, spreading of the novel corona virus has resulted in the closure of all educational institutions. The authority of the institutions has decided to shift all their academic activities online. Hence, they not only take class but also have come up with few alternative ways to assess their students online by facilitating formative appraisals.

Hence, the researcher tried to explore the educator's perspective regarding the alternative assessment techniques they are using now. Therefore, the participants were asked if it will be effective for the students to add few alternative assessment tools with the traditional pen-paper based exam or not. In reply to this, one of the secondary school teachers named Mr. Bashir said that "I think it would be much effective for the students if we can add few alternative assessment tools along with the traditional one." He further suggested that we can add group or individual assignment, project or presentation or response papers based on the chapters taught in class. Moreover, open book exams followed by the logical and opinion-based questions and viva or oral tests can be introduced to evaluate the learners. Furthermore, the participants also suggested that few marks can also be allocated for the student's participation in any sort of extra-curricular activities in school. Thus, if there are any inconveniences, they do not have to depend only on the pen and paper standardized exams to evaluate the students. Another participant said that "I think few alternative assessment tools along with the pen paper-based exam will be much effective for the students. Along with increasing the efficiency of the

students, it will also enhance their interest. As a result of which, they will not get bored with the same assessment procedures and will get the chance to explore something new. So, I think it's a very good idea to include in our system.” Therefore, all the participants find it effective to add few alternative assessment tools along with traditional ones. Furthermore, Mr. Azhar mentioned that “I think, if the Internet is available, then it is a huge world open to all the learners. So, any relevant content can be given to the learners as an assignment or task, on which they can gather knowledge by exploring. So, I think we can incorporate such type of studies or online research too with traditional assessment techniques.” On this note, Mr. Toufiq said that “Currently, we are also marking them on their attendance, their responsible behavior towards the task. So, few marks can be allocated for attendance and class participation also.” Therefore, it is not possible to reject the traditional forms of assessment and the summative exams will always be there in our system. However, we can incorporate the alternative assessments having formative exams in it with the traditional ones.

5.1 Replacing the final exam with formative assessments:

Later, in the follow-up question, teachers were asked if it is possible to replace the final exam with any other assessment tool and will the students' study if there is no final exam in the school. Participants had some conflicting views in reply to this question. Mr. Bashir in this regard said that “Through different practical exams or other sort of projects, mock tests, we can comprehend their understanding level and assess them. So, if 80% of the marks is allocated for all the assignment, class work or related problem-solving tests and other 20% for a viva. So, I think by following this procedure teachers can assess students easily without taking a final examination.” Besides, he thinks that since in our system everyone prefers grade or score over learning, if the students are provided with proper instruction that all the formative assessment tools will be graded and added in their final result. Then only they will put emphasis on those small tests also. Agreeing to this, Miss Prova said that it is not like that if there are no final

exams students will not study, they will if other small assessing tools or quizzes and other assignment projects are handled with proper importance. Furthermore, Miss Khodeza opined that some formative assessment procedures can be included throughout the whole academic year. However, since taking final exam has traditionally been used to assess students and promoting them to the next level. So, without writing the final exam a student will not have the exact level of seriousness and excitement they have centering their final examination at present. This is how the education system of our country is working currently. So, a sudden change in such behavior is not an easy task to do, it will require many chances and a lot of time to change.

The education system of Bangladesh is also not a constant one since it keeps on changing (Mohiuddin, 2015). This is a true statement indeed, and this change is mostly observed in the assessment procedure of our country. Initially, the only way of assessing students apart from the high-stake exam was the final exams. However, depending on only the final exam for evaluating and promoting a student in the next level was not ample for both the learner and the educator. Hence, on June 2007, a new system named school-based assessment was imposed on VI-IX grade students in every schools of the country. According to which, students will not only be graded based on their final examination rather based on their whole year performance. Their performance of the whole academic year is to be valued while promoting them to next level. From then onwards the institutions started to assess their students based on class tests, half yearly and the final examination mainly. However, this year the pandemic has created a transition in the domain of education. Both the teaching and assessing has been shifted online, as a result the institutions are unable to set class tests and half-yearly exams. Hence, they are using formative techniques online to assess their students. Moreover, since nobody knows when the curve of the pandemic will be flattened down, the stakeholders are not sure if it will be possible to make the students sit for the final exam physically or not. This has also left the

students and their parents wondering whether school colleges will be able to take the final exams of their students during this time.

