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Matching university education with contemporary needs

RAIAN ABEDIN

Tertiary education and the outcome provided by it are factors that are constantly in need of revision. In today's world where new in-demand jobs and special fields of expertise explode into popularity at unprecedented rates, universities have a responsibility to respond by adapting quickly and efficiently. The curriculum taught ten years ago may no longer be viable as technology keeps progressing and Artificial Intelligence looms on the horizon. Reforming education for it to be viable and helpful in preparing students for today's fast-moving world is of utmost importance, and while the approaches taken to make this possible are multifaceted, the necessity for constant reevaluation of the education provided cannot be understated.

Reforming education, however, comes with a series of questions and hurdles, and managing to bring change from the ground up is a task that will no doubt require years of concentrated effort from universities. For this, several factors need assessment. Updating a curriculum to fit modern demands is, of course, important but on top of that there is the growing need to integrate knowledge spanning different majors to provide a more holistic understanding of the field of study.

Dr. Asrar Chowdhury, Professor of Economics at Jahangirnagar University, spoke at length about the issues surrounding the segregation of skills and knowledge. "Take for instance basic business communication, which in today's world is a skill that everyone regardless of background should be fluent in, and yet so many graduates don't seem to have that figured out," he said.

"When universities don't help students learn specific skills to complement their fields of choice, there is a problem that needs to change. Institutionalising this change is something that can take up to a decade, and yet it has to come from the universities themselves because you cannot expect a teacher in one field to handle learning of another field," he added.

On this note, Dr. Chowdhury went on to address the need for intermediary solutions. University clubs may, according to him, be an excellent alternative method of learning, provided the training carried out is guided by the university. It



Clubs and university-run organisations may have a pivotal role to play by hosting training programs for necessary skills that the coursework is failing to provide.

PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

is often not a feasible idea to incorporate the learning of skills within the limits of a semester's duration. Hence, clubs and university-run organisations may have a pivotal role to play by hosting training programs for necessary skills that the coursework is failing to provide. This has plenty of potential though it may come with its own series of hurdles to overcome as not all majors may have available resources to be used by clubs.

Similar to the discussion around clubs, there is a newly growing world of online education that provides flexibility in methods of learning. According to Md. Kabir Uddin, Assistant Professor of Biochemistry and Microbiology at North South University, this has been crucial for training his students

in research methodology.

"All the simulation work we run requires very sophisticated software. For this, I hold training sessions and provide learning materials online to make the entire process easier for my students diving into research because otherwise, it's nearly impossible to find the time within our already packed course load," he added.

Another important point of discussion in the reformation of education is the incorporation of industry with academia. With increasing industry demands for hands-on knowledge, it is becoming more and more redundant to arm students with purely theoretical knowledge.

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