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STUDENT POLITICS AND QUALITY OF EDUCATION AT THE UNIVERSITY LEVEL IN THE CONTEXT OF BANGLADESH

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Abstract : Education is believed to be the backbone of a country and its necessity is undeniable in a developing country like Bangladesh. The quality of education at all layers of education sector from primary to university in Bangladesh is deteriorating. Unsatisfactory teacher performance, involvement of students and teachers in politics, lack of infrastructure facilities and low standard of education system have been identified as the reasons for low quality of education. In the case of a developing country like Bangladesh the search for new path in higher education is rendered all the more necessary by the harsh realities surrounding the institution of higher learning. The universities have been bedeviled by violence, party politics, student unrest, session jam and prolongation of the courses. This paper attempts to highlight the nature of student politics, its relationship with the affiliated political parties, the effects and consequences of student politics, pattern of student politics, causes of student involvement in politics and its material aspects. We hope that the results of this article will be helpful to give effective guidance for the government and authorities of higher education who are responsible for maintaining sound academic atmosphere in the higher educational institutions.

Introduction

The role of higher education is to prepare competent, knowledgeable and far-sighted people for assuming various higher responsibilities. The purpose of education is not only to educate the nation but also to produce skilled and efficient manpower for the greater advancement of the people of the country. University occupies an important place in education arena and plays significant role in nation building and producing highly qualified and efficient manpower in the society. The quality of education from primary to university in Bangladesh is not at all satisfactory. This poor quality of education has already created grave concern to the educated sector of the people. Besides

other reasons involvement of student and teacher in politics has been identified for the lower standard of education. Therefore, the search for new reform in higher education is necessary in Bangladesh. The widespread claim by all sections of the society that the quality of education in general and higher education in particular is deteriorating is indeed alarming and demands proper investigation. Very little has been done to systematically indicate and sort out the prevailing problems of higher education. Though many of the researchers have focused on primary and secondary education, few systematic studies have been initiated and done in addressing the problems of higher education. For all these, higher education is under considerable challenges in Bangladesh.

Now- a-days it is frequently pronounced that from primary school to university the quality of education in Bangladesh is deteriorating gradually. The students at universities are seen to be less attentive and interested in the development of their academic proficiency, qualitative education and research work. But the number of higher education institution is increasing. Before independence in 1971, there were only five public (government) universities in Bangladesh but at present the number of public universities has increased a lot. However, at the same time the prevailing problems like strike, student involvement in politics, low attendants of classes, lack of interest about study, teacher politics, manipulation of rules and weakness of university administration, weakness of student ordinance, insufficient infrastructure facilities etc in the education arena particularly in higher education at university level are becoming more acute.

Educational standard of a country depends on the quality of education. Mismanagement and uncongenial atmosphere stand on the way to maintaining the quality of education.

How to ensure quality of education

Quality of education has some indicators. The following six principles are extracted from Paul Ramsden's article "Current challenges to quality of higher education":

1. Interest and explanation: The material of a subject should be genuinely interesting, so that students find it a pleasure to learn. When our interest is aroused in something, we enjoy working hard at it. We come to feel that we can in some way own it and use it to make sense of the world around us.
2. Concern and respect for students and student learning: It is everything to do with benevolence and humility; it always tries to help students feel that a subject can be mastered; it encourages them to try things out for themselves and succeed at something quickly; it helps students to be adventurous to learning by offering a secure emotional climate to come

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home to. Related to generosity are honesty and interest in teaching, versatility in teaching skills and availability to our students.

3. Appropriate assessment and feedback: Setting appropriate assessment tasks as studies of students. It is difficult but crucial skill. It implies questioning in a way that demands evidence of understanding, the use of variety of techniques for discovering what students have learned and an avoidance of any assessments that require students to rote-learn or merely to reproduce detail.
4. Clear goals and intellectual challenge: Consistently high academic expectations are associated with high levels of pupil performance. Lectures in higher education should find this aspect of effective teaching relatively straightforward.
5. Independence, control and active learning: High quality teaching implies recognition that students must be engaged with the content of learning tasks in a way that is likely to enable them to reach understanding. Active engagement, imaginative inquiry and the finding of a suitable level and style are all much more likely to occur if teaching methods that necessitate student activity, student problem solving and question asking, and cooperative learning.
6. Learning from students: Good teaching is open to change; it involves constantly trying to find out what its effects are on learning, and modifying teaching in the light of the evidence collected.

