

NEW TRENDS IN LEGAL EDUCATION AT BANGLADESH OPEN UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

In Bangladesh, Formal legal education is provided by either a department of a university or an affiliated college. There are four public universities and above twenty six private universities in our country with law as a regular subject of teaching. Besides, the National University imparts teaching of law through law colleges in the country. All public and private universities providing law graduate degree by conventional system but many people deprived from this opportunities. Thus to increase equitable access to education and to develop the human resources of the country the Bangladesh Open University playing significant role.

Large numbers of students of rural areas, particularly women, out of school and adults who must do work to support their families are include with the university. Bangladesh Open University is the only institution in Bangladesh which imparts education in open and distance mode and offers 23 formal programmes, the demand for the introduction of LL.B programme for the benefit of those who have been, for various reasons, deprived of the opportunity of undertaking graduate course in law in conventional mode of education.

The decision to offer the programme in distance mode is being taken in response to the earnest desire of the relevant quarters expressed in various dailies and formal applications submitted to the university authority as the learners in the open and distance mode learn at his own place and any time whenever he feels convenient to learn and is not for restricted by time, space or age. Distance learning is, indeed, presently considered as a viable alternative of the conventional system of education to fulfill the growing demand for legal education.

This paper presents the new academic trends in Bangladesh Open University by distance learning Bachelor of Laws (LL.B.) degree and modern aspects of the legal education at School of Law in Bangladesh Open University.

Keywords: Legal, education; trends; substitute; distance; learning; conventional; programme; access; human resources; curriculum; deprived; technology.

INTRODUCTION

Program planning is a process of transforming idea into a coherent, complete and structured plan for teaching and learning in a particular subject at a particular level. Bangladesh is a highly dense country, whose population at present is 150 million. There are mixed pattern of society, economical status and educational status.

Mixed pattern means some where there is low to high level of perception and discrimination. To avoid discrimination in social and personal life and to get the proper judgment there must need education. Legal education can help the people to know the human rights and social justice.

Education is the continuous unfolding of ones potentialities; it is a life long process. Now there is a need to promote legal education and awareness, especially grassroots deprived

people (Annual Report of Progress of south Asian women, 2000, UNIFEM, p. 30). Law is looked upon as having any greater role than preserving the security of life and properly in the state. A former chief justice of Tamil Nadu, India, has made the following remarks on legal education "The world is getting ever closer in anything and everything involving instant communication, comparison, and competition on a global dimension. Law has to be ever compatible and march with progress around and at home for survival. Law education is bound to take note of the position". (Majumder, p.14)

In Bangladesh besides traditional universities, there are a lot of law colleges which are all conventional system. But distance learning law degree first introduced at Bangladesh Open University. This programme explores the development of basic legal education. It focuses on the legal development of practical plans for the effective use of distance education approaches at the university level. Distance education is not intended to substitute the traditional studies. It should be integrated in the traditional education to complement it and to contribute to the creation of a new flexible educational environment. It was found that aged officers of GO, magistrates and most of the officers of NGO are highly interested to obtain law degree through Open and Distance Learning systems as they have no scope to get study leave from their working institute (Islam, 2001, p.2).

THE BACHELOR OF LAWS (LL.B.) PROGRAMME

Law is considered as one of the most effective vehicle of development, it being the embodiment of social values and at the same time the means of attaining them. It can thus be in instrument to further social objectives and equality at all levels (Islam, 2001, p.2).

Law is a social science interlinked to and interwoven with various facets of and often reflected the changes taking place in the society. Some do not get study leaves for face to face learning and some are involved with their family circle, so that they are not interested to obtain their law degree through face to face, (Democracy, Rule of law..., 1996), they want to get some opportunities through distance mode. The democratic society continuously requires qualified and competent citizens. Therefore, the modern society needs a lifelong education for its citizens that could be performed through the distance education system (Caisin, 1998, p. 13). The Bangladesh Open University (BOU) was established on October 20, 1992 by an act of the Bangladesh National Parliament with a view to ensuring access of people. Particularly the deprived and disadvantaged ones, to all levels of education, through distance mode using information technology including electronic devices to reach people in different corners of the country. (Bangladesh Open University Act (Act No. 38), 1992)

The project profile of the university has portrayed the objectives of the establishment of an open university in Bangladesh in a very impressive and interesting manner thus:

To increase equitable access to education, to develop the human resources of the country and the improve quality, relevance and efficiency of the education system.

It will also support the Governments current and long term education policy on eradication of illiteracy and thus help alleviate poverty in the country.

The role of the Bangladesh Open University will be primarily to cater to those sections of population that are currently excluded from the conventional education system for a wide variety of reasons.

The potential clientele of Bangladesh Open University will therefore include significant numbers of students of rural areas, particularly women, out of school and adults who must do work to support their families” (Project Proforma, 1997)

OBJECTIVES OF THE BACHELOR OF LAWS (LL.B.) PROGRAMME

The new opening LLB programme aims at achieving following specific objectives:

- To enable students contributing to their professional growth and career advancement and country’s development.
- To produce highly competent law graduates with appropriate legal experience to meet the needs of society. The lawyers play a significant role in the development of the society. Rule of law is the essence of democratic country. It can be protected and sustained by a strong, impartial and independent judicial system.
- To promote legal research and studies in order to stay current with developments and trends in legal field. Today, when the society is engaged in social and economic development, we need professional lawyers, jurists who are already his process of democracy.
- To encourage members of the legal profession and the general public to uphold justice and maintain high moral standards.
- To provide society with academic services by disseminating legal knowledge, relevant to their professional and occupational needs, as well as to provide continuing education at various levels.

