

Working Status of SSC and HSC Students of BOU: Impact on Poverty Alleviation

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INTRODUCTION

In the present day, from national and international perspectives, quality is at the top of most agendas. Similarly improving quality of education is probably the most important task facing any educational institution. Quality of education has significant impact and invaluable contribution to the area of human development. Students, therefore, have the right to receive an education of good quality and quality of education is associated with different academic and institutional factors. As societies evolve from the post industrial era to the information of age, distance education in the developing country has got the central importance and subject to study.

The Open School of Bangladesh Open University (BOU) is presently imparting two educational programs, namely Secondary School certificate and Higher Secondary School Certificate programs. These programs are basically providing an excellent opportunity of continuing education to those, who were either dropped out from basic education program, both in formal and non-formal education sectors or were unable to avail further educational opportunities due to various reasons. About 5 years ago two programs have earned recognition of equivalency to those of formal education sector, which has naturally raised a question of quality assurance of BOU programs. The Open School, one of the faculty of BOU is providing two vital programs, SSC and HSC, for last couple of years to the students of secondary and higher secondary level who had not the privilege to complete it through the national system. Through these programs Open School is supplementing the initiative of the govt. to achieve the goal of EFA and MDG. In this context a study has been conducted with the following objectives.

- Asses the present status of the SSC and HSC graduates of the Open School in the job market;
- Assess the socio- economic benefits of the programs on their personal life;
- Assess the role of the programs in poverty alleviation from the society;
- Identify the role of the SSC and HSC programs of BOU in achieving the MDG by the government.

POPULATION AND SAMPLE

SSC and HSC graduates of Open School who passed from BOU, amongst them 50 graduates, from SSC and 50 from HSC graduates have been selected for the study.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Quantitative and Qualitative methodology has been adopted. Documentary analysis is also done. Both open and close ended questionnaire was supplied to the target group. The methodologies for the successful findings of the study were followed:

- Documentary analysis
- Record observation
- Collection of information through questionnaire

RESULTS OF THE FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

To asses the present status of the SSC and HSC graduates of the Open School in the job market; a set of open-ended and close-ended questionnaire is supplied to the target group.

Students passed SSC and HSC are included in the target groups; the feedback from the questionnaire is satisfactory. The opinion collected is shown below through the various tables. Among the target group 55 percent are female and 45 percent are male. Amongst the respondents 8% are Hindu and 92% are Muslim. Amongst the respondents 46% are married and 54% are unmarried. The age of the respondents is within 25.

Table-1
The status of students before admitting in BOU

Respondents	Student	Service
SSC Students	58%	42%
HSC Students	26%	74%

The students passed SSC and the students passed HSC have been separately in the table. 58% of the SSC passed students were simply students before taking admission in BOU and 42% were either service holder or in agriculture based job or small business. 74% of the HSC passed students were in service and 26% were simply students.

Table-2
After completion of the program get a better job

Respondents	YES	NO
SSC	65%	35%
HSC	72%	28%

After completion of the SSC program 65% got better job or got promotion and 35% still do not get better job. 72% HSC students got better job after completion the HSC program because it was the pre-requisite of their promotion and 28% do not get any promotion but they are expecting to get a better job or up gradation of their jobs.

Table-3
The certificate of BOU helps in getting job
Opinion of both SSC and HSC passed students

BOU helps in getting job where the pre-requisite is SSC and HSC pass.
The certificate from BOU helps 60% for the up gradation of their jobs.
Due to poverty most of the students work in agricultural field or small business and simultaneously they did their degree from BOU.
The equivalency of the certificate of BOU enhances almost the same possibility of getting jobs with the other candidate who passed from traditional educational institution.
The certificate of BOU ensures the eligibility of applying for higher studies in any reputed public or private university.

Table-4
The percentage of monthly income increase after the completion of the degree from BOU

Respondents	Yes	No	N/A	Percentage of increasing income
SSC	67%	13%	20%	30-40%
HSC	74%	11%	15%	50-55%

The respondents were asked whether their income has increased or not or in the other way whether the degree of BOU has helped them in their poverty alleviation. 67% of SSC passed students said yes their income has increased, 13% has disagreed and 20% respondents did not answer. Amongst the HSC passed students 74% said yes their income has increased, 11% has disagreed and 15% did not give any answer. Most surprisingly it has been observed from the findings of the questionnaire that significant amount of money has increased after the completion of BOU degree.

Table-5

Expectation before taking admission in BOU program
Findings of both SSC and HSC passed Students.

Subjects	Yes	No
Increase of social and family esteem	95%	05%
Possibility of getting new jobs	86%	14%
Up gradation of the job status	73%	17%
To improve life style by increasing of income	65%	35%
To involve with modern education	98%	02%

Distance education offers a new format for teaching and learning. In this field, technology offers many promises; many of the promises of distance learning are financial in nature. The students of BOU are mainly from disadvantaged class, those who could not carry out their education in the traditional institution due to poverty. Most of the students have to take the responsibility of their family either doing job or helping in household activities or in agricultural field. Once they have a dream to be educated in the traditional institution which they could not fulfill due to time consume and due to poverty. So when they got admitted to the Open University, they have lot of expectation. Considering the point as an important issue, the question is asked about their expectation. 95% students agree that they expect that their family and societal status will increase, 05% has disagree with the matter. 86% expect that job opportunity will increase and 14% have no expectation. 73% expected that after completion of their study, their job will be upgraded and 17% have no idea. 65% students wanted to change their lifestyle by developing their economic position and 35% were not sure. 98% students expected that they will be introduced with the modern technology and up dated knowledge and 02% have no idea

