

Higher education model needs rethinking \\

Ex-chancellor of University of Derby tells discussion at DU

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

University education should focus on developing skills such as leadership qualities, adaptability and verbal communication instead of focusing on technical skills that dominated the 20th century. Sir Christopher John Elinger Ball, former chancellor of University of Derby, the UK, said.

"The model of higher education we developed in the 20th century was appropriate for the 20th century but not appropriate for the 21st century. We need to think again about our model of higher education in university learning," he said.

Christopher was delivering his lecture on "What are Universities for - in the 21st Century" in the Dhaka University's Muzaffar Ahmed Chowdhury auditorium yesterday, organised by the University Grants Commission,



with Prof Abdul Mannan, its chairman, in the chair.

"In the 20th century, we focused on technological learning..." said Christopher, adding that the focus now should move on to what in Britain is called the softer and interpersonal skills, which include leadership and adaptability qualities and communication. "These are the challenges of the 21st century."

"We are faced with problems to which we are trying to bring technical solutions, though they are not technical problems. There is a problem with adaptation," he said, adding, the universities should play the central role to produce skilled workforces.

Prof Gowher Rizvi, the programme's chief guest, said, "...This is the beginning of a discussion we need to have on

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what sorts of university we want." He hoped the UGC will organise similar type of discussions in future.

Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique, vice-chancellor of DU, who gave the welcome address, said, "If we pull resources together and unite then it is only a matter of time we will be able to stop the terrorists who are threatening our ways of life," he said, adding that a concerted effort must be taken by the academic world to keep the world free from terrorism, extremism, violence and bigotry.

Prof Mannan said the country had six universities when it achieved independence with only 30,000 students studying tertiary level but now there are 38 public and 94 private universities with more than three million tertiary level students.

Prof AK Azad Chowdhury, former UGC chairman, Prof Iftekhar Uddin Chowdhury, VC of Chittagong University, and Dalem Chandra Barman, VC of ASA University, Bangladesh, also spoke.