

# Democratic digitalisation of higher education

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The education report prepared for the UNESCO World Summit, 2009 was named "Trends in Global Higher Education: Tracking an Academic Revolution". This report showed strong indications towards a shift in the global economy due to the unprecedented changes of direction and depression of the economy worldwide. This situation in turn is changing the trends in industrial economics and playing a role in the growth of service based industries and a knowledge based economy. It is also making unparalleled contributions towards the increase in demand for higher education. This can be identified as the democratisation of higher education.

The principal objective of higher education is to build a market worthy workforce and to ensure efficient use of that. This manpower is beneficial for the ever increasing population. It can be said without a doubt that the undertaking in the government level is mostly insufficient and inactive in meeting the growing demand for higher education in the country.

Worldwide privatisation of industries started as early as the 80s to ensure the highest standard of industries and industrial products. Education is also an industry and it has been privatised in many countries of the world. There has been noteworthy privatisation of education in the US, UK, Australia, Canada and many countries of South Asia. Following that trend, higher education has been and is



still being privatised in Bangladesh. There is no scope to underestimate the role of private universities in creating an effective workforce.

Various experimentations and long term identification of shortcomings, and finding ways to recover from them are needed to bring about revolutionary changes in higher education. Again, experimentations are needed to make

these revolutionary changes work. As higher education has become competitive through privatisation, the entire world has faced a new phenomenon and this experience is limited to Bangladesh.

John Daniel, the president and CEO of "The Commonwealth of Learning", has stressed on the importance of open education and distance learning in a

recent seminar. To privatise higher education, or in other words, to cross this tough road of revolution, he has encouraged everyone to take the pledge of technological transformation. He said, "Adding value to education or higher education and turning it into an asset would be expensive. To reduce the expenses would bring inevitable risk to the availability and quality." Mr. Daniel

also said, "Through using technology, more can be gained, higher quality can be achieved, and the expenses can be lessened. This in itself is a revolution that has never happened before." He brought up the success of the open universities (Indira Gandhi Open University for example). He also talked about the open educational programs by MIT as examples of excellence in

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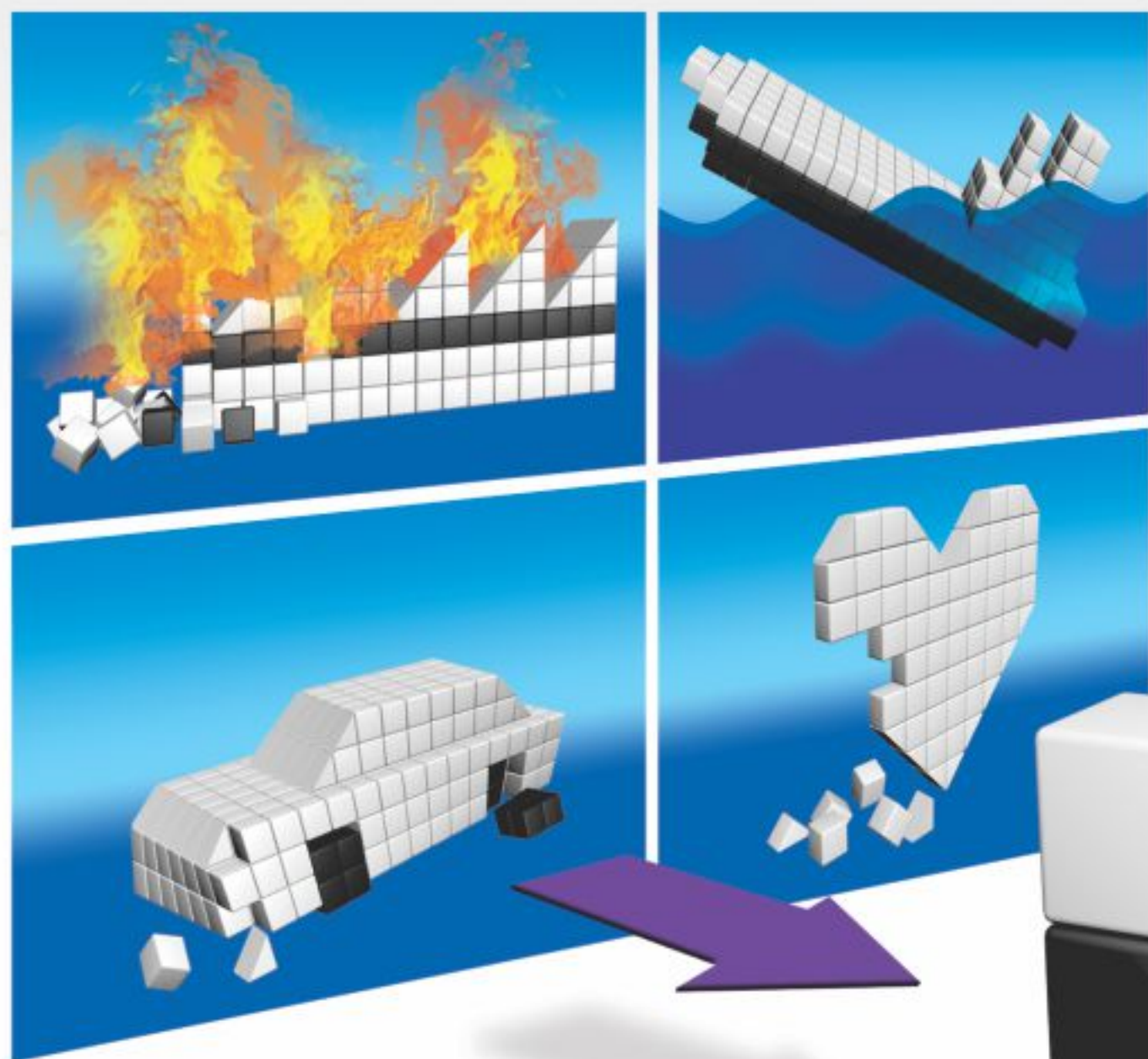
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technological progress. Open universities run with the combination of numerous out-campuses. To accelerate the processes of their out-campuses, MIT has completely digitised them or in other words, they have used technology.

