A SURVEY ON ACCEPTABILITY OF E-LEARNING MBA OFFERED BY THE PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES IN BANGLADESH

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Abstract

e-Learning is the new frontier in modern education system. Recently many universities have introduced and incorporated a number of e-Learning technologies to increase flexibility in course offerings and to enhance student learning experience. In general, online education is becoming very common in developed countries. It is already gained some level of acceptance in the worldwide academic industries. With the continuous advancement of the technology, now in addition to text, it is easy to use picture, video, sound, animation etc on the Internet. By using those tools, it is possible to offer many quality training programs or higher education courses over the Internet. Using the state of the art technology, now e-Learning offers a wonderful environment of learning. The mechanism of ensuring quality also increased significantly. In developed countries, many Universities are offering online higher education programs including MBA program. A developing country like Bangladesh has its own problem and style in the domestic business market. To design an effective curriculum of MBA program for the local students, only the local University can perform the best role. A survey result on the potentiality of e-Learning higher education programs offered by privately owned Universities in Bangladesh is analyzed and presented in this paper.

Keywords: e-Learning, Online Education, Higher Education, Private University.

1 INTRODUCTION

At present, there is a good number of Private Universities in Bangladesh, none of which offers their MBA programs online [1]. Some of the Private Universities are offering traditional classroom based MBA programs. There are many busy executives who are interested to be an MBA to enhance their administrating capacity and for a better career. Many of those executives have computer and internet access in their office and home as well. If there is an opportunity comes to those executives, may be they can join the online MBA programs and by improving their managerial capability and skill, can serve the organization in better way.

The main objective of this survey is to find the demand and acceptability of the online MBA from the Private Universities. Based on the outcome of the research, some of the University may offer their MBA programs online and open an opportunity to the busy executives who does not have enough time to attain a regular classroom based MBA program. Another objective of the survey was to find the general barriers and technical limitations to offer a Higher Education Program online.

2 EDUCATION IN BANGLADESH

Education is fundamental to the development of Bangladesh. The Government has placed a high priority on it. Although official education statistics are unreliable, substantial progress has been made over the last 20 years. Enrollments have increased, the gender balance has improved, and public spending on education has expanded. To reach the education to everybody, modern and new method of teaching and learning should be considered. Online education is one of the most expanding and demanding effective method of new method of teaching in higher education.

Highest allocations for education in the national budgets since nineties show that the government has attached topmost priority to human resource development though education. The goal of ‘Education for All’ is being vigorously pursued in the country. The education system is divided into 4 levels-Primary (from grades 1 to 5), Secondary (from grades 6 to 10), Higher Secondary (from grades 11 to 12) and tertiary. Alongside national educating system, English medium education is also provided by some private enterprises. They offer ‘A’ level and ‘O’ level courses. There is also Madrasa system which emphasizes on Arabic medium Islam-based education. This system is supervised by the lone...
Madrasa Board of the country. Public education in Bangladesh generally follows the model established by the British prior to 1947. Elementary education is free, but at least one-third of all children are not enrolled in school. Poor school attendance is a major reason for a literacy rate of only 35 percent for Bangladeshis aged 15 and older. In the period 1989 to 1990, the country had about 45,000 elementary schools, with a total annual enrollment of some 11.3 million pupils, and about 10,000 secondary schools, with a combined yearly enrollment of about 3 million. Compulsory primary education, free education for girls up to class ten, stipends for female students, food-for educational total literacy movement and nationwide integrated education are some of the major programs being the government in the education sector.

Currently, there are 31 government and 51 private universities in Bangladesh [1]. Specialized universities include Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET), Bangladesh Agricultural University and Bangabandhu Shaikh Mujib Medical University. The number of government and non-government medical colleges stand at 18 and 42 respectively. Among them 15 government and 23 non-government medical colleges are recognised by the Bangladesh Medical and Dental Council [2]. Now, there are also 2845 colleges and institutes, 12553 secondary schools, and 78595 primary schools available for mainstream general education [3,4]. To make higher education accessible to all, an Open University has been set up in the country. A National University has also been set up to serve as an affiliating university colleges across the country.

The information and communication technology (ICT) revolution brings particular challenges to education systems around the world. These challenges are in three broad areas. The first has to do with participation in the information society; the second is ICT impact on access, cost-effectiveness and quality of education, while the third is to do with the way that ICT changes the education process. The various types of learning noted by researchers and educators fall into three general categories:

1. **Formal learning**: takes place in schools and higher education institutions providing systematic education.

2. **Non-formal learning**: occurs outside the formal education system but is nevertheless an organized event with specific target groups or clients and learning objectives. This includes ‘continuing education’, ‘adult education by distance education or social interactive education’, ‘professional training,’ ‘literacy programs’ and other organized programs, the everyday experience and environment.

