

Internationalisation in Universities of Bangladesh (country profile)

Different universities in Bangladesh are currently aiming to bring cross-cultural programs in the country to establish traditional and innovative academic curriculum. These very programs aim to expose students to diverse perspectives and enhance their global understanding. By incorporating traditional and innovative elements in the academic curriculum, universities in Bangladesh are preparing students to thrive in an increasingly interconnected world.

The universities provide international students with comprehensive pre-arrival information and support that includes visa application, accommodation options, local knowledge on living conditions and costs, university services etc. They also organise cultural events aiming to promote multiculturalism.

While most universities in Bangladesh have the formula of internationalisation mentioned in their mission and vision statement, a document of formal strategy for internationalisation is being prepared in the institutes. This formal strategy aims to outline specific goals and actions that will facilitate the process of internationalisation within these universities. It will provide a roadmap for enhancing global collaborations, attracting international students, and promoting cross-cultural exchange opportunities.

The concept of internationalisation holds a significant value in such institutes.

Institutional top priorities for internationalisation:

- To provide our students with the possibility to experience studying abroad.
- To establish cooperation relations with other foreign institutions in research.
- To develop learning and teaching partnerships with other institutions.
- To improve our position in international/national rankings.
- International development and capacity building projects.
- International research collaboration.
- Marketing and promoting our institution internationally.
- Outgoing mobility opportunities/learning experiences for students (study abroad, international internships, etc)
- Broadening the knowledge base of the curriculum beyond the canon
- Integrating the experience/expertise of international students to enrich the learning experience
- Integration of international/intercultural dimensions into learning outcomes for courses and programmes
- Professional development for faculty to enhance their ability to integrate international/intercultural dimensions into teaching

Main sources of funds:

- General Institutional Budget
- External Public Funds including grants and/or programmes from international organisations such as the Erasmus+ International Credit Mobility (ICM), Global Korea Scholarship (GKS) Programs, etc.

Benefits of internationalisation for the institute:

- Enhanced international cooperation and capacity building: Collaborations with foreign institutions lead to knowledge exchange, research advancements, and improved teaching methodologies.
- Improved graduate employability: International exposure and intercultural skills enhance graduates' competitiveness in the global job market.
- Increased quality of teaching and learning: Faculty development programs with an international focus and exchange opportunities elevate teaching standards and learning experiences.
- Expanded international networks: Collaborations with international institutions and researchers broaden institutions' global reach and visibility.

Obstacles to Advancing Internationalisation in the Higher Education Institutes (HEIs):

Internal Obstacles:

- Administrative and Bureaucratic Difficulties (e.g. minimal credit transfer, different academic years)
- Insufficient exposure to international opportunities, limited awareness among faculty and staff.
- Increased competition among institutions.
- Lack of government or local recognition of the efforts
- Insufficient financial resources.

External Obstacles:

- Difficulties of recognition and equivalence of qualifications, study programmes and course credits
- Internationalisation of higher education is not a national policy priority
- Limited funding to support internationalisation efforts/to promote our higher education internationally
- Complex application procedures and difficulties related to recognition of candidate's prior qualifications

Addressing the Challenges:

Several universities in Bangladesh are actively addressing these challenges through various initiatives, such as:

- Streamlining administrative processes and developing clear guidelines for international programs.
- Organizing workshops and training sessions on internationalization for faculty and staff.
- Investing in scholarships and financial aid programs to support student mobility.

- Collaborating with national and international stakeholders to advocate for supportive policies.
- Developed strong partnerships with universities worldwide, facilitating student exchange programs.
- Implemented flexible credit transfer systems among partner universities to recognize international coursework.
- Embraced online learning opportunities, including virtual exchange programs and collaborative online courses, to overcome geographical barriers during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Offers intercultural training workshops and seminars for students, faculty, and staff.
- Encourages faculty to integrate intercultural perspectives into their teaching.
- Provides incentives and recognition for faculty actively engaged in internationalization efforts.

However, a large number of universities in Bangladesh are yet to require prioritising these activities to mitigate the challenges of internationalisation in universities.

During the academic year 2019/2020, the total enrolment of international students in the universities of Bangladesh reached up to 5%. However, there are no enrolled international students who spent between 3 and 12 months in Bangladeshi universities as a part of their study programme at the sending university and vice versa.

In the same year, 5% of full-time academic staff members who were enrolled in the universities were international. This indicates that while there is a significant presence of international students in Bangladeshi universities, there is limited exchange between universities in terms of study programmes.

During COVID-19 pandemic outbreak in 2020, universities in Bangladesh conducted a few selected courses online, and the classroom teaching was promptly replaced by distance teaching and learning. Even though it was a difficult task for the faculty members to conduct classes online, the institutions organised online staff training to help them improve digital and pedagogical skills. The universities successfully adopted such a procedure to address the needs and necessities stemming from the new teaching and learning realities COVID-19 pandemic has created, as well as to aid the process of internationalisation at home. Even though the universities in Bangladesh have been actively promoting their programs and scholarships to attract students from around the world, training on interculturality for students, teachers, researchers and administrative staff has not been offered in the institutes. Policies to provide incentives for faculty who are interested and motivated to teach a course with an international implication are not in place yet.

With this increasing globalisation of education, the universities in Bangladesh are working to establish intercultural training and transnational education, and implement appropriate measures in

the near future. Hopefully, it will strengthen our international standing and empower the future generations of globally competent graduates to thrive in an interconnected world.



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