Dipu Moni, the education minister of our country, said in a press conference about the suspension of all sort of in-class and formal examinations. She also said that we are in the midst of an attempt to a paradigm shift with our education system. The purpose of our education will be to acquire knowledge, skills values and eventually being a good and worthy citizen of our country. I wonder why we always assume that our whole education is to be test-centric, why do we always have to assess our students only by giving them pen paper-based exams. We generally assess students to comprehend their understanding level, and for this we do not need to make them sit on a desk and take a three hour exam. Indeed, by now, we have already started using formative assessment techniques in which even parents are also actively engaging them. Considering the pandemic, we are trying our level best to guide and assess our student. However, it is a matter of mentality and a fact that whenever there is exam, a student prepares them for that. Thus, without writing final exam, a student will not have the exact level of seriousness and excitement they have centering their final examination at present. We have to take education to a place where the student will learn with the joy of learning, not because he is afraid of taking the exam. If we still kept on focusing only on the exams, this will not happen. Today, while we are in a life-and-death battle, if we cannot give exam one year, will our whole generation be destroyed? Certainly not. It is not that everything will be fine with an examination or that it will end if it is not. Henceforth, with all our effort and initiatives we have to come out of such exam dependency mind set, and motivate the students to learn for gaining knowledge rather than getting good grade. The researcher also agrees to the fact that assessment is mainly for comprehending the understanding level of a students, so it is not important that it always has to be a formal test to do so. Whereas, it can be done by following any method on any time, on any related activities.

Chapter 6

Possibilities of online assessment during Covid-19

The sudden outbreak of the novel corona virus has triggered the stakeholders to add many innovations in our education system. This, has made both the teachers and students explore many new things in education. Hence, the researcher thinks along with having many challenges in online assessment, it also has some possibilities.

6.1 Varieties of assessment tools:

The assessment procedure of our education system has always been dominated by the traditional approaches, where there are summative exams containing knowledge-based questions. This is a very traditional approach and the outbreak of the novel corona virus has successfully initiated some changes in the system. It has included formative assessment tools. In this regard, Mr. Saif said that “During this pandemic I have used different tools to appraise my students, which I had never used before. Those formative assessments are effective, I think. So, even after everything gets normal, we can continue using these.” Moreover, on this issue Miss Ruchi said that “there are few things which we could not do in our classroom, but can do online. Like showed them videos, used power points. Moreover, gave them projects and assignments, by this student can be involved. Hence, when the situation gets normal, we can keep few things for assessment used during the pandemic.” Furthermore, Mrs. Afrina said that “To engage my students in both class and assessment I have made changes in my rubric by grading their attendance which in turns has made my students sincerer. I think, we can add this also in the checklist of assessing a student’s performance.” Mr. Toufic said that “Including formative assessment tools in our study material and in the assessment system by the board of Education, will be much effective for both students and institutions.” Moreover, another participant named Mrs. Khodeza said that “since this pandemic is successfully ensuring us the availability of internet. So, I think we can also add assignments based on online research also

which will help the students to explore and learn more on the related topics.” Therefore, majority of the participants supported the addition of formative tools in the assessment procedure of our system. To conclude, this pandemic situation has left a possibility of adding formative assessment tools in our education system even after the situation gets normal.

6.2 Developing Digital Skills:

While the participants in the follow-up question was asked about their learning from this situation, which might help them in the future. A secondary school teacher named Miss. Prova said that “Not only students but also teachers have learnt so many things. If I talk about myself, I have learnt many things about using different apps for connecting students. It has given me the floor to conduct online teaching, by making use of different apps. Which I believe, in turn will help me a lot in future. Since, in our country having political unrest is a very common phenomenon. So, we have to face different types of protests leading to strikes. Hence, during such type of situation instead of cancelling classes and exams, we can take those online. Though our students and guardians are already getting used to it, they won’t face much difficulties to reuse the platforms again in any time of difficulties or inconvenience.”

