

Quality Tertiary Education and Sustainable Development in Bangladesh

Mst. Kulsum Begum

Professor, Department of Basic Science, Patuakhali Science and Technology University, Bangladesh

A.F.M. Moshir Rahman*

Managing Editor, *International Journal of Humanities Arts and Business*, Dhaka, Bangladesh

Md. Zahirul Islam

Lecturer in English, Govt. Mohammadpur Model School and College, Dhaka, Bangladesh

Dr. Md. Shahidul Islam

Associate Professor, Department of English & Registrar, Trust University, Barishal, Bangladesh

Md. Sirajul Islam

Former Lecturer, Bangladesh Navy College (BN), Dhaka Cantonment, Bangladesh

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*Corresponding Email: moshireu@gmail.com

Abstract: *Sustainable Development is an idea which inherits leaving a developed society for the future generation where they will be able to meet their needs and develop their own skills for survival. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) are designed to create a prosperous and participatory society for all. Quality tertiary education is one of the essential prerequisites of sustainable development as the core objectives of the tertiary education are exploring new knowledge, improving skills, innovation and changing values in different fields for the true development of the mankind. Role of tertiary educational institutions to Sustainable Development Goals is broad. In this respect, tertiary education has to maintain standard quality to achieve sustainable development goals. The aim of the present paper is to examine the scenario of the tertiary education and unfold the challenges for achieving sustainable development goals. Mixed Method Approach has been used to collect and analyze data for the study. The findings of the study show that tertiary education system has already been revised several times to ensure the quality education and to cope with Sustainable Development Goals but only a few numbers of public and private tertiary institutions are following high standard of curriculum and practicing research and innovation work. It is also found that very few exchange programs are designed with the world ranking universities. Another key finding is that the whole teaching-learning system fails to create the students skilled for employability. So, the findings suggest that a long-term outcome based effective plan for quality tertiary education has to be taken and implemented immediately so that it can yield the cornerstone of sustainable development and accelerate the exploration of knowledge and skills.*

Keywords: Sustainable Development, Tertiary Education, Sustainable Education, Quality Education, Skills

INTRODUCTION

Quality tertiary education is the precondition for every kind of development including the field of business, economy, innovation and technology. In case of Bangladesh, tertiary education mainly includes Bachelor, Masters, Diploma, Post Graduates Diploma degrees. This level of education has to be developed enough to cope with the Sustainable Development Goals. As the whole world is changing

very rapidly, a standard education is mandatory for everyone to cope with the situation (Irina Bokova, Director General of The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), in UNESCO 2015: 3). The concept of Education for Sustainable Development was born from the need for education to address the growing social challenges facing the world. In this respect, the process of education should include the phenomena that will make the learners skilled enough to work for the true Sustainable Development. So, education and sustainable development are strongly connected to each other that needs to be integrated to each other. ESD is holistic and transformational education and concerns learning content and outcomes, pedagogy and the learning environment (UNESCO, 2014). Twenty-first Century highlighted the importance of education in supporting human development. UNESCO Commission does not count education a magic but a mandatory and significant catalyst for making the world an ideal place where there will be harmony among the people of all walks and the rate of poverty, ignorance, oppression, war, and exclusion will be reduced continuously (Delors, 1996:11). Education has a more positive influence on health than either income or employment (Lochner, 2010).

The importance and prioritization of education within the post-2015 development agenda is well supported with the clear indication that SDG 4 will provide a standalone goal with the aim to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” (Kutesa 2015). The discussions on the post-2015 development agenda have focused attention on education as an essential mechanism to achieve sustainable development. According to (Buckler and Creech 2014), Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) has a great impact in every field of education including formal, informal and non-formal education. ESD helps to apply advanced and practical methodologies to improve the quality of education and to make the whole system more effective.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section of the study is concern with a number of literatures related to the present study to unfold the connection of those studies with the current one as well as to find out the research gap.

According to Lukman & Glavic (2007), the principles of sustainable development are becoming increasingly important, and universities are acting as agents in promoting these principles within society; thus, universities will inevitably play a crucial role in promulgating these principles. The Belgium researchers (Pauwetal. 2015) recommended a number of issues regarding the fulfilling of Sustainable Development Goal. They specially focused on the improvement of learners ‘sustainability consciousnesses by the instructors to get the desirable ESD learning outcomes. Branden (2012) advocated for a whole education system reform through some sustainable strategies for policy makers and insists upon Fullan’s (2011) four drivers a) Intrinsic motivation b) Instructional improvements c) Team work d) Allness /100 % result to foster sustainable education at all levels across the dimensions (socio, economic and environmental). Okolie (2003) recommended that tertiary education should have set procedures to work as Education for Sustainable Development so that it can contribute to the stated goals of improving the lives of target communities and peoples.

