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# May Falgun (Spring) spark higher education

**Dr. Prodhon Mahbub Ibna Seraj** : Bangla Falgun (spring) should spark higher education in Bangladesh! The nation just has observed the blossomed Bangla Falgun (Spring). The Anti-Discriminatory Student Movement created the Bangla Falgun. I salute them! The motto of the Anti-Discriminatory Student Movement is to eradicate discrimination from all spheres of life and decompose the country. In solidarity with the movement, I would like to add my thoughts on some existing issues that are much needed to be addressed in higher education in terms of public and private universities.

At the very outset, universities should be categorized as research and non-research universities rather than private and public universities. The changing terms will bring a paradigm shift in the concepts and applications among students and teachers of both types of universities. Implementing this concept will assist in decomposing higher education and the country.

Secondly, a commission should be formed to restrict students of well-off families from going abroad for undergraduate and recruiting and returning scholars who are working in different overseas universities. For the last few years, the country has sought students from well-off families, including MPs, ministers, bureaucrats, businessmen, and so on, who are going abroad for undergraduates indiscriminately. This is also found to be one of the sources of money laundering, and this so-called elite class does not understand the actual situation of higher education. Ironically, this class plays a crucial role in the strategic planning of higher education. This class also creates an expectation gap between the middle class and the so-called class. Next, the commission should also work for returning scholars working overseas with name and fame and deployed to higher education institutions according to their merits and positions. As the motto of the movement was to reconstruct the system of the country, everyone will acknowledge that their contributions are much needed, now. Further, the commission can also work on the recruiting process of teachers at universities, setting criteria or checklists. In this checklist, the key points should be academic results, research, national and international collaboration, attending/presenting workshops/seminars/conferences, involvement within the community, and soft and ICT skills. The checklist should be strictly maintained.

Moreover, it is noticed that there is an untransparent system for teachers' evaluations and promotions at both private and public universities. It's a myth in a country if you get a job in govt. university, you will never lose it (this myth is true for all govt employees). So, a transparent and concrete KPI (Key Performance Index) should be introduced and maintained strictly. Depending on the annual KPI, a teacher should be evaluated for promotion, increments, and other facilities. The rule should be "the more you maintain KPI, the more you secure your job." Many will say we have this in our system. However, we did not find it functioning, so we needed to decompose the system.

Fourthly, political party-wing students' politics should be abolished from higher education. Bangla Spring (Falgun) is the best example of a non-political student movement. We have seen many times the bankruptcy of political party-wing students' politics in higher education. For the last few decades, they have been merely creating anarchy all over the country, fulfilling the agenda of parties. Rather than that, Student Sangsad must be activated to raise the voices and practice democracy for future leaders. Student leaders must maintain a transparent checklist or KPI when they are being selected. KPI can be prepared according to academic results, social involvement, moral grounds, and so on.

Fifthly, the admission system for the undergraduate level should also be decomposed. Nowadays, it has become an earning system for universities, causing students to suffer a lot. A unique and unified admission test should be introduced for both public and private universities, where admission can be made gradually according to the merits and choices of merit students. Here we may try our best for hassle-free admission for our freshers.

Sixthly, public university teachers' involvement in private universities should be restricted. This type of involvement has several detriments. It is sought that students at public universities have been deprived of the teachers' services. Moreover, teachers are spending a large amount of time outside their campus. In some cases, teachers do not have time for research and studying course materials. That's why a psychological and emotional gap

studying course materials. That's why a psychological and emotional gap between teachers and students has been raised and found in this Bangla Falgun Movement. On the other hand, as the authority of private universities can hire teachers from public universities on a part-time basis, they mostly do not care about their teachers in terms of their promotions, salary structures, and so on. This sort of event creates a discriminating class in the teachers' community in higher education in Bangladesh.

Seventhly, it has been noticed for years that most of the opportunities regarding research funds/grants/projects, as well as scholarships circulated by the Ministry of Education and UGC, are mostly for students and teachers of public universities. This is a sort of violation of human rights. Moreover, representations from Private Universities at UGC are scarce. Initiatives should be taken into account to eliminate this sort of discrimination.

Last but not least, the Ministry of Education and UGC must have separate wings to facilitate and promote research for all the students and teachers of the universities. They must have a database of publishing journals, conferences, workshops, and research publications. They must set criteria for categorizing journals (A, B, C, etc.) published by the universities. They may introduce the Bangladeshi Index for all publications in journals, conferences, and book chapters.

Nevertheless, we people say that is all we have because we love to talk and are reluctant to work. Bangla Falgun revolutionizes all spheres of life, and we hope for a better Bangladesh ahead!

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