Other than the pandemic, our nation has faced many more instabilities regarding the social, political or economic issues. This sometimes causes the sudden closure of institutions, and ends up hampering their regular activities. Now, everyone is using the online platforms for academic purposes through trial and error. This is helping both the learners and the educators to learn and acquire knowledge. Therefore, it can be asserted that they are constructing a backup plan in the education sector to get through any further crisis. Agreeing to this Miss Khodeza said that “Students as well as teacher are now learning and getting used to online class. As a result, in the time of any other inconvenience they will be able to use it as a backup.” Hence, this

pandemic has brought a huge transition in the education system of our country. It has opened a new door in the education system to explore by introducing online learning.

Chapter 7

Parent's perspective on online assessments during Covid-19

As far as the perspective of parents regarding the sudden change in the academic activities due to the novel corona virus is concerned, it can have both advantages and disadvantages at the same time. Hence, the researcher, by interviewing some parents, tried to know their views.

7.1 Positive sides of online-assessment during pandemic:

Majority of the parents appreciated this step of shifting everything online as a result of the pandemic. Since no one knows when the pandemic will calm down and everyone will be able to go back to their schools, most of the parents think that this transition in education was much required. According to them, it is an effective initiative because these online classes are keeping their children active and helping them to maintain regularity in their studies instead of setting idle for months. Mrs. Nahar whose son is in 10th grade and will be attending Secondary School Certificate (SSC) exam the following year said that “Since before taking the board exam a student needs to pass through different tests and exams which in turn helps them to get themselves prepare for the main exam. Although, the sudden attack of pandemic has resumed everything online, which I think is better than setting idle and wasting time for months. My son is attending online classes regularly and taking short tests, which I think is keeping him in the track. Nonetheless, since this is a very new approach for the domain of education, both the students and teachers being a victim of the situation are struggling to make the best use of it. Consequently, we guardians must not expect that everything will go on smoothly like before.” Henceforth, participants also appreciated how the educators are trying to assess their students besides teaching them online. On the other hand, this sudden attack of pandemic has bought financial crisis to many families. The researcher also tried to tap into this issue. Since the researcher was unable to interview any of the parents from such families, she asked the participants if they can provide any information about such families from their children’s school. In this regard, most of the participants said that the families facing crisis are mostly facing problems in buying smart phone or laptop for their children. Mr. Shamsu said that “I

have a friend, who has one son and two daughters all of them have to attend online class and tests. Since, they are in different levels so they class or the exam time sometimes overlap, because of which he had to provide individual gadgets to each of their children. So, he was telling me that it is getting difficult for him to buy them individual gadgets.” There are many schools in the city which have decided to provide gadgets to their students in low cost and also in installment. Such type initiative can be taken by institutions.

7.2 Issues related to online-assessment:

Moreover, there are many families who have left the city, being the victim of the financial crisis; they opted for moving to their hometown. For them, it is difficult to attend online class and exam because the internet connection outside Dhaka is not up to the mark, and consequently they face many difficulties. Furthermore, few participants also said that not only students are leaving the city but also the teachers are leaving. In this regard, Mrs. Shoiley said that “One of the teachers from my son’s school has moved to his hometown. Whenever he takes class and gives exams, a disturbance in the net connection is occurs. Also, sometimes in the time of need we cannot reach him.” Therefore, this transition in the education sector has also got some challenges while resuming all academic activates online. However, everyone from their position is trying their level best to adjust with the changes until the situation calms down.