Table-6
Achievement after completion of degree from BOU, both the students of SSC and HSC

Subjects	Not t all	Partially	Satisfactory	All
Increase in the status in family and society	00%	02%	94%	04%
Possibility of getting new jobs	00%	00%	68%	32%
Up gradation of the job status	00%	00%	37%	63%
To improve life style by increasing of income	13%	26%	55%	06%
To involve with modern education	00%	11%	89%	00%

02% students agree that partially their family and societal status have been increased, 94% said satisfactorily their family and societal prestige has been increased and 04% have completely satisfied. 68% students said that the possibility of getting new job has increased and 32% said that they got new jobs. 37% said that they are satisfied with the upgraded knowledge of BOU and 63% said that their expectation is fully fulfilled. 13% students said that after completion of the degree from BOU their income has not increased, 26% said that partially increased, 55% said that satisfactorily increased and 06% said that their income has increased according to their expectation. 11% agree that the knowledge of BOU is updated, 89% are satisfied with the knowledge.

Table-7
Inspire other friends to study in BOU

Respondents	Yes	No
SSC Students	100%	00%
HSC Students	100%	00%

100% students inspire their friends to study in BOU. They were asked about the reason behind this. They put some reasons:

- Anybody could carry their study side by side with their profession
- The exam schedule is in Friday, which is holiday
- Tutorial classes are in Friday.

- Women could perform their household duties because in BOU there are no classes. Self-learning material is student friendly
- It is cost-effective and time consuming.
- To get a job in abroad, this certificate will help
- As a primary teacher it is necessary to be SSC passed and in Defense it is also necessary to be SSC passed to become a soldier. So BOU education is helping the individual as well as to the state. A large number of students are getting job as a teacher of primary education and in defense.
- There is no age bar.
- Semester system of exam
- Flexible time of appearing exam. One could complete their degree within 5 years, which is 2 years in traditional system.
- Creation of self-employment opportunity
- Course completion expenditure is less

Comments from the students about the improvement of BOU program to make it more fruitful in poverty alleviation:

- Introduce vocational education in SSC and HSC program
- More tutorial centre nearby the home of the students
- Delivery the textbooks in due time
- Exam according to the academic calendar
- Decentralization of power in getting testimonial and certificate. At present the poor students have to come at BOU campus in Gazipur to collect their testimonial and certificate, sometimes due to unavoidable circumstances it takes two or three days. They are so poor it becomes almost impossible for someone to manage accommodation and food outside their home
- Own satellite channel of BOU for continuous educational program so that everybody could be benefited from the program
- Banking system for the students should be easier when they deposited money and collect bank draft
- Development of guide book making the BOU program easier and acceptable to the students
- Still most of the people in our country give lower status to BOU students. But we know that the program got equivalency from the state. So awareness cell and awareness through audio-visual program should be incorporated in BOU
- More tutorial class and model test should be included
- Tutor should be more trained in distance learning, so that they should take care of the students properly
- Course fee should be reduced
- Curriculum should be periodically revised and updated in order to introduce the recent development of the programs
- Incentives should be given to the meritorious students
- More audio-visual program in BOU
- Finally, administration of distance education has a wider scope flexibility to innovate an exceptional something. Their potentiality, promptness in decision making and pragmatic action could ensure the quality of any programs in distance education

EXPECTED RESULT

The research explore the impact of the Secondary School Certificate and Higher Secondary Certificate program of BOU on poverty alleviation and will further help to consolidate BOU's role in such activities by exploring areas of improvement and future action plan.

CONCLUSION

While secondary age group students are definitely thought to need environment of the school as support for their learning, the opportunity should be given to the students to complete their education with competence. However technologies need to be used in the distance mode in such a way as to promote them as potential

workforce in the society. Component of quality in technology-based educational material include, instructional design and delivery and student support. Successful distance education system includes interaction between teachers and students, between students and learning environment and amongst students themselves, as well as active interaction in the classroom. Interaction takes many forms; it is not just limited to audio and video, or solely to teachers and students interaction. It represents the connections feel with the distance teachers, the local teachers and the facilitators and then peers. Usually, it is thought that classroom is the best place for learning to occur. Distance learning methodologies judged primarily on their abilities to duplicate classroom experience. Policies and strategies need to be revised to guarantee that the distance education do not assure a single-campus delivery model but are effective, supportive for multi-campus students. By proper application of distance education program, it will be possible to make an effective linkage between education and economic development of the state. Finally, it can be said that the quality of the successful program of distance education could be assured, if the programs rely on the consistent and integrated efforts of students, faculty, facilitators, support staff and administrators. To meet the global challenge, to meet the global economy by producing effective manpower, quality of the institution should be ensured.

The foregoing discussions give an overview of the impact of BOU education in poverty alleviation and enhancement of social status. It has also proven an effectiveness or impact of BOU on the empowerment of the students. As such it is expected that implementation of the proposed comments of the students of BOU, will definitely make to able BOU in offering a broader scope of access to underprivileged mass education program. Before that, a critical analysis of different aspect of this program is necessary and also should have a need based well-conceived plan. BOU should make a conscious step towards fulfillment of its constitutional commitment of providing educational opportunities to the underprivileged population of the country and help Govt. in implementing MDG.