

■ CAREER ■

From fresh graduate to FACULTY MEMBER

The prospects and challenges

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University is one of the most important periods of a student's life – it acts as the bridge between their youth and adulthood. University faculty members, thus, play a huge role in shaping a student's life. As a result, it seems necessary for these faculty members to truly know what they are doing. What then, is the case for educators who have joined as a faculty member right after their graduation?

As expected, the answers varied widely. Despite that, certain common themes emerged throughout my conversations with various students.

"At Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET), I have felt that the issue depends on whether the new faculty member belongs to the same department as the course they are teaching," says Tahsin Ahmed Ayon, a second-year student at BUET. "If the new faculty member is an alumnus of the same department, students usually have a more positive attitude towards their lectures than towards non-departmental faculty members. In both cases, however, the educators' lack of experience shows in many aspects, for example, when taking classes or exams."

Samayla Binte Salam, a fifth-semester student of English at BRAC University, points out, "In many cases, these freshly graduated faculty members become busy preparing for their master's or PhD, and neglect their teaching. This sometimes

leaves the syllabus for that particular course incomplete or finished haphazardly."

While many of the responses are pretty negative, there are students on the opposite end of the spectrum.

Maliha Mumtaz Anandi, a third-year International Relations student at Bangladesh University of Professionals (BUP), says, "Fresh graduates who become faculty members are like our older siblings, they are much more relatable to us."

Rodiya Hossain, a sixth-semester student of Biotechnology at BRAC University, explains, "I've had two faculty members who are fresh graduates take my courses up until now, and both were amazing. Their level of knowledge was great, and they were very adept at teaching. I don't think the lack of experience is an issue. What matters more are knowledge and understanding of the subject."

Surprisingly, the faculty members who joined as fresh graduates mostly agreed with the points raised by the students, both praise and criticism. Taukir Azam Chowdhury, a faculty-member-on-leave at Bangladesh University of Business and Technology (BUBT) and a current PhD student at UC Riverside, opines, "Training periods are essential for the new faculty members. As most of these faculty members aim for a master's or PhD, they should teach first or second-semester courses. Teaching Assistants (TAs) are still not very popular in Bangladesh, but it could be helpful for these young educators to start as TAs."

teaching techniques and become accustomed to their learning methods more easily because there is no generation gap."

Is the lack of a generation gap only an advantage? Nafisa Nazin Lutfu, an International Relations lecturer at BUP, has mixed feelings about this.

"Of course, it is great that fresh graduates can communicate with current students better, having studied the same curriculum and being acquainted with recent information, which is very important in today's hyper-evolving world. However, students can become too friendly with the faculty member and forget the need for boundaries, going as far as to ask the teachers to shorten the syllabus or cancel classes. They probably wouldn't have thought of doing such a thing had I been an older faculty member. Learning how to handle these situations is vital for the new educators," she said.

However, Wasifa Rahman, a lecturer at the Islamic University of Technology (IUT), has a more positive view on this, "The new generation comes with new ideas. They care about their mental health, which the older faculty members are at risk of neglecting. Also, the career options are currently much more diverse for every discipline. The new faculty members can play a huge role in educating the students about these sectors due to how recently they've graduated."

Hasanul Kabir, Head of the Computer Science and Engineering (CSE) Department at IUT, shares his thoughts, "While it is true that young faculty members can help students with their mental health, I believe it is best to leave that for the professionals."

"The reason why we recruit fresh graduates is because of their jack-of-all-trades nature. They don't, however, have in-depth knowledge on the topics they have studied." He advises the younger faculty members to focus more on classroom management and advancing their research for growth.

What all sides agreed upon, however, is the practice of empathy. Empathy should be extended from students to teachers and vice-versa. Transitioning from being a student to an educator is difficult. While students should be concerned about their studies not being hampered by the lack of experience of their faculty members, they should try not to make the transition harder by being harsh.

The journey between aspiring to become an educator and reaching that goal is a long one.

Just a few months isn't enough for that transition to occur smoothly. On the other hand, it is the newer faculty members who bring in new ideas, catalyse better research, and modernise the system — things that are crucial for moving forward. Therefore, for the sake of the education system, fresh graduates should be encouraged to become educators.

