University of Dhaka: In Search for Excellence
Issues and Policy Recommendations

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Contents

Executive Summary

The policy paper, based on a series of conversations with major stakeholders in the higher education sector of Bangladesh, draws attention to some important measures to be taken up in order to achieve excellence at the University of Dhaka. This includes, among other pertinent issues:

First, governance. With reference to the Dacca University Ordinance of 1973, it is suggested that the true spirit of the Ordinance needs to be channeled for the nourishment of professionalism in the University. The autonomy of the university must be understood from the perspective of political freedom, as well as academic professionalism, unhindered by external forces.

Second, faculty recruitment and student admission. To maintain the quality of the academic environment of the university, it is important to ensure recruitment of the best students and best faculty members. This paper suggests measures to overcome the hurdles in achieving these goals.

Third, the policy paper highlights the importance of reinventing campus politics by creating opportunities for both students and faculty members in the campus as well as the wider world.

Finally, the policy paper highlights the importance and ways of achieving excellence within the context of global academic standards in teaching and research.

I. Background

In 2021, Bangladesh and the University of Dhaka (DU) will turn 50 and 100 respectively. The fates of these two entities are intertwined in many respects. Despite references to the University's past glory and criticism of its present conditions, there has been little useful public discussion about possible ways of securing the University's rightful place in the world of knowledge, learning and teaching. It is crucial that we start policy-oriented

and practical efforts in that direction. An opportunity towards that end was provided by a two-day conference and four workshops held during 2015-16, involving the participation of eminent scholars, policy-makers, academics, student-politicians and the non-political student community, as well as the wider public. These resulted in the publication of University of Dhaka: Making Unmaking Remaking in February 2016. Subsequentlys, two editions of the book came out in August 2016 and February 2017, followed by a Bangla translation of the same in February 2018.

This policy paper is largely based on the four workshops and informal conversations with stakeholders, and is a sequel to the book. Each of the workshops engaged a different set of stakeholders: academics; policymakers, student politicians and the student community in general. The papers that were presented at the conference appeared as chapters in the book. The chapters touched on historical contributions and the evolution of the University of Dhaka and its contemporary situation, but most of these chapters also included broad-based and specific policy recommendations that would prove useful to recent discourses and initiatives in reforming higher education in Bangladesh in general and in the University of Dhaka in particular. We hope this policy paper will provide useful recommendations for stakeholders and policy-makers working for a better educational system in Bangladesh.

II. Vision

The University of Dhaka needs a declared vision, both short and long term. Discourses on the University is clearly focused on its political contributions in the past, particularly in the period from 1948 till 1990, without a sense of what it wants to achieve in the next few decades. This looks particularly odd as the university, the largest and oldest in the country, reaches its centenary in a few years. The Government of Bangladesh and the DU authorities need to formulate a holistic vision for the University in order to regain its reputation as an institution of higher education.

First of all, it is important to set goals for DU. All its present conditions, bad or good, are accepted as given and we don't know where we are headed in the quest for excellence. In some university rankings, DU appears in between 600 and 2500 universities (mostly in non-

learning and non-research categories) and it does not appear at all in most major rankings. Do we want to be at least within the first 100-200 top universities in the world? If so, we need to examine, debate and discuss the possible ways of meeting the criteria set for achieving that goal.

In this respect, the following broader issues need focus:

1. Where DU should be in the next 10 to 15 years and how to reflect that target in the global indexes of universities

2. Whether the university will take the character of a research or a teaching university, or a combination of both, and how to formulate such characteristics

3. How to create space at DU for human capital investment infrastructure

4. How best to take advantage of the demographic dividend within the learning and research architecture of DU

5. What kind of politics the students and teachers of DU will practice in the campus, and what will be its nature?

III. Governance

By dint of the Dacca University Ordinance of 1973, the DU is a semi-autonomous institution, whose day-to-day administration is run by a good number of administrative and academic staff led by the Vice Chancellor and two Pro-Vice Chancellors. It is well known that the idea of autonomy has lost its true meaning over the past few decades and in fact, the Ordinance broadened the space for national politics on the university campus. A major question continues to be: what are the best ways to preserve DU as an autonomous space for higher learning and research?

In Bangladesh, the Vice Chancellor of a public university is 'elected' through popular vote by faculty members and registered graduates, out of a panel of three, where the government

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[1] This is, however, limited to only five public universities, including University of Dhaka.

has the final say.[1] Despite this election, the Vice Chancellor must have the blessing of the government of the day to run the university. Not surprisingly, a change of regime at the national level also sees a change of the Vice Chancellor at the University of Dhaka, as in other public universities. Such governmentalization of the university seems to be the result of the policymakers' inability to distinguish between the 'government' and the 'state'. A case in point would be the annual allocation of funds for the University of Dhaka. Since the bulk of the funds of the university, over 90 percent, are provided by the state, the government of the day makes it a point to remind the University that the government alone has the power to disburse such funds. 'Autonomy' of the University cannot be ensured as long as the state remains indistinguishable from the government. Each of the incumbent government needs to appreciate and ensure that universities in general, and DU in particular, function as national and state institutions, not as a space for national party politics. This could be done in one of two ways:

1. Amend the Dacca University Ordinance of 1973 and put a new clause that the funds of the state is guaranteed and the government of the day cannot change the allocation without prior approval of the University.

2. Discontinue the Dacca University Ordinance of 1973 and draft a fresh one.

IV. Recruitment of academic staff

The recruitment policies of a university are crucial for maintaining and promoting academic excellence. At DU, the recruitment and promotion practices in recent years have largely overlooked the need for recruiting brilliant candidates and instead, ensured politically motivated appointments. For example, more than 41 percent of the university's faculty are full professors, the number being far greater than that of any other single category in the hierarchy.[2] This may not be a major issue if we did not consider the fact that many universities with a smaller number of professors have secured top places in world rankings. For example, of about 2,400 faculty members of the National University of Singapore, Asia's

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[2] In the University of Dhaka, the number of Professor is 887; Associate Professor, 322; Assistant Professor, 453;and Lecturer, 397.

no. 2 and world's no. 15 university (QS 2018), there are less than 250 full professors. The University of Cambridge, consistently placed in world's top three universities for decades in different indexes, has altogether 585 full professors (July 2015). To become a challenging place of higher scholarship and excellence in research, teaching, and learning, the University of Dhaka needs to fix this glaring mismatch, where about 900 professors have not been able to move the university to any considerable locus. This situation is partly a result of a non-transparent and, in most cases, politically biased recruitment process.

Under the circumstances, the following recommendations may be considered:

1. The introduction of a transparent, independent and merit-based recruitment process that results in a single, combined and integrated faculty recruitment system. Before an application for faculty position is reached to the respective selection committee, the applicant should show evidence of research and teaching skills to the respective Department's undergraduate and graduate students as well as faculty members, whose confidential opinions should be taken into account by the selection committee.

2. No faculty member should be allowed to hold Assistant Professorship or higher positions without a PhD from an institution of considerable repute.

3. Early DU practices of appointing visiting and contractual faculty should be revived. This may include the appointment of Distinguished University Professors, Department-based Distinguished Professors, and contractual guest faculty. The academic calendar needs to be reformed in such a way as to enable eminent international visiting scholars to conduct intensive summer semesters.

4. Teachers publishing and doing experimental work should be fast-tracked in career advancement; faculty members who are producing nothing or only producing work published in in-house journals should not be allowed to advance beyond Assistant Professor. Also, past results should not be considered for promotions beyond the position of a lecturer; since every appointment at the university level is considered a fresh appointment, the achievement at the level from which the applicant is applying for promotion should be prioritized by the committee vetting applications.

5. There is a strong need for the training of newly recruited faculty members. As the UGC Chair emphasized, "we should not assume that a good student is going to be a good teacher. He/she must possess communication and other skills." There are institutional training mechanisms for teachers at primary and secondary level educational institutes. There is no such arrangement for university teachers. It is good news that the UGC has received proposals to introduce training for university teachers.

6. As far as the recruitment of the faculty member is concerned, University of Dhaka, as well as other major public universities, has not even earned a national level of quality, let alone international. In fact, as the UGC Chair termed it, it has remained "tribal", in the sense that mostly Dhaka University graduates are recruited.

V. Research

The foremost challenge is the level of priority and commitment that the government has attached to higher education, particularly as reflected in the allocation of resources. Bangladesh's public expenditure on education is traditionally low. Of the total budget for education in the country, the Ministry of Education, which takes care of secondary and tertiary education, receives a very small portion, and there has been a downward trend in this regard. In the fiscal year 2015-16, in the development budget, this Ministry received only 4.09 percent of the total national allocation in the education sector. In the revenue budget for the same fiscal year, the allocation was 5.8 percent, which is down from 10.18 percent from the 2001-2002 fiscal year. With less than 1 percent of the budget allocated to higher education, Bangladesh has clearly turned its back on the sector that the world is fast holding on to. This compares oddly with public expenditure on higher education as a percentage of total public education expenditure in other Asian countries such as China (up to 60 percent), followed by India, Singapore and Malaysia (around 37-38 percent).

But once the government takes a policy decision about spending more on higher education, the challenge will be how best to use and allocate these resources for transforming Bangladeshi universities into centres of excellence. The University of Dhaka, although weak in some areas, would still be a good place for the government to invest. Non-government

bodies also need to be approached for funding research at the higher level. This could be done in the following ways:

1. Government funds should be allocated on a competitive basis. In addition to a healthy basic payment scheme, there should be a major funding pool from which competitive research grants should be made.

2. The best-performing universities should receive a proportionately large amount of grants. To assess the quality of research, the UK model of REF (Research Excellence Framework) could be put in place. Without such a national and institution-based vision and competitive research environment, the World Bank's project with the University Grants Commission has brought little tangible impact in terms of raising the profile of Bangladeshi universities globally, although the 300 projects that the fund has sponsored would be a good start in preparing a base level of research architecture.

3. The proposed Bangladesh Higher Education Commission needs to be in place as soon as possible, with the objective of putting well-aimed, substantial investments in research at the tertiary level.

