

Shifts in Assessment in Higher Education: Students' and Teachers' Perceptions

By

Ummy Fahmida Mitul
ID: 21263007

A thesis submitted to the Department of English and Humanities in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in English

Department of English and Humanities
Brac University
May 2023

© 2023. Ummy Fahmida Mitul
All rights reserved.

Declaration

It is hereby declared that

1. The thesis is my own original work while completing degree at Brac University.
2. The thesis does not contain any materials previously published or written by a third party, except there have been appropriately cited through full and proper 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 institutions.
4. I have acknowledged all main sources of help.

Student's Full Name and Signature:

Ummi Fahmida Mitul
ID: 21263007

Approval

The thesis titled “Shifts in Assessment Practice in Higher Education: Students and Teachers Perceptions regarding the „new“ Forms of Assessment Method” submitted by Ummy Fahmida Mitul (ID: 21263007) of Spring, 2023 has been accepted as satisfactory in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Masters of Arts.

Examining Committee:

Supervisor:
(Member)

Md Al Amin, PhD
Associate Professor
Department of English & Humanities, Brac University

External Expert Examiner:
(Member)

Full Name
Designation, Department
Institution

Departmental Head:
(Chair)

Professor Firdous Azim
Chairperson
Department of English & Humanities, Brac University

Ethics Statement

This is my original research work. Throughout the study some ethical issues have been considered to conduct this research. The ethical factors which are taken into account for this study are discussed in detail in the methodology chapter.

Abstract

Educational Assessment has immense impact on students' academic lives and careers. In the higher educational scenario, assessment determines the potentiality and required skills of the graduates. In the context of Bangladesh, students and teachers are mostly dependant on traditional pen and paper examination. Apart from traditional examination, a wide range of non-conventional assessment techniques can be applied to assess the students holistically. This study aims to explore the assessment practice in the higher education from students' and teachers' perspectives. I employed qualitative method to provide insights into the phenomena. The participants of this study were 16 students and 4 teachers from different disciplines of a private university in Dhaka. In order to conduct the research, the participants were interviewed face to face through semi structured interview and the interview data has been presented thematically. The findings of the study revealed that the students and teachers have positive attitude towards alternative assessment methods. Alternative assessment methods develop their critical thinking skill, promote collaborative learning, facilitate students empowerment and less stressful as mentioned by the participants. Conversely, the participants pointed out some difficulties with these forms of assessment system including unfamiliar and new method, misuse of technology, time consuming, unethical act by the students, procrastination and so on. Moreover, the results indicated that virtual teaching learning and online assessment methods in the time of COVID 19 lockdown taught many lessons which lead to a transition from traditional pen and paper based examination to various kinds of alternative methods.

Keywords: alternative assessment, higher education, COVID 19, traditional assessment, shifts in assessment practice.

Acknowledgement

First and foremost, I would like to express my utmost gratitude to the Almighty Allah for each and everything in my life. He is the one who gives me strength and helps me in every stage of my life.

Next, I would like to show my sincere appreciation to my supervisor, Md Al Amin for guiding me in every step in my thesis. With his constant support and guidance, it becomes possible.

Moreover, I am thankful to all the faculty members of the Department of English and Humanities.

Furthermore, I am really grateful to my family members and friends for their immense support throughout this journey. Lastly, I am thankful to all of my participants, who took part in this study and made it happen.

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|------------|
| Declaration | ii |
| Approval | iii |
| Ethics Statement | iv |
| Abstract | v |
| Acknowledgement | vi |
| Chapter 1 | 4 |
| 1.1. Introduction and Background of the Study | 4 |
| 1.2. Higher Education System in Bangladesh..... | 5 |
| 1.2.1. Assessment in Higher Education | 6 |
| 1.3. Impact of COVID 19 Pandemic on Higher Education | 7 |
| 1.4. Purpose of the Study | 8 |
| Chapter 2 | 10 |
| Literature Review | 10 |
| 2.1. Characteristics of Alternative Assessment..... | 10 |
| 2.1.1. Types of Alternative Assessment..... | 11 |
| 2.2. Students’ and Teachers’ Perceptions on Alternative Assessment | 13 |
| 2.2.1. Opportunities of Alternative Assessment | 13 |
| 2.2.2. Challenges Encountered by the Students and Teachers..... | 14 |
| 2.3. Assessment System of Higher Education in Bangladesh | 16 |
| 2.3.1. Assessment Framework during COVID 19 Pandemic | 16 |
| 2.3.2. Assessment Framework after COVID 19 Pandemic | 17 |

| | |
|---|-----------|
| 2.4. Research Gap | 18 |
| Chapter 3 | 20 |
| Research Methodology | 20 |
| 3.1. Research Design..... | 20 |
| 3.2. Research Questions | 21 |
| 3.3. Participants of the Study | 21 |
| 3.4. Data Collection and Data Analysis Procedure..... | 23 |
| 3.5. Ethical Consideration..... | 25 |
| Chapter 4: Students’ and Teachers’ Perceptions on Alternative Assessment: Opportunities and Challenges | 26 |
| 4.1. Forms of Alternative Assessment Used in the Class | 26 |
| 4.2. Paradigm Shift in the Assessment Method | 27 |
| 4.3. Positive Impacts of Alternative Assessment on Students’ Learning | 29 |
| 4.3.1. <i>Develop analytical and research skill</i> | 30 |
| 4.3.2. <i>Promote collaborative learning</i> | 31 |
| 4.3.3. <i>Encourage students to think out of the box</i> | 32 |
| 4.3.4. <i>Less stressful</i> | 33 |
| 4.3.5. <i>Enhance Student Empowerment</i> | 33 |
| 4.4. Issues and Challenges of Alternative Assessment | 34 |
| 4.4.1. <i>New Assessment Method</i> | 34 |
| 4.4.2. <i>Misuse of Technology</i> | 35 |
| 4.4.3. <i>Time Intensive Method</i> | 36 |

| | |
|--|-----------|
| 4.4.4. <i>Focus on specific topics</i> | 37 |
| 4.4.5. <i>Unethical Act by the Students</i> | 37 |
| 4.4.6. <i>Tendency of Procrastination</i> | 38 |
| Chapter 5 | 40 |
| Traditional VS Alternative Assessment | 40 |
| 5.1. Limitations of Traditional Assessment | 40 |
| 5.2. Students' Preferences for a Well-balanced Assessment Framework..... | 42 |
| Chapter 6 | 45 |
| Conclusion and Recommendation | 45 |
| References | 48 |
| Appendix A | 53 |
| Appendix B | 55 |

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1. Introduction and Background of the Study

Assessment is an integral part of teaching and learning process. In the higher educational scenario, assessment determines the learning and potential of the students. The purpose of the assessment is not only to measure the students' content knowledge on a subject matter rather it should be beyond that (Irawan, 2017). To illustrate, an effective assessment method make sure that students attain real life problem solving skill as well as being capable of applying their knowledge in their workforce. According to the critics of the traditional pen and paper based examination, it fails to meet the demands of the 21st century skills. Therefore, educators and academics are looking for an „alternative“ and „new“ assessment method to this conventional evaluation system. Alternative assessment approach includes any kind of alternative to traditional paper and pencil test. Unlike traditional paper and pen test, alternative assessment focuses on skill and „doing“ rather than knowledge or „knowing“ (Podder, 2020).

Several studies (Alam, 2021; Ullah, 2020; Rashid and Rahman, 2017) have mentioned that the assessment system of Bangladesh tends to test only the memorization abilities of the students. Other skills including critical and higher order thinking, analysis, synthesis and evaluation abilities are hardly reflected in the current examination system. In most of the cases those students who are good at memorizing are the ones who achieve good grades in the high stakes examination such as S.S.C and H.S.C. Moreover, examination plays a significant role in the curriculum, student learning and teaching, and overall social practice of the country. In terms of higher education, students' learning and ability are mostly determined by assessment

techniques. It is crucial to assess a wide range of skills while evaluating the students of higher education. This study explores various types of alternative assessment techniques other than traditional pen and paper based examination in the tertiary level education. Through this study, I intended to explore how the tertiary level students and teachers perceive the opportunities and obstacles of different kinds of alternative assessment in higher education. Moreover, this study sought to look into the participants' preferences for suitable assessment method in terms of alternative and traditional examination. It is important to explore the students' observations on assessment process as it affect their learning approach as well as enable teachers to identify the needs and progress of the students. The views of the students regarding assessment framework may bring many issues to the front which needs to be addressed.

1.2. Higher Education System in Bangladesh

According to the National Education Policy (2010), the main goal of higher education is the innovation and sustainable continuation of new knowledge and the growth of skilled man power for developing the nation. Presently, millions of students across the country are taking their higher education from a total of 151 universities; 46 Public and 105 Private) (BANBEIS, 2020). Students from different background including Bangla medium, English medium and English version along with Madrasa background take their higher education degree from the public and private universities. It can be said the tertiary level is full of different students from diverse educational background.

