

THE CHALLENGES OF SECONDARY LEVEL BUSINESS EDUCATION IN BANGLADESH

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Abstract: *This paper discusses challenges of secondary level business education in Bangladesh. In particular, it explores the challenges related to curriculum, pedagogy, infrastructure and assessment systems in school. We looked at the existing facilities in schools that teach business education, teaching strategies used in the classrooms as well as the perceptions of teachers and students towards business education. Using an online survey, data was collected from 101 respondents who are secondary level school teachers. Findings reveal that challenges are mainly related to curriculum, pedagogy, infrastructure, and assessment system. However, infrastructure and students' attitude-related challenges are the greatest challenges. In addition, we find that most of the business studies classes are attended by more than 40 students, contributing to issues related to pedagogy, infrastructure and assessment. The study recommends that the present curriculum, infrastructure, and assessment procedure of business education at the secondary level need to be upgraded for effective secondary level business education in the country.*

Keywords: *business education, secondary level, business curriculum, business education pedagogy, assessment, infrastructure, Bangladesh*

Abstrak: Artikel ini membahas tantangan pendidikan bisnis tingkat menengah di Bangladesh. terkait dengan kurikulum, pedagogi, infrastruktur dan sistem penilaian di sekolah, khususnya dalam hal fasilitas sekolah untuk pendidikan bisnis, strategi pengajaran yang digunakan, serta persepsi guru dan siswa terhadap pendidikan bisnis. Metode yang digunakan survei online dari 101 guru sekolah menengah. Temuan mengungkapkan bahwa tantangan terutama terkait dengan kurikulum, pedagogi, infrastruktur, dan sistem penilaian. Namun, infrastruktur dan sikap siswa merupakan tantangan terbesar. Selain itu, jumlah siswa yang cukup besar, lebih dari 40 siswa, berkontribusi pada masalah yang berkaitan dengan pedagogi, infrastruktur, dan penilaian. Studi ini merekomendasikan bahwa kurikulum, infrastruktur, dan prosedur penilaian pendidikan bisnis di tingkat menengah perlu ditingkatkan efektivitasnya di negara tersebut.

Kata kunci: pendidikan bisnis, pendidikan menengah, kurikulum, pedagogi, penilaian, infrastruktur, Bangladesh

INTRODUCTION

Business education is defined by Salome (2012) as education for and about the business which aims at accelerating skills necessary for paid employment or be self-dependent as an entrepreneur. According to Ezeani (2012) business education produces reliable, creative and self-reliant civilians who seem to be more superior than other graduates in terms of skill achievement and job creation. Business education is a dynamic field of study geared towards preparing youths and adults for and about business (Bajada and Trayler 2013) and for actual practice in the world of business. It covers the area of intelligent and effective consumption of economic goods and services offered to society in our free enterprise economy. On that note, business education plays a vital role in transforming the general population to that of human resources.

Given the significance of business education, the Bangladesh government has given the discipline special emphasis. For example, it has included a particular part on Business Education in its national education policy 2010 (Bangladesh. Ministry of Education, 2016). For achieving the aims and objectives of business education of national education policy 2010, business education is initiated from the secondary level at class IX. Thereby, the Bangladesh government has taken different steps to develop the education system with a firm impression to build digital Bangladesh for which successful entrepreneurs, skilled human resources and trained workers are necessary. However, in practice, this aspiration does not seem to be quite within reach as yet. In reality, although student enrollment in business education is high, the number of successful entrepreneurs, skilled human resources and trained workers do not seem increase.

Therefore, it is important that we explore the effectiveness of business education, asking the question of the extent to which secondary level business education is fulfilling the aim and objectives of the national education policy 2010. The challenges identified in this study could provide us with a view on specific areas of business education that need to be improved. This study will make suitable recommendations for education planners. To that end, the primary purpose of conducting this study is to explore the challenges of business education. pertaining to five factors i.e., curriculum, pedagogy, infrastructure, assessment and students' attitude. In additions, this study also tries to explore teachers' perceptions towards the most significant challenges. Thus, the research questions guiding this study are as follows:

RQ 1: What are the challenges related to the curriculum of business education at the secondary level?

RQ 2: What are pedagogical challenges in business education at the secondary level?

RQ 3: What are infrastructural challenges related to teaching business education at the secondary level?

RQ 4: What are the challenges related to the assessment processes in business education at the secondary level?