4. There should be public bodies from which individual researchers can seek funding. Such organizations can also develop a public-private partnership. Organizations like the National Endowment for the Humanities of the USA, the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation of Germany and the British Academy of the United Kingdom are good examples in this regard. Such bodies, through offering fellowships and research grants, can create a bridge between the Bangladeshi academic community and the rest of the world. For instance, the Humboldt Foundation has so far offered different kinds of fellowships to more than 26,000 scholars from around 130 countries. The Foundation also offers fellowships to German scholars to go abroad and in the process, keeps Germany at the crossroads of global academic excellence.

5. There is no financially and intellectually remarkable fellowship programme in DU. In every major university in the world, fellowship programs offer opportunities for international or nationally reputed scholars from other universities to engage with the permanent faculty of the university for a few months to a couple of years.

6. Research requires resourceful libraries. The DU library system could be uplifted to a National Library, where depositories of all the libraries of Bangladesh would be made available, using various methods, from online borrowing to copying the materials. Also like the British Library and the libraries of Cambridge and Oxford Universities, the DU Library system should be entitled to automatically receive two copies of each book published in Bangladesh by all publishers. The government should take steps to bring library resources of all universities and other institutions in the country under a unified, electronically searchable catalogue with inter-library loan services.

7. It is important that the government allocate more resources for higher education in the national budget, while other non-conventional sources are harnessed.

8. The private sector is expanding in Bangladesh and many corporate entities are shouldering corporate social responsibilities. This sector may develop some sort of 'corporate educational responsibilities' to generate funding for public sector higher education.

It was heartening to hear from the Chair of the UGC at the fourth workshop that the Government of Bangladesh was planning to establish a research university. We are not sure what sort of shape such a university will take, but the latter can be set up under the University of Dhaka as an autonomous institute, like the Graduate Institute Geneva or Doha Institute for Graduate Studies.

VI. Education, learning and training

a. New courses, curriculum and examination system

Recently, three-year courses have been extended to four years, mid-term exams have been introduced, and many such changes have taken place. Change to four-year undergraduate classes were introduced in order to ensure 17 years of schooling, as is the case in many developed countries. Yet the additional one-year has not been utilized to introduce new courses. In most of the Departments, three-year courses have been 'stretched' to cover four years, without bringing any qualitative changes to the syllabus. In this context, there is a need to:

1. Introduce inter-departmental intake of courses. That is, students should be able to take a limited number of courses from outside his/her parent department.

2. Each department must introduce at least one new course every two years in light of national and global requirements.

3. There is a strong need for academic plans. There are hardly any academic plans inspired by update and innovative frameworks of learning. Moreover, personal interest, consultancy preference and vested group interest of the faculty members often play a role in deciding which courses will finally make their way into the curricula and what the contents of the courses will be.

This is compounded by the fact that there is a minimal presence of 'action domain' in the curriculum. It is important to consider the capabilities and interests of the students when designing curriculum and instructional processes, but there is no structure and system in place to measure the interests and capabilities of the students. For this reason, courses designed by faculty members who are unaware of their students' capabilities do not exhibit the same amount of contextualization as those designed by teachers who are more knowledgeable. This underscores the absence of students' perspectives in curriculum development. As there is no way to obtain feedback from students and teachers, the effectiveness of the curriculum remains unknown to the people tasked with developing it. In some positive instances, faculty members include new topics to prepare students for the job market. However, these changes are based on the instructor's own understanding of the demands of the job market rather than any formal interaction with job recruiters. On the issue of curriculum development, the following recommendations are flagged:

1. Contextualizing of curriculum should be included as one of the purposes during this development process. The content, instructional processes and assessment methods of the curriculum should be in accordance with this purpose.

2. To address the demands of society, those tasked with curriculum development must include various stakeholders, such as students, professional bodies, job recruiters, etc. by arranging seminars and workshops.

3. There is a need to revisit the examination system. Multiple assessment methods including presentation in the classroom, assignment writing, oral exam, take-home, and open book exam could be introduced, instead of the current practice of sit-down closed book exam.

4. Student-led learning activities in and outside the classroom should be encouraged.

5. Dhaka University should have its own graduate training centre. There is no doubt that the quality of human capital investment and training of future leaders in any sphere of national life (such as business, innovations or political leadership) will depend on the quality of the teachers themselves (along with proper incentives and supporting materials). Graduate training can help to train the next generation of teachers at any level of teaching (including early childhood development).

6. Most importantly, at this stage we need to ask, which types of students do we want to educate? What kind of thinking should be supported? Some of these issues have been raised in the book, University of Dhaka: Making Unmaking Remaking, but this is a major issue that requires a more participatory approach. The hope is that this policy paper will serve the purpose of generating further and deeper discussions on these pedagogic issues.

b. Number of students

'The terror of numbers' is definitely a major reason for the deterioration of higher education in Bangladesh. While the number of students has rapidly increased, we have failed to establish the required number of institutions at all levels. So the pressure fell on existing institutions to bear the load, and University of Dhaka has suffered the most. The number of students are increasing year after year.

Limited allocation of financial resources limits students' access to educational resources at the tertiary level. Class sizes in the universities in Bangladesh are usually large compared to other countries. For example, the average student to teacher ratio in Bangladesh at the university level is about 1:26. The average for developed countries is much lower, with a ratio

of 1:6 in Switzerland and 1:7 in Germany. The newly industrialized countries also exhibit a low student to teacher ratio that tends to be below 20. Only Thailand reports a student to teacher ratio of 20, still thirty percent lower than that of Bangladesh. This ratio also does not suggest the exact class size, which is usually much larger than is suggested by the student-to-teacher ratio, because students may have multiple subjects. The low incentives for teachers may lead to reduced effort where a large number of students are put into one classroom, further lowering the teacher's time per student. What is, therefore, required is to:

1. Restrict the number of students in a course to 30, even if the enrolment is double or triple that amount.

2. Gradually, preferably in three-years time, reduce the number of students in the first year undergraduate level to 60 and divide them into two groups, with equal number of students.

c. Students' employability

The lack of human capital content (or "employability") of graduates is a cause of concern. Beyond producing and supplying quality employees, an active local network of universities can also act as an important hub for innovations. Moreover, if Bangladesh needs to accumulate skills to ensure long term economic growth and development, it will need to invest in efforts to improve the quality of teachers at all levels of education.

Building a bridge between the private sector and universities is crucial in today's world. Most students usually end up working for the private sector. One of the reasons for the disconnect between universities and industries is the lack of knowledge from the industry's side about the skills and training of the graduates. It is important (as noted above) to learn about the demand for specific skills that are valued in industries.

It may take some time to reach the capacity for proper training in certain disciplines. Hence, universities such as the University of Dhaka, which can strive to be at the frontier of knowledge dissemination, should also anticipate the future trends in demand for skills. Moreover, there

will be further automation of many jobs and tasks over the next decade that will provide rewards to workers with responsibilities of carrying out the simplest tasks, without requiring a complicated set of skills. Or the production processes (even in service sectors such as accounting) will require workers who will design and support the automation process itself (such as coders). Hence, a higher education system that fails to recognize production and manufacturing processes will fail miserably in developing the next generation of skilled workers, managers, leaders and entrepreneurs. There is a need, therefore, to:

1. Establish an office for students' employment issues.

2. Make internships a compulsory part of courses at the Master's level. It would be even better to introduce a "Discovery Year" in the third year when students are offered opportunities to serve as interns in government and non-government sectors and their efforts are credited to their CGPA.

3. Coordinate with industrial and manufacturing houses for part-time employment.

4. Coordinate with banks for business loans for postgraduate students, who have creative and innovative projects or entrepreneurship ideas.

d. Admission process

Another challenge of securing a productive and creative learning environment is to get the best students through a good admission process. The current admission system has become unmanageable, as proven in the last few years, due to issues of leaked questions and errors in questions leading up to legal complications. There are criticisms that the University of Dhaka entertains the "selling" of admission forms as many as possible, with a view to generate revenue. This also means that a majority of admission seekers are given false hopes of admission. In the context of admission, the following suggestions are worth considering:

1. Admission tests need to be decentralized. Every department or at least every Faculty or Institute should be allowed to take the admission test for those students willing to study that subject. A centralized admission test system may not be able to capture the potential of the individual student, or a small group of students, for achieving excellence in a specific subject area.

2. The University needs to raise the criteria for admission tests as high as possible, so that fewer students, and those who are most qualified, apply.

3. There is a need for a separate admission office, headed by the dedicated official.

VII. Campus Politics

The disturbing impact of student and teachers' politics in the DU campus is all too apparent. When it comes to faculty politics, the spirit of the Dacca University Ordinance 1973 should be revisited, including limiting the number of elections. Major political parties of the country should find a way of delinking themselves from the process of selecting Vice-chancellors, and instead choose the chief executives of public universities from a pool of nationally and internationally recognized scholars and administrators, vetted by an independent body consisting of reputed national and international members. Positions such as those of the House Tutor and Student Adviser should not count towards promotions, and these positions should be distributed on the basis of applications, where need and scholarship are assessed by nonpartisan committees and party considerations discounted. As with students, the federal nature of the University of Dhaka should be recognized in Teachers Association elections, in which faculty representatives will choose the leaders at the helm of the collective bargaining body that the Association really is or should be.

The relationship between teacher politics and student politics is currently facing debate, with three major schools of opinion. Teachers involved in politics believe that having political affiliations and being involved in politics is a fundamental democratic and human right. For support, they point to the glorious political history of the University. A second group believes that the 1973 Ordinance is not in itself lacking merits, since it provides autonomy and encourages freedom of thought and independent research, but politicians and successive governments have failed to protect and promote its true potential. Instead, some of their policies and practices created scope for its manipulation. Therefore, some reforms are required to return it to its original state. The third opinion holds that the Ordinance itself contains the seeds of politicization and is in need of major reform. In a place of academic excellence, top administrative positions cannot be filled on the basis of numbers. Doing so

has critical implications for the future generation and overall academic future of the nation. It is precisely because of this game of numbers that mediocrity and populism reigns today at the University of Dhaka, instead of academic excellence. It is true that the politics of both DU teachers and students is no longer dominated by academic brilliance. Rather, dropouts and over-stayers rule the student wings. The general student body does not even identify with them.

