'Higher education is slave-generating'



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academic experience. Specifically, he stated, "Most of our national wealth is in the hands of a few people... this [education] system iust builds modern slaves who will dedicate their lives to make someone else rich, while believing they are making career progress. Actually, this slave-generating system is not for 99 percent of the people. This is not an education system at all." Facts aside, the sentiment itself speaks volumes.

With the economy of Bangladesh growing strongly in recent decades, creating exploding demand for enrolment education, grown commensurately. Yet, the "outcomes" of education have been intriguing. The nation produces uncounted Golden-GPA-5-holders, and pass rates in public exams soar off the charts. But when these students come to universities, a large number of them are unable to write a decent sentence or solve a problem they have not memorised.

University graduates, too, have consistently failed to meet the standards demanded by local employers. Their education

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is indeed baffling both to the employers and hapless parents straddled with high expenses and unemployed progeny with a certificate in hand worth only the

paper on which it is printed. The general opinion is that the overall education quality has been

So remarked a university student vice-chancellor of a prominent in a recent interview on his private university lamented that university graduates struggled in the job market as they had to compete with foreigners. And why are foreigners being hired? Because Bangladesh's educational

institutions "lag behind in

1=very little; 7=very much).

The findings are unsurprising: only 14.1 percent felt the education they received was making them competitive. Many lacked any exuberance about their academic institutions which was seen as good, average, it's alright, or not so good-not so terrible. A number of respondents went further to comment on their disappointments. A few are shared here for the record.

Student 1: "Poor quality. [Some] faculty members are amazing, but the others are simply not. One teacher commented, 'This is a

responded (see the graph where concern the elite institutions in the country. It behooves the educational authorities (the education ministry and the University Grants Commission) to delve into what goes on in the other academic institutions that have mushroomed in the last decade. In the 51 years since independence, not a single academic institution has made it into decent global rankings. Over USD 5-10 billion are repatriated each year by foreign workers occupying the middle and upper tiers of the job market.

Industry bosses will not hire products of academe, and parents



A protester holds a portrait of Mahsa Amini during a demonstration protesting her death at the hands of Iran's morality police.

The futility of oppression in Iran



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Sometime between June and July of 1848, at a conference in the city of Bedasht, in the Semnan Province of Iran, a Babi poet and revolutionary named Fatimih Baraghani Tahirih dared to appear unveiled in front of 80 men. Tahirih lived during the Qajar Dynasty, when women were ignorant, illiterate, and kept hidden from the public gaze a milieu marked by totalitarianism, dogmatism, and unquestionable

patriarchy in its most severe forms. intellectual abilities, Tahirih's eloquence, poetic talents, insatiable curiosity, and unwavering courage made her one of the rarest women of her time – a result of the wishes of her father (an Islamic scholar of Qazvin) to educate his beloved daughter within the confines of his own library.

Tahirih's audacity to do the her fearless action unthinkable of presenting herself to her male companions without her veil – may have been a rude awakening for many who were unwilling to accept their female counterparts as their equals.

It must be understood that the act of unveiling was not to disrespect or go against any religious tenet; rather, it was a bold move that symbolised equality of the sexes and was used to make a statement that women can act independently and make their own choices. Perhaps the first women's rights activist in Persia, Tahirih was executed by strangulation for her radical beliefs and resolute convictions. Her prophetic final words were, "You can kill me as soon as you like, but you can never stop the emancipation of women."

Interestingly, exactly 100 years after the audacious unveiling of Tahirih in Bedasht, the United Nations gathered in Paris in 1948 and composed the new Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states: "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and

And 174 years later, in 2022, under the Islamic regime of Iran that has imposed multiple oppressive laws, thousands of women have taken to the streets in the nation that gave birth to the lion-hearted Tahirih. It's almost as if Tahirih's fiery spirit has been rekindled in the hearts of the repressed Iranian women today. And despite knowing that they may be arrested, beaten, or killed the way 22-year-old Mahsa Amini was killed at the hands of the notorious Morality Police on September 16 for wearing the hijab "improperly," they are protesting valiantly.

They chant powerful slogans, the rhythm of which can electrify your soul, especially if you speak Farsi like I do, "Natarsin, natarsin! Ma haameh bahaam hastim! (Do not fear, do not fear! We are in this together!)," or "Zan, zendegi, azadi! (Women, life, freedom!).' Some even sound like war slogans, "Mikosham, mikosham, har aankeh khaharam kosht! (I will kill, I will kill,

the one who has killed my sister!)." Many Iranian women are cutting their hair on social media as well as in public, and while doing so, they say, "Baraaye azadi! (For freedom!)." Videos of the violent nationwide protests sparked by Mahsa Amini's murder also show women burning their hijabs on the streets – a compulsory garment for women in Iran. Perhaps the best part of seeing these demonstrations is that there are possibly an equal number of men standing alongside women, fighting for their rights.

Iranian-British actor and comedian, Omid Jalili, called this moment in history a "George Floyd moment," hoping that the protests will lead to something bigger, to bring about change in the gender-apartheid state. Masih Alinejad, an Iranian-American journalist, has been posting tweets about Mahsa and the repercussions of her murder continuously, one of which states, "This is the brutality of [the] Islamic Republic of Iran that has a seat at [the] UN to monitor women's rights globally."

