SKILLS

Looking into the lack of programming courses for
BUSINESS STUDENTS

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There is something about the glowing neon text against the black backdrop of code editors that has always made my stomach churn. Then again, I had little interest in coding and have excused myself from dabbling too much in that arena for much of high school. Now that I am sailing rather close to the end of my undergraduate journey as a Business major, a new sense of discomfort seems to be creeping into my consciousness. This time the case is more pressing.

The business world has been scrambling to embark on new technological heights rapidly. Learning basic programming languages like Python or SQL has gone from being an advantage to an absolute necessity. This, however, is no news since companies heavily lean on technology these days. Given this reality, it's hardly surprising that businesses increasingly demand a basic level of proficiency in coding or programming from their employees.

marketing, the shift towards data-driven approaches means the need for proficiency in Python and SQL for tasks like customer segmentation and campaign optimisation.

Moreover, it's not just Business students who stand to benefit from learning programming. Students from other fields such as Mathematics or Economics also receive basic programming instruction, recognising its applicability across various domains. Considering how universities include several mandatory General Education (GED) courses as part of their curriculum, the inclusion of programming courses could offer significant benefits.

Asif Mahmud, a recent graduate of the Institute of Business Administration (IBA), Dhaka University expressed his frustration on the matter saying, "Throughout my time at IBA, I've been able to take only one programming course, which had run through some of the basics of R and Python. For us Business students, we often find ourselves needing to independently

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All these often include introductions to relevant software and some basic coding skills. However, for the vast majority of Business students belonging to other majors, the courses are often only offered as free electives or as a part of a broader course with the intent of learning business intelligence or data analytics. While some knowledge could be acquired in such courses, its adequacy compared to offering mandatory basic programming courses is still questionable.

It is also true that much of this absence of technical lessons at universities can be attributed to the local industry still being in the early stages of adapting such technology. A good portion of the industry here has also not embraced many of these advancements in a full-fledged way. But the demand for such skills will soon catch on and we need to be prepared as we are headed towards a time where this skillset is going to become increasingly relevant.

Muntaha Naushin, a Marketing major from Bangladesh University of Professionals (BUP) shares, "I personally struggle with basic IT courses, so in the short term, I'm happy that I don't have to worry about a programming course. But I also know that not doing even a basic programming course will definitely set me back in my career. But again, students are so busy juggling university, work, and life in general that they spend very little time thinking about what's not taught to them."

In the current digital era, it seems rather jarring that one should be ill-equipped with technical skills going forward. Consequently, such a gap could pose a significant obstacle for students looking to pursue further degrees abroad in their respective fields or for those looking to enter the job market overseas. However, thanks to hundreds of free online resources, it is not completely out of one's hands to gain at least some level of expertise on some of the basics.

Arishba Junaynah Mahmudi, a former intern at Bangladesh Angels Investor and a Finance and Marketing major in her last year at NSU shared a similar sentiment saying, "I wouldn't say all students should be entirely reliant on their institutions for their skillset. The programming knowledge we currently require is something that can be self-taught and it's unlikely we would be able to grasp the entire picture even if we were made to learn some of these languages during our undergraduate years."

ILLUSTRATION: **FAISAL BIN IQBAL**

Across all business functions, specialised software, nowadays, assumes a pivotal role, and the development of such software often relies on collaboration between business stakeholders and IT developers. With a foundation in programming, those in the professional field gain crucial insights into the capabilities and constraints of IT systems. This is especially helpful when working with a large volume of data. Such an understanding also allows them to anticipate development timelines better and contribute meaningfully to discussions.

For instance, in the finance sector, familiarity with programming languages such as R is essential for data analysis and quantitative modelling. Similarly, in

acquire a multitude of skills. The curriculum could benefit from more courses tailored to business-specific needs. Additionally, the industry itself must adapt to the increasing demand for technical expertise. Despite the current job market not fully embracing these technical skill sets, students should still strive to acquire them, even if not formally taught."

In Bangladesh, Business schools from universities such as BRAC University, North South University (NSU), Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB), and United International University (UIU) offer courses in Data Analytics and Information Systems. The Management Information System department will usually include some courses where Java, Python, and R is taught.