Keeping these observations in mind, we propose the following reforms:

1. Critical posts in the University's administration ought to be elected on a merit basis only. Since the Dean is the academic head of the faculty, s/he must be nominated from among the Professors and the nomination must be made on the basis of merit.

2. Since dorms constitute the cornerstone of student (and to a certain extent teacher) politics, appointment of provosts should be based on merit. Halls should be turned into centers of academic and cultural activities rather than party politics.

3. An international and national search committee should be instituted for the appointment of Vice Chancellors. Names and suggestions may be suggested not only by the senior teachers of the University, but also eminent persons from across the country.

As far as student politics is concerned, there are suggestions to go back to having hall unions and revive DUCSU (Dhaka University Central Students' Union) elections as well, given that all the major parties agree to stay out of unfair and undemocratic politicking before resuming such elections. We should also look at models afforded by Oxbridge style student politics, where future Conservative, Labour, and Liberal Democrats are bred through non-partisan debating societies and student union activities, without marring the academic calendar. Certainly, letting duly elected students run halls in tandem with teachers appointed for non-political reasons, such as Provosts and House Tutors, reverting to a system of regular tutoring and attendance checks in halls, and driving out outsiders and students who are overstaying in the dorms will help contribute to the democratization of the atmosphere in the residential halls. In addition to the opportunities of healthy debates and dialogues, students should be given abundant internet access and computers in sufficient numbers at workstations all

over the campus, so that they can carry on their studies without being hampered in any way. Without a doubt, they should not be coerced into taking part in the politics of the ruling party and becoming pawns in "seat politics" and "hall politics."

In terms of the situation of student politics in Germany, one of our graduate student contributors from Germany provides similar observations. There are two parallel structures of student groups and parties in universities there. One constitutes of the university governance body that focuses mainly on academic issues or issues related to the university, and the other works as a part of civil society. There are young social democrats, green, conservative and liberal student parties, and they form a student parliament in every university. Representatives of the student parliament are elected every year, and sent to the academic senate and "AStA"-the General Students' Committee. Every department elects student representatives as well, and they are sent to different department boards. There are groups of students who work for sustainability, human rights, and other societal issues, and students also form groups for debate, young entrepreneurship, sports and other activities. All these groups, however, cannot participate in political parties or political decisions (See 'Report on the Second Dialogue, 16 August 2016, in the appendix).

Banning student politics may not solve the current dismal state of things; it could also create confusion and chaos, frustrating all good intentions. Instead, the student community's power and potential should be unleashed through "real" student politics. When students are engaged and given space, party-politics among them should eventually weaken and disperse. For instance, major UK political parties are active on the Cambridge or Oxford campus, but they have no institutional voice in the CUSU (Cambridge University Students' Union) or OUSU (Oxford University Students' Union). This relative independence and autonomy of student bodies also apply to most German universities. How can we get non-partisan but politically sensitive students represented? The following suggestions could be considered:

1. DUCSU's federal nature must be firmly restored. This requires forming a hall committee and a departmental/institute committee and electing a representative body for each hall and department/institute, which together elects the DUCSU central committee.

2. The tenure of the elected student body at both hall and DUCSU levels should be one year.

3. No student should run twice for any position.

4. There should be a minimum quota for female students.

5. An expenditure ceiling should be set during all elections, so that poorer students get an equal opportunity to run.

6. DUCSU should have an academic committee, represented by different departments and institutes.

7. DUCSU should have a subcommittee headed by a female student who looks into gender equality challenges relating exclusively to the university's female students.

8. Publication is a very important tool for student empowerment. DUCSU should bring out an editorially independent weekly with the aim of providing a platform for open debates and discussions.

9. National parties should support the rise of a non-party political regime on campuses, even if it requires temporarily neutralizing their student wings. When non-political student leaders train in appropriate campus politics, they will be assets as post-campus-life leaders for all national political parties.

10. A10-year moratorium on teacher and student politics along national political party lines need to be in place. They may be allowed to form associations and unions in the campus but any issues discussed ought to revolve around academia and other concerns of the teachers and students at the University.

VIII. E-learning environment

In terms of E-learning, DU has made some visible progress. Online admission application system, multimedia classroom, access to major databases, e-learning platform (Virtual Learning Environment) and automation of library systems are in place. However, the e-learning environment is changing fast, which demands solid IT infrastructure to keep pace

with these changes.

There are also problems of gaps between digital natives and digital immigrants. Since DU students come from all over the country including remote places, many of them have had limited access to digital technology. These students struggle to adapt to their new learning environment and compete with the digital natives or more advanced users. Teaching, learning and assessment strategies need to be reevaluated and adapted for this new kind of student.

Despite limitations in the use of technology and lack of resources, we hope that DU will become a centre of national and global education in Bangladesh. In order to place digital technology in the heart of this regeneration, the university should aim for:

1. Studio classrooms i.e. multi-disciplinary and multi-mode spaces to provide a dynamic and interactive learning environment. For example, CANVAS, MOODLE and Qualtrics can be used. Lectures can be otherwise replaced by rich multimedia.

2. One pitfall of the internet age is the temptation and easy opportunity for 'copy' and 'pasting' or subtler forms of plagiarism. Although anti-plagiarism software is available on the internet, a better way to combat plagiarism is to educate students about how to properly use and reference copyrighted content.

3. Creating awareness about cyber-insecurity, cyber threats, and stalking related activities.

4. In order to establish a Virtual Learning Environment, department-wise infrastructure changes, licensing agreements and firewall system are required. Along with bringing structural changes, it is also important to bring changes in the attitudes and mindsets of teaching professionals in order to develop web based learning platforms. In this context, rigorous efforts towards capacity building of the students, academics and administrative staff should be in place.

5. Setting up or getting linked to global education learning networks to arrange regular video conferencing and lecture/seminars with leading international academic institutions. Corporations could also use these resources, making the University a hub of digital networking in the country.

IX. Campus security

There is a growing trend of insecurity on the DU campus, affecting the students, faculty members and officials residing inside the campus as well as those who reside and commute from places outside the university. Female students face insecurity the most, and few are eager to stay and use the library, for instance, after class hours in the evening. There is an urgent need to improve the dismal state of security in the campus. This could include:

1. Reforming the Proctor's office: A full-time senior administrative position of chief security officer should be created. The post could be filled either by a retired officer or some other deputed personnel from the state law enforcement and intelligence agencies. The Proctor's office should also improve its coordination with the Dhaka Metropolitan Police and other concerned security services during national festivals.

2. Campus policing: A campus police unit should be created to improve overall security on the DU campus. The campus police, in collaboration with the proctor and provosts' office, should have the authority to arrest suspects and shift them to the nearest police station. Volunteers from the Dhaka University Scouts and Bangladesh National Cadet Corps may be embedded within the campus police force as part of their involvement in community service.

3. Introducing electronic ID card system for each student, faculty member and employee of the University. Only this card should allow entry to all major facilities of the University, including libraries, administrative and academic building, and halls.

X. Issues of gender and the disadvantaged

The University of Dhaka can take pride in its considerable number of female students and female faculty members. One of the two Pro-Vice Chancellors is a woman. However, the increased number of female students, teachers and administrators requires increased attention to their wellbeing, which seems to be lacking. They are mostly vulnerable to campus insecurity often resulting in harassment, unhygienic toilets, lack of childcare facilities and amenities relating mostly to women. The university also lacks well-placed facilities to

assist challenged and disabled individuals. The University authorities need to take practical measures to make sure:

1. The female and disadvantaged members of the University community have equal representation and facilities across the campus.

2. An internal ombudsman or a board of arbitration is constituted for addressing all forms of complaints on issues related to gender and the disadvantaged.

XI. Soft power of the academic community

The strength of the University of Dhaka lies in soft power, particularly in holding a national event every year in the month of February. DU hosts a national event where national leaders, including the President and the Prime Minister of the country and other dignitaries, both local and foreign, come to pay homage to the brave souls of the Language Movement. This provides an occasion for the students and faculty members to engage in cultural activities of all kinds. This soft power needs to be developed further, and this could include:

1. FM station for DU. Each department/institute/centre will be given the responsibility of managing and running it for three months on a rotational basis.

2. TV station for DU. Each department/institute/centre will be given the responsibility of managing and running it for three months on a rotational basis.

3. A faculty-wise funding unit and a management body consisting of members of all the departments for running the cultural activities of the students.

Concluding remarks: What next?

The set of recommendations made in this report is preliminary and it is intended to inspire further dialogues, debates, and recommendations with respect to positive developments at the University of Dhaka as it reaches its centenary in 2021. It is also hoped that this will inspire debates and renew conversations on reform and development of other universities across the country. The immediate tasks, however, will be the following:

- Hand over the report to the Ministry of Education, Government of Bangladesh, University Grants Commission (UGC) and other concerned ministries, agencies and institutions in Bangladesh.

- Create and maintain a website which will act as platform for interactive conversations and garnering recommendations provided by the public can be posted on a regular basis. This website is expected to be launched by March 2018.

- Commence a lecture series, at least four annually, by eminent personalities, residing at home and abroad, the papers of which will be posted on the website and published in a volume in 2021.

- Generate a national consensus on educational reforms at the tertiary level. For this purpose, the report will be disseminated, followed by discussions at various workshops outside Dhaka.

- Involve leading policymakers, educationists, and the members of civil society as well as stakeholders in both private and public universities of the country in educational reforms by holding a national conference in March 2018.

All readers of this report and anyone generally interested in the wellbeing and excellence of the University of Dhaka are requested to kindly send in their comments and suggestions to the editors of this policy paper at <imtiazalter@gmail.com> or <iftekhar.iqbal@gmail.com>.

Acknowledgements

shared, the local academic communities expressed their interest and outlined their own ways of dealing with the question of reforms of their respective university. We are therefore pleased to attach the minutes of the two dialogues held in Chittagong and Rajshahi. We are hoping that joining hands together we can achieve our objective of meaningful and positive changes in Bangladesh's higher education sector.

