



**Office  
of External  
Affairs**

# THE BRIDGE

## The Official Newsletter of the Office Of External Affairs

**ISSUE 14 | MAR-JUN '20**

### *Editor's Message*

Welcome to this special COVID-19 issue of the OEA newsletter. As our regular activities were curtailed, we thought we'd take a different approach to The Bridge #14 by including a number of perspectives about how life has changed as a result of lockdown and other various effects of the pandemic. We hope you'll enjoy it and that you are safe!

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Public Relations Office

### Activities of the OEA June 2019 - May 2020 (Highlights)

1. Local outreach efforts for the purpose of branding NSU (embassies, high schools, NGOS, etc.): **Total = 28**

2. Programs organized by the OEA, foreign and local dignitaries, delegates, scholars, academics' visits to NSU (largely resulted from local/international outreach efforts):  
**Total = 61**

3. International visits for the purpose of academic understanding, exchange, and collaboration (i.e., universities):  
**Total = 27**

4. Academic Collaboration (e.g., joint research, faculty & student exchange): **Total = 30 MOUs signed + 62 pending** (as a result of outreach and visits to universities and subsequent follow-up) 22 left to reach the Vice Chancellor's goal of 150

5. Products created by the OEA:

• NSU Research Foci 2020 • Design for the MDS brochure • Bi-monthly newsletter called "The Bridge."

6. The Office of International Affairs oversees the oversight and support of NSU students who come to the OAA to explore credit transfer and study abroad opportunities for postgraduate studies. This also includes the following students who already went for their higher studies:

• 4 students to Canada • 2 students to Australia • 2 students to USA • 1 student to UK  
• 1 student to Malaysia

**Total = 265**

Services provided to the international students at NSU include: visa extension, exit visa, information and orientation programs for the new international students enrolled at NSU.

**Total = 250+**

7. Office of Alumni Affairs (OAA Officer joining on November 07, 2019 after a one-year +vacancy)

#### Events:

Alumni Networking Session, February 29, 2020 at NSU Plaza Area.

(Discussions were held with the alumni and a soft announcement of launch of NSU Alumni Association was given to the alumni.)

#### Current activities in process:

- MoU with Bangladesh Alumni Foundation (BdAF) of USA regarding scholarship to potential candidates in final stage and awaiting approval of Vice Chancellor.
- Design of NSU Alumni Association's website currently under brainstorming process.
- Framework of NSU Alumni Association's Mission and Vision under process.
- NSUAA constitution in the very final stage.

#### Planned events which could not be held:

NSU Alumni/faculty members and international students 'Iftar Party' was on planning stage (jointly by OIA and OAA) but could not be executed due to the covid-19 situation.





## Delegate from Oxford Institute Bangladesh Visits NSU

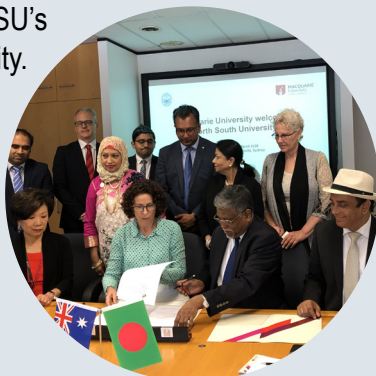
**M**s. Mona Masud, the Country Coordinator of Bangladesh for the Oxford Institute visited North South University on 1st March, 2020. She conducted an interactive and lively seminar with the students of different departments of NSU to inform them about the activities of the Oxford Institute in Bangladesh. The primary purpose of this seminar was to notify the students of NSU about the study tour programs that the University of Oxford, UK offers for external students and the process to follow to participate in such programs.

The University of Oxford arranges educational camps for groups of students of high schools and universities from all around the world twice a year - once in July and once in August. The Oxford Institution, Bangladesh helps interested students with the whole process of applying for these educational camps to completing visits at the University of Oxford. The registration process for the program is held online. After registration, the interested students have to appear for an interview through which they are selected or rejected for the University of Oxford educational camp program. The selected students will choose 2 subjects of study for this short educational tour among 32 subjects offered by the University. Previous academic background of students does not limit their choice of subjects for the educational tours. The selected students for the tours receive an offer letter within two weeks of the interview.

During the camps, the guest students follow the same schedule and activities as the internal students of the University of Oxford. Students experience attending lectures and tutorials from renowned professors of the university which is a huge opportunity for enhancement and exchange of knowledge. Recently, a group of four students from IUB participated in such a summer study tour at 'The Oxford Summer Program'. Mr. Sami Alam Turzo, the Brand Ambassador for the Oxford Summer Program at Independent University, Bangladesh was also present at the seminar and shared his experience of attending the summer educational program at University of Oxford.



## NSU Delegation Visit to Australia and New Zealand



**F**rom 03 – 13 March 2020 an NSU delegation visited 9 universities and held two alumni events in Australia and New Zealand. The first visit was to Melbourne where the delegation visited La Trobe University and signed an MOU, afterwards Monash University, and then Deakin University. The delegation also met with the OZNSUers. Then they went to Sydney where they met with the NSU alumni there. During the visit to Macquarie University a MOU was signed to renew NSU's academic partnership with them. At Western Sydney a discussion took place with the Humanitarian and Development Research Initiative (HADRI) about starting joint research. Finally, the tour ended in Australia by with a visit to the University of Technology, Sydney (UTS). On Tuesday, 10 Mar the delegation landed in Auckland where they visited the Auckland University of Technology (AUT), the University of Massey and the University of Waikato where the Vice Chancellor signed NSU's very first MOU with a New Zealand University. The delegation returned to Dhaka on 13 March 2020.



## Regional Advisor of University of Portsmouth, UK Visits NSU



**M**r. Arman Mofiz, the Bangladesh Regional Advisor of University of Portsmouth, UK was at North South University on 8th March, 2020. The purpose of his visit was to inform the students of North South University about the exciting opportunities offered by the University of Portsmouth for higher education for international students. Mr. Mofiz conducted a seminar at NSU during his visit to interact directly with the students, convey his messages and provide information to students and also answer their questions.

During the seminar, Mr. Mofiz presented data, statistics and facts about the educational qualities and opportunities of the University of Portsmouth. The university is one of the top-ranked universities in the UK. The study programs offered by the University of Portsmouth are comprehensive. Almost all subjects are offered under different departments by the university. They also offer some short and professional courses to students. Courses are taught with sufficient practical experience to make the content clear to the students. Co-curricular, extra-curricular and research (both academic and applied) activities are encouraged by the university. Students of the University of Portsmouth are eligible for work permits of 20 hours per week during their studies and two years of post-graduate working permit visas. Statistically, the employment rate of the University graduates is 97.5%.

Different scholarships are available for international students at the University of Portsmouth. The university also provides an opportunity for credit transfer for external students. The university's global and regional offices are easily reachable for external and international students for them to get any information or help. Their online resources are rich and updated providing sufficient information and contact data. Many students from Bangladesh have graduated from or are currently studying at the University of Portsmouth. These students have created a Bangladeshi students' society there in the UK, which is very supportive and helpful to the Bangladeshi students who go there for higher education. As the University of Portsmouth and North South University have an MOU, many students from here too have studied there, are studying or have shown interest to pursue their higher studies at the University of Portsmouth. For this reason, the university is now familiar with the grading and other systems of NSU and considers the CGPA or other documents of any student of NSU for admission or credit transfer accordingly.