Discipline of education includes examination results, class hour, class programme, teacher student ratio, teaching performance, learning method, internet facilities, library facilities, course content, reading and writing habit of the students, quality of speaking English, teacher's academic quality, university administration, socio economic status of students family and so on. A university was envisioned as a community of scholars, teacher and student seeking knowledge, extending its frontiers and nurturing human and social values in an environment of peace and freedom. Today's universities are considered to be the bases of political parties and groups. The campuses are no longer ideal place of free academic activities and the present situation has almost completely destroyed the academic environment. The majority of students engage in destructive politics being aware of the bleak employment prospect, session jam, campus violence etc.

The study is based on content analysis method which requires information from secondary sources to understand the concepts. We have used several

books, research literatures, articles, journals and thesis, as secondary sources for study. Internet sources were also used as a secondary source.

Objectives

- To find out the nature of student politics from world perspective; its historical evolution in Bangladesh.
- To find out the relationship between the political structure and student affiliated politics.
- To study whether student politics in practice hamper the education process, atmosphere and standards and quality of education.
- To give some recommendations

Role of student political activism

The study is about the student politics and the problems of higher education in Bangladesh. Although political issues have always been, to some extent, present at the university. The widespread opinion holds that politics should be absolutely separate from the university and insists that this separation is possible; the university should be outside of politics. The opposite opinion endorses the notion of a university as a political arena where political movement may be organized. In this perspective the university becomes a fraction in the class struggle though the very fact that knowledge has become an essential element of economic production. The third opinion is intermediary and literal. It underlines the need of the students to join together in order to become informed and to discuss whatever issues arise. Thus the university should encourage the development of a critical attitude toward all institutions.

Students are considered as one of the most important agents of political change throughout the world. Student political activism has become a world wide phenomenon. University students have traditionally been politically active in the nationalist's movement of the formerly colonial nations and there are some historical examples of student participation in politics. Student's movements and organizations, as carriers of modern, often radical, political ideologies have been important in spreading ideological trends in various countries, particularly in developing areas.

Countries with a strong tradition of student activism, often stemming from student participation in independence struggle, tend to have active student movements. Bangladesh is no exceptions to this. Bangladesh went through the same experience. This key political role has legitimated the participations of students in national politics. Because students participated in the national freedom, they have achieved a place in history and their contemporary political role is considered legitimate. The students have also seen historically involved in cultural and linguistic reform movements and have

been important also in shaping the cultural tradition of the modern period. Students have been involved in all kinds of role in different points of its history. In fact national characteristics, historical tradition, changing political environment, academic organization structure and many other functions are related to the understanding of student politics in a country. In case of Bangladesh there is no doubt that since its independence, the students have been active and even in the military regimes, their presence were felt both positively and negatively. Most student groups are remnants of the student's movement of the late 1990s. At that time, students played a major role in Bangladesh politics. Their involvement in street agitations played a crucial role in ousting the military president General Ershad in 1990 and the resumption of the democratic process in the country.

Perhaps the most important general difference in this regard between the developed and developing countries is the role played by the academic community in general, and students particularly in independence struggles in many third world countries (Altbach:1987). In western universities, students engage themselves in various political activities. They are highly organized in different capacities. Along with their regular study, they do lots of political study to redress academic, national and global issues. If necessary, they initiate tough programs against the authorities.

Student political activism has become a world wide phenomenon. University students have traditionally been politically active in the nationalist's movement of the formerly colonial nations and there are some historical examples of student participation in politics in Europe. The decade of the 1960s has shown that students are a crucial political force in many countries. Each country has its own particular type of student activism which springs from the political, cultural and educational realities of the country. But at the same time, there are many similarities among student activists and in their activities. Student activism has had a crucial impact in many countries. Turkey, South Korea, South Vietnam, Ecuador and other nations in which student demonstrations have actually brought down governments to indicate the important of student politics. Student participation in cultural movement has also been important. Indonesian students during the early days of the nationalist's movement in that country spearheaded the creation of an Indonesian language and publicized its use. Students in the industrially advanced nations of the West are important, their number is large and the society is sufficiently well developed so that the fate of an individual student or even fairly large group of students is not crucial. In most new nations, however students often form an "incipient elite". In many of these societies, students assume political responsibility even before finishing their studies, thus bringing national politics onto the campuses in a very direct way.

