

Chapter 21

The Role of Higher Education in Institutionalising Climate Change in Bangladesh

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Abstract Since the inception of higher education (HE) over one hundred years ago, its purpose has been to cater for the religious and social leaders who will be competent enough to run the country. Paradigm shifting in HE has made society realise that every profession demands competent professionals to provide balanced development across all educational sectors in order to see national development progress. As a result, universities now provide a wide range of training and education in the arts, sciences, social sciences and commerce, which may have caused the recent IT and e-commerce revolution. However, the primary contribution of HE is still seen as supporting economic development because it contributes less than other developmental phenomena. In developing nations, the issue of climate change is yet to be perceived either as an economic or as a social developmental agenda item. Consequently, HE provides less attention to climate change. However, climate change has a serious impact not only on economic development but also on social development. Therefore, HE needs to discover a concrete and substantial way in which to handle climate change. This novel piece of research, which is the first of its kind in Bangladesh, used qualitative methods in order to outline the policy direction that HE may adopt to make its role more distinct in handling climate change.

Keywords Climate change • Higher education • Sustainability in education Policy • Bangladesh

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Introduction

The criteria of education and their schemata have evolved from historical social practices. The interpretation of social events is guided and constrained by the prevailing rationality, which itself reflects the dominant constellation of power (Alam 2009). Currently, every provision, type, level and pattern of education is experiencing a serious experimental process (Alam 2008). Adherents of this experimental philosophy argue that in order to cope with modernisation and to ensure timely education, the philosophy of education outlined in earlier times cannot be followed in this contemporary world (Alam et al. 2010). They further argue that the philosophy of education needs to be revised in a way in which it can respond to the needs of the 21st century (Alam et al. 2011). On the other hand, opponents advocate that in this era of 'commodification', the education system is overly responsive towards programmes that can offer early economic benefits to its 'customers' (Brennan 2012; CHE 2000). According to Alam (2013) and Konrad (2013), this attitude forces the education system to ignore many fundamental and pertinent components connected to social development, especially those programmes related to sustainability in education. However, sustainability programmes in education with a spotlight on climate change programmes provide a wider value in terms of both economic and social returns¹ (Laessoe et al. 2013; Lemons 1995, 2011; Feinstein 2009; IALEI 2009; Rowe 2007; Bowers 2008; Kerr 2001; Weis et al. 1992; Aldrich and Kormondy 1972).

Primary education is seen as an important component for the civic and ethical development of children. Secondary and tertiary education is considered to be the main weapon to develop 'human capital' with an assurance of providing the necessary citizenship skills to students (Dalton and Crosby 2010). The core business of higher education (HE) is considered to be a production house of knowledge through research, and this knowledge is fundamentally disseminated to the community for wider benefit (Boulton and Lucas 2011). HE should partially be responsible for the dissemination of knowledge; however, the prime responsibility is to discover a substantial mechanism both for primary and for secondary provisions that can ensure the decent and pragmatic dissemination of knowledge invented by HE (Kerr 2001).

Climate change is a contemporary topic, especially in the area of research (Laessoe et al. 2013; Lemons 2011). This topic falls under the scope of sustainability programmes in education (Laessoe et al. 2013; IALEI 2009). Even though the topic of climate change has been gaining increased popularity, universities and research institutions have mainly considered this to be an issue exclusively for research. Therefore, a complete academic-taught programme deliverable from primary education to HE is missing (Laessoe et al. 2013; O'Brien 1998). In the

¹ If the world vanishes because of climate change, what would be the point in having economic gains.

current situation, primary education in some countries may have some content on climate change as a part of its social sciences programme. Meanwhile, secondary provision via science departments may deliver little content on climate change, particularly related to awareness programmes, compared with the multidisciplinary climate change programmes at university (Vincent 2010; Rowe 2007). Although theoretically claimed as multidisciplinary, every single faculty conducts research or offers courses at a small scale in the area of climate change without being rigorously involved in inter-faculty collaboration and linkage (Fahey 2012; Filho 2010). This is primarily seen as the root cause of the sluggish progression of the climate change topic to become a full-fledged subject of study (Reed and Mera 2011). It is fair to assume that because of lower achievement in HE, the climate change topic is yet to receive high attention from primary and secondary provisions (Fahey 2012). Therefore, although the research impact on climate change may theoretically be high, the overall impact on society to date is insignificant because of the low level of participation by both primary and secondary provisions in the due course of dissemination (Fahey 2012; Reed and Mera 2011).