HOW TO DEVELOP LL.B. PROGRAMME THROUGH DISTANCE MODE

Taking in to account above realities, the curriculum of 3 years LL.B. programme to be offered at the Bangladesh Open University, has been following designed and developed.

Duration of the Programme

The duration of the LL.B. programme shall be 3 years divided in to 6 semesters, each consisting of six months. Each academic year has been divided in to two semesters: Spring (January to June) and Fall (July to December).

Structure of the Programme

- LL.B. program shall be conducted in semester system.
- Each course shall be 3 credits.

The distribution of course in to six semesters extending over three years shall be in the following manner:

Year	1st Semester (12 Credits)	2nd Semester (12 Credits)
1st Year	Legal History of the Indian Sub-continent Law of Contract Constitutional Law-1(Bangladesh) Jurisprudence	Muslim Law Constitutional Law-11 (UK and USA) Law of Torts Hindu Law
2nd Year	3 Semester (12 Credits)	4th Semester (12 Credits)
	Law of Equity, Trust and Specific Relief Law of Property and Registration. Criminology Law of Rules of Interpretation, the General Causes and Drafting	Criminal Law Law of Criminal Procedure Law of Intellectual Property Roman Law
3rd Year	5th Semester (12 Credit)	6th Semester (12 Credit)
	Labour and Industrial Law Land Laws and Public Demands	Company and Business Law Human Rights

	Recovery Act Law of Civil Procedure and Limitation Public International Law	Environmental Law Law of Evidence
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Instructional materials

- Institutional materials shall be distributed among the students at the beginning of each semester on payment of requisite course fees. Program shall be broadcast through Television and Radio.
- During each semester period, tutorial sessions shall be arranged at the specific tutorial centers approved by the Academic Council on the recommendation of the School of law.

Examination

The Bachelor of laws examination shall consist of the six semester examinations. There shall be a separate Examination Committee for each of the six semester's examinations. The Examination Committee shall perform all the functions relating to the examination of the respective semester.

The Examination Committee shall be composed of 5 members of which one shall be an external member to be appointed from outside the School of Law of the University. The Committee shall be headed by a Chairman. The Chairman of each of the Examination Committee shall act as the coordinator of the examination results. The duration of examination of each of the courses carrying 3 credits (=100 marks) shall be 3 hours. At the end of the six semester students participating to the Advocate ship Examination at Bangladesh Bar Council (Academic Regulation of LLB Program 2005, Bangladesh Open University).

Teaching Materials

School of Law is working for developing its own programme evaluation techniques. Well designed curriculum, appropriate instructional materials and efficient delivery systems have also much to do in maintaining acceptable quality and standard.

The quality and standard of learning materials are maintained by getting them developed by a team of competent writers, editors, instructional or graphic designers and referees. Audio-Video materials are likewise developed, produced and previewed by a team of experts competent to do so.

EXPECTED OUT COME FROM THIS PROGRAMME

Distance learning is one of the great inventions of modern education in that it allows people to study for qualifications that they would otherwise have been unable to undertake. Balancing the pressures of study with full time employment and other personal or social commitments is possible.

- It help students to develop inter disciplinary approach for raising the personality and the intellectual ability to understand the society and the human situation in a changing social order,
- Produce competent and conscientious students of law who have absorbed and mastered the theory of law, its philosophy, its function and its role in a democratic society and could be expected to follow any branch of legal profession, namely, bench, bar, and teaching, and
- Develop personnel in law related professions who possess the type of knowledge, competency and experience necessary to keep abreast of new developments in law.

CONCLUSION

Basically law is a special art and effective instrument of social justice, demands high standard and quality of service. The study of law must be of that quality which justifies the standard of profession. Legal education will be able not only to provide an insight into the society through law, acquire a working knowledge of subjects in a variety of disciplines, particularly from the Humanities and Social Sciences and be trained in the basic legal skills of advocacy and research.

The challenges facing Bangladesh today globalization, the information revolution, multiculturalism, the ever present tensions associated with Bangladesh's newly gain democracy each of these represents a legal challenges as well as a social and political one. And each is challenging not only the way in which we think about the law, but also the way in which we at the department are thinking about legal education with an international outlook. Bangladesh Open University has taken this challenge by new trends in legal education through distance learning system which can play an important role in providing a new opening law degree for who could not afford to go to the conventional university.

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In 2005 she has completed a Diploma in the Distance Learning Course on International Environmental Law (two years) from United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), Switzerland. She received many national and international training. Of them, training on open and distance learning concept "Best Practices in Open and Distance learning" from Open University, Malaysia is mentionable. From 2001, she has enlisted as a part time artist with the Bangladesh Radio Centre and participated in legal awareness and other educational programme. She has seven (07) publications with two (02) books at University level.

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