RQ 5: What are students' attitudes towards business education at the secondary level?

RQ 6: What are teachers' perceptions of business education's most significant challenges at the secondary level.

As per the research questions, this study is conducted with the following objectives in mind:

1. To examine perceptions of the current business education curriculum at secondary level;
2. To identify views on business education pedagogy;
3. To identify views on current facilities available for the teaching of business education.
4. To examine assessment practices related to secondary level business education;
5. To obtain students' views of business education.
6. To obtain teachers' perceptions regarding the most significant challenges of business education at the secondary level.

This study hopefully has created a scope for an educationalist to understand the current state of business education of Bangladesh at secondary level which are the barriers to achieve the objectives of business education mentioned in the national education policy 2010. To that end, this study tries to explore the answers of several questions e.g., Is business education curriculum at secondary level fail to create interest to the students towards business learning? Are teachers failed to make it attractive? Are not teachers qualified with proper knowledge, skill and perceptions of teaching business education? Are not schools well equipped? To find out the answers to those questions, this study is needed for exploring the current situation and challenges of business education at the secondary level. The study may result in the basic information to get the answer to the above questions.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Business education involves interrelated planned courses in the area of the business field which are taught to learners that accelerate business careers (Salome, 2012). It is also concerned with educational training that supports the individual to gain related skills desirable for business world (Nwaigburu & Eneogwe, 2013) and familiarise individuals with real-world and suitable skills, knowledge, attitude and value that would afford them a better fit for the business world (Bajada & Trayler, 2013). Its importance is such that business education is regarded as a significant agent of economic and technical expansion through higher human competency, enhancing individual's capability for innovation, industrial development, and environmental development or as a matter of personal empowerment (Umezulike and Okoye, 2013). In addition, Nwaigburu and Eneogwe (2013) noted that it plays a remarkable role in the economic development by providing knowledge and skills to the students, thereby, allowing them to sufficiently impart knowledge into others, and handle sophisticated office machinery and information structures. To that end, the objectives of business education are principally to create knowledge able, skillful and self-motivated business graduates, educators, office administrators and entrepreneurs who will professionally contest in the world of work and contribute ultimately to the growth of a nation.

However, studies have shown that like any other disciplines, business education is not free from education-related challenges. These include challenges related to the curriculum, pedagogy, infrastructure, assessment, teachers and students' perceptions. For example, Bajada and Trayler (2013) highlighted the curriculum related challenges which mainly emerge due to the rigidity of the traditional business education curriculum.

Attitudinal and infrastructural challenges include overcrowded classrooms, insufficient teaching aids, and poor services (Edomwonyi and Osarumwense, 2017). With regard to assessment, it was suggested that using authentic assessments improve students' positive perceptions towards business education (James & Casidy, 2018). As for pedagogical challenges, Ekoh (2018) argues that these emerge due to the use of traditional/conventional pedagogy, leading to the suggestion that the integration of ICT in business pedagogy would help alleviate the challenges.

In the context of Bangladesh, business education at secondary level also suffering from the above-mentioned challenges. For example, curriculum is not updated, pedagogical approaches are mostly traditional, scarcity of qualified teachers. Besides, business studies teachers of countryside areas have rare access to appropriate training. Moreover, business studies teachers are not self-confident about applying appropriate pedagogical strategies and unwilling to use new approaches of teaching because of low motivation, training and supervision. To date, most of the business subjects are taught everywhere in Bangladesh by using teacher-centred methods with less attention paid to learners' involvement and interest. As a consequence, mostly, business studies teachers stimulate learners to rote learn. Further more, they are reluctant to creation instructional aids on their creativity because of low inspiration.

Focusing on these issues, in the national education policy 2010, Bangladesh has included an especially Chapter, number 13, title business studies which describes the aims, objectives and strategies of business studies (Bangladesh. Ministry of Education, 2016). However, only formulating policy doesn't guaranty the smooth implementation of business education and achieving the outcomes. Empirical studies are essential for exploring the real scenario of grassroot level. Where as, there is a lack of such kind of studies. Focusing on these issues this study was undertaken.

METHODOLOGY

1. Research design

This study adopts the quantitative research design. Data was obtained through the administration of a survey distributed online. The survey was conducted for four months from September to December 2020. Respondents were selected using convenience sampling. 101 responses were returned, out of which 95 were usable for further analysis.

2. Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework of this study was adapted from several studies (Bakogianni, Tsitouridou & Kyridis, 2020; Edomwonyi & Osarumwense, 2017; Subramaniam, Suhaimi, Latif, Kassim & Fadzil, 2019). Figure 1 depicts the conceptual framework, showing how the challenges of business education in Bangladesh are mainly related to five factors, with each having several items. For instance, challenges related to the curriculum are related to seven sub-factors, challenges related to pedagogy are related to six sub-factors, and so on. Thus, these related factors and sub-factors act as a blueprint for developing the survey questionnaire.

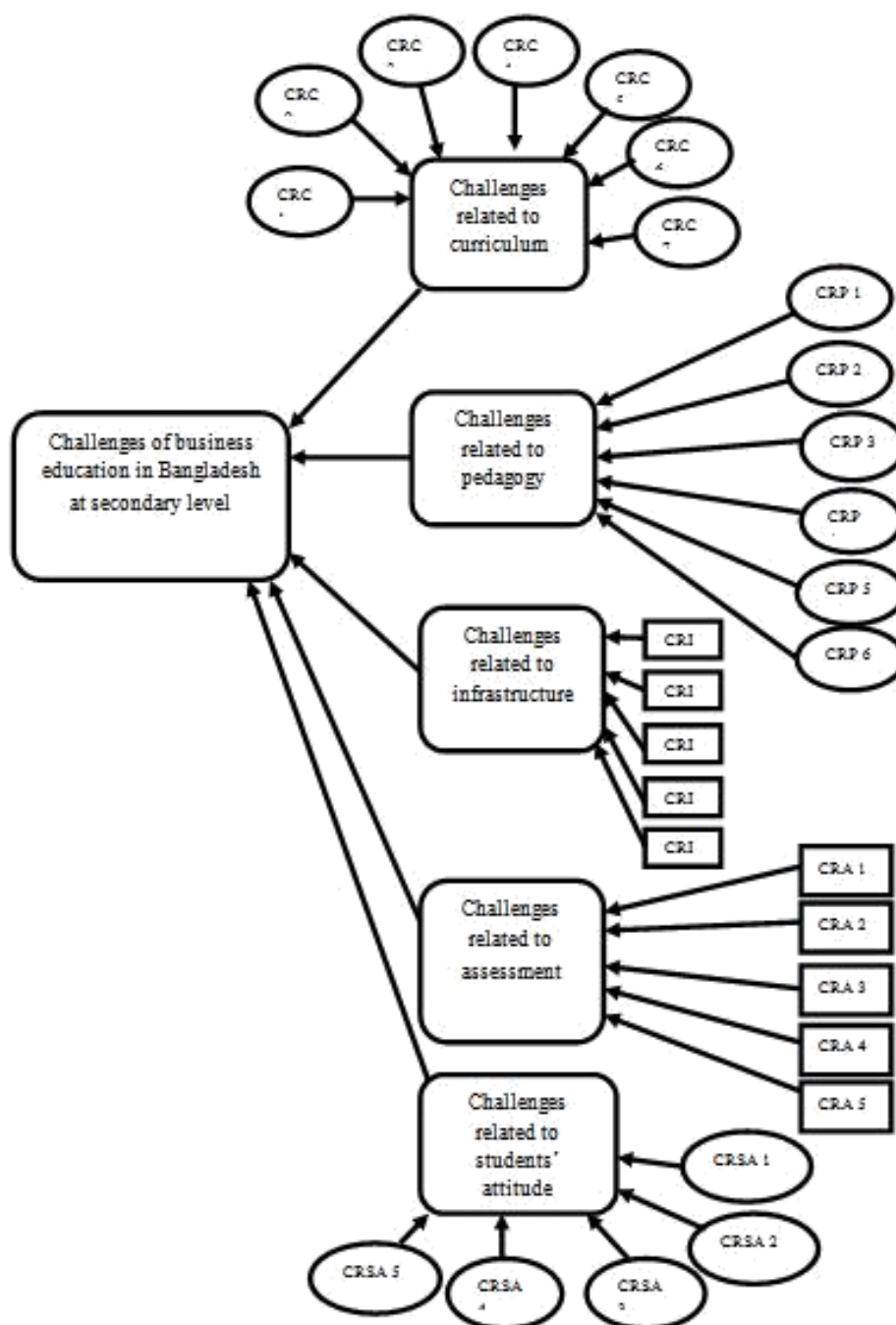


Figure 1. Conceptual framework of the study

3. Tools of data collection

Data was collected using survey questionnaire. All participants i.e. secondary level school teachers provided their consent to participate in the research study. There were seven sections to the questionnaire, with a total of 43 items. Aside from the 10 items in Section A which required respondents to select the answers based on their own personal demographics, the rest of the items used 5-point Likert Scale, ranging from Strong Agree to Strongly Disagree. Table 1 shows the structure of the survey questionnaire.

