

Going Green: Role of Private Universities in Dhaka to Protect Environment

Md. Mamunur Rashid Zaber

Abstract

Considering the ever-growing urge to save the environment, higher education institutions can have a remarkable impact on the youth who in the future are going to take over the responsibilities to ensure sustainable living conditions. Various statistics indicate the continuous deterioration in Dhaka's environment. This paper attempts to find out the role of private universities in Dhaka to protect the environment. This paper focused on the working culture, teaching methods, study materials, and specific arrangements of higher educational institutions to minimize the impact of pollution. Then by applying a qualitative approach, it endeavors to identify the level of impact it has. Finally, this paper attempts to find the possible challenges and ways to go Green.

Keywords: Dhaka, environment, protection, private universities

Introduction

Universities in Bangladesh are mainly divided into three types: public universities, private universities, and international universities. Bangladeshi universities are monitored and regulated by the University Grants Commission; a commission created according to the Presidential Order (P.O. No 10 of 1973) of the government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. At present there are 109 private universities throughout the country, and 85 of them are located in or around Dhaka. These universities have a large number of students who complete their education in Dhaka. For this purpose, students have to live in the capital of Bangladesh, and for accommodating their needs, Dhaka city has to take an additional load on top of its already overloaded population.

Environmental pollution has long been a headache for the country as it's overwhelmingly crowded being one of the most densely populated countries in the whole world. According to the World Health Organization's Air Quality Guidelines, the annual standard is 5 microgram per cubic meter for PM2.5 and 10 microgram per cubic meter for NO₂ whereas it stands at 35.5µg/m³ in September 2022. Bangladesh was ranked fourth lowest out of 180 countries in the recently released

*Lecturer, Center for Language and Cultural Studies (CLCS), Department of English, Green University of Bangladesh

Environment Performance Index 2022, an international ranking system that evaluates a country's environmental health and sustainability.

With a score of 23.1, Bangladesh's 177th ranking comes after Pakistan and is followed by Vietnam, Myanmar, and India – the bottom five together make up the poorest performing countries for environmental health. According to the report, the countries with the lowest scores are those that have put growth over sustainability. So, this gives us a picture of what actual Dhaka dwellers face every day.

This paper intends to understand whether private universities have an impact on the environment at all or not. If they do, can they play a role in protecting the environment at any possible level?

2. Literature Review

Bangladesh is one of the most densely populated countries with a limited land area (approximately 0.06 ha/person) (Ali, 1995 and UNDP, 1995). The environment is being directly and indirectly degraded by various human and natural activities. Nevertheless, this environmental degradation poses a global threat to human civilization (Kabir and Mahmud, 2009).

The primary goal of education is to promote the mental, environmental, and physical development of people as well as their economic, social, and cultural development. Human conduct and social mobility are altered by it. It is the best investment a person could make. Institutions in the nation's public sector are in complete disarray.

Islam (2008) conducted a survey to explore public (professionals, women, rural people/farmers, and local leaders/elite) attitudes towards environmental issues in Kathakali Pourashava, Rajshahi District, Bangladesh. However, research has revealed this level of awareness. Respondents were very low. Awareness of female respondents was significantly lower than that of male respondents. (Mamun et al, 2012) attempted to investigate the environmental awareness of people of different age groups in Tangail District, Bangladesh, and found that young people (ages 19 to 33) were more concerned with current environmental issues and found that male participants had more interest.

(Shil et al., 2013) examined the environmental awareness of different classes of industrial workers working in different industries in the Tangail district of Bangladesh and found that most were illiterate and lacked enough resources to

cope with everything. It turns out that I have no freedom. Accepting the question of consciousness is required.

(Kumari et al., 2012), in a study on environmental awareness of high school and high school teachers in Bareilly India, showed that differences in teachers' environmental awareness were observed according to various variables. Gender, Board of Education, and Teacher Qualifications. Female teachers, younger teachers with higher qualifications, were more aware of their environment and exhibited more positive attitudes, suggesting that these variables influence teacher awareness.

Kainth (2009) surveyed schoolteachers in Punjab, India, and found that environmental awareness existed among teachers and that the level of awareness was higher for science teachers compared to arts teachers found to be higher. Singh and Aziz (2015) conducted a survey of all primary and secondary teachers teaching in schools in Allahabad and found that primary teachers were more aware than secondary teachers, but under 30s and Primary and secondary teachers over the age of 30 were observing Allahabad.

3. Methodology

A qualitative approach was taken to gather critical insight into the research area. This involved the author's personal and professional observations and experiences in mentioned private universities in Dhaka, Bangladesh. The author collected and analyzed data by participating in various academic and extracurricular activities, such as attending seminars, and engaging in discussions with students, faculty, and staff.

A thorough literature review was conducted based on the primary and secondary data sources. Pertinent tools and methods were utilized to gather information from credible sources, including books, peer-reviewed journals, scholarly articles, reports, and reputable newspapers. This allowed for a comprehensive exploration of the subject matter, ensuring a holistic understanding of the challenges, opportunities, and developments in the context of the private university in Dhaka.

At the conclusion of this study, a complete list of references has been provided to acknowledge and give credit to the sources that informed the study. This ensures transparency and allows readers to access the referenced works for further exploration of the topic.

4. Findings

Going green represents the impact of private universities to make Dhaka a more environment friendly city as it currently stands amidst the top polluted cities around the world. Besides the governmental efforts, educational institutes like private universities also have a major impact on the environment. This study attempts to explore the possible sectors where private universities can play significant roles to protect the environment both by initiatives to reduce pollution and adapting to more environment friendly approaches at their institutional level which can be encouraging for the stakeholders.