In an interview with Alcaraz, Thiruvattal, and Escudero (2010), Manuel Escudero, the Head of the Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME) Secretariat and a special advisor to the United Nations (Global Compact/PRME) initiatives, explained that it is important to note that managers who have received a business education will make economic decisions that will affect society and the environment in the future.

Littledyke, Manolas and Littledyke (2013) recommended an Education for Sustainable Development that emphasizes on such development being an urgent and important international priority, while universities play an important role in educating the next generation of professionals across a wide range of contexts. Thus, sustainability problems are closely related to higher education, which has a vital role to play in future generations. More recently, UNESCO report (2018) advocates for ESD to play an active role (in every country) across the globe to empower all learners to take informed decisions and responsible actions for environmental integrity, economic viability and a just society for present and

next group, counting the issues of overall cultural variety (Leicht et al., 2018). Johnston (2007) mentioned that there are two excellent phenomena for tertiary level educational institutions to engage in sustainable development as those institutions work as the knowledge generating, sharing and transferring entities to contribute to the true development of the society regarding every necessary arena. It is the fundamental role of the tertiary educational institutions to make everybody aware to have practical knowledge, skills, moral values etc. on the way of generating a developed and sustainable upcoming for the next group of human being.

As the present study aims at exploring the existing scenario of tertiary education in light of Sustainable Development Goals and tried to have an insight whether this level of education tends to nourish SDG, it can be said the reviews mentioned above have unfolded a number of issues correlating quality tertiary education and sustainable development though a number of new phenomena have to be added including the adaptation of syllabus, curriculum, materials etc. that the present study also includes.

The main objective of the study is to explore the core connection between quality tertiary education and sustainable development in Bangladesh perspective. The objectives of the present study are:

- i) to examine the scenario of the quality of tertiary education in Bangladesh
- ii) to identify the impact of higher education on achieving sustainable development Goals

METHODOLOGY

The researcher conducted the study implementing both qualitative and quantitative method. Based on the nature and the objectives of the study, the researchers applied Mixed- Method approach to collect data and analysis of the collected data. Qualitative method included in-depth interview of university teachers and quantitative method covered student questionnaires. The study took place at five public and private universities of Bangladesh. Five university teachers were interviewed and 30 tertiary students were provided questionnaire. It used 5-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree though both strongly agree and agree were merged into Agree. Disagree and Strongly Disagree were also merged in Disagree.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

This section covers the overall issues related to quality tertiary education and sustainable development in Bangladesh perspective through exploring tertiary level teachers and students' thinking and opinion.

Correlation between Tertiary Education and Sustainable Development

Sustainable Development has a broad connection with the development of overall socioeconomic development. So, socioeconomic development has to be addressed first in this respect. Sustainable Development greatly relies on the changes in the arena of core belief of every society that can be brought out through the quality tertiary education (Katayama, 2008). Education for sustainable development assists the human being to improve the all necessary fields to fulfill the objectives of Sustainable Development including knowledge, values and skills so that they can take wise decisions in every step of the development personally and socially without harming the resources of the world (Davidson, 2003). The demands of the twenty-first century require the universities to attempt towards the development of globally minded citizens able to effectively function in the context of an increasingly complex, pluralistic world (Sherren, 2008).

Tertiary educational institutions plays the very vital role to enhance the agenda of Sustainable Development through a number of significance steps such as: increasing the relevance of teaching and research for the societal processes discouraging unsustainable patterns of life; improving the quality of teaching and research; bridging the gap between science and education; strengthening interactions with actors outside the university, in particular with local communities and businesses; as well as introducing decentralized and flexible management concepts in higher education (Abu 2010). Universities should address sustainable development issues which involve institutional change of one sort or another. Such change will relate particularly to how the university presents its role

through vision and mission statements and how its resource usage is managed; as well as what and how it teaches its students; adding to how that teaching is managed (Scott, 2007).

Findings from Students' Questionnaire Survey

Table 1. Statistics

Statements	Our curriculum and syllabus are of high standard.	Teachers give their full effort to teach us.	Classroom environment is suitable for us.	Lectures are provided in English.	We have modern library facility.	Teachers use technology while teaching.	Co-curricular activities are given importance.	Education system is making us enough skilled.
N Valid	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30
Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean	3.53	3.60	3.17	3.73	3.73	3.30	3.17	2.67
Median	4.00	4.00	3.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	3.00	2.50
Mode	5	5	5	5	5	4	3	1
Std. Deviation	1.408	1.522	1.510	1.388	1.337	1.489	1.367	1.422

Table 2. Our curriculum and syllabus are of high standard

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	3	10.0	10.0	10.0
	Disagree	5	16.7	16.7	26.7
	Neutral	6	20.0	20.0	46.7
	Agree	5	16.7	16.7	63.3
	Strongly agree	11	36.7	36.7	100.0
	Total		30	100.0	100.0

In response to the question number one, 53% (Mean 3.53) of the participants agreed that their curriculum and syllabus are of high standard. 20% of the participants were neutral regarding the same issue and another 27% of the participants disagreed.