A good number of studies are ongoing around the world in research institutions and higher academia, but the current evidence on climate change issues and impacts and vulnerability issues indicates that the world is still behind in terms of effective actions and appropriate awareness programmes for dealing with climate change matters (Al-Amin and Filho 2011). Keeping this view as a research issue, this novel piece of research aims to discover how HE can play an important and constructive role in institutionalising climate change as a core subject of study using Bangladesh as a case study. This may also help researchers find a way for other subjects in the area of sustainability in education to institutionalise this as a core subject of study.

Conceptual Development

Climate change and its nature vary because of a number of parameters. However, the causes of climate change can broadly be differentiated into two directions: (1) human activities and the factors for transformation towards modernisation and globalisation and (2) nature-driven causes (Ritter 2009).

Human Factors

Climate change is a repercussion of globalisation and modernisation; consequently, within current trends, its impact is inevitable (IPCC 2007; Stern 2007). Lately, a reasonable number of scientific studies have evidenced the repercussion effects of globalisation (Ritter 2009; Oreskes 2004). It is thus straightforward to see the linkage between climate change and modernisation by human activities.

In exchange for the complete cessation of modernisation, some degree of climate change could be prevented; however, the existence of human beings on the planet will continue to cause climate change (IPCC 2007; Wigley 2001). Ceasing modernisation would simply be impossible. Climate change caused through modernisation is a human-made concept that is not feasible to prevent completely (Stern 2007). However, a greater degree of awareness of the people involved in different stages would help in reducing the volume of climate change and damage without interrupting modernisation too much (Singh 2013). Well-evidenced arguments confirm that industrialised countries are the principal contributors to climate change, while developing countries are victims because of their relatively low bargaining power (Sheila 2003). Extensive knowledge and awareness both at macro and at micro levels may help. Consequently, education and effective knowledge on awareness can play a major role in change. It is a fundamental responsibility for legislators to discover a substantial mechanism that can answer: what can universities do to address the issue of climate change?

Natural Factors

In addition to the human-led causes of climate change, natural causes are also influential. The climate of the world can be affected by natural factors that are external to the climate situation, such as changes in solar output, volcanic activity and the Earth's orbit around the sun (GOV 2012). These factors primarily influence the incoming energy, which is important to the Earth's energy balance. Volcanic eruptions are episodic and have relatively short-term effects on climate change. Over the past century, although changes in solar irradiance have contributed to climatic trends, increasing greenhouse gases caused by the Industrial Revolution has affected the atmosphere by about 10 times as much. However, both human and natural causes are interrelated (GOV 2012). A better way of handling the issue and building awareness is to offer a key solution to the problem, which can mainly be acquired through institutionalising such knowledge.

Scenario of Climate Change in Bangladesh

The issues of climate change and its vulnerabilities and impacts are not new concerns in Bangladesh (Rahman and Alam 2003). Climate change causes vulnerability to the demography and physiography of the national economy for which development is affected on a regular basis (INC 2002; Saleemul et al. 2003; Ahmed 2008; Mazumder 2010). Hence, climate change is no longer only an ecological problem but also a fundamental issue for future development (INC 2002). The increases in temperature, inadequate rainfall, irregular weather pattern and short winter and long summer are causing catastrophes (Rahman and Alam 2003;

Saleemul et al. 2003; Mazumder 2010). In particular, according to INC (2002), IPCC (2007) and UNFCCC (2007), 8 % of the low-lying lands in Bangladesh may become inundate, 8 million people could be affected by drought and 70 million people could suffer from floods by 2,050. The probable impacts of climate change are already well known and changing climate patterns are adversely affecting plant, water, soil, animal, agriculture and ecosystems (Al-Amin et al. 2010; Al-Amin and Alam 2011; Al-Amin and Filho 2011).