Table 1. Survey Questionnaire Framework

Sections	Items	Explanation	Scale
Section A	10 items	Demographic information: Gender, school locations, educational and pedagogical qualifications.	Nominal
Section B	7 items	Challenges related to curriculum	1-5 Ordinal
Section C	6 items	Challenges related to pedagogy	1-5 Ordinal
Section D	5 items	Challenges related to infrastructure	1-5 Ordinal
Section E	5 items	Challenges related to assessment	1-5 Ordinal
Section F	5 items	Challenges related to students' attitude	1-5 Ordinal
Section G	5 items	Perceptions of teachers' regarding these challenges	1-5 Ordinal

4. Findings

1. Demographic information of the respondents

Table 2 illustrates the respondents' demographic data. Out of the 95 respondents, most of the teachers are male (80%). There are more respondents working in urban schools, compared to rural ones. A large number of the respondents hold a Masters degree (84.2%). As far as pedagogical qualification is concerned however, only 48.4% possess education degrees (at Masters, Bachelor and Diploma/Certificate levels, with a majority of 51.6% having none).

Table 2. Demographic Information Of The Respondents

	Items	n	%
Gender	Male	76	80
	Female	19	20
Schools' location of the respondents	Urban	54	56.84
	Rural	41	43.16
Educational qualification of the respondents	Masters	80	84.21
	Bachelor (Honors)	4	4.21
	Bachelor (Pass)	11	11.58
Pedagogical qualification of the respondents	M.Ed.	5	5.26
	B.Ed.	36	37.89
	DpEd. / C.Ed.	5	5.26
	Nil	49	51.58

Note. *n*=number of participants.

2. Challenges related to Curriculum

Table 3 shows the teachers' opinion regarding challenges related to the business education curriculum at the secondary level. The majority of teachers agreed with the challenges related to curriculum. For example, 41.7% teachers expressed that business education curriculum was not updated.

Table 3. Challenges Related to Curriculum (CRC)

Items	SA (%)	A (%)	N (%)	DA (%)	SDA (%)
1. (CRC-1): The objectives of the business education curriculum are not clearly stated.	7.3	40.6	16.7	31.3	4.2
2. (CRC-2): Business education curriculum is not updated.	11.5	41.7	18.8	22.9	5.2
3. (CRC-3): Considering the context of Bangladesh, the curriculum is not properly implemented.	8.2	36.1	17.5	35.1	3.1
4. (CRC-4): The curriculum did not include adequate business contents.	8.2	39.2	17.5	30.9	4.1
5. (CRC-5): The educational contents of accounting, business enterprise, finance and banking are not properly arranged according to the syllabus.	6.2	32	20.6	38.1	3.1
6. (CRC-6): The teaching-learning functions are not explicitly described in the curriculum.	8.2	36.1	15.5	37.1	3.1
7. (CRC-7): The assessment methods of the students are not clearly described in the curriculum.	8.3	39.6	16.7	29.2	6.3

Note. SA=Strongly Agree. A=Agree. N=Neutral. DA=Disagree. SDA=Strongly Disagree

3. Challenges related to pedagogy

Table 4 shows teachers' opinion on challenges related to business education pedagogy. Maximum teachers agreed with the challenges related to pedagogy. While a number of teachers also disagreed with some of challenges related to pedagogy.