Appendixes

Report on the First Dialogue
14 August 2016

The Department of International Relations and the Department of History, University of Dhaka, in collaboration with Friedrich-Ebert-Stifting (FES) Bangladesh, organized the first dialogue on the "University of Dhaka: In Search for Excellence: Issues, Policies, and Recommendations" at the Special Conference Room, Nabab Ali Chowdhury Senate Bhaban of the University of Dhaka. It was held on 14th August, 2016. The program was chaired by Pro Vice Chancellor Professor Nasreen Ahmad, University of Dhaka, while Professor Imtiaz Ahmed gave the opening remarks. Special remarks were made by Franziska Korn, Resident Representative, FES Bangladesh. The dialogue was aimed at having a discussion and an exchange of ideas between scholars and academics on the Draft Policy Recommendations proposed by Professor Imtiaz Ahmed and Dr. Iftekhar Iqbal.

Professor Imtiaz Ahmed argued for the need of a declared short and long term vision for the University of Dhaka. He also discussed the need to adopt policies that would help the University of Dhaka to attain the character of a research university and improve its position in the global indexes of universities. He argued that Germany has a success story of managing public universities efficiently, making it a competent party to providing support to the University of Dhaka.

Franziska Korn, Resident Representative, FES Bangladesh, briefly explained the goals of FES in Bangladesh. She mentioned that FES, although founded in 1925 to promote social justice, democracy and development especially through youth involvement, started its operations in Bangladesh quite recently, in 2013.

Professor Imtiaz Ahmed and Dr. Iftekhar Iqbal read out their Draft Recommendations to the audience and then Dr. Tobias Berger, Research Fellow, Institute for Human Sciences, Vienna, Austria, shared his views on education at public universities in Germany over a

Skype conversation. Following Dr. Berger's conversation, the floor was open for questions and answers, comments and observations.

Observations:

1. There are very few private universities in Germany, and tertiary education in Germany is mainly the responsibility of the state. The Public universities have decentralized democratic governing structures and enjoy autonomy from all political processes. Funding for research and teaching is provided by both the state and third-party funding agencies (e.g. foundations, funds from the European Union or the Deutsche Forschung sgemeinschaft), while the universities retain their autonomy in managing their academic affairs and governance. Dr Berger suggested that Bangladesh could take these German examples in consideration (Dr. Tobias Berger, Research Fellow, Institute for Human Sciences, Vienna, Austria).

2. Many faculties are conducting research with Dhaka University-affiliated research institutes. However, their research works are not reflected in the activities mentioned in the University website. It is benefiting only the individual research institutions but not the University as a whole (Mr. Rashed Alam Bhuiyan, Lecturer, Department of Political Science, University of Dhaka).

3. Research/project proposals have to go through a bureaucratic process and many faculty members at the C&D and Academic Committee meetings end up being rejected. Because of this bureaucratic process, there is also a trend among the faculties to work independently or outside Dhaka University with other research institutes or think-tanks such as, BIDS, CPD, etc. (Dr. Imtiaz Ahmed, Professor, Department of International Relations, University of Dhaka).

4. A faculty member should be allowed to submit research proposals directly to the University authority or an alternative authority for permission (Mr. Rashed Alam Bhuiyan).

5. Like many other overseas universities, there should be an Ethical Research Committee to monitor ethical standards of the research done at the University of Dhaka (Mr. Rashed Alam Bhuiyan).

6. Research funding for students at the University of Dhaka is scarce and most of the available funding is channeled into the Faculty of Sciences. Therefore, there should be more allocation of resources or funding for research in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (Ashik Billah, Student, Department of International Relations).

7. The overall quality of the students and education are falling. Dr. Iftekhar Iqbal suggested that the number of students should be limited to the residential capacity of the University. The Pro-Vice Chancellor Nasreen Ahmad commented that reduction of student intake is not feasible within the present structure. Professor Imtiaz Ahmed then suggested that in order to ensure quality education, the existing numbers of students can be placed into several sections, each section containing no more than 30 students.

8. Tuition fee is too low in Dhaka University. It is only 25 Taka per month for each student. This should be increased to overcome problems associated with funding (Pro-Vice Chancellor, Nasreen Ahmad, University of Dhaka).

9. The University Grants Commission (UGC) has taken up projects, especially HEQEP and IQAC, for quality assessment, performance evaluation and quality upgrade at the universities. The projects have been able to bring to light various limitations of the universities and faculties. A good number of faculty members are involved in these projects, but measures should be taken to ensure quality improvement by taking feedback also from staff, students, guardians, and alumni. (Dr Nasreen Ahmad).

10. The faculty members of the University of Dhaka should regularly update their research initiatives and outcomes on their respective departmental websites so that people are informed about them (Dr Nasreen Ahmad).

11. Since there is so much space constraint in the university, half of the rooms in the Arts Faculty should not remain under lock and key in the afternoon (Dr Nasreen Ahmad).

12. The Faculty of Sciences of the University of Dhaka distinguishes between thesis and non-thesis students, and the thesis students are always affiliated with other research organizations, for example, bio-science students are often affiliated with ICDDRB or pharmaceutical companies for research. Faculty of Arts and Social Science can look for similar options for Master's students in their respective fields (Dr. Nasreen Ahmad).

13. The University of Dhaka should now aim to attract international students, attain higher university ranking in education and research and also to compete globally (Dr. Nasreen Ahmad).

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Report on the Second Dialogue
16 August 2016

The Department of International Relations and the Department of History, University of Dhaka, in collaboration with Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) Bangladesh, organized the Second dialogue on the "University of Dhaka: In Search for Excellence: Issues, Policies, and Recommendations" at the Special Conference Room, Nawab Ali Chowdhury Senate Bhaban of the University of Dhaka. It was held on 16th August, 2016. Professor Imtiaz Ahmed presented the opening remarks. The program was chaired by Pro Vice Chancellor Professor Dr. Md. Akhtaruzzaman, University of Dhaka, and special remarks were provided by Franziska Korn, Resident Representative, FES Bangladesh. The Dialogue offered opportunities for a lively discussion and exchange of ideas between scholars and students on the Draft Policy Recommendations proposed by Professor Imtiaz Ahmed and Dr. Iftekhar Iqbal. Dr. Syed Munir Khasru, Professor, Institute of Business Administration (IBA), University of Dhaka, and Dr. Mohammad Tanzimuddin Khan, Associate Professor, Department of International Relations, University of Dhaka provided synopses of their respective chapters in the book "University of Dhaka: Making Unmaking Remaking" edited by Dr. Imtiaz Ahmed and Dr. Iftekhar Iqbal. Then Lukas Daubner, PhD Candidate, Universitat Bielefeld, Germany, shared his views on student politics and student political parties of public universities in Germany over a Skype conversation.

Observations

1. Outside classroom learning opportunities should be explored (Professor Syed Munir Khasru, IBA, University of Dhaka).

2. There should be an elected student representative body (Munir Khasru).

3. There should be efforts to mobilize funding from the private sector for research in the University (Munir Khasru).

4. Private resource mobilization requires drastic structural changes and these changes may not be good for the interest of general students. Public universities must be money and class neutral (Dr. Mohammad Tanzimuddin Khan, Associate Professor, Department of International Relations, University of Dhaka).

5. National politics has a direct impact on the residential problems of the students of Dhaka University. The Vice Chancellor, the Pro-Vice Chancellor and the administration of the residential halls, change with every regime change. The student wings of the party in power manipulate the allocation of seats in the residential halls. The crisis of seats in the residential halls have a political economy. Loyalty towards a particular political group should not be the determinant of getting a place in the hall, rather students' needs should get priority (Dr. Tanzimuddin Khan).

6. Guest rooms at the residential halls are overcrowded, with 40 or more students living in one room, and they are no better than 'Hitler's concentration camps'. Absence of any elected student representative body accentuates the existing lamentable conditions of the residential halls (Dr. Tanzimuddin Khan).

7. The history of student politics in Bangladesh can be divided into four phases: pre-1947, from 1948 to 1971, from 1971 to 1990, and post-1990. The 1960s can be regarded as the golden decade for student politics and movements. The decline in the glory of student politics started from the 1990s (Dr. M. M. Akash, Professor, Department of Economics, University of Dhaka).

8. Education and educational institutions should be the prime concern of student politics (M.M. Akash).

9. Student politics currently involves arms, conflicts over tenders, communal intolerance, harassment of female students, and many other crimes and wrongdoings. These should be stopped and "Save Education" should be the slogan of student movements (M.M. Akash).

10. Education should be a right irrespective of class and should not be the privilege of any particular class (M.M. Akash).

11. Student politics should be encouraged to bring constructive changes in leadership and national politics (M.M. Akash).

12. There should be a cohesive education policy (M.M. Akash).

13. If the overall political culture and practices do not change, the present malpractices in student politics will remain the same. Student political groups operate as student wings of major national political parties. They should rather be people-centric, where their principal interest should be to serve the interest of their constituency (M.M. Akash).

14. Student political groups must participate at the macro level on issues like Rampal, Save the Sundarban, anti-terrorism activities, etc (M.M. Akash).

15. Students should considering social, cultural and political values while developing themselves as good students (M.M. Akash).

16. There should be a clear distinction between state and government. It should be realized that Dhaka University is not a government institution, it is a state institution. The autonomy of the University is often compromised because of government's intrusion into University administration (Professor Imtiaz Ahmed, Department of International Relations, University of Dhaka).

17. Election of Dhaka University Central Students' Union (DUCSU) will generate violence and electoral politics similar to those in Upazila elections. The process of election, therefore, needs to be changed. Election can take place within the departments or residential halls. Student representative elections of overseas universities can also be taken as examples (Imtiaz Ahmed).

18. The number of students in each class should be no more than 30 (Imtiaz Ahmed).

19. There should be research/teaching assistantship opportunities for Masters or PhD students (Imtiaz Ahmed).

20. There should be employment opportunities for the students. Even loans for business can be generated for student entrepreneurs (Imtiaz Ahmed).

21. E-learning facilities should be made available in classrooms (Imtiaz Ahmed).

22. There should be security checking for all public transport in the University campus (Student, University of Dhaka).

23. Security in residential halls should be increased (Student, University of Dhaka).

24. Ill-planned old buildings require repair and renovation (Student, University of Dhaka).

25. Department of Economics, Home Economics, and Health Economics have students from all disciplines: science, arts and commerce. There should be a math course for developing their basic math skills (Student, University of Dhaka).

26. University admission tests contain only multiple choice questions and it is widely believed now that this method is inadequate to evaluate a candidate's merit (Student, University of Dhaka).

