Exploring Educational Priorities in Post-Pandemic Era: Tertiary Level EFL Context of Bangladesh

By

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A thesis submitted to the Brac Institute of Languages (BIL) in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of MA in TESOL

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Declaration

It is hereby declared that

1. The thesis submitted is my own original work while completing degree at Brac University.

2. The thesis does not contain material previously published or written by a third party, except where this is appropriately cited through full and accurate referencing.

3. The thesis does not contain material which has been accepted, or submitted, for any other degree or diploma at a university or other institution.

4. I have acknowledged all main sources of help.

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Approval

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Ethics Statement

I state that the thesis entitled "Exploring Educational Priorities in Post-Pandemic Era: Tertiary Level EFL Context of Bangladesh" is my original work submitted to BIL as a partial requirement for my MA in TESOL degree. No part of this work has been plagiarized or copied from any other published or unpublished work. I acknowledge that I have not adopted any unfair means while writing this thesis. Moreover, I have maintained the APA 7th style and cited the pertinent literature correctly in both the in-text and reference sections. Finally, I accept that if any unethical element is noticed in this work, it can lead to the cancellation of this submission.

Abstract

An educational priority in a curricular approach to education is an idealistic assertion that defines what students will learn due to participating in educational opportunities provided by an institution or division at a particular college or university (What Is Educational Priority | IGI Global, n.d.). There is no denying that the COVID-19 pandemic has created the necessity of many educational priorities (beyond traditional teaching-learning practices) at different levels of education, which can play a significant role in ELT pedagogy in the present time. Therefore, this study follows a qualitative approach where I conducted semi-structured interviews with 6 tertiary-level EFL teachers from 5 private universities and 4 TESOL students from 2 private universities in Bangladesh, to determine the extent those institutions have incorporated the post-pandemic educational priorities, mainly digital resources, empathy, mental well-being, blended classrooms, alternative assessments, 21st-century education and skills, SDG (Sustainable Development Goals), and benignant usage of AI (Artificial Intelligence) in ELT. I analyzed the interview data through a thematic analysis while considering the participants' beliefs, attitudes, insights, and experiences. Finally, this research has explored all these priorities and provided pertinent recommendations on incorporating such priorities for further development of the Bangladeshi EFL context.

Keywords: EFL context; blended learning; empathy and mental well-being; alternative assessments; 21st-century skills; SDG; AI; CPD.

Dedication

I gladly dedicate this thesis to my lovely parents, Mr. Tapan Das and Ms. Shika Das, who love me unconditionally and always sacrifice their happiness and comfort for me. I am eternally indebted to my parents for their selfless love and motivation.

Acknowledgement

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List of Acronyms

SDG   Sustainable Development Goals

4IR   Fourth Industrial Revolution

LMS   Learning Management System

AI   Artificial Intelligence

CPD   Continuing Professional Development

UGC   University Grants Commission

OBE   Outcome-based Education

IQAC   Institutional Quality Assurance Cell

Shaikat Das Master's Dissertation Educational Priorities Post-Pandemic Era: EFL Context of Bangladesh

Chapter One

Introduction

This chapter covers the background and introduction of the entire study while giving importance to the post-pandemic innovations in EFL teaching-learning and the significance and rationale of the current study. Moreover, the readers will get to know the research questions and objectives of the study while going through this chapter.

1.1 Introduction and Background of the Study

The COVID-19 pandemic hit the world at the end of 2019, affecting almost every nation's essential sectors. The education sector of Bangladesh was affected by the hit in March 2020, and all the educational institutions were closed.

Meanwhile, the Bangladesh Government and UGC (University Grants Commission) took the initiative of distance online teaching-learning at every level of education. As a result, online Educators have been extensively used for teaching and learning the English language. Until now, blended learning has become the standard teaching method at all academic levels, including higher education, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic (Menggo & Darong, 2022). According to Aktar et al. (2022), online education is pre-planned, organized, and methodically created over time to address particular needs that offline or in-person education does not provide. However, many people have questioned the benefits of using virtual instruction and testing. Mainly how to teach and evaluate the four English language skills—listening, reading, writing, and speaking through online sessions when most educators and learners are essentially devoid of the necessary technical means and internet access (Hossain, 2021). According to Khan (2021), despite confronting enormous challenges, EFL teachers

have continued the teaching-learning process during the dire situation of COVID-19 in Bangladesh. Some of the primary challenges in education in the Bangladeshi context have been identified in a study by the World Bank in 2020, such as the lack of access to TV-based learning programs for a large number of students, the digital divide between wealthy and poverty-stricken students, the tendency of doing more household chores than studying and significant gender discrimination ("Keeping Bangladesh's Students", 2021). Several language educationalists have previously brought up the subject of inequality and student empowerment in foreign language classrooms (Benesch, 1999; Pennycook, 2001), as cited in (Al-Nofaie, 2023).

Additionally, an article reported by Unicef (2021) claimed that cognitive deficit, mental discomfort, missed school meals and routine vaccines, a higher likelihood of leaving formal education, a rise in child labor, and an upsurge in child marriage are just a few of the startling side effects of school closures (Selim & Thaung, 2021). Empathy, in this regard, is a priority. According to Stojiljkovi et al. (2012), as cited in (Barton & Garvis, 2019), empathy is a crucial quality of effective educators. Empathy, thus, facilitates efficient communication between educators and students. Teachers who possess empathy can better manage their many responsibilities, including dealing with parents in society.

On top of that, focusing on the teachers' importance of digital literacy, Palacios-Hidalgo and Huertas-Abril (2022) claim that after the pandemic's effect on education, the use of technology appears to be the only option to ensure that teaching and learning continue perpetually. Besides, regarding the mental well-being of the students, which is an essential educational priority, Sauer et al. (2022) state that to prevent a situation where a significant percentage of current pupils and soon-to-be fully adult people are battling mental health difficulties like depression or post-traumatic stress disorder, disruptions in mental well-being

must be adequately examined. Another post-pandemic priority is an alternative assessment system, which has reportedly acquired some popularity in the TESOL community, according to Brown and Hudson (1998), because language-testing procedures attributed to language learning are inherently distinct from those employed in other fields of study (Al-Mahrooqi & Denman, 2018). Besides, it cannot be denied that incorporating 21st-century skills and the SDG in EFL teaching-learning is inevitable due to their enormous contribution to making students skilled and responsible in this era. Finally, due to the emergence of AI, many sectors, including education, are highly affected positively and negatively. Therefore, it is time to explore whether ELT practitioners consider the usage of AI as a threat or opportunity in the teaching-learning process. This study, thus, mainly aims at exploring the application of the post-pandemic priorities, such as employing empathy-based education, using digital resources, addressing digital inequalities, ensuring the mental well-being of the students, implementing blended and flipped classrooms, doing alternative assessments, incorporating priorities of 21st-century education and skills, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and beneficial usage of AI (Artificial Intelligence), which are yet to be explored in the tertiary EFL context of Bangladesh. Private universities have been particularly focused as I belong to a private university and I have observed many of these priorities in my university and would like to explore them in other privately run universities in Bangladesh.

1.2 Problem Statement

The COVID-19 pandemic has taught the education system that traditional classrooms can be replaced with digital classrooms, and students can be taught effectively through various digital platforms and resources. However, there are subtle issues that, if not dealt with sincerely, holistic and quality education is impossible. There is no denying that today is a post-pandemic era, and the way teaching-learning occurred during the pandemic is still

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pertinent in education to a great extent. These priorities must be met if we want to tackle such challenging situations in the future. Therefore, it is high time the researchers explored these priorities in the educational fields and became well-equipped to strengthen EFL teaching-learning in this post-pandemic era.

1.3 Research Questions

1) What decisions did the institutions follow while including the educational priorities in the EFL curriculum during the pandemic?

2) Which educational priorities and specific measures did private universities in Bangladesh take to maintain an effective EFL teaching-learning process in the post-COVID-19 period?

3) How do the teachers consolidate their while-pandemic "knowledge gain" and "knowledge transfer" in this Post-pandemic era? Moreover, why do they do so?