Since the economy of Bangladesh depends on climate-sensitive sectors (such as fisheries, livestock and agriculture), any alteration in the climate causes more vulnerability compared with many other counterparts. In particular, the poor, who essentially depend on a sector controlled by sustainable conditions in nature, are the main victims of climate change (INC 2002; Saleemul et al. 2003; UNFCCC 2007). Bangladesh lacks long-run climatic national plans. The sustainable development of natural resource management to handle climate change is yet to be developed in Bangladesh. It rather translates and orients short-versioned action plans that only deliver short-term solutions (Reza 2004). Environmentalists and related agencies, however, have recently started looking for mechanisms, especially awareness programmes, to handle these issues. However, owing to budgetary constraints and a lack of institutional support, short- or long-term action-oriented tools to deal with future impacts are lacking. This undoubtedly restricts the ability to cope with potential vulnerabilities. Political commitments, international pressure and an awareness of the impact on development have all helped make some legislative changes in the past two years. However, sincere attention is now required for periodic reviews of legislative provisions on HE, environmental policy aims and a redefinition of sustainable development (Saleemul et al. 2003). Bangladesh is yet to realise that building awareness is a key solution to the problem, which can mainly be acquired through institutionalising such effective knowledge.

HE: A Paradigm Shift

The criteria of HE and their schemata have evolved from historical social practices. Evidence confirms that the first university in the world, Al-Azhar University in the Middle East established in the 970s, was the exclusive world leader in knowledge for a long period. The activities carried out and role played by Al-Azhar University primarily shaped the philosophy and role of HE in general (Altbach 1999, 2004). Later, universities in Europe especially in the United Kingdom, took over the leading role of HE with some amendments made both to philosophy and to the role of HE (Ball 1993). The US system gradually began to compete through large investment in both public and private provisions (Symes 1996, 1998; Ball 1993). After the rigorous involvement and drastic shift in paradigm (which was primarily created by the US system), global HE has enjoyed significant successes and tensions (Altbach 2004; Symes 1996).

After examining the regime of HE, let us now examine the role of HE in different eras. Until the 1500s, HE followed the concepts prescribed by Plato and Aristotle, namely it set out to form the intellect and character of students, with character defined to include moral and civic aims (Alam et al. 2011). From the late 1500s to the 1700s, HE consisted of seminaries to prepare religious leaders and liberal arts colleges to prepare the wealthy to become the leaders of the society. It was intended for the few and the elite, so that they could lead the uneducated masses. In the late 1700s, Oxford, Cambridge and Harvard advocated that the purpose of a state university was to promote social improvement and individual happiness (Nigel 2005). Newman in the 19th century argues that the purpose of a university in the early 1800s to the 1900s was to train elite scholars in order to render them competent enough to work for the public service that ran the country (Alam 2009). From the 1900s to the 1960s, multidimensional views asserted that universities do far more than what Newman initially envisaged. Universities recognised that every profession demands competent professionals (human capital) that countries need to bring about balanced development across all educational sectors in order for national progress (Alam 2009).

As a result, universities now provide a wide range of training and education in the arts, sciences, social sciences and commerce, which may have caused the recent IT and e-commerce revolution. Well-developed communication systems in the ether and across landscapes remind us that universities are centres for sharing and exchanging knowledge, and excellence in scholarships (Alam 2009). From the late 1960s, HE has traditionally been considered to be for both the 'public' and the 'private' good. It delivers a unique product—that of knowledge—and the credentials to apply that knowledge in a modern society. It provides the necessary skills for individuals to raise their income levels and to follow prestigious careers (Alam 2009). At the same time, HE improves the condition of the human resources needed for societal growth and the operation of a modern economy (Alam 2009). Since the late 1980s, the concept of commodification in HE has taken place both in public and in private institutions, especially in private provision (Alam 2009). These days, buyers, consumers, suppliers and providers see HE as a commodity that should provide financial gain to each party or stakeholder involved (Alam 2013).

