

# University students deserve a better learning experience



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"I am a ... student at ... University. I am having some difficulty with my faculty members. Most of the senior professors, I feel, are unable to teach ... They seem to have little idea about the grading system, curriculum and teaching process ... Is there anything we can do ...?"

– The Daily Star, April 5, 2005  
"I have always felt that the education system in this country is broken ... The classes are boring and the teachers are mostly insincere and uninterested in teaching ..."

– The Daily Star, September 12, 2024  
These two quotes have been taken from articles published on *The Daily Star*, 19 years apart. As evident in these quotes, learning experience in our universities has not improved over the years. Generations of students have been yearning for a decent learning experience, which we can no longer brush aside. One of the goals of education, besides crafting proper human beings, is to produce graduates who are employable in our increasingly complicated, sophisticated and tech-oriented economy. Ill-prepared graduates who go through a poor learning experience cannot satisfy the quality standard required by the job sector. Indeed, employers constantly complain about the low level of readiness of our graduates.

Teachers are the most important factor for the success of student learning in the classroom, as research has shown. Therefore, they have to take their teaching responsibility as a sacred duty. "Teaching is the profession upon which all other professions depend," says the World Bank Policy Approach to Teachers. In fact, one can argue that teaching is not just a profession, it is a life mission.

Teaching has two aspects: what to teach, and how to teach. University teachers in Bangladesh are rarely trained in the latter. In our university classrooms, passive lectures are still the dominant mode of teaching. Passive lecture, a teacher-centred mode of education, can be ineffective, unengaging, uninspiring,



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and boring. It leads to rote learning or surface learning, and doesn't help students to acquire the mastery of knowledge and achieve higher cognitive skills such as problem-solving, analysis, evaluation, synthesis, creation, etc. A prominent research study found that "... students in classes with traditional lecturing were 1.5 times more likely to fail than were students in classes with active learning" (PNAS, 2014). This finding prompted Prof Eric Mazur, a famous educationist and physics professor at Harvard University, to opine that "... it's almost unethical to be lecturing if you have this data" (*Science*, 2014).

But our universities don't have to adhere to passive lecturing. Educational sciences have seen tremendous developments over

the years, and research in this field has led to the development of innovative teaching techniques that can make lectures more interactive, ensuring student participation. These techniques include think-pair-share, roleplay, jigsaw, minute paper, concept map, summarisation, muddiest point, etc. To instil higher cognitive skills, modern universities adopt other innovative modes of teaching and learning, such as problem-based learning,

However, one cannot blame only the teachers for the poor learning experience of students. University authorities have the key responsibility to support teachers in achieving teaching excellence. Universities must create an atmosphere where teaching excellence is encouraged, nurtured, supported, and celebrated. Authorities must help create champions in quality teaching and let younger teachers learn from them.

our teachers to international best practices.

The education ministry and the University Grants Commission (UGC) must realise that excellence in teaching and learning cannot happen automatically in our universities. It requires setting goals and proper implementation at the national level. They must support the universities in establishing teaching and learning centres. They should institute national-level awards for university teaching (UGC has awards for only research and publications). The Bangladesh Accreditation Council (BAC) is currently implementing Outcome Based Education (OBE) in our universities. Fundamental to OBE is constructive alignment among (1) student outcomes, (2) teaching and learning activities, and (3) assessment. In this construct, teaching and learning activities are vital to achieving student outcomes, so that's where serious consideration should be given. In the past, the UGC, in partnership with the British Council, initiated a project named the Centre of Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) to strengthen teaching and learning capacity in a few selected universities. The experience with this programme should be revisited. It should be revised and revived with the aim of improving its efficacy, wider applicability and long-term sustainability.

Our employers and industry cannot just demand high-quality graduates without doing their part either. They must play their role by engaging with academia, clearly articulating their needs, and supporting student training. They must help universities expose students to real-life scenarios by bringing industry problems to the classrooms. The government, UGC, and professionals have to facilitate such industry-academia collaboration.

Students, in turn, have important roles to play. As adult learners, university students must take responsibility for their own learning. They must realise that there is no alternative to diligence, discipline and hard work.

We cannot afford letting our university students go through poor learning experiences. Teachers, being the primary actors, should play a leadership role to improve the situation. They must restore pride in performing their basic duty. But university teachers need support from the key stakeholders, i.e. the university authorities, education ministry, UGC, and the employers. The reward and return that excellent teaching can bring for all are invaluable. The benefits are not just academic but, indeed, economic as well.

# Spreading false narratives will get Indian media nowhere



Bishakha Devnath is the business editor of *The Financial Express*.

BISHAKHA DEVNATH

In journalism, there is a popular saying: if there is a dispute over whether it is raining or not, look out the window to see for yourself.

Since the ouster of former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in Bangladesh, a larger section of the Indian media has constantly been belittling the political changeover in Bangladesh as nothing but an emergence of extremist groups. In doing so, these "journalists" have been cherry-picking information about what has been happening in a tense, tumultuous time to tarnish the image of Bangladesh, with a pre-determined narrative. It is as if they look for information to fit the story they have already written about post-2024-uprising Bangladesh.

The main rhetoric in the Indian media is that minorities in Bangladesh have been subjected to communal violence after the student-led mass uprising toppled the Hasina regime. There is no denying the fact that homes and businesses belonging to Hindus were ransacked and set ablaze in the immediate aftermath, but so were many other establishments that belong to Muslims. Taking advantage of the political void and lawlessness that followed the ouster, people who had been victimised by the previous regime, as well as those who took the situation as an opportunity to loot properties and some fanatics unleashed a wave of attacks on their opponents or perceived enemies.