27. Seminar libraries should be modernized (Student, University of Dhaka).

28. Many student politicians often harass female students and often abuse them verbally, mentally or physically. There should be a legal framework to address these issues and stop them from doing these misdeeds (Student, University of Dhaka?).

29. Responses and recommendations of the stakeholders should be taken into consideration. There should be a chapter in the book particularly on the responses of the students, guardians and employers (Dr. Md. Akhtaruzzaman, Department of Islamic History and Culture; Pro-Vice Chancellor [Administration], University of Dhaka).

30. There should be a chapter on an analysis of the overall budget and funding of the University of Dhaka. The current draft policy recommendations are focusing only on research funding and research budget (Dr. Md. Akhtaruzzaman).

31. New approaches should be explored to increase funds for the efficient management and maintenance of the University (Dr.Md. Akhtaruzzaman).

32. Student politics should be viewed positively. There should be an official elected student representative body; otherwise groups will emerge with many factions or sub-groups (Dr. Md. Akhtaruzzaman).

33. There should be an effective career consulting mechanism for the students. There is a Center for Student Counselling and Guidance in Dhaka University which is practically inactive now. This center should be revived (Dr. Md. Akhtaruzzaman).

34. There are two parallel structures of student groups and parties in the universities in Germany. One constitutes a part of the university governance body that focuses mainly on academic issues or issues related to the university, and the other works as a part of the civil society. There are young social democrats, green, conservative and liberal student parties, and they form a student parliament in every university. Representatives of the student parliament are elected every year, and sent to the academic senate and "AStA"- the General Students' Committee. Every department elects student representatives as well, and they are sent to different department boards. There are groups of students who work for sustainability, human rights or other societal issues, and also students form groups for debate, young entrepreneurship, sports or other activities. All these groups, however, cannot participate in political parties or political decisions (Lukas Daubner, PhD Candidate, Universitat Bielefeld).

35. The main issues which the student parties in German universities are concerned about include better services, teaching quality, affordable student housing, public transport, etc. They often form rallies, information campaigns, polls and dialogues between students and university management for their demands (Lukas Daubner).

36. The fund for the student parliaments comes from student social service contributions. Each student pays around 300 Euro for each semester and a small amount goes to the student parliaments (Lukas Daubner).

37. The structures of student parties and elections are abstract and complicated. Most students have strict curricula and they hardly find time to participate in student parties or other groups. Many are disinterested in extra-curricular activities. They have different demands: research, career, political interests outside of the universities (Lukas Daubner).

38. Strong and independent student representation is beneficial in many ways. It is good training for students to present their viewpoints, and a university-wide civil society can emerge as a result. A more meaningful exchange of knowledge between the university authorities and the students takes place through student representation. Furthermore, by giving students the opportunity to make decisions on certain issues, the university signals their trust towards their students and they can prove their trustworthiness in return (Lukas Daubner).

39. There should be better management to oversee and improve the ill conditions of the residential hall canteens (Student, University of Dhaka).

40. In addition to lectures, other forms of learning methods should be introduced in class, such as, storytelling, problem solving tasks, and e-learning (Student, University of Dhaka).

41. There should be training and workshops on research methods, referencing style, plagiarism, etc (Student, University of Dhaka).

42. Student exchange and cross registration of courses across departments should be introduced in the University of Dhaka (Ishfaqur Rahman, Student, Department of Geography, University of Dhaka).

43. An online student registration system should be introduced (Ishfaqur Rahman, Student, Department of Geography, University of Dhaka).

44. There should be a teaching evaluation procedure after each course (Student, University of Dhaka).

45. There should be a strong and active alumni association (Student, University of Dhaka).

46. A permanent body is required to ensure female students' security (Student, University of Dhaka).

47. There should be more creative, critical and analytical questions in the university admission test (Student, University of Dhaka).

48. Noise from vehicles should be reduced in the campus (Student, University of Dhaka).

49. Faculty accountability should be increased with regard to classes and exam script evaluation (Student, University of Dhaka).

50. There should be a database for seats availability in the residential halls to prevent student political leaders from manipulating seat allocation (Dr. Mohammad Tanzimuddin Khan, Associate Professor, Department of International Relations, University of Dhaka).

51. Teacher evaluation by the students will not always give a true picture of the commitment of the teachers. Many students will judge their teachers by the grades they receive from them, no matter how badly they perform, or how reluctantly they evaluate the exam scripts or provide lectures (Tanzimuddin Khan).

52. If we want a better teacher-student evaluation system in a 6-month semester system, we will have to follow the evaluation processes of renowned universities abroad (Dr. Abdul Momin Chowdhury, Professor, Department of History, University of Dhaka).

53. It is time to change the admission test procedure. We need to find a better option other than MCQ to evaluate students. It also needs to be noted that hundreds and thousands apply each year for admission in the University and evaluating their scripts containing critical analytical questions might create further problems (Abdul Momin Chowdhury).

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Report on the Third Dialogue
11 December 2016

The Department of International Relations and the Department of History, University of Dhaka, jointly organized the "Dialogue on University of Dhaka: In Search of Excellence: Issues, Policies and Recommendations" with the support of Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES), Bangladesh. The Dialogue was held at the special conference room in the Nawab Ali Chowdhury Senate Building, University of Dhaka, on December 11, 2016. This is the third dialogue that has been organized with the aim of accumulating the viewpoints of the students of the University of Dhaka regarding the academic and infrastructural challenges of the University. About 70 students attended the program. The Dialogue started with the opening remarks of Professor Imtiaz Ahmed, Department of International Relations, University of Dhaka. This was followed by the special remarks of Franziska Korn, Resident Representative, FES Bangladesh. Then Professor Imtiaz Ahmed and Dr. Iftekhar Iqbal, Department of History, University of Dhaka, gave a brief introduction to the Draft Policy Recommendations which they had prepared. This was followed by comments and questions from the audience. The concluding remarks were delivered by Professor Rashed Uz Zaman, the Acting Chair of the Department of International Relations, University of Dhaka.

In his opening remarks, Professor Imtiaz Ahmed talked about the glorious history of the University of Dhaka. He said that the contribution of the University in the Language Movement and the War of Independence, and later on to the nation building process in Bangladesh, is immense. This is the only university in the world where a movement for the independence of a nation was instigated. The students of this university raised our national flag for the first time on 2nd March, 1971. The University now organizes the program, for observance of the International Mother Language day on 21st February, on its campus premises every year. The University of Dhaka has always been the heart of politics, policies, movements and social as well as political changes in Bangladesh. Nevertheless, in recent years, the University's position in world rankings has depreciated shockingly. The project on the University of Dhaka, conducted by the Department of International Relations and the Department of History, has the objective of examining the challenges and issues concerning the academic and learning environment of Dhaka University, and exploring ways to address those challenges. A book

based on the project, titled "University of Dhaka: Making Unmaking and Remaking", has already been published, and an extensive study has been carried out on the challenges faced by Dhaka University. There were 14 academic experts who contributed in this book. Based on their recommendations, Professor Imtiaz said, they were now formulating a policy paper on tertiary education in Bangladesh. He said that students were an integral part of Dhaka University and student organizations can bring many changes. They are the ones who will run every institute and every office of the country in ten to fifteen years. This is the reason for having a dialogue with the students - to learn more about their opinion about the future of this university, as well as the country. Prof. Imtiaz Ahmed thanked FES for supporting this academic endeavor. FES is a German institution which has immense interest in working in the higher education sector of different countries. In Bangladesh as well, FES is working on bringing out books and policy papers and organizing a series of dialogues with various stakeholders to develop policy intervention plans and policies.

Ms. Franziska Korn, Resident Representative (FES Bangladesh), said that Bangladesh has achieved tremendous success in achieving the Millennium Development Goals, and now the country is aiming to implement the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. She said that Bangladesh needs to develop a policy to improve the education system for sustainable development. FES globally supports democratic values, economic growth and development. It aims to spread social democracy through civic education and international cooperation. And in Bangladesh, FES has immense interest in supporting Dhaka University to achieve higher academic standards.

Ms. Korn informed the audience that FES was established in 1925 after the name of German President Friedrich Ebert Stiftung. He was the first democratically elected President of Germany. He struggled for his education when he was young, and therefore he wanted to ensure education for all and supported the formation of this institution to promote social democracy and social justice.

Higher education in Germany is mainly run by the state. Student politics is common in German universities. All political parties in Germany have student or youth associations. There are four levels of student political organizations:

1. Federal level.
2. Regional level.
3. Local level
4. Youth group based at the university campus level.

Members of the youth organizations are below 30 years of age. The annual membership fee is 12 Euro. They receive some funding from the mother party organizations and also for implementing specific projects. Elections take place every two years. Forty percent of the membership of youth organizations is reserved for women. The members of the youth organizations are eligible to run for office and become a parliamentarian after 35 years of age.

Prof. Imtiaz Ahmed and Dr. Iftekhar Iqbal presented several major areas of policy intervention in Dhaka University. These are:

1. Campus politics
2. Teaching and research environment
3. Campus security
4. Soft power

Professor Imtiaz said that student politics of Dhaka University has a glorious past. It was the students of this university who protested against Jinnah's declaration of making Urdu the state language of Pakistan. However, the trend of student politics has changed in the recent past in Dhaka University. Student politics no longer concentrates on national issues, not even academic or student welfare issues. Student leaders are thinking only about the benefit of the mother party. Party politics has a devastating impact on the student politics of Dhaka University. Many scholars are arguing for having hall unions and DUCSU elections to change the unhealthy nature of student politics. It is argued that DUCSU will provide a platform to raise the voices of common students and speak out regarding their needs. DUCSU representatives will be able to raise issues related to their academic, library and hall lives. Professor Imtiaz added that Dhaka University should have an FM radio station and a campus TV station run by the departments. Each department can take charge for one-month.

Dr. Iftekhar Iqbal said that our thinking should be around several pertinent questions including the following:

- Why are we doing student politics?
- What should student politics be like in future?
- What can student politics offer for the improvement of the current condition of Dhaka University?
- How should we do student politics?
- Where should we do student politics?

