Limitations of Blended Learning in Bangladesh: A Measurement for a Decade

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Abstract

This study portrays a picture of why blended learning process in Bangladesh is now not appropriate to the students in any level of education systems. A total of 21 teachers and 17 administrators in more than 25 public and private universities interviewed with a set of 11 questions in a questionnaire. The results of frequency count from the questionnaire showed that blended learning requires a minimum of 12-15 years to be implemented across the country. There were also some positive signs of quick adaptation of blended learning process in Bangladesh on conditions. Inadequate logistic support causes the obstacle to achieve the goal of blended learning in Bangladesh. The acknowledgement of the interviewees on acceptability and sustainability of blended learning to the students enhances the popularity of this process. Based on the analysis of the answers of interviewees in this study, some suggestions have been added to make conscious to the policy makers in education sectors.

Keywords: Blended Learning, Logistic Support, Sustainability, Quick Adaption, Policy Makers

Introduction

Blended learning is the collection of the different ways that teachers make to keep students interested, inspired, motivated and driven even after the long time of the completion of their particular courses. In addition, it is the fusion of individual lessons, group lessons and phone lessons. The crucial factor in blended learning is the electronic support coming from E-learning. In comparison to other countries across the world, blended learning is quite new in teaching and learning methodology in Bangladesh. Time has emerged for blended learning as a substitute learning process to the face to face traditional learning techniques. Teachers, students and their parents, administrators in universities virtually feel the importance of a fresh process in learning and teaching sectors over the country. Specially, blended learning as a substitute of traditional learning method was supposed to welcome. But the scenario as to the expectation is completely different. Only text-based lecturing is the way of teaching and learning mode in Bangladesh. The support that requires for the implementation of blended learning is inadequate at this moment. By most standards, blended learning is a mechanism that bridges the old and the new by impacting policy and strategic initiatives in higher education at virtually every level (Moskal et al., 2013). Here in Bangladesh perspective relating to policy and initiatives for blended learning minimizes prospect of newness in learning. Decision makers' contribution to the implementation of their decisions on the achievement of progressive and latest learning scheme gets less importance than the administrators' contribution- to the response of university lecturers. As blended learning is enriched with the addition of e-learning which penetrates into a nation through web connection, in that sense Bangladesh is not ready yet to adapt it. To get connection one needs continuation of electricity supply-a crying need for the country. In this paper, limitations and reasons behind them should be focused with the responses of the interviewees.

Methodology

This study formed with the ramifications of the teachers and administrators as to the barriers of implementation of blended learning in the universities in Bangladesh. It is beyond doubt that this study's formation is based on descriptive approach. Furthermore, with the respondents mark on the causes as proportions of a total of 100%, this study constructs a pie chart in order to clarify the facts effectively. Descriptive answers were asked from the participants with a set of 11 questions in where some answered few questions among 11. Some respondents focused the problems with evidence from the past history of the national progress and some tried to show how particular reasons interrupt to the implementation of decisions taken for education sectors in Bangladesh. On the other hand, some opined that blended learning already established in Bangladesh in the means of multiple way of learning without supporting the modern web-based e-learning. But, in this study, only the obstacles have been described citing the theme of the respondents' comments.

Versatile Challenges

Categorically Bangladesh is a third world country with dense of population. Opportunities are less than its population. There are many causes behind the slow motion of the progress, which are directly related to the advancement of education. With so many blended learning models in existence, which might be the most effective, or the most appropriate for a particular institution to choose? The answer might seem surprising, or at least counterintuitive: there is no single best model, and most institutions can achieve success with near any of

