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■ EDUCATION ■

The prospects of pursuing postgraduate education in BANGLADESH

After getting a Bachelor's degree, a Master's degree thus becomes widely sought after, as this has the potential of opening many doors. In this case, the prospects of pursuing your Master's in Bangladesh are often overlooked.

RAIAN ABEDIN

For those interested in stepping into academia, a degree from Bangladesh allows them to look for future prospects with more comfort. Labiba Rifah Nanjiba, a 24-year-old student at BRAC University, shares, "My future plan is to apply for a Master's in a foreign university but before that, I feel like there is a gap in my academic knowledge which I'm trying to fill here."

In most countries, getting into a Master's programme with proper funding or scholarship is extremely difficult. For Labiba, the choice to stay in Bangladesh also came about after realising the challenges of securing a scholarship. For many others, a Master's also leads to a PhD, where funding may be considerably more generous. This particular career path is quite popular among STEM students.

Nayara Noor, a 23-year-old Master's student of Biotechnology at BRACU, shares her plans. "The decision to pursue a Master's in Bangladesh was because of extenuating circumstances which forced me to stay here for longer than I had initially planned. I do plan on applying for a PhD afterward but I think I'd prefer a combined Master's and PhD program."

For research-heavy subjects, such as life sciences, the dearth of facilities available to the students seems to be a clear problem. Nayara shares, "If you want to do advanced-level research, it's difficult unless you go to specific organisations through links. In the universities themselves, a lot of the more sophisticated work just isn't done."

Mubtaseem Nower, a 25-year-old Master's graduate from Dhaka University's Criminology Department, adds, "We learnt whatever we learnt in our undergraduate years, with very little being added to it at a Master's level. As for research, from what I've seen I think a lot of the work done here is rather poor methodologically. Part of this could be due to poor infrastructure that plague some of the newer departments in our university, but another important factor is that there isn't a very big culture for research in our country."

Regarding the barriers students face while working on their

thesis, M Kabir Uddin, Assistant Professor of North South University's Biochemistry and Microbiology Department, says, "While the facilities we provide are quite robust, there's still plenty of limitations in what we can provide our students. Whatever practical knowledge we can't provide we try to make up for it by providing a strong theoretical understanding."

For many, a Master's degree is an important opportunity to build their skill set and to create networks that will lead to newer opportunities or provide a chance to explore something drastically different from their Bachelor's programme.

Kajali Chakma, a 23-year-old MBA student at Bangladesh University of Professionals, says, "When I finished my B.Sc in

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Computer Science and Engineering (CSE) and entered the job market, I realised that there is a lot of pressure to get jobs in the IT sector in Bangladesh. I initially had no plans to get a Master's, but my struggles made me realise that getting an MBA was just the better option for me in terms of employability."

If a four-year Bachelor's programme is not enough to arm a student with the required skillset to survive in the industry, then is that not a problem that needs addressing?

"Every single job listing I come across that's related to my field requires a Master's degree. So, I'd say that at least for life sciences, having a Master's degree carries significantly higher value," bemoans Nayara, painting an unfortunate picture of the current job market for fresh graduates.