Lately, discussion on HE often generates more heat than constructive criticism. The adherents of different thoughts have been putting a significant amount of effort into proving their excellence (Alam 2009). Consensus is yet to be placed because most states and regions of the globe need a distinct nature of HE suited to their economic, social, cultural and religious patterns (Alam 2013). While the area of science in HE may have a common international phenomenon with little adjustment in light of local needs, the areas of social sciences, arts and humanities simply cannot progress if there is no distinction based on the local context (Nigel 2005). However, distinction concocted for the local context always faces recognition and validation challenges internationally (Alam 2013). Developing and underdeveloped countries always struggle to set their education systems to reflect their own needs and demands because of budgetary and cultural constraints

and an ostensible colonial mental setup in both ruling and ruled countries (Alam 2009). This always forces them to breathe in a colonial pattern imposed by the prevailing dominants. Bangladesh is no exception to this because of its economic backdrop and long heritage of being colonised.

Some debated questions have lately developed from the dramatic paradigm shift in the arena of HE. Should HE institutions follow the philosophy of HE determined earlier? Should they be included in the philosophy of HE whatever they have lately been doing? Should HE institutions have a predetermined role? Should all the activities carried out by institutions of higher learning be expected of HE? Common answers are yet to be framed. However, the drastic paradigm shift in HE is lately driving us to realise that each state or region should adopt a distinct nature of HE aligned with a global prototype, thus ensuring a full-fledged course for the overall education system connected to sustainability programmes in education towards a better state. This also shows us that sustainability programmes in education should receive higher attention.

HE in Bangladesh

Dhaka University (DU) is the premier university established in the early 1900s for training the elite intelligentsia to run a flawless bureaucracy. Later in the 1960s, challenging DU's concept of a 'Man as Man' knowledge delivery method, the concept of 'Land-Grants delivery' mode came to be known as the Bangladesh Agriculture University. Simultaneously, the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology started operations with its 'Factory/Industry Grants' delivery mode.

The total number of public and private universities in Bangladesh is 42 and 73, respectively. Four out of the 42 public universities are traditional such as DU, while the rest are specialised. Lately, some traditional universities have started offering additional programmes taught in specialised universities and vice versa. On the contrary, most private universities are confined to either a business or an IT school. Universities provided access only to 4 % of qualified secondary graduates until the 1980s. With the affiliated institutions of HE of National University of Bangladesh (NUB) and the private HE sector, this number has increased dramatically. Currently, HE provides access to 42 % of qualified secondary graduates. However, Alam (2013) argues that most secondary graduates are only theoretically qualified to be enrolled into HE and that the quality of secondary graduates is sacrificed for the sake of a quantity-friendly market. This has benefitted both rich customers and the private sector.

HE received 20–25 % of the total budget in education until the late 1990s. This was curtailed to 8–12 % after the massive growth of the private sector. The education sector is still one of the highest priorities when allocating the national budget, and the reduction of allocation from HE increases the allocation for primary and secondary provisions. Until the late 1970s, the employment of university graduates

was limited to only public service commission. Therefore, many graduates from the area of agriculture and engineering have been working as administrators under the Bangladesh public service commission. From the late 1980s, the development of NGOs and the private sector has increased dramatically, which has provided remarkable employment for HE graduates. However, there is a mismatch between the degree and available jobs, resulting in a huge number of HE graduates remaining either underemployed or unemployed.