1.4 Research Objectives

1) To determine the institutions' decisions while including the educational priorities in the EFL curriculum during the pandemic.

2) To discover the educational priorities and specific measures private universities in Bangladesh have taken to maintain an effective EFL teaching-learning process in the post-COVID-19 period.

3) To explore the instructional (dynamics) changes and adaptations in the post-pandemic era and how the teachers defend their position in this regard.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

This chapter highlights the relevant literature based on the post-pandemic educational priorities in ELT, which incorporates blended learning, LMS, mental well-being, alternative assessments, priorities of 21st-century education and skills, SDGs, 4IR, AI, CPD, post-pandemic policies by UGC Bangladesh, post-pandemic private university EFL context of Bangladesh, the conceptual framework and literature gap.

2.1 Blended Learning

Blended learning, sometimes called "hybrid learning," combines traditional classroom instruction with online learning (Western Governors University, 2021). Blended learning necessitates the adaptation of educators and learners to digital technology, modern teaching techniques, flexible educational processes, and the efficacy of time, location, expenditures, learning motivation, and learning autonomy (Menggo, 2022). Furthermore, blended learning is an innovation in education that adapts to changing patterns of social interaction and the evolution of information technology (Abdullah, 2018; Zhang & Zhu, 2017) as cited in (Menggo, 2022). During COVID-19, blended learning permitted a partial restoration to the intended 'normalization' while maintaining the contemporary hygienic measures of social distance and seating capacity (Batista-Toledo & Gavilan, 2022). However, according to Oyedotun (2020), a new reality emerged in the education industry during the COVID-19 pandemic. He believes that the pandemic has revealed and aggravated inequality in underdeveloped nations, with the author arguing that the digital divide between students and professors has suddenly become evident since Internet access varies by location. To mitigate the negative consequences, many educational institutions started using Massive Open Online

Courses (MOOC) and Small Private Online Courses (SPOC) in the course of learning, which include video lectures, assignments with feedback, interactive experimentation, and various discussion forums (Brauweiler 2013, 2014c; Brauweiler & Noack, 2020; Brauweiler & Scholz, 2015) as cited in (Dyczkowska, 2021). Fernandez et al. (2022) conducted a case study in India during the pandemic, where they claimed that the compatibility of both synchronous and asynchronous learning could direct toward a balanced teaching-learning. In a Narrative Study on the EFL teachers' teaching experience during the pandemic, Aktar et al. (2022) mentioned that teachers must possess technological expertise alongside subject and pedagogical knowledge, which include the ability to operate a variety of devices, utilize necessary software and apps, track relevant materials from Open Education Resources (OER), choose, adapt, and adopt online materials, and handle on line platforms for learning management systems and transfer, such as Zoom, Google Meet, Google Classroom, Microsoft Teams, Canvas, and Moodle.

2.2 LMS (Learning Management System)

According to Chaw and Tang (2018), The LMS is an online mechanism that provides educational institutions, from the primary to the tertiary levels, with a practical solution for delivering learning, equipped with features like content management and student administration. The LMS offers a valuable platform for students to access course materials, take online tests, and more at a time and location that is feasible for them (Poulova et al., 2015). One of its primary strengths is that the LMS utilizes the web to provide collaborative features like blogs, forums, and Wikis to support education o outside of traditional physical classrooms (Al-Fadly, 2013).

2.3 Empathy

Empathy is the competency to understand and experience another person's ideas, feelings, and experiences, which entails both perceiving another person's emotional condition and experiencing comparable emotions (cognitive empathy) on one's own (affective empathy) (National Geographic Education Staff, 2022). Teacher empathy is demonstrated by educators' efforts to truly understand their students' personal and public circumstances, respond appropriately to their feelings, and convey their recognition and concern for them (Meyers et al., 2019) as cited in (Tan, 2022). Sharing personal narratives, reading appropriate literature, collaborative learning, cross-age, and peer teaching, and role-playing are all successful methods to foster empathy in learners (Decety & Yoder, 2016; Oxley, 2011; Pinker, 2011; Horsthemke, 2015) as cited in (Tan, 2022). According to Olderbak et al. (2014) and Scherer (1984), as cited in (Aldrup et al., 2022), affective empathy may stimulate emotions that are positive as well as negative because emotions are multidimensional and different types of emotions will result in different physiological and behavioral responses.

2.4 Mental Well-being

The World Health Organization (2004) frames mental health as a component of a broader behavior set that leads to a sound, blissful, and fulfilling life (Nortje, 2023). Much emphasis has recently been given to mental health, as its importance in attaining sustainable global development goals has risen (Jamshaid et al., 2023). The researchers also claim that many studies on college or university students' mental health during COVID indicate a wide range of findings, with clinical diagnoses of depression increasing by 1.3% to 100% and anxiety increasing by 1.3% to 100% (Jamshaid et al., 2023).

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2.5 Alternative Assessments

Evaluation determines the value and efficacy of educational programs and items. In contrast, assessment is described as assessing student learning and human traits such as aptitude and motivation (Reeves, 2000). The term "alternative assessment" refers to those unconventional or alternative types of assessment that started to appear in schools during the 1990s in reaction to the perceived shortcomings of more conventional assessments, particularly standardized tests (Al-Mahrooqi & Denman, 2018, pp. 4851– 4856). Formative and summative assessments are alternative online assessments that can be used in school, which include evaluations of the student's cognitive abilities, performance, writings and journals, portfolios, and self and peer evaluations (Arifuddin et al., 2021). Formative assessment discerns student learning and delivers constant feedback that students and teachers may utilize to strengthen their learning experience. In contrast, Summative assessments are intended to assess student learning by comparing it to an established standard or benchmark after a unit of teaching (Carnegie Mellon University, n.d.). According to Aktar et al. (2022), after evaluating the shortcomings of the traditional testing system, it is time to reconsider and suggest alternatives, such as frequent and online formative assessments using online quizzes, activity sheets, summaries, and observations, as well as project-based assignments, student-friendly and safe assessment methods such as crafting videos and creating e-portfolios.

2.6 Priorities of 21st-Century Education and Skills

The term "21st-century skills" implies a broad range of knowledge, abilities, work habits, and personality traits that are thought to be crucial for success in today's world, particularly in higher education programs, modern careers, and workplaces, by instructors, reformers of schools, professors at colleges, employers, and other individuals (Sabbott, 2016). Teachers are tasked with determining whether the present competencies and teaching practices are

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intended to incorporate the 21st-century frameworks, which offer strategies to determine the skillset learners must develop for employment in the future workforce (González-Pérez & Ramírez-Montoya, 2022). According to the researchers, three categories of competencies are listed: (1) learning skills (innovation, critical thinking, problem-solving, and communication and collaboration); (2) literacy skills (information, media, and ICT literacy); and (3) life skills (adaptability, flexibility, initiative, and self-direction; social and intercultural competence; productivity, accountability, and leadership and responsibility).

2.7 SDG (Sustainable Development Goals)

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), commenced by the United Nations (UN), is a global framework related to Critical English Language Teaching that must be achieved globally by 2030 (Mambu, 2022). According to Ferrer-Estévez and Chalmeta (2021), the UN emphasizes the importance of achieving SDGs4 (Quality Education), the seventh goal of which (4.7) states: *" By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship, and appreciation of cultural diversity and culture's contribution to sustainable development."* UNESCO Assistant Director-General for Education Quian Tang indicates the dual meaning of SDG 4 in the introduction of the book "Education for the SDGs": The acquisition of knowledge, abilities, attitudes, and behaviors that lead people in the direction of a sustainable future is what makes education both a goal itself, as well as a tool for fostering the social transformation required for the accomplishment of the other global goals (Ferrer-Estévez & Chalmeta, 2021).