## Recently Signed Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs)

**H**ere you will find the complete list of NSU collaborations: <http://institutions.northsouth.edu/oea/international-affairs/partnership/list-of-mous/>. (To view MOUs, please login through your NSU mail.)

- **04th February Texas A&M International University** – This includes exchange of faculty and students, collaborative research, exchange of education materials and databases, joint and dual degree programs, and joint sponsorship of conferences, symposia, etc.
- **10th February Conflict and Resilience Research Institute Canada (CRRIC)** – This includes joint research/publication, exchange of research staff and policy analysts, exchange of research outcomes, academic publications, and other academic information, international networking with civil society members through both institutions, joint development of peace literacy materials, and collaborative management of conference, summits and policy dialogues.
- **19th February The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award** – NSU has renewed its Sub-License for Award Unit Operator. The “Sub-License for Award Unit Operator” was signed to enlist and recognize NSU as an “Award Unit” which allows its students to enroll under The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award. The Duke of Edinburgh's Award Foundation Bangladesh will provide necessary services to NSU and its Award participants for all the enrichment activities that available to develop the soft skills of NSU students. To learn more about the program, please visit the website <https://deabd.org/>.
- **24th February The Maldives National University Male** – This includes joint research/publication, exchange of faculty members and administrative staff, exchange of undergraduate and graduate students, exchange of research outcomes, academic publications, and other academic information, other academic and educational exchange programs approved as suitable by both institutions, and preferential acceptance of NSU junior faculty in pursuit of PhDs.
- **05th March La Trobe University** – The parties to this MOU wish to engage with each other in a program of co-operation to explore potential collaborations such as staff and student exchanges, projects or programs and joint research.
- **16th March University of Waikato** – This provides opportunities for research, management, and teaching staff, to the extent resources permit, to participate in exchange programmes to gain experience at another institution; exchange research findings and publications, academic teaching resources, and other materials of common interest; develop collaborative research programmes that investigate topics of interest to staff in both institutions; facilitates joint activities, including meetings, seminars, symposia or lectures, workshops and conferences; provides opportunities for student exchange or study abroad programmes; and, provides opportunities for students to transfer to the partner institution with a guaranteed recognition of credit or to undertake a joint qualification.
- **16th March United International University** – This is a research collaboration between the Office of Research – NSU (OR-NSU) and the Institute for Advanced Research (IAR), UIU in support of joint faculty research.
- **26th May Sapienza University of Rome** – This includes the exchange of faculty and staff members, graduate students and undergraduate students; joint implementation of research projects; exchange of documentation, scientific information and publications; interaction through meetings, seminars, and development of joint courses.
- **21st June University of Amsterdam et al.** – North South University, Research Group “Archives and Records in Transition” of the Amsterdam School for Heritage, Memory and Material Culture, University of Amsterdam, Netherlands (U. of Amsterdam) in collaboration with BARM and COMMEET agree to develop a project under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs 4, 16 AND 17) around documenting the Rohingya community as a displaced community in our world.
- **22nd June National Institute of Development Administration (NIDA)** – Graduate School of Public Administration and the Department of Political Science and Sociology exchange of students, faculty and researchers.
- **23rd June Bangladesh Alumni Foundation (BAF) Scholarship** – North South University and Bangladesh Alumni Foundation (BdAF), USA have signed an MOU to promote Scholarship opportunities to talented students in Bangladesh who meet the requirements for admission to NSU and show extraordinary ability yet need financial assistance in order to pursue their higher education at NSU.



## PRESS RELEASE BANGLADESH ALUMNI FOUNDATION

**N**orth South University &  
Bangladesh Alumni Foundation

### North South University and Bangladesh Alumni Foundation Announce First Ever Alumni Driven Scholarship Program

Dhaka, Bangladesh - North South University (NSU) and Bangladesh Alumni Foundation (BDAF) came together to announce the first ever alumni funded scholarship program. Bangladesh Alumni Foundation recognized the need to establish a scholarship program at North South University, the premier private university of Bangladesh, to attract meritorious and financially constrained students who wouldn't have considered the university for economic reasons. Both institutions strongly feel this must change - education must be accessible and alumni must play a role here. NSU and BDAF have been coordinating closely for some time to structure a scholarship program towards that goal. We are happy to announce that an MoU has been signed between NSU and BDAF to commence the scholarship program from Fall of 2020 at North South University.

The "NSU - Bangladesh Alumni Foundation Scholarship" would be offered to talented young students who are also in need of financial support to study at NSU. NSU and BAF would jointly determine the right candidate for the scholarship. The scholarship will cover the entirety of the tuition and other fees of the university. Bangladesh Alumni Foundation would also mentor the selected candidate in helping them achieve their dream!

Bangladesh Alumni Foundation, a California based non-profit organization, believes that a key towards bringing positive societal change would be to make quality private university education completely free through offering 100% scholarship over a sustained period of time. For more information, please email [info@bdalumni.org](mailto:info@bdalumni.org).



UNIVERSITY of HAWAII<sup>®</sup> at MĀNOA

On June 23rd a Joint Zoom Meeting between North South University (NSU) and University of Hawai'i at Mānoa (UHM) took place to kick off the academic collaboration signed in May, 2019 and was followed up by a scoping visit by Dr. Ashok Das in August, 2019. This Zoom meeting was held in lieu of the UHM delegation visit to Dhaka which was scheduled to take place in June, 2020 but because to the pandemic had to be postponed to a later date.

From UHM were the following participants:

**Denise Eby Konan:** Dr. Denise Eby Konan is Dean of the College of Social Sciences and Professor of Economics at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa (UHM).

**Ashok Das:** Dr. Ashok Das is an Associate Professor in the Department of Urban and Regional Planning (DURP) at UHM, and an affiliate faculty and Executive Committee member of the UHM Center for South Asian Studies (CSAS). In early August 2019, on behalf of the Dean of the UHM College of Social Sciences (CSS), Denise Konan, he came to NSU on a two-day scoping visit, and submitted a report on his observations of the potentials for collaboration between NSU and UHM.

**Daniel Ferguson:** Dr. Dan Ferguson is the Director of International Programs for the College of Social Sciences at UHM.

**Nori Tarui:** Dr. Nori Tarui is a Professor and Graduate Chair for the Department of Economics at UHM.

**Carole Petersen:** Dr. Carole J. Petersen holds a joint appointment as a Professor in the William S. Richardson School of Law and Graduate Chair in the Matsunaga Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution.

From NSU were the following participants:

**Abdur Rob Khan:** Dr. Rob Khan is the Dean, School of Humanities and Social Sciences (SHSS) and Professor, Department of Political Science and Sociology (PSS).

**Sk. Tawfique M. Haque:** Dr. Tawfique Haque is a Professor of Public Policy and Governance and Director of South Asian Institute of Policy and Governance (SIPG) and Center for Peace Studies (CPS).

**Md Shahidul Haque:** Foreign Secretary Shahidul Haque is a Senior Fellow at SIPG.

**M. Jashim Uddin:** Dr. Jashim Uddin is the Coordinator, Center for Peace Studies (CPS), SIPG & Associate Professor of Political Science and Sociology at North South University.

**Bulbul Siddiqi:** Dr. Bulbul Siddiqi is an Associate Professor at the Department of Political Science and Sociology, Director, Confucius Institute and a member of CPS.

**Md. Harisur Rahman:** Dr. Harisur Rahman is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Political Science and Sociology and a member of the Center for Peace Studies at NSU.

