



Empowering students to take brand Bangladesh to the next level

In conversation with Manas Singh, CEO of STS Group

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STS Group is leading a revolution in the education sector of Bangladesh. With DPS STS School, International School Dhaka (ISD), Glenrich International School, and Universal College Bangladesh (UCB), four high quality educational institutions are being operated under this umbrella. We sat down with the CEO of STS Group, Manas Singh, for a chat about what they've done so far, and what they plan to do in the future.

Tell us a little bit about yourself.

Manas Singh: I started my career as an engineer. My initial career has been technical. I was working for Dell computers in Hyderabad, India, and then in Ireland. After many years, I got the opportunity to work in the education industry. Eventually, I got this opportunity to lead the education sector vertical in Bangladesh, which is STS Group. It's not easy to go to a new country and settle down. The idea of starting our own brand of schools, I thought, was a good opportunity for me.

In your role, can you share some observations you've had about Bangladesh's education sector?

MS: We typically see good Cambridge schools in Bangladesh. I think the issue is not with the schools. The issue is whether we are upgrading ourselves based on the 21st century or what is globally happening. That's where I see a big gap.

Today, our vision should be that if a parent is paying money to give their child a great education, the quality of education should be the same whether you are studying in Dhaka, or Delhi, or New York. Quality of education is a by-product of two things. One is great faculty, as a school is known for its teachers. The second part is whether you know what's happening in the world right now and if you are incorporating those new things in your school. And that part is gravely missing.



With government schools, I feel like there is a huge opportunity for the government to invite private players like us to give some input. Teacher training is a big thing in public schools. The infrastructure is a question of money but teacher training is also a question of knowledge.

You mentioned how schools in Bangladesh struggle to keep up with what's going on with the rest of the world. As STS Group is running multiple schools in Bangladesh at this point, what are you doing in those schools to fill that gap?

MS: So first of all, to understand there is a gap, you need to visit schools all over the world to understand what's being done. I have that experience. For example, in Glenrich International School, we are focusing a lot on robotics. World is moving towards that landscape, ChatGPT is just the first part of it. No one knows what will happen in the next 5-10 years. So, if the student does not know base level robotics or base level artificial intelligence, it won't work. How will you prepare that child for a global position in the future? Performing arts is a big area where, unless someone is very talented, people don't focus. We are focusing there. The ABRSM, a Royal School of Music program, is with us. Then, we introduced skating, which I didn't see in any school in Bangladesh. Our thought was to introduce a sport which is beyond just cricket and soccer. We are focusing on swimming. A lot of moral based education is also being given which I think is missing.

What is the vision of STS Group going forward? What's happening with schools as well as with higher education?

MS: On the school side, we are planning to open more Glenrich schools all over the country. We are exploring Sylhet, Chattogram, and we are also looking at Dhanmondi and Purbachal, too. We have a vision of having at least three to four schools in the next five years. It's a very aggressive plan, but I

believe that with the love and trust people have shown us, we can take it to the next level.

In ISD, which is our premium IB brand, the offering is totally different. We are looking at bringing top programs from around the world. We have introduced Carnegie Mellon Robotics Academy and Rohit Sharma Cricket Academy. We are in talks with some top badminton and tennis academies. We have introduced a Columbia read and write program.

On the higher education side, in Universal College Bangladesh (UCB), we already have a course post from Australia and Malaysia which is Monash. We also have a course from LSE, one of the top universities of the UK and the world. Now we are focusing on getting one more UK partner. We are looking at a Canadian partner too.

With all your plans and ambitions, how do you see the larger Bangladeshi education sector reacting to these efforts made by STS Group?

MS: When something new is being done, people learn from it and overall, I see the quality of the entire education sector increasing. We are trying to change the mindset. Who will be the beneficiaries of this? The people of Bangladesh. More schools, more colleges, doing better things will give more benefit to the students. Our vision is that a student of Bangladesh who graduates from a good school or university should be able to work anywhere in the world. This should not be a difference between a university graduate of Singapore versus a graduate of India or Bangladesh.

What contributions does STS group expect from its students to the world and society at large? **MS:** We want to ensure that ultimately all these things that we are doing, this should lead to a situation that wherever the student goes, they should be able to say that they are a proud Bangladeshi. The person hopefully contributes back to the country. Our vision is to give them all these learnings, that they are employable everywhere, but they take brand Bangladesh to that level. If people do well outside, who gets the most appreciation? It's the country.