2.8 AI (Artificial Intelligence)

"AI" refers to highly advanced and potent computing technology that can effectively think for itself and respond quickly based on the information provided (Moore, 2019). Mijwil et al. (2023) opine that through e-learning and periodic instruction, this science aids learners effectively because these programs thrive for helping students locate the necessary study material skillfully and access any resource they opt for without restriction. In the last two years, the education sector has undergone enormous change, and e-learning has begun to take hold in schools, colleges, and universities. Therefore, Artificial intelligence applications are now required in teaching (Mijwil et al., 2023). The efforts to tackle the pandemic provide many breakthroughs, and the Fourth Industrial Revolution's developing technologies, such as artificial intelligence (AI), have the potential to influence how future generations of students will be educated significantly (World Economic Forum, 2021) as cited in (Aktar et al., 2022).

2.9 4IR (Fourth Industrial Revolution)

Founder and Executive Chairman of the World Economic Forum (WEF), Klaus Schwab invented the term 4IR (Fourth Industrial Revolution) (Lavopa & Delera, 2021). The fourth industrial revolution (4IR) is a significant emergent sociological phenomenon that has the potential to reshape society and individuals throughout the world in unprecedented ways. It is defined as a combination of artificial intelligence, quantum or massive data sets, the Worldwide Web of Things, robots, and the incorporation of interfaces between physical and cyber systems, among other things (Gleason, 2018), as cited in (Carrim, 2022). As a result, we have to harness the opportunity and expertise we possess to mold the Fourth Industrial Revolution and steer it toward a future that represents our shared goals and values (Schwab, 2016). Schwab (2016) also opined that to achieve this, we must first establish a

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comprehensive and globally recognized awareness of how technology affects our existence and reshapes our socioeconomic, cultural, and personal contexts. Oke and Fernandes (2020), as cited in (Avelino & Ismail, 2021), argued that instructors have a crucial role to play in leveraging the potential of using or integrating 4IR in their teaching methods since 4IR has beneficial as well as detrimental impacts on the field of education.

2.10 CPD (Continuing Professional Development)

CPD is a stipulated, continuous, and perpetual process in which educators attempt to enhance their personal and professional attributes, as well as their knowledge, skills, and methods, resulting in their empowerment, agency growth, and betterment of their institution and students (Padwad & Dixit, 2011). CPD programs with a transformational focus comprise action research and collaborative professional analysis, which allow teachers to experiment with diverse techniques to pursue and enhance their practice. Educators who employ these techniques become reflective professionals who can examine, critique, and improve their practices and shift educational objectives (Kennedy, 2014; Sachs, 2007), as cited in (Abakah et al., 2022). CPD for English language instructors means that teachers who have previously completed fundamental teacher training, either officially or unofficially, are willing or obliged to continue learning to adapt to their constantly shifting teaching context (Berbain et al., 2023).

2.11 Post-pandemic Policies by UGC, Bangladesh

UGC Bangladesh launched two curriculum policies, the OBE Curriculum and the Blended Learning policy, after the COVID-19 pandemic. The OBE Curriculum template (revised) covers the formats of essential academic elements such as course objectives, learning outcomes, learning materials, formative and summative assessments, rubrics and grading, and improvement plan ("Template of Outcome Based Education (OBE) Curriculum (Revised),"

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2021b). The other policy document published by UGC Bangladesh in 2022 emphasizes implementing a blended approach in the post-pandemic era while giving importance to the manifesto of Digital Bangladesh and the Vision 2041 plan of the Bangladesh Government. The policy document defines blended learning as a learning design that strategically, methodically, and effectively combines face-to-face, online, distance, community, smart-phone, computer, TV, radio, and other forms of educational technologies across online and offline environments ("Policy on Blended Learning for Bangladesh," 2022).

2.12 Post-pandemic Private University EFL Context of Bangladesh

According to Nahar et al. (2020), except for a few large universities, COVID-19 has revealed that private universities need more resources to address any issue of such magnitude. Most experts who participated in the research believe that most privately run universities still need to be fully prepared to continue their educational operations online. When many pupils need to prepare to adapt to the new mode of instruction, administering online exams and grading student work create specific challenges (Nahar et al., 2020). Although complete reliance on online teaching-learning was foreign to Bangladeshi EFL students, they have experienced online classes and demonstrated a mixed reaction to the while-pandemic education (Shifat et al., 2021). According to Al-Amin et al. (2021), teachers used various tactics in the changing scenarios to engage students in meaningful learning or provide online space. Giving this sort of support required more time in consultation hours and the preparation of engaging language-learning materials, such as songs and videos, from which learners could derive inspiration (Al-Amin et al., 2021). The post-pandemic university might consider flipping its classrooms by posting reading and research materials, even videotaped lectures, as well as some quizzes and formative assessments online while still meeting with students in actual

classrooms for more lively discussions and practical, hands-on activities (Aktar et al., 2022).

2.13 Conceptual Framework

What the researcher refers to as the Post-pandemic educational priorities also existed before the pandemic. Nevertheless, the necessity of these priorities has accelerated after the pandemic hit. There are constitutional and institutional policies for ensuring quality education for all students in Bangladesh while promoting inclusive practices, 21st-century skills, openness and tolerance, diversity, SDG, compassion and empathy, physical and mental well-being, and equality and equity. However, to what extent the academic stakeholders are maintaining these policies and adopting substantial measures? That is the biggest question in the post-pandemic world. Therefore, the researcher suggests that it is time to take action towards sustainable solutions to all these issues. This study further relates to two learning theories, namely, Lev Vygotsky's "The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)" theory (1962) and David Kolb's theory of "Experiential Learning" (1984). According to Gauvain (2020), Vygotsky's ZPD is frequently addressed with assisted or scaffolded learning since it refers to the student's capacity to accomplish tasks with the help of teachers or more competent peers. This theory is relevant to this study because the teacher participants have shared their opinions on effective scaffolding and peer feedback in the findings and discussion section of the study. Finally, According to Kolb's experiential learning theory, successful learning results from a four-stage procedure (or cycle) that includes solid experience, reflective observation, abstract thoughts, and practical experimentation (Mcleod, 2023). This theory is relevant to the third research objective of this study, where the researcher has explored the instructional dynamics changes of the EFL teachers in the post-pandemic era.

2.14 Literature Gap

From the reviewed literature, we get a glimpse of the educational priorities in the global and local post-pandemic context. However, to what extent these priorities have been incorporated in the Tertiary level EFL context of Bangladesh that needs to be explored for further pedagogic development. This area has not been exclusively explored yet.

Chapter Three

Methodology

This study follows a qualitative approach where the data have been collected through semi-structured interviews to meet the research objectives. The reason behind my following a qualitative approach is that this approach is suitable for exploring the deeper understanding of the participants' beliefs, insights and experiences regarding a complex issue. On the contrary, in quantitative research, we get the statistical and numerical data regarding a particular topic. According to S. B. Mishra (2017), qualitative research focuses on qualitative phenomena and is often more descriptive and challenging to analyze than quantitative data. In-depth non-numerical data analysis is a key component of qualitative research. As my research is largely complex and descriptive, I decided to go for this approach. For congeniality, the interview medium was a mixture of Bengali and English, as the participants were native Bangladeshis.

3.1 Sampling and Interviewing

I purposefully selected 6 EFL teachers from 5 private universities and 4 TESOL students from 2 private Universities in Bangladesh to collect interview data. Purposive sampling is the deliberate selection of informants who are capable of clarifying a particular topic, concept, or phenomenon (Robinson, 2014). As this is small-scale research, I decided to sample a small number of participants. As qualitative data covers the in-depth ideologies and insights of the participants, these 10 participants have sufficed the study's objectives. There are no confined guidelines for sample size in qualitative research; it is determined by the goal of the study, what is in danger, what is valuable, what is plausible, and what course of research can be done within the time limit and with the resources available (Shaheen et al., 2019).

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The following tables demonstrate the academic profiles of the EFL teachers and TESOL students.

