

Our school teachers – the unsung heroes of the pandemic

Every nation in the world, including Bangladesh, was brought to a halt due to the unprecedented shock of COVID-19. Over time, gradually, everything started to open up and become functional. Still, the country continues to close its educational institutes to limit the spread of the virus and protect the children.

Bangladesh, as a country, was never prepared for distance or online-based education for the masses. But the unprecedented shock demanded unprecedented and innovative approaches to deal with the crisis.

Keeping the secondary schools closed for a long time will lead to severe learning disruptions. It will take a massive toll on the students since these are the most critical schooling years for anyone who is preparing themselves for the most competitive board examination of the country – SSC.

It was soon realised that the pandemic and its aftermath is not something that can be easily dodged, and people will start leading a normal life. All the public and private schools together made some all-round efforts to digitally support the education system to continue the academic activities online — ranging from broadcasting lessons on national TV channel to social media platforms. The most popular and effective initiative was to conduct classes online, along with other classroom activities. Teachers once again had the opportunity to administer one-to-one interaction with their students in the virtual space.

All these initiatives are definitely praiseworthy. It ensured that the pandemic could not take away one vital academic



year from the students' lives and prepare them for their SSC examination. Amid all these, the real heroes who led us through the crisis are our teachers, especially from Bangladesh's rural parts.

The secondary school teachers, who have little expertise with the latest technologies, were required to conduct online classes; thus, leading them to take several initiatives to prepare themselves to adapt to the change. Apart from it, these teachers have tried their best to overcome any challenges that come their way. During lack of smoother Internet connection, the teachers were seen to access it through local markets with their own money. Colleagues shared devices with each other, and if it weren't possible, they would access

them through the school premises.

Besides helping themselves, the teachers have also helped some of the students overcome issues with the latest technology and attend online classes. They had travelled miles to help the students when people stayed indoor to avoid getting infected with the virus. For most students, as per Bangladesh's education system, the SSC examination sets the momentum of their future. Realising this, our secondary school teachers went above and beyond to ensure that these students' learning is not hampered in any way.

British Council in Bangladesh, through its connecting classroom project, is privileged to support our secondary school teachers across the country in their mission to

continue the academic activities online by providing training on enhancing their digital literacy.

With a mass vaccination programme rolling out in Bangladesh, and once the nation's situation improves, we believe that the doors of the schools will again open and be filled with laughter and happiness. We hope that our government will take rigorous initiatives to speed up the process of digitalising Bangladesh while ensuring that we soon overcome the existing challenges and have a proper setup ready to offer online-based education efficiently and effectively.

By Nusrat Jahan, Head of Education, British Council