

Learners Attitude and Perception towards Bachelor of Education Program of Bangladesh Open University

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Abstract

Bachelor of Education (BEd) program of Bangladesh Open University (BOU) has been designed to provide professional education for teachers through Open and Distance Learning (ODL). School of Education plays a significant role in the field of teacher education through ODL system in Bangladesh. ODL is different from conventional education system. ODL system conveys education through multiple media and techniques to equalize the classroom education. Unlike the conventional system, the distant learners may face some problems during their course of study. The focus of this paper is to find out learners' perception and attitude towards BEd program at BOU. To conduct the study, 120 students were selected using simple random sampling technique from the six different study centers out of 20 study centers. This paper will discuss the factors affecting learners satisfaction and some measures have been proposed on the learners perspectives to offer effective teacher education program through BOU.

Keywords: *Open and Distance Learning, Student Perception, Teacher Education, BEd program.*

Introduction

Teacher is the most important element in any educational program. It is the teacher who is mainly responsible for implementation of the educational process at any stage. Teaching involves the use of a wide body of knowledge about the subject being taught, and another set of knowledge about the most effective ways to teach that subject to different kinds of learners. Assumed special significance in between elementary education on the one hand and higher/university education on the other.

Since the teacher plays a pivotal role in the entire educative process, teacher education is very crucial to the improvement of both quantity and quality of education. Especially, at the secondary stage, teacher education has assumed special significance in between elementary education on the one hand and higher/university education on the other. Since the teacher plays a vital role in the entire educative process, teacher education is very crucial to the improvement of both quantity and quality of education. Especially, at the secondary stage, teacher education has assumed special significance in between elementary education on the one hand and higher/university education on the other.

Since the teacher plays an important role in the entire educative process, teacher education is very essential to the improvement of both quantity and quality of education. Teacher education is a program that is related to the development of teacher proficiency and competence that would enable and empower the teacher to meet the requirements of the profession and face the challenges therein.

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BOU played a vital role in the field of teacher education since 1992. BOU conducts the BEd program in open and distance mode. Recently, a growth in distance education programs can be seen because of the time and space restriction of face-to-face learning system. It is also economically advantageous and preferable by working students. But in Bangladesh only BOU provides teacher education program through distance learning. In distance education system, where students pursue their studies in an academic environment absolutely different from their prior one, investigation into the level of satisfaction and course involvement is very much necessary for overall improvement of the programs (Monira & Selina, 2003). This study tries to find out the learners' attitude and perception about the BEd program of Bangladesh Open University. And tries to explore Learners' opinion regarding tutorial services and printed text materials. Distance education can be more learners oriented if distance learners are aware of the problems, needs, attitudes and characteristics of their learners (Numan S. M., Rahman. R. K. & Sadat, 2008). The findings of this study may be helpful in bringing necessary reforms and revamping the BEd program to bring it more in line with the expectations of the learners and make it more effective for them.

Objectives of the study

The objectives of the study are:

- to find out the learner's perspective and attitude towards the quality of BOU's BEd program.
- to explore the learner's satisfaction level about BEd program of BOU.
- to extract some suggestions from the respondents and recommend some possible measures for improving the existing program and maintenance of the quality of this program.

Review of the Related Research Literature

What Is Open and Distance Education?

Before the discussion about open and distance education undertaken, it is necessary to clarify the terms open learning and distance learning. In the field of non-traditional, post-school education, open learning and distance learning are terms which are often used interchangeable. Some propose that there is no distinction between the two (Rumble, 1989), and that "distance learning is a sub-category of open learning" (Lewis & Spencer, 1986, p.17); Garrison (1990) also noted that "Open learning systems are not equivalent to...distance education" (p. 119). Foks (1987) stated that, "Open learning is not synonymous with distance education" (p. 74).

In a general term, distance education, mainly serves learners who cannot attend face-to-face programs due to unforeseen circumstances. Learners stay at their convenient place and follow the course, do the assignments, and interact with each other and the teacher via internet. In other words, they take the responsibility of their own learning. Sampson (2003:104) defines distance learning as "... a mode of delivery independent learning at a distance through the means of self-study texts and noncontiguous communication". As Holmberg (1989:24) states, people prefer distance education for "the convenience, flexibility and adaptability of this mode of education to suit individual students' needs". Distance education appears in the educational field as a new technique because of the increasing demand for these flexible and convenient aspects.