Summary of the dialogue:

1. Universities are supposed to be an open place for all political and cultural activities, but in Dhaka University, these spaces are shrinking. First year students are compelled to live with 20/30 others in a guest room. Not only do they have to live in a small room with so many other students on the floor, they suffer because of the domination of senior students and student political leaders. This lack of privacy goes so far that even their messages on cell phones, Facebook accounts etc are checked. Students living in the residential halls have no freedom of expression. They are bound to join the existing regime's student political wing. The membership in that political group helps them survive in the halls. Student political leaders also eat for free in the halls and they get better rooms (Mokbinul Islam, student, Haji Mohammad Mohsin Hall, Dhaka University).

2. One of reason for the domination of the ruling party is that there has been no election in DUCSU for decades. It has become an ineffective body and a place where students can have cheap meals. Students are joining politics only for their personal gain. They are not interested in national issues or issues related to the general wellbeing of the students. The quota system for government service in Bangladesh has been criticized by most people, but no student wing has ever stood up and raised this issue during their political activities (Mokbinul Islam).

3. The government is going to build a stadium in our hall. We do not have enough space to live here; what will we do with a stadium? (Mokbinul Islam).

4. We need to distinguish between party politics and student politics. Students should not involve themselves in party politics which is all about looking after the interest of the party. Student politics should be about the demands of the students, and issues of their academic environment and wellbeing. We need to develop democratic practices and values in student politics (Johurul Islam, 3rd Year Student of History, Muktijodhya Abashik Hall, Dhaka University).

5. There are some positive sides of living in the guest rooms and joining student politics. Guest rooms are the best place for socialization. First year students are taught how to behave with their senior brothers (bhai). They learn who is holding a political post and who is not involved in politics. They learn about the junior-senior structure, and the right place to ask for support and favors. Many students become interested in politics because this creates a scope for the students to participate in various altruistic and charitable activities. Most of the guest room students participate in blood donation programs. They also participate in social support activities such as winter cloth collection and distribution among the poor, or working with street children etc (Mehedi Hasan Mizan, Haji Mohammad Mohsin Hall, Dhaka University).

6. We seriously lack research funds and publication facilities for students. Most of the students are writing plagiarized research papers. There is an inherent problem in the course structures and the way students are doing assignments. They are writing only to secure good grades. There is no uniqueness in the research, no new knowledge is created, and there is no clear impact of this whole process. If students are given the opportunity to publish their research work, then they might stop writing plagiarized papers and find it necessary to carry out original and serious research (Shakil Ahmed, Student of Development Studies, Dhaka University).

7. There is no scope for credit transfer, cross registration, or inter-departmental course enrollment amongst the various departments (Shakil Ahmed).

8. There is a lack of seriousness among many faculty members. Many come to class without adequate preparation and lectures are delivered only on the basis of a few Powerpoint slides (Shakil Ahmed).

9. Political activities are carried out mainly to secure a seat in the hall and securing jobs. No national issues or ideologies are involved here. Some join political groups in order to avoid ragging by the seniors (Wahiduzzaman Siddiqui, Student of International Relations, Dhaka University).

10. Dhaka University should initiate an FM radio station and a Youtube channel of its own. First year students need special attention. They need to develop their English language skills. There should also be opportunities to publish term papers. Departments should subscribe to public magazines and journals (Shibli, Student of International Relations, Dhaka University).

11. About 80 to 90 percent of students come from rural areas. The guest room is the place where seniors train the new students about campus life and conduct. Many students do not want DUCSU election. We are fine with the domination of a single student political organization. If we start DUCSU elections, other student organizations will participate and become politically active. This will create chaos in the campus, and the domination of Bangladesh Chatra League (BCL) will be questioned. We do not want DUCSU election until there is harmony among all student wings. I also disagree with the notion that participating in student politics is all about securing jobs. Many BCL leaders did not get government jobs even after passing the preliminary and written examinations of BCS. The CGPA system is also destroying our enthusiasm. Some departments do not give CGPA 3.50 and many of us do not get the chance to apply for government jobs. We have so many departments, but what is the relevance of having so many departments when we do not have good professors? We need our best teachers in the first year, which we do not get. Some teachers favor only those students who belong to their political group. Some teachers have no time for students after class. The halls, departments, and libraries seriously lack an academic environment for students to carry out their studies properly. We have problem of space in the central library as well. BCS examiners occupy spaces most of the time, making it difficult for many students to access the central library for reading. The University is appointing new graduates who have no teaching experience. This is adversely affecting teaching quality. PhDs should be made a requirement for faculty appointments in Dhaka University (Syed Imtiaz, Student, University of Dhaka).

12. There should be some measure of training for new teachers in Dhaka University (Shishir Mahbub, Student, Dhaka University).

13. We are lagging behind in the use of technology in the Department of Music. We do have a projector in the classroom, but it does not work. Another problem is, we do not get to study the subjects that we want to study. I have no knowledge of or background in music, but I am forced to study this subject (Mahbuba Islam, Student of Music, Dhaka University).

14. I do not think that students should be allowed to join politics in their first year. The guest room is a place where student political leaders control our movement and freedom. I was forced to attend political activities even during my exams (Imtiaz Rouf, Student of Dhaka University).

15. We still do not know what is the medium of education in Dhaka University. I think English should be the medium of instruction here and it should be made official. Also, students should be allowed to take courses from other departments (Osman Goni, Student of Dhaka University).

16. Many students do not have any place to stay in Dhaka. They should be able to get a room in the in the hall and continue their study without any political favors and pressures. Many former students keep on staying at the halls. There are outsiders as well who live in the halls using their political connections. They should not be allowed to do that. We need new halls as well. There is no restriction on outsiders to enter the Dhaka University campus. There should be measures to stop this and improve campus security (Shahnur Rahman, Student of Dhaka University).

17. There can be multiple twenty storeyed buildings to deal with the residence problem of Dhaka University students (Professor Imtiaz Ahmed, Department of International Relations, Dhaka University).

18. There can be expansion of the central library. It can be made ten storeyed (Professor Imtiaz Ahmed).

19. There should be orientation programs in all departments for the new students in first year (Professor Imtiaz Ahmed).

20. There should be a campus newspaper for Dhaka University students (Professor Imtiaz Ahmed).

Dr. Rashed-uz-Zaman, Professor and the Acting Chair, Department of International Relations, said at the end of the dialogue that we can learn a lot from the German education system and the history and philosophy of education in Germany. He said that the Humboldtian model of higher education, which started in the 19th century in Germany, gives us a holistic idea of research and studies. The University of Berlin, founded in 1810 under the influence of Wilhelm von Humboldt and renamed the Humboldt University Berlin after World War II, is traditionally seen as a model institution of the 19th century. The aim of the Humboldtian model was to integrate the arts and sciences with research to achieve both comprehensive general learning and cultural knowledge, and ultimately to create a philosophical turn of mind amongst the students. Professor Rashed-uz-Zaman expressed his desire for the same kind of institution in Bangladesh and the initiation of the same kind of philosophy for higher education as Humboldt's.

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Report on the Fourth Dialogue
13 December 2016

The Department of International Relations and the Department of History, University of Dhaka, in collaboration with Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) Bangladesh, organized the Fourth Dialogue on the "University of Dhaka: In Search for Excellence" at the Special Conference Room, Nawab Ali Chowdhury Senate Building of the University of Dhaka. It was held on 13 December, 2016. Professor Imtiaz Ahmed delivered the opening remarks. The program was chaired by Professor Sonia Nishat Amin, Chair, Department of History, University of Dhaka. Remarks on behalf of FES were delivered by Mr Shadhan Kumar Das, Program Coordinator, FES Bangladesh. Professor Abdul Mannan, Chair of the University Grants Commission (UGC) Bangladesh, delivered the Chief Guest's address. Professor Imtiaz Ahmed delivered the closing remarks. The Dialogue was aimed at having a discussion and exchange of ideas among the UGC Chair, and scholars and students on the Draft Policy Recommendations proposed by Professor Imtiaz Ahmed and Dr. Iftekhar Iqbal.

In his opening remarks, Professor Imtiaz Ahmed stated that the current project on the University of Dhaka, conducted by the Department of International Relations and the Department of History, aimed at examining the challenges and issues concerning the academic and learning environment of Dhaka University, and exploring ways to address those challenges. Professor Imtiaz said that the reason for having a discussion with the UGC was to look at issues where the UGC could make a difference. The Dacca University Ordinance of 1973 has been criticized on many grounds and many argue that it needs to be revisited, amended or changed. There should be a new clause in the ordinance that will guarantee funds from the government for Dhaka University, and changes in the regime should not affect or change that allocation without prior approval of the University. Another option is to discontinue the Dacca University Ordinance of 1973 and draft a new one. Professor Imtiaz added that the autonomy of Dhaka University cannot be ensured unless each regime stops interfering with the recruitments of academic staff, and the appointments of the Vice Chancellors and Pro-Vice Chancellors. The presence of national politics on the University campus has jeopardized academic performance, environment and overall standards. There

should be a national committee for the appointment of the Vice Chancellor and Pro-Vice Chancellor. There should be a structure for a transparent, independent, and merit-based recruitment process. There should be a single integrated faculty recruitment system. No faculty should be allowed to hold Assistant Professorship or higher positions without a PhD degree from a reputed university. There is also a need to innovate and create new ideas about how to address the negative impacts of student politics and faculty politics in Dhaka University. We also need to explore ideas about utilizing the University's soft power, and establishing an FM radio and a TV station for the University.

Dr. Iftekhar Iqbal talked about the problems related to the recruitment of academic staff and promotion practices, as well as campus politics. There are numerous Assistant Professors, Associate Professors, and Professors without PhD or MPhil degrees. There is a serious lack of research funding and facilities as well. Dhaka University must bring change in these areas to regain its position in academic rankings.

Mr. Shadhan Kumar Das, Program Coordinator, FES Bangladesh, said that FES works for the enhancement of quality of education in Bangladesh. It aims to increase the capacity and engagement of young people. It promotes social democracy, and for this purpose FES initiates educational programs to motivate, inform, enable and qualify citizens to successfully participate in political organizations, trade unions and civil spheres. The partnership with the Department of International Relations and the Department of History with the project on 'Dhaka University: In Search for Excellence' started in 2014. He added that FES is supporting this project to help identify the challenges of tertiary education and explore ways to address these challenges.