Furthermore, most of the participants while appreciating the fact of online assessment has also pointed out few problems they are facing. Firstly, the most common problem they are facing is in operating the digital platforms. According to them not being a tech savvy they are unable to operate the apps, as a result they sometimes cannot help their child. One of the participants said that “My daughter has now started spending more time on smart phone or laptop with an excuse of studying.” Therefore, most of the guardians had the same complain, that their child is

spending more time on internet. Furthermore, Mr. Sohel thinks that while attending classes or taking any quiz or exams from home, there is a high chance that a student might get distracted by their surroundings. On this note, another participant said “My son sometimes can’t understand the question and face problem, and cannot ask since the teacher is absent there. Whereas, in the exam hall whenever he faced problem he could ask and solve that instantly by asking the teacher.” Hence, a few numbers of participants complained of not understanding the question.

7.3 Providing feedback online:

Moreover, most of the guardians seemed worried about their children for not getting a proper feedback after the assessment. Mrs. Meherunnnessa said that “My son is attending online classes and taking tests also. However, he is not getting a proper feedback from the teachers regarding the tests he is taking. Teachers only provide the score and discuss some of the very common mistakes in their online classes, which I think is not sufficient for my child. Because, he is a bit shy to ask questions sitting in front of the camera. Initially, they used to write comments on the answer script or attend individual question in class, but the transition has hampered this practice.” Henceforth, most of the parents agreed to this fact of not getting proper feedback and they want the educators to look into this matter too.

7.4 Incorporating alternative or formative assessment in the curriculum:

Later, in the follow up question, the parents were asked if including alternative or formative assessment in the curriculum will be good for their child or not. In reply to this, most of the participants said that adding those is a good idea. Mr. Rafiquzzam said that “My son studies seriously only when there is any sort of exam or test ahead of him. So, when he will be facing small tests or graded tasks frequently, he will concentrate and study regularly. Moreover, children sometimes get bored of the usual assessment tools, and lose their interest. So, I think

introducing some innovative and effective assessment tools will be good.” Furthermore, most of the participants hold a view that adding formative assessment tools is a very good idea. They think the educators are actually spoon-feeding their students and they are regurgitating those in the exam paper. This means our education system is not letting the students use their higher order skills and is rather more inclined towards memorization. Therefore, the existing assessment procedure is mainly measuring the memory of the students, not their skills. Integrating alternative assessment procedures can make the students practice their other skills. This will help them to learn and do something out of the box. Teacher can make them work in an assignment or a project, which will help them to explore and learn more. However, they don’t like the online assessment method. In this regard Mrs. Nahar said that “I think any sort of assessment is effective in a physical classroom setting, but not online. When the situation gets normal, adding some formative assessment will be beneficial for both the student and the learner.” Later, in follow-up question, they are asked if they support eliminating the final exam and replacing it with small assessment tools throughout the year. Almost every parent disagreed to this statement since they think that if there is no final exam, their children will not have the same level of excitement and seriousness towards those small tests. Thus, they think it should have a year-end exam.

7.5 Proctoring online- assessment:

Considering the current situation as teachers are unable to invigilate their students, they depend on the parents to keep an eye on their children while taking the exam. Hence, the participants were asked to share their views and experience in this regard. Then, after interviewing, the researcher found two kind of comparable responses. The student who’s both the parents are employed, those parents’ experiences and views are similar. Whereas, the student whose one of the parents is employed those parents hold similar experience. Employed parents are less capable of monitoring their child, while he/she is taking the exam. Mrs. Shoily who is

government service holder said that “Since the government has decided to resume all official activities in limited form. So, I either have to do my office work from home or have to go there physically. Thus, it gets difficult for me to make some time to monitor my son, while he is taking the test. Considering the current situation, I think the stakeholders should design online assessments in a way that, the teacher themselves can invigilate being on the other side of the camera. Also, can take exams by using different apps.” Hence, most of the employed parents are facing the same problems regarding the issue of making time to monitor their children. On the other hand, the student whose mother is not employed and stays at home are more capable of making time to monitor their child. Mrs. Afroza said that “Yes, I do keep an eye on my daughter while she writes any exam. I always try to make some time for her, and help her, monitor her activities. Since, they are doing everything from home so it is also one of my duties to help them.” Therefore, at this point, the researcher found a difference in opinions among the participants even though most of the participants demanded that the teachers should make a way out to invigilate their students by themselves for the time being.