BEd program of BOU

Bangladesh Open University (BOU) is the only public sector university in Bangladesh that is providing a wide variety of education program by open and distance mode. Bangladesh Open University (BOU) was established under the Act No. 38 of the Parliament in 1992 (Bangladesh Gazette, 1992). BOU played a vital role in the field of teacher education since 1992. In 1992, the educational program of Bangladesh Open University was started with the inauguration of BEd program. School of Education (SOE) offered this program. The main responsibility of this program is to develop theoretical, conceptual, and practical knowledge, understanding and skill of the target groups in pedagogy as well as in subject teaching conducting an efficient teacher education program. [BOU website] The minimum duration of the program is 1 year. This program is divided into two semesters and each semester duration is six months. BOU is running this program with the support of twenty tutorial centers all over the country.

Importance of BEd Programs through ODL

Bangladesh needs a huge number of well-trained teachers to liquidate literacy and to accelerate the role of her socio-economic development. For this reason, a regular BEd degree program has been in operation for quite a long time in Bangladesh. The course was conducted by fourteen teachers' training colleges (TTC) located in different regions of the country. With their existing facilities, fourteen teachers' training colleges had provided training only a little number of trainees yearly. Though, a great need for providing training to the large number of untrained graduate teachers who were working in different schools was required.

Since 1992, BOU was running its Teacher Education program successfully by identifying Government Teacher's Training colleges and some other reputed institutions as its study centers for conducting theory and teaching practice classes during weekends. Every year a large amount of student successfully completed their BEd degree from BOU. And most of these learners have got their promotions and increments in their existing organizations. This is one of the life satisfaction components for any individual who achieves in his life and who gets full satisfaction.

ODL Learning Management System for BEd. program

Employed people, who want to improve their educational qualifications, ODL system is the most feasible alternative method of study. If the working people complete any extra degree, they will get rewards in terms of increments and promotions in their existing jobs. ODL system provides the better opportunities for those who want to improve their educational qualifications while working. For the teachers Bangladesh Open University is the only institute who provide BEd degree through ODL. The learning process in ODL for BEd learners are given in figure 1.

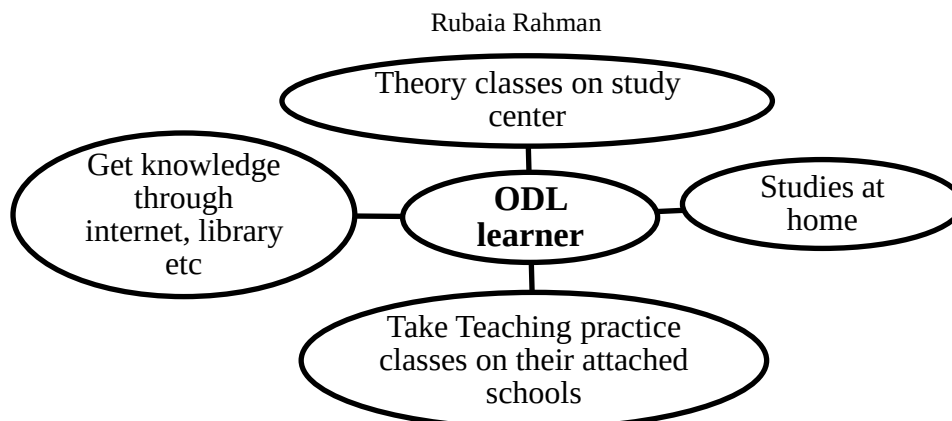


Figure 1: ODL Learning Management System for BEd. program

Methodology

This study was carried out in School of Education of Bangladesh Open University. Both qualitative and quantitative approach was followed in this study. A cross-sectional study design was used to collect the quantitative data from the students. The duration of data collection was from September 2018 to December 2018. The entire list of learners of BEd program served as sampling frame and the learners were randomly selected for the study. There are Twenty (20) study centers of BEd program of BOU and the respondents were the students from 6 study centers among the 20 study centers. Data were collected from 120 students within the study sample. Structured self-administrated Bengali version questionnaires were used to collect the data from the learners. Before distribution of the questionnaire amongst randomly selected respondents a prior consent and permission was sought from the respective respondents.