**Ishrat Zakia Sultana:** Dr. Ishrat Sultana, Assistant Professor at the Department of Political Science and Sociology, and a researcher at the Center for Peace Studies (CPS).

**Helal Md Mohiuddin:** Dr. Helal Mohiuddin is a Professor in the Department of Political Science and Sociology and member of CPS.

**Tasmia Nower:** Ms. Tasmia Nower is a Lecturer at North South University.

**Katherine Li:** Dr. Katherine Li, Director, Office of External Affairs (OEA). Recently, she became the Advisor, Center for Peace Studies (CPS).

The following items were discussed during the meeting:

#### Collaborative Research

- Climate Change (and the pandemic)
- Urban Development - Sustainable cities (coastal issues)
- Water
- Peace Studies
- Economic Development
- Indigenous Issues (Native Hawaiian issues are strongly emphasized through the UH system)
- Displacement (along with Climate Change will have good traction with the U.N.)
- Rohingya





Dean Denise Konan

BA Public Policy (possibly a joint degree in the future), as both universities have strength  
 Development Studies (Nori keen on exploring this with Economics)  
 Joint (online) Certificates (Multidisciplinary focus) or class-shared initiative  
 • Peacebuilding • Disaster Management • Humanitarianism  
 Joint (online) international conference - in the future can be in person together with EWC

## Topic - virtual study abroad & research

Denise explained that UHM is part of APRU - Pacific Rim Universities and has strength in the following areas:

- Environmental Management
- Joint degrees in the future
- Health - Health Policy initiative(drop in course initiative)
- Women's Issues/Women's Studies (Bangladesh has really advanced in this regard)
- Nonprofit sector/Public policy - research (Bangladesh has been extremely successful and is considering a role model in this regard)
- Ocean Science & Technology
- Sociologists/Anthropologists
- Astronomy
- Webinar this year on water
- Intelligent Cities

Carole explained that MIPCR will have the following courses online and that NSU students could enroll in them:

### Summer '20

- Mediation
- Negotiation

### Fall '20

- Environmental Conflict Resolution
- Facilitation

### MIPCR offers:

- Graduate Certificate - 5 courses including a capstone
- Peace Studies major through Interdisciplinary Studies or minor
- Peace Corps Prep

### CPS/MIPCR could think about:

- We could think about an annual issue (e.g., Rohingya, COVID-19, and Climate Refugees)
- Mix of students in a certificate program
- joint credit
- Transcript could be given
- Degree from NSU and Certificate from UHM
- Preferential tuition rates

Joint seed funding is possible like UHM CSS NSU - award for capstone/joint faculty research

Ashok in response to question about training

- Intensive programs could be developed during the summer
- USAID - possible partner for Disaster Management

While there is no real training at MIPCR, but Outreach might offer some kinds of programs. Also it could be possible for NSU students to start at UHM and finish at NSU with credit. Sandwich programs for PhD students/joint supervision (already being done with MPPG students at NSU)

### Pathway Program

- Economics or Urban Planning where student gets Masters at NSU and PhD at UHM
- 1 or 2 faculty from both sides

As Ashok emphasized, there are many areas where we could collaborate across the campuses more broadly (it's great that our MOU is an institutional agreement). For now, let's focus on Social Sciences.

We didn't talk much about it, but the Sustainable Development Goals are a good framework for us to think through the issues. Also Bangladesh/China Studies has a lot of potential. Both UHM and NSU have Confucius Institutes (note the Dr. Siddiqi is the Director for the Confucius Institute at NSU)

### Next Steps:

- Joint Certificates (online)
- Joint Conference (online)

### Faculty taking the lead:

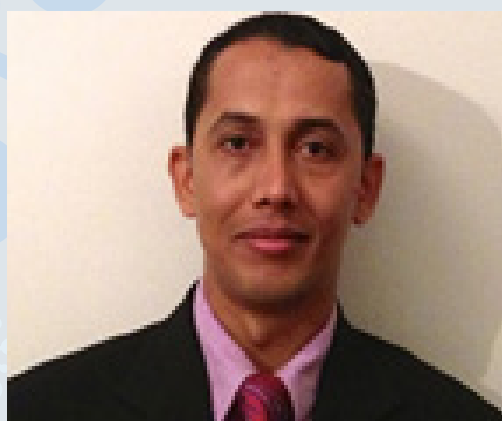
- UHM - Ashok
- NSU - Katherine

## Special COVID-19 Section

Three representatives from our partner institutions shared their insights about how they felt COVID-19 was affecting International Education.

## From State University of New York in Stony Brook, USA

### Covid-19 and International Education



Ali, a student from a small town outside Dhaka, was in my class, here in New York, the spring of last year. And, last summer, he turned into reality my half-serious promise that I would meet him in Bangladesh if he served me mangoes from his farm. On the last day of my visit to NSU, he surprised me by coming to my Dhaka hotel, along with his father and sister, with a bag of mangoes. The family outing in the city was memorable. And, the mangoes were so incredibly tasty that I was planning to travel to his town after my plenary session at an academic conference in ULAB this summer, which would be this week. Of course, I had to cancel the trip due to the pandemic.

As a former international student myself, I find interactions with international students inspiring. Indeed, I find Ali's kind of energy symbolic of the adventure that globally mobile students must undertake, across the world, across unfamiliar societies and cultures, across uncertainties and challenges. Unfortunately, the pandemic is seriously disrupting most of the 5.3 million adventures of international students around the world, with a quarter of them being here in the US. This is a painful situation.

In March, organizations tracking responses of prospective international students indicated that up to a half of them were planning to postpone study until 2021; the numbers



have shifted chaotically by destination country as the virus has spread (1, 2, 3). Some students say that they might enroll in online degrees, but many more want to pay partial tuition if their standard degree programs are online only. Up to a fifth of them might not leave their home countries, with a tenth of them planning to skip college altogether. The real challenges posed by the pandemic arrive when the normally complex and challenging processes begin. For instance, a Korean graduate student who has received admission with full funding (via research assistantship) recently wrote to a colleague here that she was told by the visa office in Seoul to expect the interview in about nine months. There is less than two months' time before the fall semester begins here.

When a visa is delayed or denied, that blows apart all other plans. So does parents losing the source of income on which a child's study abroad would depend, or travel disruption, quarantine measures along the way, qualifying tests, exam results, or family or personal health. That is to say nothing about a mother's or father's extreme anxiety when sending a child thousands of miles away at a time when any system is becoming vulnerable to the disruption (4). "My family is now scared to send anyone anywhere," said one student in one of the surveys (2), "be it a foreign nation or just a trip to the grocery store!" And yet another was worried that scholarships will be harder now for someone like them without sufficient means.

As the last student's concern indicates, the global pandemic is further exposing extant fault lines in international education, which was increasingly driven by market forces, with shrinking opportunities for global social mobility among the less affluent. Facing decreasing public support, public universities have increasingly used international students to address the gap, with their private counterparts facing less competition. If the booming new middle classes especially in populous countries shrink, experts say that this "market" could face collapse, or serious disruptions for at least half a decade (5). The global map might also shift toward new directions and dynamics. "What we're now going to see is a shift of part of the [student] traffic..." says Prof. Simon Marginson of Oxford University, "going into other East Asian countries. That effect is likely to be permanent" (5). Whether they like it or not, universities must rethink how they support international students in the new "buyer's market." The hype of online education is being exposed, spotlighting how international students learn and grow far beyond the classroom. Most importantly, international students could be viewed through more lenses than mainly as customers: as a global talent pool, as new generations who must approach global challenges more successfully, as neighbors' children from a bit far away, and, regardless of nationality or other labels, as individuals with tremendous potential and aspirations.