them, to Dziuban and Moskal, (2011).In this sense Bangladesh has already adapted blended learning in most courses across the country. But problems are with the up to date modernized one which should be overcome filling the following gaps.
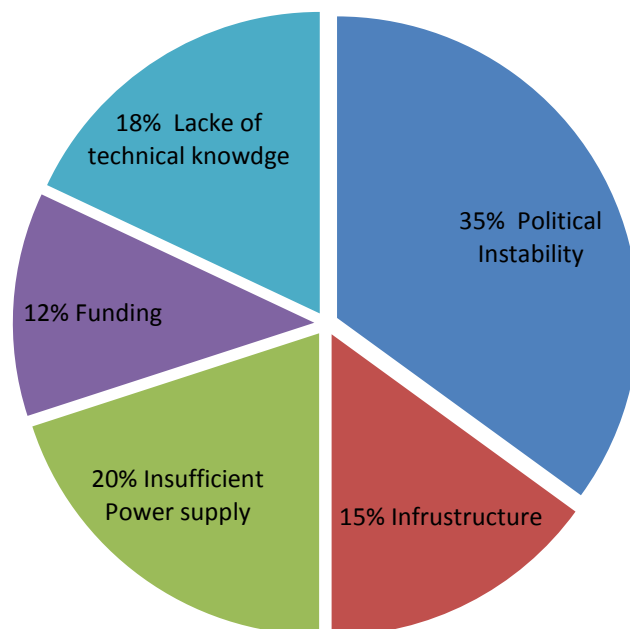

Figure 1: This pie chart showing percentages of barriers in Blended Learning in Bangladesh. Source: Author's estimation.

Political Instability

Respondents' views on political situation over the country confine the feasibility of quickly upcoming solution on the debate regarding blended learning. According to the report published on the October 2012, academic operational activities were stopped up for at least 43 days on an average in a year without regular weekend and public holidays. Report focused that lose of academic years and dropping out from the study in different levels caused by the political clash between the parties. Participants were asked to identify the major cause not to enjoy the modern technology based blended learning in Bangladesh. The replies were almost near to each participant. They marked it 32% -38% as proportion of total obstacles of implementation blended learning. This is a complete negative picture for education sectors. Whereas, Rindermman, (et al., 2013) say that the social sciences have traditionally assumed that education is a major determinant of citizens' political orientations and behaviour. To them, several studies have also shown that intelligence has an impact. According to a theory that conceptualizes intelligence as a burgher (middle class, civil) phenomenon –intelligence should promote civil attitudes, habits and norms like diligence, order and liberty. Political leaders' interferences in execution of decisions taken for educational development in different states (districts) make slow and steady in national progress. Here is most interesting that all participants sought out political instability as a big bar for blended learning.

Electricity Supply

As a slow and steady developing country, electricity production has not been increased so far expectation of its population in last few decades. Continuation of electricity supply and modern technology based blended learning are linked with each other. One is part and parcel of other. According to paper written by Asif Hasan et al.,(2012) Bangladesh is experiencing intimidating energy challenges: Security concerns over growing fuel imports, limited domestic energy resources for power generation. At present the power demand in Bangladesh is about 6000MW, whereas the generation ranges only 4000-4600 MW. The generation capacity is 5936MW.

Table 1. Present Status of Power Generation in Bangladesh

SI No	Items	Status(2011)
1	Electricity Growth	10 % in FY-2010 (Av. 7 % since 1990)
2	Total Consumer	12 Million
3	Transmission Line	8,500km
4	Distribution Line	2,70,000
5	Distribution Loss	13.1%
6	Per Capita Generation	236 kWh (incl. Captive)
7	Access to Electricity	48.5%
8	Present Generation Capacity	5936 MW
9	Present Demand	6000 MW
10	Present Available Generation	4000-4600 MW
11	Recent Maximum Generations	4699 MW (20 August 2010)
12	Maximum Load Shedding in FY-10	1500 MW (during hot summer days)

Source: Electricity Challenge for Sustainable Future in Bangladesh.

