



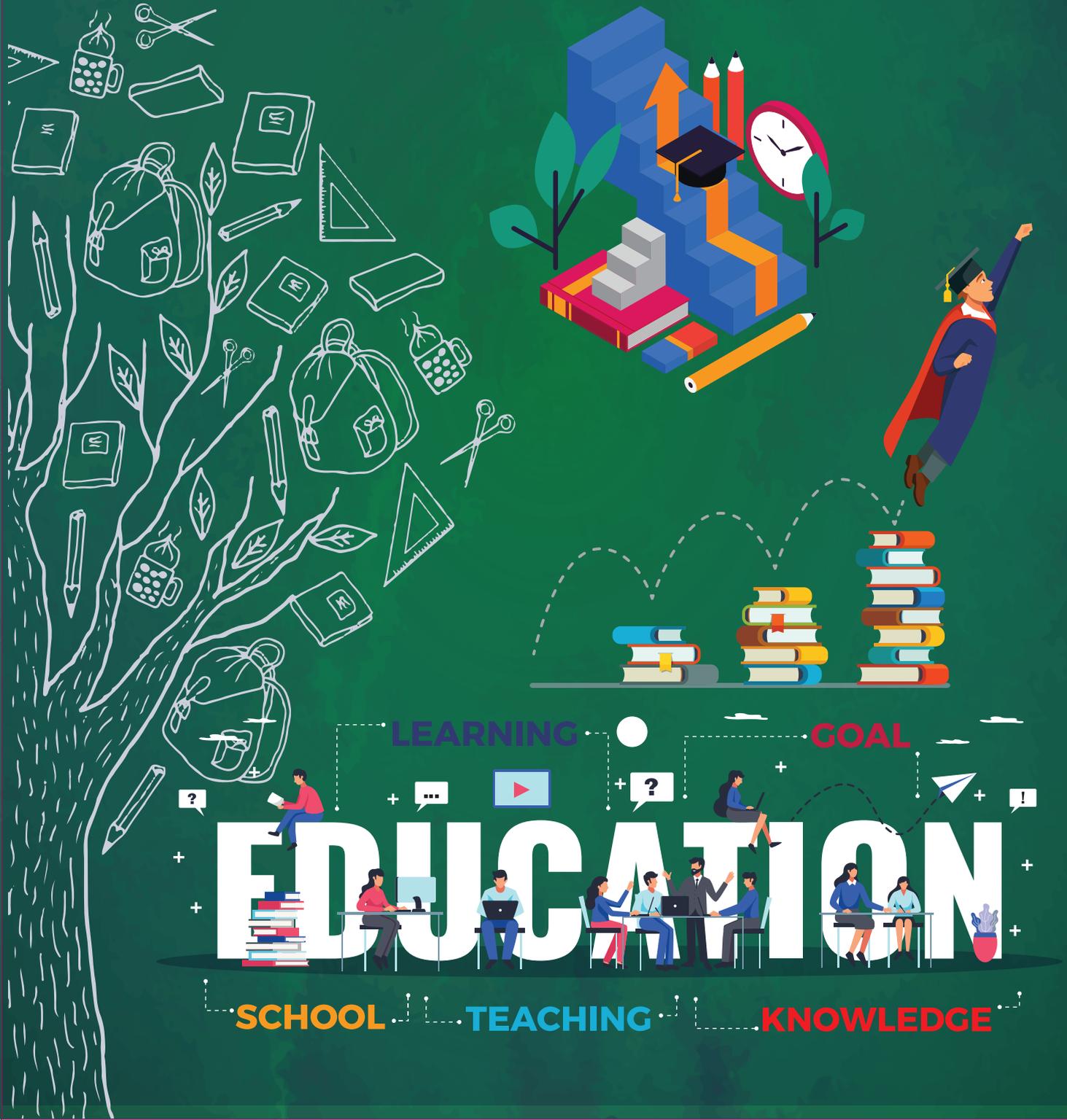
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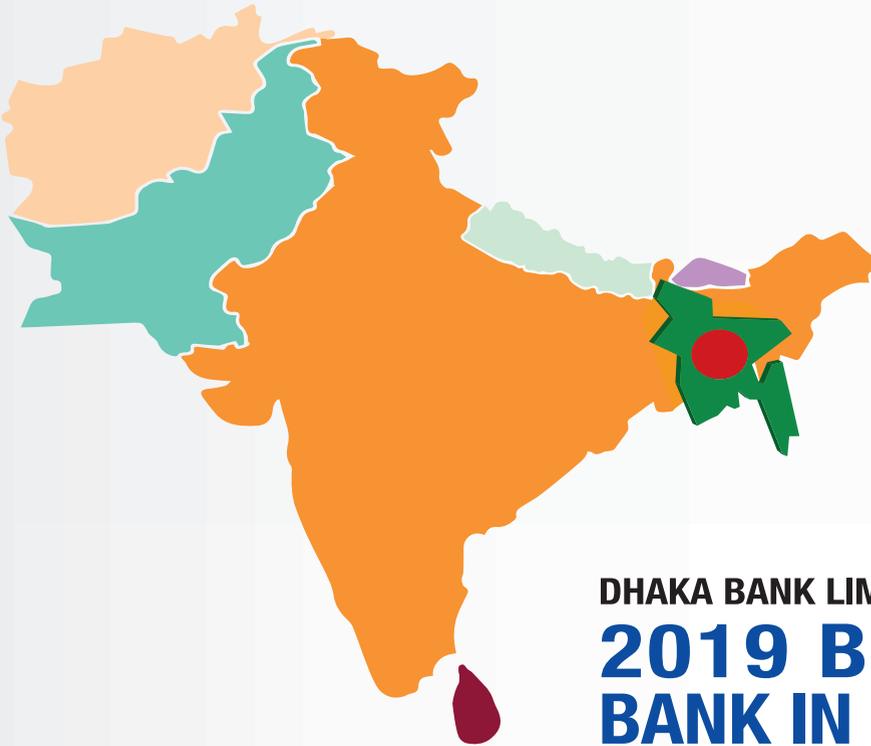
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FROM PUBLIC TO PRIVATE: GOVERNING & MODERNIZING BANGLADESH'S HIGHER EDUCATION AMID CHANGES

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The invigoration in technological advancement, especially over the last few decades, has prompted reflective changes globally in workforce demands and economic transitions. Nelson Mandela once said, “education is the most powerful weapon which we can use to change the world.” He further stated that education is an essential key for ensuring national development.

It is evident that strategic planning and effective management can enhance the quality and credibility of institutions of higher learning worldwide.

For Bangladesh, the development of leadership talent throughout institutions of higher learning is fast becoming a strategic imperative for effective management of national institutions, and national policies need to be established that set the parameters and conditions for productive education. Bangladesh's higher education sector has seen critical changes in the last five decades, including privatization of higher education and steady growth since the 1990s. Although Bangladesh government's initiatives have included monitoring and controlling the higher education sector and standardization of curriculum in public universities, there has been little organized discussion between scholars and practitioners in higher education on the topics of strategic management, current leadership, and future development.

This article provides an overview of strategic management and effective leadership in higher education and examines major challenges to higher education in Bangladesh. Best practice strategies in four distinct areas for quality higher education are recommended.

Being Globally Competitive

When Bangladesh achieved independence in 1971, there were four universities. Today, there are 49 public and 106 private universities. In less than a decade, the total university student body in Bangladesh has tripled from less than one million to now more than two million. This is an achievement that Bangladesh identified early on- the need to build capacity.

Bangladesh's economy has tripled since the start of the 1990s, a period that, not coincidentally, has also seen a boom in the university sector. There is a need for sustainable education if Bangladesh is to become a developed country by 2041. In a knowledge economy, universities do not just serve the market; they are part of the market. In the United States, almost 1 million foreign students contribute nearly \$1 billion to local and state economies. A higher education system that is globally competitive could enhance Bangladesh's gross domestic product (GDP) and not only produce outstanding Bangladeshi graduates, but also be a magnet for South Asia, Southeast Asia and the world.

There are many signs that such a globally competitive system is emerging. The Deputy Chief of Mission from Nepal, Sushil Lamsal, takes it as a point of pride that about 3,000 Nepalese study in Bangladesh. However, there is clearly room for growth, as about 20,000 Bangladeshis study abroad. Approximately 8,000 Bangladeshi students are in the United States but less than 200 U.S. students are in Bangladesh.

To be globally competitive and draw more foreign students and foreign faculty, higher education in Bangladesh must offer high quality and be affordable on the global market. Also, Bangladesh needs to implement: (a) Curriculum Innovations, with each academic department having an advisory board from outside academia; (b) Quality Assurance and Accreditation to improve transparency and provide a system of checks and balances; (c) Placement Offices to assist students with career development and contribute to an innovation ecosystem; (d) Gap Analysis to develop a road map to correct gaps in Bangladesh's education system; and (e) Partnerships with distinguished foreign universities for exchange of students, faculty and research.

Professional Development

Although many good practices prevail in both public and private universities in Bangladesh, there is room for improvement by setting criteria and parameters of resources and achievements as evidence of excellence. Efforts by universities in Bangladesh for sustaining excellence are in the introductory phase and face achievement challenges, both in public and private universities.

Excellence in the field of higher learning, both in research and teaching universities, needs to focus on three important issues. First, enhancing intellectual capital, competitive recruitment and retention of qualified faculty without bias, as well as continuous professional development that stimulates knowledge generation, dissemination and use. Second, enhancing teaching and research supports by incentivizing innovation through unique salary structures, distinct fellowships, and continued mentorship. To attract and retain qualified faculty, there must also be a career path with a tenure system, recognition of faculty achievements, retention packages and allowances for scholarly development, along with new faculty orientation and mentorship programs. Third, enhancing outreach through collaboration and continued interaction, teacher-to-teacher, department-to-department, across universities, business and industries both home and abroad.

Effective Management

The country lags behind global ranking of universities, because no universities from Bangladesh are included in the top 100 or 200 list of world academically reputed universities. Bangladesh has a huge number of students and close to 200 public and private universities, but without sufficient physical structures, logistics and faculty with a global perspective. Many private universities do not have their own permanent campus, and existing campuses do not meet the minimum standard. Public university funding comes from the University Grants Commission (UGC) and is often insufficient, improperly distributed or may contain financial irregularities. UGC does not have sufficient academic control over the public universities other than financing.

Administrative positions, such as Vice Chancellors (VCs) of public universities and the Board of Trustees in private universities are powerful but often fail to achieve good governance and academic excellence in the current system. Universities are overburdened by excessive paper work and unnecessary tasks. Faculty and staff recruitment and promotions not always awarded based on quality and merit. "Cheap popularity syndrome" of teachers exists that sometimes makes the academic and management environment complex. Other issues include lack of gender balancing among students, faculty, and staff, lack of strong alumni associations or even alumni activities and lack of uniformity in the examination and evaluation of students and researchers. Government and political interferences on university management is a serious and common issue, especially for the public universities and are a major challenge to university management and healthy learning.

Shared Success

The higher education system in Bangladesh is fraught with management issues, resulting in a fragmented system. Employees at all levels need to work together as a team for common goals and outcomes, rather than ownership for only part of the system or none at all. Higher education is responsible to not only its students and faculty but also to society and the country at large. Success should be measured not only by economic viability and financial success but also by the quality of education provided and the quality of knowledge produced.

Higher education institutions should be transparent and collaborative, rather than competitive, and should work together and share resources, such as by building consortiums, using common funds for scholarships and grants, sharing expensive equipment and structures, and sharing expertise. Lack of qualified senior faculty members to learn from and lack of a clear chain of command can contribute toward low faculty responsibility.

Universities need to focus on academic responsibility, because faculty has the responsibility to be honest and uphold academic integrity, and the responsibility to engage with and be available to students outside of teaching responsibilities, if required. Faculty must NOT exploit, discriminate, or harass students or take advantage of them in any way and have responsibility to distinguish and separate between their professional obligations and personal political ideologies/orientation.

Conclusion

In order to be globally competitive and ensure quality higher education, improvements need to be made by Bangladesh in the selection of students, faculty and management positions at higher education institutions, and a system of accountability is needed for all stakeholders.

The student selection system should be revised to ensure that both the student and the university have mutual success. A system of support and care for students, including career development training and academic as well as psychosocial needs assessment of the students and counseling, if needed. Students should be involved in research, community development, and other activities as per their interest and capabilities.

Students should be able to participate in university activities and voice their concerns through formal student associations, extra-curricular activities, student motivation programs, student counseling, effective feedback, etc. Universities must ensure that graduates will qualify for suitable employment in the current economy when they graduate.

Professional development of faculty involves continuous training, mentorship, meaningful interactions among intra-inter/national scholars, and ongoing evaluation. Universities should aim to be globally competitive by maintaining global standards in both teaching and research. This can be achieved by improving facilities; continual training in teaching and research methodologies, encouraging regular publications by the faculty members in their respective fields, and creating an "innovation ecosystem" that is democratic, equitable, and participatory in the higher education institutions by collaboration with departments, disciplines, other universities, and appropriate organizations and industries. A "Research Ethics Board" needs to be established that would incorporate epistemological values and the culture of Bangladesh. Recruitment of teachers needs to be free, fair, depoliticized, and competitive, with emphasis on academic knowledge, pedagogic skills, and research interests, as well as capabilities. There should be a clear career development path to retain faculty, along with differential salary and incentive packages.

University management needs to provide leadership in an efficient and neutral manner with the best-qualified candidates selected. The existing fragmented system should be streamlined with a clear sense of responsibility, accountability and good governance for all stakeholders. Balancing power among different bodies and both the Board of Trustees and the VC is necessary. UGC funding for public universities, needs to be improved with divisional offices, larger workforce, higher budget and more control and timeliness over the higher education arrangements.

Universities need more gender balancing and sensitivity to be inclusive and transparent. In addition, there should be a culture of sharing and collaboration among universities, as opposed to mere competition, for a culture of mutual benefit, cooperation, care, and sharing among institutions.

In conclusion, universities should be granted maximum autonomy and academic freedom while being regulated by a single and uniform higher education policy. Success of higher education institutions should be measured by economic viability, financial success, quality of education provided and the quality of knowledge produced.

BANGLADESH EDUCATION SYSTEM . . . A COMPREHENSIVE FRAMEWORK



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Higher education has a significant impact on the development of modern society. It not only improves individuals' lives but also offers productive economic growth to a country. But it is not possible for any country to maintain its sustainable economic growth without the development of human resources. The development of human capital can only be ensured through quality higher education and training.

The Higher Educational management of Bangladesh needs to be more organized. Every year a huge number of students are admitted to and graduate from different public and private universities of Bangladesh. It is very difficult and time-consuming for the universities as well as the education ministry and other government organizations like UGC to track this huge amount of data. As a result, a lot of opportunities are getting wasted and graduates are suffering from unemployment. Because of the lacking of skilled human resources, there are no significant upgrades happening in our job sectors. Besides, there is also some management process that should be reformed as they require much time, money, and human work. For example during the admission test, students need to buy applications for multiple exams of one university and have to go to universities physically for taking admission test which has a great physical and financial impact on them. Students need to arrange accommodation for them and universities have to arrange multiple admission tests which results in extra monetary costs. There are some other issues like the management of proper resource utilization, revenue generation, course allocation, student management, library management, proper evaluation of the performance of students, etc. With the existing higher education system, taking decisions regarding these issues becomes troublesome as data analysis requires much time.

E-governance in the education system of Bangladesh can provide better approaches for interacting with students, organizing and conveying data and benefits, evaluating students' academic performances, etc. Moreover, this will reduce administrative delays in the education system. For the overall development of the education system, the incorporation of e-governance has become very important and necessary as well. Through this, sustainable economic growth can be ensured for Bangladesh.

From the entrance exam to the job placement of the students, the overall higher educational management should be very systematic. With this view to improve the overall higher education process of Bangladesh, we proposed a comprehensive education framework that will handle the whole higher education management and will mitigate existing issues of the higher education system so that universities of Bangladesh can provide quality education that meets international standards. This proposed educational framework will bring transparency over the overall system and help to remove process vulnerabilities.

If the overall higher education process can be managed through a unified system where all the universities, undergraduate and post-graduate students, university admission applicants, UGC, government's education ministry will get access, then we can expect the following benefits:

1. The system will reduce the economic and physical impact for students and parents during the admission procedure as they don't need to go to the university physically for the admission test.
2. Universities will be able to track and analyze admission related data, student's registration data, and other management data easily for taking quick action.
3. University faculties will be able to evaluate students properly.
4. Students will always know what they are good at and where they have space to improve by checking their performance evaluation.
5. Transparency and accountability of different universities will be maintained as the government will have access to all the universities' data.
6. UGC will be able to make decisions about funds for the research, scholarships, and training to the graduated student, etc.
7. Government will be able to ensure jobs for the graduates efficiently which will ultimately help to upgrade the job sector and will reduce the unemployment problem of the country.

With all the benefits described above - we proposed a system that can solve all the problems related to higher education in Bangladesh. Bangladeshi universities do not currently have any unified system that can contribute to the whole education system. Currently, different kinds of universities are in Bangladesh, such as:

i) Public University, ii) National University, iii) Open University, iv) Private University and v) Medical Colleges and Universities

All these institutions are different in nature and their strategy of running a business is also varied in nature. Available solutions are not much suitable and need more than 30% customization. In fact, there is currently no such solution that is reasonably designed to unify all the institutions with all the educational modules yet. So from a sustainability perspective, developing a new one makes more sense than upgrading or customizing existing solutions. Some universities already made their own solutions for some of the modules already. For example, some made the registration system, and some implemented the library system.

In this condition, to enhance the higher education in Bangladesh effective and organized, we are proposing a Unified Universal University Management System (U3MS) together with dynamic participation of every associated stakeholder. We are planning this as a unified system that will incorporate all the public and private universities, UGC officials, and Education ministry under e-Governance. In our system, we are planning to implement several modules are listed below:

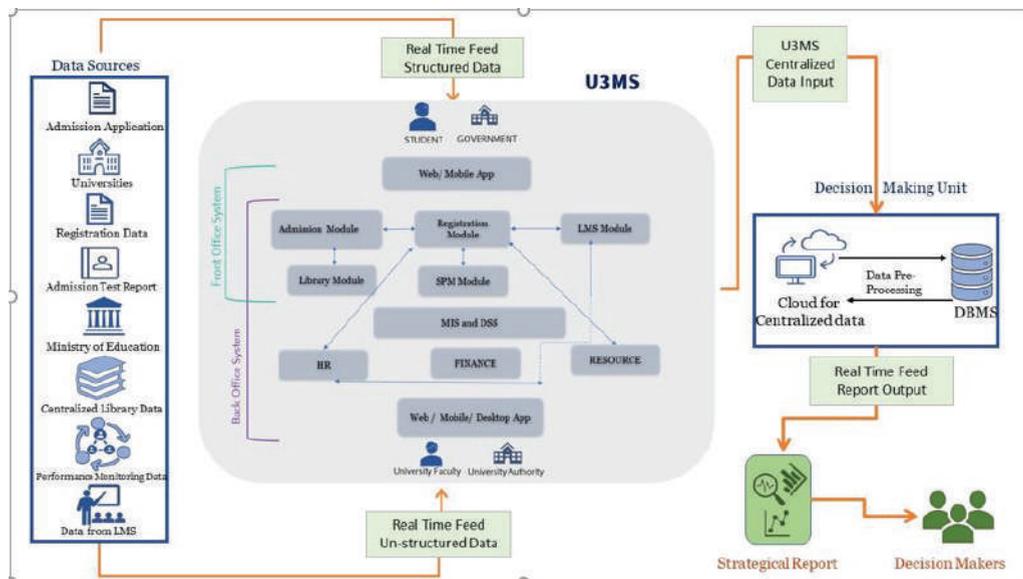
- 1) Admission Module: This module will handle Student's Applications, Admission tests, Institution Ranking, etc.
- 2) Registration Module: Admitted students will register.
- 3) E-Learning Module: It is a learning

BANGLADESH EDUCATION SYSTEM . . . A COMPREHENSIVE FRAMEWORK

management module through which students can enroll themselves in several courses offered from different universities of Bangladesh. 4) Student's Performance Monitoring Module: This module will monitor the overall performance of the students. 5) Library Management Module: This module will deal with library-related issues, share books with different universities and we also integrate a home delivery system for student's 6) Payment Module: This is for paying when needed. For example: paying fees, paying for library subscriptions, Semester fees, etc. 7) Report Generation Module: We are proposing a Big Data Analytics driven system that will have the ability to analyze data and give reports with necessary graphs and charts for decision-makers.

A general rich picture of the proposed U3MS system is presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Rich Picture of Proposed U3MS System



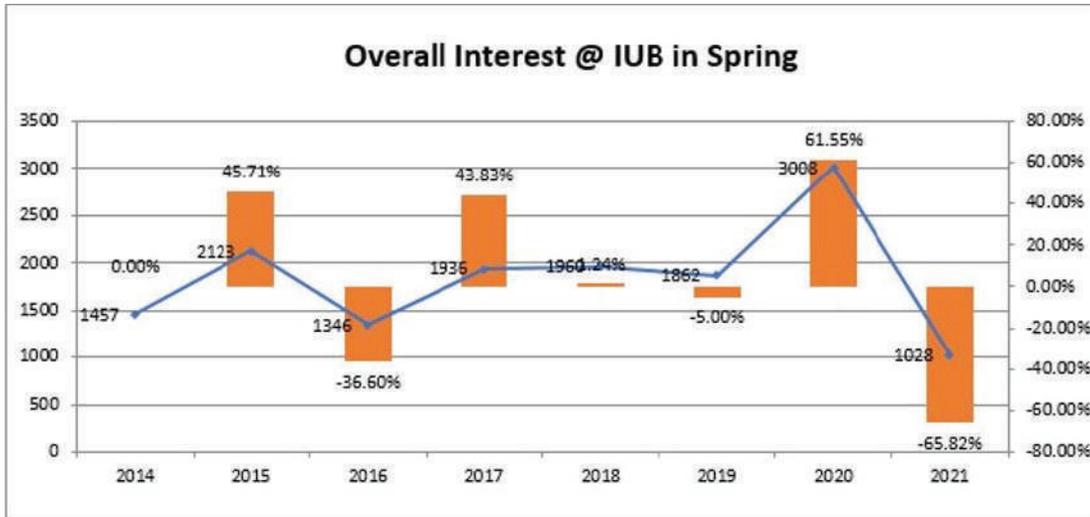
Through U3MS, students will apply for and take part in the admission tests, see the result, register for courses, attend several learning programs, etc. Universities can arrange examinations, set the question paper, announce the examination result, offer courses to choose, monitor students' performances, analyze students' progress data, view the report generated by systems, etc. Government, Ministry of education, Related Officials of UGC, and other government organizations can gain access to the data, monitor universities and activities, generate required reports, etc. and the corresponding policymakers can have access to data and reports; they will be able to analyze those reports and can take essential decisions out of those reports.

