

OPEN SCHOOL LEARNERS: LEARNING DIFFICULTIES IN SCIENCE COURSES OF SECONDARY SCHOOL CERTIFICATE PROGRAM OF BANGLADESH OPEN UNIVERSITY

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There are three different backgrounds existing in the Secondary School Certificate (SSC) program: Science, Arts, and Commerce of the Bangladesh Open University (BOU). In the science group out of four courses (Physics, Chemistry, Biology and Higher Mathematics) at least three are compulsory in the national curriculum as well as the BOU curriculum and each course is marked out of 100 (theoretical 75 marks and practical 25 marks). For higher education, all science courses are very important for learners. Science courses have always been a challenging academic subject, particularly in schools. When students encounter difficulties in learning science courses, the common reaction to resolve the issues is to get them to practice more because of the belief that practice makes perfect. In a distance-learning class, students must be committed to their own success. In a distance-learning class, these behaviours are necessary but the social pressure to comply is absent.

The current research project aimed to investigate what problems the Open School learners encounter when trying to be successful in Science courses of the SSC program. In the SSC program 33,347 learners admitted beginning in 2018 and last year in 2017 there were 46,592 learners. In the SSC program of Open School, the total learners in Science, Arts, and Commerce was 79,939. Out of these (2,456+3561 = 6,017) learners are taking the science group, which represents the total population. A survey was conducted among 350 learners in 4 focus group discussions. The participants were randomly selected from 4 different Regional Centers (RCs) under a project funded by the UGC of Bangladesh via BOU. Most of the students are from the same ethnic background. Therefore, they represent a homogenous population.

The results found that most of the sections of the Science curriculum of the Bangladesh Open University (BOU) have been difficult for learners and they mostly relied on print materials which are provided by Open School and also depend on shadow teaching for both theoretical and practical learning rather using video materials. Shadow teaching is a big problem not only for Open and Distance learners but also for conventional learners as well.

Attitudes are deeply related to motivation and social support; we recommend that developing strategies in educational contexts, to improve teacher support and student engagement could be of vital importance in improving not only attitudes but also science performance among learners throughout their schooling.

Keywords: Learning difficulties in Science, Practical of Science, Secondary School Certificate (SSC), Open School (OS).

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