Table 1: Teachers' Academic Profile

Symbolic Names	Gender	Teaching Experience	Highest Degree
T1	Male	16 years	MA in ELT
T2	Male	21 years	M.Ed.
T3	Male	9 years	MA in English
T4	Male	28 years	Ph.D. in Applied Linguistics
T5	Female	11 years	MA in ELT
T6	Male	4 years	MA in English

Table 2: Students' Academic Profile

Symbolic Names	Gender	MA Degree (Cont.)
S1	Female	TESOL
S2	Male	TESOL

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S3	Male	TESOL
S4	Female	TESOL

3.2 Data Collection Instruments

The data collection took place in August 2023 through Zoom interviews instead of in-person interviews because of the diverse locations of the universities and the convenience of the participants and me. Moreover, as I had to complete the research within the stipulated time (two semesters), I found it timesaving to conduct the interviews online. The duration of the interviews were 40-45 minutes on average. I selected the teacher participants by visiting their profiles on the websites of their respective universities while giving importance to their degrees and areas of expertise. Moreover, I selected two TESOL students I knew personally and the other two, with the assistance of one teacher participant. I emailed them while asking about their availability and convenient time. Based on their consent and positive responses, I conducted the Zoom interviews.

Additionally, I mailed the abstract, research questions, and objectives of the study to all the participants so that they could make a prior mindset. Instead of jumping into the interview questions directly, a rapport was built between the participants and me by sharing about our daily lives and academic practices so that they feel free to provide factual data. Interviews were recorded on Zoom after getting the approval from the participants.

3.3 Data Analysis Techniques

The interview data have been manually coded while listening to the Zoom recordings and analyzed through a thematic analysis process while shedding light on the participants' beliefs,

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insights, and experiences and giving importance to the research objectives. Thematic Analysis is a method for detecting, analyzing, organizing, characterizing, and reporting themes in a data collection (Braun & Clarke, 2006) as cited in (Nowell et al., 2017). Based on the description of the participants, discussion has been conducted.

I used the translanguaging method in the interview for congeniality since the participants were comfortable with mixing Bengali and English during the interview. Interview questions are provided in Appendix A and B at the ending part of the thesis.

3.4 Research Ethics

Research ethics refers to the implementation of fundamental ethical considerations in research activities, such as the planning and carrying out of research, respect for society and others, utilization of resources and research outcomes, scientific dishonesty, and the governance of research (*Understanding Ethics | Research | University of Stirling*, n.d.). This is my original work; no section has been copied or plagiarized from any published or unpublished work. I used pseudonyms instead of revealing the names of the participants. Moreover, I did not disclose the names of the universities as well. I did not force or persuade my participants to participate in my interviews. Instead, I mailed them while asking about their availability and interest. Finally, I announce that this study will be merely used for the positive development of the Bangladeshi EFL context after getting published.

Chapter Four

Findings and Discussion

This chapter covers the insightful comments, narratives and perspectives of the EFL teachers and the TESOL students. Moreover, certain themes have been created for systematic analysis of the data while giving importance to the research objectives. Finally, a comprehensive discussion has been conducted on the basis of the findings and the reviewed literature.

4.1 Findings

4.1.1 Interview with the Teachers

This section covers the analyzed data from 6 EFL teachers from 5 private universities in Bangladesh. The 6 teachers participating in the interviews will be addressed as T (1 to 6).

Universities' Decisions during the Pandemic

All the teachers taking part in the interviews stated that the first decision the authorities of their respective universities made was to conduct the classes online rather than to meet the students in person. There were many decisions made by the universities, such as training the teachers on online educational technologies, maintaining inclusive and empathetic practices, dealing with social, financial and emotional challenges of the students, adopting a flexible grading system, conducting alternative assessments, checking the originality of student assignments, conducting e-counseling and e-mentoring, manipulating LMS and other digital platforms, and incorporating 21st century skills and SDG.

T1 in this regard said that the university authority organized a 12-week training program, where the teachers got only a three-hour session on using different learning tools, which

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needed to be improved for them, he concluded, "Those who provided the training were not specialists. They had little training."

Later on, according to T1, the authority arranged further training and introduced the usage of 'Moodle' and another LMS. He added that the university arranged further asynchronous training through videos on using LMS. Later, the university authority established a dedicated LMS for uploading materials and disseminating resources among the students. Besides, the teachers were given further training through short, self-accessible videos. According to T1, the younger teachers were advanced in coping with the changes. "It was a trial and error process. I noticed that the young faculties could learn faster than the seniors because they are more techno-savvy."

He added that many teachers needed help uploading the materials and resources in the LMS. However, T1, being professionally equipped with technology, created an undergraduate course that his colleagues highly praised. Nevertheless, overwork led to his sickness. "I designed lots of digitized materials for the course, and at some point, I got sick due to overexposure to the computer."

Apart from the LMS, T1 talked about some other decisions made by the university authority during the pandemic. For instance, they ensured students' academic fairness regarding assignment submission, dealt with different personal and social issues, made the classroom more engaging and interactive, shared the recorded classes with the students, and met the international students' needs. The teacher also talked about specific challenges while dealing with international students.

> I had some students from countries like Saudi Arabia and Nepal. I faced difficulties reaching them out sometimes due to the different time zones. However, I tried my best to give them liberty in many ways while being very flexible.

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He added that during the pandemic, the university authority emphasized the mental well-being of the students, and the teachers used to communicate with the students regularly and continuously motivated them to continue their studies. Whenever the students needed extra support, they could contact the teachers. According to him, the university had a policy for in-person mentoring, counseling, and psychological support ever since. Nevertheless, the university took the policy of e-mentoring and e-counseling during the pandemic. T1 said that before the pandemic, the 21st-century skills and SDG had already been embedded in the UGC (University Grants Commission) recommended OBE (Outcome-based Education) curriculum, which the university follows. Regarding the availability of learning resources, he said the students had access to all the materials anytime and anywhere on the LMS. Regarding communication and interaction, the teachers were advised to use 'Slack' instead of Facebook Messenger or WhatsApp to ensure security and transparency issues. "I know many teachers from different universities used different social apps, but our university strictly told us to use the subscribed platform: 'Slack.'"

In addition to this, T1 talked about the university's Google subscriptions, by which the teachers used different Google platforms (e.g., Google Docs, Google Slides, Google Meet) to continue an effective teaching-learning process during the pandemic.

T2's case was similar, as he also belongs to the same university. He mentioned that the university organized short-term training programs from the same university's Department of Computer Science.

> Our CSE department, I guess, made some comprehensive videos on how to use the digital tools, how to record the classes, how to assess the students, and so on.

He said the materials were phenomenal, and the training was adequate for the teachers.

While discussing the while-pandemic synchronous classes, asynchronous materials, and assessment procedure, T2 shared his doubts regarding the students' authentic academic development.

> As it was not mandatory that students have to attend the classes, the attendance was very poor. Though we uploaded the class recordings and materials on the LMS, I am sure that all the students did not follow those.

He added that as he was teaching a non-credit course, students were not interested in attending the classes and following the instructions.

T3, in this regard, believed that his university went through indecision during the initial days of the pandemic. Later, the university arranged Zoom classes, authorized by BdREN. The teachers were instructed to take online classes, record the sessions, and share with the students. He also added that the IQAC (Institutional Quality Assurance Cell) of the university arranged a one-day training program for the teachers on online teaching-learning.

T4 stated that there were a few new decisions apart from the online teaching-learning. He said the classes had to be pre-recorded, and the materials had to be uploaded on the LMS at least 24 hours before the synchronous class. The students had to go through the recorded classes and asynchronous materials before the regular class, where only discussion would occur. The teacher said the initiative was challenging as he needed a favorable setup to record the class smoothly.

> I had to make several attempts to record one session. Suppose there was a noise or chaos outside, and there I had to stop the recording, and there was no option to pause and resume the recording. I had to start from the beginning. I found that one of my 1-hour 20-minute classes took 5-6 hours to record.

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While discussing the challenges, T4 added that the students needed to follow the lectures earlier, and the regular online classes repeated the recorded class. Moreover, students started cheating on their assignments. Additionally, he criticized the university authority's flexible and compromised grading policy, resulting in many weak students getting higher grades than they deserved and the good ones getting the equivalent. "The good students were thinking, and I am working hard to get an 'A.' but others are getting 'A' without much effort."