In higher education, public universities are the top choice of majority of the students due to various reasons including brand name, social status, low cost and quality education. However, the growing numbers of private universities also attract the students now-a-days though most of them do not provide standard and quality education. The higher education sector of Bangladesh

is afflicted with many problems including lack of vision, poor standard, lack of qualified teacher, poor course design, deficient assessment criteria, political interference, lack of research and many more (Andaleeb, 2003, 2019; Ullah, 2020). Though the numbers of the universities and students are rising, it cannot assure that the quality of the higher education has improved. In reality, the progress of the higher education is more quantitative rather than qualitative (Rashid and Rahman, 2017). Despite the fact that the higher education sector is stricken with countless problems, very little research has been done specifically on this topic.

1.2.1. Assessment in Higher Education

The assessment system of higher education is mostly summative and based on rote learning and memorization (Khaled, 2014; Rashid and Rahman, 2017). The teachers tend to test the students' content knowledge and what they know about a subject. Consequently, the students are encouraged to memorize and consume the content rather than developing their skills. Hassan (2019) stated that the curriculum of higher education of Bangladesh does not assist generating skilled and competent graduates in the workforce. Additionally, Alam (2021) argued that the universities are competing to produce certificates and other qualifications that hinder the meaningful education in higher level. The quality of higher education diminishes when the graduates give more focus on good grade and CGPA rather than knowing how to apply the knowledge in their real life milieu. To point up the profoundness of reforming the assessment system of higher education Podder (2020) claimed that the government should rethink the current assessment system to ensure the quality education. He again said that there is no point of education if the learner cannot relate and apply their academic knowledge to solve the real life activities.

It should be mentioned that in order to improve the quality of higher education UGC (University Grant Commission) took initiatives to redesign the curriculum of higher education in line with OBE (Outcome Based Education). All the public and private universities are instructed to restructure their programmes in accordance with the OBE template. In OBE project, there are set of predetermined Programme Educational Objectives (PEOs) and Programme Outcome (POs) and each course under each programme has its own Course Learning Outcome (CLOs). These PEOs, POs and CLOs needs to be aligned with each other. The instructor requires to focus on the „outcome“ of a instead of the final product. Outcome Based Education puts emphasize on the teaching –learning strategy and assessment strategy and facilitate a wide range of alternative as well as innovative teaching learning and assessment strategy apart from traditionally oriented education.

1.3. Impact of COVID 19 Pandemic on Higher Education

The educational institutions have been affected by COVID 19 pandemic in numerous ways. Same as the many other countries, Bangladesh government also imposed complete shutdown during the time of pandemic. All the educational institutions including the public and private universities remained close from March 17, 2020 to February 22, 2022. In the lock down period, teaching-learning strategy and assessment method have been shifted to online. At the outset, students and teachers were not ready for a sudden change and conducted the online classes on social media app such as Facebook. Later, several teaching friendly apps including Zoom, Google Meet, Google Classroom and others were adopted to take the online classes. Nonetheless, most of the private universities opened online learning platform such as LMS, Moodle, edX to make the process easier whereas the Public and National universities faced

various difficulties to cope with the distance learning. Initially, they were unwilling to adopt online classes and lagged behind compared to the private universities.

Several studies reported mixed responses from the students and teachers in regard to the experiences of virtual classes during COVID 19 Pandemic. The students and teachers encountered many challenges in the teaching-learning strategies and assessment system in the virtual classes. Various health related concerns including physical and mental issues such as stress, depression, back pain, head ache and many more were identified by the university students. The teachers also faced hurdles to adopt new technologies and the new style of teaching assessment strategy. As traditional face to face examinations were not possible at that time, they were instructed to give assignment based assessment. In most of the cases, final examination has been replaced by research paper or term paper. There was also open book examination which was not practiced in the face to face classroom. However, as per the government instructions, the universities have resumed their physical classes almost after two years of lock down. After reopening the traditional face to face classes, the teaching and learning strategies as well as assessment system has returned to the normal state. Nevertheless, the students and teachers have gone through a new experience during the online classes which can be positive as well as negative. The most important thing is that they were exposed to unconventional and a wide range of assessment methods. The Pandemic has taught many lessons when it comes to the alternative ways of assessing students which can be sustainable in the face to face classrooms. It also showed the educators the possibilities and obstacles of these techniques.

1.4. Purpose of the Study

The key purpose of this study is to explore the perceptions regarding alternative assessment methods through the views of the university students and teachers. I intended to look

into the beliefs and experiences of the students and teachers about a wide range of assessment techniques other than traditional pen and paper based examinations. Primary focus was given to the opportunities and challenges faced by the students and teachers. I also wished to investigate the preference of the participants in terms of alternative assessment and traditional examination.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

This chapter presents a synopsis of the existing literature on alternative assessment which includes the features of alternative assessment along with various techniques of authentic assessment. Moreover, it summarizes the relevant works on alternative assessment across the world, mainly focuses on the challenges and possibilities in different contexts. It also discusses the status of alternative assessment in higher education in Bangladesh. Therefore, the research gap has been identified in order to fill the gap by this study.

2.1. Characteristics of Alternative Assessment

Alternative assessment is an umbrella term which includes any alternative in assessment method to traditional pen and paper test. It is also referred as authentic assessment, performance-based assessment, continuous assessment or formative assessment. Due to the shortcomings of traditional assessment, the educators consider the need for alternative way of assessment. Unlike conventional assessment, alternative assessment method concerns with the process of learning, growth of the learners over time. The advocates of alternative assessment argued that this non-conventional assessment method is less formal than traditional assessment, formative in nature and has positive wash back effect (Alderson and Banerjee, 2001).

One of the proponents of alternative assessment, Hamayan (1995) defined it as a set of procedure and strategies that can be applied into everyday activities or outside the classroom. Alternative assessment method is not limited to the classroom, instead, it helps the learners to explore and solve real life problem. Gipps and Stobart (2003) asserted that „alternative assessment is not simply the use of alternative forms of assessment but is also an alternative use

of assessment as part of the learning process" (p. 550). Alternative assessment method focuses on the students' performance and ability to do real world task. The major characteristics of alternative assessment include (1) it requires students to create, perform and produce, (2) promote higher level thinking and problem solving skill, (3) involve real world task, (4) students need to produce observable response (5) the nature of the task should be authentic and contextual (Brown & Hudson, 1998; Chirimbu, 2013; Herman et. al., 1992). However, alternative assessment is regarded as more advantageous over traditional examination. To illustrate, it takes each and every student's cultural background and level of knowledge into consideration. Moreover, alternative assessment finds out the strength and weakness of a learner and deals with the learner individually according to their competence (Chirimbu, 2013).

2.1.1. Types of Alternative Assessment

Any alternate method to the traditional paper and pencil test might be categorized as alternative assessment technique. It includes various alternate methods, for examples, take-home examination, portfolio, research project, presentation, open book examination, self and peer assessment and other performance based test. According to Podder (2020), the major alternative assessment techniques thorough out the world include self-assessment, peer assessment, portfolio and performance based assessment such as pair work, group work, presentation etc.

Elkhoury (2020) discussed a variety of alternative assessment techniques and their advantages, drawbacks, examples, rubrics along with integrated technology in order to help the teachers designing and implementing these types of assessment method. Annotated portfolio, blogs, case studies, digital storytelling, concept maps, error analysis, research article, info graphic, critique, podcast, poster session, role play, student proposed project and so on. Portfolio is one of the most popular techniques used as a form of alternative assessment method in higher

education. Portfolio is a systematic collection of learner's work which shows progress of the learner over a period of time. In disciplines such as art, architecture and engineering, portfolio has been commonly used method for years. Portfolios allow teachers to evaluate the development of a student over time by observing the evolution from a draft product to final one (Reeves, 2000). Portfolios not only track the students' progress but also make them self-aware and autonomous learner (Shorna, 2017). Besides, portfolio is proved to be a great way of motivating the learners to become an effective learner as well as improving their higher order thinking and problem solving skill (Muiruri, 2020).

Moreover, self-assessment refers to the evaluation of one's own work and peer assessment means assessing other student's works such as peers or classmates. Self-assessment and peer-assessment are becoming more and more common in the higher education as these skills are crucial for both the students' professional and personal lives. It has become an essential aspect of student centered evaluation process in higher education in the recent times (Perez et. al., 2020). Self-assessment technique enables the students to set objectives for themselves and facilitate the learner to be a dynamic learner. Furthermore, peer assessment promotes collaborative and constructive learning of the students. Concina (2022) mentioned that self and peer assessment helps the students in two ways. The students have the opportunity to evaluate or judge one's own as well as other students' performance.