The term ‘lifelong/adult learners’ is increasingly used for people who want to make use of learning tools and materials, which would traditionally be available in libraries but now are readily accessible via internet and through educational outreach programs of major institutions that lead two broad categories of education - Distance Education & Social Interactive Education.

### 3 ICT BASED EDUCATION

The internet plays an important part in ICT-based distance education, and most applications are dependent on the net. Therefore, in addition to the policy focused on the telecommunications infrastructure supporting the internet, the policies and laws directly regulating the internet have an impact on the potential of ICT-based distance education.

The following policy principles and regulations are important and maintained by the government of Bangladesh [9]:

- **Liberalization of Internet Service Providers (ISPs)**: Bangladesh is following this principle like other developing countries.
- **General ‘hands off’ approach towards internet regulation**: This approach recognises the fact that the internet has developed rapidly, largely owing to the fact that it was free of hindering regulation. A view seems to be evolving that the common law should be sufficient to regulate activities on the internet (i.e., the commerce law for e-commerce, criminal law for internet pornography, etc.).
- **Promoting broadband and advanced communications**: This can be achieved by allowing competition to flourish and the government remaining ‘technology neutral.’ Several ISPs in Bangladesh are providing broadband communication.
- **Low import tax on computer hardware and software**.
- **Ensuring that transmission capacity pricing is low and cost-based**: Otherwise ISPs cannot offer affordable consumer prices to achieve a mass market.
4 UNIVERSITY GRANTS COMMISSION

The UGC of Bangladesh is the apex body of all the Government Funded Universities including the public and private universities. The underlying principle is that the Government should not deal directly with the Universities, either individually or collectively: instead, it should deal with the UGC which, in turn, deals directly with the Universities. This arrangement is designed to safeguard the autonomous character of the Universities [1].

Over the years, the UGC has exercised its roles in the realm of higher education in general and for upgradation, expansion and development of the University education in particular. Under section 5(1) of the President’s Order No. 10 of 1973 the UGC’s functions are to:

- Assess the needs in the field of University education and formulate plans for the development of such education;
- Determine financial needs of the Universities;
- Receive funds form the Government and allocate and disburse, out of the such funds, grants to the Universities for their maintenance and development;
- Evaluate the programme under implementation for development of Universities, teaching departments, institutes and other constituent institutions;
- Examine all kinds of University developments plans;
- Collect statistical and other information on university matters;
- Advise the Government of the establishment of new Universities or on proposals for expansion of the existing Universities;
- Advise the Government on proposals to grant the right to confer special degree awarding status on colleges which may be considered suitable for such status;
- Exercise such other powers and perform such other functions as may be conferred on it by any law or by the Government.

5 SWOT ANALYSIS OF PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES

Strength
- Government Approved
- Latest curricula and regular update
- Truly English medium
- Government Incentives in terms of Tax and other benefits

Weakness
- Lack of infrastructural resource
- Lack of experienced academic staff
- Poor management due to lack of experienced human resource
- Very small campuses compare to the public universities

Opportunity
- To meet the millennium education goal of the country, private university may play a vital role
- With the flexible rule and regulation, private university management can play more dynamic role than the public university
- International links and partnership may established more easily
- May introduce the modern online programs through the Internet to cover the service overcoming the boundaries

Threat
- Due to privately own may run for personal benefit of the Board of Governors, hence may turn to profit oriented.
- With communication being enhanced to such a level, location is now no longer an issue. Hence competition base is much more widened.
- To meet the market demand, running only demanding subjects may less encouraged for research and development for national interest.
6 SURVEY INFORMATION

The Survey was conducted on the working people who work in national and international organizations with a good salary scale. We send our selected data collector directly to the targeted 2000 employees with a questionnaire for primary data collection. Among this 100 person was selected randomly to make a telephone call for the interview to learn more about their expectations. Trying to answer too many things usually means none of them are answered well [5]. For this reason, the questions were kept in a minimum number. The target participant of the survey was the potential students who are interested and can afford an online MBA. We have chosen only the mid or high level management staffs who earn at least Tk. 25,000 (US$400) per month.