Earlier this week, I emailed my student Ali, one of 5.3 million whose education is more uncertain than that of those who study nearer home—because I didn't want to use his story in this essay if he or anyone around him isn't doing well. I was relieved to hear back, within hours, that the "situation here is not that bad. I go out almost on a daily basis. . . . There are more mangoes in the tree than last year."

The big picture of international education might change fundamentally. But we must also focus on one aspiring student at a time, each student who crosses oceans of both water and hardships to realize his or her potential, as engineer, economist, or physicist someday. We must cultivate an optimistic outlook when they say, like Ali did in the middle of a global pandemic: "I will be returning to campus for fall semester."

#### References

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Author: **Dr. Shyam Sharma** is Associate Professor and Graduate Program Director in the Program in Writing and Rhetoric at the State University of New York in Stony Brook. His scholarship and teaching focus on international students and education, writing in the disciplines and professional communication, cross-cultural rhetoric and issues about language and language policy, and new media and online instruction. His works have appeared in a wide variety of venues, including a Routledge book on international students, based on data gathered from 35 US universities. He writes an op-ed column on higher education in the Republica, a sister publication of The New York Times in Kathmandu. He is recipient of the Nepal Vidya Bhusan gold medal and the K. Patricia Cross Future Leaders Award from the Association of American Colleges and Universities. He facilitates faculty training, research- and teaching- based collaborations, and institutional exchanges, online and onsite, across South Asia.

## From OP Jindal University, India

### From Global to Glocal: A New Direction for Higher Education Internationalization

In the wake of the COVID-19 crisis, just as we are examining our supply chains and our health care systems, we have an unprecedented opportunity to rethink our approach to internationalising our universities. Looking for quick-fixes at this juncture, will mean losing an important learning opportunity. For instance, now that the excessive reliance of internationalisation on international travel is exposed, we should be asking not just how much mobility is needed but also, what kind of mobility. A healthy dose of intentionality is called for at all levels of design and implementation of international strategies. This transformation can only be realised, I would argue, if we move away from the entrenched and hegemonic understanding of what it means to think, be and do "global".

As educators, we have been told our job is to mould students to fit patterns premised on an inexorable march towards an eventuality - globalised utility maximisation - that purportedly defies the complexity, circularity and idiosyncrasy of history. In the post-COVID scenario, however, we can no longer deny that globalisation is expected to unfold in ways that do not strictly conform with once sacrosanct assumptions and textbook definitions. Just as governments will restructure supply chains to emphasize proximity and predictability, universities will be required to demonstrate dynamism in their international strategies. Education in general and higher education in particular needs to go beyond preparing students for a global world – we have a responsibility to shape minds who will ethically harness globalisation in the service of sustainability, equity and humanity, rather than a cookie cutter graduate army that has internalised "winner takes all".

If there is one lesson policy-makers have drawn from the pandemic, it is that the cause of the "global" must not be advanced at the cost of the local and the regional. As well-meaning practitioners invested in finding the best way forward, the post-COVID world invites us to shed the deadweight of "best practice". Institutions in the Global South have every reason to invest more in learning from each other. International education is needed now more than ever but only if it is rooted in the genuine acknowledgement that learning is equally available everywhere. The binaries of work-life, home-office, online-offline have snapped and cleared the way for a new language free from simplistic othering.





The post-crisis recovery and reconstruction of higher education must be mindful of those global dynamics which exacerbate inequality and ultimately enhance our vulnerability to future shocks. There is no denying that how we create and disseminate knowledge is exactly such a global dynamic – if not the most significant one. For guiding lights, we may turn to our wisdom traditions that proclaim the unity of nature and our inner and outer worlds and our inherent humility which reassures us that if our challenges are shared, so is our will and ingenuity to meet them. As I have argued elsewhere, spiritual education with a focus on sustainability opens up the unique possibility for the higher education internationalisation project to strengthen the positive impact of globalisation.

Author: **Kalyani Unkule**, Director of International Affairs and Global Initiatives at O.P. Jindal Global University and Associate Professor at Jindal Global Law School. Her monograph "Internationalising the University: A Spiritual Approach" was published by Palgrave Macmillan in 2019.

## From UniSA, Australia

### Who Would Have Thought?



**E**arlier this year in February whilst visiting Dhaka, a now customary trip in my work calendar, I conducted a student seminar at NSU. Never would I have imagined that only a month later I would be directed by the Vice-Chancellor of my University to work from home and the Prime Minister pleading with the Australian public not to leave our homes unless strictly necessary. By the same token thousands of students would never have considered online studies as the only option to continue their degrees while in lockdown at home due to a pandemic, yet they had no other alternative. We are now living in a different world than the one we inhabited four months ago. When asked to write about how I thought COVID-19 had changed international education, my immediate reaction was flexible delivery.

In markets where online studies have not been a popular studying option due to the perception of being of low quality or the authorities ban on foreign online studies, suddenly students are now exposed to the great offerings many universities have in this space. I know the quality out there because I did my second post-graduate degree online. When I started my online studies, I was very impressed with the platform, delivery, content and support offered by the institution. The last QILT\* survey in Australia showed that 86% of all students in Australia doing undergraduate online studies were satisfied with online learning resources and teaching quality, and at UniSA these indicators are even higher. I think the pandemic gave online study and unparalleled platform to a segment of the global market that had a very low awareness of its possibilities.

This flexibility will now also have major repercussions later when those students currently studying will graduate and start looking for jobs. A report from consultancy Building 20, based on a survey of 423 Australian office workers in May found that overall 51% of the respondents preferred remote working and even more interestingly managers are the ones with the higher preference (57%) to continue working remotely once the pandemic is under control. This is a lot higher than pre-pandemic. This new age in education delivery will come in many ways and shapes. The options will be moulded by how the pandemic continues evolving and the restrictions that come with it. As COVID-19 continues crippling economies around the world, many people will look at micro-credentialing and upskilling possibly with short online courses. The aim, once the local economies reactivate, is to be more marketable in a challenging job market post-pandemic. To this aim the Australian government facilitated legislation and resources to help people embrace this underdeveloped aspect of education.

Lastly, this situation we find ourselves in may well be a catalyst for transnational education to take front page in international education as mobility among countries is hindered by border closures. A mid-term strategy to overcome all the traveling restrictions is bringing our product to the markets where there is appetite for it through partnerships with local institutions allowing universities like UniSA to cater for the demand of quality Australian education in country, even if the borders of many nations continue being closed. We certainly live in a different world but still a world full of opportunities and possibilities.

\*2019 ComparED (QILT) Student experience survey (Undergraduate, External Study Mode)

Author: **Juan F. Ospina**, Manager International Business Development, University of South Australia

**NSU staff also shared their observations about COVID-19**

## From the Director of the Confucius Institute, NSU

### The Opportunities and Challenges of International Education Under the Impact of Covid-19

**I**t may be something that none of us thought of when the epidemic has developed to such a degree. I have to say that COVID-19 has affected all aspects of our lifestyle and education style in a short time. It's not saying we start a new teaching and learning style. Long-distance teaching and learning we all have known depended on the development of IT technology in the last 20 years. We predicted today's scenario many times in the past. But when these things happen in our life, we still feel that it is not easy to accept. We have to face and take our attention very seriously about online learning much more than ever before. They are not pretty good as we expected. The combination of the most advanced technology and education seems not so friendly and even makes the online class so dull.