Additionally, performance based assessment is a kind of authentic assessment which focuses on the skills rather than knowledge. Podder (2020) mentioned that performance assessment can be individual work, pair work or group work or presentation in that other students or teachers ask questions and provide feedback to the students. Performance based test is a non-traditional assessment method where student have to perform or complete any real world

task (Brown & Hudson, 1998). For instance, students require writing for the real audience instead of answering questions about writing (Darling-Hammond et. al., 1994). In the performance based assessment, the task should be authentic, contextualized and complex. Moreover, in the language class, the task should engage the students into communicative activities and real life language skill (Shorna, 2017).

2.2. Students' and Teachers' Perceptions on Alternative Assessment

Several studies have been conducted on the alternative assessment across the world. The following section discusses some of the existing researches on the opportunities and challenges of alternative assessment in other contexts.

2.2.1. Opportunities of Alternative Assessment

The prospects and possibilities of alternative assessment in higher education have been studied in different contexts across the world. A study by Wakefield et. al. (2022) examined the effectiveness of learner –generated podcast, an authentic assessment tool on the undergraduate students. Formerly, the experimental course was traditional essay based. The researcher introduced pair work and learner-generated podcast as an alternative assessment technique to compare it with conventional assessment. The students opined that the podcasts help them in understanding the context better, promote creativity, and boost their confidence as a communicator and more enjoyable than the traditional essay.

Moreover, Monib et. al. (2020) conducted a systematic review on a series of studies (n= 373) based on alternative assessment in order to explore the effects of non-traditional assessment on students' language learning process. The findings of the study reported that majority of the studies found alternative assessment techniques as an effective evaluation method for language

learning as well as the implementation of different performance based assessment provides opportunities for both the teachers and the students.

A study carried out by Schultz et. al. (2021) explored how the undergraduate students of an Australian university think about alternative assessment method within their context. The findings of the study revealed that the students have positive attitude towards authentic assessment. They found authentic non-conventional assessment method is helpful for their future workplace; develop their critical thinking and problem solving skill as well as take students' input and choice into account.

Additionally, Gozuyesil and Tanriseven (2017) investigated the impact of alternative assessment on students' academic achievement in Turkey. Meta-analysis method was used to conduct the study. The researcher reviewed 26 studies and found out that alternative assessment method has favorable effect on students' achievement and portfolio was most used and effective alternative assessment technique in the context of Turkey.

2.2.2. Challenges Encountered by the Students and Teachers

A study by Spiegel and Nivette (2021) looked at the impact of in- class closed book exam (traditional exam) and take-home open book exam (alternative assessment) on students' academic performance and well-being. The study was conducted on the bachelor and master students of a university in Netherland. The findings of the study revealed that there is no significant difference between the examination format in terms of students' academic performance and well-being. The study also found out that take home examination has no clear advantages or disadvantages; instead, students' performance and well-being depend on the individual factors such as motivation, self-regulation, learning style teachers' feedback and other.

In the similar manner, Hauff and Nilsson (2022) investigated students' experience and perceptions about the efficacy of peer assessment, an alternative assessment technique. The data was collected through survey from the university students of Sweden. The results of the study reported that peer assessment method has some limitations such as lower level of knowledge of the students lead to lower and ineffective evaluation process. Additionally, the students no longer rely on the teacher's feedback as the sole provider of assessment rather accepts the feedback of the other students.

Next, Putri et. al. (2019) looked at the challenges faced by the teachers while implementing alternative assessment in an EFL classroom. This study was conducted on an Islamic Boarding School in Indonesia. The researcher interviewed two EFL teachers who practiced various authentic assessment techniques in the class. The participants of the study pointed out some obstacles in implementing alternative assessment including limited time for assessing all the students' performance, lack of students' motivation and some students with learning difficulties. .

In the context of Bangladesh, very few researches have been done on alternative assessment. Podder and Mizan (2020) explored the status of alternative and continuous assessment in the secondary level education of Bangladesh. The study was conducted qualitatively by interviewing secondary level teachers. The findings of the study revealed that alternative assessment is not being implemented in the schools as most of the teachers did not get proper training and guidelines. Moreover, the teachers reported that they are not ready to practice continuous assessment in the class due to some challenges. As they are busy with preparing model test, invigilating and checking so many scripts, the teachers do not get enough time for implementing alternative assessment in the class. Besides, Podder (2020) also mentioned that

most of the teachers consider implementing alternative assessment as an additional burden on them.

2.3. Assessment System of Higher Education in Bangladesh

Assessment is viewed as an important part of education system in Bangladesh. The students are well acquainted with the examination system from their primary level of education. Traditional pen and paper assessment is the dominant form of assessment here. Before entering the higher education, most of the students are accustomed to conventional examination system which focus on the memory based assessment. Nevertheless, the tertiary level assessment framework of Bangladesh differs from those of other developed countries. Khaled (2014) pointed out that the teachers only assess rote memorization of the students instead of facilitating creative thinking, reasoning, communicating, how to apply knowledge in real life and solving workplace problem. The assessment systems of Bangladeshi universities tend to measure what students know rather than what students can do (Alam, 2021). Nonetheless, during COVID 19 Pandemic when the classes have been shifted to online mode due to sudden shutdown, traditional pen and paper examination has been replaced by assignment based test. Teachers and students had the opportunity to practice various alternatives in assessment methods. The following sections discuss the assessment framework adopted by the universities during novel Corona virus pandemic and its continuity after the reopening of the universities.

2.3.1. Assessment Framework during COVID 19 Pandemic

Due to the COVID 19 pandemic, Bangladesh went to complete lockdown on March 17, 2020 in order to ensure the safety of the people. As a result, all the educational institutions from primary to tertiary have shifted their teaching-learning and assessment method on online. In the online mode of teaching, assessing students was one of the most challenging tasks as reported by

several studies (Allo, 2020; Sohel et. al., 2022). Nevertheless, as traditional and physical assessment was not suitable at that time, most of the universities adopted alternatives and formative assessment methods. The assessments methods in online can be categorized into two types: synchronous and asynchronous. The synchronous assessment methods were live tests in which students were provided examination question and they had to submit the answers within a limited period of time. In these real time tests, students have to keep the camera open and they were proctored by the teachers. There are some similarities between these kinds of synchronous online tests and traditional pen and paper tests. Conversely, the asynchronous tests were more alternatives and innovative in nature. Various types of assignments, projects, research paper, presentations, viva voce or interview, reports, creative writing etc. were applied on the students. This creates an opportunity to introduce and practice alternative assessment methods and students, teachers and parents were exposed to the new assessment system which differs from the conventional one.

2.3.2. Assessment Framework after COVID 19 Pandemic

The educational institutions of Bangladesh resumed in-person classes on 22 February 2022, after 17 of month closure. The higher educational institutions also shifted their teaching learning and assessment from online to face to face setting. In the initial phase of the lockdown, UGC directed the universities especially the public universities to conduct only online classes but postponed the final examinations. Due to this instruction, the students of public universities were facing session jam and other problems. As a result, UGC changed its decision and instructed the public universities to hold the final examinations after 15 months of shutdown. The UGC had directed the public universities to take final examination by following some guidelines i.e. the medium of examination should be Google Classroom, the students have to join

at least 15 minutes before the examination starts, the camera must be kept on, students have to scan or take picture of the answers and submit it to the respective faculty (Jasim, 2021). On the other hand, private universities were allowed to take online examination as well as the online classes. They adopted different assessment method to take the semester final on online.

Nevertheless, the remote education system on COVID 19 had taught us to think the teaching-learning and assessment techniques in a whole new perspective. Many universities opened online learning platforms such as Learning Management System (LMS), Moodle, Open edX etc. to support the students. For instance, Brac University created an online learning platform „buX“ in where students are provided with pre-recorded lectures, reading materials, video materials, discussion board and many more facilities (Anonymous, 2020). Most of these online platforms are still open for the students and faculty after resuming in-person class. Before COVID 19 pandemic, the teaching-learning and assessment process is confined to the classroom. Distance and online learning in the time of lockdown taught us that we can include real life medium for instance, radio, television, and internet for teaching-learning as well as assessment process (Mortuza, 2021). The post pandemic era is now observing a transition in the assessment system. The students and teachers got the opportunity to experiment with a wide range of assessment techniques that were beyond conventional test.

2.4. Research Gap

There is a lack of research on students' and teachers' experiences and perceptions about alternative assessment and their thoughts on the opportunities and challenges of alternative assessment methods. This study is needed to understand the scope of implementing alternative assessment in the higher education. Therefore, perceptions of the students and teachers regarding alternative assessment will help to trace the challenges and prospects of applying alternative

assessment. Till date, to the best of my knowledge, very few studies attempt investigating possibilities and challenges of alternative assessment in the higher educational scenario of Bangladesh. There is a gap in this area which needs to be addressed. Hence, my study aims at exploring students' and teachers' perceptions on alternative assessment in the tertiary level in order to fill the gap and contribute to the existing knowledge in this area.