The survey contents summary includes the following:

1. Expectations of the respondents
2. Demand of online MBA
3. Barriers of online education in general
4. Acceptability of Private University qualification

The survey was carried out by the circulation of a questionnaire to selected national and international organizations in Bangladesh in the end of January 2010. The format of the questionnaire was largely questions requesting specific answers. It was felt this approach would elicit the highest return rate. Two areas were explored: The perception about the private university degrees itself and the online qualification like MBA. The income range of the respondents were also emphasized in the questionnaire due to the expense of the online MBA is little hire than the traditional class room based MBA. 1359 questionnaires were returned out of the 2000 and all of them have considered to find the outcome of the research. The data collected from two sources:

6.1 Primary Sources

The primary sources of data include the following:

- People working local organizations like private limited companies
- International organizations including some NGO’s

6.2 Secondary Sources

The secondary sources of data include the following:

- University Grants Commission (UGC) Bangladesh
- Ministry of Education, People’s Republic of Bangladesh
- MBA Club, Dhaka
- Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS)
- Internet web pages
- Newspaper and Magazines

6.3 Sampling Procedure

6.3.1 Sampling Units

People working in the mid and high level management with a good salary in the local and international organization, who have strong interest to have an MBA for their better future.

6.3.2 Population

Some selected 20 organizations operating in the local market of Bangladesh.

6.3.3 Sample Size

A sample size of 2000 people (employees working in the national and international organization) ware determined by the survey team. The following table lists the surveyed sample size:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Organization</th>
<th>No of Employee (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employees working in the local organization</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People working in the international organization</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total respondents</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6.3.4 Sampling Technique

The sample was drawn using convenient Sampling Procedure. The data was collected on following ways:

Twenty (20) field enumerators (data collector) collected data from 20 different organizations, through arranged personal interviews by using structured and non disguised questionnaires. The data manager supervised the field enumerators for effective and non-erroneous data collection.

6.3.5 Data Analysis Technique

All statistical analysis of the data followed the commonly accepted research practices. All statistical procedures were attained through computer to ensure accuracy & validity. To analyze and summarize the collected data Microsoft Access, Visual Basic, Microsoft Excel were used. Query software has been developed to seek the information out of the entered data. Various validations have been set in the form's field to ensure proper data entry for better and near to appropriate results.

6.3.6 Limitations

The study is based on known primary sources in the Dhaka city only. The respondents were little reluctant to provide the data regarding monthly income and in some cases their highest academic qualification. Many respondents were distracted from the right answers. Many of the respondents were no more interested to spend further about their study.

7 RESULTS

We have received 1359 persons in total as the respondent of our questioner survey. As the number of questions were limited, all of the participants answered all questions without skipping a single one. We have described our findings in the following sections below:

41% of the respondent says that they have interest to do an MBA (Figure 1). But among them only 10.50% is interested to do an online MBA. 56% thought that they will be less capable in compare to the traditional classroom based MBA holders. A very good number 92.50% thought that their online MBA degree certificate will have lesser value than the class room based MBA.

![Interested about MBA](image1.png)

Figure 1: Interested about MBA

Surprisingly, there is no body says that the quality of the online education will be very good. 21.50% says it will be good and 78.50% expects that the quality will be average.

The number of the Internet user among the respondent group is quite satisfactory 58.50%. The education level of the respondents also very encouraging for launching the higher degree program. Most of the respondents already hold either a graduate or postgraduate degree (Figure 2).
The acceptability of the private university is satisfactory but online degree may be in question, according to the survey result. 56.50% says that the private university degree is standard, 27% says acceptable and 12.50% says it is below average (Figure 3).

![Perception about private university qualification](image)

### 8 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

#### 8.1 Bangladesh’s Economy and ICT

Bangladesh is located in South East Asia in 143,998 sq. km. with more than 135 million population. The literacy rate is 42% (7 years and above). English is now widely spoken all over the country. Population growth rate is 1.59% per annum. Density per square km is 891. Government system is parliamentary. Working days are considered from Sunday to Thursday (from September 2005).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Economic Indicators</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GDP per capita (US$)</td>
<td>399</td>
<td>418</td>
<td>464</td>
<td>521</td>
<td>559</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDP growth (% change per year)</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current account balance (US$m)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>764</td>
<td>814</td>
<td>1621</td>
<td>1980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inflation (% change per year)</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Recent economic indicators [6,7,8]

Figure 4 is showing the reflection of ICT in GDP. The number is very little but should be considered that Bangladesh entered in this industry very late. The increasing line shows that ICT is now start contributing towards the growth of GDP at an increasing rate.
With the increasing growth of ICT, it is expected to increase the online education in Bangladesh. The survey shows that now a days many people have the access of using Internet. But they are not yet confident enough to use the Internet to use as the tool of higher education like an online MBA degree.