Why is this? According to a language teaching survey, when teachers and students discuss online classes, the most satisfying thing is convenience. The students said that I could even be in class or sign in while I was in travel or bed. The most dissatisfying is that the students couldn't have eye contact with teachers, and lack interaction between teachers and students. The teaching process is like a designed processor program, the professor's jokes were no longer funny, and the classmates' pranks were gone. If COVID-19 profoundly affects our education, then we should rethink how technology serves education? And how online learning can provide what we need? How to bring caring and interaction into the online class? Educational institutions need to embrace new information technology and promote education to engage in new technology development to find a way to resolve the current problems. And also, online teaching and learning need much more offline service and support than we imagined. All of these call on more research and exploration.

From a social perspective, education is a system. When the pandemic strikes, the entire system of education has been hit. Technological progress, and educational opportunities, social equality become severe problems. How to obtain and allocate educational resources involves all parties of society both in the national and global level. For developing countries, they need not only domestic consensus but also the support and help of the international community. The allocation of educational resources is an opportunity to achieve collective progress and a challenge to avoid new inequality as well in the era of science and technology.





Under this circumstance, international education is likely to be related to a country's development and destiny, and it is worth considering seriously.

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## From Office of International Affairs, NSU

### Impact of COVID-19 on Global Higher Education System



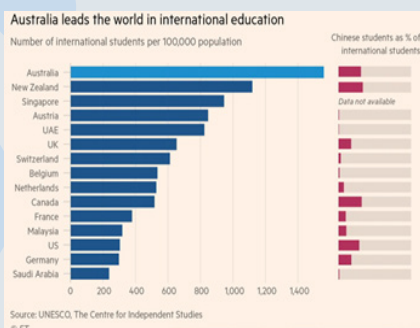
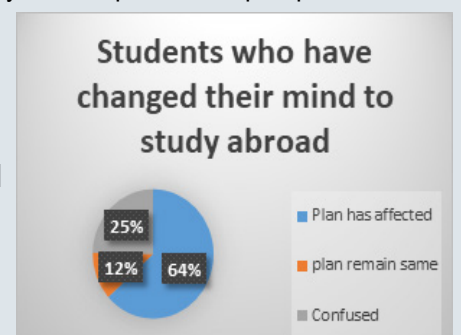
**C**ovid-19 pandemic has made a huge bearing on education systems across the globe. Worldwide schools, colleges, and universities have been closed to prevent the transmission of the virus since avoiding community gathering and the maintenance of social-distance is crucial to prevent the spread of the disease.

Several surveys from mid-February 2020 to June 2020 reflects the major changes in the study plans of international students and higher education institutions throughout the crisis moment. This article demonstrates how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected the global higher education system and discussed strategies on education system.

**Current Scenario of Global Higher Education System:** Covid-19 has deliberately affected the study abroad plan of the prospective international students. QS Survey presented some statistical data on the scenario of the prospective

students who have already changed their plan of studying abroad. On May 2020 it has been seen that plan of 64% students had been affected, 12% said they hadn't and 25% still didn't know. This percentage on February 2020 was 27%, 61% and 12% respectively (QS 2020). Reason behind the change of study plans are mainly travel restrictions, flight cancellations, university closures, difficulties with obtaining scholarship interviews, visa applications or language tests, exam cancellations and health concerns. Students are wondering why they should pay thousands only to get online tuition, whereas they want to attend the real classes with new classmates from different countries and also enjoy the cultural diversity between countries.

Some stated that the world is going to face an economic collapse which will affect their study plan. Education could become costly because of the lack of part-time job opportunities which will be tough for middle class families to bear. There will be long line of scholarship candidates because almost every country has stopped taking foreign students. As the days pass by no solution of this outbreak is found and school and university closures will not only have a short-term impact on the continuity of learning but also engender far-reaching economic and societal consequences. Australia, the US and New Zealand are among more than a dozen nations to impose a ban on entry to anyone who is neither a citizen nor a permanent resident if they travelled in China within the past 14 days. The measures, aimed at containing the spread of the coronavirus, pose a multibillion-dollar threat to western universities, which have become increasingly reliant on income from International students mostly from Chinese students. (Jamie smith, Alice, Jane, Andrew, 2020).



This graph shows that Australia leads the world in international education but the COVID-19 pandemic made a huge bearing on education systems across the globe. Recent scenario is totally opposite of this because the educational institutions (EI) started to close from March 2020 at the beginning of the pandemic and now the time has been extended for almost all countries. Australia is re-opening the schools although a large number of schools had not been closed here ("Coronavirus Covid-19 update, 2020"). In the USA some institutions announced that they closed for the academic year and some other institutions announced that they will remain closed until further notice. On April 26, 2020, In Canada, the Education Minister Stephen Lecce announced that all schools would remain closed until at least May 31, 2020 ("School Closures Extended to Keep Students, Staff and Families Safe"). In Japan the state of emergency would remain until May 6, 2020, so educational institutions would also remain closed until then ("Coronavirus: Japan Declares Nationwide State of Emergency"). On April 27, 2020, the BBC

News published that China's EI started re-opening. And Wuhan from where the pandemic had originated would re-open schools from 6 May 2020 ("Coronavirus: Schools Start Reopening in China's Biggest Cities"). The duration of EI closures is depending on the Covid-19 situation of the countries. (Alam, June, 2020)

**Adapting to Online Learning:** In this current situation there is no more face-to-face interaction or class because all the educational institutions have been closed during this COVID-19 pandemic. Online learning is the only mode of communication. Bangladesh is not behind in this situation. They are adapting this e-learning education system. In some developed countries, the Department of Education is offering free online courses for primary and secondary school students, also providing laptops to students who can't afford it. According to BBC, video conferencing application "Zoom" is being used highly to work from home in the current situation not only for meetings and conferences but also for the online classes. (Alam, June, 2020). From the QS report we have got a statistical data of the impression of how students are interested in studying their degree online because of the coronavirus. (QS, 2020), it says that only a few students are very interested and most students are not at all interested. In Bangladesh the structure of schooling and learning, including teaching and assessment methodologies are very new to the underprivileged or low-income family and only a handful of private schools could adopt online teaching methods. Low-income private and government school counterparts have completely shut down for not having access to e-learning solutions. UNICEF is working with the Government of Bangladesh to offer effective remote learning programs using TV, radio, mobile phone and Internet platforms to reach the maximum number of students. UNICEF has also helped produce guides to assist teachers that are giving remote classes. Unlike in many developed countries, most children in Bangladesh do not have access to the Internet. This is why the initial education response focused on delivering classes on TV, as television sets are more widely available in households.

**Strategies for Education Sector:** The pandemic has significantly disrupted the higher education sector which is a critical determinant of a country's economic future. A large number of Bangladeshi students enroll in universities abroad for their higher studies, especially in countries worst affected by the pandemic like US, UK and China. Many such students have now been barred from entering these countries. If the situation persists in the long run, a decline in the demand for international higher education is expected. (Chowdhury, 2020)

Some strategies that can help to overcome with the current situation:

- By ensuring continuity of learning in schools and universities. Digital learning solutions and Learning Management Software should be adopted by all specially government school teachers in Bangladesh so that they can conduct teaching online.
- By developing inclusive learning solutions. With a rapid increase of mobile internet users technology is enabling global access and personalization of education even in the remotest parts of the country. This can help to increase the effectiveness of learning and teaching, giving multiple option to choose from. By adopting mobile-based learning models for effective delivery of education will help to continue the education.
- Strategies are required to prepare the higher education sector for the evolving demand supply trends across the globe and improving the quality of and demand for higher studies in Bangladesh. Also, immediate measures are required to mitigate the effects of the pandemic on job offers, internship programs, and research projects.