Our proposed Unified Universal University Management System (U3MS), will consolidate and validate all sorts of data. The system will ensure data transparency and will evaluate accrued data, and finally will generate several strategical reports that are described below.

As it's getting difficult to track a huge amount of admission-related data, monitor students' performance, and make analytical reports for quick decisions on the educational status of higher studies. If we can execute our comprehensive education framework through a Unified Universal University Management System, it will be able to analyze those data more efficiently which will be helpful for the policymakers to take any decision on educational status within a short time; it will generate reports for respective stakeholders such as students, Authority of Universities, Government, and UGC as well. If we think about students' perspectives, they will be accessed admission-related data, able to make decisions and evaluate their performances.

This system will be helpful for authorities of universities also. We can see the trends of students' admission interest for a university. For example, Figure 2 is showing the massive changes in the trends of students' admission interest in IUB.

Figure 2: Overall Student Interest in IUB from 2014-2021



Through the concept of comprehensive education framework, universities can analyze the number of applicants, the number of admitted students, required classrooms, school wise section distribution, resource allocation, different schools, data on departments, major-related information, the overall trend of universities, and revenue process to have quick decisions regarding - budget allocation, revenue increment, classroom allocation, proper classroom capacity, and resource utilization, the need of laboratory and library, including seats in residential halls and so on.

For example, in Spring 2021, IUB takes classes in two slots ST(Sunday and Tuesday) and MW(Monday and Wednesday), and in six time slots per day. On the other hand, NSU uses three slots ST (Sunday and Tuesday), MW (Monday and Wednesday), and TS (Thursday and Saturday) for classes. So they utilize their resources three times more than IUB per week. But private universities are unable to utilize their resources properly as there is an open credit system. It indicates the unused capacity calculated by subtracting average enrollment from average room capacity.

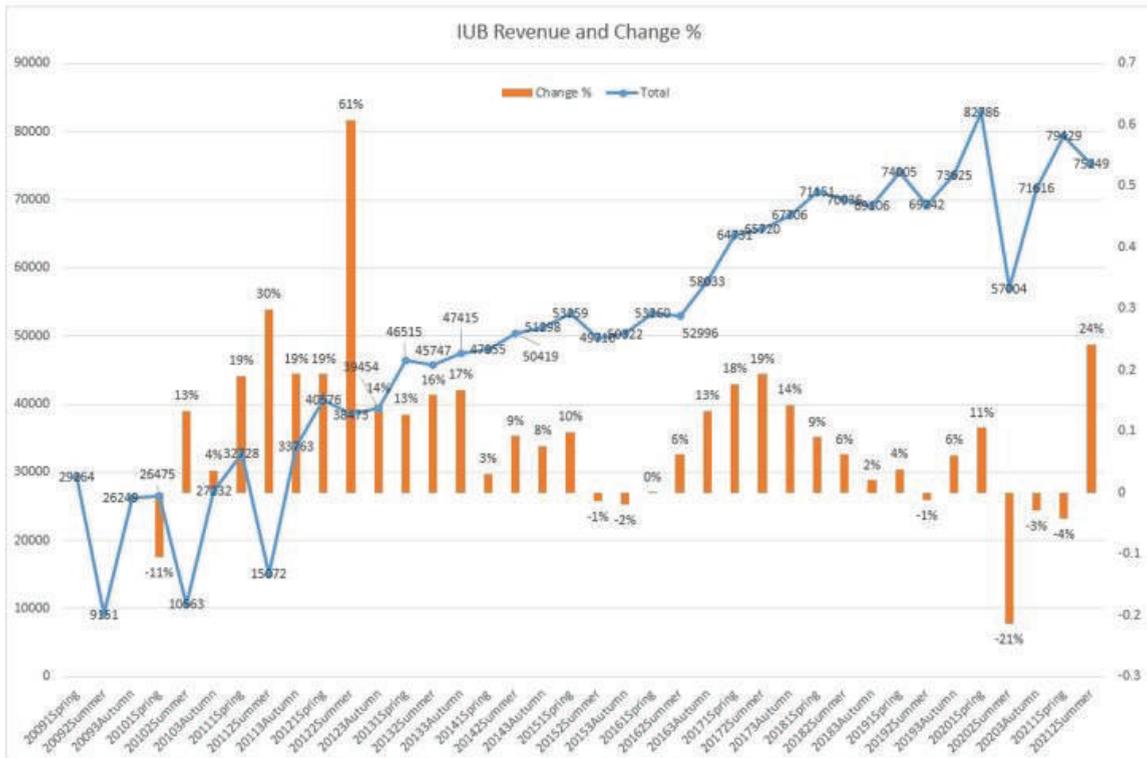
From Figure 3, we can visualize the average room capacity of the School of Engineering Technology and Sciences (SETS) is 40.86 but the average enrollment is 31.04 only. So the percentage of unused capacity is 24.04% approximately which is not a good sign. In that case, 50 sized rooms can be divided into two rooms with 20-30 capacity to utilize the rooms more efficiently. Through a unified system for educational management, we can make decisions on that easily. It will be beneficial to make strategies for proper resource utilization.

Figure 3: Room allocation in different schools of IUB for Autumn and Summer session

	Sum	Avg Enroll	Avg Room	Difference	Unused %
Spring	26910	30.30	39.87	9.57	24.00%
SBE	8567	40.99	46.94	5.95	12.67%
SELS	2404	21.85	35.09	13.24	37.72%
SETS	8039	31.04	40.86	9.82	24.04%
SLASS	5598	24.88	36.11	11.23	31.10%
SPPH	2302	27.08	35.65	8.56	24.03%
Summer	26633	31.15	40.19	9.04	22.50%
SBE	8960	42.26	47.83	5.57	11.64%
SELS	2568	22.93	34.96	12.03	34.41%
SETS	9554	31.95	39.80	7.84	19.71%
SLASS	5473	23.80	36.13	12.33	34.14%
SPPH	78	39.00	50.00	11.00	22.00%

For instance, Figure 4 shows the overall revenue trend of IUB. It also indicates the change in revenue each year from 2009 to 2021.

Figure 4: Overall Revenue Trend of IUB from 2009 to 2021



Apart from this, Governments will be able to access the data from all universities, data of examination results, the evaluation process of students, graduate training, job placement of the graduates, researches are done by different universities. UGC can prepare a ranking so that the government of Bangladesh, organizations, and students can have a clear picture of the trends of any university. With this concept, UGC will be able to analyze data regarding data about graduate students.

If Bangladesh wants to get one of the leading positions in this fourth industrial revolution, then the education system needs to be modernized and organized under e-Governance. In the future, we can plan to make the system more robust and secure so that it can be acceptable to everyone in Bangladesh. This enormous system, if got accepted and implemented, can change the whole direction of the higher education system in Bangladesh.

The massive projected database of the U3MS is an opportunity for novel, creative systems. With the help of Artificial Intelligence and Machine learning, coupled with proper data mining, this system can be the state-of-the-art educational system not only for Bangladesh but also for the World.





MY TEACHING JOURNEY: MIRRORING THE CHANGING E.L.T. STATUS IN BANGLADESH

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It is not often that we take a moment to reminiscence and reflect over our professional lives. We leave it for that cinematic moment before our demise when our whole life “flashes before our eyes”. Even then I doubt it is the professional aspect that is uppermost on our minds. I am happy, therefore, to take this opportunity to reassess my nearly four decades of teaching career.

I started teaching in 1979, right after my MA results from Dhaka University were announced. My first child was three and I was far from keen on getting a job right then, least of all in teaching. A friend, however, a college teacher herself, encouraged me to apply to the College of Music where a lectureship in English was available. It was a private college, but later became the Government Music College. I applied and was accepted.

As a private college it followed the syllabus laid down for all government colleges, with two papers in English, one in language and one in literature. The classes prepared students to sit for the national Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) examinations. The literature paper had a selection of well-known short stories such as “The Gift of the Magi” by O. Henry, “The Luncheon” by Somerset Maugham, and “Mrs. Packletide’s Tiger” by Saki. A selection of essays was also included.

Since this was my first proper job, I was in no position to make comparisons. The ambiance of the place was good, I met some great singers and the music students were open to whatever English lessons I was able to impart. I have fond memories of afternoons whiled away listening to nationally acclaimed singers like Khalid Hussain, Fazle Nizami and Indra Mohan Rajbongshi (who taught there) joined by Sheikh Luthfar Rahman, Sohrab Hussain (who often came to visit), giving impromptu recitals.

Having successfully floundered in the waters of academia, the next obvious step was to take the Public Service Commission examination. Once selected, I joined the “elite” coterie known as “government servants”, branded with the profession: Teaching.

Now I was at the whim of the Education Ministry and was appointed Lecturer at Kabi Nazrul Government College at Victoria Park. The English syllabus was similar to what I had taught at the College of Music, the only difference being the size of the classes. From ten to fifteen students I was now faced with an average of 100 students.

A couple of years into my career, I was lucky to get a Technical Training scholarship to do a Masters in Linguistics and ELT (English Language Teaching) at the University of York, UK. On my return, I was appointed to Dhaka College. Again, the syllabus was exactly the same but there were two other changes: the quality of the students and the size of the classes. Here students were more serious; but here too, there were anything upwards to 300 students at the beginning of the year. It petered down to the hard core of about 150 after a month or so, but I was faced with the challenge of teaching language in classrooms where desks were nailed to the floor and the body of students rotated from day to day and class to class.

Dhaka College, however, offered an Honors program in English. This meant a manageable group of students who were actually interested in the subject. This was more motivating for me and interacting with them rekindled my passion for literature as a subject and not just a vehicle of language.

What was happening outside the classroom all this time? A little contextual information will not be amiss here, I think. I would like to quote from my article "Language Planning in Bangladesh: A Case Study":



Before the independence of Bangladesh in 1971, the following scenario prevailed: Bangla was the language spoken at home and used in day-to-day transactions as well as in social settings. It was also the medium of instruction in Bangla medium schools. English was a compulsory subject at the secondary and higher secondary levels of education, and the medium of instruction at the tertiary level. It was also the language employed in offices, government, trade, and the learned professions as well as the chief means of communication between the two wings of Pakistan" (Mansoor 112).

The Education Commission of 1974 recommended that Bangla be the medium of instruction at all levels of education. It must be a compulsory language up to class XII, and textbooks at the higher stages of education, especially in the field of science and technical, professional and vocational education must be written in Bangla and translated from other languages. English would continue to be taught from Class VI to Class XII as a second language. Due to loopholes and contradictions in the language policy, English lost its place as the second language and became a foreign language. This resulted in the system spewing out students with a lower level of language proficiency in English and at the same time creating a vacuum in the supply of prospective English Language Teachers. These shortcomings were keenly felt, not just in the Government sector where officers often had to communicate with the outside world, but also in other private sectors and Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs).

The British Council had been running courses for government officers. Previously it had organized its "intensive English refresher course" in the United Kingdom, but it was more economical to do that at the British Council in Bangladesh. The officers would be required to sit the IELTS and based on their results, assigned a four, eight, or twelve-week course.

The British Council was quick in picking up on the lower language proficiency level as well as the dearth of language teachers all over the country. They started offering English courses not just for Bangladeshi Government officers but also for the staff of different organizations, government and NGOs alike.

In 1995, a study conducted by the British Council on behalf of the University Grant Commission (UGC) identified some major problems in the area of ELT. Their recommendations included a number of steps to improve ELT, such as inclusion of English as a subject from Elementary level and in-service training of ELT teachers all over Bangladesh.

Circumstances so happened that I was offered the job of Head of Courses of the English Language Centre at the British Council, Dhaka. Government jobs were coveted positions in those days (1980s) but the British Council offered advantages that could not be scoffed at.

After seven years as the Head of the Direct Teaching Operation (around this time the nomenclature changed from the English Language Centre – ELC, to Direct Teaching Operation – DTO) and three more years as a part-time teacher, I realized I had reached the proverbial glass ceiling. The regular in-service training, classroom observations and workshops continued but the work had become repetitive and less challenging.

Aware of the language needs of the country, having done a number of consultancies for the British Council, I cut my mooring and set myself adrift on fresh waters. I, together with an Irish friend, started our own language consultancy which offered both on-site and off-site language courses to different organizations for their local staff. Organizations where language courses, specially writing courses, were in great demand were UNICEF, GEC, UCEP, Oxfam, Concern and a number of other NGOs.

After a couple of years running our language consultancy, I found myself in a new predicament. Though economically viable, it was causing me to get mired in administrative activities: hiring teachers, organizing transport, corresponding with different organizations. This was just not my cup of tea.

Serendipitously I came on Mr. Mosleuddin Ahmed's radar. A retired diplomat, he was in the process of starting the first private university in Bangladesh. I was asked to draw up the syllabus for English – possibly to test my ability and efficiency. With my knowledge of syllabus design and ELT training from York, it was a painless task, yet it had a certain novelty and I liked the significance of the task. Considering my lack of expertise at that time, it couldn't have been the best of syllabi, but it was my own and I was mighty proud of it. The department started with that syllabus, though in later years it underwent a number of changes, and I clinched the job of Assistant Professor of English at North-South University (NSU).

The demand nationwide was for basic English language and we went full swing with that. Foundation courses of Pre-intermediate to Upper Intermediate levels of English were successfully offered. After a couple of years as Head of the Department of English, I proposed a three pronged English Discipline. TESOL (Teaching of English to Speakers of Other Languages), Linguistics and Literature. It is interesting to reflect that this idea was frowned upon in the beginning and much debated due to the paucity of students. I had done my homework, however, and discovered that a few universities in the United States were doing just that. The proposal was finally approved and though we had fewer than five students in many of the literature and TESOL classes, we persisted. The literature syllabus followed what was being taught in other public universities with the inclusion, mostly, of British canonical authors.

During the decade that I taught at NSU I came to the realization that though ELT had been the need of the day to fill the vacuum that had been created by our initial language policies, the place for literature was always there. Thus, when I went for a PhD in the US in 2002, I chose to earn it in Creative Writing and not in Language Teaching or Linguistics.

MY TEACHING JOURNEY: MIRRORING THE CHANGING E.L.T. STATUS IN BANGLADESH

At the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL), as a Teaching Assistant, I initially taught Freshman English, basically ESP (English for Study Purposes) courses to help students with their academic subjects. After a couple of years, I moved on to teach Creative Writing and other literature courses to undergrad students. This would be invaluable on my return to Bangladesh.

Seven years later I returned to Bangladesh and joined IUB. There was a Language Institute with focus on the four skills of Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening. Within a few months I was able to, with the help of other members of the faculty, set up a Department of English and Modern Languages. Here too, we decided to have two streams: Linguistics & ELT and Literature. With my background I was able to be move between both the streams taking foundation courses as well as the new literature courses on offer.

Creative Writing was one such course. Over time this course was to have quite an impact on our students, both Literature Majors and ELT Majors. Once aware of their ability to write fiction and/or poetry, some could now dream of a future as a writer and some have already applied to Creative Writing programs overseas. Hopefully this will, in the coming years, build up a group of young fiction writers and poets who will play a major role in changing the field of Bangladeshi Creative Writing in English.

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THE MEDIA IS THE MEDIUM: GENESIS & STATE IN HALF A CENTURY OF BANGLADESH

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The old cliché that the Media (as a unit rather than a plurality) is a society's mirror to itself, that it holds truth to those wielding power by keeping them honest in democracies still holds largely true in the liberal democracies of the world. This in spite of CNN media personality Fareed Zakaria persuasively contending, illiberal democracies have been on the rise almost as soon as the bell tolled to signal the end of the Cold War. Make no mistake, even if at some personal risk to body and/or personal freedom, the Media still tries to elicit accountability from those in power and show the mirror to society. The Media's onerous responsibility is not spelt out in detail in any country's Constitution (although its right to freedom of expression is usually guaranteed even in many authoritarian states), which is where its epithet of being the Fourth Estate of a country comes into play.

The Media, in the British statesman Edmund Burke's speech in the British Parliament in 1787, is the Fourth Estate in addition to the constitutionally defined government branches of the Executive, Legislature and Judiciary. Constitutional provision of the protection of free speech (and, as its corollary, a free press) was inserted in the US Constitution over two hundred years back. The Bangladesh Constitution, from its very inception a shade under half a century ago as of this writing, contains similar provisions, although, in practice, it has occasionally been undermined under different governments of the country. Generally, though, in liberal democracies, the Media has shaped itself as, and, for the most part, settled into the role of being watchdogs of the society, of keeping them honest, of speaking truth to the power --- political or otherwise.

The Media is a vast proposition consisting of newspapers, radio, television and the Internet as the primary media (hear, the plural form) although film and advertising are also significant members of this family. In Bangladesh, as in many other countries, the print media, whether offline or online, continues to be influential to both the readers and the government, although the Internet, often resembling a cheeky blow-up of its acronym www as denoting Wild Wild Web in the manner of Wild Wild West of folklore, movie, and television, continues to attract more and more users every day. The Media in general covers topics on politics, economics, sports, education, entertainment, and general and local news.

In terms of Bangladesh, the Media is particularly significant, based on the premise that it was a key to the engendering of cultural, and, later, political, nationalism when it was a part of Pakistan, which eventually culminated in the emergence of Bangladesh as a free and sovereign nation-state. Where the rift between East and West Pakistan exhibited itself significantly within the first five years of Pakistan's existence was in a cultural field --- the issue of language to be precise, or rather, the snubbing of the Mother Tongue of the majority of the country's population, Bangla, from being recognized as the state language by the ruling class in West Pakistan. Language has an undefinable hold on the Bangla speaker's psyche (as, indeed, in other language speakers), is a part of the person's culture, and its denigration became the first major contentious issue between the Bangalis and the West Pakistanis.

The language movement that ended with Bangla being recognized as one of the state languages of Pakistan, but which later on became a pivot around which revolved the future emergence of Bangladesh as a sovereign nation-state, required a media outlet to act as a catalyst for galvanizing the people to realize their demands. And *The Pakistan Observer* was ready and willing to do just that. It was an English language daily that espoused the cause of Bangla. The post-Ekushey February scenario when the political movements that would culminate in the birth of Bangladesh saw the emergence of the most influential and widely read daily newspaper in East Pakistan --- *The Daily Ittefaq*.

The Pakistan Observer, renamed *The Bangladesh Observer* in December 1971, and which had ceased publication on 8 June, 2010, was born on 11 March 1949 and, under its second editor, Abdus Salam, consistently followed an independent editorial policy. It paid the price for becoming the convenient route of looking out for public safety and state security by the government. In response to the newspaper's powerful support for the Bangla language movement and demand for East Pakistan's provincial autonomy, the East Pakistan provincial government imposed in February 1952 an embargo on its publication under the repressive Public Safety Act. The owner of the daily, Hamidul Huq Chowdhury and editor Abdus Salam were arrested by the Pakistan Government to stifle the voice of the press. Ironically, Hamidul Huq Chowdhury was elected to the Pakistan Constitutional Assembly and to the East Bengal Legislative Assembly when he served as Minister of Finance, Commerce, Labour and Industries from 1947 to 1949 as a candidate of the Muslim League, the party that was instrumental in the creation of Pakistan! Later on, he was elected to the National Assembly of Pakistan in 1955 as a leader of the Krishak Sramik Party and served as Pakistan's Foreign Minister from 1955 to 1956.

The Daily Ittefaq was founded in 1953 by Tofazzal Hossain Manik Mia and remains the oldest running newspaper in Bangladesh. From its very beginning it opposed every military rule in Pakistan. It strongly supported the Awami League's Six-Point Programme during the mid-1960s, publicized the party's ideas, and quickly rose to become the voice of most East Pakistanis. The upshot was that the Ayub Khan regime censored it from 1966 to 1969, and Tofazzal Hossain was incarcerated on a number of occasions. After the Pakistan Army crackdown in 1971, it was forced to publish anti-Bangladesh write-ups and was turned into a propaganda mouthpiece for Yahya Khan and Tikka Khan. And then Bangladesh emerged as a sovereign, independent nation-state.

There were other newspapers of note in East Pakistan, notably *The Daily Sangbad*, which espoused both Bangali causes and leftist thoughts and actions, and the Pakistan government-owned English-language daily *Morning News* and the Bangla-language *Dainik Pakistan* (which became *Dainik Bangla* after the country's liberation, and is now defunct).

In Bangladesh, notwithstanding the ubiquitous Internet, the newspaper (especially with its online edition, if there is one) continues to be the dominant media for news and usually sensible views. TV news, freed from restrictive government guidelines during the period of its initial broadcasting at the fag end of 1964 in East Pakistan and through the protracted formative years of Bangladesh as a viable nation-state, began to depict some measure of independent perspective in usually stylized presentation, once private TV channels were permitted to operate by the Bangladesh government. The radio, similarly, made the transition from regional broadcasting in East Pakistan to Bangladesh Betar as a government entity, and its news content is perused, but the radio's grandest role probably was played in its broadcasting as *Shwadhin Bangla Betar Kendro* during the country's War of Liberation. Its contribution to the cause then cannot be overemphasized. Like TV, the radio medium has also been allowed to operate as private enterprises and has its own varied audiences.