In a recent seminar organised by the collaboration of British Council and English in Action, Mr. Anir Chowdhury, Policy Advisor of the UNDP and USAID-supported Access to Information Program, Prime Minister's Office, Bangladesh, said, "Education is going outside the building."

Both the speakers show an indication towards the important issue, and that is the use of technology. The physical building is no longer the primary concern. Buildings are useful; a permanent address is essential too. However, to bring revolutionary changes, clutching on to a building will not do.

The rate at which technology is advancing in providing high quality service to every sector in a short time tells us that there is no need to worry about constructing buildings. It can be understood more clearly if we draw the example of a service sector, such as, the postal service. Post offices were used to talk to the dear ones, to send information from one part of the country to another, and to send money. There was no other media other than the post. Thousands of post offices were built in this country

spending hundreds of crores of taka. With the advent of technology, post offices are not used any more. The post offices, worth so much, have become obsolete. Even though the necessity of post offices has become exhausted, the service did not stop. Rather the quality of the service has increased in multiples taking less time and money. An electronic letter (e-mail) is not only going from one edge of the country to another, it is going from one edge of the world to another. The amount of paper and ink used in writing letters is not needed anymore. As the usage of paper has become less, fewer trees are cut and the environment is also harmed less. Now we do not even need a computer to send an e-mail. We can do that from a mobile phone. All of this is the excellence of technology.

Let me give you another example, that is, newspapers. We don't need to take up grand offices, huge printing machines or cut thousands of trees to make newspapers anymore. Now online news is getting more focus. Hundreds of newspapers have gone online around the world and we do not even need a computer to read them. We can read them from the mobile phones on our hands. These are the uses of technology. Bangladesh, also, is not behind in this regard. "Digital Bangladesh" is a groundbreaking announcement by the honourable Prime Minister. It is a brave and ambi-

tionous utterance that is helping the country to keep pace with the contemporary world. Digitalisation is essential for every section of the service sector. Today, due to the visionary thinking of the Prime Minister, digitalisation has started in every section of the country. "Digitalisation" is a must to achieve the revolution of privatising higher studies.

A permanent campus has been identified as the only measure of quality education of the private universities. Is it really the case? As a citizen, I think, enough qualified teachers, advanced laboratories, enriched libraries, task-based syllabus, and suitable environment for teaching need to be identified for controlling and evaluating the quality of education. Often in newspapers and television reports, only a permanent campus is highlighted as one of the problems of the private universities. How logical are these reports? It has also been written in the newspapers that most of these reports are made based on guesses. Of course, a permanent campus is necessary but that cannot be the only way to ensure high standards of the private universities.

To accelerate the higher education revolution in the poor and middle income countries, as we have to save time, we also have to keep from spending money in unproductive works. A building is now essential for teaching but it is very

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**Math 109 / College Algebra with Trigonometry - Dashboard**

Class Code: 00003-00000 CLASS TOOLS

**ALEKS Pie Report**  
Progress: 312 of 562 Topics (54%)

**Time and Topic - Learning Mode**  
Legend: View Full Report

**Progress Overall**

Student	Score	Due Date
Alberti, Paul J.	29 (50%)	10/24/2015
Nguyen, David T.	28 (49%)	10/24/2015
Ellison, Robert	27 (48%)	10/26/2015
Vargas, Carlos J.	26 (46%)	10/17/2015
Warren, Jane B.	25 (44%)	10/17/2015
Hoffman, Bart T.	24 (42%)	10/17/2015

**Overall Grade**

Student	Score
Fisher, Jose P.	1 (24%)
Anderson, Kevin J.	2 (21%)
Diaz, John B.	3 (26%)
Vargas, Carlos	4 (69%)
Kennedy, Victoria S.	5 (88%)
Doyle, Victoria J.	6 (89%)