Governments are therefore conscious of the student population, trying to influence it or perhaps repress some of its leaders.

We may define a student movement as an associations of students inspired by aims set forth in a specific ideological doctrine, usually, although not exclusively, political in nature. A student movement may be generated by emotional feelings often associated with inter-generational conflicts, although it may also be motivated by positive goals; the number of a student movement, moreover, have the conviction that, as young intellectuals, they have a special historical mission to achieve that which the older generation has failed to achieve, or to correct imperfections in their environment.

The achievement of independence after 2nd world war for many of the developing countries brought substantial changes for the student movement. The relatively simple commitment to nationalism which characterizes the student activists prior to independence no longer sufficed. Many developing countries were faced with massive internal and social and economic problems and the support which the students have previously from the adult political elite disappeared. Political leaders were more interested in building up the trained cadre of manpower necessary for development than in supporting political activism among students.

Student activism does not exist in a vacuum. Just as students are part of the broader society, they are members of a university community. The situation of the university is therefore of crucial importance in any examination of activism. Society oriented student activism is often stimulated by conditions in the universities. Where academic conditions are ideal – a condition which exists in very few educational institutions- student activism will be less likely and probably less violent when it occurs. Conditioned of study, the orientation of the curriculums, the intellectual direction of the institution, and the amount of repression that exists on university campuses all contribute to the nature and direction activism. The location of the university often has a relation to the nature and scope of activism.

Students are considered as one of the most important agents of political change throughout the world. In a number of cases, students have been vital in overthrowing political regimes. The political strength of a student, therefore clearly, is evident. The student politics is recognized for its achievement of bringing independence to Bangladesh from Pakistan in 1971. Since then all the major political parties have a strong interest over student politics in the country. Every university and college has a strong presence of political student wings of all major parties. The fact that student politics as a way to train and prepare young people for a democratic system is very important. At the same time it reflects the fundamental democratic rights to association, participate in elections, think and opine. It is also a way of empowering

students to demand the kind of services they deserve from the universities and best utilize the time and money spent while being a student. The student politics is heavily influenced by partisan politics and the major players and the beneficiaries of the system are only few politically motivated party cadres using student politics as an avenue to mainstream politics.

Nature and causes of student activism may also vary from country to country. Students age, religion, personality, the proximity, social origins and political attitudes of his family, the location, auspices and quality of university, career preparations and perceived life chances, the politicians who proselytize him, the balance of stability and change in his nation—all these factors define the terms of the student's entrance into or avoidance of, the political realm.

Nkinyanga (1991) says that there are some trends in African student movement:

African student movement is based on common bread and butter issues that is related to the quality of life. Student's complaints about inadequate or low quality food in university cafeteria actually constitute a serious problem embedded in the general deterioration in educational standards.

Erosion of student's status and privilege stimulated student movements with the explosion in enrollments, the privileged status of African students, both as a group and as individuals, has been seriously eroded, even though the process of marginalization has been gradually. It began with the democratization of schooling and was furthered by the erosion in educational quality. Moreover as the economies of the African countries have worsened, the fall has been accentuated by the problem of unemployment and under employment in the general population as well as by the increase of the educated unemployed from all levels of education.

A strong sense of frustration among individuals and disadvantaged social classes may explain the increasing incidence of violent demonstrations in general and by student groups in particular. Violent demonstrations are now dominant features of student movements in most African countries.

In the developing countries particularly the university has assumed an important political function. Not only does the university train the elite of the nation, but in countries where there is only a small political aware "public" higher educational institutions can play a direct political role as well. University faculty members in many countries often act as government advisers or even as ministers. Political journal often emanate from university campuses, and ideological trends are reflected first within the universities. Student movements are persistent features of all developed and of many developing societies. The principal factor that precipitates student movement is their desire to defend and extend democratic

rights, which in the most general sense can be defined as the demand to participate equally in all aspects of society. The student sectors propensity toward political action derives from several factors.

