



Professor Dr AFM Mafizul Islam

Vice Chancellor, Southeast University



The key challenge concerning the higher education scenario in Bangladesh is delivering quality education. The government is taking steps in this regard. The government had already introduced HEQEP (Higher Education Quality Enhancement Project) earlier. Another project called HEAT (Higher Education Acceleration and Transformation) is coming up.

I strongly feel that lack of leadership in higher educational institution is the problem.

Southeast University has established the Institutional Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) headed by an experienced professor with the rank and status of a dean. This Cell is regularly providing diverse training to our faculty members and staff so that they can achieve the goal of delivering quality education. In the meantime, several departments have gotten professional accreditation, and others are in the process. If a university complies with all conditions of accreditation, I think quality education would be automatically achieved.

We are preparing our students for the corporate world by blending practical experience and operational challenges into standard economic and business lessons. Some steps are: teaching case studies, relating theoretical content to real business challenges, hosting entrepreneurship contests, creating an entrepreneurship-in-residence programme, inviting professionals, encouraging international exchange programmes and promoting student-in-residence programmes.

Southeast University is providing quality education at affordable cost, targeting middle, lower and marginal middle class. Tuition fees of some programmes, such as Bangla, English and Economics, are very low. We run these programmes with subsidies. Another exception of this university is that the Benevolent Trustees of Southeast University Trust do not take any remuneration.

Professor Dr Chowdhury Mofizur Rahman

Vice Chancellor, United International University

Background knowledge and foundation of most of the students are very poor. They are not prepared for university level education. It is due to the weak pre-university education, i.e. education at the SSC and HSC levels. If foundation remains poor, quality education is difficult to be imparted at university level.

We are trying to improve the communication skills by offering a number of intensive English courses in the first year. We offer a course in the first semester, known as life skill for success. This is a kind of guidance to learn about the necessary attributes and skills to become a good human being and responsible citizen of the country.

There is a wide gap between academia and industry. To reduce the gap, we have included



industry professionals and our alumni in the curriculum committee. In addition, final year students get hands-on practice on real-life projects by industry professionals at institutes like CDIP (Center for Development of IT Professionals), CCNA (Cisco Network Academy), IBER (Institute of Business and Economic Research), IAR (Institute of Advanced Research), CCC (Career Counseling Center), VTA (VLSI Training Academy), PETA (Power Engineering Training Academy) and CER (Center for Energy Research).

UIIU has a culture that promotes and cultivates entrepreneurship among students. We frequently hold competitions among students to come up with new ideas and ways of their commercialisation. We have also set up an entrepreneurship forum. We encourage our students to participate in inter-university and national-level competitions. We have allocated one floor of our university building to accommodate startup companies at a very low cost which we have named Incubation Center of UIIU. We allow the young successful entrepreneurs to showcase their achievements.

Professor Dr Vincent Chang

Vice Chancellor, BRAC University



Developed countries such as Japan, Singapore and Taiwan were as poor as Bangladesh after the World War II. Thirty years after the World War II, China was even poorer than Bangladesh, then how did they develop so fast? It was because of the unique people and how active they were. Next comes the influences of education and the virtue and philosophies people hold related to work – whether they value hard work and try to put it into their endeavours. According to my experience in Bangladesh, I am still confused if people put in the hard work or not.

The attitude here does not reflect that. People here wait to be taught, by their superiors, and make no effort to learn things themselves. They simply do not take the initiative. People are happy with their recent university rankings, but internationally, people do not care. The issue is in the mindset. We have to thrive to do better or else we will be stuck at the same place. We have to change our mindsets in order to incentivise people to want to improve. We have to understand the changing standards.

I would like to refer to the gap in the mindset instead of referring to the gap in the skillset because to me, it isn't about the knowledge or other skills; it is about the perspectives and mindsets. These are difficult to adjust, but these are what will allow us to compete and produce appreciable outputs. We need to have a champion mindset; you face problems, you fix it. You don't depend on others to fix it for you.

BRAC University thus tries to engage internationally so that our students have the opportunity to expand their horizons and their vision. We try to involve our teachers and students in a process where they understand international standards.

Professor Md Abu Saleh

Vice Chancellor, Bangladesh University of Business and Technology (BUBT)

Lack of need based knowledge and skills, lack of time based knowledge and skills, lack of outcome based knowledge and skills, are some of the major challenges concerning the existing skills gap in Bangladesh. Emphasis on theoretical knowledge through traditional classroom lectures is mostly prevalent in the current education system of the country, leading to a lack of focus on practical learning, which is required for the 21st century workplace.

To address these gaps, BUBT emphasises on practice-oriented knowledge and skills. We also focus on university-industry partnership, research activities, teachers' training and development. We design the curriculum of the academic courses, highlighting both education and human resource development.



However, challenges persist such as non-availability of subject/course experts for structuring, designing and developing the curriculum of new courses. The processes for reviewing, revising and getting approval are also time-consuming. The imposition of unnecessary and irrelevant pre-conditions is also a concern. Approvals should be based on the quality and the standard of the curriculum, not on irrelevant pre-conditions. It should also be based on the need of the course(s). Cooperative attitude is direly required, instead of controlling attitude.

To encourage entrepreneurship, we offer entrepreneurship courses. In this way, students are motivated to become job providers rather than remain as job seekers only. We provide training, organise seminars and workshops on entrepreneurship. We also organise competitions, contests on business idea generation and business plans. We invite the successful entrepreneurs to share their success stories, some of whom are also the alumni of BUBT.

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