Two frontline Media dominates news dissemination and perusal in Bangladesh. The first is the newspaper industry. It incrementally flourished with the years and, even in the Age of the Internet, continues to command a significant readership, including in the key news areas of politics and economics, although, according to one observer, while priority is given to political news, the space allotted to it is limited. This is a valid observation, including the implied criticism that the crucial political news is presented as a routine bland report, without much critical input. *The Daily Ittefaq* continues to command an audience, even if its stellar role in the heydays of Bangali nationalism has given way to humdrum presentation. The post-independence emergence of *The Daily Star*, *Prothom Alo* and a few other dailies, in conjunction with their online editions, have a faithful following. And, every once in a while, and also depending on various factors, like the overall state of the polity, coverage by the dailies have had significant contribution in the spearheading of democratic movements in Bangladesh. This trend, though, is by no means a given.

The second is New Media, in the form of the Internet. This is increasingly being used by the people to communicate with each other and accessed online. The use of the Internet has been growing exponentially in Bangladesh. As of 2021, around 70% of the citizenry had access to the Internet. Reflecting the country's further interest in the New Media, on 11 February 2018, it started the 4G network service. Or, maybe, the New Media has been on the ascendant for having taken recourse to combative journalism. Since it has become an integral part of global communication, people have demanded access to government information on grounds of right to information. "Respect for, and guarantees of, freedom of the press have long been regarded as among the fundamental tenets of democracy since the unhindered flow of political information was recognized as integral to holding governments accountable for their (in)actions. Accordingly, governments were to intervene as little as possible in the free flow of information through the print media," caution Media scholars Richard Gunther and Anthony Mugar on the key factor of right to information.

The Bangladesh Constitution guarantees freedom of the press. According to Article 19, (1) Freedom of thought and conscience is guaranteed, and (2) Subject to any reasonable restrictions imposed by law in the interests of the security of the State, friendly relations with foreign states, public order, decency or morality, or in relation to contempt of court, defamation or incitement to an office:

- (a) the right of every citizen in freedom of speech and expression, and
- (b) freedom of the press, are guaranteed.

But it is not enough to write into the Constitution the concept or right of a free press. More than that, media audiences themselves need to be educated as to what it means to have a free press, to have a voice, to make government accountable in a society where the concept of liberal democracy is still in its relatively youth. Just how effectively is democracy practiced in Bangladesh may partly be deduced through a study of the state of its media, its functioning, and the media professionals. It would be easy for a government to take recourse to Article 39 (2) of the Constitution and use the excuses of looking after the security of the State, or public order, or defamation, or incitement to an office to formulate a law that could interpret yellow journalism in the broadest terms.

Of course, to contemplate a free media being a part of a government would be an oxymoron. After all, the Media is there to keep a check on the abuse of power by the government and other power structures. Journalism is still, for good and bad, at the heart of politics. But political journalism is also changing and reinventing itself as a craft and a profession in the face of harsh competition, a rapidly changing business environment, and a political world undergoing its own profound changes. The New Media, because of its innate possibilities to create the good or the bad, is often a target for manipulation towards one's own benefit, and at the expense of other political activities, in a number of countries.

Further to the constitutional provision and the demand by people for access to government information in the context of the Internet, Bangladesh enacted the Right to Information (RTI) Act in 2009 to satisfy this demand. On the other hand, the government has also found it necessary to redirect dissemination of information and impose penalties for transgressions, as is embodied in the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Act of 2006 and its Amendment of 2013.

The problem with this interface is that, while RTI embodies constitutionally-guaranteed freedom of speech and of the press, the ICT and its Amendment also reflect the same constitutional change with the proviso that each freedom is subject to restrictions. For a harmonious interface of RTI and ICT, a healthy political culture is an imperative in Bangladesh. However, the political culture of the country has been manifesting itself in fits and starts. The good is at times interspersed with the bad. Filthy language used by politicians in Bangladesh is as much a manifestation of poor cultural and social background as it is a deliberate policy to influence the public. The use of vile language has contributed to the deteriorating political culture and weakening of political institutions.

As it is, international assessment of the state of the Media in Bangladesh is not exactly flattering. In its 2021 report, *Reporters Without Borders* (RWB), in its listing of its annual Press Freedom Index, ranked Bangladesh 152 out of 180 countries considered, which is one place below that of the previous year. The RWB explanation for the drop was ascribed to persistent violations of human rights, involving alleged persecution, arrests of journalists, restricting media industries to access certain information, including elections. That RWB indictment devolves on the political government.

Arthur M. Schlesinger Sr. and Jr., father-son distinguished historians from the United States, theorized that the United States alternates between two phases: one marked by emphasis on liberalism, increasing democracy, human rights and concern with wrongs suffered by many, and public purpose. The other is distinguished by conservatism, containing democracy (effectively Zakaria's illiberal democracy proposition in a 1997 *Foreign Affairs* article), private interest, and concern with property rights and rights of the few. That could explain why those who had enthusiastically embraced the New Media as being putatively instrumental in bringing about closeness among countries and nationalities and making national boundaries a thing of the past were soon in for a rude awakening as they witnessed the rise of ultra-nationalism, an insular mentality, hardened partisan mentality in government and legislature, to name a few. This theory of alternate social shift could be applicable to many societies of the world, including Bangladesh. That, in turn, could account for the current state of steady deterioration in political culture and a generally staid Media in Bangladesh.

The Media in Bangladesh has had a significant contribution to raising awareness of Bangladeshi culture, particularly espousing the cause of the Bangla language, and raising its voice against heavy-handed government actions on the political rights of the Bangalis that eventually culminated in the birth of Bangladesh. The country's birth was accompanied by various forms of the Media emerging with a view to espousing the cause of democracy.

The Media, while frequently espousing the imperative of establishing liberal democracy, and there can be no equivocation that a section of it is sincere in doing so, often act in ways that negate the very principles of the political philosophy and system. The Media cannot think itself to be a catalyst of a liberal democratic system functioning in the country. The politician, because of the inherent attribute of leadership that comes with his/her vocation will have to lead by example in developing the mindset for the democratic spirit within him or herself. The Media professionals will have to do the same in order to be able to spread the liberal democratic spirit through the journalists' writings and commentaries.



BANGLADESH: HIGHER EDUCATION AFTER 1971

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Bangladesh is celebrating its golden jubilee of independence and rejoicing its promotion from the list of *least developed countries* to *developing countries* in 2021. However, the journey was not so smooth from the beginning. Three million lives were lost, thousands of women lost their honour, and about 10 million people crossed over to India as refugees in the 1971 Liberation War. All crucial sectors took the heavy brunt of the war. From there, in 50 years, the significant success of Bangladesh is evident not only in the economic sector but also in the social sectors, led by health and education. Particularly in the education sector, substantial improvement due to various policies and programs taken by successive governments and private sectors contributed significantly to the country's overall development. What follows is our analysis of some of many debates on the impacts of education policies.

The Founding Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Shekh Mujibur Rahman, took several steps to rebuild this country. In his vision "no investment could be better than investment in education". In his short regime, he undertook a comprehensive education scheme. Bangabandhu always dreamed of a research-based higher education system. To promote the free exercise of knowledge and research by cultivating free-thinking culture among the teachers and students at the university level, his 1973 Order gave autonomy to the then four public universities: Dhaka University, Rajshahi University, Chittagong University, and Jahangirnagar University. Today all the country's universities enjoy the same privileges.

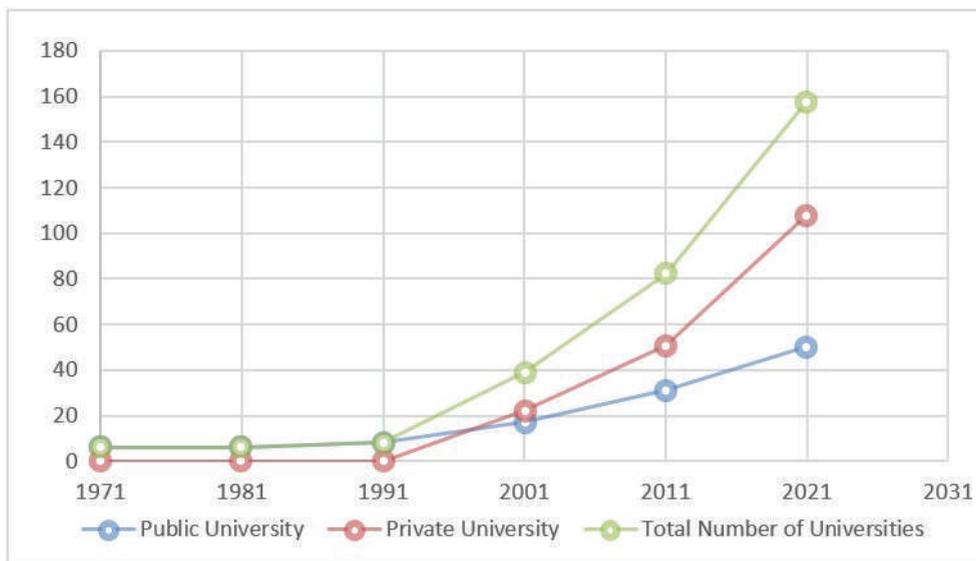
He also established the University Grants Commission (UGC) through an ordinance to accelerate education and research and allocate and monitor grants to the universities. Bangabandhu asked a prominent scholar, Dr Quadrat-e-Khuda (QK), to recommend strategies for ensuring a sustainable education system that would help build a prosperous country. In the QK Report (Dr. Quadrat-e-Khuda Education Commission Report of 30 May 1974), the learned Commission significantly emphasized technical and vocational education, and focused on nurturing higher education at the universities through teaching and research. The brutal assassination of Bangabandhu on 15 August 1975 put an end to any action on the QK Report. No substantial policies or actions to accelerate higher education were taken during the authoritarian military regimes until 1990.

The higher education sector of Bangladesh got a colossal momentum when the government of Bangladesh endorsed the Private Universities Act 1992 (subsequently replaced by Private University Act 2010). It provided a legal framework for the establishment of private universities to supplement government efforts to meet the demand for higher education.

This Act allowed private individuals or groups of individuals and philanthropic organizations (Trusts or Foundations) to establish and run a degree-awarding self-financed university by fulfilling certain conditions and criteria. In 1991, there were only eight public universities in Bangladesh, whereas, in 2021, the University Grants Commission of Bangladesh website shows 161 universities, including 50 public universities, 108 private universities, and three international universities. In ten years, i.e., from 2011 to 2021, public universities have risen from 31 to 51 and in private universities from 51 to 108, as depicted in Figure 1.

In the early stage, most students opted for private universities for their higher education when they failed to enroll in public universities, but now some private universities have proven their credentials. Moreover, recent data shows, around 40% 'O' and 'A' level students who are supposed to go abroad for higher education are now studying in private universities, enabling Bangladesh to save BDT 100,000 crore.

Figure 1: Growth of Universities in Bangladesh



Source: Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics and UGS, Bangladesh

A report showed that the number of university students has amplified to 3.9 million in 2019, which was 31,000 and 1.9 million in 1972 and 2009, respectively. UGC predicts overall enrollment of students at the tertiary level to be 4.6 million by 2026. Addressing this extensive upcoming enrollment, Bangladesh Government has already planned to establish universities at every district level. However, the recently published UGC report exposed how in higher education, female students' enrollment is still lower than their male counterparts.

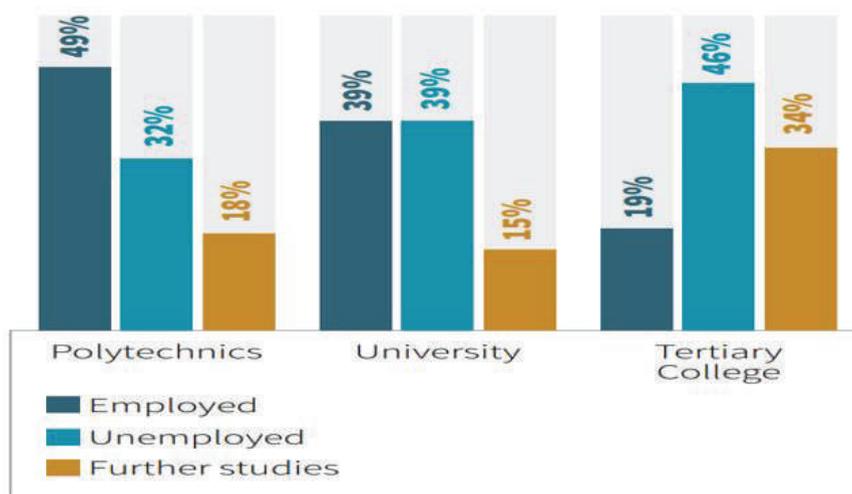
The present Government of Bangladesh is working comprehensively for the development, expansion and advancement of the higher education sector in the country, keeping in view the Sustainable Development Plan of the Rio+20 Conference, Bangladesh Education Policy-2010, Private University Act 2010 and the QK Report of 1974.

Meanwhile, the Bangladesh Accreditation Act 2018 promotes quality in higher education. Higher education at the *madrassa* level has also been emphasized in various ways. Moreover, the budget allocation for the secondary and higher education sector saw a rise from the previous year – from BDT 33,118 crore in the ongoing fiscal to BDT 36,485 crore. An "Integrated Health Science Research and Development Fund" has been formed to develop health education and technology research in the current fiscal year. According to UGC's Higher Education Achievement Report 2018, the budget allocation in the research sector at the university level has been increased more than 900 per cent in the last ten years. However, the budget allocated in the education sector is still insufficient to promote sustainable development.

The 2021-22 FY education budget is only 2.09% of the total GDP (gross domestic product), while UNESCO suggests allocating 4 to 6% to education. Compared to other neighboring South Asian countries, the percentage of the allocated budget is also low; for example, India spends 4.6% of its total GDP on education in its union budget. With UGC cooperation, the World Bank initiated Higher Education Quality Enhancement Project (HEQEP) in 2014, aimed to boost the quality of higher education in Bangladesh. However, the project gained ample criticism from experts who saw this project as an agenda of western imperialism.

However, the mushroom growth of tertiary institutions, especially private universities, has raised many questions about its quality and its linkage with employability in recent years. A report published by the World Bank has shown the high unemployment rate among university and tertiary college graduates. Figure 2 portrays this.

Figure 2: Employment Status of Graduates after 1–2 Years of Graduation



Source: World Bank Bangladesh Tertiary Education Sector Review, 2019.

Furthermore, a recently published Bangladesh Institute for Development Studies (BIDS) report showed that 66% of the students who graduated from the colleges affiliated with the National University are unemployed. The latest labour force survey of the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) projected a 47% unemployment rate among the educated population in the country. Moreover, a recently published newspaper report showed that around half a million foreign employees are now working in Bangladesh, and as different estimates suggest, they take more than US\$5.0 billion every year as their remuneration. As employers claimed, the reason behind this is that locals the industry demands and skills. A report titled 'Bangladesh Development Update October 2019: Tertiary Education and Job Skills', launched by the World Bank, also indicated some substantial 'skill gaps' in our higher education. The report also raised concerns about the job-readiness and relevance of skills that tertiary educational institutions in Bangladesh impart to their students, whereas around 69% of employers reported a shortage of skilled applicants for professional positions. The World Bank report unleashed three higher-order cognitive and soft skills as most relevant for the current work environment: problem-solving and independent thinking; work attitude; and positive personality. However, targeting the upcoming challenges of the 4th Industrial Revolution and SDG-4, Bangladesh Government has already made a plan titled "Strategic Plan for Higher Education in Bangladesh: 2018-2030" to ensure quality education for all.

Thus the overall development of higher education in Bangladesh still shows a mixed scenario of success and challenges, and the future development of this sector should give priority to improving quality keeping aside the path of increasing quantity.

DIALECTICS OF BANGLADESH'S MAGICAL CYBERSPACE

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Many scholars, including the Russian historiographers, are split on the discourse relating to Empress Catherine II's visit to Dnieper River region and Potemkin's mobile village on the bank of Dnieper. Grigory Aleksandrovich Potemkin, popularly known as Field Marshal Grigory Potemkin, was a minister and lover of the Russian Empress Catherine II.

After the 1783 Russian annexation of Crimea, Potemkin was made governor of the region. (notes 1&2) As soon as the barge carrying the Empress and ambassadors arrived, Potemkin's man, dressed as peasants, would populate the village. Once the Empress's barge left, the make-shift village was disassembled (3). If we are keen observers of the digital economy and fourth Industrial Revolution-related developments in Bangladesh, we cannot equate the Bangladesh's cyberspace related developments with that of a Potemkin's village.

In this write up I will focus on the paradigmatic shifts that has taken place on the Bangladeshi cyberspace. I will start with two landmark events that have attracted the attention of the global audience and placed Bangladesh's name on different security related discourse. I will also try to touch upon the challenges posed by omnipresent pandemic and Bangladesh's position relating to digital economy in near future.

A significant number of international observers in the field of communication for development (C4D) lauded Bangladesh's transformative change in social sectors and magical progress in the field of new media communication (NMC). During neo-normal pandemic time (in 2020 and 2021) Bangladesh reaped benefits of being ahead of many other developing countries in the fields of C4D and NMC.

We should never forget that behind the façade of magical progress and transformative developments Bangladesh had already experience two major ICT-NMC related highly negative events which had partially damaged and ruptured the country's external image as a peace loving, culturally pluralistic, heterogenous and tolerant nation-state completely free from all major types of imaginable cybercrime.

The very first ICT NMC related incident took place in Holey Artisan Bakery in Gulshan 2, Dhaka city, Bangladesh on the night of 1 July 2016, at around 21:20 local time. The five attackers of Holey Artisan Bakery were Bangladeshi young people with immersive ICT-NMC engagement on the international cyberspace. The Holey Artisan attackers were radicalized via cyberspace, and their command, control, communication, coordination (4C) architecture included sophisticated software and ICT-NMC platforms which could easily by-pass all traditional vigilance system of the law enforcers in Bangladesh.

Interestingly, this gruesome incident awakened Bangladeshi law enforcers and intelligence outfits. Our foreign policy analysts and 'national security' experts also admitted that a big void existed in our protection system. They took the quickest possible remedial steps to bolster and build more than one anti-cybercrime units covering all nook and corners of Bangladesh.

On July 1, 2021, US Secretary of State Mr. Antony J. Blinken, referring to Holey Artisan incident stated that "The United States stands with the people of Bangladesh on the fifth anniversary of the terrorist attack at the Holey Artisan Bakery in Dhaka, resulting in the deaths of 20 people, including one U.S. citizen. We extend our deepest condolences to the loved ones of the victims." The Secretary of State further added: "The United States and Bangladesh are united in our condemnation of terrorism and determination to prevent future attacks. We commend Bangladesh's efforts to bring those responsible to justice and recommit to our strong counterterrorism partnership to prevent future attacks" (4).

The US Secretary of State's public statement echo the sentiments of our key development partners Japan, Italy and India on the Holey Artisan Bakery incident in Gulshan 2, Dhaka.

On a separate and unrelated cybercrime, in February 2016, thirty-five fraudulent instructions were issued by international hackers to illegally transfer close to US\$ 1 billion via SWIFT network from Federal Reserve Bank of New York. The money, kept in the NY Federal Reserve Bank account originally belonged to Bangladesh Bank, the central bank of Bangladesh. Five of the thirty-five fraudulent instructions were successful in transferring US\$101 million, with US\$20 million traced to Sri Lanka and US\$81 million to the Philippines (Source: Wiki).

These two landmark incidents have profound impact on kaleidoscopic fields in Bangladesh, our security architecture and our position inside a globalized cyberspace. We had to reassess our national security related definitions, and we also revisited our external affairs related issues. Cyberspace security threats, once perceived as trivia and fixing malware or virus, emerged as strong as real geo-space centric geo-political threats.

Bangladesh authorities, with international assistance, have stepped up and bolstered the anti-cybercrime units and increased vigilance on the Bangladeshi cyberspace. The country's seriousness was reflected in the latest edition of the Global Cybersecurity Index (GCI) prepared and disseminated by the U.N. organization International Telecommunication Union (UN-ITU).

"Bangladesh has moved up by 25 places from its previous year's rank. Scoring an impressive 81.27 in the index for 2020, Bangladesh is sitting pretty at 53rd, in a list containing 194 countries from across the globe," a report of Dhaka Tribune quoted UN- ITU's latest Global cybersecurity Index (GCI) as saying (07).

The *Dhaka Tribune* noted that the GCI index was based on weighted scores for legal system, technical skills, organizational system, capacity building and cooperation. We must not feel complacent seeing Bangladesh's elevated position on the CGI scoreboard.

We hardly can feel complacent even after Bangladesh's mentionable progress on the UN -ITU CGI index as according to the *World Factbook* statistics, the approximate number of Internet users in Bangladesh (upto July 2018) is approximately 2,39,17,950 (Source: The World Factbook).

The neo-normal time created by the omnipresent global pandemic forced 7.7 million people to adopt omnipresent cyberspace and Internet in their daily life. With the exponential increase of the number of Bangladeshi netizens active on the global cyberspace Bangladesh badly needs "Data Protection Law" alongside literacy about three important types of information presentation.

These are misinformation, disinformation and mal-information (09). Misinformation refers to mistakes such as inaccurate photo captions, dates, statistics, translations, or when satire is taken seriously. Disinformation refers to the fabricated or deliberately manipulated audio-visual content or intentionally created conspiracy theories or rumors. The third category of information is called mal-information, which refers to deliberate publication of private information for personal or corporate rather than public interest, such as revenge porn. It also includes deliberate change of context, date, or time of genuine content.

The UNCTAD Digital Economy Report (2019) reminded the member states to take caution about data in as the world is moving faster with the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) technologies including precision agriculture, algorithmic economy, artificial intelligence (AI) and data analytics.