First, students are acutely aware of democratic issue because they are concerned with their own future participation in society.

Second, liberal arts orientated education encourages students to critically confront the social and moral problems of their time. Even without institutional support, students can be expected to develop democratic sentiments from their own intellectual efforts.

Third, many students are relatively free of the social constraints of jobs and families and are consequently more likely than most non-students to engage in political activities. Finally, institution of higher education socialize large number of students into dense networks, enabling student organizations to quickly gather momentum, to mobilize large number of students, and to utilize university resources usually unavailable to other social.

Historical evolution of student politics

Student politics gave a new dimension to Bengal politics in the early 20th century. The revolutionary terrorist movement, SWADESH movement and the NON COOPERATION movement made student politics institutionalized in the first quarter of the 20th century. But it can not be asserted that there was no student politics in the 19th century. The Young Bengal Movement was an act of students, though it was essentially an intellectual response to western education. The young Bengal group also addressed social and other issues which later became a part of politics. But the existing political, social and economic conditions and disciplinary styles of school and colleges debarred the students from showing interest in politics. Qualifying oneself by some education for a job under the colonial government was the highest ambition of students of all classes until the end of the 19th century. History tells us that the students independently led the nation to fight their own issues against contemporary slavery and colonialism. The students did not form organizations or movements out of the will or for any political party. The incentive to student activism from the early 20th century came from the nationalist movement launched by the western educated middle class. Despite their involvement in nationalist politics, the Bengal students did not have an organization of their own until 1928 when All Bengal Student Association was formed at the Congress initiatives. The constitution of the organization was modeled on that of the Indian National Congress. It provided for a central council and a 19 member working committee. Though not mentioned in its constitution, the All Bengal Student Association was ostensibly the student wing of the Congress. In the political activities of 1920s, Muslim students were almost totally absent. However, inspired by the

Congress sponsored All Bengal Student Association some Muslim intellectuals of Dhaka felt to have a student organization of their own. This association was guided by Muslim political leaders. Muslim politicians of various functions had tried to establish their control on the association. M A Jinnah established an all India based student association called All India Muslim Students Federation in 1937. But since the elections of 1937 and increasing expansion of the Muslim League spreading over Bengal under Jinnah, students tended to follow the Muslim League leadership. The Bengal chapter of the All India Muslim Students Association was renamed in 1938 as All Bengal Muslim Student League. It was this Muslim Student League that could draw a large number of student supports from East Bengal. The anti Khwaja faction of the Muslim league broke away from the All Bengal Muslim Students League and established East Pakistan Muslim Students League in 1948. This student's league spearheaded the language movement in 1952. The contribution of students to this national issue is well recognized. The most crucial and most glorious phase of student politics was the period from 1966-1971. Under the political settings of the early 1960s, most of the political parties got fragmented into various factions and with them the student parties were also segmented. After the birth of Pakistan student movement was formed on the language issue but it did not link itself with national politics or the politicians. The demands of the students were very much strong. In 1966 when Bangabandhu SK Mujibar Rahman declared his 6-point programme, it was very much normal for the student organizations to render support blindly. So the fact is clear although the student movement was directed along with the national political movement it was independent of the national political parties. During the post liberation period the prime objectives of the student organizations was to ensure support of the political leaders. The student politics and student movement lost its former glory and good image.

After the change of political situation in 1975 great political erupted in the educational institutions. Students started agitating against militarization of politics. After introducing multi political party system in Zia regime different students organization was formed such as students union stood for CPB, students league became Awami League, students league (scientific socialism) for JSD, chatraro shibir for Jamat and chatra dal for BNP. Every political party and student organization became intermingled and the political parties register their presence in the educational institutions of student bodies. Acting as a proxy organization the student bodies would naturally serve the interest of their present organization. In 1982 General Ershad came to power to dispirit the anti military movement of the students his policy was to create division and conflicts among the students and to deteriorating the situation in the campus. To give legitimacy to his rule formed a political party along with its student front. After the successful anti autocratic

movement of 1990 people became rejoiced of the hope that violence in the campus would cease due to the democracies of the installed government. But soon after taking over power, struggle for power among rival student political parties and conflict within the same group became a common picture. Leadership in student politics means insurance of a life of plenty afterwards. So the student leaders and their student organizations had to subscribe to every commands and wishes of its front organization.

