



# Don't you want to stay relevant?

## Rethinking education and future skills

Having studied at the University of Sydney for my master's, I know that experience, networks, and affiliation can open many opportunities. Currently, foreign degrees are plentiful online as well. However, there is a stark difference between studying online and having the experience of a full-blown campus and academic environment.

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The world is undergoing a loop of innovation and invention. Artificial intelligence, blockchain, NFTs, the ever-present diffusion of digital cultures, Internet of Things (IoT), and mixed reality-enabled communication are just the tip of the iceberg – knowledge essential for staying relevant. Whether in IT, business, science, economics, or art, knowledge gives one an advantage in the game of society and success.

But where does one gain knowledge in these areas?

From online tutorials and courses to formal higher education ecosystems, learning opportunities to stay relevant are no longer scarce. People fresh out of high school in Bangladesh are no longer limited to higher education in the proverbial sense, as higher education is no longer limited to national borders today.

Want to learn a new skill? Search it up on YouTube. Trying to get certified? Check out platforms like Udemy and Coursera. Besides, many global universities also offer bachelor's and master's programs online. Regardless of these options, nothing beats the experience of a university campus.

Of course, there are pros and cons to each of these approaches. Staying relevant translates to positive outcomes for people – most commonly in a job, business, or expanded opportunities. Otherwise, there wouldn't be a lot of meaning behind it.

Employers always look for the cream of the crop, and that does not necessarily go in favour of graduates from educational institutions that have long held the spot of being societal elites. An employer looks for well-built foundations



in their hires – good communication capacity, foundational technical skills, ability to critically think and solve problems, being a doer, and of course having unique traits that they can utilise or find interesting.

For instance, a job advertisement from a renowned company would receive hundreds of thousands of applications. A recent graduate interested in the role may apply with a great resume, cover letter, and portfolio of work. However, if a thousand people get those right, they are still knee-deep in competition. So, apart from a good dossier, an added advantage is needed that can come in many forms.

Perhaps, an entry-level web developer primarily needs programming skills in HTML, CSS, JavaScript, PHP, Laravel, Python, and MySQL. These are skills that nearly every apt web developer has. But, experimentation experience in developing Smart Contracts and knowing the Solidity language accounts for that edge, making them graduate to the top one to five percent of the applicants. These future skills can be easily accessed online for free or at convenient prices.

Advantages can also take much simpler forms, like being a graduate from a perceivably top-tier institution in Bangladesh or studying abroad. Not to disregard university-level education in Bangladesh, but many employers in our country are attracted to foreign degrees.

Foreign degrees can also open doors to the global workplace. Having studied at the University of Sydney for my master's, I know that experience, networks, and affiliation can open many opportunities. Currently, foreign degrees are plentiful online as well. However, there is a stark difference between studying online and having the experience of a full-blown campus and academic environment.

Campus life incubates peer-to-peer learning. It expands on extracurricular experiences as well and activates a student's

social circle, enabling them to mix with others from diverse backgrounds and different skill levels. This is amplified further if the campus is a global education institution.

However, it is difficult to get into foreign institutions because of competition and financial bottlenecks. Satellite or branch campuses of global universities are a great countermeasure to bring these international education institutions closer to international students as opposed to them going abroad. NYU Shanghai, Monash Malaysia, and Carnegie Mellon in Qatar are just a few examples of globally stationed branch campuses.

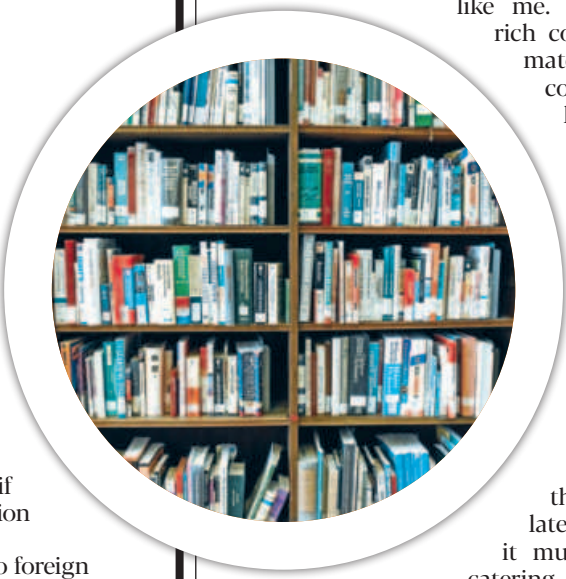
Thankfully, one such institution opened up in Bangladesh as well – Universal College Bangladesh, a place which gives out Monash University's foundation year courses and is accredited by the University Grants Commission, enabling easy access to Monash Malaysia or Monash Australia which is ranked 57th in the world by QS as of 2022.

It is inspiring to see growth in prospective Bangladeshi students' access to these institutions as the international curriculum guarantees the adoption of future skills and the networks to make it big in one's career and life.

Options such as complete digital education, skill-based short courses, onsite education, hybrid deliveries and easy pathways to enrol in top-tier institutions are now available. Bangladeshi students and graduates are making considerable headway both locally and globally. The quality of students in Bangladesh has always been great. We just did not have the connectivity and opportunities to go global at scale.

Now, we do.