The Digital Economy Report observed that "Data have become a new economic resource for creating and capturing value. Control over data is strategically important to be able to transform them into digital intelligence. In virtually every value chain, the ability to collect, store, analyse and transform data brings added power and competitive advantages. Digital data are core to all fast-emerging digital technologies, such as data analytics, Artificial Intelligence (AI), blockchain, Internet of Things (IoT), cloud computing and all Internet-based services. Unsurprisingly, data-centric business models are being adopted not only by digital platforms, but also, increasingly, by lead companies across various sectors" (Source: UNCTAD DER 2019).

The DER report 2019 also stressed that "Data privacy and data security require special attention. Various security arrangements are important to protect against deliberate acts of data misuse. Laws and regulations are needed to counter theft of personal data, to set rules for what and how personal data can be collected, used, transferred or removed, and to ensure that data-driven business models generate gains for society."

The netizens and the new entrepreneurs of Bangladesh need to educate and orient themselves not only with the fundamentals of digital governance and cybersecurity but also new architectures of algorithmic economy that would have transformative impact on our geo-politics, economy, and society in less than a decade time.

In near future, we will face a binary choice. Prepare for the forthcoming challenges or face the music. If we wish to maintain the pace of magical progress in the field of national development new media communication (NMC) literacy is the only available option. The Big Data and AI will shape, reshape and de-shape our digital economy within decades, if not years. Therefore, we need to prepare our battle-gears against mal-information, dis-information and mis-information.

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"IVORY TOWERS", CROWDS, "CLOUDS": STEAMROLLING EDUCATION

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From the "ivory towers" to the "clouds", education has come a long way. By rightfully claiming to be "of, for, and by the people," education has also democratized along that journey. Until the industrial revolutions began three-centuries or so ago, that was not the case: it tended to be an exercise "of, for, and by the intellectuals," that too not in classrooms, but in arenas, princely courtyards, spas, saunas, and swimming pools. Today we stand close to the ultimate frontier where even those "ivory towers" look a misfit against "clouds" of information, communications, and push-button automation. We can now access as much news inside a refugee camp as we are able to from libraries; in civil society an alert mind to learn. Having the right kind of contraption and program today seems to be the counterpart requirement today. Neil Armstrong, for instance, could live out part of what Galileo Galilei once envisioned (since he discovered 4 moons circulating Jupiter, NASA's spaceship to Jupiter in the 1990s was called Galileo). So too may any Pythagorean puzzle find an instantly automated resolution .

Does that mean *sayonara* institutionalized education, as in schools, colleges, and universities? Well, we cannot have our cake and eat it too. Unbeknownst to us, the ready-made garment factories once introduced in England in mid-18th Century have come home to roost across Bangladesh today. From one innovation to improve our lives, we have moved constantly to another too many times to even count. From building physical infrastructures to position our place in human civilizations to the next logical step: intellectual infrastructures. That may have been our Rubicon: proportionately fewer people can cross today's bridges to the intellectual frontiers than before. We have become selective and secretive. Both qualities are uncomfortable partners of education.

Groundbreaking publications riddle those two-and-a-half millennia since our "jungle" exit. Western civilization paved the way. That is not to say other parts of the world still remained the relative "jungle" or backward: far from it, Chinese and Indian civilizations can be traced as far back as any "western" counterpart, if not earlier, and with as many glittering treatises as in the "west", if not more; and throughout those two-and-one-half millenia, "knowledge" (that is, information at the upper crust, as opposed to practical Main Street information), moved from one part of the world to another frequently, sometimes on horseback, aboard shipping vessels, with merchandise commodities, or through the "globe-trotters" of the day, and similarly, due to a victorious army, lone-ranging philosopher, or a money-making merchant.

Still, schools, colleges, and universities across the world remain under a "western" intellectual grip. Democratizing knowledge ensured that. So too communications revolutions: from the Caxton printing press to online circulation, not to mention the dozens of stellar newspapers and television channels. Likewise with our entertainment escapades: without a Hollywood or Bollywood, could cumulative knowledge ever be given a "face"?

From dissemination to publications, we find the same "*more western than eastern*" pattern: Homer's mid-8th Century before the birth of Jesus Christ (BCE) pioneering classics set the

'IVORY TOWERS', CROWDS, 'CLOUDS': STEAMROLLING EDUCATION

pace which was continued by the, *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, in Greece, while two centuries later Confucius, Laozi, and Sun Tzu of the Zhou dynasty would begin intellectual inquiries to Chu- (the previous name for China), with, Sun Tzu's *Art of War* becoming the Chinese classic. Roughly three centuries after Homer, Chanayka's classic, *Arthashastra*, would also project India as an intellectually trailblazing area.

More popular have been the contributions of Plato, whose monumental *Republic* fed off discourses with Aristotle, whose own works, *Nicomachean Ethics*, *Politics*, *Poetics*, and *Metaphysics*, among others, dominated the Fifth BCE Century. Both drew much from their mentor, Father of Western Philosophy, Socrates. Note the absence of the term "discipline": this would be formalized once knowledge grew in multifarious directions after the French Revolution and Industrial Revolution: both revolutions carried the seeds of not just expanding the intellectual frontiers, but also actualizing the substance. Science would now be institutionalized.

No wonder the term more appropriately fitting historical circumstances today is none other than a "Renaissance person" (note how it was "Renaissance Man" before, signifying the absence of women on the intellectual firmaments).

Interestingly, the European Renaissance (14th-17th centuries), drew upon the superior Islamic civilizations of the time across Arabia and Persia (which themselves drew upon Classical Greek works mentioned beforehand). Subsequent voyagers to China (and Chinese voyagers to especially the Americas, half a century before Christopher Columbus's journey), added to the knowledge stockpile.

European printing press dated back to William Caxton in England and German Johannes Gutenberg in the mid-15th Century (and almost five centuries after the Chinese and one century after the Koreans developed woodblock publications). These crossed more national boundaries and found more readers than the Chinese or Korean (or Latin, French, or Spanish in chronological order). This helped Renaissance works get more "airplay" across historical annals: Macchiavelli's *Prince*, the Dutch humanist, Desiderus Erasmus, who first edited the *New Testament*, Italian Francesco Petrarca's poetry, which, a century earlier actually inaugurated the Renaissance, while William Shakespeare closed the Renaissance era with his tragic and comic plays, all drawn from the Classic European Age in Greece.

This "rebirth" (the most appropriate meaning of Renaissance), helped launch the transnational late-17- 18th Century European Enlightenment. It was headquartered in Paris, where Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond d'Alembert founded the arguably most monumental intellectual project ever, *The Encyclopédie* (a collection and analysis of information of all knowledge, "A Systematic Dictionary of the Sciences, Arts, and Crafts", as its subtitle conveyed). It was in this atmosphere that Scotsman Adam Smith wrote his *Wealth of Nations* (sowing the seeds of the study of economics as a discipline), influenced as he was by Francois Quesney; Swiss Jean Jacques Rousseau wrote his classic *Social Contract* to not only end the old order of status and usher in another of bottom-up democracy (sowing similar seeds of Sociology); and so forth.



No wonder, then, that after Emperor Louis XVI was guillotined in January 1793, the French *Directorate* haphazardly initiated public education from 1795, which none other than the First Consul, Napoleon Bonaparte, would cultivate (largely to train his military officers), in the opening 19th Century. Ripples of public education slowly crossed national boundaries and disciplines.

By the end of the 19th Century, disciplines were formalized, and stood tall: Business through works of (Peter F. Drucker, Frederick Winslow, among many others); Economics (Smith's work was beefed up supported by Thomas Malthus, David Ricardo), Political Science (John Burgess, Harold Laswell, and others), Sociology (from the works of August Comte, Émile Durkheim, Karl Marx, Max Weber, and others), Anthropology (Franz Boas and Bronislaw Malinowsky), Psychology (Sigmund Freud, William James, Wilhelm Wundt, among others); and so forth.

It is not surprising inter-disciplinary offshoots would follow (International Relations from Economics, History, and Political Science), and new knowledge modes emerge (for example, Computer Science). To a large extent these movements would capitalize upon the latest technologies, thus making industrial revolutions a central player in the education business: once the First Industrial Revolution began emptying the countryside with urban jobs, wages could be kept low because of the huge labor supply and most minimal technological needs; and the Second Industrial Revolution ramped up those skills, since steel-based industries needed technical knowhow, while also making business administration necessary since mass production demanding mass marketing, focused management, advertisement, investment, and human resources

Likewise the Third Industrial Revolution introduced the computer: quantitative skills entered the picture, even as "economic development" also shifted attention to social development, health development, and so forth, while disparate development across the world raised the premium of cultural, family and values-based studies. Note how the work-skill shifted from the physical (assembly plants) to the intellectual (software programming). This significant shift would dive off the deep-end with the Fourth Industrial Revolution bringing in artificial intelligence, creating networking "clouds", and essentially taking mass education back to the very select few: not only can machines do the analytical work of humans (and far faster too), but *software* knowledge cannot be marketed at the mass level (not everyone can deliver).

Both democratization and industrial revolutions have evolved symmetrically and simultaneously in the modern age. It is not a wonder now why modern education is related more to the job-market than it was before the French Revolution. If this postulates one difference between "ivory tower" and "mass" education, the shift towards mechanizing education, most accelerated by the pandemic's online shift, could be seen as the beginning of a reverse journey: knowledge has become so abundantly available from online sources, that we must begin to wonder if institutions like the library, to begin with, but ultimately, schools, colleges, and universities will be needed in the next century. They are costly, even for maintenance purposes; but purchasing software facilities not only presume a lot of prior technological and analytical knowledge, which historically have not featured in public education, but also impose huge and perpetual costs just to remain in the business. Could we be seeing the twilight of education as we have known it to be?

Bangladesh's next 50 years would need not just answers but, more so, functional strategies.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

... what we cannot see, feel, or touch, we stand closer to materializing ...

3RD INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION (late 20th Century):

Computer-based; ENIAC;
Cybernetics, International
Relations, Physics, Chemistry,
Literature, Nuclear Age, Fine Arts.
Social Sciences was formed.

4TH INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION: (early 21st Century) "Clouds", Robots

2ND INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

(late 19th Century: W. Europe,
United States, Japan): New
disciplines: Business, Economics,
Anthropology & Culture, Political
Sciences, Psychology, Sociology.

1ST INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION (mid-18th Century): Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, Jean-Jaiques Rousseau *Social Contract*: low- wage workers (first RMG plant)

RENAISSANCE (14th-17th centuries, Europe): Art, Architecture, Science were closely interlinked & evaluated in fused forms.

ENLIGHTENMENT (17th & 18th Centuries: France as Epicenter, but also England). Bred: reason, individualism & skepticism Drove: deism, liberalism, republicanism, conservatism, tolerance, scientific progress. Highlighted by Paris-based Encyclopedia of Library & Information Sciences

CLASSICAL ROME: (4th Century BC- 4th Century AD) Architecture, Engineering, Medicine, Geometry, Physics, Biology (all practical sciences)

CLASSICAL GREECE (5th- 4th centuries BC): Politics, Philosophy, History, Epic Comedy, Tragedy, Rhetoric, Aesthetics, Science (all socio-cultural and intellectual infrastructure of western civilization)

**Raw knowledge:
what we saw is all we got!**

INDUSTRIAL

1870s - 1890s:

2nd INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

**Catalyzer*: steel (infrastructure development, transportation, weapons)

**Skills*: technical training, business

**Education*: economics, business, sciences, sociology; management; marketing; administration; politics; well-established universities; comprehensive curriculum.

1770s - 1790s:

1st INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

* *Catalyzer*: low-wage workers (farm-to-factory migration)- textile production (RMG)

* *Skills*: manual

* *Educational needs*: public education

Private/ Selective/
Philosophical
Religious Education

Public
Education
Begins here

1st Industrial
Revolution

2nd Industrial
Revolution

1770s - 1790s

PUBLIC

REVOLUTION

3rd INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION (1970s-)

* *Catalyzer*: Internet

* *Skills*: alert, agile in intellectual domain;
capacity to mix slow-moving social/business sciences
with rapid technological and marketing dynamics

* *Education*: well-established universities; comprehensive
curriculum + “major” (area of concentration)

4th INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION: 21st century

* *Catalyzer*: artificial intelligence

* *Skills*: intellectual; multitasking

* *Education*: skill-specific comprehensive education
not viable, nor is institutionalized education:
only flexible, portable, go-as-one-wishes education

21st Century

3rd Industrial
Revolution

Today

EDUCATION

1970s



LAND HO! BANGLADESH'S ONLINE SHIFT & I.B.U.'S PACESETTING ROLE

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Questions:

One of the major causalities of the pandemic was education. This is a story of how IUB's online shift not only mirrors the country's similar journey, but also led by example. Such a shift requires crucial university level infrastructures: technology, tools and a support system. How have learner responses/practices and culture shaped IUB's online ecosystem? Will faculty online competency and professional development sustain such an online ecosystem?

Survey Methods:

Triangulation (including the survey data collection), and interviews of instructors and university administrators (through Zoom meetings) at universities across Bangladesh helped us in the Global Studies & Governance (GSG) Program to get some answers. Two questionnaires were generated, one for the students, the other for instructors/teachers. Data was collected for the former from three terms (Summer 2020, Autumn 2020 and Spring 2021), about demographic information, socioeconomic-background, including learners' experiences (challenges and benefits of online classes), Internet and resource accessibility, and impact of Covid -19 on health and learning process. A total of 1,128 students from both private and public universities responded. The teacher's questionnaire collected data on their demography, designation, online teaching challenges and benefits, time and feasibility for research work and professional development. A total of 66 university teachers responded to the questionnaire. Representativeness can be improved, and the results are only preliminary. Still, we believe we have started a new journey.

Findings:

Table 1 shows the name of the universities and the frequency of student respondents from each university. With a 720-strong response tally, IUB participation proved to be the highest among university respondents, accounting for nearly 64% of all responses. Jahangir Nagar University (JNU) and American International University, Bangladesh (AIUB) supplied the least number of respondents, with 5 from each.

TABLE 1: STUDENT SAMPLE SIZE & THEIR UNIVERSITIES

Institute	Frequency	Percentage
East West University	6	0.5%
IUB	720	63.8%

Institute	Frequency	Percentage
BRAC	22	2.0%
AIUB	5	0.4%
Ahsanullah University	6	0.5%
Bangladesh University	47	4.2%
North South University	23	2.0%
University of Dhaka	97	8.6%
Khulna University	23	2.0%
University of Liberal Arts	28	2.5%
Shahjalal University of Science & Technology	21	1.9%
Jahangirnagar University	5	1.9%
Daffodil University	10	1.9%
Others	115	1.9%

Of the student population, 47.7% have at least one computer (Figure 1), of whom more than two-thirds have computers for all family members (Figure 2). The average number of students per family is 2, belonging both in universities or schools (primary and secondary).

FIGURE 1: PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS HAVING COMPUTERS

Having computer

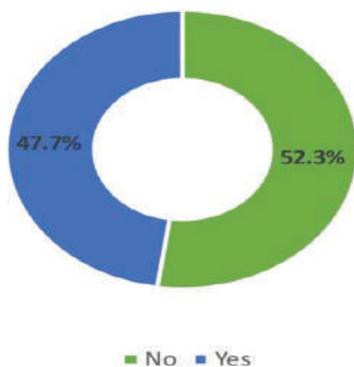


FIGURE 2: PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS EACH OF WHOSE FAMILY MEMBERS HAVE A COMPUTER

Having computers for all members

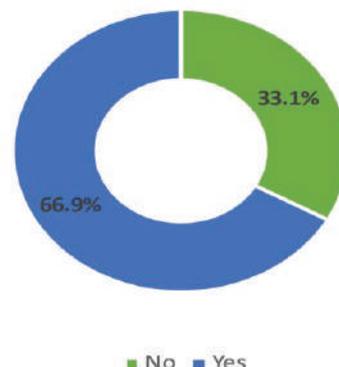


Figure 3 and 4 show *IPS* and *Wifi* accessibility at home. Interestingly, almost 50% of the sample show having “*IPS* access” and 88.3% “*Wifi* access”, with 96.8% of the sample reporting “mobile data usage” alongside *WiFi* at home (Figure 6). On a scale of 1 to 5, a total of 83.1% of the sample is reported to avail “average to best” *Wifi* stability (where score 1 is the least stable *WiFi* and score 5 is the best *WiFi* stability) (Figure 5). As an important aside Figure 7, illustrates the 76% preference for F2F (face-to-face) classes in the total student population, with only 23.1% favouring online courses.

FIGURE 3: PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS HAVING IPS
Having IPS

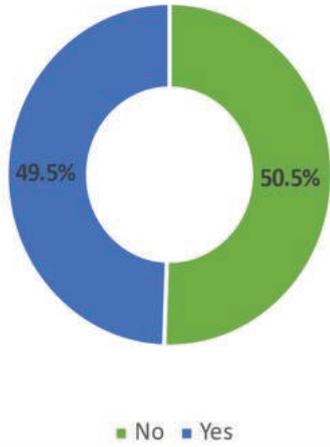


FIGURE 4: PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS HAVING WiFi AT HOME
wifi at home

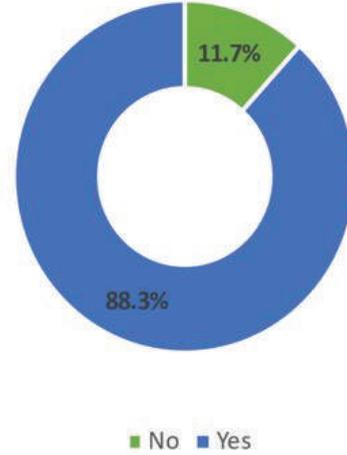


FIGURE 5: PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS WITH WiFi CONNECTIONS
Stability of Wifi

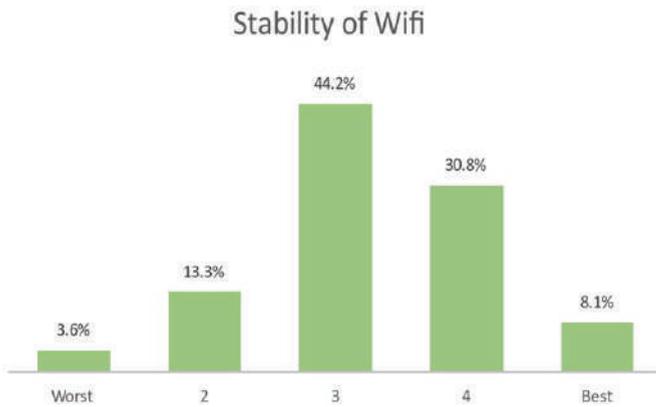
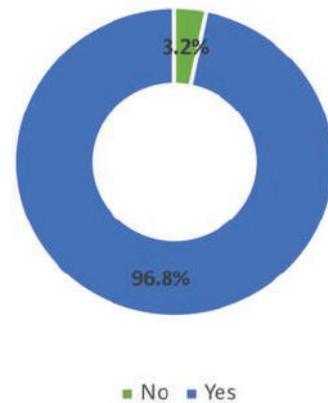


FIGURE 6: PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS USING MOBILE DATA
Using Data



Class preference

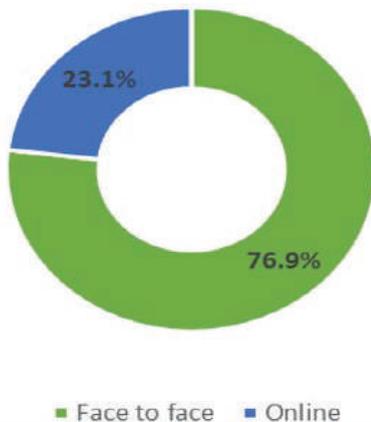


FIGURE 7: PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS PREFERING F2F OVER ONLINE CLASSES

The bar chart in Figure 8 shows the percentage of students who believe their universities to be “well equipped” in terms of technology to run online courses. When *technology* defines being “well equipped”, what students failed to identify was what online platforms were being used to run the courses. In Bangladesh the platforms used for online classes include *Google Classroom* and *Zoom*. None of the universities were found to develop their customized platform, like the already existing online pedagogical *Sakai* and *Canvas* platforms. More discussions of infrastructural issues follow. Figure 8 shows that almost all the university students think their university is “well equipped”.