While I demand justice on behalf of the innocent men and women who suffered at that time, I will resist the manufacturing of the self-serving narratives that the Indian media is so fixated on—as vehemently as any Indian would do if the neighbouring country was judged by the 2002 Gujarat riots or the lynching of people from its minority Muslim community.

Hence, I request my Indian peers to come to Bangladesh, leaving behind prejudices, and see for themselves how things are before reporting on the country's evolving political and social situations. I appeal to them to stop portraying the country as a war zone. It is not. Things have been improving bit by bit since August 5, and we Bangladeshis are optimistic about reconciliation in a society that has been highly polarised for a decade or more to the benefit of a highly extractive political, economic

disparity. The macroeconomic indicators make it palpable. About a dozen banks have been dragged to near bankruptcy by close allies of Sheikh Hasina by borrowing huge amounts of money but never paying back. The capital market is in ruins because of corruption, manipulation and scams. The previous regime allowed politically influential people from the Awami League and bureaucrats, who served their interests, to exploit and distort the system of governance.

People are now suffering the consequences; they are not getting back deposits from the sick banks, the value of investments in scam-hit securities diminished, and commodity prices skyrocketed as inflation kept rising not only because of global tensions but also due to domestic mismanagement. In the meantime, jobs are scarce because the money borrowed from financial

for their lack of knowledge, but did not say how Bangladeshis around the world fought back against the force. What I hate to see is his depiction of attacks on minorities. Communal tensions have always had a presence in Bangladesh, kept alive by politicians as a calculated strategy targeting elections. Between 2012 and 2021, many attacks were made on minority communities: 2012 Ramu violence against Buddhist houses and monasteries; 2014 attacks on the Hindu community in Abhaynagar, Jashore; 2016 attacks on Hindus in Nasirnagar, Brahmanbaria over a fake Facebook post; and the 2020 attack on Hindu households in Muradnagar, Cumilla, for example.

The Awami League government did not ensure justice for the victims of those attacks, and we did not see Indian media personalities—such as Mr Ghosh—expressing concern and warning the then government against

inaction. The Indian government, too, was not vocal at the time.

What has changed then? Mr Ghosh and his disciples will be able to tell. I would suggest one thing though: his yelling does not prove the points he wants to make. He has to contextualise his speeches and research a bit more to elevate his works to the standards of journalism.

Meanwhile, the damage rendered by the Indian media is that they have created a virtual version of Bangladesh as the political unpredictability offered them a good business opportunity with more and more audiences drawn to whatever content they made and promoted on social media platforms. That was feeding into an already tense psyche. The outrage in India expressed through attacks on Bangladeshi missions is inimical to the relations between the two nations.

What the present turmoil in

Bangladesh demands is a supportive attitude from friends within and outside towards building an amicable environment for reforms that will help the country achieve equitable growth. We need reconciliation between opposing forces; we need harmony and solidarity to rebuild the nation for the better.

On Monday, during an official visit to Bangladesh, Indian Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri said India wanted to "carry on where we left off," meaning the disruption in the bilateral ties after Hasina's fall. "There is no second thought about increasing engagements. We see this as beneficial for both countries," he said. I hope the section of the Indian media that is bent on fuelling tensions between the two countries will take note. Above all, I expect them to uphold journalistic standards and present reports based on facts.

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and bureaucratic system.


This appeal comes from concerns that the misinformation and disinformation that journalists (who crossed over into the territory of YouTubers or activists) are spreading will ruin the potential of good relations between these two neighbours. One particular individual who has drawn my attention is Mayukh Ranjan Ghosh, senior editor of Republic Bangla. He is bent on proving that Bangladeshis are furious against the chief adviser of the interim government. It is a bizarre proposition unless he refers to the fallen political force and its sycophants.

Yes, Bangladeshis are frustrated because they are running out of patience to see a quick fix to the accumulated problems. A majority of them feel left out of the nation's economic growth over the last decade because it only exacerbated economic

institutions on the pretext of business expansion was laundered abroad.

While the financial sector has been mercilessly beaten into the present sorry state for over a decade, it is now an uphill task to bring it back into order. The interim government has been given the mandate to bring reforms, but anyone can guess how challenging it must be. There are other concerns to address, such as rampant land grabbing, pollution of water bodies, and illegal construction of buildings, hotels, and other infrastructure by those who could get away with violating laws for their links to power before the August 5 changeover.

But Indian journalists like Mayukh Ranjan Ghosh tried to push the narrative that people were unhappy and divided in the post-August 5 era. He brought to notice some extreme sermons that criticised our national anthem, vilifying them



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Memo No. 46.207.007.09.25.004.2024

Date: 08/12/2024

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1	egpdsccmech. 036/2024-25	Supply of different types Road Marking Paints & Necessary Things Required.	1044757	22/12/2024 up to 4:00 PM	23/12/2024 up to 12:00 PM
2	egpdsccmech. 037/2024-25	Engagement of yearly contractor for supplying Stone ships, Sylhet sand, Bitumen & Labour for repair and maintenance of defected bitumenous roads of different zones under DSCC through Asphalt Plant of mechanical division.	1044796	22/12/2024 up to 4:00 PM	23/12/2024 up to 12:00 PM

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