Nevertheless, the university changed the policy and returned to the regular grading system.

T5, in this regard, said that the first initiative the university took was to train the teachers on using online teaching-learning platforms and digital resources without delay and taking exams online during the pandemic. She further claimed that her university has been using online platforms and blended methods since 2016. Hence, teaching online was relatively easy for the teachers. However, she emphasized the need for a while-pandemic professional training. "There was a need for professional development when the pandemic started. I learned from numerous online platforms during the pandemic."

She also stated that she, along with other faculties of the English department, designed lots of online materials for the students, and the university gave the teachers the liberty to use any material or resources they saw fit for the class.

Finally, T6, in this regard, expressed that his university started Zoom classes for the students, and the classes would take place according to the pre-pandemic schedule. Moreover, the assessment would take place online through assignment submissions, presentations, and quizzes. He complained that many students took advantage of the online assessment as there was no arrangement of a premium AI detector and plagiarism checker like 'Turnitin.' As a result, he had to assess the write-up based on his prior experience with the students and the

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free online plagiarism checkers. "There was no institutional support from the university to check whether students were plagiarizing or copying. I felt quite limited by this"

On a final note, he said that the university authority suggested the teachers keep the resources low-tech while considering the social and financial variables of the students during the pandemic.

> The teachers were instructed not to use high-tech materials because many students are joining from rural places. They might not have proper internet access or devices.

From the description, the conclusion can be drawn that all the universities went for online teaching. Moreover, three universities had dedicated LMS for disseminating materials and student academic administration, whereas the other two needed one. Besides, those two teachers expressed regret that there was no subscribed AI and plagiarism detector, which promoted the cheating propensity of the students. What is heartening is that the teachers, as well as the university as a whole, implemented numerous measures for empathetic teaching and flexible alternative assessments. On top of that, all the teachers developed their technological and tactical skills to deal with the students effectively.

Post-pandemic Educational Priorities and Specific Measures

All 6 teachers shared that the universities gradually moved to face-to-face classes like the pre-pandemic setting when the pandemic ended and they have become more prone to incorporating technological devices and digitized materials in their regular in-person classes than before. Apart from that, some other priorities have been incorporated such as blended learning initiative, conducting both offline and online assessments, incorporating some SDGs and 21st century skills in the curriculum, using AI positively while discouraging cheating propensity, and practicing empathy based teaching.

T1, in this regard, said the university took the initiative to continue in-person classes from the Spring 2022 session, and the teachers no longer needed to take online classes except for some emergency make-up sessions. Moreover, according to him, teachers were not interested in online teaching once they had been back in the regular classroom. "I asked one of my colleagues, 'Would you like to conduct some online classes?' He replied to me with a big 'NO'."

He also added that the teachers greatly benefited during the pandemic regarding new technological orientation. According to him, despite being a priority, the teachers need to exercise those skills regularly. "Teachers are not using digital tools often, but they should. Otherwise, they will forget them."

Moreover, he mentioned that the teachers will again teach online next semester due to the university's shifting to the permanent campus, and they are ready for it.

Apart from that, on other post-pandemic priorities, he responded that the teachers use online quizzes as an alternative assessment, and students submit their assignments and portfolios. He also elaborated on the integration of communication and collaboration (21st-century skills), addressing climate change (SDG 13), and gender discrimination issues (SDG 5) in the EFL curriculum at his university in the post-pandemic era.

Lastly, he discussed the emergence of AI tools like 'Chat-GPT' and 'Quillbot'. He visualized this as both an opportunity and a challenge for the educators and students. "Are the institutions, administrators, teachers, and students ready to use the AI tools productively? This is a huge area to explore."

T2, while talking about the post-pandemic scenario, asserted that he has been practicing a blended method.

I share materials online, give the students feedback on their work through Email, and so on. But I conduct the classes in person. For me, mixing both synchronous and asynchronous classes and materials is a blended class.

The teacher found using digital tools and resources for teaching-learning in the post-pandemic era very useful. He said that currently, he makes the students work online on Google Docs and Google Slides for group presentations and assignments. Moreover, Google Forms has reduced the burden of checking quiz scripts. "I am taking their quiz online in the class, and they are getting their results just after the submission."

In addition, he remarked that the current EFL curriculum at his university includes 21st-century skills and SDGs, particularly in the materials he utilizes and the activities he conducts in the class. "We are bringing some literature on SDG and some YouTube videos that promote communication, collaboration, and critical thinking skills."

Regarding the material design and content selection in this era, T2 said that to make the students competent and skilled, lots of new listening and reading materials have been included, which were absent during the pandemic.

Furthermore, on the question of AI usage in teaching and learning, he expressed an entirely pessimistic gesture, saying: "AI is more of a threat than an opportunity. The way AI is dominating the world, one day it will replace human teachers."

He concluded that most students, more innovative than the teachers, would explore numerous ways to cheat in different assessments and permanently lose their creativity. Moreover, he said that universities will use AI technology to reduce human resources, and many teachers may lose their jobs.

T3, on the issue of digital resources in the post-pandemic era, said that the pandemic created an opportunity for teachers, students, and universities to learn how to manipulate digital resources and platforms. That knowledge helped him maintain effective teaching learning in the post-pandemic era.

> We are using smart boards nowadays. While teaching, whenever I feel like the lesson will be more useful if I use Google, different websites, or YouTube videos, I do that so that the learners can get some audio-visual input.

On the issues of empathy and mental well-being of the students, T3 said there is an adviser teacher for each section in the department. They take care of the students' different personal and social problems. Whenever the advisers feel that the department chair should be involved, they contact the chair and take care of the issue. However, he feels the necessity of a central and certified psychologist in the university for counseling.

> We always motivate the students and counsel them whenever necessary. Nevertheless, we are not clinically trained to deal with psychological issues. The university should arrange for a certified psychologist.

Moreover, he emphasized the importance of incorporating 21st-century skills and SDGs in this post-pandemic era.

> Our university as a whole, organizes workshops on climate friendliness, how to use more environment-friendly resources, for example, using more digital documents than physical papers.

T4, on the issues of post-pandemic educational priorities, emphasized the blended learning initiative his university will implement soon while giving importance to the holistic

development of the students. "80% teaching should take place in the in-person classrooms; the rest of the things can be online, as far as EFL context is concerned."

Furthermore, he gave some solid reasons for implementing blended learning in the EFL context while giving importance to the sociocultural reality of Bangladesh.

> Whenever there is heavy rainfall and storms, students' presence fall drastically. If there was a blended learning policy, we could announce that we will not come to the class whenever the weather is bad. There will be online classes.

He added that he has been practicing a blended method, combining synchronous classes and asynchronous materials.

Regarding motivational and empathetic teaching, T4 said that the teachers in the department have developed materials and workbooks so that the students are motivated to learn the language and their writing skills. He has also talked about incorporating gender sensitivity and other concurrent affairs in the workbooks.

> We have incorporated topics like gender sensitivity and other social awareness-related issues in the textbooks. Now, the students understand which is good and which is not. I see they are developing.

T5, on the post-pandemic educational priorities in her institution, said they are following a blended approach. The university's IT team has updated the "Moodle" LMS with ample resources.

> We have efficient materials on Moodle now, and we constantly adapt, compile, and update our materials for better learning outcomes.

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She further asserted that blended learning promotes more student engagement and practical learning. "Without a blended method, it is not possible to engage the students outside the classroom."

On the issue of mental well-being and motivation in this era, she said that the university has a central counseling system for dealing with all kinds of psychological or physical problems students go through. Additionally, she engages the students in coffee-cup counseling hours, where the students can discuss different issues with the teacher while having tea or coffee.

Regarding alternative assessment as a post-pandemic educational priority, she said that the university does not force teachers to follow a specific alternative assessment system. However, T5 uses different alternative assessments.

> Journal writing is a common thing I practice to elicit their weekly learning points. Besides, I find the 'I can or I can't statement' very useful. From their statements, I get to know which things they know and which they don't.