Chapter 8

8.1 Discussion

As far as the sudden transition in the education system of our country is concerned, it has gained the attention of the researchers over recent days. Additionally, research regarding the transition in the assessment system during the pandemic needs more attention to find out the actual picture of the online assessment. However, this study tries to represent the perception of the related stakeholders of the secondary level schools of Dhaka city.

8.2 Summary of the Findings:

This chapter represents a summary of the responses that the researcher received, while interviewing the participants.

8.2.1 Teachers Perception on online-assessment:

In total 17, teachers from secondary level schools of Dhaka city were interviewed, whose responses regarding online-assessment are summarized below.

8.2.1.2 Confirming practicality in online- assessment:

Educators' responses on the practicality of online-assessment were mostly negative since they perceive it as a challenge for them while conducting assessments. Participants such as Miss. Ripsaha, Mrs. Khodeza, Mr. Toufiq in addition to 13 others also hold the same view that since they are unable to trace the students' actions behind the camera, many questions regarding student's integrity are raising on their mind. Furthermore, all the participants also pointed out the internet issues as one of the barriers in online-assessment.

8.2.1.3 Availability of technological devices:

All the 17 participants raised this issue that in their class, not every student is privileged enough to have their own device, so they also have to take this into account while assessing online. Furthermore, almost 10 to 12 participants said that because they are not tech savvy, they face problem in operating the free cloud platforms. Rest of them said that they are enjoying and learning more by solving the problem.

8.2.1.4 Ensuring credibility in assessment:

The responses of the educators were much pessimistic about ensuring the creditability of online-assessment, as they are not sure about the actions of their students behind the camera. Hence, they claimed that such type of assessment is not measuring the actual performance of the students.

8.2.1.5 Replacing the final exam with formative assessments:

Mr. Bashir, Mr. Rafiq, Miss Toma and 5 others were very much positive towards the replacement of final exams with formative assessment tools. They consider it as an opportunity for the learners to have a stress free and effective learning friendly environment. Whereas, Miss Prova and few other participants think that without having three hours final exam, students will not have the same amount of seriousness towards study as they have now. On the contrary, the Education Minister of our country in one of her speech mentioned about her plan to take this education to a place where the student will learn with the joy of learning, not because of the pressure of taking exams.

8.2.1.6 Varieties of assessment tools:

Mr. Saif , Mr. Taufiq and other educators perceives this online-assessment as an opportunity for them to use different types of alternative assessment tools to appraise their student's

performance. Furthermore, Miss Ruchi and few others said that they can now involve their students by assigning them different projects and assignments, which was not practiced earlier in their physical classroom setting.

8.2.1.7 Developing Digital Skills:

Every participant agreed to the fact that online-assessment is helping them to nurture their digital skills. Mrs. Khodeza, in this regard, said that online-assessment is not only making a room for the teachers to explore and learn more but also for the students to explore. Furthermore, majority of the participant views it as a possibility for the related stakeholders to use it as a backup plan in the time of any other instabilities or distress.

8.3 Parent's perspective on online assessments during Covid-19:

In total, 12 parents from secondary level schools of Dhaka city were interviewed, whose responses regarding online-assessment was a mixture of both the positive and negative perceptions.

8.3.1 Positive sides of online-assessment during pandemic:

Mrs. Nahar, Mr Shamsu and few other parents think that, since nobody knows that when they will be able to get back to the normal life, it is better for their children to get engaged in studies and tests online, rather than sitting idle at home.

8.3.2 Issues related to online-assessment:

Mrs. Shoiley, Mrs Meherunnesa, Mr. Shamsu and 8 other parents find it difficult to provide a proper internet connection and required devices to their children. Moreover, every participant face problem in operating digital platforms, thus being unable to help their child. Mr. Sohel further thinks that his child is now spending more time with mobile phone, with an excuse of attending classes and exams.

8.3.3 Providing feedback online:

Majority of the parents believe that their children are not getting a proper feedback of the tests and exams they are taking online.