- It is also important to reconsider the current delivery and educational methods in school and higher education by seamlessly integrating classroom learning with e-learning modes to build a unified learning system. Further, it is also important to establish quality assurance mechanisms and quality benchmark for online learning. Many e-learning players offer multiple courses on the same subjects with different levels of certifications, methodology and assessment parameters. So, the quality of courses may differ across different e-learning platforms.

- In this crisis moment, well-shaped and effective educational practice is needed for the capacity development of young minds. It will develop skills that will drive their employability, productivity, health, and well-being in the decades to come, and ensure the overall progress of Bangladesh.

- Need a change in assessment method in education system because with social distancing arose new changes appears. Two popular methods to assess students in a classroom are individual readiness assurance test (iRAT) and team readiness assurance test (tRAT), where students are assigned with necessary materials, granted time to work on them individually or in groups, provided with instant tests or quizzes right after the group or individual work, and finally provided with instant feedback by the teachers.

Covid-19 has surely put a devastating impact on social and economic aspect. Worldwide education system is not ruled out of this. The changes occurred in education sector may lead to more deteriorating situation which demand effective and on time actions for remedy.

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## Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic: Adjusting Life

The effects of COVID-19 on the global economy and on individual life are becoming obvious as time goes on. The closure of almost all the economic activities have brought desolation. Production and supply chains have been disrupted, exports and imports decelerated, transportation system collapsed and all the service sectors are interrupted. These have changed the lives and livelihoods of people all over the world. Unemployment has soared, poverty has pitched, food insecurity has increased and above all, loss of lives is increasing day by day.

Although, the sudden discontinuity of regular life and the uncertainty about return to normality, we can also see some changes in the office system as a result of working from home. As some offices were turned into online systems, we are getting benefits of quick processing time. Recently we experienced such things related to the work permits from Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (BIDA) under the Hon'ble Prime Minister's Office.

People are also familiarizing themselves to maintain proper hygiene habits. They are also saving their long transfer time due to traffic jam so they are attending the online meetings in due time. Although, the source of income is limited, but people are learning to minimize the costs dodging the luxuries in life.

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## Un-Coordinating Effect of COVID-19



From the very beginning of 2020, the whole world is facing an unprecedented situation due to the massive outbreak of COVID-19. The spread of this virus has become so vicious at this point that it has turned into a global pandemic and has brought the whole world to a standstill. Most of the regions of the world had to activate strong lockdowns and restrict the mobility of common people in order to control the rapid spread of COVID. Bangladesh is no different than the rest of the world fighting the pandemic. Amid this COVID-19 pandemic, Bangladesh went through one-and-a-half-month long lockdown which impacted our economy and the general people. However, the government plans to shield people and the economy from the harmful effects of this economic standstill.

This current situation of the whole world as well as our country was beyond our imagination even a few months before. At this point, we cannot even surmise the duration of such a condition. It cannot be surely said if and when the world can will be back in its normal state, and when can we gain back our regular mobility. In such a condition, the only practicable thing for us to do is cope with the situation, strictly follow safety regulations and control our mobility as much as possible.

Our workplace, North South University has also been completely closed during the lockdown, but recently it has again started its administrative activities as the government has loosen the lockdown and permitted for the administrative functions to proceed. But the campus is still restricted for the students.

As a Coordination Officer of OEA my main task has always been contacting foreign delegates for various educational issues. Foreign educational institutions have always come up with their lucrative educational offers for students who are enthusiastic. Successfully enough I have organized various meetings, seminars, workshops for such delegates and students so that both the parties can have one-to-one talk sessions, where they can ask questions and get all their queries. Since the whole world is facing this pandemic issue now, inviting foreign delegates and other educators to attend such seminars has become quite impossible.



For this may also hamper the safety issues. Keeping this in mind what I can suggest is that we can go for online platforms and organize sessions on zoom. We can make it live on our official Facebook page by providing the link. In that way, we can have questions from the students and then get their questions answered by the respective people.

Secondly, I want to add that our IELTS team has started working online. There is no point of any miscommunication there. Students who are interested are having their online IELTS trainings easily. Our facilitators and instructors are working there without any major interruption. So that sector is running smoothly. Finally, to point out the BD Educators topic and emailing them. It is to be mentioned that I am keeping in touch with them. Sending them emails on a daily basis. Trying to connect with them with all our necessities. But because this COVID-19 issue not everything is working properly so these things might take time. But I am keeping the work up to date and mailing them. These are the measures I am implementing to keep everything smooth sailing so that we can progress towards OEA's mission, vision and strategic goals.

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## Coronavirus and the New Normal

**P**lagues and epidemics have demolished humanity throughout its existence, often changing the course of history and, at times, signaling the end of entire civilizations. Perhaps none other in our time has shaken us to the core as hard as the COVID-19, or the coronavirus. As nations around the world close their borders, halt international trade, and craft national responses to limit the spread of the disease, the current crisis shows us how helpless we are in front of this tiny droplet of disease (Paul, 2020).

The spread of COVID-19 has been emotionally challenging for us all, as it has altered our day-to-day lives in and out of the ordinary manner. Schools, colleges and universities closed, restaurants shut down, parks and recreation centers emptied, whereas hospitals and clinics have filled up with patients, doctors and medical staff exhausting themselves attending these people which is something we have never seen before. Offices and workplaces took a massive hit by the virus, as social distancing is nearly impossible at most of the arrangements, which forced people to adapt alternate measures like web meetings and virtual presentations.

But is this situation an eye opener? Could we really achieve much more than we had imagined without being physically present? Organizations are moving away from conventional work environments and towards arrangements that mirror how we really can work and live. Consider trends like remote work, cloud computing and other innovative practices that flexes the requirements of physical attendance. Arrangements like these are time, cost and space saving from the beginning, and when you add the benefit 'life saving' to this list during the time of this pandemic, these practices are definitely worth a shot!

A big question in our perspective is is the work sector of Bangladesh ready to adapt this new arrangement and environment? Traditionally the corporate meeting structure of our country has always been a bit old-fashioned, where people have been more comfortable with face-to-face meetings, and agreements have always taken place with the physical presence of all associates. The current situation has forced us to leave behind these conventional methods. It was not easy at the beginning, but people have started to gradually adapt the new practice of digital meetings and virtual presentations.

The lockdown took a toll on all of us. After 66 days of shutdown, the Government lifted the general holiday at the beginning of June and people slowly began to resume their normal lives, the new normal that is! North South University also took the necessary health safety measures and opened its offices, as the new semester needs to start and students need to be enrolled. The Office of External Affairs (OEA) also opened along with its sub-offices, Office of International Affairs and Office of Alumni Affairs. The Office of Alumni Affairs was working on a few things before the shutdown started. It was in the process of establishing the university's first-ever central alumni association. It was at the last stage of finalizing an agreement with Bangladesh Alumni Foundation (BdAF); an association of Bangladeshi Alumni based in the United States, which would facilitate scholarship opportunities for students of NSU. The Office of Alumni Affairs had also been working with the Office of International Affairs to arrange an Iftar Mahfil this Ramadan jointly for the alumni faculty members and international students. The current pandemic certainly created an obstacle in front of all of that. Fortunately, after the long break, the office has taken off again and the scholarship opportunity from the Bangladesh Alumni Foundation has been finalized. And despite the delay of the process and the current situation, the OAA is optimistic about a successful launch of North South University Alumni Association by the end of this year. Given the health safety concerns, a lot of the work has to be done in a remote manner from now on, with heavy reliance on internet and telecommunication. But these newly learned practices will certainly help a long way in the future, and OAA is looking forward to it!