Apart from that, on the issue of incorporating SDG and 21st-century skills in the EFL syllabus, she said that after the pandemic, the teachers' panel had included materials on climate change, clean energy, and environment friendliness. Moreover, 21st-century skills are embedded in the curriculum even though they are not teaching them exclusively.

T6, on the issue of post-pandemic educational priorities at his university, said that he feels the necessity for a blended approach where he could take some online classes under some concerning situations, but the university does not permit it. "The university does not encourage online classes after the pandemic because many students did not have a laptop or stable internet."

In addition, he gave more reasons in favor of blended learning while emphasizing the perpetual presence and need for technology integration in education.

Regarding alternative assessment in this era, he said that the university is heading back towards the pre-pandemic era as far as assessment is concerned.

In terms of empathy and motivation in this era, he said that due to the paradigm shift, the students exhibited different gestures regarding seriousness and dedication toward learning. When T6 finds them less serious, he motivates them and sets examples so they become enthusiastic and passionate about learning.

In terms of the incorporation of 21st-century skills and SDGs, he said that the university incorporated specific goals of SDGs and is aware of 21st-century skills as well.

On a final note, he talked about the emergence of AI. He said that the teachers, as well as the university as a whole, discourage the use of AI at this moment while assuming that AI tools harm students' creativity. "Students might misuse the AI tools. We are discouraging them from using AI. I think AI discourages creativity."

From the above findings, most teachers supported implementing the Blended method rather than merely classroom-based teaching. Most of the participants said they are practicing a particular blended approach while combining the synchronous classes with online materials and look forward to a sustainable blended approach in this era. In terms of AI augmentation, the teachers expressed a mixed feeling. Notably, two teachers expressed a firmly pessimistic gesture in this regard. However, according to the rest, AI technology is an enormous educational opportunity if employed and regulated wisely. On top of that, they are practicing an empathy-based approach in the post-pandemic era. Finally, all the teachers elaborated on incorporating 21st-century skills and SDG in their teaching, which is commendable.

Post-pandemic Instructional Adaptations

All the teachers confirmed that the while-pandemic educational practices enabled them to gain technological knowledge and develop new skills and strategies they currently apply in the classroom. The teachers have talked about several dynamics changes, such as lesson plan adaptation, innovation and experimentation, frequently asked questions checklist, comprehensive and entertaining slides, real-life examples and humor, and technical development.

T1, in this regard, said that He is using digitized materials in the class a lot. However, he does not teach the same material in the same manner in different sections. He asserts that he changes his instruction according to the needs of the students, prior experimentation, and reflection of the previous class.

> I share the same materials with the students, and there is a common lesson plan. But while teaching in different sections, I adopt my strategies according to my experience of the previous class. I prefer to experiment on different things with the students.

Moreover, he mentioned 'timing' as an essential variable in terms of skill development. According to him, the same skills are developed differently in different students because of the different class times.

> When you have a reading class in the morning, there is better performance by the students. In the afternoon, when the students become desperate to go home, they do not show the same performance.

T2, in this regard, said that he finds it boring to do the same things and follow the same lesson plans every time. He experiments with new things in the class to ensure better results.

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Moreover, he shared that he has back-to-back classes and practices this reflection within a minute.

> Once I finish my delivery in one class, I start thinking if I could do this and that activity differently, I would get better results. I experiment that and find better success.

He further added that he likes to share his experience with his colleagues, and sometimes, he takes the floor and starts writing on the board in other teacher-led classes. In this way, the class teacher and all the students become surprised. He justified such action by saying that he always makes decisions while putting himself in the students' shoes, considering their comfort and flexibility. In addition, according to him, most undergraduate students do not tend to study the books outside the classroom; the classroom notes are the last things they take away. Therefore, he ensures all students learn better and make final notes for the course examinations. He also added that he is used to providing the students with a "frequently asked questions" checklist so that the students do not have to worry before the examination.

T3, on this issue, said he is hardly satisfied with his classroom performance. He also added that he continuously develops technologically to support his students better.

> I try to update myself with technology so that I can keep pace with the students. I believe it is very important to adopt new skills and strategies to produce better graduates.

T4, in this regard, said that he transfers his gained knowledge among the students using real-life examples and humor. Besides, he makes his PowerPoint slides comprehensive, trouble-free, direct, and entertaining. "This is the policy I apply in all courses. Of course, the degrees vary across sections and courses, depending on contexts."

T5, in this regard, said that her classes are more activity-based than lectures. While conducting the classes, she finds different questions in different classes. She said that she could make a few strategic modifications. However, sometimes, she initiates reading texts in some classes, whereas in other classes, students are prescribed to read the texts at home.

 Depending on the classes' needs, I make the students read the texts in the class. But I suggest the students of a different section to read the text at home because I know that they are more enthusiastic in self-reading.

T6, in this regard, said that he needs to constantly change the lesson plan in different classes because the students are inquisitive and, hence, pose numerous questions. In such cases, he endeavors to provide them with satisfactory answers. Therefore, in a different section, he brings up those issues beforehand so that the students are well-informed and he can save time. "The questions I get from one section, I include those things in the other sections to save time and make room for new questions."

From the findings, it is clear that the teacher participants are adept at making strategic adaptations and modifying their lesson plans in different classes while giving importance to students' welfare and the best learning outcome. According to Kolb's theory of Experiential Learning, such reflective and experimental practices can benefit educators and the students. Such adaptations in teaching dynamics mainly depend on teachers' discretion. Moreover, the more reflective the teachers are, the better the success they achieve in teaching-learning.

Teachers' Post-pandemic Suggestions

All the teachers have suggested many pertinent initiatives as post-pandemic educational priorities in the tertiary level Bangladeshi EFL context, such as benignant usage of AI, keeping pace with growing technological advancement, scaffolding and peer assessment, blended approach, teaching communicative competence, empathetic teaching and being a humble teacher.

T1 suggested that there should be a strong emphasis on the beneficial usage of AI technology in education. "You know, AI needs to be taken seriously. Otherwise, students will become intellectually dumb."

T2 and T5 suggested that teachers must update themselves with new technology to sustain an effective teaching-learning process. Moreover, they expressed the concern that there might be another pandemic anytime soon, and teachers and students must be well-equipped for that.

T3 suggested that there is no alternative to scaffolding, self-assessment, and peer-assessment, which resembles Vygotsky's theory of the Zone of Potential Development. According to T3, teachers should facilitate a more student-centered approach than a teacher-centered one.

> Teachers should simply scaffold and facilitate the class. Students should be the center of the class. There should be more self and peer assessment for their own good.

T4 suggested that all the universities should practice a blended method instead of traditional classroom teaching. In this way, all the teachers and students will keep pace with the current technological advancements.

> We should go blended. Probably, we can do some online assessments as well so that we can continuously take advantage of educational technology.

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Furthermore, he suggested that teachers should be humble and empathetic in this era. Additionally, they must be prepared to confront the students' queries and respect students' genuine quest for knowledge. He also emphasized that teachers should comprehend the subject matter well before delivery.

T6 suggested that some emphasis should be on teaching communication skills. He is concerned that the textbooks and materials produce good English speakers regarding grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. However, such graduates must demonstrate proper communicative competence in real-time. Moreover, he metaphorically compared 'language' with a vehicle and 'communication' as the destination. According to him, the destination is often marginalized or ignored because the vehicle is over-emphasized and overspecialized. "We should focus on both the vehicle, which is language and the destination, which is communication."

From this particular section, all the teachers provided some handy suggestions that can transform the complexion of ELT to a great extent. These are highly pertinent and the demand of the moment.

4.1.2 Interview with the TESOL Students

This section covers the analyzed data from 4 TESOL students from two private universities in Bangladesh. The 4 students participating in the interviews will be addressed as S (1 to 4).

