

EDU: Pioneer of “Flipped Classroom” in Bangladesh

SHOUT DESK

The Covid-19 pandemic has laid bare the truth that without leadership, innovation, and adaptability, it is impossible to survive let alone make a difference. In the education sector, the probable effect is much more intense compared to other industries. From the beginning of the coronavirus outbreak, traditional classrooms were forced to go online, but facilitating classes online is challenging if the educators are not trained, willing to adapt, and commit to keeping up the quality of education delivered.

At the current stage of the online study, East Delta University (EDU), realised the need for a novel endeavour. They took the lead and planned to “flip the classroom” to make the learning process smoother with asymmetric teaching methodology. EDU introduced the “Flipped Classroom”, the latest trend in the global education arena, as the first university in Bangladesh.

FLIPPED CLASSROOM

A “flipped classroom” is a type of blended learning strategy where students are introduced to a topic by utilising recorded video content and textbook at home. Then, in the classroom, they are given a brief lecture on that particular topic, and after that, students will receive assignments and projects to practice both in classrooms and from the comfort of their homes. This strategy is the reverse of the conventional approach practiced throughout Bangladesh’s educational institutions, Sayeed Al Noman, the Founding Vice Chairman of EDU, expressed.

the School of Business, said, “All the joys of university life are on campus. As it’s been closed for a long time, it feels like we have forgotten the joy of studying at the university.”

When EDU asked students to join campus to implement the Flipped Classroom strategy, they responded to this call with great interest. They are now participating in the class on a rotation basis.

Student Nahin Chowdhury said, “Chatting and roaming with friends in the canteen or university premises after class, singing the chorus to the guitar’s tune, talking with the faculties -- these are what university life means to me. Now, I am coming to the campus by contacting my friends whenever I get a chance. I also feel safe as the university takes necessary measures to ensure the safety of those coming to the campus.”

EDU has also taken necessary precautions to provide the best possible safety measures to those entering its premises. It has implemented the “Campus Movement Protocol”, which all personnel must adhere to.

TRANSFORMATION TO ONLINE/LIVE CLASSROOM

This is not the first time EDU has taken innovative steps to open the door to new ideas. From the start of the lockdown, EDU actively participated in finding and implementing different means to facilitate the students. Two weeks prior to the official announcement of educational institutions’ closure in March 2020, the university adopted a strategy to shift everything online.

data per month for faculties and students to make online access and participation seamless. EDU was the pioneer in taking such measures from the early stages of the lockdown. Grameenphone actively participated in this landmark initiative by providing the students with a special SIM card where they sent the data bundle every month on behalf of EDU. A few months later, another survey found that students were joining online classes with great enthusiasm and energy.

ASSESSMENT PROCESS SYNCED WITH LATEST INNOVATION

During the lockdown period, arranging examinations as well as motivating students to adapt to this new normal, came as a

tion. Students were given the opportunity to register for the next semester automatically. EDU tried its utmost to support the students in the smooth continuation of their studies.

CONTINUATION OF SALARY-BONUS

Due to the pandemic and its associated complications, EDU had to go through extreme challenges. The university authority struggled to manage organisational activities. In spite of this, the university authorities have kept the full salary-bonus and retained the regular promotions. While many institutes were seen trimming salaries of employees in Chattogram as new student enrolment immensely dropped, not only did the EDU authority provide



PHOTOS: EDU

He said, “We are offering a variety of avenues for our students to choose from to continue their education and set the pace for their autonomous learning. Moreover, a few students are coming to the campus while the rest of the same section attend classes from home, simultaneously. We are calling it a blended learning experience, both on-campus and online. Our faculty members and students are actively practicing the flipped classroom strategy that we have implemented from the beginning of the Spring 2021 semester. The ideas of both blended learning and flipped classrooms are very new in our country, and we are pioneering the adoption while testing its feasibility.”

Even with active participation, the students were very keen to return to the campus. Mashfia Rahman, a student from

From the very next day, EDU went forward with full-fledged online classes, and since then, no classes have been suspended till date. This has been the result of careful long-term planning and investment. Such transformation was possible at the right moment because of continuous digitisation and modernisation since its inception.

BREAK THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

EDU conducted multiple surveys prior to and following the online classes. It raised some issues in addition to sincere compliments. The primary concern that came to light was the connectivity issue. Since internet facilities are not the same all around, Sayeed Al Noman took the “Breaking the Digital Divide” initiative to solve it.

Under the “Breaking the Digital Divide” initiative, the university decided to provide 30 gigabytes of free internet

great challenge. EDU’s traditional assessment model consisted of class attendance, one or two assignments, a few class tests, midterm and final exams. Inside the assessment model, most emphasis was put on mid and final term examinations. Since the classroom is flipped and students are doing more than usual, it was found to be a standard best practice of constantly assessing their efforts and grading them as they move forward with a class/lesson/topic.

PARTNERSHIP WITH COURSERA

It was postulated that students, faculty members, and admin staff would have extra time to learn new things during the days of lockdown. To make the most out of those trying times, the institute partnered with Coursera. The successful MOOC platform hosts more than 4,500 general and certification courses offered by renowned universities worldwide. More than 3000 enrolments were recorded from the students, instructors and staff on the platform in a wide variety of courses.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT TO STUDENTS

Realising the crisis from an early stage of the pandemic, EDU removed all bars on different fees. Late fees were revoked, the deadline for all due payments was relaxed and payments in instalments were introduced. To keep the flow of providing services as an educational institute and to carry out various types of expenses, including salaries and allowances of the employees during the pandemic, it was crucial to have the funds. However, EDU took a stand not to force the students regarding clearing their payments despite the situa-

the full salary-bonus but they carried it out in time. This initiative was highly commendable among the employees and was a great example set by the authorities. More than three hundred employees are currently working on EDU as faculty members, officials and staff. The university spends BDT 40 lakhs per month on salaries, which was a considerable amount when the income was almost zero during the lockdown period.

EDU were able to stay by the side of every staff member, providing their families with the necessary support during this difficult time of the pandemic.

AWARDED OVER 30 EMPLOYEES

When layoffs, intermittent promotions and other benefits became a common practice worldwide job market in the coronavirus outbreak, EDU took the opposite approach. The authorities honoured 33 teachers and officials of the university in five categories for their extraordinary leadership and responsible role apart from the university’s regular responsibilities from the very beginning of the pandemic. Along with a crest, the authorities also provided financial incentives of BDT 12 lakh for the honour. The Abdullah Al Noman Employee of the Year award went to Prof. Dr Rokibul Kabir, Associate Dean of the School of Business among the teachers and Mofazzal Uddin, Assistant Manager, IT & Innovations among the administration. In addition, 31 others received awards in four categories, namely Faculty Leadership Award, Staff Leadership Award, Faculty Performance Award and Staff Performance Award.