FIGURE 8: PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS WHO THINK THEIR UNIVERSITY IS POORLY-EQUIPPED

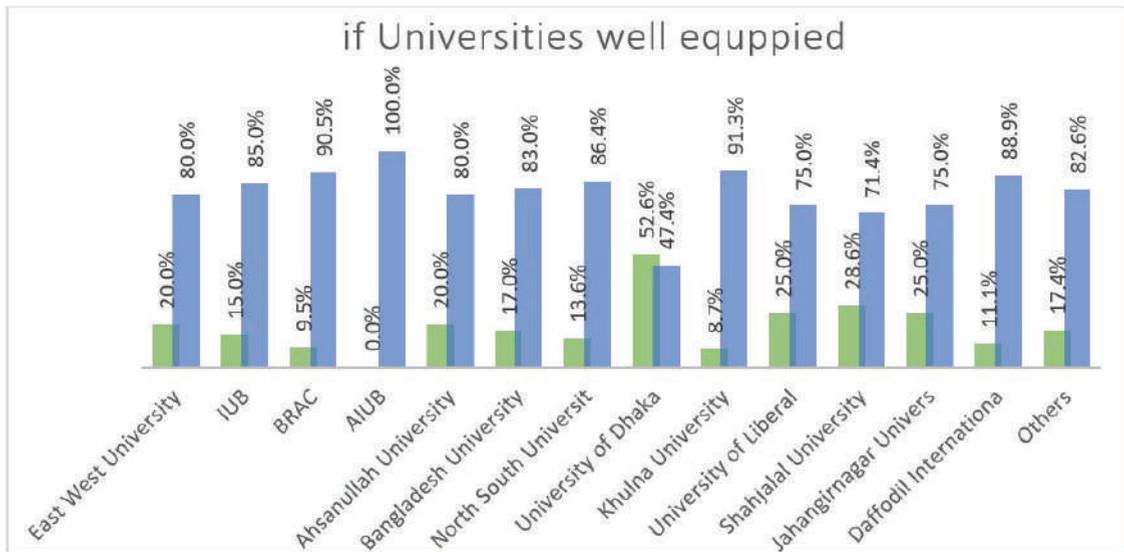


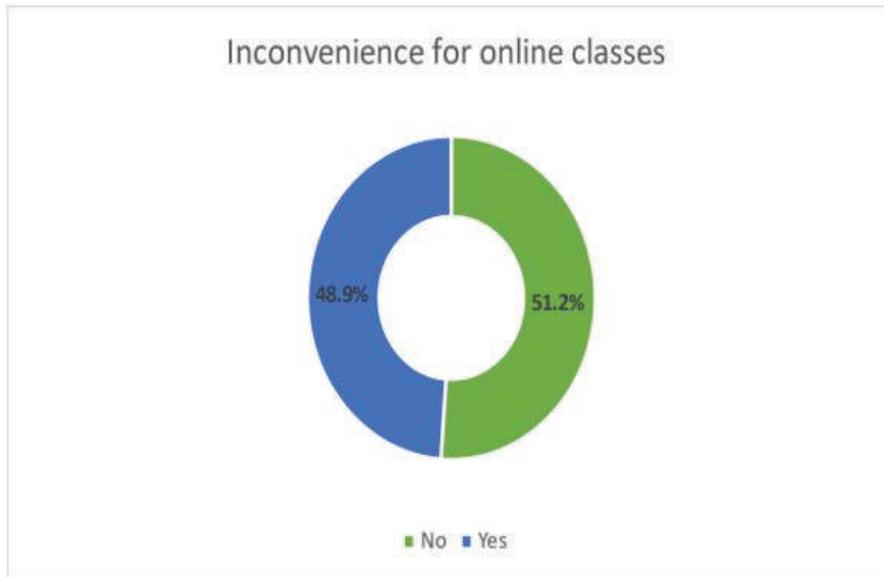
Figure 9 interestingly depicts about 86.2% of the population feel “satisfied” with their institutions running online courses, mostly ranging on a scale of 3 to 5 on a continuum of 1 to 5 (where 1 is the least satisfactory and 5 the highest).

FIGURE 9: PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS SATISFIED WITH THEIR UNIVERSITY



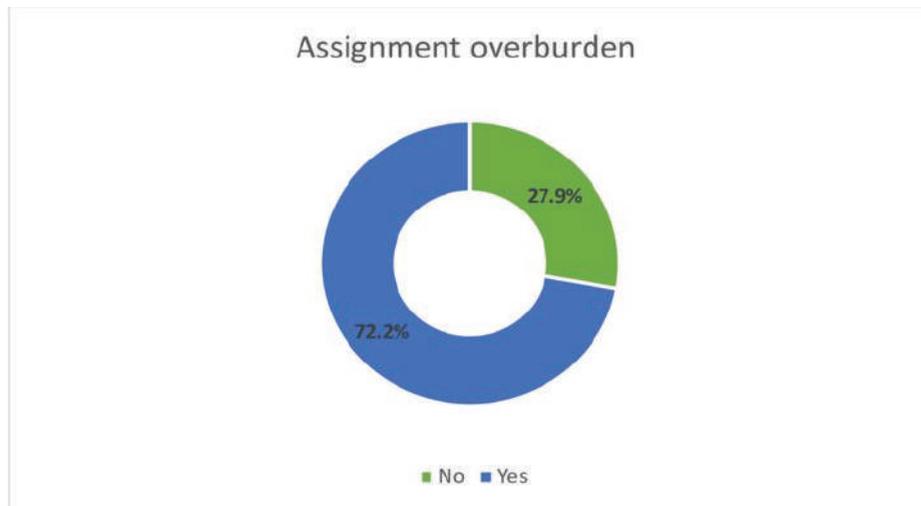
One contrasting outcome grabbed attention. With students showing confidence of their institutions performing “great” in equipment supply and creating online classrooms, their satisfaction with online classes diminishes. Almost a little more than half the population do not find online classes “comfortable”, that is, they feel these being “inconvenient” (Figure 10). When interviewed randomly, students mostly pointed to “social” (at home) or “cognitive” reasons (likely to be associated with online pedagogy), for their discomfort.

FIGURE 10: PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS WHO FEEL INCONVENIENT WITH ONLINE CLASSES



Students also feel overburdened with assignments as shown in Figure 10, with the reason for such overburden being illustrated in Table 2. In the student population, 72.2% feel overburdened by assignments, yet another factor highlighting the pedagogical considerations in designing online courses by the teachers.

FIGURE 11: PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS OVERBURDENED WITH ASSIGNMENTS



The reasons why student feel “overburdened” is shown in Table 2.3 below. As this question required multiple answers, we estimate only the percentage of cases. Of the 72.2% who felt “overburdened”, 55.2% thought “too many assignments” were asked, 37.8% that “faculties did not cooperate”, and 71.4% felt “uncertain about grades”, thus suffering from online examinations.

TABLE 2: REASONS FOR OVERBURDEN

Reasons for overburden	Responses	Cases*
Lacking cooperation from faculties	12.84	37.8%
Too many assignments	18.75	55.2%
Experimental online exams	11.89	35.0%
Fear about grades	24.29	71.4%
Not having a quick response from hotlines	0	0.0%
Not having enough options	11.45	33.7%
Time and format of exams	20.78	61.1%
Others	0	0.0%

*cases represent multiple answers by respondents

Teacher’s survey and interview analysis:

In a developing, yet traditional country like Bangladesh, university teaching is not research-based, thus providing leverage for many female educators to join the industry just for the sake of teaching. However, with designated university rankings (from “assistant professor” upwards), a doctorate degree is expected, especially in private universities, making research and publications a silent prerequisite. At the same time, research and publication experiences do impact the quality of teaching and the pedagogical design of the courses. When interviewed, many of the teachers showed “disinterest”, more appropriately, unawareness of the pedagogical design of their courses taking the social and cognitive aspects of the students into account.

The following tables and charts illustrate the demographic information for the teachers in terms of their gender and designation. Figure 11 illustrates the percentage of lecturers, assistant professors, associate professors, and professors. Interestingly, the “lecturer” population represents one-third of the entire population. For “professors”, too, the population shows one-third of the sample; thus leaving the rest one-third to a combination of “associate” and “assistant” professors. Figure 12 shows that, at the “lecturer level”, the male and female ratio to be just about 50-50. At the professorial level, the percentage of female is 9.5%, for male 90.5%. In the Figure 12 bar-chart, we will notice the female percentage of university teachers declining with higher designations, impacting such macro-level (state level) issues as gender balancing in the teaching workforce (which is beyond the scope of this study but highlights whether the teacher’s gender impacts student learning). On the other hand, with teachers unable to climb up the professional ladder, do they lose their motivation to teach? The interviews record that most of the female teachers rub out time to do research, meaning professional development gets blocked in many forms. The frequency level of respondents in Table 3 shows 30.3% of the sample being female university teachers, and 69.7% male teachers.

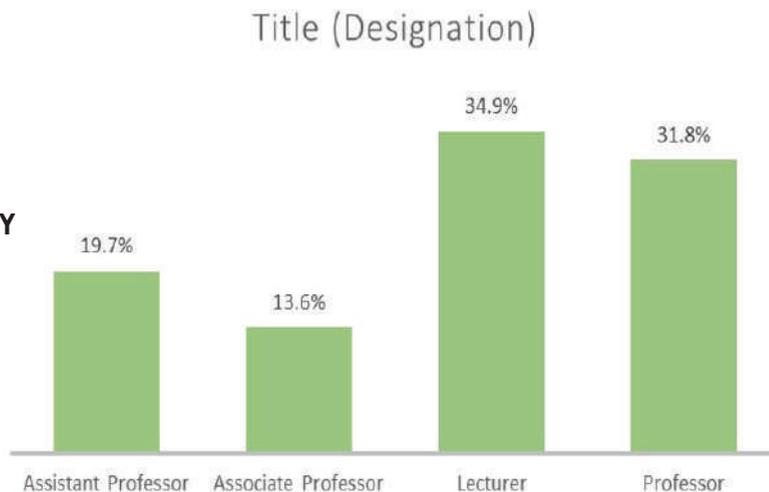


FIGURE 12: PERCENTAGE OF FACULTY MEMBERS AGAINST DESIGNATION

FIGURE 13: PERCENTAGE OF FACULTY MEMBERS AGAINST GENDER & DESIGNATION

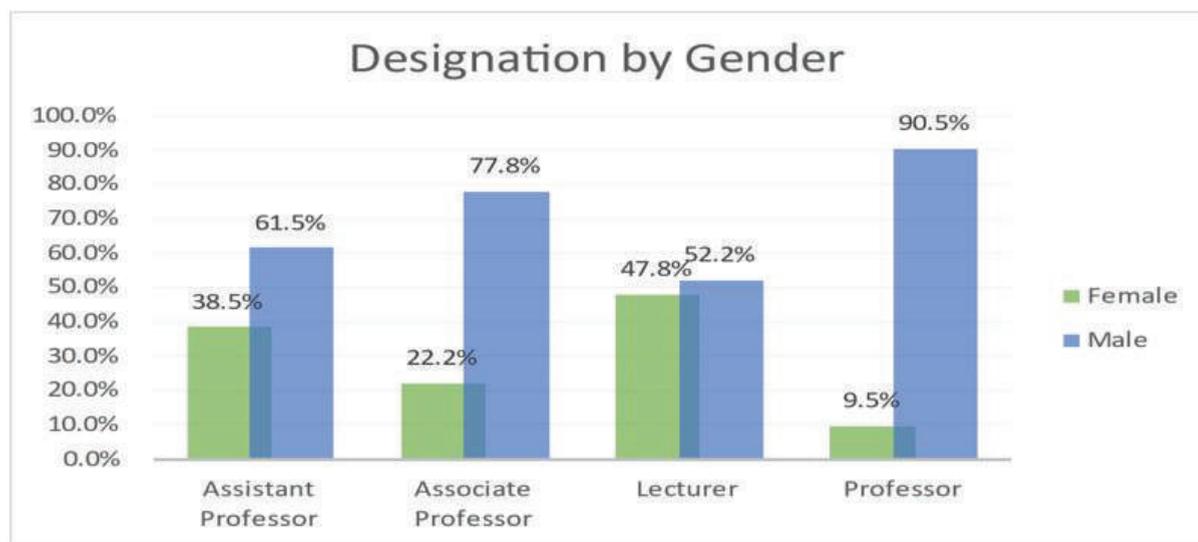


TABLE 3: GENDER RATIO OF TEACHERS

	Frequency	Percentage
Female (N-20)	20	30.3%
Male (N-46)	46	69.7%

Most of the time the career pathways get related to a teacher having a PhD degree or not. In the case of the sample here, all “assistant professors” and upwards held a PhD degree. Table 2.5 shows the male-female percentage of doctorate holders. At the “lecturer” level we find no PhD-holders, and at professorial level, a whopping 19 out of 21 professors were male, with only 2 females holding a doctoral degree. The table also illustrates more female doctorate-holders to be in the “assistant professors” category. Theoretically, a doctorate, because it implies research, is directly associated with pedagogical outcomes in classrooms. However, the student data (Table 5) shows that 64.3% remain indifferent towards a teacher with or without a PhD, implying their respect for teacher does not vary with the highest degree the teacher carries.

TABLE 4: TEACHER’S PhD ACHIEVEMENTS AGAINST GENDER CONSIDERATIONS

	Professors (N21)		Associate Professors (N-9)		Assistant Professor (N-13)		Lecturers (N-23)	
	Female (N-2)	Male (N-19)	Female (N-2)	Male (N-7)	Female (N-5)	Male (N-8)	Female (N-11)	Male (N-12)
PhDs	9.5 %	90.5%	22.22%	77.78%	38.46%	61.54%	0.0 %	0.0%

TABLE 5: STUDENT PERSPECTIVES ON ‘DOES Ph.D. MATTER IN A TEACHER?’

Does PhD matter in a teacher?	YES	64.3%	NO	35.7%
Does your respect for teachers vary with number of degrees they hold?	YES	64.3%	NO	35.7%

The following tables and charts illustrate the use of platforms and the challenges teachers face when taking online classes. Table 6 shows the online platforms used for teaching all across Bangladesh universities. Many universities use *Google Classrooms* and *Zoom*, yet some resort to *Microsoft Teams* and only *G-Meet*. When interviewed, teachers reported many challenges, but the most common (and of note) were: the assessment process, logistics (such as use of *Whiteboard* or other gadgets), Internet network crisis, interaction becoming an issues, small screen not fitting in all students, less student participation, health issues, and so forth, all illustrated in Table 7.

TABLE 6: ONLINE PLATFORMS USED BY TEACHERS

Platform	Frequency	Percentage
Google classroom	32	48.48%
Zoom	29	43.93%
Others	5	7.5%

TABLE 7: CHALLENGES TEACHERS FACE TAKING ONLINE CLASSES

Online challenges	Percentage	Cases in percentage*
Teaching related (low interaction, low attendance)	14.19	25.8 %
Logistical (internet connections, using required gadgets, graphic tablets and likewise)	41.79	84.9 %
Assessment issues (grading online assignments, plagiarism, English, Maths and lab courses need especial logistics making assessment difficult)	12.6	25.8%
Technological literacy (some teachers are having to adapt to the online teaching)	13.43	27.3%
Impact on health	10.19	22.4 %
Lack of timeliness in taking decisions on university's central policy and regulation	7.8	12.1%

Table 8 captures teacher responses to their professional development, depicting 87.88% of teachers involved in some form of research, while Table 9 explains the specific reasons why research is needed for an individual. A majority of the teachers, 77.59% of the cases, agree research to be important for their promotion or increment, a development they associate not only for professional development but also for social salience and economic benefits. Only half the cases, 50.62%, research out of their personal interest, illustrating exposing how institutional funding is desirable for research.

TABLE 8: TEACHERS INVOLVEMENT IN RESEARCH

Are you currently involved in research?	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
No	8	12.12	12.12
Yes	58	87.88	87.88
Total	66	100.00	100.00

TABLE 9: TEACHER'S MOTIVATION FOR RESEARCH

If your answer is <i>Yes</i> , is this for (mark as many as relevant):	Frequency	Proportion	Cases*
A requirement (like a fellowship)	3	4.5%	26.36%
Personal Interest only	24	36.36%	50.62%
Counts towards promotion/ increment at my university	31	46.97%	77.59%
Research work under my supervision (MS/ PhD)	3	4.5%	8.56%
Research for writing statement of purpose for PhD	5	7.67%	10.45%
Admissions			
Total	66	100.00%	

Survey analysis for Covid 19 & other health issues impact on students:

This section explains the impact of Covid-19 and other health related impacts of working with laptops/computers. The data analysis below is mostly from the student's perspectives. Figure 14 shows only 21.8% of the student families were affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, the proportion suffering from the disease being so mainly because data collection was during the first Covid-19.

FIGURE 14: PERCENTAGE OF FAMILY MEMBERS SUFFERING FROM COVID-19

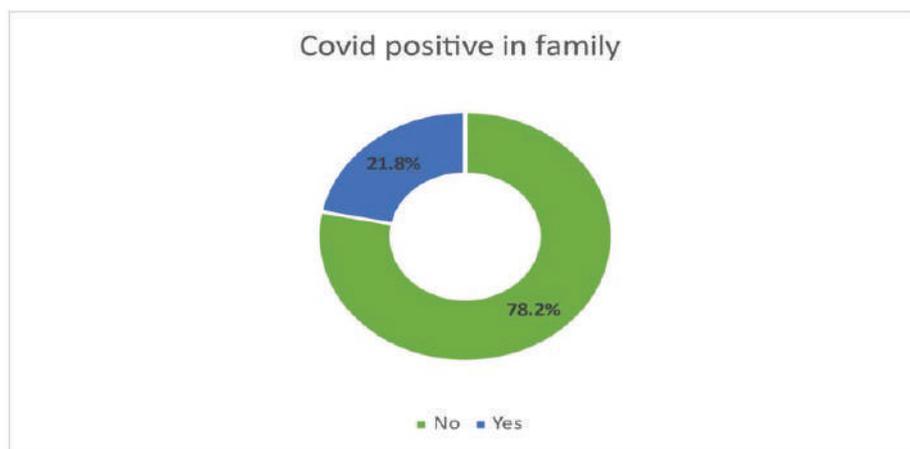


FIGURE 15: PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS SUFFERING FROM STRESS

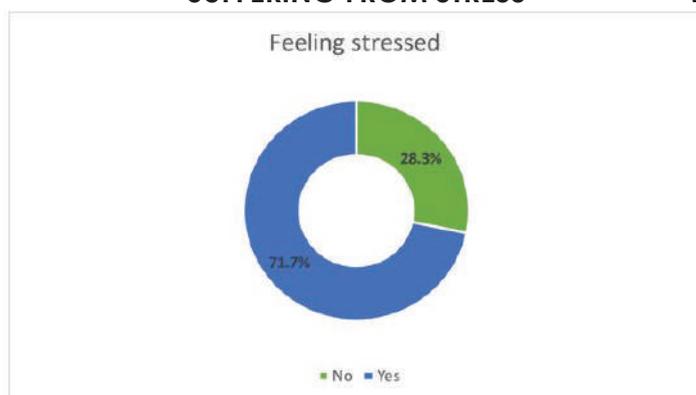
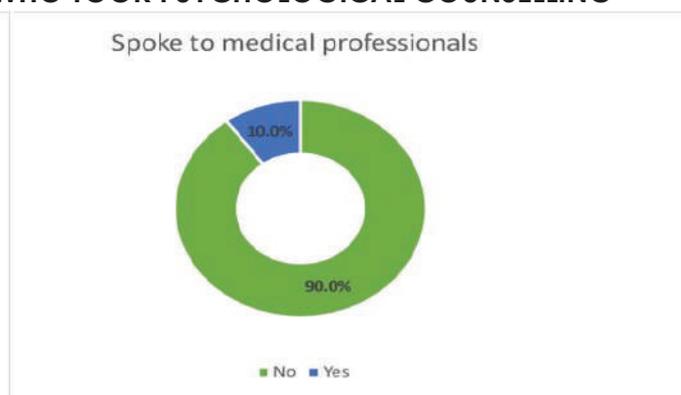


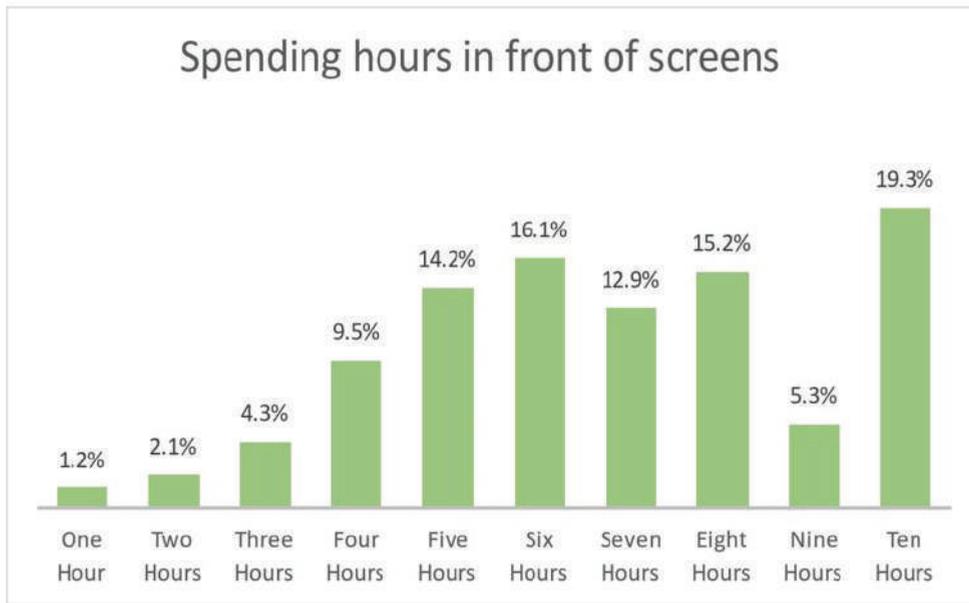
FIGURE 16: PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS WHO TOOK PSYCHOLOGICAL COUNSELLING



However, Figure 15 demonstrates how 71.7% of the student population suffered depression, ranging on a 1-5 continuum (with 1 as the lowest point and 5 and the highest). Figure 16 shows that 10% of 71.7% stressed students have taken psychological counselling.

About the number of hours students spent before the computer screen for their classes, studies, and assignment purpose, Figure 17 reveals two out every three (67.9%) students spending between 4-8 hours. The students have been heard of being exhausted of doing online classes, some of them back-to-back, with online assignments, doing research for term papers and other tutorials. Many of them reported back-pains, headache and often head-spin which is likely to impact their ability to concentrate in class.

FIGURE 17: STUDENTS SPENDING TIME ON THE SCREEN AGAINST NUMBER OF HOURS SPENT



Website and interview analysis of University’s online ecosystem & infrastructure:

While discussing key concepts, the online ecosystem does not only comprise of the capacity to run the classes online, but it is also the aggregate result of seven identified factors: (a) the governance structure; (b) institution’s online mission and vision; (c) pedagogical training series (for teachers/learners); (d) co-curricular support structure; (e) library support system, and finally, (f) work life balance of the teachers; and (g) family (student’s) engagement in such online ecosystem. These factors comprise of, or their cumulative effects are likely to, yield the university’s infrastructural analysis and a resilient online ecosystem.

Through interviews, especially with teachers and students, the findings suggest the university governance structure being more bureaucratic than not, comprising of the Academic Council (representing the faculty and administration), Syndicate (inviting external members from the government, Vice Chancellor, and selected Deans), and either Board of Trustees (for private universities), or Senate (for the public universities). Almost all the decisions made by any of these bodies have to comply with UGC (University Grants Commissions) rules and regulations, more so for private universities than public. Of relevance in these findings is how Bangladesh-wide university students’ assessment systems have been UGC governed throughout the pandemic. Because of the bureaucratic nature of the institutions, the assessment criteria become subject to UGC decisions. As per interviews, implementing such decisions after the semesters began puts the teachers in a dilemma as to what to assess, how to assess and when to asses and release grades for at least the continuous internal evaluation (CIE), if not the semester mid-and-end-examinations (SMEE).