Chapter 3

Research Methodology

This chapter provides an overview of the research methodology of this study that includes design of the research, details about the participants, description of data collection procedure and data analysis method. Besides, some ethical issues were discussed in the chapter which have been taken into consideration to conduct the study.

3.1. Research Design

For conducting the research, I have employed qualitative method. I have chosen qualitative method because it provides “in-depth and illustrative information in order to understand the various dimensions of the problem under analysis” (Queiros et al., 2017, p. 370) as well as complex and comprehensive study of a phenomenon (Creswell, 2018). Under qualitative method, I followed phenomenological approach for this study. Phenomenological approach is best suited for this study as it focuses on subjective experiences of the participants and also effective for gaining insights into individual’s perceptions from their own perspective (Lester, 1999). Therefore, qualitative method and phenomenological approach deemed suitable for this study.

Further, this study has been designed to focus on the students’ and teachers’ perceptions and experience of alternative assessment in higher educational scenario. To illustrate, what types of alternative techniques they are familiar with, what are their beliefs about the opportunities and obstacles of alternative assessment as well as their preferences towards traditional and alternative assessment method have been explored through this study. I used interview as an instrument for collecting data. For data analysis process, I used thematic analysis to present the data.

3.2. Research Questions

I have formulated one broad research question and under this broad question, there are three specific questions which were addressed in this study. Throughout this study, I attempted to find out the answers of these questions.

1. What are the challenges and opportunities of implementing alternative assessment in higher education as perceived by the students and teachers?
 - (a) What are the opportunities and challenges of implementing alternative assessment in higher education as perceived by the student?
 - (b) What are the opportunities and challenges of implementing alternative assessment in higher education as perceived by the teachers?
 - (c) What type of assessment do students prefer?

3.3. Participants of the Study

For this study, I have selected two kinds of participants including the students and teachers. The participants from the student side were undergraduate students from a private university who belong to diverse disciplines. I took participants from diverse disciplines to obtain holistic and multifaceted data. There were 16 students among them 9 students are females and 7 are males. Moreover, 7 students are from ENH department, 3 students are studying in L.L.B. discipline, 2 from C.S.E., 2 from Economics and 2 from B.B.S. department. In terms of teacher, I interviewed 2 teachers from ENH department. Considering the aptness of the snowball sampling, I used this sampling method for selecting participants of this study.

Table 1: Demographic information of the participants is illustrated below

| No. | Pseudo name | Discipline | Occupation |
|-----|-------------|------------|---------------------|
| 1 | Niaz | L.L.B. | Student |
| 2 | Sohel | L.L.B. | Student |
| 3 | Kollol | Economics | Student |
| 4 | Ria | English | Student |
| 5 | Rishad | B.B.S. | Student |
| 6 | Asma | English | Student |
| 7 | Sakib | C.S.E. | Student |
| 8 | Himi | English | Student |
| 9 | Sanzida | L.L.B. | Student |
| 10 | Juthi | English | Student |
| 11 | Dhruba | Economics | Student |
| 12 | Sadman | C.S.E. | Student |
| 13 | Rifat | English | Student |
| 14 | Tahia | B.B.S. | Student |
| 15 | Mimi | English | Student |
| 16 | Esrat | English | Student |
| 17 | Ms. Afrosa | English | Professor |
| 18 | Mr. Ahmed | English | Associate Professor |
| 19 | Ms. Tania | CSE | Lecturer |
| 20 | Ms. Lamia | CSE | Lecturer |

3.4. Data Collection and Data Analysis Procedure

Before starting data collection procedure, I made information sheet and consent form for the participants (see appendix B). In the information sheet, I provided information about my research project and its purpose so that the participants can get clear idea about my research. Before data collection procedure, I have provided information sheet and consent form to each of the participant. After looking into the information sheet those who want to take part in the study are given consent form for their written consent. After that, I have used semi structured interview for data collection procedure. Interview is a widely adopted tool for collecting in-depth data and this instrument is also considered as “versatile and flexible” (Kallio et al., 2016). I have formulated two separate interview questions for the students and the teachers. The interview questions were open ended and aligned with the broader research question of the present study.

Initially, I have done piloting with one student to evaluate the feasibility of the interview question. After pilot study, I have made some modifications and rephrased some technical terms so that the question is comprehensible and intelligible to all the participants from different disciplines. My participants were undergraduate students from one private university from diverse disciplines. The interview session was one to one and face to face which were conducted on university premise. Before starting the actual interview, I provided them information sheet and consent form to decide if they are interested to take part in the interview session. Those who were interested to participate in the study were interviewed. It was a semi structured interview. Therefore, I asked some follow up questions for clarification, justification or examples whenever necessary. Besides, the interview was audio recorded after taking permission from the participants. The duration of interview session lasted for 15-20 minutes for each of the

participants. In addition, I also take teachers' interview by following procedure at their convenient time and place.

In terms of analysing the interview data, I have used thematic analysis framework adopted from Braun and Clarke (2006). Thematic analysis is useful and flexible that results into robust and detailed, yet complex version of data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The phases I have followed to analyse the data are familiarizing with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing potential themes and lastly defining and naming themes. Before starting data analysis procedure, I listened to the recording over and over again and transcribed key findings of the interview data. The second phase involves the systematic analysis of data through codes. Codes are considered as the building blocks of analysis. After that, interpretative and descriptive codes were identified from the data. The next phase deals with reviewing the coded data and categorizing the similar codes for generating themes. In order to form themes, I have clustered similar codes that share similar meaning and pattern. The final stage concerns with shaping as well as defining the final themes which will address the broader research question. In this stage, I interpreted and organized the themes and connected it with the research questions.

Table 2 : Example of data analysis procedure through thematic analysis.

| Transcription of interview data | Similar category /codes | Subtheme/theme |
|---|---|--------------------------------------|
| 1. In our school and college level, we only had pen and paper exam. So, when we come to university level and experience these kinds of examination such as presentation, group work or collaborative work, we face some challenges 2. As I was from Bangla medium, I was not familiar with assignment format writing | 1. New assessment method for the students 2. Students are not familiar with the new assessment method. | New and Unfamiliar Assessment Method |

| | | |
|--|---|--|
| <p>in the Microsoft word. As a result I face problems and I have to watch you tube tutorials to learn the format such as MLA, APA.</p> <p>3. in the alternative assessment method, understanding instructions is really challenging sometimes. It is difficult to understand teachers' requirements</p> <p>4. Though my content and project was good enough, I got less mark in the exam because of the presentation skill which was new for me.</p> | <p>3. Students face challenges in understanding the instructions.</p> <p>4. Students face challenges in presentation and speaking skill as it was ignored in the school and colleges.</p> | |
|--|---|--|

3.5. Ethical Consideration

In this study, some ethical measures have been taken into account in order to ensure the trustworthiness of the study along with maintaining safety of the participants. First of all, information sheet and consent form have been provided to the participants for their convenience. After reading the conditions, those who wished to take part voluntarily in the study are selected as the participants. Next, I did not disclose the real name of the participants in this study. In this case, pseudonyms were used to maintain anonymity and confidentiality of the participants. Moreover, the participants were made comfortable during the interview and they had the option to choose whether they want to give interview in English or Bengali.

Chapter 4

Findings and Discussion

Chapter 4: Students' and Teachers' Perceptions on Alternative Assessment: Opportunities and Challenges

This chapter discusses the major themes and sub themes that appeared from the students and teachers interview. Students' and teachers' experience and their thoughts on opportunities and challenges of authentic assessments are described in this chapter. In order to conduct the study, I have interviewed students from different disciplines of a private university. Moreover, few teachers were interviewed for this study. The interview data has been analyzed and presented in a thematic way.

4.1. Forms of Alternative Assessment Used in the Class

The first theme emerged from the students' and teachers' interview focuses on the different forms and methods of alternative assessment implemented in the class. The students are acquainted with various types of alternative assessment methods though it differs from discipline to discipline. The most mentioned assessment methods are presentation, research paper, project, assignment, open book examination, portfolio and others. One of the participants, Niaz talked about role play as an authentic assessment technique used in some courses. Niaz stated, „in a court room setting, we are required to play the character of a lawyer, opposing lawyer and judge in order to debate over a case“. Students of English departments are experienced with several types of assessment methods alternatives to traditional pen and paper examination. Most of the students are experienced with presentation, research paper, portfolio, assignment, reflection paper, open book examination, debate etc. Besides, some participants mentioned about creative

writing and real life performance based assessment. For instance, Ria, one of the participants, stated she had to write a poem for a literature course that was quite enjoyable and interesting. She added that there was also drama performance and poetry recitation which were non-conventional techniques. Students of engineering field noted that they are familiar with alternative assessment such as project based assessment, presentation, assignment, lab reports and so forth. Apart from this, participants from Economics and B.B.S. (Bachelor of Business Studies) also claimed that they had experience with alternative assessment. One of the participants from Economics department mentioned that, during pandemic they had various types of assignments and project based assessment. Additionally, the teachers also asserted that they use wide range of assessment such as viva, assignment, research paper, project based paper, reflection paper, presentation group work and others.

