

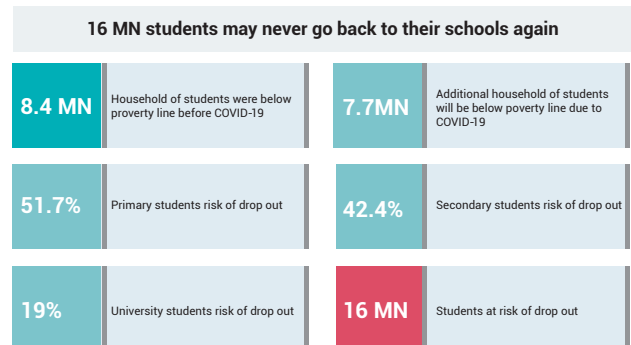
Post-COVID-19 ICT Roadmap: The Education sector

How the Roadmap came to be

With the growing certainty that COVID-19 is here to stay, the ICT Division of the Government of Bangladesh is developing a roadmap to fight the pandemic and ensuing crisis and to find innovative ways to flourish in the 'new normal'. Education is one of the 18 priority sectors selected based on the impact of COVID-19 on the sector and its potential for transformation of the economy and society.

Why the Education Sector

34 million students in Bangladesh face the harsh reality where they may never get back to their classrooms in the way they have been used to. With poverty levels expected to rise to 40.9% as a result of the post-pandemic economic fallout, 16 million of these students are at risk of never returning to their classrooms. 17 million primary school students, 13 million secondary & higher secondary students, 1.6 million SSC examinees, one million HSC candidates, 850 thousand university students, and 25 thousand students pursuing higher studies face a multitude of obstacles in the coming days ranging from session jams to even dropping out. Educational institutions in Bangladesh not only serve as places of learning, but also act as safe havens providing social protection and health, nutrition, and psychological support to young minds.

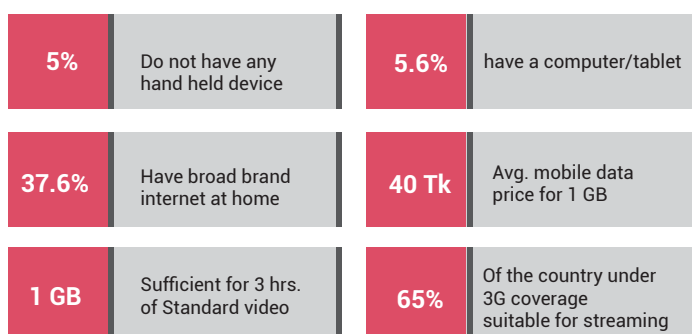


Impact of COVID-19

The widespread socioeconomic effect of COVID-19 did not spare even educational institutions, which faced shutdowns like the rest of the engines of the economy - offices, marketplaces, factories, and all forms of businesses. This has put a sizeable number of students, especially those in the public education system, at risk of dropping out, partaking activities pertaining to child labour, or even facing underage marriage, especially in the case of girls. Young students, who suddenly find themselves idle from lack of academic learning and cognitive engagements, are more susceptible to take part in anti-social activities like stealing, drug peddling, and drug abuse. University and vocational students also face session backlogs which delays their graduation, entry into the workforce, and eventual income generation.

Many private schools have not been able to keep operational and this has put teachers, who are not on the government payroll and rely on the salaries from school or after school coaching classes, in dire financial crises. As this pandemic lockdown continues so do the woes of the teachers with little to no alternatives for sustenance.

In Bangladesh online Classes are easier said than done for students



Constraints

The education system in Bangladesh is heavily dependent on rote learning methods which are unsuited to develop the skills requirements for today's world, especially with the advent of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. Education disparity between urban and rural areas is vast not only in terms of teachers' competence, but also due to the lack of up-to-date educational infrastructure like poor internet connectivity and computing devices.

Not having a national edu-tech agenda further hurt the sector as there were no alternatives to mitigate the situation effectively. Most students are unable to access online classes, either due to connectivity or affordability,

and are now disconnected from the formal education system. Many urban and semi-urban institutions with the financial and infrastructural ability have transferred to some form of online classes. The majority of nationwide students are, however, unable to avail this.