Private universities in and around Dhaka serve the majority of Bangladeshi youth. This group of people plays the most important role in environmental protection. As educational institutions, these universities aim to be role models for environmentally responsible behavior. This allows these students to reflect on their learning as they grow into active, adult and responsible citizens of the country. This study has divided the impact of private universities into six sub-areas and examines the existing culture and its overall environmental impact.

4.1 Electricity use

Most private universities are open six days a week, with normal working hours of up to 12 hours. Electricity consumption is the most important area affecting the environment. Electric lights, fans, projectors, digital whiteboards, CCTV, PABX, and internet connectivity are the major services that the university requires that everyone can afford. In most environments, these are not properly monitored, and both teachers and students leave the classroom without turning off devices they no longer use. The floor manager is supposed to supervise but is often busy with other tasks. The load shedding uses a generator, which consumes a lot of oil to generate electricity, which has a greater negative impact on the environment. but this could have been easily avoided. As such, private universities are massively wasting the nation's precious resources, using more electricity than necessary and affecting the environment. The situation almost came to a halt during the COVID-19 pandemic as the entire education system switched to online mode and institutions no longer needed office equipment or electricity. The situation has changed significantly since activities on campus resumed.

4.2 Paper

Paper is used in universities for a variety of purposes. Overall implementation to store exams, academic or official meetings, fact sheets, assignments, project reports, official documents, financial activities and required regulatory materials. The university will provide all papers, except for the student's personal assign

ments. We often see the needless use of large amounts of paper in almost every area, which can easily be transformed into a much simpler and cheaper system. All this work was done paperless and accurately during the pandemic. For the most part, there are so many alternatives in these areas that reasonably accomplish the task with limited paper usage. Despite the environmental costs of producing paper, few steps are being taken to ensure that the amount of paper used in activities is reduced.

4.3 Air conditioning system

All private universities in Dhaka have air conditioning in classrooms and offices. These ACs are not always properly monitored. Many ACs are installed in unplanned and chaotic environments. If, instead, the university chose to design its infrastructure environmentally friendly, it would provide a comfortable environment for all. When the air conditioner fails, most classrooms will suffocate. The temperature is also not constantly monitored, making the classroom excessively cold. When you go outside, you face extreme heat, which can lead to serious health problems.

4.4 Teaching Methods

Online and onsite courses are long discussions on environmental protection. It turns out that the online teaching method is less environmentally taxing than the face-to-face method. On-site classrooms consume more pollutants such as paper, air conditioners and plastic items. Universities with more online facilities are certainly playing a greater role in environmental protection as they encourage students to use sustainable tools for educational purposes. In this scenario, digital platforms the use of can also be a very important area. Universities using several other digital platforms for their daily work such as meetings, exams or social gatherings of any kind will certainly do less harm to the environment. During the COVID-19 pandemic, nearly all universities have switched to online platforms for all required tasks. Students learn a very important life lesson that online solutions are very easy and sustainable for the environment. The use of audiovisual content in the classroom is entirely dependent on greener methods. It is also very effective for students as they learn faster and better with audiovisual materials than with paper-based content.

4.5 Study Materials

Private universities use books as teaching materials for elementary school. We also use paper-based exercise books. Also, submit assignments, reports, and other required homework in paper form. This requires a lot of paper. Teachers also use printed materials in class. This practice changed during the COVID-19 pandemic. Because almost everything was done online via virtual materials. PDFs are an

easier and more convenient way to replace hardcover books. This not only reduces the weight of student backpacks, but also reduces the impact on the environment. PowerPoint also seems like a useful alternative for teachers to stay up to date with the latest content and create styles and methods to make students more involved in the classroom. While private universities don't seem to take as much seriously about ensuring green teaching materials, both teachers and students should get into the habit of being a little more diligent about protecting the environment from pollutants should be encouraged to do so.

4.6 Specific Arrangements

The institution organizes various events and programs throughout the academic year. Seminars, workshops, cultural events, gatherings, conferences, and activities of various kinds are held annually for the betterment of the students and staff of these institutions. Worryingly, these arrangements do a lot of harm to the environment. Events create additional material waste, noise pollution, air pollution, water pollution, and more. An effective alternative to this is, in most cases, online organizations. For example, a seminar can be replaced with a webinar. Webinars have a lower environmental impact as keynote speakers and attendees can attend without transportation issues, and content is equally visible to all attendees, all of which is what onsite seminars typically achieve. It leads to the same result: large events such as concerts and festivals can usually be loud enough to annoy those around them. Food and packaging leftovers are also a major problem, leaving the country directly with plastic waste and causing lasting damage to the environment. So, all these areas under consideration are clearly showcasing to us what private universities are doing to the environment. These are put in a simplistic format, but digging deep into it might help us find many more undiscovered and unnoticed sub areas where the environment is affected.

5. Recommendations and Conclusion

Based on the discussion, this study intends to make some recommendations.

1. Private universities should focus on going paperless in both offices and classrooms.
2. The power consumption of each room should be closely monitored.
3. Air conditioning is not recommended, with an emphasis on greening infrastructure.
4. Students and teachers should be encouraged to use online or virtual materials to make learning more meaningful and enjoyable.
5. Programs must be designed so that environmental protection is a top priority. Teachers need to be trained to stimulate interest in greener teaching methods.
6. All university personnel should be motivated and encouraged to contribute to environmental protection.

This study attempts to provide insights into the current practices of private universities in Dhaka regarding environmental protection. The recommendations aim to encourage a paradigm shift toward sustainability, urging all stakeholders, from students to faculty and administrative staff, to actively contribute to the collective effort of safeguarding the environment. As private universities play a pivotal role in shaping the future leaders of Bangladesh, their commitment to environmental responsibility can pave the way for a more sustainable and resilient future.

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