Causes and consequences of student politics

Student politics is a part and parcel of higher education institution in Bangladesh. The destructive student politics in Bangladesh is facilitated and patronized by the existing political parties. Any party that does not have demonstrated commitment to free educational system from student politics as it is now would be rejected. The political parties major or minor have their student wings on the university campus. The student wings enjoy open patronage from the major political parties. Student wings of the country's major parties have traditionally captured all university campuses following the ascent of their party to power.

Political authorities recognize that a university requires a free environment in order to provide education and research. However political authority in Bangladesh has always found it difficult to enforce total conformity in the universities. The balance between the requirements of a quality education institution on the one hand and the demand of government for political loyalty on the other is a delicate one. Student activism often is able to flourish in the confusing middle ground between freedom and conformity.

Students in Bangladesh are a consistent, important and even legitimate part of the political equation students are, in many cases, a "fourth branch" of government and the campus is a key part of the political system (Altback:1987).

Student political activism remains key issues for Third World University and frequently for political system as well. Students continue to be politically active and involved and on occasion contribute to political unrest. There are considerable national variations and the scope and the place of student politics changes over time and across national boundaries. But the issue remains one of the most important for higher education, administration, planners and for government. In order to understand student political activism, it's important to look at the educational political and social configurations in each society. And it is crucial to look at societies which have different tradition of student activism and different political orientation. It is important to examine situations where there is a little activism and to have a historical as well as a contemporary perspective. In sum student political

activism is a multi faceted phenomenon that must be interpreted carefully, taking into account the different circumstances in which it occur.

Students may have their organizations; they may have their own demands arising out of their problems from inside the campus. Students may have their Student Unions. But they will have to remain busy with their own problems regarding education and proper atmosphere; they must not be primarily involved in national political issues. Student involvement in national politics is strong especially when political parties, structures and leaderships are weak. There must be a dilinking bar between student politics and national politics. Students may remain conscious about politics and affairs of the state, but they must not be involved directly in politics. There should be very clear process of role differentiation and role specificity. Students will remain busy with their education. On the other hand, politics will be the affair mainly of politicians, this is the basic premise.

It is rare for a student movement to be fully campus based and concerned mainly with university issue. These are many reasons for this close relationship between structure and the political system. There are fewer competing political forces and this permits students to play a more direct and powerful role. The mass media are relatively weakened, parliamentary system is often ineffective, trade unions, consumers group and myriad of interest group are missing and the educated middle class are small. University student as one of the few easily mobilized groups in society play a crucial role in politics. The reaction of the political system to student activist movement helps to shape their action, orientations and of course, the impact they have on society. Students often participate in different kinds of movements and politics in that way become as accepted part of campus life.

Student often see themselves and were taken by society as an incipient elite. In Bangladesh, external political groups often attempt to gain support in the university and often contribute largely non ideological student unrest .The organization of students also has an impact on student activism.

In the university, the academic system permits long periods of time between examinations, in most cases the examination system is centralized and the system leaves students relatively unsupervised and without direct activities and responsibilities. As the student in the system has relatively few requirements, they spend more time to participate in political movement. The sense of constant responsibility for academic work is not strong and in general lectures and other assignments are not compulsory.

Economic reasons, background of student politics, intention of gaining benefits are becoming successful and getting at the top of campus oriented politics are few reasons which promote the teacher to involve with national

level politics. The situation becomes so bad that the teacher relatives with each other are worst and political rivalry divides the whole academic community. All thus affect the quality of higher education in many ways. The present system of education lacks strength and ability to keep the student attendance to their studies. A good number of teacher fail to take their class regularly which affects the completion of studies in time .The tendency of the student to attend more importance to political activism than to their own studies under the influence of the political parties.

