

Chapter 12

Blended Learning Space for Primary and Secondary Education: Challenges and Opportunities in Resource–Constrained Contexts

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ABSTRACT

Emergency remote education during the COVID-19 pandemic has opened the door for everyone not only to see the prospect of blended teaching and learning but also to understand how critical it is to incorporate technological development to enhance learning and access to education. While face-to-face in-classroom teaching and learning methods help children and young people in developing vital social, communicative, developmental, and digital competencies, it is also critical to embrace the digital transformation that is happening around everyday life and throughout society. Based on secondary data, this chapter explores the key challenges and opportunities for policy and practice in resource-constrained contexts. This chapter utilizes Bangladesh as a case study to elicit the transition and transformation process of teaching and learning at the primary and secondary education levels in the global south during the emergency.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected every sphere of human life across the globe (Bacher-Hicks et al., 2020; OECD, 2020; Rahim, 2020; Raaper & Brown, 2020; Shohel et al., 2021a; Shohel et al., 2021b) and has brought a screeching halt in all sectors (Ellis et al., 2020). The education sector is not an exception, rather this sector is one of the most affected ones, with the pandemic disrupting almost 1.6 billion learners in more than 190 countries (De Giusti, 2020; Giannini, 2020). Educational institutions were closed for unpredictable durations, and many switched to emergency remote teaching and learning (ERTL) afterwards (Shohel et al., 2021b; Shohel et al., 2021c). During the course of the pandemic so far, policymakers and educators across the globe have put in a lot of effort to ensure that learning continues. In many cases, educational activities were moved to a virtual teaching and learning mode using existing technological infrastructure and software or publicly available digital platforms (Power et al., 2020; Sepulveda-Escobar & Morrison, 2020). Elsewhere, educational institutions introduced blended teaching and learning (BTL) including a mix of onsite and offsite teaching and learning activities. While the draconian lockdown restrictions are easing in many countries, the blend of online and offline teaching and learning is becoming more convenient and more popular to educators and their learners. Many scholars have forecasted that the blended approach to teaching and learning would be inevitable in the post-pandemic era (Shohel et al. 2021d). In resource-constrained Low- and Middle-Income Country (LMIC) contexts like Bangladesh, educational stakeholders have been blending several teaching and learning approaches, including teaching virtually and visiting students' home (while maintaining social distancing regulations) since the beginning of the pandemic. With the invention and rollout of vaccines and naturally achieved immunity to the virus through exposure, herd immunity might not be far. Many countries are slowly returning to the pre-COVID state of affairs. Though this might take some time for Bangladesh to achieve, many hope that teaching and learning will gradually become normal within the next couple of years. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has immensely contributed to the long due transition and transformation of educational practice as researchers have indicated that the blended teaching and learning approaches will be the trend in post-COVID-19 educational practice (Gorgen & McAleavy, 2020). In this chapter, evidence has been presented from some empirical studies as well as from some secondary research and other scholarly writings published in the COVID-19 context.

2. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In this chapter, researchers discuss the concepts of education, technology, and digital education, changing landscape of education, concept of blended learning, learning management systems, emergency remote education, and the challenges of implementing blended learning at the primary and secondary levels in Bangladesh, as well as opportunities to create or implement blended learning programs. To reiterate, the purpose of this study was to address the following questions:

1. What are the challenges to create blended learning spaces for primary and secondary education in the resource-constrained context of Bangladesh?
2. What are the opportunities to introduce blended learning spaces for primary and secondary education in the resource-constrained context of Bangladesh?

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