



ECHOES BY
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The BBA Boom in Bangladesh

I
 The HSC batch of 1991 is a special batch in Bangladesh. Some students from this batch enrolled in the first Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) program in what was then the Department of Business Administration at Jahangirnagar University, in 1992.

The following year, IBA of the University of Dhaka joined the bandwagon. North South University was launched the same year. The BBA then, and still now, remains their flagship program.

With Bangladesh enjoying economic growth since the 1990s, the corporate sector started to rise. They needed business graduates. It was not possible for JU, DU and NSU alone to meet this increased demand. Other universities throughout Bangladesh started BBA programs.

Three decades later, in 2021, there is perhaps no university in Bangladesh that does not offer a BBA program.

II
 As the BBA program proliferated, the degree started to become specialised. BBA in Finance, Marketing, Accounting and other disciplines came out. Further specialisation came with an additional minor or a dual major. These are time consuming, but candidates had to show that they were special in the face of competition.

In an open-credit program, increased enrolment can be addressed by offering multiple sections of the same course. When a university pursues this strategy, it raises challenges. Different sections have different teachers, carrying out different assessments.



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When advising, students may not get the “best” teacher. Sometimes, some specialised courses cannot be offered in one semester. These require teachers with special training or experience. Thus, some students wait until it is offered. This can contribute to added time.

Scarcity is the essence of value in labour markets. Those who enrolled at JU, DU and NSU in the early 90s were scarce. A CGPA of say 3.9 out of 4.0 was a good signal to get a good placement in the job market. Today, there are more than 150 universities in Bangladesh, where the top-students may be achieving 3.9 in each of them.

What was glittering as gold before enrolment can easily evaporate into air sooner than one may think.

III
 A young person chooses a subject influenced by their peers and elders. They are also influenced by a question: What type of job may I get once I finish? They see the job market now, but lose sight that they will enter it at least four years from today. The skills they learn today in classes may not be relevant by that time.

The rise of the BBA program in Bangladesh in the last three decades raises an important question for itself and all other undergraduate programs. Over time, they have tried to adapt. Experience may have been mixed, but they have tried. This is where other programs can learn.

Those who are clever and keep their eyes open, will adapt. Those who don't will move along with the status quo. A generation or two ago, this was not a problem. Not many people studied in universities. Bangladesh was not a country with the opportunities it has today. It was possible to develop skills after joining a career. Today that is no longer possible.

The challenge remains the same for all Bachelor's programs. It would be wrong to isolate BBA programs. What role are our universities playing in preparing their students for the next stage in life?

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How *not* to react to compliments

BUSHRA ZAMAN

Imagine you're sitting in a cafeteria, minding your own business, and suddenly a friend shows up who you haven't seen in ages. They greet you, even hug you, and proceed to compliment you.

What do you do then?

As someone who has yet to master the art of receiving compliments, I'm afraid the only way I can help you is by telling you exactly what *not* to do.

Get aggressive? No.

The last thing you want to do is get defensive and deny that the compliment is true. You may be your own worst critic, but hey, even if that is the case, you do not have to go out of your way to prove your flaws to a stranger.

When someone says, “You look so pretty!” you shouldn't reply with, “It's because the colour of the dress is so nice.” You might be challenging them to take on your low self-esteem and argue against the compliment. Winning this spat might technically sound like a response to a compliment, but no. *What exactly are you trying to win here?*

Run away? Don't.

This is basically the “flight” mode of the fight or flight response that gets triggered in situations of survival -- and properly reacting to a compliment requires survival



of the fittest.

Nodding and running away after being complimented might sound reasonable because you are technically sparing the person from having to listen to you mumble awkward responses. In reality,

however, it only makes you seem crazy, rude, or worse, both.

Also, this technique cannot be applied everywhere. You could be complimented in a crowded area, thus preventing you from running away. What then?

Pretend not to hear the compliment? Wow.

You know the trick where you make a person repeat the same things over and over until they're fed up and quit talking?

For example, before when I was complimented, I would zone out while trying to think of a response. Now, I just ask them to repeat what they said while explaining that I did not hear them, over and over again. Eventually, they think I'm crazy and cease to compliment me again for a while, saving the both of us some serious awkwardness.

It is pretty efficient in terms of saving time trying to figure out a response to the compliment too.

Make random noises? Really?

Laughing or giggling continuously at how ridiculous the compliment sounds to you is not a very logical response mostly because others may view you as maniacal. Same goes for choking on your own breath out of shock of hearing nice things said about you, or pretending to have the hiccups so you don't have to respond.

We get it. You just want to escape, not sound confused or silly, even though it may sound like doing so will keep the compliments from coming.

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