The questionnaire consisted of twenty closed-type questions, divided into four categories:

- demographic information,
- satisfaction from studies, assessment system and student support service
- Question Regarding Course Fees
- tutor's performance, communication and interaction between the tutor and the students

Five-point Likert Scale was used for some questions. Collected data were analyzed using the Microsoft excel.

Findings and Discussion

Demographic Profile of the Learners:

Demographic information of the participants is given on Table 1.

Table 1: Demographic information of the participants

Demographic Information	Features	Learners	
		n	%
Gender	Male	71	59.2
	Female	49	40.8

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Age	20-30 Years	38	31.7
	30-40 Years	63	52.5
	Above 40 Years	19	15.8
Educational Qualification	Bachelor's (pass) degree holders	41	34.2
	Bachelor's (Honors) degree holders	58	48.3
	Master's degree holders	21	17.5
Working Status	Teacher	87	72.5
	Govt. job employee	11	9.2
	Private job employee	13	10.8
	Unemployed	9	7.5

Note: n=number of participants

This study shows that about 120 learners were responded in the study. It shows that male participants were heavier than female participants and the ratio was 71:49. Distance education gives opportunity to learners of any age or level to study. The statement reflected in this study also. The study showed that 31.7% (n=38) of the learners were aged between 20-30, 52.5% (n=63) of the learners were between 30-40 and 15.8% (n=19) were above 40. Of the 120 learners in the sample, 41 (34.2%) were Bachelor's (pass) degree holders, 58 (48.3%) were Bachelor's (Honors) degree holders, 21 (17.5%) were Master's degree holders. Amongst the learners 72.5% were teacher, 9.2% were Govt. job holder, 10.8% were private employees and only 7.5% learners were unemployed.

Learner's perception towards BEd. Program of BOU:

Learners were asked to give their opinion on BEd program of BOU. They expressed that it was a nice opportunity to get a BEd degree with a flexible way. As most of the learners were job holders, they had no pressure to away from their current job. As the tutorial classes and the examinations of BOU were held on holiday it was a great advantage for them. Table 2 shows that 76.7% (n=92) of the learners attended tutorial classes regularly and 23.3% (n=28) of the learners did not attend regularly. Most of the participants thought that the number of tutorial class were insufficient. Whereas larger amount of the participants assured that they were satisfied with the quality of the program. From the table it also can be say that 62.5% learners were satisfied with the teaching skills of the tutor and 37.5% of them were not.

Table 2: Learner's perception towards BEd. Program of BOU

Questions	Yes		No	
	n	%	n	%
Did you attend tutorial class regularly?	92	76.7	28	23.3
Do you think that the number of tutorial class is enough?	53	44.2	67	55.8
Are you satisfy with the quality of the program?	86	71.7	34	28.3
Tutors teaching skill made me feel satisfied with the course.	75	62.5	45	37.5

It was found from the survey (figure 2) that above 40.8%(n=49) of the respondents agreed and 17.5% (n=21) strongly agreed that the assessment system is appropriate.

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29.2% (n=35) of them disagree with the statement and only 5.8%(7) of them strongly disagree. Whereas 6.7% (n=8) of them were neutral.