It can be assumed that the participants are familiar with various kinds of assessment method other than traditional pen and paper based test. Among them, research paper, project based assignment, presentation, reflection paper are the most common. Moreover, the use of formative assessment depends on the course teacher most of the times.

4.2. Paradigm Shift in the Assessment Method

One of the prominent themes emerged from the interview data is the paradigm shift in the assessment practice in higher education. Almost all the participants mentioned that pandemic has certain impacts on the post pandemic teaching and assessment practice. During pandemic, the teachers and students were compelled to switch to distance learning and teaching as well as remote assessment method. As a result, students were exposed to various types of evaluation methods that were not used in the pre pandemic scenario. For instance, one student from Economics department mentioned that they had assignment based examination in the time of

pandemic although they did not have any assignments before online classes. Other participants also observed some changes in the post pandemic assessment practice. Ria, a participant, claimed that after reopening of the university, some faculty are taking assignment in lieu of quizzes. She said,

Before COVID 19 pandemic, when I took her course, she always gave us quizzes and written exam but now when I took her course after reopening of the university, I found out that she has changed her grading system, she added term paper and assignment instead of one quiz and final written exam.

Another participant said that some faculties ask for the students' opinion whether they want to take quiz or assignment. Sadman mentioned that the grading system of a course depends on the course teacher. He said that after resuming in-person classes, some teachers are taking more assignments as alternative to quizzes. Another participant mentioned that during online classes, some teachers took viva or recorded presentation. She added that viva and recorded presentation are still taken by some faculties after returning to physical classes. Besides, some teachers still take online presentation in some cases. Now, online classes are considered as second option for makeup classes and to deal with any crisis.

In the similar context, the participants from the teacher's side also opined that pandemic and virtual teaching and learning taught them many practical things about the students. One of the participants mentioned that the pandemic has made him more sympathetic to the students and now he considers the student's ability and their needs. He made some changes in his teaching and assessment system accordingly. In his words

Because of the pandemic, I learnt quite a lot, for example, writing academic paper, how student struggle. I made some adjustment. During pandemic, I saw how student struggle

for writing academic paper, now a days, I am quite sympathetic and I consider what a student can do. I did not made lot of changes but I change some things I must say, I take into consideration what student can do or what they cannot. I am quite sympathetic to them.

Ms. Tania mentioned that different kinds of formative and continuous assessment help finding out student's strengths and weaknesses rather than relying on only final examination. Another participant Ms. Afrosa mentioned that in the time of online education, she only gave assignment based examination as directed by the UGC and university authority. Initially, it was difficult for her to become familiar with this as she only gave traditional pen and paper based examination before shifting to online classes. Ms. Afrosa said that she has learnt many lessons from pandemic. Since she started teaching face-to-face classes again, she has modified her assessment system. Her assessment framework now reflects a combination of pen and paper based examination and research based assignment.

It can be said that Pandemic and online teaching has brought many changes along with endless opportunities to the fore in terms of evaluation methods. The students and teachers have undergone many experiences and experiments with regard to the various forms of new assessment and evaluation techniques. Transition from a rigid pen and paper based traditional test to a wide range of alternate assessment techniques leads to paradigm shift in the assessment method in higher education.

4.3. Positive Impacts of Alternative Assessment on Students' Learning

According to the interview data, alternative assessment impacts the leanings of the students in a positive way. Almost all the students showed positive attitude towards these kinds

of assessment methods. The following section describes the prospects and suitability of alternative assessment as perceived by the participants of the present study.

4.3.1. Develop analytical and research skill

Majority of the participants believed that authentic assessment techniques, for instance, research paper, assignment and term paper improve their analytical and research skill. One of the participants Rifat pointed out that research based assignment and term paper enhance their critical thinking and analytical skill. According to him, „there is a scope for critical thinking and creativity as we get more time to think and research“. A study by Schultz et. al. (2021) also revealed that non-conventional assessment techniques develop students“ critical thinking and problem solving skill. Almost all the participants had favorable attitude towards alternative assessment techniques. One of the participants, Rishad claimed that term paper and research based assignment develop their communicative skill. According to him, „these kinds of assessment polish our communicative skill as we interact with different kinds of people for research purpose“.

Furthermore, the findings from the teachers“ interview also indicated that alternative assessment has positive impact on students“ learning. One of the teachers stated that she takes assignment, graded discussion and reading presentation as alternative assessment techniques. Assignments are mostly research based in where students require doing primary and secondary research. In her opinion, these types of research develop the students“ research skill together with critical analysis ability. She added that in her time there was no assignment based test other than traditional pen and paper exam. For that reason, she has poor experience in research and study. She thinks that the students need assignment to develop their research skill. Another teacher mentioned that he takes open book examination and set the question in a way that the students

need to use their analytical skill to answer those questions. Besides, a tertiary level student should have range of skills apart from only memorization and it is not possible to assess those skills only by traditional examination said by one of the teacher, Ms. Lamia.

4.3.2. Promote collaborative learning

Alternative assessment techniques include various types of group work, pair work as well as self and peer assessment. A number of the participants mentioned that group work and pair work help them enhancing their collaborative learning, teamwork and leadership skill. These are the most sought after professional skills in the job market in the present world. In fact, it is crucial for the students to cultivate these professional skills to perform excellently in their workplace. One of the participants from Business discipline shared his opinion in this way,

In my case, currently I am kind of playing the role of a leader in my term papers.

According to my experience, it helps me in developing my leadership and communicative skill and also I get the opportunity to find out my strength and weakness.

A study by Rohmah and Srijono (2018) also found out that alternative assessment techniques help the students realizing their understanding and mistakes and the area they need to improve. Another participant, Kollol stated that teamwork and communicative skill are essential skills in this era which can be achieved by group work and collaborative task. From the same perspective, Nasab (2015) in his study also found out that alternative assessment encourages students to collaborate which leads to self-esteem and efficacy. Additionally, Juthi said that, „I think all kinds of group work and pair work develop our soft skills as in communication skill, leadership skill, self-confidence etc.“

4.3.3. Encourage students to think out of the box

Majority of the participants admitted that alternative assessment methods help students improving their critical thinking skill and outside knowledge. One of the participants Sakib asserted that,

When I was in school, I only read one book to memorize the content, but now in alternative assessment method, there is open book exam or assignment and I have to go through many sources and books. Now, I can read from these sources and make comparison among them which actually give me more ideas and information.

Another participant, Tahia said that these types of assessments help her to think out of the box. She added, „like in group project or assignment writing, these assessments make me want to know things clearly or elaborately“. Juthi, pointed out that incorporating technology with the alternative evaluation techniques makes the process more effective and innovative. She mentioned that one of her teachers used Padlet and encouraged the students to comment on their peers“ work. Another participant also thinks that alternative assessment contributes to elevate her knowledge level. „It is interesting for me because I can know many things when doing research; I can explore more ideas and thoughts“, claimed by that participant. Another participant stated that, „this assessment help students to bring out their creativities and when we do any kind of research, we constantly think about it, so yeah, alternative assessment enhance critical thinking skill“. The finding of this study is consistent with the result of Wakefield et. al. (2022). His study showed that alternative assessment promotes creativity and boost students“ confidence. Moreover, Mr. Ahmed mentioned that alternative assessment promotes student“s learning and a teacher can trace the student“s progress and improvement through various kinds of techniques.

4.3.4. Less stressful

Performance based assessment methods are less stressful according to the majority of the students. As these forms of assessment methods are not time constraints, students feel relaxed and stress free. Few participants mentioned that they do not feel pressured as they do not have to memorize anything same as conventional assessment. Rifat asserted that, „I do not feel anxiety as I do not have to memorize anything in these types of assessment“. Other participants also mentioned that alternative assessment have longer deadline which is why they can study their own time. „We can progress at our own pace and own time“ as claimed by one of the participants. She added that she can have time for revisions and edit and structure her paper properly. Additionally, Mr. Ahmed stated that various kinds of alternative assessment minimize negative wash back effect. In his words, „through various range of assessment, we can assess what student can do and what they cannot, and also we can remove negative wash back effect associated with formal exam“.

The participants claimed that formative examinations are less stressful than the traditional summative examination. Moreover, the wash back effect of traditional examination can be minimized by different kinds of alternative assessment techniques.

4.3.5. Enhance Student Empowerment

Alternate assessments give voice to the students and empower them as mentioned by Ms. Afrosa, one of the teachers and participants of this study. This is how she explained,

With the graded discussion they are reluctant to participate but when they do, perhaps I think they feel empowered, that is what I meant to do, let them feel empowered through openly speaking up and sharing their thoughts on the topic.