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## Public libraries could solve our public space problem

USRAAT FAHMIDAH

Imagine it's noon and you're wandering around Dhaka under the scorching heat in search of a quiet place to work or study. You're hoping to find a quiet environment where you can focus on completing your homework for the day and maybe get some reading done as well. The noise from the nearby construction site is inhibiting the peace at home, making it impossible for you to concentrate there. Your only other option is to go to a cafe, but you don't want to spend the last of your weekly allowance on overpriced coffee just to get a seat.

In times like this, you desperately wished that there was a well-equipped public library in Dhaka that you could frequent. And that is me. Growing up in Dhaka, I have always felt the need for a public library for various reasons.

In the increasingly privatised and neoliberal societies that we live in, public spaces are becoming scarce. The existing libraries in Dhaka fail to ensure the availability of diverse reading materials essential to engage readers of all ages, backgrounds, and interests like me. I have always found the existing ones to cater to only specific groups of people, mostly individuals preparing for the BCS or other public exams.

Although this is a great example of how resourceful public libraries are, it also reveals the issue with the existing ones – it's not catering to the demands of young people like me. The absence of a rich collection of reading materials and research content renders a library meaningless, which is why most libraries in Dhaka are in a sorry state.

Thus, there needs to be a push for a strong public library culture in Dhaka.

Firstly, the existing public libraries must stock the shelves with the latest books. Secondly, it must ensure that it's catering to people of all socio-economic classes.

One of my favourite accounts on Instagram is the Milwaukee Public Library account. Its key feature is that it's marketing a strong public library culture to its audience through funny and relatable content, mostly memes and reels. This sends a message across to the audience that public libraries can be a fun place too.

A similar marketing approach can be introduced here as it's a creative way to get more people to use libraries.

Let's break down the myth that young people don't read these days. Online bookstores are witnessing a surge in book sales indicating that young people want to read but want to do it on their terms. It reveals a trend that young people like accessibility and convenience when it comes to reading. By making public libraries more accessible and user-friendly, we can encourage more young readers to use them.

Public libraries can be a great equaliser, offering access to knowledge and resources that might be out of reach for many. Therefore, libraries must be easily accessible and welcoming to everyone.

With public spaces becoming increasingly scarce and the overall community well-being threatened, public libraries could play a crucial role in fostering a strong sense of community. It's high time that the public library culture in Dhaka gets a boost and becomes an integral part of the community.

Usraat Fahmidah loves philosophy. Her favourite philosophers include Simone de Beauvoir and Agust D. Send her book recommendations at [usraatfahmidah@gmail.com](mailto:usraatfahmidah@gmail.com)

# How credible are your research sources?

ZIBA MAHDI

It might come as an unpleasant shock to some, but you actually need to research the research you want to cite. While "trust the science" has become an unofficial motto in a post-pandemic world, like the humans that produced them, they're not infallible.

Research usually falls into two categories – qualitative (non-numerical data collection) and quantitative (numerical data collection). The quality criteria for qualitative research are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Quality criteria used in quantitative investigations are internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity. While the factors determining their legitimacy differ, the core principles are the same.

**Purpose**

The purpose of the study itself will influence its methodology, and its result by extension. This is even more applicable to qualitative research, where there's more room for human interference.

**Author**

It's necessary to determine whether the people who conducted the research had the relevant expertise for it. Checking the



DESIGN: ABIR HOSSAIN

source of funding is a good option in this case.

Industry-sponsored studies tend to be biased towards providing favourable results of the sponsor's products. A famous example is Coca-Cola's history of funding scientists who downplay the risks of sugary beverages on obesity.

**Bias**

Selection bias is a common phenomenon that occurs when the researcher includes or

excludes relevant groups or data while conducting the study. People volunteering (self-selecting) for the study will also lead to highly skewed results, for instance, online surveys. Interpreting information in a way that fits a preconceived hypothesis, known as confirmation bias, has been observed in political, financial, and organisational contexts and research is no different.

This is why it's important to observe who is conducting the research, as their

interests might influence their conclusions. Design bias happens when the structure of the study is flawed. You can usually see this type of bias in flawed research questions.

**Sample size**

A small sample size likely won't be representative of the larger population. This is why large sample sizes are heavily preferred in quantitative experiments.

On the other hand, qualitative investigations can get away with relatively smaller samples, since each respondent will likely yield a lot of information to be analysed.

**Methodology**

For qualitative experiments, you should check whether multiple data sources and

methods were used or not and whether the participants had enough time to answer the questions.

For quantitative studies, internal validity needs to be scrutinised. Internal validity refers to how accurately results reflect the studied group. This means having control groups and a sufficient sample size.

Peer-reviewed articles are generally considered trustworthy since it adds another layer of quality control.

**Transferability**

When the study passes all other checkpoints, it's time to ponder the most important question – does the conclusion apply to your context? For example, the results of a study measuring stress levels of high school students in Germany cannot necessarily apply to students in Bangladesh.

It's important to note that using unreliable sources can make your work less credible by association. Aside from ethics, blindly following research without fact-checking can also influence your personal life, especially considering how quickly misinformation goes viral on social media. Healthy scepticism is celebrated even in the scientific world, so why not practise it?

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