Academics in the public HE sector receive the same salary as their counterparts in other public sectors. However, the counterparts working in the public service enjoy some additional benefits such as transport and a travelling allowance, while academics enjoy only flexitime. The private HE sector is yet to follow a prescribed salary structure; hence, some academics in the private sector may enjoy huge salary packages, while the rest are badly underpaid. Academics from business and IT in public universities earn significantly higher because of their part-time involvement in the private sector. Despite high qualifications, academics are always paid less in comparison to their colleagues in the private sector.

Research Design

This article aims to generate discourse through the analysis of secondary data and intellectual debates. In order to obtain information, a number of related official websites, scholarly sites hosted by different organisations and blog sites were browsed. Moreover, data received through fieldwork were also supplemented. Many of the arguments were also made through the analysis of the data received through fieldwork. Qualitative methods were used that allowed interviewees to express their views in a free and personal way, giving as much prominence as possible to their thematic associations.

Semi-structured interviews by using a qualitative approach were held with the personnel at the Ministry of Education, Ministry of the Environment and Forestry, Department of the Environment, University Grants Commission (UGC) and management, staff and students at both public and private universities. Focus group discussions were conducted with teachers, administrators and students in secondary and primary provisions. The paper also concentrated on the use of data collected from a document review and observations.

Data Collection, Analysis, Confidentiality and Limitations

The document review provided us with an excellent opportunity to preview the overall scenario and prepare the semi-structured interviews to generate in-depth understanding. The objectivity of the study was achieved through the triangulation of samples. As suggested by Bell (1999), we conducted trial interviews with

colleagues, which guided us to realise the need to ask further questions based on their answers in the final interviews. Therefore, the final interviews with respondents were semi-structured. Interviews were segmented into four phases. While the first phase included students, the final phases covered key legislators. This sequence guided us to ask the relevant questions on a phase-to-phase basis. Since legislators are the key designers of strategies, they were interviewed last to communicate the relevant issues from the other phases. A second session of interviews was conducted with some respondents for cross-checking purposes.

A briefing on the purpose, focus and confidentiality of the research was made before the final interviews. Each interview lasted 35–45 min compared with legislators' interviews, which lasted around an hour. We asked several indirect questions and respondents' answers led us to ask further questions. We enquired if they could tell us more that was not covered but relevant to the research. This prompted respondents to disclose additional useful information. The exact sequence of the interview questions was altered to maintain a friendly discussion. Our discussion ended with a healthy rapport by thanking all participants for their constructive, positive and critical feedback with an assurance of security and confidentiality regarding information. We sought their permission to record the interviews to which most of them agreed, leading us to record, transcribe and listen to the interviews for our analysis.

As researchers from educational management, we took care with all our cultural baggage and aimed to be entirely objective in our data collection by being aware of possible positional power issues that might arise from power differences. The findings of this qualitative research project are limited to the affiliated HE institutions in Bangladesh and cannot be generalised. They can, however, be a pathway for further research in other developing nations.

Findings and Discussion

Before narrowing the topic to the role of HE on climate change education and research, let us state some basic statistics and facts on HE in Bangladesh.

Genesis of HE and Public Universities

Offering informal HE was started by the visiting religious and spiritual leaders from the Arab World. In July 1921, DU, the first official institution of HE, started its operations as a British colonial university (DU 2012). This university was the witness and main activist of many revolutions over the period. Consequently, DU is seen as the apex of the knowledge world in the region (Alam 2008). Until 1971, the growth of universities and HE institutions was unexpectedly slow. After independence in 1971, even though legislators realised the need for the expansion of

HE, owing to budgetary constraints, the expansion did not take place immediately. From the early 1980s, the government considerably expanded HE by establishing new universities and institutions or transforming institutions into universities (Alam et al. 2007).