University student and politics in underdeveloped countries Lipset has shown the factors which influence the students to involve in politics. In general and particularly in Asia , students residing in university housing ,student hostels, or rented rooms are politically more active and more radical than those who live at home and several studies have shown that upwardly mobile students tend to be more politicized than those from higher status backgrounds (Lipset)

Students negative role in political activities results the universities are closed sometime by the unauthorized without any definite reason. The courses of studies are not completed within the selected time because of political involvement and make session jam. It can be described as æthe overcrowding of session within the same academic year or the delay in completing academic courses (Choudhurt:2001). Another phenomenon is session lag which means delayed admission in the first year in the academic institution. Though a university student should come out within 4-5 years but he usually has to wait for two or more years, sometimes even more before he can do that. As a result he gets enough time to do politics due to political involvement. The examinations date is occasionally shifted under the pressure created by party politics and student leader.

Lack of definite and necessary plan of the university authority to control the student politics in the campus invites unwanted happening to spoil the academic atmosphere in the university. Universities have also become hot beds of politics , intrigue growing unrest ,internecine conflict , direct interference by the party in power .With such combination of teachers, students, administrative personnel , staff, academic excellence and moral values are deteriorating gradually. Academic atmosphere gets a backseat and universities are attacked by the public as inefficient, incapable of running the institution properly and also unable to meet the growing demands of social accountability.

It is the time to discover the causes of involving in student movement and politics. In developing country like Bangladesh reasons come from social, political, economic and administrative perspective. Uncertainty of future, unemployment, frustration, illiteracy of the parents, evil companion,

discriminatory society, political instability, to show heroism, poverty, weakness of the university act and ordinance, education system, teacher politics etc are the prime cause of involving politics. Studying six developed countries(France, Great Britain, USA, Italy Japan, Yugoslavia the following ten possible causes of the student movement were proposed: Poor university system, authoritarianism of teachers, lack of employment possibilities for college or university graduates, political discontent, socio economic discontent, crisis of civilization, foreign conspiracy, conflict between generations, inspired by agitators and others(Klineberg: 1979).

Recommendations and conclusion

Political parties have to suspend all kinds of patronization towards student politics. If they do so students will not dare to get involved in any illegal activity.

Political parties should also try to change their idea and thinking about student politics. They have to think that they are the soldiers of development and prosperity of the nation.

The interference of the selection or election or appointment of the student leaders has to be stopped. Political parties should allow them and inspire them to practice democratic values and norms within the party.

Authority of educational institution should be free, fair and impartial to all to take its actions. In order to maintain a healthy educational environment within the institution, whenever any incident occurs, they should take strong administrative measures against those who have violating the rules and regulations of the institution.

Authorities have to give up the practice of forming show piece inquiry commission. Proper drastic actions need to be taken who are the criminals.

University halls are run under the administrative authority. Management of administrative should be efficient and behaviour of the hall administrators should be non political and impartial.

Student union is the representative body of general students, which will put forwards the demand of the students and their problems to the proper authority. There will be enormous enthusiasm and vigor among the students in electing their representatives.

Our education system needs to change. The present trends is that even if a student does not attend the classes and only a week of studying of some selected topics just before the examination will ensure a second class. And thus they can unnecessarily spend ample time in politics. So course curriculum should be made in such a way that a student has to work hard.

Meritorious, genius and politically cautious students need to take part in student politics. Students have to resurrect student politics by having a positive attitude towards it, they have to bring back student politics to its original course.

Affiliation of a certain political party becomes the most important criteria for being a student leader. Students have to change this attitude of choosing their leaders according to their political belief.

Students have to be more vocal and united about their rights. Their united and strong demand for terrorism free campus and to maintain a sound academic atmosphere will help the authority to make a change.

Conclusion

The present scenario of the student politics in Bangladesh which is shown in the academic intuitions is not constructive or not directed towards progress and development. There is nothing to attain the student rights, nothing ethical or positive. The nature of student politics is that each student kills his classmate, amputating hands and legs, to rape, tendering, hijacking, capturing hall, etc. As a result academic institutions is about to destroy. So all the groups concerned have to play their role sincerely from their position. If the political parties stop patronizing students, they will stop creating pressure on the authorities and authorities will able to take the decisions impartially. This situation can be rectified only if there is an agreement among the major political parties to the effect that they would not utilize their educational campuses for political purposes. If the political parties are ready to do that, not only the campuses would be rid of these sinful viruses, the student politics would also regain its pristine glory and play a creative role.

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