TESOL Students' Post-pandemic Opinions

The TESOL student participants elaborated on their post-pandemic learning experience while talking about the synchronous and asynchronous classes, LMS and other learning platforms, digital communication tools, online and on-campus examinations, handy AI tools usage,

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embedded skills of 21st century, literature on SDG, and teacher's empathy in the post-pandemic setting.

S1 and S2 from the same university opined that teachers and students use many digital platforms and tools which they used during the pandemic. They attend online Zoom or Google Meet classes as make-up ones. Moreover, the students use "Slack" for communication in a course. For some courses, they use "Google Classroom" as well.

Regarding assignment submission and quizzes, the students use the "Turn-it-in" app and "Google Forms" used during the pandemic.

S1 said,

> We communicate through "Slack" in one course and use Google Classroom for another course, which was used during the pandemic. We submitted the assignments on "Turn-it-in" during the pandemic. We still do that.

S2 said,

> We learned the usage of different learning tools like 'Scribber' for referencing, 'Turnitin' for assignment submission, and "Google Forms" for quizzes. We are still used to all these platforms.

S3 and S4 from University 2 opined that they are also experiencing a reflection of COVID-19 pedagogical practices in the post-pandemic era, except for regular online classes and online-based assessments.

S3 said,

> We used to submit assignments and term papers online. Moreover, quizzes would take place on 'Google Forms'. Our university still does that. We sit for mid-term exams and final exams in the classroom. That is the difference.

S4 said,

> We used to get online materials during the pandemic on e-learning platforms and sit for online quizzes and exams. Currently, we get all the materials on 'Moodle' and, for some classes, on 'Google Classroom.

All the students expressed a positive gesture regarding their AI usage. According to them, AI has taught them many things, accelerating their academic journey. In this regard,

S1 said, "Chat-GPT' makes me understand things easily. I never use it for copying and pasting on my assignments."

S2 said, "I have learned the concept of paraphrasing from 'Quillbot'. I notice how the AI is creating synonymous words. I learn from it."

S3 said,

> We used to look for different sources on 'Google' for getting the right information regarding something. But 'Chat-GPT' is more advanced. We can get the correct information or answer from it within seconds.

S4 Said, "I use 'Magic Slides' AI for creating my presentations swiftly. 'Chat-GPT' gives me many ideas for assignments. I don't copy them but enrich my knowledge.

From the above discussion, the message is clear that these students are using AI tools as educational assistants. Moreover, using these tools saves time and enriches their knowledge

and creativity. All the student participants opined that AI technology should be used ethically, and the students should judge their consent on how much is too much. Moreover, they all concluded that if AI is used wisely, it is not a threat but a massive educational opportunity.

Concerning motivation and empathy, all four students agreed they had experienced such factors in both the during-pandemic and post-pandemic era. However, the degree and way varied contextually.

In terms of incorporating SDGs and 21st-century skills, all of them opined that some goals from SDGs and 21st-century skills are embedded in the syllabus.

The findings of this section resemble what the teacher participants expressed about post-pandemic integration of technology, alternative assessments, empathy, motivation, 21st-century skills, and SDGs in ELT. However, the anticipations of the teacher participants in this study counteract the TESOL student's point of view on AI technology since the student participants have exclusively counted the opportunities of AI and marginalized the drawbacks.

TESOL Students' Post-pandemic Suggestions

Prospective English teachers shared insightful suggestions, such as addressing marginalized communities, adequate teacher-training on students with special needs, adaptations on core and minor courses, incorporating ethical subject-matters, and providing more internship opportunities.

S1 suggested that some content should address marginalized communities and their educational needs. According to her, it is essential to introduce undergraduate EFL learners to such communities and do research activities on their lives so that the graduates can help such

communities in the coming days. Moreover, she opines that prospective EFL teachers should receive adequate training in teaching students with special needs, such as autistic or physically challenged, because they also learn in mainstream settings. In order to ensure equity, an inclusive and effective gesture towards such students is necessary.

> I think the prospective EFL teachers should receive adequate training on how to deal with such autistic or blind or other students with special needs so that they can ensure equity in the class.

S2 suggested that the EFL undergraduate curriculum should be designed so that the students will study all the core and minor courses up to their sophomore stage. After that, they should be allowed to choose their major because most graduates fail to choose the right career after graduation and are indecisive about their future job sectors. For example, if the program is English Language and Literature, the students will study all the relevant issues related to English and English literature. Nevertheless, they must decide what major to move between language and literature from the third year onwards. He believes that such an initiative can produce better and career-focused graduates.

> The students should be divided into two groups in the third year. The ones who choose language will only continue language and linguistics. If they want to be writers, the other group will study novels, poetry, stories, and other forms of literature.

For the teacher training courses like TESOL/ESOL/ELT, S2 opines that there should be proper Needs Analysis before enrolling the students in this program, the reason being that many students enrolling in the course need to know why they are in the course and what they will do after the post-graduation. Therefore, they should only be enrolled in the program after proper Needs Analysis.

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According to S3, moral and ethical lessons should be incorporated into the EFL curriculum that is not explicitly taught in the EFL context. He added that such lessons should not be addressed from a religious point of view but rather from a humane and social point of view. For instance, specific content should promote academic and professional integrity, discourage corruption, trigger equality and fraternity, and encourage greater good over individual good.

Only learning different technical issues and field-related subjects is not complete learning. There should be moral education, not necessarily related to religion.

According to S4, the students should be exposed to the practical world and be given field-related internship opportunities during their undergraduate program to exhibit experiential learning after graduation.

Students do not get jobs after graduation because of not having any experience. If they are given internship opportunities during their undergraduate, they could get good jobs,

Finally, both S3 and S4 emphasized real-time teaching experience in different institutions and internship opportunities in the teacher training courses so that the graduates can demonstrate better classroom leadership and management skills.

While shedding light on these thoughts, all these TESOL students have endeavored to share some crucial pedagogic concerns. Implementing these in the Bangladeshi EFL context will lead to the best EFL practice and unprecedented success in ELT due to their rationality and righteousness in the post-pandemic world.

4.2 Discussion

In response to research question 1, I have found that the universities decided to train their teachers, implement online-based teaching-learning solely, disseminate synchronous and asynchronous materials, use LMS (3 universities), carry e-mentoring and e-counseling, use low-tech materials (2 universities), use premium AI detectors and plagiarism checkers (3 universities), conduct flexible alternative assessments and grading, and deal with students' social, emotional and financial circumstances. These findings are relevant to the study of Al-Amin et al. (2021), where the researchers found that teachers used a variety of tactics in the changing scenarios to engage students in meaningful learning or to provide space in an online format and giving this sort of support required more time in the context of consultation hours and the preparation of engaging language-learning materials, such as songs and videos, from where learners could derive inspiration.

In response to research question 2, I have found that classes take place in physical classrooms, teachers are more prone to adopt technological devices and digitized materials, four universities follow the UGC recommended blended approach and OBE curriculum, three universities conduct alternative assessments as well as final examinations, all the teachers practice empathetic and inclusive teaching, and the participants have mixed perspective on AI technology. These findings are relevant to the research of Aktar et al. (2022), where the researchers concluded that the post-pandemic university might consider flipping its classrooms by posting reading and research materials, even videotaped lectures, as well as some quizzes and formative assessments online while still meeting with students in actual classrooms for more lively discussions and practical, hands-on activities. Moreover, according to the World Economic Forum (2021), the efforts to tackle the pandemic provide many breakthroughs, and the Fourth Industrial Revolution's developing technologies, such as

artificial intelligence (AI), have the potential to influence how future generations of students will be educated significantly (Aktar et al., 2022).

Finally, in response to research question 3, I have found that teachers make several changes while giving instructions in the class in the post-pandemic EFL classrooms. Notably, they continuously develop themselves professionally, which is relevant to the research of Padwad and Dixit (2011), where they noted that CPD is a stipulated, continuous, and perpetual process in which educators attempt to enhance their personal and professional attributes as well as their knowledge, skills, and methods, resulting in their empowerment, agency growth, and betterment of their institution and students. Furthermore, I have found that the teachers use the same lesson plan but provide different instructions in different sections (T1), experiment with new activities in the back-to-back classes (T2), provide "frequently asked questions" checklist (T2), keep pace with the intelligent students on technology usage, use real-life examples and humor (T4), make comprehensive, trouble-free and entertaining slides (T4), and deal with new questions in each class and incorporate them in another section's class (T5 and T6). These findings are relevant to David Kolb's theory of experiential learning. According to Mcleod (2023), Kolb's experiential learning theory claims successful learning results from a four-stage procedure (or cycle) that includes solid experience, reflective observation, abstract thoughts, and practical experimentation.