Altogether, 34 public universities have been actively involved in providing HE. Out of these 34, 32 are conventional and two are unconventional universities. Of the latter, the Bangladesh Open University mainly covers the dropped out graduates from the secondary system in order to give them some basic training and secondary education through open and distance modes. On the other hand, National University, Bangladesh is not directly involved in teaching and research. Through its affiliated institutions, National University only provides teaching to undergraduates and master's students without any involvement in research. This university shares 90 % of the total enrolment in public sector. Of the 32 conventional universities, a significant number are engineering universities, while a few are for agriculture and medicine.² Universities rarely engage in research. Some academics of these universities may be involved in research through their individual consultancy services for different agencies and companies.

Private Universities

In the early 1990s, Bangladesh HE passed a new milestone as a GATS (General Agreement on Trade in Services) member country by opening its HE for the private sector. After the commencement of the private sector, its expansion was dramatic, rapid and politically motivated (Alam 2008). This attitude developed a quantitative sector, thereby sacrificing its qualitative nature (Alam 2013). These days, private counterparts are challenging the public sector from multiple positive and negative angles. Since challenges from negative angles are dominant, it is no surprise to see the quality of both public and private universities declining, while the growth in the private sector is mushrooming (Alam 2013). In total, 73 private universities are currently recognised by the UGC; however, there are few ostensible franchises universities in the market without a valid operating licence from concerned regulatory bodies (UGC 2010).

Owing to the regular entrance of newcomers and sudden collapse of private HE institutions, providing an accurate figure is impossible. According to the UGC, the private sector currently shares more than 65 % of total university enrolment but only offers very limited popular programmes. These programmes are seen as Western, especially American, programmes. Without identifying local needs, the private sector mainly offers business, IT and other low-cost programmes (Alam 2013).

² A number of public medical colleges are affiliated with different universities. Medical colleges provide education in medicine.

Role of HE in the Education and Research of Climate Change

The following subsections examine the specific role that HE plays in different areas of climate change.

Education Programmes

According to the information available on the websites of the universities, neither a single public nor private university offers a complete programme on climate change. It is surprisingly observed that none of these universities offers a complete programme (undergraduate or postgraduate) connected to a course in the area of sustainability in education. However, data gained from telephone conversations with the management of public and private universities testify that even though there are no such programmes on climate change, universities have lately started offering sustainability programmes in education (e.g. environmental science, urban and rural planning). In this regard, the statement by a Vice Chancellor of a reputable university is worthy of note:

“As we hardly design any programme or course curriculum in Bangladesh, we are overly dependent on the programmes, courses and curricula of Western universities. Given this nature, the current market of higher education and operational bureaucracy, it is somewhat impossible to offer sustainability programmes in education, especially programmes such as climate change and disaster management. However, we are slowly entering into these by providing some tiny courses alongside with our different programmes, although it is very insignificant.”

The statement above implies many constraints that Bangladesh HE may face. However, it also shows the hope and willingness for sustainability programmes in education, especially on climate change. By using this scope, a well-implementable decent policy and action plan on climate change education may ensure a better education, which the country needs.

Research on Climate Change

HE plays a significant role in research on climate change. Interviews with the academics and students of public universities confirm that a few public universities have recently produced a remarkable number of PhD theses and master's dissertations in the area of climate change. All this research is devoted to discovering insights into climate change that are applicable regionally. These attempts are encouraging. Some development partners (i.e. DFID, British Council, Action AID and USAID) have been working in the areas of both research and field

implementation to address climate change. Academics from both public and private counterparts are involved in research on climate change. In this regard, one of the officials of a development partner shares her experience:

“Initially, academics in Bangladesh used to blame industrialised countries for the adverse situation that Bangladesh was experiencing due to climate change. Fortunately, they now realise that this is a grave concern and, without finding the faults of others and making further delays, everyone should contribute their best to tackle it. I am very happy that academics in Bangladesh are now contributing remarkably to research outputs on climate change.”

An academic of a public university observes:

“Since the fund for climate change research comes from development partners, the findings may be prejudiced to protect the funder’s objectives, which also fail to provide proper recommendations to protect the interests of our country.”

