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Views

Some Aspects Of Planning-education In Bangladesh—II

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THERE exists a wide gap between the number of the enrolled and the passed out students of the graduation course of Urban and regional Planning under BUET. Till now, the Urban and Regional Planning Department at BUET has neither started under-graduate nor Ph.D. courses. The Geography Departments of Dhaka, Jahangirnagar and Rajshahi Universities do not confer any formal degree in Planning but these departments offer planning subjects which are being taught at graduate and master's levels. It is important to note that the Geography Departments of Dhaka and Jahangirnagar have introduced M. Phil and Ph. D. courses in Urban and Regional Planning. The Institute of Bangladesh Studies (IBS) of Rajshahi University also offers M. Phil and Ph.D. courses in planning. But the number of students completing M. Phil or Ph. D. courses in planning from these institutions is very insignificant. One can fairly draw a conclusion that supply of planners by these planning schools is not large enough to create their demands in the job markets. As a result, the planners fail to participate in the nation building activities of the country.

In this situation, what planning school of Khulna University has done, for the first time, in planning education of Bangladesh — let it be discussed here. Khulna University began its academic activities since August 1991 and the Urban and Rural Planning Discipline was established then. This discipline offers undergraduate degree on Urban and Rural Planning. It is a four-year course. The students after passing Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) or equivalent examinations with mathematics securing more than 50 per cent marks without fourth subject are eligible for admission to the course. These eligible students are required to sit for the examination for tests of their aptitude and standard suitable for the course.

In order to create a strong founda-

tion for studying planning, supporting subjects such as Mathematics, English, Geography, Economics, Sociology, Construction Technology, Architecture, Statistics and Social Psychology are included in the syllabus for the under-graduate course. Considering purpose, scope and context of a planner's activities, a wide range of subjects are also included in the all design and planning related subjects. At the end of the fourth academic session, the students are required to complete a planning report or dissertation based on practical planning problems encountered in our rural and urban environs.

The course is designed with up-to-date subjects which are necessary to deal with emerging problems in the field of urban and regional planning. In fact, the syllabus of the under-graduate course of planning is so designed that the passed out graduate planners from Khulna University would be able to be employed either in Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs); or private engineering and architectural consulting firms; international agencies such as UNICEF, FAO, UNDP, the World Bank, UNESCO etc.; or donor agencies such as Canadian International Agency, Sweden International Development Agency, Swiss Development Corporation, DANIDA, United States Agency for Development, and Norwegian Agency for International Development (NORAD) etc.; or semi-government organizations such as Bangladesh Rural Development Board, Rural Electrification Board, Bangladesh Agricultural Development Corporation, Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation, Cantonment Boards etc. and other related semi-government agencies leading with land use issues.

It is to be mentioned here that in under-graduate course in the plan-

ning school of Khulna University a wide range of allied subjects are taught so that the graduate planners from this university could be absorbed in the posts of computer programmers, GIS programmers, research and planning officers, project monitoring and evaluation officers/project analysts, environmental planners, transport planners, industrial planners, relief and rehabilitation officers, agricultural planners, credit officers, etc. in any organizations, if they do not find work in existing planning and development organizations. At present, there are students in four academic years in Urban and Rural Planning discipline of Khulna University. The first batch of graduate planners having Bachelor's Degree in Urban and Rural Planning (BURP) from Khulna University is expected to come out by mid 1995.

Lastly, it is worthwhile here to discuss what measures are to be taken to improve the existing system of planning education in Bangladesh and to find out ways and means for creation of posts of planners and thus to strengthen the planning profession for better use of our limited land and resources. Keeping this in mind, the following suggestions are put forward to the appropriate authorities for consideration:

★ A high level committee be established to assess the need for planning at national, regional and local levels and to suggest appropriate policy measures for strengthening the planning profession.

★ Posts for the planners to be created in all city corporations, pourashavas, zila parishads, thana parishads and these posts are to be filled up phase wise

★ Post for planners are also to be created in the government — and semi-government agencies such as

Local Government Engineering Department, Department of Environment, Bangladesh Space and Remote Sensing Organization, Bangladesh Rural Development Board, Bangladesh Agricultural Development Corporation, Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation, Department of Land Records, Bangladesh Tourism Corporation and in similar agencies indirectly dealing with land issues.

★ Experts' opinions are to be sought for updating the under-graduate syllabus of the planning school of Khulna University according to the changing needs

★ The students having passed Higher Secondary Certificate examination with geography/economics/statistics should also be eligible to sit for admission tests for under-graduate course in the planning school of Khulna University. And this will provide the scope for wider interaction of various subjects among the students.

★ Steps should be taken to establish linkage programme between planning school of Khulna University and any international reputed planning educational institution and this will help the planning faculty members to be acquainted with other planning educational system and take appropriate actions for improvement of our existing system of education.

★ A close link has to be established between the planning schools of BUET and Khulna University in terms of exchanging teachers, sharing of ideas, dissemination of information and knowledge, faculty visits, undertaking of joint research studies etc.

The author of this article is an urban and regional planner by profession and now a teacher of Urban and Rural Planning Discipline in Khulna University. The opinions expressed are his and as such do not reflect the opinion of the organization.