All parts of society should play their necessary roles to protect themselves and each other in order to prevent further spread of this disease. It is forecasted by the researchers that the COVID-19 will not go away entirely for a while; and the development of a proper vaccine is still a long shot. So we have no choice but to survive along with it. But this is not the first time in the history of mankind. We have taken a hit, and we will shake it off. Taking the first step is the hardest, but once it is done, the road onwards is always smoother. May we have brighter days ahead!

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## Experience of Online Semester at NSU



**S**pring 2020 has been an extraordinary semester for us, the students of North South University. The semester started and continued till the half in the conventional system, but after that – from mid-March, all on-campus classes and activities had to discontinue on an emergency basis due to the increased outspread of COVID-19. Once the campus had closed, NSU authority managed to make necessary arrangements to resume the academic activities of the ongoing semester as soon as possible. So we were able to start online classes by the end of March 2020.

The online class and evaluation process was a very new experience for me. As soon as the university authority announced online continuation of the semester, all my course instructors provided Google meet links for online classes and clear guidelines for attending class and other curricular activities. All the faculties were very helpful and supportive towards us. They helped with proper instructions and guidance throughout the semester and were easy to reach whenever we faced any difficulty or confusion. After the shutdown of educational institutions, I went back to my home town Rajshahi. The internet network in all cities of the country is not as strong as the capital. So I had to face some trouble regarding maintenance and continuance of strong internet network during my class time. The internet connection being a bit weak in the congested housing areas, I attended some classes sitting in open areas like fields and rooftop for better network.



The evaluation process of this semester was quite different than usual as in class exams were not possible to be taken. Most of/ all my faculties followed assignment-based final assessments as this was the most convenient means of assessment to conduct online both for the instructors and students. Overall, I enjoyed this exceptional experience of online based educational process of this semester.

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## Online Class Experience for the First Time in NSU

We are partly familiar with technology-based educational system and I have read and heard a lot about completely virtually conducted courses and academic programs, but never have I ever experienced such a thing before attending the latest semester in North South University. The semester spring 2020 has been a very exceptional and memorable semester for the students of NSU, as we have experienced fully online-based academic process for the first time. We were able to start the academic procedure e.g. classes, exams of the semester in conventional way but had to shift to online based system midst the semester due to COVID-19 pandemic. The on-campus activities paused and the campus was closed on 16th March 2020 on an emergency basis with short notice because of sudden increase of COVID-19 infections. The NSU authority responded to this unexpected situation swiftly and thus we were able to resume all curricular activities of the ongoing semester using the online platform from the last of March 2020.

The experience of going through this unique situation has been obviously new, exciting and mostly positive for me. The faculties had adapted the change rapidly and helped us to cope with this new system very actively. Right after the declaration of going online from NSU authority, the course instructors contacted us and provided us with Google Meet link and other necessary communication details. For uninterrupted and smooth online class experience, our faculties arranged demo online classes for us days before the beginning of actual online class. As face-to-face communication was not possible, I faced some minor problems with understanding a few academic topics. But those problems were easily solved as the faculties were very cooperative in classes, office hours and responsive through e-mail. The teachers put extra attention and effort in providing clear guideline being easy to reach in case any student needed to discuss any confusion or problem regarding curriculum.

I did not have to face much of a problem regarding the internet network during online sessions and research for assignments; but if and whenever I faced such network issues, I had informed my faculty about the problem right away. My faculties have been really considerate about these kinds of problems. The assessment process of this semester has been really unusual too. All my faculties evaluated the final grades through individual assignment-based tasks instead of going for a conventional exam system. Sure this system was new for me, but the assessment and grading was not unfair in any way. I felt the whole system was designed and conducted considering the best convenience of both the students and faculties. The overall experience of spring 2020 has been fairly pleasing and satisfying for me.

Author: **Nusrat Naila Nokshi**, student of BBA department and student worker at Office of External Affairs, North South University



## International Faculty Feature COVID-19 Closes Borders to Mobility



On 03 March 2020 I led a high-level delegation from North South University (NSU) to visit 9 universities in Australia and New Zealand. We transited through Singapore, which at that time was considered one of the COVID-19 hotspots. Immediately we noticed that thermal scanners were set up outside the arrival gates to check the temperatures of the passengers. All airport personnel and most passengers were wearing masks and some of them gloves. We, too, had been wearing masks on the flight from Dhaka. As we went from one university to the next in Melbourne and then Sydney, the comments were, "We're surprised that you didn't cancel this trip. Yours is the last delegation we'll be hosting for the foreseeable future." By the time we reached New Zealand on 09 March 2020, the global news was reporting the closure of global borders. Sure enough, two days after we departed on 13 March 2020, New Zealand closed its borders. By now we wondered how this whole thing was going to affect Bangladesh, which had its first case of COVID-19 on 08 March 2020 (WHO, 2020). I recall the Vice Chancellor reaching out to the Director of IT at NSU saying, "We need to go online."

According to Giannini (2020), "the COVID-19 pandemic put 3.5 billion people in lockdown which had a perceived deleterious effect on education around the world. Starting in China, school closing became a one of the immediate strategies used by governments to mitigate the spread of COVID-19; 1.53 billion learners were out of school in 184 country-wide closures, impacting 87.6% of the world's total enrolled learners." In many cases, the reaction was an attempt to move to the online environment.

Upon return to the airport in Dhaka, there was a new addition to the immigration area: a medical station. Passengers were required to fill out a health form and detail any recent travel. At that time, the pertinent question was whether we had visited China in the past 14 days and did we have any symptoms like fever, cough, etc. Thermal scanners were also in place and technicians donned full PPE gear. How quickly things had changed. Two days later, the Prime Minister announced the closure of all educational institutions in Bangladesh initially for 2 weeks, reports Shawon (2020). So far, the shutdown or 'general holiday' has been extended 7 times. When it was partially lifted on 31 May 2020, there was still no definite date of full reopening.

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## NSU Alumni Feature

*Mahmid Hassan* (Chairman/Head of Operations, The Bakers Family Ltd.). -NSU Batch - 093

*Ashfia Ahmed* (Managing Director/Head of Production & R&D, The Bakers Family Ltd.). -NSU Batch - 111

*We both had an intuition for business even before we graduated. Our company TBFL is now operating different businesses in different industries such as trading, agro, restaurants and hospitality and apparel. We were awarded the Young Entrepreneur 2014 Award by BDOSN. Our vision is to contribute in the development of Bangladesh economy and create more job opportunities for people.*



**Interviewer:** From your perspective as an alumnus/alumna, how has COVID-19 changed your life?

**Mahmid & Ashfia:** COVID-19 has swept the whole world upside down with its calamity. From poor to the rich, it has hampered people of all socio-economic classes. However, the people of the lower and mid-level classes have been the most affected with scarcity of food and finances as everything was shut down. However apart from this major detrimental outcome of covid, I have another view about this as well...people nowadays were getting too materialistic and running after everything but family. Covid has brought family together under the same roof and enabled people to spend time with their loved ones, extensively. But yet another question is, how many people have the luxury to do so? How many can afford to relax and sit back at home without earning a penny? How many have the savings for it? How many have the food in store? These privileged people would merely be a tiny percentage. Some say, it has been a positive aspect for Mother Nature to recompose itself. But to what I feel, COVID has not just shattered families but also the economy of the nation at large and has already started affecting global economies. All these calamities do not actually suffice with this trivial positivity. It has changed lives for many, if not all.

