

EDU GUIDE

Being stuck with the wrong major

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During university entrance exams in Bangladesh, the primary target for most aspirants is to get into a reputable university. The pursuit involves getting into a particular university rather than going after a major they're interested in. In many cases, students aren't accustomed to the idea of evaluating the course content before choosing the major and end up making the choice based on trends, the job market, or simply what their parents tell them to do.

However, in this day and age where information is so accessible, it might be confusing as to why choosing a university major is such a difficult task. But once we examine the sheer complexity and number of factors that influence this decision, it becomes clear.

Many young people feel that they're not ready to make a decision that's going to dictate so much of the rest of their lives.

"It is a bit unreasonable to expect seventeen-year-olds to decide upon a college degree that takes four years and a career that lasts forty," says Sarika Saiyara, an A2 level student at Academia School.

A majority of people at this young age don't get the chance to develop a passion for any field in particular. No student has the time to shadow a doctor, an engineer, or a lawyer as potential career options while also leading the pressure filled life of a high schooler.

"My options have been narrowed down to engineering," says Ahnaf Hassan Kazi, an A2 student at SFX Greenherald School, who intends to pursue a career in STEM. "I have to choose between different kinds of engineering, but none have caught my attention as I'd hoped, and I worry I won't be able to display passion in those fields."

Even the process of narrowing down can be difficult for people who go online for help, as the barrage of information can be difficult to handle.

"The ongoing economic crisis, with declining employment rates and relative usable incomes, only

pressure better than me and I was failing to even understand many of the basic concepts, I realised I was in the wrong place," said Farhan Tahmid Ryan, a CSE undergrad at BUET.

Although this might seem like a problem exclusive to people who are uncertain about their passions, even people who know what field they're enthusiastic about have a hard time deciding their majors.

"With a dream to study something related to finance and money, I decided to pursue a career in finance-related fields," said Shaika Zaman Jeba, a student of Economics at Dhaka University. "I had to choose Economics because people said it's a flexible subject and a career related to finance would be possible. But Economics is more than just the study of money. I realised I chose the wrong major."

Upon realisation, students often have no other option but to push through until graduation, because dropping out or changing majors is often not a feasible option. However, many end up changing tracks after graduation or working on a backup career option from student life.

"I intend on changing my core in Masters," continued Zeba. "I'm fortunate that a transition from Economics to Finance is feasible. I might even get an MBA and try for public service jobs."

The majority of people haven't had the chance yet to develop a passion for any field in particular. This can be attributed to a lack of exposure to what these fields actually demand in practice.

"I tried my best to migrate to a different university abroad with a subject of my forte, even as far as trying out as a fresher over there when I was already in my third year," said Benzadid. "However, the plans didn't work out. So, I stayed back and am currently fighting for a decent CGPA that would get me a good scholarship for masters in a different subject."

On the bright side, many students succeed in finding interest in the majors they end up in.

"I had trouble adapting to the subject initially," said Rezvana Saima, a student of Political Science at Dhaka University. "However, as I explored the subject, I realised they were relevant to the past and current world events. Although some of the topics are a bit abstract and boring, there are interesting courses every semester to look forward to."

Being stuck with the wrong major is an unfortunately common experience for many students. While it's a disheartening situation for one to find themselves in, there are always many options open for young students. The trick is to evaluate one's own interests and future prospects with as much objectivity as possible, and keeping a positive mindset even if things don't seem to work out at first.

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What you can do if you think you're stuck with the wrong major



CHANGE YOUR MAJOR

If your university allows it, switch to a different major. See if your already earned credits might be transferrable to a new major. If your university doesn't allow this, transferring credits to a different university may be a plausible, albeit complicated option.

PIVOT

Graduating with a major very rarely means you have only one option leading into your professional life. Find out what alternative career paths lie ahead, and see if your learnings from the subject you have majored in may come in handy in any of these alternatives.

DEVELOP YOUR SKILLS OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM

With the abundant resources available on the internet, no skill is unattainable if enough will exists in this day and age. You might be stuck with Business whereas your calling was to become a programmer, so develop programming skills on your own. You may not learn everything a Computer Science graduate knows, but you can learn a lot still.

CONSIDER HIGHER STUDIES IN A DIFFERENT DISCIPLINE

If you are truly passionate about something, and you can prove it through your work and dedication, there is no reason for a university to say no to your desire to pursue higher studies in a discipline that you haven't graduated from.

RE-EVALUATE YOUR PRIORITIES

If you think you're stuck with the wrong major, maybe you can seek fulfilment elsewhere, in a hobby or in an interest that you can maintain parallel to your work and studies.



PHOTOS: ORCHID CHAKMA

adds to my concerns," Ahnaf added.

However, once a decision is made, it's difficult for someone to accept the reality that the major chosen might not be suitable.

Benzadid M Gani, a student of architecture at BUET, says, "I thought I had been misled into thinking that architecture was a subject best suited for those with a talent for drawing. This is not the case because in reality, architecture calls for an understanding of how people perceive space."

"Considering how almost everyone was handling the