8.1.1 Financial Aspect

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROBLEMS</th>
<th>RECOMMENDATIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The cost of the course is not affordable</td>
<td>Bank loan can be arranged (like Grameen Bank Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pay at a time is little difficult for a</td>
<td>Loan) which will be repayable in a long term period.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mid level income employee</td>
<td>Installment of the course fee may be arranged as per the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>module taken per semester.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8.1.2 Quality Aspect

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROBLEMS</th>
<th>RECOMMENDATIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No Government agency for controlling or</td>
<td>A division of UGC may take the initiative to monitor the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>monitoring the quality of online education</td>
<td>activities of online degree programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>is currently available</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Many institutes may offer low quality</td>
<td>UGC may set a rule so that only approved universities can</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>program online.</td>
<td>offer online degree programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The overall quality may not standardized</td>
<td>A UGC controlled private body may set up to set the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>standard like QCA in UK.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8.1.3 Infrastructure Aspect

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROBLEMS</th>
<th>RECOMMENDATIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The speed of the Internet is not good</td>
<td>The course could be designed in such a way so that less</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>enough for downloading the documents</td>
<td>documents should be downloaded (eg. Flash based)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some potential students may not have PC at</td>
<td>More cyber café can be setup to facilitate such kind of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>their home</td>
<td>students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8.1.4 Awareness Aspect

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROBLEMS</th>
<th>RECOMMENDATIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employers are not aware about the online</td>
<td>More marketing effort could be given for building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>programs</td>
<td>awareness of the online programs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8.2 Bangladesh’s Strength for launching e-Learning Program

Although not properly exploited yet, Bangladesh does have quite a few inherent strengths, which can be used as the launching pad for offering online qualification like MBA program. Some of these advantages are:

- A substantial number of unemployed computer-skilled youth force, with ability to develop quality course material for online program exists in the country. They can be trained in the required skill (particularly in online course development) within a short time.
- Quite a few Bangladeshi skilled professionals have been working abroad. They can be encouraged to return back to the country and/or collaborate with Bangladeshi entrepreneurs, provided proper environment is created.
- Universities in Bangladesh are turning out an increasing number of graduates in Computer related subjects every year, although the number is much less than the requirement.
- A large number of Bangladeshi students are studying overseas in Computer related subjects.
- A wide range of Hardware platforms, from Mainframe to PC, with a large number of Macs, are available.
- A very good number of university professors and business entrepreneurs are available in Bangladesh to prepares the contents of the online courses for the MBA programs.

9 CONCLUSIONS

Many people are very much interested about the MBA program offered on-line by the local universities. As the program will give more focus on local needs and requirements, those program will be more effective to the local people than the international MBA’s awarded by the foreign universities offered currently over the Internet. The cost of the courses is found as a major factor for discouraging to do the online MBA’s. The people who are interested about the program can hardly afford the program. Some of the respondents have doubt about the quality of education provided online. They have also confused about the acceptability of the qualification to the local organizations.

REFERENCES

APPENDIX (Survey Questionnaire)

Survey on the Proposed On-line MBA Program
Offered by Private Universities in Bangladesh
January-February 2010

Respondents Name: ______________________________________________________
Company: ______________________________________________________________
Contact Address: _________________________________________________________

1. Do you have a plan or interest to do an MBA?
   a) Yes
   b) No

2. What is your opinion about the qualification awarded by the Private Universities of Bangladesh?
   a) Standard
   b) Acceptable
   c) Below average

3. What is your opinion about Online Education System?
   a) Good
   b) Acceptable
   c) Unacceptable

4. Do you think an online MBA will be acceptable in our Country?
   a) Yes
   b) No
   If no, Why? Explain ________________________________

5. Are you comfortable of using the new technology, such as the Internet?
   a) Yes
   b) No
   If yes, Please tell what kind of user you are:
   a) Sending & receiving e-mail
   b) Search for new info
   c) Chat
   d) All of the above
6. Your educational qualification:
   a) Undergraduate
   b) Graduate
   c) Post graduate

7. What is your expectation of learning from an On-line MBA?
   a) High
   b) Moderate
   c) Minimum

8. What is your idea about the quality of the On-line program?
   a) Very Good
   b) Good
   c) Average

9. What level of understanding do you expect about the topic by using on-line?
   a) Very Good
   b) Good
   c) Average

10. Do you think you will be less capable than as normal MBA degree holder?
    a) Yes
    b) No
    If no, how you will manage? Please explain ________________________

11. Do you think your certificate will have lesser value than normal MBA degree?
    a) Yes
    b) No
    If yes, how you will manage? Please explain ________________________

12. Your monthly gross income please:
    a) Above Tk.25,000/-
    b) Tk.25,000/-
    c) Less than Tk.25,000/-

13. Any comments (optional)
    ______________________________________________________________
    ______________________________________________________________
    ______________________________________________________________
    ______________________________________________________________