She added that group presentation and graded discussion are helping the students in their speaking and boost up their confidence. In that same context, she said that, „in the assignment, I give them a lot of feedback so in the first assignment they have not done very well, but in the second or third assignment they tend to pick up and they improve their critical thinking“. Furthermore, another teacher mentioned that different kinds of assessment make student more enthusiastic and they do not feel intimidated.

4.4. Issues and Challenges of Alternative Assessment

4.4.1. New Assessment Method

The findings of the interview data revealed that alternate evaluation techniques are new to the most of the students. Almost all the participants agreed that these new forms of assessment methods are different than traditional paper pencil test which they are familiar with. This how one of the participants shared his views,

In our school and college level, we only had pen and paper exam. So, when we come to university level and experience these kinds of examination such as presentation, group work or collaborative work, we face some challenges.

He added that „how to work as a team member or in some cases, how to lead a team was the most difficult thing for me. And mostly, in presentation, public speaking was a major issue for me“. Other participants Sohel, Sanzida and Dhruva also mentioned that some alternative assessment methods are relatively new and they have no prior experience in these types of examination system. Sadman, another participant, admitted that his speaking skill in English is not up to the mark. Though his projects and contents are good, he tends to get less mark in the presentation because he runs out of words in that situation. On this account, he emphasized on lacks of practicing speaking skill in school and higher secondary level.

In that same context, Ms. Afrosa mentioned that in terms of presentation and interactive discussion, most of the students feel shy and do not speak up. She admitted that it is difficult to motivate them to speak in the class so that they do not feel harassed. Additionally, another participant Esrat claimed that, „in the alternative assessment method, understanding instructions is really challenging sometimes. It is difficult to understand teachers’ requirements“. According to her, understanding the instructions and expectations from the teachers is one of the challenging issues. Mimi also thinks that some alternative assessment tools are difficult to adapt. For example, she mentioned about portfolio assessment which was an unfamiliar and complicated process for her. In addition, Mr. Ahmed thinks the standardization of alternative assessment is difficult and the teachers need to be quite experience as well as they must understand the principles and philosophy of alternative assessment.

It can be said that alternative assessment techniques are comparatively new to the students as they have no experience with these kinds of assessment in their school and college level. Thus, when they are exposed to these authentic assessment tools, they face some challenges to adapt it.

4.4.2. Misuse of Technology

A number of the students acknowledged that they tend to take help from the technological tools when doing their term papers and take home examination. Besides, few students mentioned that some of their classmates use tutoring websites, for instance, Chegg for writing their assignments. Some students admitted that they often use „QuillBot“ which is a free paraphrasing tool. This is how one of the participants Sohail stated,

To be honest, when I use QuillBot or Grammarly, I become dependent on those and my competency is going down. Like, when I take traditional pen and paper exam I make mistakes such as wrong sentence structure or capitalization.

Other participants Niaz and Himi mentioned Grammarly, from where they used to take assistance. Interestingly, one of the participants claimed that some teachers set their assignment questions from Chegg and the students who have access to Chegg, copy their answers from that website. However, one participant Sakib opined that

It is not wrong to take help from friends when there is collaboration. But some students divide the work with their friends like, you do this part and I will do that part. And they just paraphrase it using QuillBot and never learn the part which he did not work on.

Apart from this, the teachers also said that some students have high plagiarism rate in their assignment and term paper. When their plagiarism rate goes above certain percentage they are told to rewrite their papers. Nevertheless, there is nothing wrong in taking technological support in this era. When the students try to misuse the technology it becomes a major concern.

4.4.3. Time Intensive Method

Alternative assessment methods are time consuming and lengthy as stated by quite a few participants. One of the participants mentioned that some authentic test takes the whole semester to complete which become tiresome and time consuming. In her words, „the parts I don't like about these types of assessments are it takes to much effort and time to make perfect course related topics“. Some other participants also pointed out that despite being performance based assessments have lengthy deadline, majority of the students do not make use of their time. On the same note, teacher Ms. Afrosa also mentioned it takes a lot of time to mark and provide feedback to the students in assignments. She stated that, „with the assignment, my goodness! Just I have to

be very watchful if the students have cheated or they have a high rate of plagiarism, so it is a lot of work for an academic.” Additionally, she said that she would prefer pen and paper test for marking as it has relatively less work. There is no stress as student cannot cheat and when she does marking she feel stress free. The finding is consistent with the study of Putri et. al. (2019). Their study also reported that alternative assessment is time consuming and it takes lot of time to assess every student.

4.4.4. Focus on specific topics

The findings of the interview data indicated that a good number of students admitted that in the assignment based assessment they only focus on the particular topics which they have to work on. In terms of traditional pen and paper test, the syllabus of the examination tends to be broad and comprehensive. Consequently, students have to study all the chapters before taking the test. However, most of the authentic assessment tools require students to work on specific topics. One of the participants, Kollol mentioned that „in one of courses, we are given two assignment topics in the final, so I normally study that topic I will work on and I am not concerned about the other topic“. Other participants also admitted that they do not touch those chapters which are not associated with assignment or research paper. They said that during online semesters they have more assignments and at that time they skipped the most of the chapters.

4.4.5. Unethical Act by the Students

One of the major obstacles of alternative assessment is the unfair means and unethical act conducted by the students. One student from CSE department who is also a student tutor shared his experience about copying of his students. This is how he explained

I think the biggest challenge of alternative assessment is the cheating of the students. In most of the cases, just one student does the assignment and whole class copy from it. And it is difficult to penalize them because it is algorithm and there is only one answer.

Other participants including Ria, Kollol, Rifat and Dhruba also mentioned that their teacher prohibit them to share their assignment with their friends because of the plagiarism tendency of the students. One of the participants shared her experience in this way, „once I shared my assignment with my classmate to help her as she wanted to see the structure, and you know what? She just copied my whole assignment and paraphrased it“. After this incident, the participant becomes more careful. Moreover, Ms. Afrosa also shared her concerns and experience with this kind of cheating of the students. She narrated that

The most challenging part is when they cheat, that a friend has shared his/her paper after they submitted it to me. They have consistent error in referencing, or same sort of argument, than I try to trace the students, who have shared his/her paper.

She added that, „this is a very challenging thing, it takes me hours after hours for me to check both scripts so that I am sure they have cheated and then I have to take action accordingly“. It is also difficult for the teachers to ensure that the students will not plagiarize and copy from one another. Besides, they have to also be careful before accusing any students and gather proofs of their cheating to take actions.

4.4.6. Tendency of Procrastination

In alternative assessment method, students are more likely to procrastinate in most of the cases. Majority of the students agreed that they tend to do the work before the deadline. In this case, Rifat asserted that

We are given more times in alternative assessment method to utilize the time but in most cases, we do not do that and left the work for the last moment. Most of us finish the assignment within one night although we have given 4/5 days to write it.

Some other participants also mentioned that term paper or assignment have longer deadline than traditional examination. As they get more time, they do not feel stressed and at the same time they wait for the last minute. On another note, one of the participants, Sakib pointed out that, „when there was a group work, most of the times, only one or two students work for the whole team but every student gets the credit and marks though they do not work. I faced this challenge in some of my hardware labs“. Asma, another participant thinks that procrastination and slackness make her unproductive. In her words, „if we do procrastination than final output of the assignment may not come out good“.

Chapter 5

Traditional VS Alternative Assessment

This chapter presents the findings of the interview data regarding the limitations of traditional pen and paper assessment as discussed by the participants. It also highlights students' preferences for a balanced assessment system which can be a combination of alternative and traditional assessment. The findings have been narrated thematically.

5.1. Limitations of Traditional Assessment

The shortcomings and flaws of traditional pen and paper test underscore the need for an authentic assessment method. In the interview, almost all the participants pointed out several limitations of conventional examination system which needs to be discussed. One of the most commonly reported drawbacks traditional paper and pencil test is the constraints of time. One of the participants thinks that she is not able to demonstrate his whole understandings of a topic in the limited period of time. The participants asserted that, „what I want to say, I cannot fully say it because of the time limit and pressure I cannot articulate my understandings in a short period of time though I know it“. Some other participants also agreed that time limitation is one of the main issues in traditional examination as they cannot do critical thinking due do the anxiety..

In addition, several participants including Rifat, Kollol, Himi and Ria pointed out that traditional evaluation techniques only assess memorization skill of a student. Kollol, one of the participants stated that, „some teachers favor bookish knowledge from a student. Those students, who have good memorization skill, can do better in these types of examination“. The night before the traditional examination, they try to memorize everything without understanding any concept, he added. The finding is in line with the previous study by Dikli (2003). He also mentioned that traditional testing promote memorization rather than analyzing and synthesizing.