Table 4. Challenges Related to Pedagogy (CRP)

Items	SA(%)	A (%)	N (%)	DA (%)	SDA (%)
1. (CRP-1): Different participatory methods (group work, mind mapping, brainstorming) cannot be used while teaching business education.	9.5	31.6	15.8	41.1	2.1
2. (CRP-2): Educational materials cannot be used properly when teaching business education.	8.4	42.1	12.6	31.6	5.3
3. (CRP-3): Business education subjects cannot be taught by creating lesson plans.	5.2	27.1	11.5	50	6.3
4. (CRP-4): Allocated time is not enough to teach business education properly.	6.2	33	17.5	36.1	7.2
5. (CRP-5): Business and industries visit is not possible to impart practical education for the students.	22.7	37.1	12.4	21.6	6.2
6. (CRP-6): Students cannot be developed as entrepreneurs by motivating them for self-employment.	17.7	30.2	13.5	32.3	6.3

Note. SA=Strongly Agree. A=Agree. N=Neutral. DA=Disagree. SDA=Strongly Disagree

4. Challenges related to infrastructure

Table 5 shows the opinions of 95 respondents regarding challenges related to the business education infrastructure at the secondary level of Bangladesh. Maximum teachers agreed with the challenges related to infrastructure. Among them 53.1% of teachers agreed with the statement that schools are suffering from insufficiency of teaching materials.

Table 5. Challenges Related to Infrastructure (CRI)

Items	SA (%)	A (%)	N (%)	DA (%)	SDA (%)
1. (CRI-1): Classrooms are not suitable for teaching business education subjects.	10.3	39.2	8.2	35.1	7.2
2. (CRI-2): Schools don't have adequate teaching materials to teach business education.	14.6	53.1	4.2	25	3.1
3. (CRI-3): Schools don't have ideal teacher-students ration i.e., 1: 40.	23.7	46.4	4.1	20.6	5.2
4. (CRI-4): Schools don't have enough funds to teach business education subjects.	18.6	46.4	12.4	17.5	5.2
5. (CRI-5): Schools don't have adequate ancillary facilities for teaching business education subjects.	17.5	46.4	11.3	21.6	3.1

Note. SA=Strongly Agree. A=Agree. N=Neutral. DA=Disagree. SDA=Strongly Disagree

5. Challenges related to assessment

Table 6 shows the opinions of 95 respondents regarding challenges related to the business education assessment at the secondary level of Bangladesh. Maximum teachers agreed with the challenges related to assessment. While a number of teachers also disagreed with some of challenges related to assessment.

Table 6. Challenges Related to Assessment (CRA)

Items	SA (%)	A (%)	N (%)	DA (%)	SDA (%)
1. (CRA-1): Formative assessments can't be done properly in business education subjects.	8.2	40.2	12.4	35.1	4.1
2. (CRA-2): Summative assessments can't be done properly in business education subjects.	5.2	30.9	13.4	45.4	5.2
3. (CRA-3): Present assessments systems don't measure accurately whether the learning outcomes has achieved or not?	10.4	41.7	9.4	32.3	6.3
4. (CRA-4): The current assessment methods don't make students more interested in acquiring knowledge in these subjects.	8.3	47.9	10.4	30.2	3.1
5. (CRA-5): Whether a student has acquired the skills needed to run a business as an entrepreneur in the future cannot be accurately measured in the current assessment system.	13.4	45.4	12.4	21.6	7.2

Note. SA=Strongly Agree. A=Agree. N=Neutral. DA=Disagree. SDA=Strongly Disagree

6. Challenges related to the students' attitude

Table 7 shows the opinions of 95 respondents regarding challenges related to students' attitude toward business education at the secondary level of Bangladesh. Maximum teachers agreed with the challenges related to student attitude.

Table 7. Challenges Related To The Students' Attitude (CRSA)

Items	SA (%)	A (%)	N (%)	DA (%)	SDA (%)
1. (CRSA-1): Students do not voluntarily choose the business studies group.	9.3	40.2	9.3	34	7.2
2. (CRSA-2): Students do not get pleasure in acquiring knowledge of business education subjects.	10.3	42.3	5.2	38.1	4.1
3. (CRSA-3): Students are not interested in running their own business as entrepreneurs in the future by gaining knowledge of these issues.	11.3	37.1	17.5	26.8	7.2
4. (CRSA-4): Students are not more interested in gaining knowledge and skills of the content than the test results.	24.7	41.2	7.2	18.6	8.2
5. (CRSA-5): Students suffer from depression after taking business studies group.	6.3	32.3	11.5	39.6	10.4

Note. SA=Strongly Agree. A=Agree. N=Neutral. DA=Disagree. SDA=Strongly Disagree

7. Perceptions of teachers towards the actual challenges of business education

To explore the actual challenges of business education at the secondary level the following items were used. Table 8 shows that 35.4% of teachers agreed that curriculum-related challenges are the actual challenges for business education at the secondary level. While, 30.2% disagreed with this statement. Again, 34.7% of respondents expressed that pedagogy related challenges are the actual challenges. While 32.6% disagreed with this statement. However, 49% of teachers disagreed that infrastructure-related challenges are the actual challenges for business education at the secondary level. Besides, most of the teachers (45.8%) expressed that assessment-related challenges are not the actual challenges. Similarly, 40.6% of teachers expressed that students' perceptions related challenges are not the actual challenges for business education at the secondary level. While, 26% agreed with this statement.