The finding thus reflects upon the lack of *macro-level* (state-level or external components, like the platforms) vision pertaining to online pedagogy affecting the resilience and sustainability at *micro-level* decisions (all local, that is class-specific), which have a trickle-down effect on students. Students generally did not feel comfortable with such assessments, and they feared the grading process as they were not aware of the new grading prescription to be able to be graded. The teachers, especially in the private universities, too, were clueless that no timely CIE instruction was available while the teachers continued taking classes. This is where many teachers mentioned how culture played a key role in understanding the online pedagogical approach. Some also mentioned how the lack of institutional vision and mission amid the online transition shaped uncertainty amongst students.

To add to the consequences of a lack of vision and mission by the institutional governance structure, the online platforms ended up in either *Google Classroom* or *Zoom* and other means which were readily available, yet these platforms are not customized as are many Learning Management System (LMS), such as *Canvas* or *Sakai* or *Blackboard*. In a small FGD sample of 15 students from three different institutions (IUB, Khulna University, Dhaka University), no proper training for the students on how to get into the online *Classroom* proved blatantly evident. Many teachers reported they were technologically challenged, yet they began learning to adapt to new online pedagogy challenges and accommodate and upgrade themselves as much as they could. For many universities, the teachers have had only one (online) training workshop, just at the beginning of the online transitions. The students had their pilot classes with their teachers for a bulk of the private universities, but very rarely so for public universities.

Co-curricular activities had not taken off until the beginning of 2021. It is now the initiative of the student counselling sessions online, while those who are involved in dance, recitation or music, hold online exhibitions. However, there is no online institutional infrastructure to support students' co-curricular activities online. Many students did volunteer to supply food and essentials to the poor and destitute on behalf of their university clubs, but those were monitored by the students themselves, not the institutions. A small student body of 15 students participated in the online FGD (focused group discussions) exercise to share their thoughts on the online co-curricular activities.

The data depicts how university libraries all over Bangladesh supported their teachers and students at least on an average level during the pandemic. They provided remote services, such as access to library resources or any requisition placed by students or teacher. Figure 18 shows how supportive the library had been, both to the faculty members and the students during the pandemic. We find that and the libraries may be calibrated mostly on the higher end of the continuum, and for some universities, more than 70% of the sample was happy with the library support, in some cases just a little more than 50% people were happy with library services.

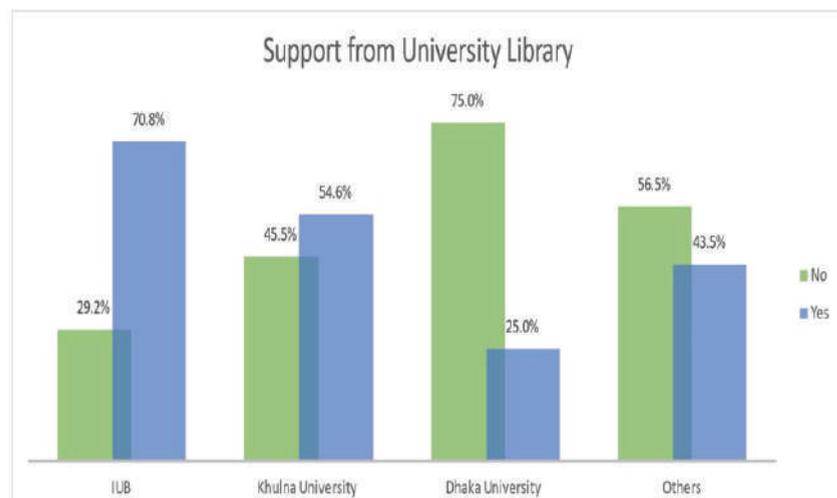
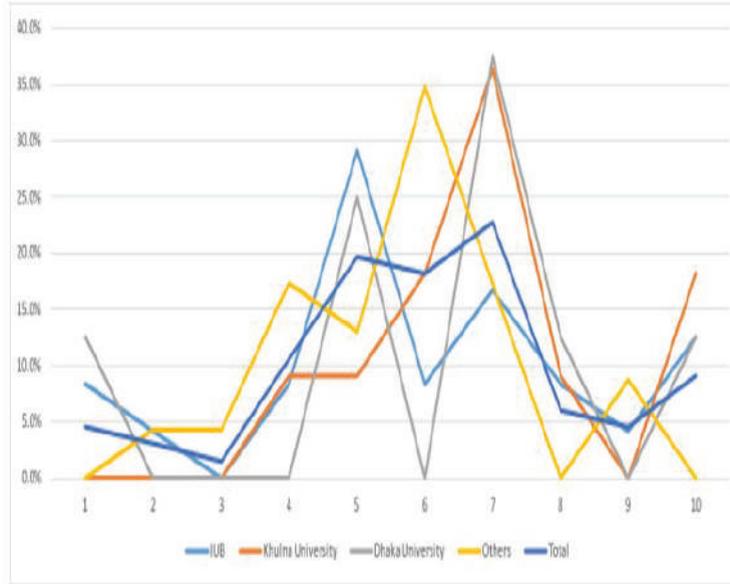


FIGURE 18: STUDENTS & TEACHERS SATISFIED WITH LIBRARY SERVICES

Work-life balance is an important factor in the university ecosystem, especially for the faculties. Without balancing their work and personal life, they face/fear impacts on their pedagogical outcomes in some form. Figure 19 depicts how only about 5% of the teachers find a work-life balance (between score 5- 7 on a scale of 1 to 10 as shown in the dark blue line).

FIGURE 19: WORK-LIFE BALANCE OF TEACHERS ACROSS BANGLADESH



Parents do not involve themselves in the online ecosystem, neither for private universities, nor for the public. Teachers assume universities and sheer necessity for creating an inclusive student based-family in the process of online learning. Since during the Covid-19 lockdown learners were separated from the rest of their family at home, there is a growing need to be alert to their online safety as a pressing issue. Teachers naturally take ownership and responsibility when seeing any kind of inappropriate online behavior—and sometimes that means talking to parents too. Senior university leadership simply seems to escape the need to call for such a system indicating how the universities have not developed any guidelines for student “online disinhibition” (Al Kinsley's team, 2020).¹

Al Kinsley, “Remote learning: Creating safe digital ecosystem,” *Resources for Trustees, Governors and SLT*, 25 August 2020, accessed on June 2, 2021 from <https://schooltrustee.blog/2020/08/27/remote-learning-creating-safe-digital-ecosystems/>



TABLE 10: THEMES OF SUSTAINABLES EDUCATIONAL ECOSYSTEM: STUDENTS' VIEWS

Color code for five major themes: (a) attitude towards online courses & issues with assessments: **Blue**; (b) feasibility & resource accessibility: **Green**; (c) attitude towards institutional support system: **Yellow**, & (d) impact of Covid-19 pandemic & other health issues on learning: **Peach**

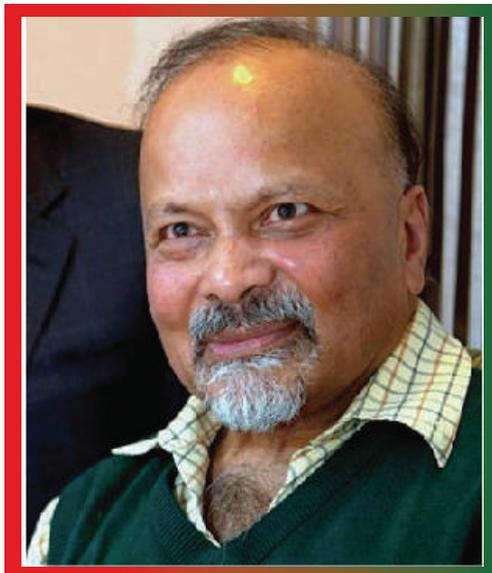
(i) Private or public university	PPU	Institutions (private/ public)	(vi) pedagogical aspect of online classroom	OA	Overburdened with assignment		
	(ii) their access to resources (computers, smartphones, mobile data, internet)	NS		No of family members as university students	OA(1)	Issues with exams	
		CM		Each student member having a laptop/computer	OA(2)	Issues with other online assessments	
		CM(1)		At least one student member having a computer/laptop	EQ	Students agree their institution is well equipped	
		CM(2)		Having at least one smart phone		EQ(2)	Problems online infrastructure
		CM(3)		No. of members sharing one computer/ laptop		EQ(3)	Suggestions to improve
	CM(4)	Wifi and internet data access		(vii) student research options and library use.	RA	Student's involvement with research work (with a faculty)	
	CM(5)	Access to power generator			RA(1)	Importance of research and publications	
	(iii) socio-economic background	LI			Living with parents and in own apartment	RA(2)	Time for research work
		LI(1)			Other housing option	UL	Importance of use of library
LI (2)		Parent's/financial guarantor's occupation	UL(1)		Frequency of library use		
(vi) learner's attitude/preference for face to face class vis-à-vis online classes and challenges they face	FPO	Preferences: F2F vs Online	(viii) impact of Covid-19 and other health issues on learning process	Cov	Impact of covid lockdown		
	FPO(1)	Challenges with online education		Cov (1)	Hours staying at home		
	FPO(2)	Suggestions to improve the system		Cov (2)	Suffering depression		
	FPO(3)	Online class preference for future generation		Cov (3)	Needed medical support for depression		
	FPO(1)	Challenges with online education		HE	Spending time in front of computer screen		
	FPO(2)	Suggestions to improve the online education system		HE(1)	Impact health and education due to long hours with computers		
	FPO(1)	Challenges with online education		HE(2)	Total number of hours with computers in a day		

"BABU", "MURABBI", OR IN THE MIXED MIDDLE? THE ODD JOURNEY FROM FORESIGHT TO HINDSIGHT

A review of Numair Atif Chowdhury's *Babu Bangladesh* (New Delhi, India: Fourth Estate, 2019), pp. 402.

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Though a professor of English, Numair Atif Chowdhury left behind a book rattling the intellectual juices of everyone donning a thinking cap. This was particularly true across the School of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences (SLASS), to which his department belonged, at Independent University, Bangladesh. As if a man on a mission prattling about burning socio-political issues, Numair couched his native country's half-century passage at once so intricately, at others too surrealistically, as to leave more questions at the end than at the start. It resonates with Leo Tolstoy's 1869 *War and Peace*, which took an invasion (Napoleon's in 1812) to spiritually charge the reforms of Tsar Alexander II half a century later. Numair's treatment of his country's 1971 Liberation War could be a modest sequel to a true classic.

It would be too presumptuous to probe the riddles he both delves into and disseminates, but his SLASS footing opens one window worth analysis. *How* his dynamics permeate other disciplines than English better (and more merrily) captures his underlying themes than trying to explain the *why*. He lets the *context* speak for itself. Reviewing his book on the 50th Anniversary of Bangladesh's liberation opens a fortuitous interpretive window. It concides with Bangladesh targeting a "developed country" outcome by the 2040s. *Babu Bangladesh* portrays Bangladesh's real-life ambiguities: does *babu* reflect the innocent youth, with developmental hopes, or the "once-bitten-twice-benefited" stand-offish 'developed country' soul?

Babu could very well be a stoic appraiser of the past. He thrusts what had happened into imaginative domains of how related dynamics could have evolved. Contrast this retrospective interpretation to that of, let's say, an innocent child first walking the talk: that untutored could be any typical Main Street person, or even a river-ranger the countryside is replete with, tackling any and every "tree" in his or her pathway. Getting a sense of a "forest" is beyond expectations. Yet as fragments of a "forest" become discernible over time, the defrocked, thus confused teenager comprehends the size, shape, substantive value, or symbiotic connections of the "tree" at stake quite differently.

Before exploring the country's ascendancy, one must first secure the footholds. History is one of them for Numair, and with it a slew of knowledge-modes: the post-liberation war's socio-cultural changes. Particularly the jump from what Bangladesh was then, a 'basket-case' (mind you, he does not use that term at all, but it comes across so vividly in his appraisal, particularly of Tangail, where he grew up). His destination is a *Babu* state, that is, a respectable entity (just as a *Babu Shahib* is, in local parlance, a respectable, yet distant, person).

Without getting too far ahead, though, we will still notice how the community-anchored communications between people begin to fray (as he found out in Tangail then, but we find across the increasingly and densely populated urbans today). They become more selective, even secretive (as in his 'Second Capital' narratives): As we, Bangladeshis, climb into the once-impossible middle-income group of countries, we also will not let anyone dwell upon "that one brief not so shining moment" when we were not Camelot: the "bottomless pit" phase. Historical references may anchor erudition, yet *sin* the imaginative tweak here and an apparition there, we end up retreating into our own comfort zones. Predictable principles, norms, rules, and decision-making authorities begin to loosen up, in part because they never existed on Main Street minds, and clearly were not present in 1971. Positive and negative consequences blur more of the future the higher the person climbs. Imagine a more tainted Cinderella, a "rag-doll" rather than princess in tuxedo company.

Back to history. It is not the return to a bucolic 1971 Bangladesh. In Numair's case this could be the Tangail backwaters, but to the rest of the country perhaps the Language Movement right here in Dacca (not yet Dhaka), in 1952. Rafiquddin Ahmed, Abul Barkat, Abdul Jabbar, and Abdus Salam, among others, do not dot Numair's firmament. What actually does, the iconic *Bot-tala*, may surprise those born after 1971. Numair traces it not to the Arts Building lawn in Dhaka University where we go to revere it today, but an older British construction, Dhaka Medical College Hospital (home of the *Am-tala*). He intertwines the heroic but futile efforts of a team of freedom-fighters (the 'twelve activists' as he calls them), including one woman (Babu's mother in the novel), to prevent the Pakistani troops (going up to, and directly including, Major General Rao Farman Ali, a complicit commander of Operation Searchlight), from blowing up the mythological mascot of the Liberation War. How they escaped daylight visibility (by submerging under the campus's various ponds), the benign neglect they received from sympathizing Pakistani soldiers-on-guard, and putting Pakistani troops guarding *Bot-tala* into sleep (through pills smuggled from the hospital), may belong to a spy thriller, *a la* Ian Fleming's famous series, but embedded here may be kernels of grim, untold "idiosyncrasies" that would never get into "histories" of first-hand 1971 war experiences. One wonders how many of them will never see the light of day. And why our takeaways of realities rarely descend deep enough or tap the rich hues to see another day. How Numair's imaginations rise above the prose exemplifies that lost sense bursting out of the seams.



History is less the stuff novelists write about in today's 5G age (or even what students pay attention to in classes), and quite lamentably so: if history impedes imagination, indifference becomes its poisoned chalice. Early in his novel, Numair depicts Tangail lifestyles through Babu, the novel's key protagonist, now in his youth, making friends. We find all that 'predictability' referenced earlier: friends were stable and rock-solid (like Kanu), everyone in every community knew each other in a way they increasingly do not in any contemporary

Bangladeshi neighborhood, or even in the Dhanmandi he later went to, or to where his most famous 'Building' (the *Jatiyo Sangshad Bhaban*) lay, that is, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar. Even the peace of the dispossessed then, when Bangladesh's post-birth life began, contrasts with the dispossessed scrambling more for peace than for *paisas* today. It points perhaps to the book's undertone: 'Babu' epitomizing possessions, suggesting the more the *paisas* the country has, the

more *Babu Shahibs* it will count. Numair could have been any prince’s apologist philosopher, like Florence’s Medicis had Niccolo Macchiavelli, Emperor Chandragupta had Chanakya, the Greco-Persian wars the Father of History, Herodotus, or even earlier, Homer of the Trojan War.



Numair was angled differently. His imaginations were in tandem with the prosaic lot, very much like William Shakespeare was to the plebian. But the stage for both was royal. If sociologists ever have to explain why millionaires, more so billionaires, become increasingly reclusive, as they tend to at some point, Numair’s imaginations should break the ice.

His bottom-up approach to a nobleman’s observation rekindles Lord John Emerich Acton’s famous phrase,

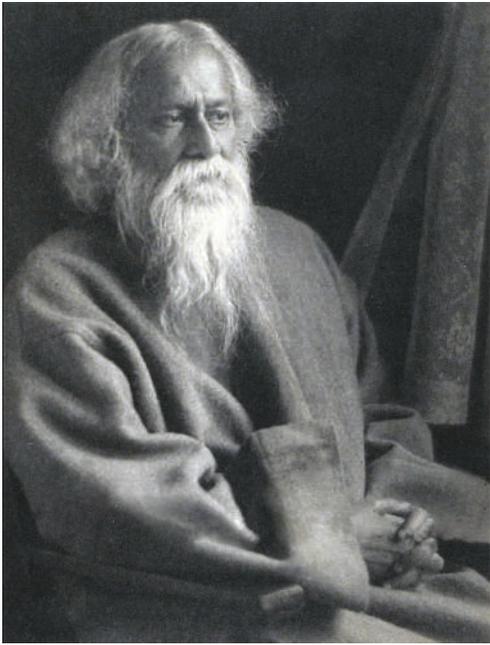
“Power corrupts; absolute power corrupts absolutely.” This was perhaps best captured in the *Jatiyo Sangshad*, another Dhaka edifice with history, but also replete with its own share of tragedy and a very protracted reincarnation. Much like the *Bot-tala* was given life by the Language Movement to eventually culminate in the country’s independence symbol, the *Jatiyo Sangshad* came alive by the turn of the century after a lackluster and neglected start. Numair traces its history to the late 1950s, and its two grand architects (Muzharul Islam and Louis I. Kahn). Capturing ‘Sonar Bangla’s’ multiple identities (Numair recounts particularly the Hindus, but also Christians, who lived in greater flocks then than now), was a common drawing-board conception. For Numair it became a lifelong playground, the escapades teenagers need, but also the platform for elected representatives to dabble. How a penniless child from two struggling but fiercely proud parents became the recipient of millions might just be the story of Numair’s country: that basket-case evolving through a rough RMG (ready-made garment) route into that middle-income fold. Numair’s references to all three phases indicate how much those transitions were central to his own experiences, suggesting more the retrospective trajectory of his writing than the bungling diary of an unevenly keeled traveler envisioning a coherent future.

More must be said of those transitions, but *Jatiyo Sangshad* snippets beg attention first. Louis Kahn’s name must have become a famous and hallowed name for the informed Bangladeshis today, based on how he created Pakistan’s ‘Second Capital’. It became the central socio-political representation that Kahn fervently sought to depict.

Many may not know how this illustrious architect from Philadelphia travailed to capture that perfect sketch to bring his dream into reality, nor of the amount he spent from his own pocket to do so. They could be shocked to learn, not from *Wikipedia*, but from Numair’s elegiac narration, how he died, not just penniless but actually deeply indebted, in a New York train station lavatory. With Philadelphia once being the U.S. capital, like Dhaka is Bangladesh’s today, *Babu’s* biggest challenge, it seems to me, is to not leave Dhaka that same New York finale as Kahn did.



Numair Atif Chowdhury



Rabindranath Tagore
Awarded Nobel Prize in Literature

Still, this must be part of any analysis, if only for pre-emption purposes. Numair's book indirectly hints at many threats to monitor. Just as Babu's pocket swelled, so too Bangladesh's population. It is remarkable how the once-poorest world metropolitan now boasts one of the world's most envious 'emerging' economies, even more, its braggadocio plan to enter the 'developed country' club within another decade or two. *Babu Bangladesh* warns us of dangling dangers from the rapid material accumulation becoming so laced with intrigues. In a fascinating discussion of *geomantic empathys* emanating from the very *Jatiyo Sangshad's* contours (for example, how a slight whisper in one remote corner of the vast edifice could, and indeed did, echo, in another, or more realistically, many others), Kahn's *magnus opus* is related to both the representativeness that any parliament building should seek, but also privation, plotting and projecting more the vested than the common interests.

At a time of exploding non-performing loans and sprouting casinos in the country, we may pause and ponder not if Numair's apprehensions can be defused, but how the proactive gestures he observed in Dhaka Medical College Hospital during the Liberation War could be reproduced. These included how to protect the inevitable *Bot-tala* destruction by holding hands with the devil, drugging enemy soldiers, as well as mustering patience and extraordinary skills beneath corpse-filled ponds.

Fifty-years down the road, our nemesis is not from another land, but our own evaporating one (Babu's forest-filled Madhupur constituency exists largely as a pineapple orchard now); cities buzzing with humans, automobiles, and carbon (with fewer countryside retreats to go to); and too much of a materialistic submission by each and all that, like the Madhupur forest, values have begun to also evaporate.

Whether a *Babu Bangladesh* transforms into a *Murabbi Bangladesh*, will we come to terms with our own accumulative instincts, will we "grow up" to expose our maturity, or will we fastidiously bury the long-term view over the short-, and personal material gains over the envious socio-cultural fabric encompassing the lot? Rabindranath Tagore won a Nobel Literature Prize for partly portraying that *environment*, and Amartya Sen's Nobel Economics Prize actually supplied a blueprint to partly regain that setting from the mess we are in. Will we respect those roots before drowning in their fruits?

Babu Bangladesh touches a spot that can help us reclaim our own Camelot.



Amartya Kumar Sen
Awarded Noble Memorial Prize in Economic Science



Professor Fakrul Alam

*Director, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Research
Institute for Peace and Liberty*

BANGLADESH'S RENAISSANCE HUMAN: PROFESSOR FAKRUL ALAM



Dr. Ahmed Ahsanuzzaman

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Homi K Bhabha in *The Location of Culture* (2nd Indian reprint, 2009) argues that the activist's manifesto expressed in a leaflet and the writer's "speculative article on the theory of ideology" are "both forms of discourse". He thinks that the writer's commitment to an ideology does not stand in opposition to the activist's idea of politics; instead "it exists side by side with it – the one as the enabling part of the other" (32).