Ria mentioned that she is not good at memorizing and so she does not do well in that examination. Besides, few participants reported that traditional examination is stressful which creates anxiety and exam phobia. Shah (2018) also reported that stress and anxiety are one of the major drawbacks of formal and high stake testing which supports the result of this study. One of the participants shared that one of his friends is scared of this kind of exam, hence, when he has quiz, he do not appear in the exam. Another participant admitted that she has anxiety issue and face to face examination instigate her anxiety. In her words,

I have anxiety issue, so in terms of face to face exam, I have to keep chocolates in my mouth so that I do not suffer from anxiety. So, alternative assessment is good for me.

Sakib, another participant thinks that alternative assessment is more effective. He opined that „I think alternative assessment is more effective than traditional pen and paper examination“. Another participant said that „some students feel anxiety in face to face examination but in assignment based exam, anxiety can be minimized as we get more time to think and write“.

Apart from this, Ms. Afrosa mentioned that it is important for the students to develop their research skill which cannot be done by traditional examination. Mr. Ahmed thinks that traditional pen and paper based examination requires memorization and some of the students are not good at memorization. Another teacher, Ms. Lamia said that traditional examination has time limitation which creates pressure on some students.

The findings of the study revealed that traditional pen and paper based assessment has some limitations which are reported by the participants. Moreover, the findings of the study are in line with the other studies Asamoah (2019), Monib et. al. (2020) and Wakefield et. al. (2022) which showed alternative assessment techniques are more effective than traditional examination. Nevertheless, Spiegel and Nivette (2021) found no significant different in the examination

format in terms of students' academic achievement and well-being which contrast the findings of the present study.

5.2. Students' Preferences for a Well-balanced Assessment Framework.

The findings of the study revealed that almost all the students prefer a combination of alternative and traditional assessment method. As per majority of the students a well-balanced assessment framework could be appropriate for students' learning and grading. One of the participants, Rishad stated that, „there will be flexibility in the grading. If anyone can not able to do get good marks in the exam he/she can cover it in alternative assessment or vice versa“. He added that some students have strengths in alternative assessment whereas some students have strengths in face to face test. Therefore, the combination of two kinds of assessment would be a balanced one for all level of student.

Furthermore, some participants opined that if there is only alternative assessment than it would be a huge pressure for them. For instance, during their online semesters in Covid 19 lockdown, there were only assignment based tests which also create numerous problems for them such as anxiety, back pain and other mental and physical issues. Another participant Asma mentioned that

There is different kind of pressure in alternative assessment for example, as it is kind of open book exam, it has broader syllabus and it is difficult to meet the expectations of the teachers.

Another participant Juthi said that she prefers assignment based examination but there should be also face to face examination. „When we have a pen and paper exam, we study the entire syllabus, but with alternative assessment, we only read the specific topic,' she said. One of the participants mentioned that though there are some downsides of traditional pen and paper

examination, it has some advantages as well. She claimed that „I think combination of traditional and alternative assessment is the best choice. It is also important to learn how to write answer in a limited time, it is a skill a student should develop“. The finding is consistent with the study of Irawan (2017). His study also showed students“ preference for a balanced assessment system as one single technique cannot results into a perfect assessment. Nevertheless, Sakib had different opinion. He thinks that traditional assessment is better than alternative assessment in Bangladesh context. He asserted that

I think when there is more flexibility; students are getting innovative ways to cheat. I do not know about other department but in CSE department, most of the students copy codes from other students. At least in the pen and paper exam, they memorize something. .

Another participant also agreed that it is difficult to cheat in the traditional face to face examination. She mentioned that both the alternative assessment and traditional pen and paper would be a best choice. Additionally, Professor Ms. Afrosa also prefers a balanced assessment framework. Another teacher, Mr. Ahmed said that he favors a combination of various kinds of alternative techniques and traditional test in the higher education. This is how he explained,

Definitely I favor alternative assessment but I am not against pen and paper exam, probably we can keep small pen and paper exam where we can see students studies certain things but we also need to include other types of assessment. So, I will prefer a combination of formal as well as alternative assessment when it comes to assessing the students of higher education.

The other teachers also showed preferences for a combination of conventional examination and variety of alternate methods. The finding indicates that a single type of assessment cannot fully assess a student holistically. The participants of this study prefer a well-

balanced assessment framework which includes a wide range of alternate techniques as well as formal examination. Nevertheless, the finding of the present study is inconsistent with the result of Phongsirikul's (2018) study as the findings showed that both students and teachers exhibited positive attitude towards traditional assessment instead of alternative assessment. The reason behind this could be the course content of this study. As the course is a grammar learning course, students want to be assessed more objectively.

Chapter 6

Conclusion and Recommendation

This study aimed at finding out the beliefs and perceptions regarding alternative assessment methods from the university students and teachers point of view. I also intended to look into the participants' preferences between alternative and conventional assessment method. In order to conduct the study, I used qualitative method and phenomenological approach. I interviewed 16 students and 4 teachers from a private university of Bangladesh. The data has been collected through semi structured interview.

The findings and discussion of this study has been presented thematically. I have found several major themes and sub themes from the interview data. The participants reported that they are familiar with various types of alternative assessment techniques including research and project based assignment, presentation, open book examination, role play and many more. Moreover, the findings of the study revealed that there is an impact on the assessment practice in the higher education of Bangladesh after the post pandemic scenario. The implementation of a wide range of assessment techniques in the online classes leads to a shift in the assessment practice in the higher education of Bangladesh. The participants of this study reported that some assessment techniques are still continued after reopening of the university. Additionally, teachers who used to give only traditional pen and paper based test before the pandemic, are switching to a more flexible assessment framework consist of various assessment techniques.

The findings of the study highlighted two sides of a coin i.e. possibilities and obstacles of alternative assessment methods. Apart from traditional written examination, various kinds of alternative assessment techniques have positive impact on the teaching and learning process according to the participants. Majority of the students mentioned that research paper, academic

paper, portfolio, presentation etc. develop their research and analytical skill along with critical thinking skill. Moreover, these kinds of assessment method are less stressful for the students. The participants from teacher's side mentioned that various kinds of assessment method enhance higher order thinking skill and facilitate students' empowerment. On the contrary, the results of the study addressed some challenges and issues concerned with alternative assessment. Most of the assessment techniques are new and unknown to the students. In the secondary and higher secondary level, students are only acquainted with traditional pen and paper examination. Consequently, they faced some challenges to adapt the new forms of examination. Additionally, misuse of technology and unethical act by the students are the most mentioned obstacles of the alternative assessment methods. Students tend to take help from various websites and paraphrasing tool or copy from their friends in the take home examinations and assignment based examination. Besides, students only focus on the selected topics and tend to procrastinate most of the times. Apart from this, the teachers need to be aware of the philosophy and ideology of the alternative assessment mentioned by one of the teachers.

Furthermore, the results revealed that the participants of this study preferred a balanced assessment framework including a wide range of alternative assessment techniques and traditional pencil and paper examination. Both the students and the teachers think that combination of these two types of assessment framework will work better for higher education.

Contribution and Recommendation

- The study provides a comprehensive understanding of assessment system in higher education. The policy makers and the authority can be benefitted by the findings of this study. They can study students' and teachers' opinion regarding alternative assessment and take necessary steps.

- It will contribute to the existing literature on the assessment system of higher education in Bangladesh. The policy makers may take necessary initiatives by identifying the gaps and issues in higher education in order to reform the assessment method in higher education.
- The teachers can get directions about implementing formative assessment method and aware of the challenges faced by the students.
- The future researcher can get directions on this specific area and can include larger population and employ qualitative or mixed method. The future researcher can extend the study by investigating any specific assessment technique or exploring the reliability, validity etc. of alternative assessment method. Moreover, they can do action research by implementing non-conventional assessment techniques in the class.

References

- Alderson, C. & Banerjee, J. (2001). Language testing and assessment (Part I). *Language Teaching*, 35 (2). DOI:[10.1017/S0261444802001751](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444802001751)
- Allo, M.D. (2020). Is the Online Learning Good in the Midst of Covid-19 Pandemic? The Case of EFL Learners. *Jurnal Sinestesia*, 10 (1).
- Andaleeb, S. S. (2003). Revitalizing higher education in Bangladesh: Insights from alumni and policy prescriptions, *Higher Education Policy*, 16 (4), 487-504.
- Andaleeb, S. S., (2019), „Teaching load: The missing link in higher education quality“, the daily star retrieved from, June 13, 2019.
- Anonymous (2020). Brac University launches online learning platform „buX“. *The Daily Star*.
<https://www.thedailystar.net/brac-university-launches-online-learning-platform-bux-1918609>
- Asamoah, D.B. (2019). Traditional assessment procedures, and performance and portfolio assessment procedures: An in-depth comparison. *International Journal of Educational Research and Studies*, 1(2).
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Brown, J. D., & Hudson, T. (1998). The Alternatives in Language Assessment. *TESOL Quarterly*, 32(4), 653–675. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3587999>
- Chirimbu, S. (2013). Using Alternative Assessment Methods in Foreign Language Teaching. Case Study: Alternative Assessment of Business English for University Students. *Scientific Bulletin of the Politehnica University of Timișoara Transactions on Modern Languages*, 12 (1).