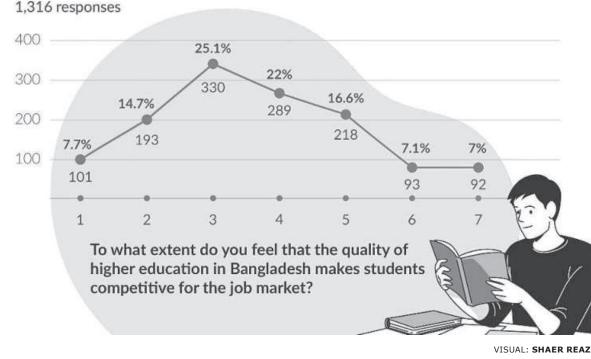
Iran's Interior Minister Ahmad Vahidi has shamelessly claimed that Mahsa had pre-existing medical conditions, which her family has denied, and medical tests confirm skull fractures and internal bleeding in the brain. The lies seem to be pouring. President Ebrahim Raisi claimed that women in Iran wore the hijab as a voluntary act and that no one had compelled them to do so; rather,

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they regard themselves as committed to the issue. In order to mute people and their voices, Iran has restricted access to WhatsApp and Instagram as the protests are growing larger and spreading like wildfire.

The fearless demonstrations that have led to violent beatings at the hands of the police and eight deaths so far may be the beginning of a revolution, but they are not the first of their kind. "The Girls of Enghelab Street" was a series of protests against the compulsory hijab in Iran that was started by Vida Movahed in 2017, who tied her white hijab at the end of a stick and waved it, much like waving a white flag that symbolises peace, while standing on a utility box in

a crowded street. It seems that this dictatorial, tyrannical regime's inhumane methods, employed to snuff out protests calling for freedom of choice, are no longer working. Iranian women are willing to die to be free - free to choose to wear the hijab and free to choose not to. As a Bangladeshi female citizen who is Iranian by race, I condemn those who persecute women in the name of religion, and I vow solidarity with those protesting against the murder of #MahsaAmini.



providing relevant skill-oriented education."

Globally, these graduates have even less chance of succeeding (with few exceptions). And the remittances on which the nation depends come from physical labour, not higher-level cognitive skills of expatriates. Over the years, the misalignment between academia's graduates and employer needs has only

According to one multilateral agency, "Unemployment rates are consistently high among tertiary graduates." That matters have really gone askew is reflected in the words of a Trustee Board member of a reputed private university, who was asked whether his company would hire his own university's graduates. His categorical response was, "No!" The reason? "I cannot use them."

For Bangladesh, it is imperative for educational institutions to combine the nurturing of intellectual growth with new (4IR) skills necessary to navigate a globalised world. Studies confirm that employment prospects are the second most important factor students expect from academic institutions. To understand how students about their educational feel experience in Bangladesh in the premier academic institutions, our study asked, "To what extent do you feel that the quality of students competitive for the job hole.'

will not cause me any problems.' Most teachers lack empathy... students are even afraid to ask questions. The courses are outdated and redundant courses are taught."

Student 2: "There's a large discrepancy between the level of education we get and the level excellence where, along with that is advertised. The university degree doesn't relate to the competence of the highest level, actual education being provided... Degrees are losing their value, unable to provide skills. We need a will be conversant with economic skill-based education system."

Student 3: "Not bad. However, many subjects are taught by teachers who lack in-depth knowledge of their subjects. Naturally, they teach badly. Students can earn grades by studying strategically. However, there are also teachers who really want to provide better [understanding] of the subjects taught. The internet has it all, but this is the precise reason to have guides to show the way in this ocean of information."

Student 4: "I don't know why I was present in the class; boredom was at its peak; teacher was not prepared for the class, as am I now. No new induction was provided regarding the present technology; lectures were copied from foreign books; quality of teaching is poor at times. Many teachers are toppers of their batches, but they cannot teach. After the first week, education in Bangladesh makes most students are lost in a black

The above comments mostly

10 Grating sound

18 "— something

16 Diet no-no

19 Pleasant

I said?"

government job; your evaluation are seeking to send their children overseas for their education. How does this situation square with Bangladesh as an aspiring middleincome country?

The vision for higher education

is a laudable one (Strategic Plan 2018-2030): "Our universities should be true centres of acquiring knowledge, skills and students will practise democratic norms and cultural values and development issues." The facts on the ground are starkly different. The challenge is to translate this vision into reality, to convert the uncertainty our graduates experience into stable jobs, to wipe away the worry beads of parents who despair about leaving their children and grandchildren behind in uncertainty and deprivation.

It is time to hold the education industry accountable. Administrators must that develop programmes marketable qualities in their students. Teachers must provide intellectual energy strengthen students' knowledge base and build human capital. And the government must provide targeted financial and other resources while holding the education industry answerable. It is time the education industry, the nation's backbone, was run competently, undergirded by a moral and ethical foundation to take the nation forward.

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consistently deteriorating. The market?" A total of 1,316 students

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