8.3.4 Incorporating alternative or formative assessment in the curriculum:

Mrs. Nahar and 10 other participants believed that adding alternative assessment tools will be effective for the learners. In the follow-up question, when they were asked about replacing the final exams, majority of the participant rejected it. Mr. Rafiquzzam, in this regard, said that his son only studies seriously when there is an exam ahead. Hence, they demanded to combine few alternative assessment tools with the traditional ones.

8.3.5 Proctoring online- assessment:

Mrs. Shoiley and other participants find it difficult to monitor their child every time whenever they are taking exams online. Whereas, Mrs. Afroza said that she is able to monitor and help her children anytime and every time they write the exam. Therefore, the responses were varied in this case.

Chapter 9

Conclusion and Recommendation

This study attempts to shed light on a very contemporary transition in the domain of education in Bangladesh due to the sudden outbreak of Covid-19. It has precisely depicted the perception of the related stakeholders on the recent transition of the assessment system. In order to do so, the experiences and perceptives of practitioners and parents of the learners from secondary level schools of Dhaka city were taken as sample, as they are the ones who are directly involved to the system. Therefore, this study, by exploring the perception of educators and parents, tried to sketch a picture of the challenges and possibilities of online-assessment during Covid-19 situation. This will help the novice educators to get an idea of the challenges and barriers they are going to face in this domain and they will be able to prepare themselves for future challenges and barriers. Subsequently, it will also help the policy makers to comprehend the actual picture of online-assessment along with its challenges and possibilities, and will be able to reform accordingly.

To conclude, taking more participants into account and this study can be done on the other aspects of online or distant education amidst the pandemic. Therefore, the researcher hopes that this study will successfully provide a new dimension for the researchers to work further on this issue.

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Appendix A

A. Sample interview of a teacher regarding assessment during Covid-19

1. Are you teaching online? Considering the pandemic situation, how are you assessing your students? Please elaborate. If you are not conducting any assessment, then please mention the reason behind that.

Ans: Yes, I teach and assess my students online. For assessment I use free cloud platforms like Zoom. Google classroom etc., and assess them by adapting formative or alternative assessment tools.

2. Mention the challenges or barriers you are facing currently while assessing your students. Please share some examples from your experience if you have any.

Ans: Challenges: Grabbing the attention of the students. Very short attention span compared to regular classes. I can see and control the behavior more actively. Losing the track. Switching their camera cannot trace them behind the camera.

Barrier: Net connection. All the students are not privileged to use net and smart phone. Picture quality is not good even creates problem in live class.

3. According to you, are these alternative assessment procedures measuring the learner's actual performance? Please share your experiences.

Ans: No, it is not as I am giving them task but if they are not actually understanding or learning it, or they just copy and send it to me. Which I am unable to monitor being online.

4. Do you think it is possible to teach without any final examination? Why? Why not? Will the students study even if there is no examination?

Ans: Yes, it is possible to teach without final exam. Through different practical exams or other sort of projects, mock test we can comprehend their understanding level and assess them. So, if 80% of the marks is being assigned for all these assignments class work or related problem-solving tests and other 20% for a viva. So, I think by following this procedure teachers can assess students easily without taking a final examination. Lastly, if the students are motivated in a way that the education they are taking will be shaping their future, also by making them realizing the necessity of education. Students will obviously take it seriously.

5. Did the ministry of Education provide any instructions regarding the way of assessing students in this situation?

Ans: The Education ministry's idea of taking online class through shangshad TV has mainly make the stakeholders think of starting online class.

6. Do you think it is important to include few alternative assessment tools in addition to the traditional pen paper-based exams even after the situation gets normal?

Ans: Yes, integrating alternative assessment is important. So, that in the time of need we can easily use it.

7. What lessons can you learn from the current situation regarding conducting assessment? What measures can we take for the future?

Ans: Learnt to use so many apps. Pandemic taught us every situation can be handled peacefully even we can conduct teaching at a large scale online which we have never thought of at least for school level.