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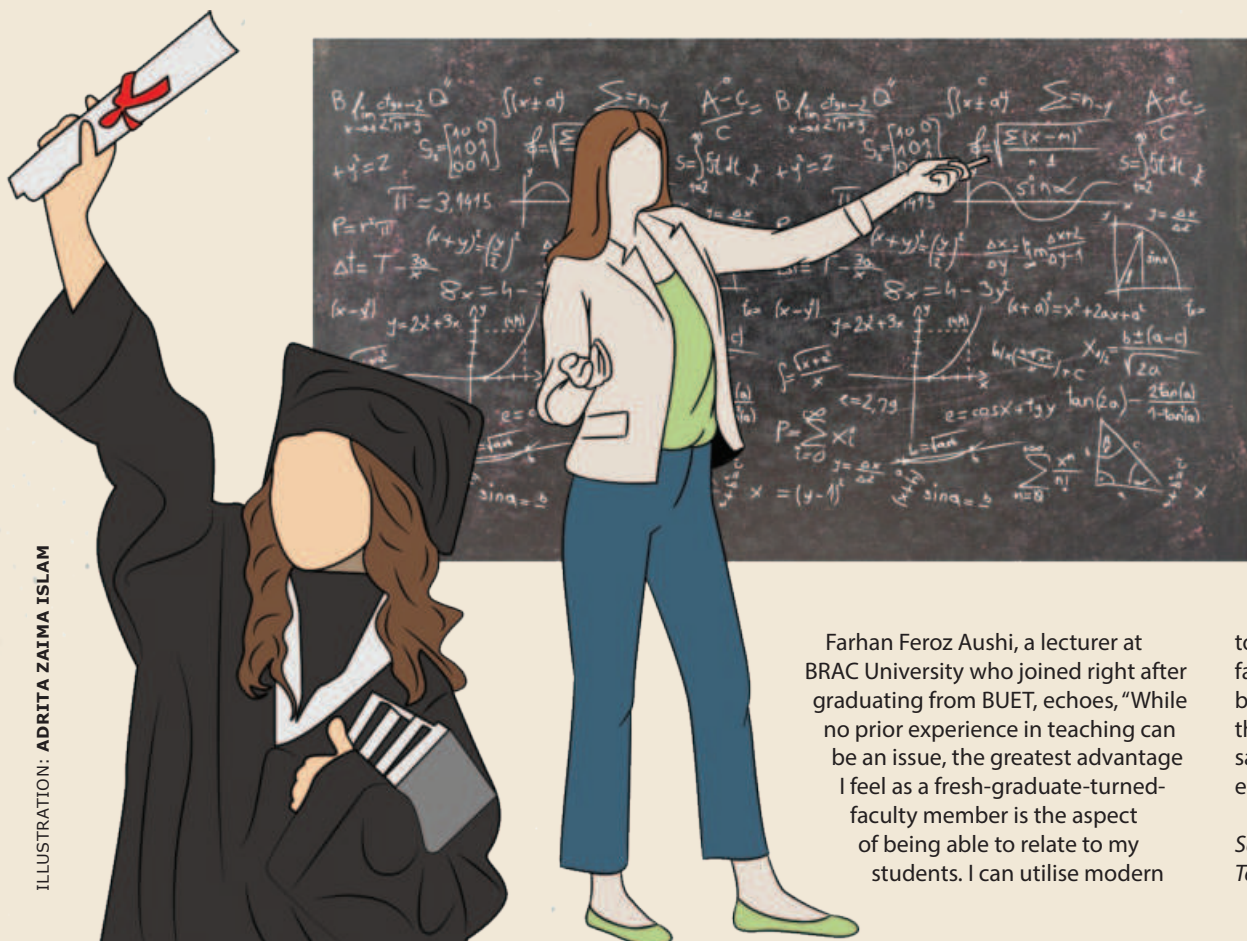


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Farhan Feroz Aushi, a lecturer at BRAC University who joined right after graduating from BUET, echoes, "While no prior experience in teaching can be an issue, the greatest advantage I feel as a fresh-graduate-turned-faculty member is the aspect of being able to relate to my students. I can utilise modern