As a result of power shortage causes excessive load shading throughout the whole year. Bangladesh relies greatly on fossil fuels for its energy, but the present reserve would be depleted by the year of 2015. That is why; respondents forecasted the impossibility of blended learning just now in Bangladesh. According to Shoniregun and Gray (2003), e-learning is the delivery of teaching material electronically with the added value of maintaining standard and quality without limitation of a specific location, using multimedia and is interactive. E-learning is not simply putting the notes online.

Infrastructures

Both building and network infrastructure in Bangladesh are significantly inadequate for educational institutes. No system can cover the facilities of blended learning process without these infrastructures. Rosenberg (2001), confines e-learning as the use of internet technologies to deliver a broad array of solutions that enhances knowledge and performance. It is based upon three fundamental criteria: networked, delivered to the end-user via a computer using standard internet technology and focuses on the broadest view of learning. Students and teachers are mostly away from the benefits of blended learning due to unavailability of infrastructural facilities across the country. Moskal et al., (2013) say -reliable and robust infrastructure must be in place to support students and faculty. They add Blended learning requires the same IT infrastructure elements as other network services: servers, network bandwidth, and remote access. However, the requirements of online learning are more stringent in terms of reliability and consistency of performance than many other network services, requiring that the technical elements be well designed and supported. From the discussion it is clear that there is no way to implement blended learning without ensuring infrastructural establishment.

Teachers' Training

As blended learning mostly based on computer and websites, it requires operational knowledge for successful perseverance among the students. Most of the teachers in Bangladesh have no basic knowledge on computer operating and even have no email account for communication. In response to the question about teachers' performance, maximum answers claim the inefficiency of the teachers. Research on teacher preparation has been found to be fundamentally flawed due to the lack of specific knowledge surrounding the field (Hamre & Olyer, 2004). Perceived levels of teacher efficacy in coping with the demands of the inclusive classroom are often determined by the 'sufficiency' of training for inclusion. Research comparing the efficacy levels of special and general education teachers has found that general education teachers often find themselves lacking in knowledge and competencies deemed necessary for teaching in an inclusive classroom as compared with their special education counterparts (Buell et al., 1999). Training for inclusion within general education teacher preparation programs will alert teachers to better understand the goals, objectives, and implementation strategies for the various support services available to better cater for students with disabilities (Nougaret, Scruggs & Mastropieri, 2005; O'Shea et al, 2000). Increased knowledge about inclusion brings about higher levels of confidence, and dissipates the fear and anxiousness often associated with the lack of awareness and exposure to children with disabilities (Avramidis et al, 2000). Agboola (2005) concluded that the notion of e-learning should be about using the computer and the Internet technology to disseminate knowledge to learners effectively and to enhance the performances of both the teacher and the learner by utilizing information and communication technology (ICT) for the purpose of instructional delivery. In general, e-learning refers to learning with using of information and communication technologies.

Funding

For execution of any decision on particular issues, financial support is the biggest part in whole. Developing countries like Bangladesh should set an agenda for the best approach for themselves through the development of comprehensive national education strategies. The participants from the administrative positions in different universities opine strongly that government and non-government organizations should come forward to ensuring quality education for all. It would not be appropriate at all asking like Moskal et, al**." Is blended learning an expense, or an investment**?", as problems in Bangladesh engulf with corruptions. The budget for education it has in each financial year may be a good portion for lifting up the status of educational system across the country.

Conclusion with suggestions

As blended learning intersects with almost every sector of the educational environment, it demands careful policy development and execution. Policy makers must consider the modality for its impact on infrastructure needs, program development, and strategic planning. Faculty members have the opportunity to capitalize on its potential for enhancing their ability to facilitate learning more effectively.

In this article, it has been tried outline a number of considerations for blended learning that impact policy in all sectors of education. First and foremost, this learning modality must be operationalized in a manner that resonates with the context of the institution and aligns with its goal and objectives while at the same time maintaining consistency with organizational capacity. Blended learning requires high quality support at all levels: organizational infrastructure, course and faculty development, as well as consistent student learning support mechanisms.

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