From the overall discussion, the findings reflect the reviewed literature and carry significant value in the Bangladeshi tertiary-level EFL pedagogy.

Chapter Five

Implication and Conclusion

This chapter covers the implications of this study in the tertiary-level EFL context of Bangladesh and draws a conclusion leading to the scope of further research.

5.1 Research Impacts

This research has undoubtedly had an enormous impact on education since it covers numerous relevant issues directly related to the Post-pandemic educational priorities in the EFL context of Bangladesh. Initially, from the teachers' perspectives, the researcher has explored the while-pandemic decisions made by the universities, where teachers have talked about while-Covid online teaching experiences, what kinds of tools, platforms, and materials they used for conducting the classes and assessing the students, what challenges they experienced, how the teachers incorporated SDGs and 21st-century skills, and how they empathized with the students and motivated them for mental well-being. This section informs the teachers, students, and mass readers about various digital tools and platforms, how the teachers have manipulated those for effective EFL teaching-learning, and what educational priorities were set during the pandemic.

In the second section, the researcher has explored the specific measures the universities have taken in the Post-pandemic era, where the teachers have expressed their transitional experiences from online to on-campus settings, how they have adopted the technological knowledge in the post-pandemic era in teaching and assessment, how they are conducting blended classes, how they view the emergence of AI in education, and how they have incorporated the other educational priorities like SDGs and 21st-century skills.

The third section elicits the instructional and strategic modifications of the teachers in the EFL context, which is thrilling and exciting to know. Notably, this section has instilled some compelling insights in both practicing and prospective teachers.

In the last section, the researcher noted educators' feasible suggestions for a substantial EFL pedagogy with proper justifications. These suggestions are invaluable for the university authorities, curriculum planners, policymakers, reflective teachers, and aspiring ones because they can significantly impact the current teaching-learning process to a great extent.

Finally, from the TESOL students' perspectives, the researcher has explored their learning experiences in the post-pandemic context and their suggestions for better EFL teaching-learning practices. Here, the initial part mainly addresses the learner's attitudes and beliefs regarding the current practices, from which the teachers and curriculum planners can measure the effectiveness of current educational priorities. On the other hand, the second part, where the prospective teachers (TESOL students) have suggested some pathways to accelerate the pedagogic feasibility of the EFL context. By acknowledging these suggestions, the current EFL teachers, university authorities, and curriculum developers can make workable decisions to develop the EFL curriculum efficiently and teach more effectively.

5.2 Limitations of the Study

Despite being a compelling study, this contains several limitations. To begin with, the researcher could only address some of the educational priorities as there might be hundreds of them relevant to the Post-pandemic era, which are impossible to address in such a short study. Due to this study's time constraints and practicality, only a few main educational priorities have been addressed. Moreover, as this is a small-scale research, only ten participants (six teachers and four students) have been interviewed. The outcome could be

more fruitful if more participants from several governmental and privately run universities of Bangladesh could be involved.

Furthermore, if this research could address a policy document by UGC or the Government, made exclusively on the Post-pandemic educational priorities and curriculum change, this research could be more valid and justifiable. However, the researcher could find only the policy documents on the OBE curriculum and blended learning approach by UGC. Although certain limitations exist, this research has significant implications for ELT.

5.2 Recommendations:

Based on the findings and discussions, this study proposes the following recommendations:

a) Universities should implement blended learning while considering the students' contemporary social and cultural context.

b) All the universities should execute a dedicated LMS for the sustainable dissemination of learning materials.

c) Curriculum planners and policymakers of the university should incorporate communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and other 21st-century skills in the EFL curriculum.

d) Policymakers should include climate change, gender sensitivity, sustainable education, and other issues directly connected to SDGs in the EFL curriculum.

e) The teachers should be empathetic and deal with students while putting themselves in their shoes.

f) Teachers should adopt counselling and motivational initiatives for students' academic growth and psychological well-being.

g) Teachers, as well as institutions as a whole, should consider the needs of marginalized students and deal with students with numerous disabilities effectively.

h) University authorities should incorporate feasible alternative assessments for the overall academic growth of the students.

i) Policymakers should consider facilitating adequate exposure to prospective job sectors and internship opportunities.

j) University authorities should emphasize teachers' professional development programs.

k) Curriculum planners should tactfully embed moral and ethical lessons in the texts so that the students can assimilate values and principles.

m) Teachers should be reflective and be able to make impromptu decisions to make the class more productive.

n) University authorities should arrange premium AI technology support to facilitate the positive cognitive development of the students.

5.3 Conclusion

There is no identical or "one-size-fits-all" answer to the challenges of teaching and learning since each educational situation is unique, and there are numerous interrelations between technology, pedagogy, and content (Mishra & Koehler, 2006). Throughout the COVID-19 Pandemic, instructors served as academic guides, career advisors, and psychological

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counselors, resulting in an integrated model that might be characterized as mentoring (Al-Amin et al., 2021). This research has highlighted the vital educational priorities in the post-pandemic era while exploring them in the EFL context of Bangladesh. In this study, the participants have shared their valuable insights, experiences, and recommendations by which the readers can acknowledge the educational priorities' current practices and a glimpse of what other priorities could be incorporated into the tertiary-level EFL curriculum. Further exploration of this issue at different levels can lead to a more successful EFL practice in Bangladesh.

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Appendix A

Semi-structured interview questions for the teacher participants (Scheduled in the evening around 7-9 PM BST)

1. What new decisions were made by the university's authority regarding EFL teaching when the pandemic started?

2. Please tell me what key priorities and specific measures your institution set after the pandemic.

3. What new skills, digital tools, and strategies did you learn during the pandemic that are helping you in the post-pandemic era?

4. What is your view about the blended method in the post-pandemic era? Is it a priority in this era?

5. How did you practice empathy during and after the pandemic? Is it a priority in this era?

6. Do you motivate the students to keep mentally fit? Please explain.

7. Let us talk about alternative assessment. What types of alternative assessments did you adopt during the pandemic? What about now?

8. What is your idea about the inclusion of 21st-century priorities of education in the EFL teaching curriculum? Is it all feasible to include in your context?

9. What is your idea about including SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals) in the EFL teaching curriculum? Is it crucial to include it in your teaching?

10. What changes do you make between your "knowledge gain" and "Knowledge transfer"? What about instruction delivery and interaction? How do they vary from class to class? Why do you make such changes?

11. What do you think about the availability of materials? Do students have access to those anytime and anywhere?

12. How do you see the emergence of AI as an Opportunity or a threat?

13. Is there anything else you would like to share that is relevant to the research and necessary?

Appendix B

Semi-structured interview questions for the TESOL student participants (Scheduled in the afternoon around 4-6 PM BST)

1. How was your English learning experience at the University during the COVID-19 Pandemic?

2. What are the digital tools you used during the pandemic for your academics?

3. Do you still use those tools for academic purposes?

4. Please Tell me about some new skills that you developed during the pandemic.

5. Did you get any institutional support to keep you mentally strong?

6. Do the teachers currently motivate you for mental well-being? Please explain.

7. What Kind of assessment criteria did you go through during the pandemic? Please elaborate.

8. Do you still experience the same assessment system, or are there some changes after the pandemic?

9. Are you familiar with 21st-century skills? Do you come across these goals in your academic courses?

10. Do you know about Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)? Did you come across these goals in your academic courses?

11. Do you use AI for academic purposes? Please share some examples if you do. Do you see it as an opportunity or a threat?

12. Finally, would you like to share anything essential for this research?