- Concina, E. (2022). The Relationship between Self- and Peer Assessment in Higher Education: A Systematic Review. *Trends in Higher Education*, 1 (1).
<https://doi.org/10.3390/higheredu1010004>.
- Creswell, J. W. & Guetterman, T. C. (2018). *Educational Research: Planning, Conducting, and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research*. Pearson.
- Darling-Hammond, L. (1994). Performance-Based Assessment and Educational Equity. *Harvard Educational Review*, 64 (1). <https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.64.1.j57n353226536276>
- Dikli, S. (2003). Assessment at a distance: Traditional vs. Alternative Assessments. *The Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology*, 2 (3).
- Elkhoury, E. (2020). *A Guide to Alternative Assessments*. York University.
- Gipps, C. & Stobart, G. (2003). Alternative Assessment. In: Kellaghan, T., Stufflebeam, D.L. (eds) *International Handbook of Educational Evaluation* (pp. 549-575).
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-010-0309-4_33
- Gozuyesil, E. & Tanriseven, I. (2017). A Meta-analysis of the Effectiveness of Alternative Assessment Techniques. *Eurasian Journal of Educational Research*, 17 (70). DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.14689/ejer.2017.70.3>
- Hamayan, E.V. (1995). Approaches to Alternative Assessment. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 15, 212-226. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0267190500002695>
- Hanrahan, S.J. & Isaacs, G. (2001). Assessing Self- and Peer-assessment: the students' views. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 20 (1).
- Hauff, J.C. & Nilsson, J. (2021). Students' experience of making and receiving peer assessment: the effect of self-assessed knowledge and trust. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 47 (6). <https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2021.1970713>

- Herman et. al. (1992). *A Practical Guide to Alternative Assessment*. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Jasim, M.M. (2021, July 2). Many public universities start online exams. *The Business Standard*.
<https://www.tbsnews.net/bangladesh/education/many-public-universities-start-online-exams-269563>
- Kallio et al (2016). Systematic methodological review :developing a framework for a qualitative semi-structured interview guide. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 72 (12).
<http://usir.salford.ac.uk/id/eprint/39197/>
- Lester, S. (1999). *An introduction to phenomenological research*. Stan Lester Developments, Taunton. <http://www.sld.demon.co.uk/resmethy.pdf>
- Monib et. al. (2020). Effects of Alternative Assessment in EFL Classroom: A Systematic Review. *American International Journal of Education and Linguistics Research*, 3 (2).
[10.46545/aijelr.v3i2.152](https://doi.org/10.46545/aijelr.v3i2.152)
- Mortuza, S. (2021, March 13). Education in a post-Covid-19 world. *The Daily Star*.
<https://www.thedailystar.net/opinion/blowin-the-wind/news/education-post-covid-19-world-2078625>
- Muiruri, E. N. (2020). *Teachers And Students Perception On Portfolio Assessment In Secondary Schools In Kenya* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Nairobi).
- Perez et. al. (2020). The role of self and peer assessment in Higher Education. *Studies in Higher Education*, 47 (3). <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2020.1783526>
- Phongsirikul, M. (2018). Traditional and Alternative Assessment in ELT: Students and Teachers Perceptions. *rEFLECTIONS*, 25(1).

- Podder, R. (2020, August 11). Alternative Assessment Strategies for Quality Education. *Daily Sun*. <https://www.daily-sun.com/post/498686/Alternative-Assessment-Strategies-for-Quality-Education>
- Podder, R. & Mizan, M.M.R.(2020). Alternative Assessment Practices in Secondary Schools in Bangladesh. *The EDRC Journal of Learning and Teaching*, 6 (3).
- Putri et. al. (2019). The Alternative Assessment of EFL Students“ Oral Competence: Practices and Constraints. *Journal of Language Teaching and Literature*, 6 (2).
<https://doi.org/10.30605/25409190.v6.72-85>
- Queiros et al. (2017). Strengths and Limitations of Qualitative and Quantitative Research Method. *European Journal of Education Studies*, 3(9).
<http://dx.doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.887089>
- Rashid, M.M.U. & Rahman, M.Z. (2017). Quality of higher education in Bangladesh: Application of a modified SERVQUAL model. *Problems of Education in the 21st Century*, 75 (1). [10.33225/pec/17.75.72](https://doi.org/10.33225/pec/17.75.72)
- Reeves, T.C. (2000). Alternative Assessment Approaches for Online Learning Environments in Higher Education. *Journal of Educational Computing Research*, 23 (1).
<https://doi.org/10.2190/GYMQ-78FA-WMTX-J06C>
- Rohmah, S.N., & Srijono, D.D. (2018). The Students“ Perception on Self-Assessment in English Language Subject at The Eighth Grade of Junior High School 01 Tawangmangu.
- Sarwar & Khaled, M.S. (2014). Problems and prospects of higher education in Bangladesh.
- Schultz et. al. (2021). Defining and measuring authentic assessment: a case study in the context of tertiary science. *Assessment and valuation in Higher Education*, 47 (1).
<https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2021.1887811>

- Shorna, S. A. (2017). Alternative Assessment to Assess Students: Opportunities and Obstacles. *International Journal of English Language, Literature in Humanities*, 5 (9).
- Sohel et. al. (2022). Teaching and Learning in Higher Education in Bangladesh during the COVID-19 Pandemic: Learning from the Challenges. *Educ. Sci.*, 12 (12).
<https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci12120857>
- Spiegel, T. & Nivette, A. (2021). The relative impact of in-class closed-book *versus* take-home open-book examination type on academic performance, student knowledge retention and wellbeing. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 48 (1).
<https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2021.2016607>
- Tsoukidou, V. (2013). Implementing an alternative method of assessment.
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/235697520_Implementing_an_alternative_method_of_assessment
- Ullah, M.N. (2020). Ingredient of Quality Education at Tertiary Level: An Assessment of Higher Education in Bangladesh. *International Journal of Engineering Applied Sciences and Technology*, 4 (11).
- Wakefield et. al. (2022). Learner-generated podcasts: an authentic and enjoyable assessment for students working in pairs. *Assessment and evaluation in Higher Education*, 47 (7),
<https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2022.2152426>

Appendix A

Students' Interview Questions

1. Please tell me about your educational background.
2. What types of assessment methods are you familiar with other than traditional pen and paper exam? Give some examples.
3. What kinds of assessment techniques were used during online classes? Do the assessment methods still continue after reopening of the university?
4. What is your experience with alternative assessment method (assignment, presentation, portfolio, research project etc.)? Did you face any challenges? Share your experience.
5. According to your experience, what are the advantages and drawbacks of alternative assessment method?
6. What types of assessment method do you favor and why?
7. How do you take preparation for alternative examination? Is the preparation strategy different from traditional pen and paper exam? Explain how.
8. Do you take help from your friend while preparing for alternative assessment? Is it okay to take help from others?
9. Does learning happen in alternative assessment methods?
10. In your opinion, can alternative assessment measure actual knowledge or performance of a learner? Why or why not?
11. Is there any significant difference between your performance on alternative assessment and traditional pen and paper based exam? Why or why not?

Teacher's Interview Questions

1. What types of assessment methods do you use in the class?
2. During online classes, different kinds of alternate assessment were implemented. After reopening of the university what types of assessment method do you still use and why?
3. How would you evaluate your pre pandemic and post pandemic assessment framework? Did you bring any changes? Why or why not?
4. According to your experience, what are the advantages of alternative assessment?
5. According to your experience, what are the limitations of alternative assessment? Did you encounter any challenges when designing and implementing alternative assessment?
6. Do you think alternative assessments promote students' learning or does learning happen in alternative assessment? Do the students use their critical thinking in the alternative assessment method?
7. Do students plagiarize in alternative assessment? Share from your experience.
8. Between traditional pen and paper examination and alternative assessment, what type of assessment method do you favor and why?

Appendix B

Consent Form

**Project: Alternative Assessment in Higher Education: Student and Teacher Perceptions
about the Challenges and opportunities**

- I have read the information sheet and understand the content of the study.
- I am aware of the research purpose and data collection procedure of this study.
- I have been informed that I will be asked a set of interview questions which I have to answer.
- I am aware that the data provided by me might be checked out by the researcher, thesis supervisor and thesis committee members.
- I am aware that my participation in this study is voluntary and I have the freedom to withdraw my participation at any stage of the research.
- I am aware that my participation in this study will not be associated with any kind of risks or benefits.
- I am aware that my name will be kept anonymous. I have the right to choose my pseudonym, and my original identity will not be disclosed or published anywhere.

Upon signing below, I hereby agree to take part in this study as a participant

Name:

Email:

Signature:

Date:

Please sign and return the consent form

Thank You.