Table 3. Teachers give their full effort to teach you

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	4	13.3	13.3	13.3
	Disagree	5	16.7	16.7	30.0
	Neutral	3	10.0	10.0	40.0
	Agree	5	16.7	16.7	56.7
	Strongly agree	13	43.3	43.3	100.0
	Total		30	100.0	100.0

While answering to the question number two, 60% (Mean 3.60) of the participants opined that their teachers give their full effort to teach them. 10% of the participants were neutral in the same statement and another 30% of the participants disagreed.

Table 4. Classroom environment is suitable for you

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	5	16.7	16.7	16.7
	Disagree	7	23.3	23.3	40.0
	Neutral	5	16.7	16.7	56.7
	Agree	4	13.3	13.3	70.0
	Strongly agree	9	30.0	30.0	100.0
	Total		30	100.0	100.0

Regarding the question number three, 43% (Mean 3.17) of the participants believed that classroom environment is suitable for them. 17% of the participants were neutral and another 40 % of the participants disagreed. Here, the percentage of disagreed participants is very significant.

Table 5. Lectures are provided in English

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	3	10.0	10.0	10.0
	Disagree	4	13.3	13.3	23.3
	Neutral	3	10.0	10.0	33.3
	Agree	8	26.7	26.7	60.0
	Strongly agree	12	40.0	40.0	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

In response to the question number four, 67% (Mean 3.73) of the participants agreed that lectures are provided in English. 10% of the participants were remained neutral and another 23% of the participants disagreed.

Table 6. You have modern library facility

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	3	10.0	10.0	10.0
	Disagree	3	10.0	10.0	20.0
	Neutral	4	13.3	13.3	33.3
	Agree	9	30.0	30.0	63.3
	Strongly agree	11	36.7	36.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Regarding the question number five, 67% (Mean 3.73) of the participants agreed that they have modern library facility. 13% of the participants were neutral regarding the same question and another 20 % of the participants disagreed.

Table 7. Teachers use technology while teaching

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	5	16.7	16.7	16.7
	Disagree	6	20.0	20.0	36.7
	Neutral	2	6.7	6.7	43.3
	Agree	9	30.0	30.0	73.3
	Strongly agree	8	26.7	26.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

In response to the question number six, 57% (Mean 3.30) of the participants agreed that teachers use technology while teaching. 7% of the participants were neutral regarding the same issue and another 37 % of the participants disagreed.

Table 8. Co-curricular activities are given importance

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	4	13.3	13.3	13.3
	Disagree	6	20.0	20.0	33.3
	Neutral	8	26.7	26.7	60.0
	Agree	5	16.7	16.7	76.7
	Strongly agree	7	23.3	23.3	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

While answering to the question number seven, 40 % (Mean 3.17) of the participants agreed that co-curricular activities are given importance. 27% of the participants students were neutral regarding the same issue and another 33% of the participants disagreed.

Table 9. Education system is making us enough skilled

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	8	26.7	26.7	26.7
	Disagree	7	23.3	23.3	50.0
	Neutral	7	23.3	23.3	73.3
	Agree	3	10.0	10.0	83.3
	Strongly agree	5	16.7	16.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

In response to the question number eight, 27% (Mean 2.67) of the participants agreed that education system is making them skilled enough. 23% of the participants remained neutral regarding the same issue and another 50 % of the participants disagreed.

Findings from Teachers Interview

It was found from the teachers' interview that all of the five teachers thought quality tertiary education as an essential factor for sustainable development. All of them believed that though different initiative had been taken from the government for the development of tertiary education but those were not enough. They opined that the budget for the research work at the tertiary level was very poor and the support regarding the use of technology, moderation of curriculum and syllabus and the skilled based training were very poor. They suggested that the government and the university authority should take proper initiative regarding updating curriculum and syllabuses due to the needs of the students to meet the real goal. They also suggested that intuitive has to be taken to train the teachers and to make the learning environment more comfortable and friendly.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and discussion, it can be said that quality tertiary education and sustainable development are two inseparable issues which are prerequisite for each other. Though the present condition of tertiary education is much developed, it is not up to the mark to achieve the sustainable development goal. So, proper initiative regarding updating syllabus, supply of well-equipped teaching-learning materials, teachers training, co-curricular activities, and research facilities both for teachers and students should be taken immediately.

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