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The trials and tribulations of starting a non-profit as a student

JAIYANA CHOWDHURY

Students initiating social media campaigns to raise funds for a cause are not rare occurrences, neither is it a new concept. Looking at the sheer number of new non-profits, it is only normal to develop conflicted feelings. It is widely believed that students have different motives while establishing or joining a non-profit, from being passionate about the cause to participating just to polish their resume.

Despite the rising popularity of such organisations, there are several difficulties students have to face while trying to make a space for their non-profit in this cluttered field.

Finding the right team
Choosing team members is a crucial part of this process, as the people you work with will help shape the future of your organisation. A team with expertise in networking, advertising, graphic designing, and event management can go a long way. It is also important to ensure that your team members believe in the cause and are willing to put their best effort towards it.

At this stage, don't be disheartened by not being able to find a place for an acquaintance in your organisation, or having your idea being dismissed by someone you want to recruit, as you will eventually be able to find equally passionate individuals.

Building your reputation
Another hurdle is building a reliable image for the organisation. Convincing everyone that you are serious about this when so many organisations die out after just one campaign can be tough.

Building a reliable online presence is crucial in this stage, so be prepared to give detailed and accurate answers to queries regarding your non-profit. People will only contribute to a trustworthy organisation, so be sure to maintain professional-ism during online interactions.

It is also important to let your donors know that they have indeed helped someone through your organisation, be it by informing the contributors individually or sharing your work through social media. However, the latter should be done while keeping in mind that the people you may be helping also have the right to guard their privacy. Asking for permission and respecting their decisions will go a long way in this case.

Raising funds
The real test in this journey is appealing to people so that they donate to your cause and participate in your events. Failure to make the audience resonate with the cause at hand and looking for donations in the wrong places are common mistakes that most non-profits end up making.

Properly knowing the cause you're championing, presenting your case with statistical data, and detailing the ways the funds will be utilised can make all the difference.

A good way to familiarise people with your organisation is through organising events in societies or educational institutions. Activities such as raffle draws, carnivals, and charity fairs can raise funds while also spreading the word about your work.

Moreover, non-profits can approach companies who usually have a Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) budget.

Student-run non-profits usually start as passion projects helmed by teenagers, but that doesn't mean they can't transform into something commendable. With the right amount of support, these organisations can sustain themselves and bring positive changes in our society.

Jaiyana is looking for ways to stop procrastinating and survive A Levels. Send her suggestions at jaiyanachy@gmail.com

Why we should include philosophy in our curriculum

USRAAT FAHMIDAH

In 2022, I visited Lisbon, Portugal, to take part in the International Philosophy Olympiad – an event aimed at promoting the study of Philosophy at the high school level globally.

Over the span of four days, I engaged in conversations with participants from more than 40 countries about the importance of studying Philosophy in today's world. We all acknowledged the relevance of studying Philosophy in today's world, despite hailing from academic backgrounds with a heavy focus on science subjects.

As more students opt for STEM subjects for its financial prospects, the importance of liberal arts is shrinking, leading us to ask, "How is it affecting our education?"

The discussion was intriguing when it was brought up that Philosophy is either a compulsory subject or an optional one in most education systems of the Western world. It's even valued as an important subject necessary for a well-rounded education.

While some of my peers from other countries were introduced to the subject early in their high school, others like myself pursued it through self-study out of sheer curiosity because it's not offered in our curriculum.

But what if we, too, incorporated Philosophy into our school curriculum?

In essence, philosophy pushes us to question the world around us. It plays a crucial role in helping students gain a deeper understanding of ethical and moral issues by urging them to think critically and ask questions. This has become a valuable skill in classrooms and in the current world, as we are constantly bombarded with information. The subject can help us form informed opinions and make better decisions without blindly accepting whatever piece of information or opinion we may view online or be presented with.

Philosophy also emphasises the importance of meaningful debates and respectful dialogue. It's an essential practice to continue in classrooms to teach students to be more tolerant and inclusive, while providing room to freely exchange ideas without the fear of censorship.

All of the above reasons illustrate how philosophy has the potential to have a profound impact on Bangladeshi youth, helping them shape their worldview and develop the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in today's complex and rapidly changing world.

While the higher secondary level in Bangladesh does include a subject named "Logic", the syllabus does not cover the other important branches of the subject like Aesthetics, Ethics, and Political Philosophy.

The main issue with our education system is the rigid core curriculum which discourages students to explore other subjects, its lack of practical application, and the focus on rote learning and restricting students from opting for the humanities. But one solution for this eroding system could be introducing subjects like Philosophy, as it has the ability to foster free thinking among students, though its proper implementation remains a concern.

Interacting with diverse students at the Philosophy Olympiad made me realise how highly valued the subject is in the education curriculum of other parts of the world where free speech, critical thinking and democratic values are highly regarded. Maybe it could be the same in Bangladesh, too.

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

ILLUSTRATION: **FATIMA JAHAN ENA**