Table 8. Perceptions Of Teachers Towards The Actual Challenges Of Business Education

Items	SA (%)	A (%)	N (%)	DA (%)	SDA (%)
1. Curriculum related challenges are the actual challenges for business education at the secondary level.	8.3	35.4	24	30.2	2.1
2. Pedagogy related challenges are the actual challenges for business education at the secondary level.	7.4	34.7	21.1	32.6	4.2
3. Infrastructure related challenges are the actual challenges for business education at the secondary level.	5.2	24	16.7	49	5.2
4. Assessment related challenges are the actual challenges for business education at the secondary level.	5.2	22.9	19.8	45.8	6.3
5. Students' attitude related challenges are the actual challenges for business education at the secondary level.	3.1	26	20.8	40.6	9.4

Note. SA=Strongly Agree. A=Agree. N=Neutral. DA=Disagree. SDA=Strongly Disagree

5. Discussions

The purpose of the study was to explore the challenges related to business education of Bangladesh at the secondary level. The findings related to research question 1 indicate that most of the teachers argued that in business education curriculum, there were not enough business-related contents. Besides, this curriculum is not up-to-date because it was updated in 2012. Moreover, objectives of business education and assessment system need to be revised. However, in this curriculum, teaching-learning instructions were clearly explained. These curriculum related challenges also mentioned by Bajada and Trayler (2013) and they suggested to transform business education curriculum from traditional to integrated which will improve the practical skills of business graduate. Hence, for the research question 2, this study recommends that immediate updating the business education curriculum according to the context of Bangladesh is vital.

In terms of the research question 2, this study revealed that usages of teaching aids in teaching business education are a big challenge for teachers. Besides, business and industry visit for practical learning is also a big challenge for the teachers. These findings are well supported by the study of (Ahmed, 2018) where he explored that in a business programme, most of the teachers are reluctant to use teaching aids and they also reluctant use industry visit technique. However, he argued that both practices have significant impact on active learning. Therefore, pedagogical practices need to be improved for implementing learner-centred pedagogy in business education.

The findings related to research question 3 explored that infrastructure-related challenges are one of the most important challenges for business education. Most of the schools are suffering from these problems. For instance, there is a lack of business-related teaching aids and sufficient fund in the schools. Besides, there are more business studies students than the ideal ratio i.e., 1 teacher for 40 students. Noted that, these findings are well supported by the government report (Bangladesh. Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics, 2018). Therefore, infrastructure development is essential for meeting these challenges.

The findings related to research question 4 indicate that present assessment procedures of business education are not suitable for formative assessment, although summative assessment can be done timely. Assessment procedures are mostly certificate oriented rather than achievement-oriented. Moreover, students don't feel pleased with this assessment system. Therefore, it can't produce enough entrepreneurs. Hence, the assessment system of business education at the secondary level should be revised.

In terms of the research question 5 this study revealed that after taking business education voluntarily, students don't feel interested in learning business knowledge. Besides, they want to achieve good marks in the final exam rather than acquiring enough knowledge in business. Moreover, most of them are not willing to be an entrepreneur in future. Hence, practically oriented teaching-learning is needed for meeting these challenges.

The findings related to research question 6 indicate that in according to the respondents, infrastructure and students attitude related challenges are the most important and actual challenges for the business education in Bangladesh at the secondary level. Thus, infrastructure development and introducing learner-centred pedagogy in business education are the two most important tasks.

CONCLUSION

This study explored the challenges of business education in Bangladesh at secondary level as per the secondary level school teachers. These challenges are mainly related to curriculum, pedagogy, infrastructure, assessment and attitude. Among the challenges, teachers expressed that curriculum related challenges are most important and needed to address immediately. However, to achieve the aim and objectives of business education more empirical studies are needed to explore other challenges. Once the maximum challenges are explored, it will be easy to address. The findings of this study might be helpful for policy makers for taking necessary steps for improving the business education at secondary level.

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