South Asian Network on Economic Modeling (SANEM) 2020, SANEM researchers assess poverty impacts of COVID-19, 01 May, Retrieved: 08 August 2020, from <http://sanemnet.org/sanem-researchers-assess-poverty-impacts-of-covid-19/>

Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) 2018, Household Income Expenditure Survey (HIES) 2016, September 2018

Uddin, M. 2020, 'How would the COVID-19 pandemic affect the education sector in Bangladesh?', Thinking Aloud, Volume 7, Issue 1, June 1, Retrieved: 13 July 2020, from South Asian Network on Economic Modeling (SANEM) Publications Online

Action Agenda

Taking learnings from local and global best practices and to tackle: (i) the effects of the pandemic, and (ii) the existing systemic and regulatory shortcomings of the education-sector and ICT in the education-sector, the ICT Ministry is proposing the following five interventions in the immediate and short term:

Title	Policies to facilitate the growth of blended learning before 2021	Multisectoral participation and infrastructure development for popularizing virtual school (blended learning) before the end of 2020	Develop IT infrastructure and give incentives to support tech based learning in partnership with private and public education institutions till the end of 2021	Group education method to prevent children falling out of education in rural Bangladesh	Create an investor friendly environment for private entrants in the Education sector so that by 2030 the country can ensure improved access to education for all
Why (To address:)	To ensure an effective and efficient blended education system, whereby all of the stakeholders and governing bodies can take a holistic approach in improving the education sector	The traditional brick and mortar education system is failing to meet the demands of the ever changing education landscape both in terms of theoretical learning and skill development	Distant learning and edutech is the way forward- only if supporting tools and technologies are widely available to the masses	Due to limited access to internet and devices to access online classes, students in rural areas are facing the threat of quitting if the lockdown situation persists for another three months	Lack of private sector investments and FDI is hindering the education sectors growth
What	By supporting edu tech startups, digital products such as LMS (Learning Management System) can be developed for local needs which will ensure the teachers to assign and check the tasks of the students, a LMS platform will act as a pivotal tool to manage both the academic and managerial responsibilities of running a class online	Lead the multi-sectoral collaboration to enhance the learning infrastructure and tools associated with it. Infrastructure development being very capital intensive, the government's initiative or subsidy can help in taking this forward	Develop cluster based internet/public wifi services whereby students can come to a designated place to learn at their time of convenience with their own devices or devices available at learning centres. Initiate programs like zero.edu (same as zero Facebook) websites where the government will subsidize and provide free internet access to learning platforms and content providers	Assigning one teacher to each area where they reside to teach the kids in that particular area and also hiring high school kids to teach primary school kids in the neighbourhood can be practiced to reduce fallout	The government's initiative to encourage private sector players in the education sector will open doors to both domestic and international investors to enter this market and improve i
Lead Agency	Ministry of Education	Post & Telecommunications Division	Post & Telecommunications Division	Ministry of Education	Ministry of Finance
Actor	Schools, Colleges, University, Technical & Vocational Institutes, Madrasas, Consulting Firms, Technology Firms, Education Foundations, Education Research Institutions	Schools, Colleges, University, Technical & Vocational Institutes, Madrasas, Consulting Firms, Technology Firms, Education Foundations, Education Research Institutions, edu tech platforms, TELCOs, ISPs	TELCOs, ISPs, WiMax Service Provider	Schools, Colleges, University, Technical & Vocational Institutes, Madrasas	Ministry of Commerce, Govt. & Public Education Institutions
Coordinator	ICT Division	ICT Division	ICT Division	ICT Division	ICT Division
Facilitator	a2i	a2i	a2i	a2i	a2i
Partners	Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (MoPME), Madrasah & Technical Board, Ministry of Communications, Post and Telecommunications Division	Ministry of Education (MoE), Ministry of Primary & Mass Education (MoPME)	AMTOB (Association of Mobile Telecom Operators of Bangladesh), Broadband Internet Service Providers, WiMax Internet Service Providers, Bangladesh Telephone Regulatory Commission (BTRC)	MoPME, UNICEF, UNESCO, BRAC	MoE, MoPME, Ministry of Communications
Partners	Private University Association, Private School Association, English Medium School Association of Bangladesh, Startups: 10 Minute School, Bohubrihi, Yoda, Repto, UNICEF, UNESCO, ADB, JAICA	Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN), Private University Association, Private School Association, English Medium School Association of Bangladesh, Startups: 10 Minute School, Bohubrihi, Yoda, Repto, UNICEF, UNESCO, ADB, World Bank, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation	Startups: 10 Minute School, Bohubrihi, Yoda, Repto, For grants and loans: IFC, ADB, WB	Private School Association	Development partners/ IFAD/ PKSF, MoA, MoLF
Financing and modality	Government Funding: Cost for the research and development of the policy and initial roll out testing.	PPP for content and technical development; cost of the edu tech platforms development, content development, and maintenance	PPP; Investment for Technological & Infrastructure Development; Funds to set up new internet networks up to the root level	Government and Donor Partner Funded; to provide allowances, PPE, mask and disinfectants for the visiting teachers and students.	Private Sector Investment; Private sector players to have confidence in the policy and ease of taking returns to their native country