In his remarks, Professor Abdul Mannan, Chairman of UGC, said that the University of Dhaka has played a very important role in every political milestone of the country's history. The contribution of the students of the University is immeasurable in the Partition of India in 1948, in the Language Movement of 1952, in the movements of 1969, and then in the Liberation War of 1971. It is probably because the birth of this university is linked to a political cause - the imperial compensation of annulment of the partition of Bengal in 1905.

Dr. Abdul Mannan said that the University of Dhaka started its journey with three faculty members, 12 departments and 60 students in 1921. At present, the University consists of around 2200 academic staffs, 77 Departments, 11 Institutes, and about 30,000 students. "University of Dhaka: Making, Unmaking, and Remaking" is a very good book for reviewing the situation of the university. Many universities of Bangladesh lack visionary leadership. However, the UGC has developed a strategic plan for higher education from 2016 to 2026. It is planning to set up a University dedicated only to research.

Dr. Mannan said that we should not assume that a good student is going to be a good teacher. He/she must possess communication skills. There are institutional training mechanisms for teachers at primary and secondary level educational institutes. There is no such arrangement for university teachers. UGC has received proposals to introduce training for university teachers.

He added that the UGC was established to work as an intermediary between the university and the government. The rules governing the activities of the UGC are outdated. The UGC has been trying to upgrade the rules for a long period. The Dacca University Ordinance of 1973 has been subject to misuse for years. He argued that this needs to be addressed as well. In selecting faculty members, the "tribal mindset" is a major problem in universities.

Dr. Mannan said that the University of Dhaka received BDT 600 crore from the government last year. About BDT 3700 crore has been given to all the universities of Bangladesh. Research funds that are available at present are not fully utilized. This year, only 83 persons applied for 100 MPhil and PhD funding schemes offered by the UGC. We should seek alumni contributions for generating funds for research and other developmental purposes.

We should not be concerned about university rankings, because some of the ranking criteria are not appropriate for our contexts. For example, a university can be good at teaching and research but might not have a good number of Nobel laureates. In many cases, this is a highly valued criterion for ranking.

He said that we will have to look upon future prospects. Just as our glorious past, we can expect and look forward to a glorious future.

Summary of the dialogue

1. There should be a mechanism for training new faculty members in Dhaka University. This will positively impact the quality of teaching. The training can be six months to one year long for all the newly appointed faculty members of the University (Mohammad Aynul Islam, Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Dhaka).

2. Courses and curricula are designed and implemented by the respective committees formed within each department. The process is such that only a few faculty members are involved in formulating and updating the syllabus, and most of the faculty do not get the opportunity to express their opinions on the curricula. Often, the curricula are not rigorous enough. For example, the Department of Political Science does not offer any course on conflict resolution or conflict management, which I think it should have. Therefore, there should be some kind of direction either from the University, or the UGC (Aynul Islam).

3. According to the 1973 Ordinance, the University of Dhaka is an autonomous institution. However, it is not clear to many teachers what kind of autonomy this Ordinance is actually providing (Aynul Islam).

4. The faculty members of the University must have the capability to teach and deliver their lectures aptly. There are many who are probably very qualified, holding a good CGPA and probably holding 1st, 2nd, or 3rd position in the merit list, but they are not delivering good lectures. They lack in their ability to teach. The recruitment process should be such that the candidates' abilities to teach and deliver lectures are judged. Appointments should not be based on only the candidates' CGPAs (Jahidul Islam, Student, Dept. of Islamic History and Culture, University of Dhaka).

5. Student exchange programs within the same discipline should be introduced amongst the various universities in Bangladesh. Inter-departmental collaboration should also be increased (Mansura Amdad, Student, Department of International Relations, University of Dhaka).

6. It is more important to focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning in tertiary educational institutions instead of getting trapped in the politics of University rankings (Shakil Ahmed, Teach for Bangladesh, Dhaka).

7. There should be rigorous decisions and plans to enhance the quality of teaching in the University. This is a lifelong job for a faculty. We must address the issues related to the teaching performance of the faculty members in order to ensure quality education (Shakil Ahmed).

8. Very little research has been conducted on tertiary education. It is therefore important to take the initiative to fill the gap. There should be documentaries or movies like Taare Zameen Par, or there can be TV dramas depicting the challenges of university life or student and faculty politics (Shakil Ahmed).

9. Dhaka University played a tremendous role in shaping the political history of Bangladesh; but now it does not have the same capacity to do that and lacks vision. We need to decide where we want to see the University after 10/20 years. Setting a goal is very important at this stage and also deciding whether this university should be a teaching university, or a research university (Atonu Rabbani, Associate Professor, Department of Economics, University of Dhaka).

10. There is no university in Bangladesh which is dedicated to research only (Atonu Rabbani).

11. There should be incentives for faculty members to acquire qualifications. For example, in Harvard, faculty members must perform well to get tenure. Even in North South University, PhD is mandatory for an appointment as Assistant Professor, whereas one can become a Professor in Dhaka University without a PhD (Atonu Rabbani).

12. Ranking is important because it gives incentives to perform well (Amena Mohsin, Professor of Department of International Relations, University of Dhaka).

13. There is a serious insufficiency of research in Dhaka University. One of the main reasons may be the lack of research funds (Amena Mohsin).

14. The politics of voting is an issue for concern. Selection board members are nominated not on the basis of their qualifications, but because of their political affiliations, to gain

support in politics, or for votes for winning the elections. Faculties without PhD degrees have been included in the selection board in the past. Even plagiarized papers have been published in various journals of the University (Amena Mohsin).

15. A large number of children are going to English medium schools in Dhaka and the major cities of Bangladesh at present, because parents think that the quality of education is better in English medium schools. Yet, when Dhaka University is administering an admission test, the recent trend suggests that almost all the students enrolling in the University of Dhaka are from the national curricula or Bengali medium. In addition, when Dhaka University is recruiting new faculty members, it is taking only Dhaka University graduates (Iqbal; Amin). We must create a system that will help us choose the right people and judge on the basis of their qualifications. The politics of manufacturing good results is a great barrier in this regard. Importance must be given to improve the quality of primary and secondary level education (Amena Mohsin, Professor, Department of International Relations, University of Dhaka).

16. Only potential voters are appointed by the administration at the University, not teachers (Sonia Nishat Amin, Professor of History, University of Dhaka).

17. Without a PhD, no one should be appointed as a faculty member. In order to enhance the quality of teaching, we can introduce a course on a regular basis for the faculty members to update them on new issues and debates within a particular discipline (Sonia Nishat Amin).

18. Introducing the semester system was a big mistake. We are losing the ability of quality assessment. The admission process should be decentralized. We also need to introduce interdepartmental course sharing. Students should get the opportunity to cross register in different courses offered by various departments of the university (Iftekhar Iqbal).

19. In case of teacher student ratio, 1:40 should be the optimal number (Sonia Nishat Amin).

20. We should include Campus Security into the curricula. We also need to sensitize students about cleanliness and stop them littering in the University campus (Sonia Nishat Amin).

In his closing remarks, Professor Imtiaz Ahmed said that turning the University of Dhaka into a research oriented university is a good idea but would be very difficult to implement. A culture of anti-intellectualism has grown in Bangladesh. Instead of knowledge being "power", power has become the source of knowledge. Imagination is important because this is a crucial driving force for change. As Einstein said, imagination is more important than knowledge. The prospect for change at the University of Dhaka lies in our imagination.

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"Higher Education in Bangladesh:
Perspectives from the University of Chittagong"

University of Dhaka and University of Chittagong, in collaboration with Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) Bangladesh, organized the fifthdialogue on "Higher Education in Bangladesh: Perspectives from the University of Chittagong" on 13th August, 2017. The event was held at the Conference Hall, Dr. A. R. Mallik Bhaban of the University of Chittagong.

The program was chaired by Vice Chancellor Professor Dr. Iftekhar Uddin Chowdhury, University of Chittagong, while Professor Imtiaz Ahmed made the opening remarks. Special remarks were made by Ms Franziska Korn, Resident Representative, FES Bangladesh. The Dialogue aimed at having a discussion and exchange of ideas between scholars and academics on the Draft Policy Recommendations proposed by Professor Imtiaz Ahmed. Professor Imtiaz Ahmed stressed the need for a declared short and long term vision for the University of Chittagong. He also discussed the need to adopt policies that will help the University of Chittagong attain the character of a research university and improve its position in the global indexes of universities. He argued that Germany has a success story of managing public universities efficiently, making it a competent party to provide support to the University of Chittagong. He also discussed the heritage of Dhaka University and its contributions on the national level. Franziska Korn, Resident Representative, FES Bangladesh, briefly explained the goals of FES in Bangladesh. She mentioned that FES, although founded in 1925 to promote social justice, democracy and development especially through youth involvement, started its operation in Bangladesh quite recently, in 2013.

Professor Imtiaz Ahmed read out their Draft Recommendations to the audience and Ajoy Dasgupta (Deputy Editor, Samakal) discussed the present scenario of students politics in Bangladesh. After that, Professor Dr. Iftekhar Uddin Chowdhury (Vice Chancellor, Chittagong University) talked about the need for self-assessment in order to find out their strengths and

weaknesses as an academic institution, and the acknowledgement of feedback from different sectors of society. He expressed his hope that a book on the University of Chittagong will be published within six months and will represent the overall status of the University. After this, the floor was open for questions and answers, comments and observations.

Observations:

1. There are very few private universities in Germany, and tertiary education in Germany is mainly the responsibility of the state. Public universities have decentralized democratic governing structures and enjoy autonomy from all political processes. Funding for research and teaching is provided by both the state and third-party funding agencies (e.g. foundations, funds from the European Union or the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft), while the universities retain their autonomy in managing their academic affairs and governance. Bangladesh could take these German examples into consideration (Dr. Shirin Akhtar, Pro-Vice Chancellor of University of Chittagong).

2. Many faculties are conducting research with Chittagong University-affiliated research institutes. However, their research works are not reflected in the activities mentioned on the University website. It is benefiting only the individual research institutions, but not the University as a whole (Dr. M Mosharraf Hossain, Professor, Institute of Forestry and Environmental Sciences, University of Chittagong).