Professor Fakrul Alam is among those handful of committed intellectuals in post-independence Bangladesh who have dedicated themselves to the causes of the country without ever aligning with any particular party. He bears the glorious legacy of his illustrious teachers at the University of Dhaka — Jyotirmoy Guhathakurta (1920– 71), Khan Sarwar Murshid (1924-2012), Munier Choudhury (1925-71) and Serajul Islam Choudhury (1936-) — the inspirational role models — who have always stood by their compatriots in their struggles for liberty and freedom. As his collection of periodical pieces and personal pieces, *Once More into the Past* (2020) evidences, Alam like his renowned predecessors, has, to a great extent, acted as the conscience of the nation by critically engaging with "political ideals and principles that inform the right to strike" (Bhabha 32).

Director of Sheikh Mujib Research Institute for Peace and Liberty, and formerly a UGC professor at the Department of English of Dhaka University, Professor Alam was born on 20 July 1951. He attended St. Joseph's High School and Notre Dame College before entering Dhaka University for his bachelor's and master's in English. He earned a second master's degree from Simon Fraser University and did his PhD at the University of British Columbia. Apart from teaching at Dhaka University, he has taught at Clemson University as a Fulbright scholar, and Jadavpur University as a visiting faculty. He has delivered key-note addresses at prestigious international conferences in universities and institutions around the globe besides contributing articles and chapters to renowned journals, books and anthologies. He held the position of the Director, Advanced Studies in the Humanities of Dhaka University and acted as an advisor to the University's Central Library. He received the "Bangla Academy Puroskar" (Literature Award) for translation in 2013. He is a member of the national education policy implementation committee constituted by the government of Bangladesh and national committee for celebrations of the birth anniversary of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

As an original scholar and thinker Alam shows his deep-seated interest in themes and issues with postcolonial overtone. A quick look at his latest book, *Reading Literature in English and English Studies in Bangladesh: Postcolonial Perspectives* (2021), reveals his interest in what Edward Said has succinctly theorized as “contrapuntal reading” (Ashcroft and Ahluwalia, *Edward Said* 8). Alam builds upon *Imperial Entanglements and Literatures in English* (2007) and takes on issues such as South Asian Literature, postcoloniality, transnationalism and the state of English language teaching in Bangladesh to dismantle “colonial straitjacket” (Dalrymple, 2005) which privileges the imperialist and colonialist gaze to exoticize and orientalise the colony and the colonized.

Chapter 16 of the book entitled “Confronting Empire Now” (297-99) is an illuminating read as it stresses how imperialism in its different manifestations is a living reality for the non-western world. Alam believes that postcolonial criticism can play a pivotal role in exposing and challenging neo-imperialist projects from the western powers, which are always on the lookout for cementing their strength “and fulfilling their appetites for markets”. Alam draws readers’ attention to several cases in the recent past to reveal how Bangladesh is vulnerable to imperial projects. He refers to the tactics deployed by the British Council to sell “British educational and linguistic interests” in the country, as well as the Rana Plaza tragedy of 2013 the roots of which were laid “in the insatiable appetite for cheap textiles in the western world”. Alam is convinced that this is where our civil society can draw inspiration from Said and activists like Arundhati Roy whose “stance exposes graphically the network of interests that sustains empire and propels imperial interests perpetually” (299).

Alam is one of the leading translators of Bangladesh. His absorbing translation of the poems by Jibanananda Das, a towering Bengali poet, *Jibanananda Das: Selected Poems* (1999) is a unique addition to translation studies as well as the study of Das. According to Syed Manzoorul Islam, the translation is distinctive, for “[t]he sights and sounds of Bengal’s landscape, its crowded botany and its constantly shifting lights and shadows find their way into Alam’s translation” (Talukder, *The Daily Star*, 8 October 2011). Alam’s translation of *Bishad-Sindhu* by Mir Mosharraf Hossain (1847-1911), the first significant fiction by a Muslim author, is a creative encounter with his source which has rendered it as a literary classic in English. *Ocean of Sorrow* (2016) is an “afterlife” (Benjamin 17) of the nineteenth century classic as he endeavours to “give a new dimension to the after-life of Mir Mosharraf Hossain’s masterpiece” (xxx).

The Essential Tagore which Alam co-edited with Radha Chakraborty and which was published by Harvard University Press in 2011 is a gateway to Tagore studies in particular and translation studies in general. The anthology includes translations of Tagore’s representative poems, songs, stories, articles and plays by famed academics and writers including Alam himself. He has continued his pursuit of Tagore and his forthcoming publication is going to be the translation of Nobel Laureate’s song-lyrics *Gitabitan*.

As translator Alam is important for one more reason. He has translated Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman’s three published autobiographical books which paved the way for knowing and appreciation one of the greatest postcolonial heroes of the world by a global audience. The first of three translations, *The Unfinished Memoirs*, came out in 2012; its sequel, *Prison Diaries*, was published in 2016; and *New China 1952* was printed in 2021. Alam’s lucid translation makes it abundantly clear how Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was a truly people’s hero and how he won the hearts of millions of his compatriots by dint of his selfless acts and enormous sacrifices.

For his students Alam is, as he himself attributes to Professor Serajul Islam Choudhury in his dedicatory note to the above mentioned *Reading Literature in English*, “a mentor for all seasons”. His doors are always open to his students and he at once makes them feel at ease in his company. He is always there for help, guidance and advice. Pass an hour with him and you emerge as an enlightened human being. He is a teacher who has mentored a host of students and continues to inspire many.



MOVING BEYOND OXFORD

Professor Dr. Niaz Zaman

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When I started my MA studies at the University of Dhaka in 1961, the department was very much a traditional English Department. I learned that the university was called “Oxford of the East” because it was based on the Oxford model. All students had to stay in halls or be attached to them. There would be lecture classes but also, following the Oxford model, there would be tutorials where four to five students would meet a tutor, who would discuss different topics, assign work to be written in front of him – I had no woman teacher when I was studying – give a grade, and discuss any problems contained in the written paper. Every group met two different tutors per year. Already, of course, the university had moved away from the Oxford model, or, rather, had modified it to suit its own situation. At Oxford students met tutors individually, and the tutorial was a learning and teaching tool rather than a grading one. At the University of Dhaka, the marks one got in the tutorials were added to the final marks.

A student from Oxford would not have found the English syllabus very different from what he or she was used to. We read English literature according to the different periods. We read Anglo-Saxon poetry and Chaucer. Fortunately, we did not have to read Anglo-Saxon poetry in the original, but we had to read Chaucer in Middle English. The Head of the Department himself taught us Chaucer, explaining how the final “e” in Middle English had to be pronounced as in the line “Whan thatte Aprille with her shoures sote.” The MA syllabus had no woman author, and the Honours syllabus only two: Jane Austen and Emily Bronte. One had the impression that women authors were in some way not writers to be taught at a university, as if they were inferior to male authors. And it was only *white* male authors that we read. There was not a single black, brown, wheat-coloured, yellow writer in the whole syllabus.

After 1972 – when I joined the faculty of the English Department – things slowly started changing at my *alma mater*. Perhaps the most important change was reducing the focus on Shakespeare. Though there continued to be a full paper on Shakespeare at the MA level, he became a part of the undergraduate course on Introduction to Drama – one play – and part of the course on Sixteenth and Seventeenth-Century Literature – two plays. Another important change followed some years later when non-white writers were added. In preparation for this, in 1990, the Department organized a conference on Commonwealth Literature, hoping that writing in “other Englishes” could be offered. The new course was, however, not accepted immediately. It was only in 1992, that six students took this optional course – which had by then been renamed “Third World Literature.” For the first time black, brown and wheat-coloured writers were being taught in the English Department. Nevertheless, the syllabus continued to be heavily male-centred. It was only in 1992, that the department recognized the significance of Mary Wollstonecraft by organizing a conference. It was, however, ten years later, in the 2001-2002 session, that a course in women’s literature was offered: 20th Century Women’s Literature and Feminist Literary Criticism.



The new syllabus that has been proposed by the University of Dhaka includes writings by not just “non-native speakers of English” but also Bangladeshi writers who write in English. But the variety that some private university departments have been offering since their inception shows a radical change in the attitude to English literature. While the undergraduate English Literature courses at IUB are fairly conservative and traditional – with perhaps the exception of Creative Writing and South Asian Fiction in English as core courses, and Other Literatures in English, Modern Literature in Translation, Women and Literature, and Translation Studies as electives – a casual glance at the MA Literature syllabus at IUB reveals how many “non-English” courses are being offered. Even what are called the core courses have a course on World Literature in Translation and a course on Contemporary Literature in English.

The common electives include, among others, Women in Literature, Feminist Literary Theory, The Literature of War, Postcolonial Readings of Literature, Postmodernism, and Editing and Publishing in Literature. Students are offered a choice of area electives from Literature in English and from Comparative Literature. The focus in the former is, of course, literature in English, including a course on Irish literature: *The Irish Strain*. Contemporary British Literature is offered as an optional course as are Shakespeare Studies, Contemporary South Asian Literature in English, and Advanced Creative Writing. The electives from Comparative Literature offer a much wider range than in conventional English Departments. Apart from Translation Studies, electives include European Literature in Translation, South Asian Literature in Translation, Latin American Literature, African literature—titled *Out of Africa*—and Religious and Devotional Poetry – drawing upon the rich mystic strain in the Bangla tradition. In addition, Contemporary Bangla Literature and Women’s Tradition in Bangla Literature encourage students of the Department of English to study our own literature. Because IUB, like other private universities, has to have its syllabi approved by the UGC, it is not possible to drastically change or add courses. However, at the MA level, IUB has two courses – approved by the University Grant Commission– which allow for change and innovation depending on interest and available faculty: ENG 519: Major Author and ENG 520: Special Topic.

The English Department syllabus at my *alma mater* is gradually decolonizing. However, from its very beginnings, the MA English Literature syllabus at IUB has included both world literature and our own literature. As the Kenyan writer, Ngugi wa Thiongo said, in his *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*, a once colonized country must decolonize linguistically as much as it has decolonized politically.

CAN BANGLADESH DEVELOP A RESEARCH CULTURE?

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Confining the development of research culture to an individual institution or university without a synergized integration into the national system is bound to produce limited and insignificant results. Research culture is not outside the norms and practices of the greater socio-cultural tradition of a country. Even the national administrative and political leadership influences the nature of research culture in a country.

Recently, the world university rankings have been getting a lot of media traction, and the position of Bangladeshi universities in the world context is being raised. *The Times Higher Education* (THE) and *Quacquarelli Symonds* (QS) rankings are especially highlighted. Several private universities use various categories of rankings to boost their student recruitment. Meanwhile, many public universities, especially reputed older establishments, have been suffering from anxiety, vexed that private universities are surpassing them in rankings. As a result, a healthy competition in improving the quality of teaching and research has been set in motion among the leading institutes – both private and public.

The ranking process and criteria by Western agencies use the trends, traditions and approaches of their own educational objectives. THE and QS use the following criteria and weightage (Laura Bridgestock, <https://www.topuniversities.com/>):

The Times Higher Education	Quacquarelli Symonds (QS)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching (worth 30% of the overall score) Based on a reputation survey (15%), staff-to-student ratio (4.5%), doctorate-to-bachelor's ratio (2.25%), doctorates-awarded-to-academic-staff ratio (6%) and institutional income (2.25%). • Research (30%) Based on a reputation survey (18%), research income (6%) and research papers published per faculty member (6%). • Research citations (30%) Based on the number of citations a university's research obtains, normalized by subject area. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic reputation (worth 40% of the overall score) Based on a global survey of academics, who are asked to identify the leading institutions in their field. • Employer reputation (10%) Based on a global survey of graduate employers, who are asked to identify the institutions producing the best graduates in their sector. • Student-to-faculty ratio (20%) An indication of commitment to high-quality teaching and support.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International outlook (7.5%) Based on international-to-domestic-student ratio (2.5%), international-to-domestic-staff ratio (2.5%) and international research collaborations (2.5%). • Industry income (2.5%) Based on income earned from industry, relative to the number of academic staff employed, and adjusted for PPP. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research citations per faculty member (20%) This is normalized by subject area, and reflects the impact of an institution's research. • Proportion of international faculty (5%) A measure of an institution's success in attracting faculty from overseas. • Proportion of international students (5%) A measure of an institution's success in attracting students from overseas.
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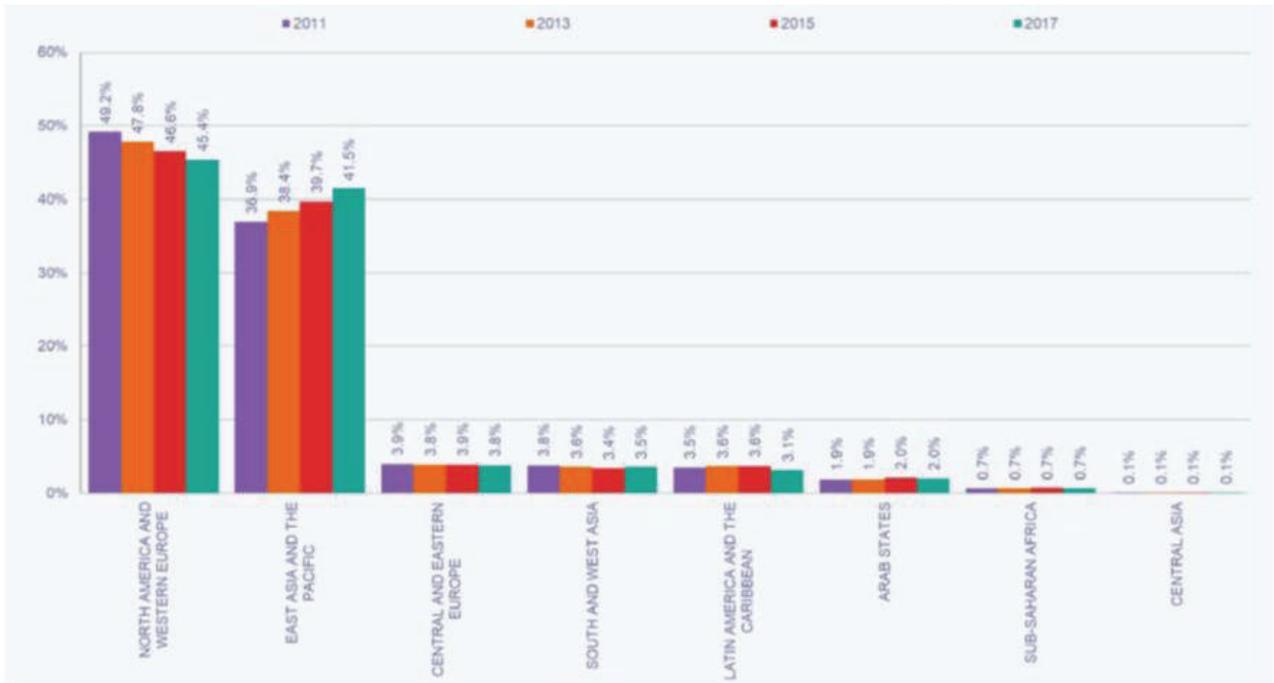
Countries and institutes have expressed concern over the validity of these ranking criteria and weightage because even the best institutes of poorer countries are inherently disadvantaged by them. There was discontent with the world ranking methodologies performed by THE, QS and other international agencies in India. As such, India introduced the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) approved by the Ministry of Human Resource Development in 2015. NIRF identifies the broad parameters of “Teaching, Learning and Resources,” “Research and Professional Practices,” “Graduation Outcomes,” “Outreach and Inclusivity,” and “Perception”. NIRF is extensively used within India for resource allocation, development plan, admission priority, and more. There is no recognized and reputed ranking agency in Bangladesh.

However, an important issue to be noted with the Indian ranking system is its approval from the Human Resource Development ministry and not the Education ministry, although the Ministry of Education developed this ranking system and updated it every year since 2016. Developing a national human resource improvement plan and aligning the quality and objectives of the education system with it, is essential for the economic growth of the country. With the NIRF ranking method, India is trying to meet its own human resource requirements.

The process of promoting institutional research culture is well understood. It requires a group of leaders who understand the importance of research and are ready to steer the team through setting specific goals. The direction and expectation of the goal must be communicated to all members with full transparency. The institute needs to allocate appropriate and adequate resources, train the team members, and create an environment of collaboration. The university may encourage research by performance-based incentives, motivation through recognition, creating higher qualification benchmarks and other such measures. The question to ponder is, whether an institute can create and sustain a culture of research devoid of a national agenda or political will?

It is seen that the low-income countries lack national mandates and collaborative programs. The research contribution by the low-income countries is far below the high-income countries. There are many reasons for that. In a country where providing basic needs of the citizens, like healthcare, food, shelter, electricity, transport, education, etc., is a struggle, spending money on research is a luxury. It is not easy to break the culture of ad hoc measures solving immediate challenges, and allocate research funding as part of the long term economic plan instead. Low resource countries would rather import technology from abroad and wait for innovation from the high-income countries. Figure 1 shows the percentage of money spent on research and development (R&D) by different regions of the world as compiled by United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

Figure 1:
Contribution in global research funding by region
(UNESCO Institute for Statistics estimates, February 2020)



It can be seen that two regions dominate the R&D investment – North America and Western Europe, followed by East Asia and Pacific countries, contributing more than 85%. The South Asian countries, with one fifth of the world population, contribute only 3.8% in world research funding. At the same time, without indigenous solutions to local problems, the economic breakthrough for sustainable development is not possible. While the Western world has consistently invested in R&D, countries like South Korea, Japan, Taiwan and Israel, which were all poor countries in the early 1960s, all graduated from their low-income status with strategic long-term development planning supported by specific R&D action. China's remarkable development since the late 1990s was also supported by increasing R&D expenditure by many folds. Figure 2 shows the R&D allocation in the national budget as a percentage of GDP of few major economies.

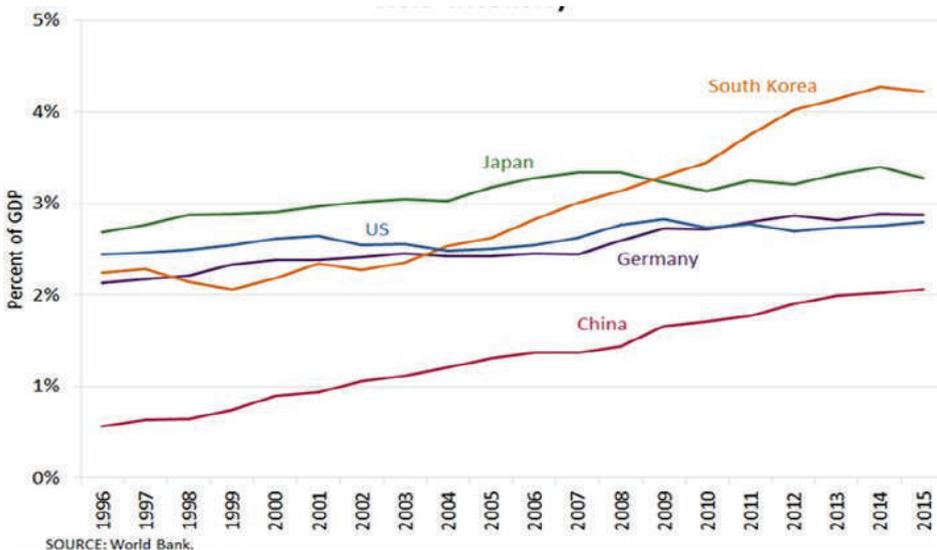


Figure 2:
R&D intensity by some selected economy

SOURCE: World Bank.

South, West and Central Asia, South America and the Caribbean, the Middle East, Sub Saharan Africa – all these regions spend less than 0.7% of their GDP on research funding. The story of South Korea is the most widely used example to inspire developing countries, and is often suggested as a model for breaking the middle-income trap. Today it leads the global R&D intensity, followed by Israel and Japan. Notably, many economists blame the stagnation of R&D intensity by the United States for its recent decline in economic power.

In the early 1960s, South Korea was an agriculture-based country. In 1961 the GDP was only \$2.3 billion with only 15% contribution coming from manufacturing with very little international trade. In 1961, Korea's total trade (import-export) was less than \$450 million. In terms of innovation, science and technology, it was almost nonexistent with only two public technical institutes– the atomic energy and the defense. From this abysmal condition, Korea launched its science and technology drive to transform itself from an agriculture society to a manufacturing giant. Its first five-year plan was approved in 1962 with the aim to first dismantle imported technology and then transfer, assimilate and improve them for local adaptation and manufacturing. It mastered the reverse engineering to gain knowledge of the technology and trained an extensive number of technically competent manpower. Later, it opted to manufacture them with foreign licensing. Instead of direct international investment, it used long term foreign loans to create their own manufacturing industry.

By the early 1980s, Korea was becoming a potential global competitor, and international companies became increasingly reluctant to export any new technology to Korea. In the meantime, the manufacturing industry became hungry for further growth. The Korean government realized that the only way to feed that hunger is through indigenous R&D. From just over \$500 million in 1981, Korea today spends billions of dollars in R&D (\$95 billion in 2018). It is the 11th largest economy in the world. South Korea is now spending even larger sums than two of the global leaders in innovation: the United States and Japan in R&D. South Korea has been in the Top-five positions in the world innovation index in the last six years. The share of R&D participation from almost 100% government has migrated to the current 80% private over the last six decades. This was achieved by promoting a top-down innovation system integrating government, industry and academia.

Just pushing academia for publication will not create a research culture. It may succeed in increasing the ranking of the universities by few notches, but to what advantage? If those research and publications do not help innovation and local application, if there is a total disconnect between industry and academia, it would be a futile exercise wasting valuable resources. The grade-based evaluation system has created a hoard of students with high GPAs in the country but unfortunately, most of them are not employable in the market. The education system needs to be reconnected to the real world. Today our students can solve complex equations but struggle to open a bank account.

