

The current education system is well constructed and fairly apt in meeting the needs of the modern world. However, education is living, breathing and changing. With rising tuition, development of technology, changing demographics and lingering high unemployment rate, this system of education might not sustain in the future.

The future of education depends on inspired leaders who can think critically and serve humanity. To combat the upcoming challenges, the world needs problem solvers and not just 'fact learners.' Instead of a 'one size fits all teaching system,' we need a paradigm that hones diverse and dynamic intelligence types. The future is no distant fairy land. It is owned by those who prepare for it today. The future is 'here and now.'

From primary schools through to the top of the academic pyramid, technology is causing a deep shift in how students learn. Technology has affected not only the availability but also the accessibility of information. Tomorrow's students will receive information through their cell phones and computers and be self sufficient. Cutting-edge technologies will bring children and educators from different countries under one roof and hence promote collaboration between cultures. The future schools will be located in the clouds where the children will be sent on an intellectual adventure.

Besides the infinite possibilities that technology promises, the future of education will also hold some barriers. Most of the population growth in the next few decades will be in the city slums in developing nations. Bringing all these children within the boundary of education will be a difficult challenge. For example, if every child in Bangladesh is to be given at least the elementary education, the existing model cannot bring about the desired results. Therefore, if I were to make changes, my change-agents would be the youth and the technology. By empowering the next generation through technology, we can make sure that no child is without hope for the future. The biggest challenge, however, will be making technology accessible to everyone and gaining control over it.

Class, course, grade and degree are some major components in the system of education but none of them is a 'rule of thumb.' It is a very logical way of doing things but with the changing demands, this method is under question. So, an alternate way of teaching will have to be integrated into the education system to accommodate the fast evolving global culture. My idea is to set up 'learning centres' all over Bangladesh, especially targeting the impoverished areas. These will be smaller than schools and nearer to learners' homes. Instead of regular teachers, these will employ staff trained with technological know-how and problem solving skills. A 'learning centre' will be a school in its true essence but with enough flexibility and vibrancy to resolve the present problems associated with the schooling system. Discarding the formalities related to a strict set-up will free up money and make education affordable, accessible and applicatory. We must understand that the deprived ones not only need to learn but also need to survive in the real world.

The education system in a developing country such as Bangladesh is plagued with various problems. Overcrowded classrooms, poorly qualified teachers and little access to materials like new textbooks and technology create a poor learning environment. Drop-out rates are also high since many families cannot bear the education costs, girls are married off early and many children miss schools to work or look after their younger siblings. People also move from one place to another in search of work with no permanent home-base. However, 'learning centres' might alleviate many of these problems.

The system will allow flexibility in terms of time, environment and the overall approach. For example, nightshifts can be run for students who cannot commit during daytime, exams can be replaced by real-life problem solving and quality tutorials available on the internet might be studied instead of sub standard academic materials. Just one laptop, internet connection and a projector can bring the whole world at the fingertips of those who have no other opportunities in life. In totality, this will cost much less than a traditional schooling system. Also, in this way, both the staff and the students can perform in teams in convenient locations at preferred times. Hardly any of these will be free of cost in the initial stages but directing funds towards this system will ensure better learning, help reduce systemic costs and create future leaders in the long run.

Schools and higher education institutes in affluent societies have already embraced the wave of technology and interactive classrooms. In addition to reading, writing and mathematics, the young generation must develop skills in problem solving and critical thinking, communication and information literacy, irrespective of their socio-economic backgrounds. Students must be given knowledge within the context of use to solve real-life problems. Teamwork and challenging workspaces will have to be prioritised because factual education is gradually losing its grip.

Gazing into the crystal ball, we can see that the scenario of education is changing rapidly and conventional models of education are losing their validity faster than we think. In reality, it is hard to step down from the traditions that have been around for so long. Technology can enhance the usual classroom experience but it certainly cannot replace the existing. The name and role of teachers might change but will still be crucial in the future because we need our teachers to discipline, motivate and drive our students. In order to prepare for the times ahead, the ones in position of delivering knowledge will have to be just as groomed as the students themselves. Only then can the future be bright and beautiful. Let the countdown begin.