3. Universities should be a place for a combination of research and teaching, not just teaching only. For this, a student should be made to do research from the very first year, not in the last year. Research/project proposals have to go through a bureaucratic process and many faculty members at the C&D and Academic Committee meetings end up being rejected. Because of this bureaucratic process, there is also a trend among the faculty members to work independently or outside Chittagong University with other research institutes or think-tanks such as, BIDS, CPD, etc.(Dr. Imtiaz Ahmed, Professor, Department of International Relations, University of Dhaka).

4. Research culture of the University should be changed. There is need for a quality PhD program and teacher student relations should be focused on. It is time to find out a way

of debugging problems of the university and the university should take the responsibility of employability of fresh graduates (Farid Uddin Ahmed, Dean, Social Science Faculty, University of Chittagong).

5. Promotion criteria of teachers should be on the basis of annual reports on teaching. There should be a career development center and initiatives should be taken for leadership building among the students of Chittagong University (Mr. Moniruzzaman, Assistant Professor, Department of Statistics, University of Chittagong).

6. A co-operative initiative should be taken amongst universities, cluster of subjects, national level human resource planning is needed. The recruitment system of teachers should be by a centralized body and political involvement of teachers should be monitored (Prof. Aurongojeb, Dean, Business Administration Faculty, University of Chittagong).

7. Research funding for students in the University of Chittagong is scarce. There is need for a resource and collaboration center. Political stability among students are needed, and a uniform monitoring cell is needed to oversee result and research quality. Campus security, removal of session jams and accommodation for students in halls and transport for students should be ensured (Ashikur Rahman, Third Year student of Applied Chemistry, University of Chittagong).

8. The evaluation system of students should be uniform amongst the universities and the development of teacher-student relations is needed (Sumon Kanti, Fourth Year student, Department of English, University of Chittagong).

9. Social relations within universities should increase. Research should be society oriented. Scholarship application processes for higher studies from different business firms in Bangladesh should be easier and research should happen according to the demands of the country (Dr. Khaled Mesbauzzaman, Professor, Institute of Forestry and Environmental Sciences, Chittagong University).

10. Every university should have a uniform evaluation system. There is a need to talk about political influence and the necessity of counseling for students (Professor. Dr. Helal Uddin, Applied Chemistry, Chittagong University).

11. Like other universities in developed countries, a floating credit system should be introduced. The curriculum should be made according to the diverse capabilities of students. MPhil program should be abolished for completing PhD in Chittagong University. There needs to be a common sharing platform for both teachers and students. The duplication of research must be prohibited and evaluation systems of teachers should consider their every activity, not only their research (Dr. M Mosharraf Hossain, Professor, Institute of Forestry and Environmental Sciences, Chittagong University).

12. The faculty members of the University of Chittagong should regularly update their research initiatives and share the outcomes on their respective departmental websites so that people are informed about their work (Dr. Iftekhar Uddin Chowdhury, Vice Chancellor of Chittagong University).

13. Most university activities are finished by 2.00 pm and the campus becomes empty and lifeless afterwards, creating an environment of insecurity. Classes should continue in the afternoon by increasing the remunerations of teachers, thus providing more hours of teaching for students, as well as heightening security on the campus (Masum Ahmed, Faculty of Law, University of Chittagong).

14. The syllabus should be redesigned and subjects related to the modern context should be introduced. The student recruitment system should be uniform in at least four universities, under 1973 Ordinance. The political environment of the University should be stabilized (Prof. Dr. Jashim Uddin, Institute of Forestry and Environmental Sciences, Chittagong University).

15. The University of Chittagong should now target attracting international students, attain higher university rankings in education and research and also compete globally (Professor Dr. Shirin Akhtar, Pro-Vice Chancellor of Chittagong University).

16. Mohammad Yeahia Akhter talked about the political problems at the university in every sector of recruitment and the academic system. He also discussed the policies of UGC and said they should be uniform. He added that autonomy is needed to develop the strength of UGC (Professor Mohammad Yeahia Akhter, Department of Political Science, Chittagong University).

Rapporteur:

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"Higher Education in Bangladesh:
Perspectives from the University of Rajshahi"

A workshop on "Higher Education: Perspective from Rajshahi University" was held on 20 August 2017 at the Senate Building of the University of Rajshahi, Bangladesh. The workshop was held in collaboration with Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) of Germany, University of Dhaka and the University of Rajshahi. Pro Vice-Chancellor of the University of Rajshahi, Prof Dr. Ananda Kumar Saha, graced the occasion as the chief guest. The discussants were Professor Imtiaz Ahmed and Professor Amena Mohsin of the International Relations Department at Dhaka University, and Dr Iftekhar Iqbal, Associate Professor of History at the University of Dhaka.

Dr. Mahbubur Rahman, Associate Professor, Department of Chemistry, University of Rajshahi and Mr. Sadhan Kumar Das, FES Program Coordinator, were also present on the stage. Other attendees included faculty members and chairmen of various departments, as well as Deans of various faculties and students from across the university. Dr. Farid Uddin Khan, Associate Professor of Economics, conducted the workshop.

Professor Imtiaz Ahmed made his opening remarks following the formal inauguration of the event by Professor Ananda Kumar Saha. Professor Imtiaz said that in the year 2021, the University of Dhaka will be completing 100 years of existence as the country's first university. He mentioned that the University, despite have high potential, is not on any major global ranking, and that the main discussion is that all the public universities, including the four major ones, have both possibilities and challenges. He pointed out that while the past cannot be changed, we can change the present and the future and therefore, we should invest in the future.

After his speech, Mr. Shadhan Kumar Das introduced the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES), which was named after the first democratically elected President of the Federal Republic of Germany in 1925. His party was the Social Democratic Party. Since 2004, this organization has been working in Bangladesh.

At this point, Pro Vice Chancellor Professor Ananda Kumar Saha presented his speech. He noted that the University of Rajshahi has about 36,000 students, six institutes, 10 faculties and 57 departments. In his speech, he stated that all the students of Bangladesh need higher education considering the socio-economic context. He also said that it is necessary to think again at the policy-making stage. He mentioned several issues related to the lack of transparency, irregularities and unhealthy political activism in the universities.

Professor Imtiaz Ahmed, when presenting the policy paper on the University of Dhaka, referred to the need for the amendment of the University Ordinance of 1973. He also said that the universities mentioned are not merely government universities, but state universities. He regretted the change of university administration that occurs with the change of political regimes in the country, and questioned its impact on the autonomy of universities. In the presentation of the strategic paper, he spoke of forming a search committee on the national and international levels for the appointment of Vice-Chancellor and Pro Vice-Chancellor of the University of Dhaka. He also suggested the introduction of common courses in universities and emphasized on e-learning.

Professor Amena Mohsin thanked the Pro Vice-Chancellor for acknowledging the role of political influence in universities and said that this appreciation of reality made the occasion more favourable for open discussion. In her speech, she said that the Vice-Chancellor will surely focus on eminent figures and meritocracy. The Hall Provost must be politically neutral. Referring to her chapter "The making of a political university" in a volume on the University of Dhaka, she said that student and teacher politics should be restricted to academic issues.

Dr. Iftekhar Iqbal emphasized the need for creating a stream of knowledge and of a fraternity of universities. He praised the Institute of Bangladesh Studies (IBS) of Rajshahi University for its contribution in the broader field of Bangladesh studies, and stressed that doctoral training was required before the appointment of a teacher. He emphasized on inter-university competitions for research funding, and said that the recent economic growth of Bangladesh should inform the higher education sector, not just by developing infrastructure, but also by promoting intellectual and academic advancements and cutting edge research.

Emeritus Professor Arun Kumar Basak of Rajshahi University mentioned in his speech that he was involved as a student and teacher in the University of Rajshahi for more than 55 years. He stated that the pre-university educational background of the students is very poor. He also expressed his regret that the relative peace prevailing in Rajshahi University was not utilized properly.

After this scheduled discussion, the open discussion session began.

Professor Dr. Enamul Haque thanked all concerned for organizing such a great event. He said, "We all know where we have problems, so if we have political will, it is possible to resolve all the problems." He expressed concerns about the teachers' standards and their interest in taking private classes at private universities.

Professor of the Physics Department, Prof. Saleh Hasan Naqib said that the university can be interpreted with only one word: "excellence". He mentioned that there are many existing faults in schools, colleges and universities as well. The university must not be market-oriented, but will be able to analyse the market. He suggested that the Ordinance of 1973 was all right, but its spirit has been distorted. He insisted that elections at the campus-based student bodies must be held.

Prof. Azam Shantanu, Professor of the Marketing Department, said that, "If the raw materials are good, production will be good. Where is the interest and passion of teaching from teachers, and why can't Rajshahi University play a part in solving their regional problems?"

Professor Elias Hossain of the Department of Economics said that teachers must develop self-esteem.

Mr. Shariful Haque, Lecturer of the International Relations Department, stressed the need to introduce critical thinking courses, creative writing courses and courses that teach students to raise their voices at the beginning of education.

Professor Fayzur Rahman, Dean, Faculty of Sociology, said: "At present, half of the problems prevailing in the university can be resolved by correcting the morality of the teachers."

He also said that the teachers should have more a developed sense of their duties and responsibilities.

Professor A Wadud of the Department of Economics said that the problems of a specific university must be solved in its regional and local context.

Mr. Bijoy Krishna Bonik, faculty member of the Department of Social Sciences, asked the audience to consider the socio economic status of teachers. He added that there is a shortage of teachers in the 'mode of conduct'as well as in the 'code of conduct,' and said that politics is the only problem.

In his concluding remarks, Professor Imtiaz Ahmed said that elections are not the work of teachers. He also stressed how the autonomy of the university withers if the administration changes after the change in the political scenario. Finally, he said that this event alone will not solve the problems faced by universities in Bangladesh, but this is just the beginning, and "To create a critical mass is the major work of the university."

In the open discussion phase, the following things were also discussed:

- Develop self-respect among the teachers
- Reform the current system of recruitment of teachers to allow the selection of the best candidate.
- Reduce the political divide between teachers.
- Improve professional quality through teacher training.
- Increase the value and scope of research.

Rapporteur:

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