Equating research and publication is a fundamental mistake. Any good research is expected to produce some publication, but what would that achieve in terms of greater social impact? In answering why research projects are carried out, in low-income countries, most of them are done to either advance personal careers or fulfill institutional obligations. Most of these projects happen without any collaboration among colleagues or any purpose for the common good. They plunge into what they are doing instead of why they are doing it.

Leigh Dayton in an article in *Nature* (May 27, 2020) showed how South Korea became a very successful global innovator through systemic planning backed by investment. He showed the importance of industry-academy partnership. Using Samsung's contribution in Nature Index Journals, he highlighted the Korean giant conglomerate's collaborations with various universities by listing their number of publications. A list of the top five is shown here (Table 1). Out of the top ten listed, six are South Korean universities and the rest are from the USA.

This reflects the South Korean priority of developing local research with local universities. The initial thrust was applied research on science and technology that persists. If we see the scientific journals today, it can be safely said that at least fifty percent of the publications come either from industrial research alone or industry-academia collaboration. Without such collaboration, a research culture cannot be developed in a country.

**Table 1:
SAMSUNG’s Top Five University Collaboration (Leigh Dayton, 2020)**

Samsung Group’s Top-five collaborating academic partners on articles in the *Nature Index* journals are split between the United States and domestic institutions. Here they are ranked by bilateral collaboration score (CS), 2015–19. CS is derived by summing each institution’s Share on the papers to which authors from both have contributed.

Rank	Institution	Country	Bilateral CS	Count*
1	Sungkyunkwan University	S. Korea	75.07	159
2	Seoul National University	S. Korea	21.10	41
3	Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology	S. Korea	20.16	35
4	Stanford University	USA	19.29	31
5	University of California, Berkeley	USA	17.16	51

Another indication of national research culture is the ease and number of migration by professionals between industry and academia. In all advanced countries, the high level of research conducted by both industry and university allows a larger job pool for graduates who chose the research stream as their career. This ease of movement between academia and industry attracts bright students into research. Figure 3 shows this cross movement. It also indicates the independent opportunity for graduate students with higher degrees in the industry.

Figure 3: Cross-sectoral movement during 1917-19 (Leigh Dayton, 2020)

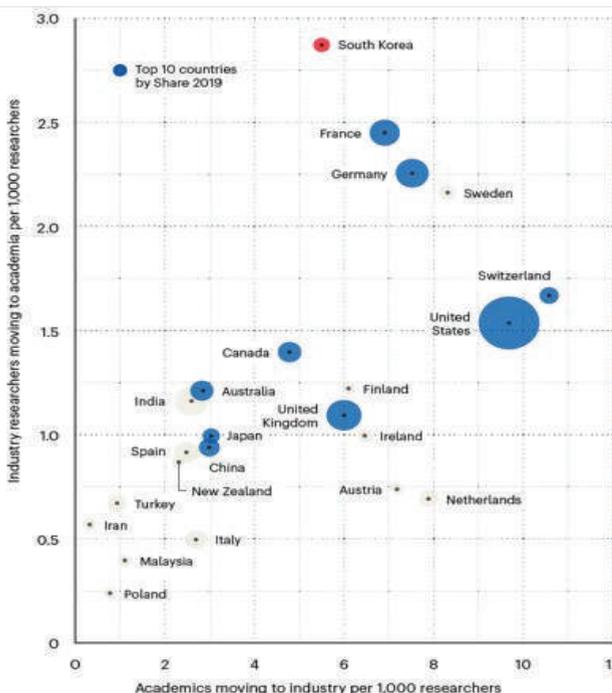
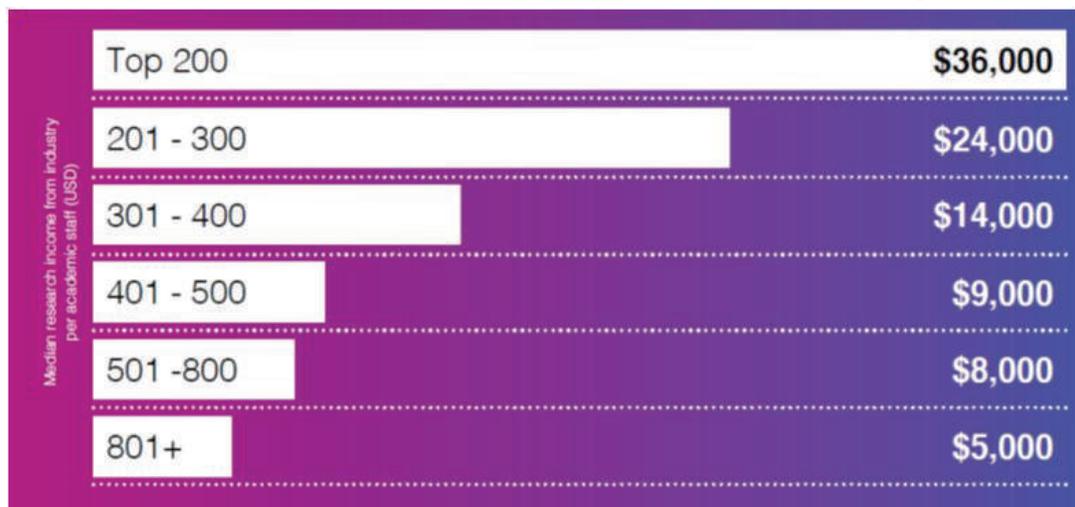


Figure 3 was constructed by the League of Scholars using the share of *Nature Index*. It shows South Korea having the highest number of researchers moving from industry to academia. On the other hand, Switzerland and the United States led the number in academics moving to industry. The bubble size in the figure indicates the breadth of the research areas and the number of institutes involved in the sampling. This migration also indicates the ease of parallel entry across the sectors that is missing in most of the low-income countries including Bangladesh.

There is also a direct link between income from industry collaboration and world ranking. THE consultancy conducted a study on such industry academic collaboration (November 2020) and showed that higher ranking universities have a direct correlation with research income indicating the role of industry in higher education research work (Figure 4).

Figure 4:
Research income from Industry and THE world ranking



To create new knowledge, develop new products and services or improve the old ones for human benefit, research is required. The onus of doing research is not only on the universities. In 2016, the global industry spent 15% of its revenue on R&D. Public research in universities, government agencies and even private think tanks are principally supported by government funding in nearly every country, although the total R&D funding is now heavily dominated by private corporates in the Western world. In 2018 tech-giants like *Alphabet*, *Microsoft*, *Huawei*, *Samsung*, *Apple*, *Intel*, *Facebook* spent tens of billions of dollars in R&D.

Bangladesh government supports many higher studies programs locally and abroad through scholarship, research funding, fellowship and other programs for meritorious students. The national leaders are increasingly expecting more research output and publications out of the universities. The country's Universities Grant Commission has also taken several supporting programs and created more strict qualification and testing criteria for faculty appointments, perhaps to improve our university rankings. Similarly, several universities are also taking bold actions encouraging research through grants and other financial incentives. Unfortunately, these actions will not create a research culture unless they are integrated with a national human resource development program, aligned with the economic development plan.

If a synergy between government, industry and academia through a national development plan supported by funding, policy and regulation is not created, a piecemeal effort by any of these sectors will be confined to "What" and "How" of a research topic, not "Why". Research without a national purpose can never create a culture. South Korea realized that R&D investment is more constrained by shortage of human resources and not by finance. As a result, they invested heavily in education and integrated it with their R&D objectives of applied research.

Bangladesh is a country transiting from an agriculture-based to industry-based economy. Unfortunately, the country is stuck principally with labor intensive RMG manufacturing for the last four decades. With the new enthusiasm in research, the country must have a plan to migrate into high-value addition industries. It is high time the country had a human resource development ministry with a clear vision and purpose to guide research in all sectors towards specific objectives. An academic-industry linked university ranking system in Bangladesh is essential to create competition and incentives for both strong and weaker institutes. Industries must be encouraged through funding, tax/loan privileges for local collaboration in developing products and services. With leadership from the government and cooperation from industry and academia, it is very much possible to create a research culture in this country.

MODERN THEATRE IN BANGLADESH: A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF ACHIEVEMENTS OVER THE PAST FIFTY YEARS



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Far from the 1960s, when the modern theatre in East Pakistan was, by and large, a provincial backwater where inconsequential social melodramas were produced by amateur clubs, modern theatre in Bangladesh today is imprinted with all signs of enormous transformations. Presented herein is a brief review of four areas where the change is most significant: mode of organization, plays and playwriting, scenography, and performance idiom.

The dominant mode of organization engaged in producing the modern theatre of Bangladesh is known as the 'Group Theatre', which was introduced immediately after the independence of the country in 1971. The organizational concept was borrowed from Kolkata (India), where a similar practice emerged after the independence of India in 1947. At this time, theatre groups in Kolkata introduced this term to distinguish themselves from both the amateur companies (which fail to match professional standard) and the professional companies (which pander to profit and commerce, and hence cannot aim for relevant and meaningful content at the cost of box-office failure). In Bangladesh, theatre ensembles run by the Group Theatre mode of organization inculcate professionalism in the work they produce but are run by unpaid practitioners. A network of over 250 non-profit city-based ensembles of Group Theatre practitioners, who are mostly middle-class students and professionals belonging to the media, advertising agencies, and other private services, produces plays in Bangla and are based in Dhaka, Chattogram and other urban locations. The ensembles generate economic resources by voluntary contributions of its members, box office receipt, revenue accrued from adverts published in souvenirs, and occasional sponsorship from national and multinational industrial and trading houses. Most of the theatre practitioners of the Group Theatre ensembles have learnt their craft by hands-down practical training, bereft of any professional training.

However, five public universities in the country offer BA (Hons.) and MA programmes in theatre and performance studies. Most of the students who graduate from these universities are unable to sustain themselves by working full-time in theatre. Occasionally, a few directors, designers, and performers are paid, but it is not enough to produce a body of full-time theatre practitioners.

Although there were professional public theatres in Dhaka city from sometime in 1890 to 1925, no professional companies existed in the country till 1991, when Bangla Theatre emerged under the artistic directorship of Mamunur Rashid. The company's memorable production was Mamunur Rashid's *Che'r Cycle* [Che's 'Cycle] (2004), based on Che Guevara's revolutionary mission in Latin America. Another professional company, Centre for Asian Theatre (CAT), emerged in 1994. Till about 2010, it maintained a repertory buoyed by foreign funding, and produced a few highly-acclaimed postmodernist performances such as Heiner Mueller's *The Mission* (2003) and Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* (2005). In 2018, a different attempt at professional theatre emerged with the launching of Spardha, an independent theatre collective. Its memorable productions were *Jīban O Rājnoitik Bāstabatā* by Shahidul Jahir (2019), and a translation of *4.48 Psychosis* by Sarah Kane (2020) and *Every Brilliant thing* by Duncan Macmillan (2021).

The most significant development in playwriting in Bangladesh over the past fifty years saw a paradigm shift away from European dramaturgy, which enunciates the necessity of dramatic action to be driven by the notion of conflict, and representation of the action by actors playing characters in first person. This shift has been most uniquely articulated by Selim Al Deen (1949-2008), who sought a new horizon in post-independence Bangladesh theatre etched in terms of distinct cultural 'roots' of the Bengali people. Al Deen's plays such as *Chākā* (The Wheel, 1991), *Jaibati Kanyār Man* (The Heart of the Youthful Maiden, 1992), and *Nimajjan* (The Submersion, 2004), abandon dramatic conflict, dialogue and even a linear cause-to-effect relationship in the development of the action in the plot. Instead, he embraces whole-heartedly the narrative mode of performance as seen in the indigenous theatre of Bangladesh. Unquestionably Al Deen is a postcolonial modern who unmoors decisively from imperialist paradigms of dramaturgy.

A prominent thematic node of the plays produced by the Group Theatre ensembles over the past fifty years has been the War of Liberation. Syed Shamsul Huq's verse drama *Pāyer Āwāj Pāoyā Jāy* (*At the Sound of Marching Feet*), is arguably the most distinguished of these. Another thematic node of interest most noticeable immediately after the birth of Bangladesh, was political protest plays, often coupled with class struggle and underpinned by mechanical Marxism. From the early 1970s to the early 2010s, two of the most outspoken instrumentalists of Marxist protest plays were Mamunur Rashid and S. M. Solaiman. A popular example of this category is *Orā Kadam Ali* (They Are All Kadam Ali) (1976) by Mamunur Rashid, and *Ei Deshe Ei Beshe* (In this Country, in this Guise) (1989) by S. M. Solaiman. Interest in Marxist protest plays declined with the fall of the Wall and the demise of the socialist states. A third node of interest has been resisting religious-nationalist ideological inclination, noticeable in performances such as *Bishād Sindhu* (Ocean of Grief) (produced in 1991 and 1992). It engaged with Islam head-on by bringing up possibly the most uncomfortable issue in its history, i.e., the death of the Prophet's grandson Hossain on the battlefield of Karbala. In the context of Islamic resurgence in post-liberation Bangladesh, *Bishād Sindhu* challenged religious bigotry by its central theme: quest for knowledge, and not blind faith, is the substance of life. It sought to contemporize the quasi-historic legend of Karbala by incessant questioning of supposed 'Islamic' values. Engaging Islam in the same manner was *Āraj Ali Charitāmṛta* (Nectar-like Life of Araj Ali) (2001) by Masum Reza. Based on the life of Araj Ali Matubbar, a home-grown philosopher with no academic background, the performance play rigorously questioned Islamic fanaticism and exposed the contradictions within Islamic epistemology by rational questioning.

By the late 1980s, modern theatre in Bangladesh began to take keen interest in the mechanics of hegemonic masculinity, gender, and sexuality in the patriarchal Bengali society. Abdullah Al Mamun's one-woman play *Kokilārā* (The Kakilas) (1989), explores this domain by examining "how the ideology of *ijjat* [honour] and *bhadrata* [modesty] and the institutions of marriage and divorce disempower women irrespective of classes," and suggests that collective resistance against patriarchy "can be based on ethical singularity among women of various classes" (Khatun iii).

In another play titled *Khanā* (Character-name) (2008), Samina Lutfu Nitra recuperates the legend of Khana, the female astrologer from early-medieval Bengal, who is still remembered and credited for shaping the indigenous knowledge system collectively known as *khanār bachan* [Khana's maxims]. Since the 1990s, Bangladesh theatre has also shown keen interest in protesting against the exploitation meted out by the Bangalee ethno-linguist community on the 54 *ādibāsi* peoples who constitute only 1.8% of the total population of the country (Chowdhury and Chakma 3). In this regard, Mamunur Rashid's *Raarang* [The Distant Drum] (2004) is a prime example.

Modern theatre in Bangladesh has also warmly embraced playwrights from Asia, Africa, Europe and North America, to produce translations and adaptations. Among these, playwrights from India include Badal Sarkar, Bisham Sahani, Girish Karnard and Abhisek Majumdar; from China, Gao Xing-Jian; and from Japan, Yuzo Yamamoto. From Africa, Group Theatre ensembles have performed the work of playwrights such as Tawfiq al-Hakim from Egypt and Wole Soyinka from Nigeria. From Latin America, they have accessed the Argentine-Chilean playwright Ariel Dorfman and the Brazilian novelist Paulo Coelho. Still others have drawn from the USA and Europe, and have produced plays by Sophocles, William Shakespeare, Molière, Nikolai Gogol, Leo Tolstoy, Anton Chekhov, Maxim Gorky, Jean Anouilh, Jean Giraudoux, Albert Camus, Jean-Paul Sartre, Bertolt Brecht, Carl Zuckmayer, Edward Albee, Ferenc Molnár, Arthur Miller, Thornton Wilder, Robert Bolt, Samuel Beckett, Henrik Ibsen, John Osborne, Dario Fo, Irwin Shaw, Duncan Macmillan and Sarah Kane. Of these playwrights, Brecht has been very popular, because fourteen of his plays, mostly adaptations, have been produced in Bangladesh. Ibsen ranks second, with eight of his plays having been staged.

The proscenium-arch theatre has been the 'universal' playhouse in the modern theatre of Bangladesh since 1861, when *The Mirror of Indigo* premiered in Dhaka city. A paradigm shift began to occur in the early 1980s, when scene designs inspired by Adolph Appia and Gordon Craig began to make deep encroachments into the auditorium, as in *Kittan-khola* (The Fair of Kittan-khola, 1981), and then to abandon the proscenium-arch stage altogether, as in *Keramat-mangal* (Auspicious Song in Honour of a Plebeian, 1985). By the early 1990s, Bangladesh theatre was deeply engaged with the 'theatre of the roots' in shaping a design aesthetics that borrowed heavily from the presentational mechanics of the indigenous theatre, but at the same time, did not forget to incorporate 'Western' principles of scene and light design. Today, the proscenium-arch theatre still continues to dominate Bangladesh theatre, and even the main stage of the National Theatre Complex is a proscenium-arch playhouse. Nevertheless, the fact that the complex also offers two studios with the provision of flexible staging shows that the postcolony of Bangladesh is confidently moving away from colonial-Imperial heritage.

By 2004, a unique design aesthetics inspired by the indigenous theatre had contributed to the performance of *Behulār Bhāsān* (Behula Sets Her Raft Adrift) produced by the Department of Theatre, University of Dhaka. As in the indigenous theatre, the performance space was a bare platform except for a mass of straw strewn in it, and a box placed at the centre. The spectators sat all around the central platform, as they would at an indigenous *nāt-mandap* (performance pavilion). The straw was used to create the dead body of Behula's newly-wed husband who dies of snake-bite; however, the body was 'dissolved' into Behula's raft when it was not essential.



If today there is a distinguishing feature in modern Bangladesh theatre, then perhaps it is the narrative mode of performance, which can be described as a multi-faceted crystal sphere revolving in space, such that the performer always remains in the same 'sphere' but projects various facets of him/herself co-present with the characters s/he creates. In some of the best performances, this aspect has been blended uniquely with the two key questions in acting that Stanislavsky sought to resolve throughout his life, i.e., "how the actor can infuse a role with emotional and spiritual content, and how he or she can repeat a performance without it becoming tired and mechanical" (Whyman 2008: 1).

Today, the modern theatre landscape of Bangladesh is literally teeming with varied forms of applied theatre: Children's theatre, Theatre in Education, Ballet with the Underprivileged Children, Theatre for Development, Street Theatre, and Psychodrama. In most cases, these are produced by Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) working towards social development, and in some cases, by the theatre departments at the universities and Group Theatre practitioners. Inspired by the notions of Paulo Freire and Augusto Boal, left-leaning Group Theatre practitioners from the Arayak had even mobilized the Mukta Nātak (Liberated Theatre) movement, which sought to generate a theatre by the people, for the people and of the people. From 1984 to 1992, Mukta Nātak flourished as a rousing popular theatre movement at the grassroots level, articulated by a network of around 40 local units and numerous sub-units. As political activism generated by a vision of social change based on class struggle, Mukta Nātak was entirely funded by voluntary participation and contribution from urban animators and villagers.

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50TH INDEPENDENCE YEAR OF BANGLADESH

Sanchita Banerjee Saxena, Ph.D.

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Director, Subir and Malini Chowdhury Center for
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The Institute for South Asia Studies at the University of California (UC), Berkeley (UCB) has always had a deep commitment to Bangladesh, but this has been even more pronounced with the establishment of the Subir and Malini Chowdhury Center in 2013. The first of its kind in the United States, the Center's mission is to create an innovative model through partnerships with leading institutions in Bangladesh, a vibrant lecture and conference series, and support of innovative research by graduate students. Over the past eight years, the Chowdhury Center has galvanized debate on many key issues around the economic, societal, political, and environmental transformations facing the country. The Center was endowed with a generous gift from the Subir and Malini Chowdhury Foundation.

Over the last several years, the Center has spearheaded a series of initiatives with an eye to the long-term expansion and sustainability of the program, both in Berkeley and in Bangladesh in three main ways. First, we have strengthened our programming by bringing top Bangladesh scholars and public intellectuals to Berkeley, including the late Sir Fazle Abed, Professor Amartya Sen, Barrister Sara Hossain, Professor Daniel Kammen, Journalist and artist Shahidul Alam, and Professor Naila Kabeer. In addition, every semester we have a robust public lecture series with key thought leaders in the social sciences, public health, humanities, law, journalism, and business.

Second, we continue to forge substantial links between top institutions in Bangladesh and UC Berkeley, as well as with other institutions committed to advancing Bangladesh socially and economically. Our partners have included the American Institute for Bangladesh Studies, the U.S. Embassy in Dhaka, the Bangladesh Development Initiative, Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology, BRAC University, the Center for Business and Human Rights at the New York University (NYU) Stern School of Business, the Council of American Overseas Research Centers, the Council of Minorities, Dickson Poon Transnational Law Institute at King's College, Independent University Bangladesh, International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research, the London School of Economic and Political Science, North South University, and the University of Victoria. We have also supported a number of junior faculty members from Bangladeshi institutions of higher education to be in residence for one week at the Chowdhury Center, where they have taken part in workshops led by UC Berkeley faculty on research methodologies, writing, and the publishing process.



Faculty Workshop on Research, Writing, and Publishing. April 28, 2018, Chowdhury Center, UC Berkeley.

And finally, we remain committed to our mission of training the next generation of students on Bangladesh by building a strong group of young scholars, not only focused on Bangladesh as a part of their study, but supporting researchers from Bangladesh as well. We have supported more than 25 Chowdhury Center research fellows working on a wide range of topics ranging from climate change, migration, infectious diseases, social enterprises, the 1971 Liberation War, art and architecture in Bangladesh, investigative journalism, and improved child development in rural Bangladesh.

Inauguration of the Subir and Malini Chowdhury Center for Bangladesh Studies, March 30, 2015. From left to right: Mr. Subir Chowdhury, former UC Berkeley Chancellor Nicolas Dirks, late Sir Fazle Abed



The Chowdhury Center looks forward to continuing its commitment to justice, equality, and improving the quality of life of those in Bangladesh. Our engagement with partners around the world will continue to guide and inspire the Center in its mission to promote research and produce knowledge that will help Bangladesh to reimagine its future.

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