

MBA Programme In AIUB

—Some Inbred Queries

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JOURNALISTS when writing about events often become oblivious about any one side of the coin. When they think something good, they write the best. When they think smoke, they write about the fire. Of course, I do not want to sound cynical, but institutional articles are mostly biased in favor of the columnist's state of mind. The crux of writing for or against an organization merely depends on its true strengths and weaknesses. On the contrary, it is often influenced by the impression the organization offers to the person making the survey. However, writing about an organization from a distinguished chair of the organization is yet another controversial matter—the author may well fall in his own trap. I believe I am competent enough to tackle such a situation. If I have known organization both in its good times and bad time, why not to try for a critical evaluation of its growth and development? Talking about impressions—well, I guess we are the one who are offering those. Then why don't we visualize our own strengths and weaknesses, and so assess the general impression we are offering continuously for the last four years?

Starting from the fact file, people have had the general idea about AMA International University Bangladesh (commonly known as AIUB) as a government approved private university with commitments. The initial advertisement presented AIUB as a non-profit, non-sectarian private university pioneering in computer-based education, with its academic programme evaluated and approved by the University Grants Commission on November 8, 1994 and with government permission on November 6, 1995. It is dedicated to the spread of education most valued in the society. Its mission is to develop skilled human resources for the country particularly in the field of computer, engineering & business. Right from the beginning, AIUB has been offering undergraduate degrees in Computer Science, Computer Engineering, Electronics & Communication Engineering and Business Administration majoring in Management Information System. At present, the university has an aggregate of almost 900 students from different parts of the country studying in different departments and a total of 32 full time and 16 part time teachers in three different schools (the school of Business,

the school of Science, the school of Engineering). The newest feather in AIUB's that is the introduction of the Master of Business Administration (MBA) programme in its school of Business. This 60-credit programme was launched in April 4, 1999 with the mission of developing managerial personnel for the global business village. In this article, I will evaluate this programme from a neutral point of view.

The academic foundation of the MBA programme of AIUB is indeed solid, as the University Grants Commission once again approved the curriculum. The Chief Coordinator of this programme, Dr. Anwar Hossain, is an eminent educationist of Business Studies in Bangladesh who earlier has been with renowned institutes like the Institute of Business Administration and Bangladesh Open University. The MBA of AIUB offers 20 courses with 5 areas of concentration namely Marketing, Human Resource

Management, Finance, Management Science & Operation Management. Comparing with other private sector MBA programmes, this programme is different in academic depth and practical application. This is evident as the 60 credit MBA programme will be followed by a compulsory internship or submission of a research paper. Earlier, while operating the undergraduate programmes AIUB has been quite famous for providing wide range of facilities to the students like modernized computer laboratory, rich library setup, air-conditioned class rooms, audio-visual presentations, seminars & workshops and above all, teaching methodology. The MBA programme is nothing different from it. The teaching methodology of the MBA Programme involves lectures, case presentations, group discussions, audio-visual aids, business games & simulation, plant visit etc. which eventually are the most updated techniques of developing efficient and effective human resources for the contemporary world of business and economy. However, the methodology alone is not enough, in fact is never enough if it is not applied by expert brains. The MBA faculty of AIUB is enriched with experts like Dr. Anwar Hossain, Dr. Zeaul Huq Mamun, Dr. Rahim Baksh Talukdar, Kamrul Arifin & Abhijit Barua, which obviously is a praiseworthy selection of teachers. A completely separate building of the school of Business adds some distinguished flavour to the environment of the programme. Moreover, the first batch admission examination of the MBA programme received great attention and enthusiasm as a total of 25 students were selected (with 4 female students) among the 71 applicants through an international standard admission test and viva voce. The university, in general, provides the most modern computer facilities among all the educational institutions in Bangladesh. The whole computer section consists of three individual labs and three platforms of Novel, UNIX and Windows NT. The labs are equipped with IBM AS-400, IBM RS-6000, Micron Netframe MV-5000 and all other necessary lab accessories. The students can use internet and email facilities for academic purposes. There is a provision of financial assistance for a few deserving students in the form of reduction of tuition fees. This assistance is provided on the basis of the academic performance of the students.

From what I have mentioned so far, one may well complain that I am trying to put a coramine dose to the readers to make them overwhelmed about the infrastructure of AIUB. But in fact, I would prefer a depolarized role to forecast the future outputs of this programme and the university as a whole. It is true that the programme, so far, sounds to be one of the best MBA programmes in Bangladesh. But the ultimate output of this programme largely depends on a few macroeconomics vulnerabilities of Bangladesh, such as the rapidly changing corporate structure, sluggish growth of entrepreneurial development and unemployment of skilled labour. Among the three, first two can be assumed to be external factors that can be influenced through increased ratio of management & business research and publication. While a case can be made for some degree of specialization as a way of improving the quality of the MBAs, a strategy of intensive specialization must

prove grossly sub-optimal in the long term. It is always better by far that teaching and research form a seamless fabric of learning. A conventional academic MBA would always prefer working with a giant organization to prove his skills, but what should be his role when the corporate structure itself is moving towards further changes? Growth of an organization often requires application of business theories in practice, but development of an organization is motivated by the analytical and critical thoughts of the employer and employees. Contrary to popular stereotype, in practice there tends to be a high degree of correlation between research and development. If the employers' view is towards development, how can an MBA without research orientation catch his attention to be recruited? Frequently, one can ask the question that, can AIUB produce an MBA who is analytically and practically competent enough in an interview or during service? The academic side of this programme does confirm and prescribe research & project works with renowned faculties supervising the students. But at present, AIUB does not have any regular journals or publications for research works, nor they possess an establishment particularly for business research. They do have a plan to set up a Center for Business Research and Publication, and I feel it is high time for both the jobs to be done.

The other factor, unemployment of skilled labour, is indeed a curse. An individual has very less access to the solution of such a mounting problem. Globally, a placement supporting cell or a placement office is considered to be an integral part of a Business school. Such units help the fresh graduates or MBAs find a suitable job placement to pursue with their career building. AIUB operates a placement office for the benefit of its students and their prospective employers, to meet and discuss mutual interests. The most recent session of such interviews was held in AIUB in April 8, 1999 where Mr. S.M. Kamal (Group Director- Human Resources & Corporate Affairs) of BEXIMCO conducted a workshop on real life interviews and interviewed some of the fresh BBA graduates of the university. This of course, is a promising and praiseworthy effort of the university, and certain initiatives like this in regular intervals may well solve the problem of placements of MBAs in a micro level. The placement office of AIUB also maintains records of students in the form of database and these records are made available to the prospective employers. But again, a placement office solving the MBA placement problems should have more exposure through maintaining effective public relations. In fact, although it may sound a bit commercial, it should work as a potential agent of human resources for the corporate arena of Bangladesh. In this regard, much depends on the competence and caliber of the in charge placement officer, and there always remains a question regarding his efficiency and effectiveness. Above all, one has very little scope of making a far judgment about the quality and standard of the MBA outputs of AIUB, as the programme has just started walking and there are still miles to go. Methodically, it is beyond doubt that the MBA programme of AIUB is a graceful one. But I guess the critics have to wait until it brings out its first batch.