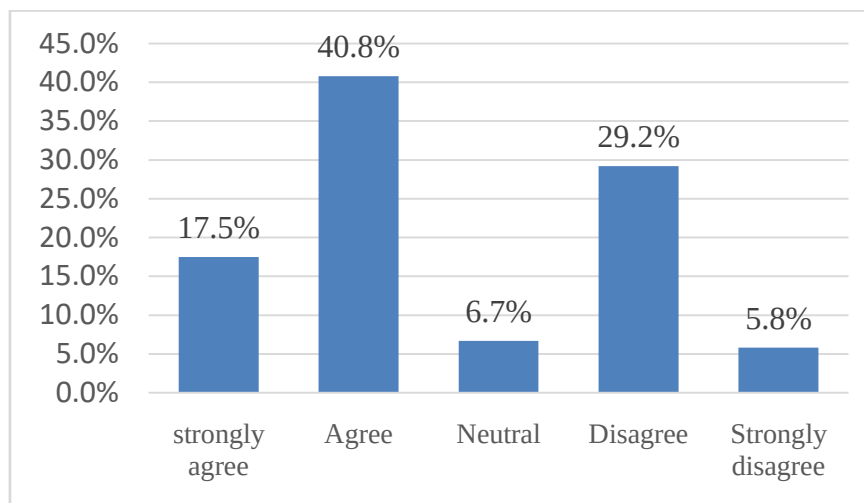


Figure 2: Learners opinion regarding the Assessment System

Learners Opinion Regarding the Course Fee

From the study it was found that amongst the learners 59(49.2%) expressed that the course fee of this program is acceptable which is shown in figure 3. Again 40(33.3%) of them thought that it is expensive, 11(9.2%) said that it is too expensive and only 3(2.5%) of them thought that the course fee is cheap. But 7(5.8%) of them were neutral.

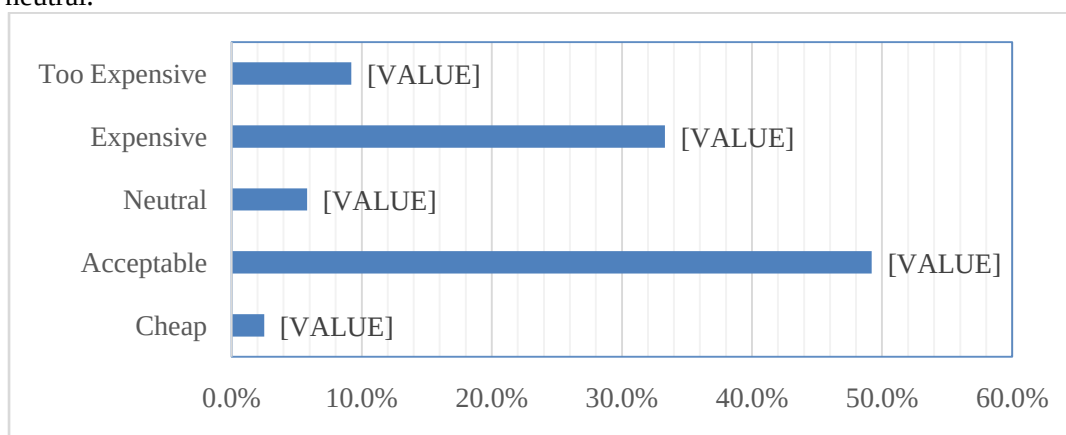


Figure 3: Learners Opinion regarding the Course Fee of BEd program

Learners Attitude Regarding Quality of Text Materials

The study materials designed for BEd program was rated by the students as excellent (5.8%, n=7), good (37.5%, n= 45), not so good (17.5%, n=21), Average (34.2%, n=41) and bad (5.0%, n=6) which implies that text materials have achieved the higher student satisfaction level. The percentages are shown in Figure 4.

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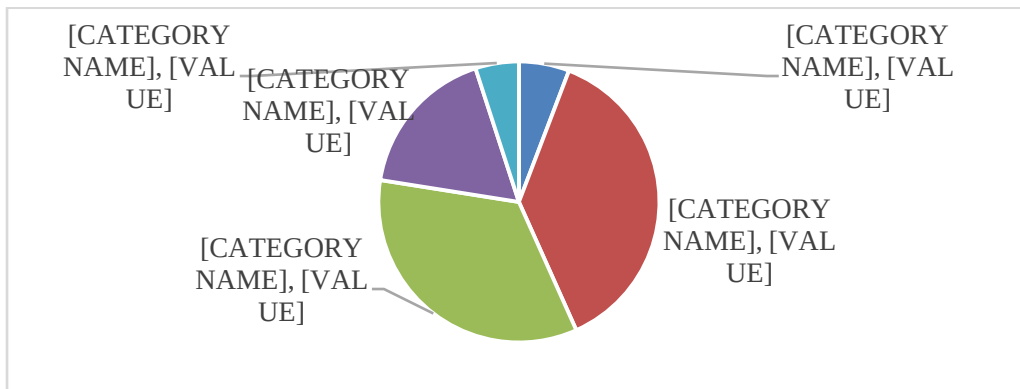