Currently, the British Council in Bangladesh is providing support, mainly logistics, to academics to conduct research on climate change and to discover pragmatically implementable projects for society that could help reduce both human and natural causes.

Climate Change Education for Primary and Secondary Levels

Before stating the role of HE in climate change education for primary and secondary levels, let us quote a few lines of a public speech given by the Minister of the Environment and Forestry: “Higher education can only play a think-tank role for climate change. It is the primary and secondary graduates who can really bring the best outcomes for climate change. They are the largest group who are involved with both human and natural causes of climate change.”

This is inevitably a real concern. However, we are well aware that primary and secondary provisions do not live in isolation. It is HE that conducts research and designs the programmes, courses and syllabuses applicable both for primary and secondary provisions. In this regard, an observation of an academic can well interpret the situation:

“A programme may initially be started either in higher education or in primary and secondary; however, if we want to give sustainability for the said programme and course, it should be readily available for every provision. If it is only available for higher education, the effectiveness of the course will ultimately be insignificant since higher education graduates use the degrees as paper qualifications to obtain a job. Thus, for real changes and the grounded impact on society, both primary and secondary graduates should be included.”

Hence, the role of HE is manifold. In addition to conducting research and discovering a programme on climate change suited to students pursuing HE, HE needs to discover a wide range of programmes on climate change suitable for various target groups studying at different levels of primary and secondary education.

Social Awareness of Climate Change

Lately, HE has conducted seminars and symposiums on climate change, which have created a degree of social awareness. The messages delivered through these seminars and symposiums are only communicated to the education community. Bangladesh has a significant population who are still out of reach of the messages usually provided by these seminars and symposiums. Development partners are striving to knock door-to-door in order to ensure that the messages are conveyed. However, isolation from the education system and industries is keeping the programmes carried out by development partners far behind reaching the targeted group.

Strategic Planning and Policy

In order to describe the strategic plan and future policies, the following key findings are hereby discussed. The topic of climate change is living within the research boundary of HE. The programme is still an unpopular subject to be taught. This is partly because the psychological and social attitudes of students and parents always favour a degree that provides quick employment with a reasonable private benefit. Although development partners advocate topics on climate change, the graduates employed with them have science, engineering or social science backgrounds. Consequently, they do not raise their voices in order to institutionalise climate change as a complete academic programme. It is an easy assumption that because of the non-supply of climate change graduates, development partners are forced to employ others to act for the climate change issue. However, if development partners make climate change knowledge a compulsory requirement of obtaining the job, this would gradually motivate students, parents and suppliers to ensure a proper supply of graduates specialising in climate change. This will be easier now since private HE institutions have become more responsive to job market patterns for survival.

Currently, academics are enjoying a greater private benefit through their private consultancy on topics of climate change. This is why they may be somewhat reluctant to materialise this topic into an academic programme. However, the long-term benefit will be erased if climate change is not institutionalised. Moreover, an academic programme is not a competitor of private consultancy. They would rather supplement each other. Currently, both the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of the Environment live in isolation, which hinders the institutionalisation of climate change as an academic programme. Owing to the urgency of the issue, the UGC and Department of the Environment should start collaborative work to open the academic gate for sustainable programmes on climate change as an academic programme with collaboration among different stakeholders (i.e. industry, development partners, the ministries and agencies concerned for sustainability programmes such as climate change, disaster management, water and natural resources).

Conclusion

The outcome of this article is fundamental to dealing with the role of HE in institutionalising climate change. Academics recognise the lack of HE policy in Bangladesh. As climate change is a real concern there, HE should be seen as supporting the climate change concern with other economic development; however, unfortunately, it is yet to be perceived effectively as a developmental phenomenon. We understand that HE needs to be discovered in a substantial and concrete way to handle climate change. We note that legislators should re-examine the roles and responsibilities of every sector by reflecting on the possible ways in which to dissolve the differences that can complement each other. This may contribute to having a complete academic programme on climate change to support national development and international competitiveness on this vital issue and thus to change education in Bangladesh.

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