Figure 4: Learners Attitude Regarding the Quality of Text Materials

Learners Attitude towards Tutorial Service and Student Support Services

The success of distance education system depends on the quality of the tutorial service and student support services. When the learners of the BEd program were asked about tutorial service, 40% (n=48) of the learners expressed that tutorial services was average, 10% (n=12) stated that it was very good, 30% (n=36) said that it was good, 16.7% (n=20) stated it was not up to the mark and 3.3% (n=4) of the learners point out that it was bad (Figure 5). When they were questioned about the quality of student support service majority of the learners were not satisfied about it. Only 3(2.5%) of them stated that it was very good, 24(20%) expressed that it was good, 39 (32.5%) said that it was average. Whereas 45 (37.5%) learners revealed that the service was not so good and 9(7.5%) of them thought that it was bad. Figure 5 shows the percentage.

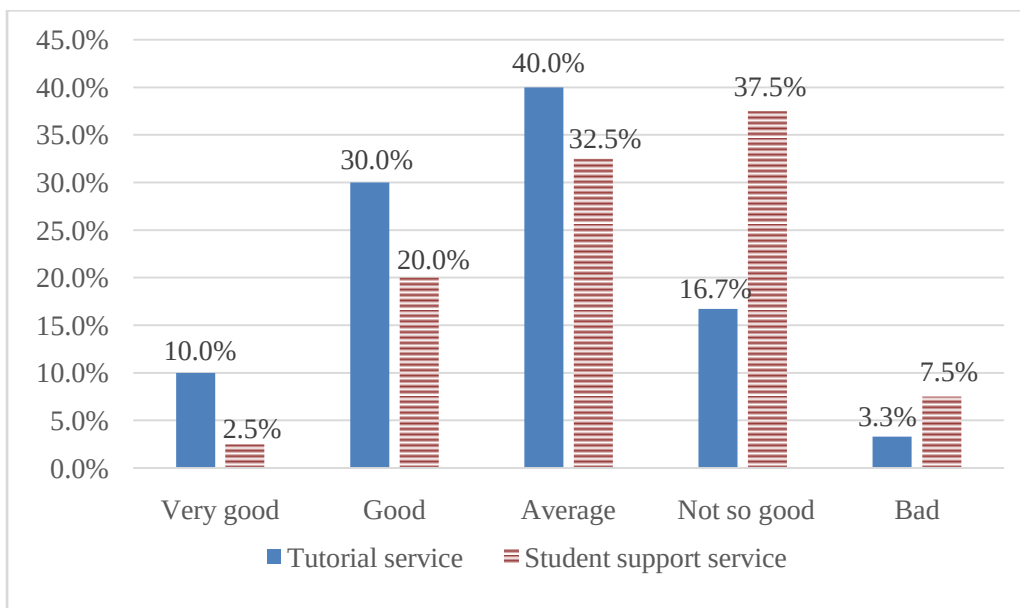


Figure 5: Learners Attitude towards Tutorial Service and Student Support Services

Recommendations

This study has been conducted to get an idea about the current situation of BEd program of BOU. The findings of this study from the learners provide valuable implications for further research. To make the BEd program more effective and fruitful to the learners following recommendations could be proposed:

- Proper and effective communication should maintain between School of Education, tutorial centers and regional centers.
- Proper designing of program structure and course curriculum.
- Text materials should be simple and easy to understand.
- The attitude of the Student Support Services should be always positive towards the learners and should be more active to promote this program.
- More research should be done by the faculty and researcher to get new ideas from the learners, tutors, coordinators, and others administrative staff of BOU.
- Finally, to promote distance learning system SoE should closely control and regularly monitor tutorial center activities of the BEd program.

Conclusion

It can be said that the demand of teachers' education through ODL mode of education is increasing day by day for working people. The purpose of this paper is to examine the satisfaction of the learners of BEd program of BOU in terms of the education quality. Various problems faced by the students have been identified by conducting interview with selected learners. Learners' views towards BEd program of BOU were very positive, though there were some downsides of the program. The results of the study highlighted several areas in which students felt let down by the course, especially in terms of learning support, and access to and provision of resource materials. Teachers' education through ODL mode provided by the BOU, is meeting the needs of some learners, but this is clearly not the case for all learners.

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