**Interviewer:** How did it affect the way you work?

**Mahmid & Ashfia:** Being entrepreneurs, it has very badly affected us. Being startups while we were striving to establish ourselves it has wobbled everything for us. At the end of everything, we are bound to pay rents, salaries, survive on our own accord without earning a penny. We had plans of expansion which got halted. We spent sleepless nights thinking of ways to overcome this...to be there for our employees, whose livelihood depends on us. For us, laying off was never an intention, let alone an option, and we are hoping to collectively overcome this.

**Interviewer:** What has this experience taught you about life?

**Mahmid & Ashfia:** This experience has downright shown us how unpredictable life is.

**Interviewer:** What does post COVID-19 life look for you?

**Mahmid & Ashfia:** Post-COVID life seems quite grim. It will take a while before we can rise up to the position we were in. Hopefully, we will be able to fight back.

## International Student Feature



*Yamundow Jah*, a Gambian national and a Muslim who was born in Saudi Arabia (Medina) I have five siblings;

*four sisters and a brother. I did my nursery and primary education in the Gambia but finished my schooling at Manning School for Girls in Nottingham, UK. I further went on to do my A'levels in the sciences at High Pavement Sixth Form College, also in Nottingham. By then I was aspiring to be a surgeon, however, my years at college presented me with the hard cold truth, making me realize that my aspired profession since childhood is simply not possible since I could not stand the blood and gore. As a result, I had to reevaluate my career path and I chose Accounting for my BSc because I had a love for Maths; loved the practical side of things, how your mind is always working out numbers and you always have to practice in order to stay on top of your game. I went back to The Gambia for my Bachelor's degree and I studied at the University of The Gambia. I graduated in 2018 with BSc Honors and started work early 2019. I was not satisfied with the work deserving of a Bachelor's degree alone. I wanted more. In fact I've always planned on doing my Masters and so I decided to start looking for universities. By this time I had already decided that I wanted to do an MBA, because I realized I wanted to have my own business and knew that an MBA was the way to go. I wanted to go back to the UK, but the schools I wanted to go to were asking for 3-5 years' work experience and I honestly did not want to wait that long. So, I was talking to my cousin sisters who goes to NSU and she told me about the good MBA program they have here. Also considering that my uncle was already staying here with my aunty and cousin, I thought why not. So, I applied and got accepted and here I am a few months later.*

**Interviewer:** From your perspective as an international student, how has COVID-19 changed your life?

**Yamundow Jah:** The COVID-19 pandemic has affected us all, either in a major way or otherwise. Personally, it has affected me quite a bit. For example I'm finding it really hard to cope with the lockdown. It's not even like I go out a lot normally but I still want that freedom and peace of mind to be able to go out whenever I want.



Another way the COVID-19 has affected me personally is my schooling. My school schedule is obviously drastically affected since all schools are closed down until further notice and no one knows for sure when we will resume. However, I'm glad that we're at least doing online classes, but it's just not the same. Furthermore, I'm an international student and obviously I would like to see my family from time to time, but the COVID-19 is preventing that at the moment. However, I thank Allah that I'm staying with a wonderful family here and I can't even imagine what the other international students are going through right now.

**Interviewer:** How did it affect the way you study?

**Yamundow Jah:** Well, to be completely honest, I've become really lazy when it comes to studying. You need peace of mind in order to focus on your studies and presently that's rather hard to achieve. I'm more interested in what's going on around the globe and how people and countries worldwide are being affected by the virus. And if I'm not doing that then I'm either watching movies to getting my mind off things for a bit, or I'm cooking because it soothes me. In fact, since the lockdown started I have come to learn a lot about baking. Perhaps, that's one side of this whole thing that isn't too bad.

**Interviewer:** What has this experience taught you about life?

**Yamundow Jah:** I am getting to learn that life is really too short and we should do our best to understand and enjoy life before it's too late. It is also very clear that only the Almighty Allah has control over this earth and everything within it and it is only through His mercy that we get to live and enjoy life. So this experience has taught me to be more conscious of Allah in my every thought and act and to also value the people I love, not that I didn't value them before but to make even more effort to be close to them before it is too late.

**Interviewer:** What does post-COVID-19 life look for you? (Will you do things differently? Do you have a new plan?)

**Yamundow Jah:** Let's just say I do not see a bright light in the near future. A lot has happened, a lot of people affected, either directly or indirectly and the death toll is astonishing. The economy is affected so badly right now that I do not even want to imagine what it would be like post COVID-19. It would take a lot to recover and every single person is and will be affected. Let's just hope and pray that it does not take too long to recover or else life would be very hard indeed. Personally, COVID-19 has really set me back in my studies, which will affect my projected timeline for graduation. Consequently, this will affect my other life plans. I'm just hoping it won't affect me in a major way.

**Interviewer:** How do you think NSU has responded to the pandemic and is there anything that it could have done differently?

**Yamundow Jah:** NSU, along with other universities that introduced the online classes, has done very well because without the online classes students would be set back even further than if they had to complete their syllabi after the lock down, or they had lost out on some of their syllabi. So, I say bravo to NSU for their quick response to the lockdown. As I said, it's not the same as actually going to classes but at least it's better than nothing. The only thing that I would have liked to happen is for us to be able to finish our assessments online so that after the lock down we would move on straight to our next semester. However, it is my understanding that this decision came from the University Grants Commission (UGC) and NSU had no choice but to follow these rules.

## Timeline: COVID-19 (Until June 2020)

**Dec 31, 2019** - Wuhan Municipal Health Commission, China reported a cluster of cases of pneumonia in Wuhan, Hubei Province. A novel coronavirus was eventually identified.

**Jan 4, 2020** - WHO reported on social media that there was a cluster of pneumonia cases – with no deaths – in Wuhan, Hubei Province.

**Jan 5** - WHO published its first Disease Outbreak News on the new virus.

**Jan 7** - China identifies new coronavirus as cause of the outbreak.

**Jan 9** - China reports first death linked to the new coronavirus, 2019-nCoV.

**Jan 12** - China shares the genetic sequence of the novel coronavirus, helping countries in testing and tracing any potentially infected people.

**Jan 13** - Thailand reports first imported case of 2019-nCoV.

**Jan 21** - WHO confirms human-to-human transmission of the virus.

**Jan 30** - WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus declares the 2019-nCoV outbreak a public health emergency of international concern, noting the potential spread of the virus to countries with weak health systems.

**Feb 2** - The first 2019-nCoV death outside China is reported in the Philippines.

**Feb 9** - The death toll of victims of the 2019-nCoV is now over 800, surpassing the death toll of the SARS epidemic in 2002 and 2003, which killed 773 people.

**Feb 11** - WHO assigns the novel coronavirus its official name: COVID-19.

**Death toll from the outbreak reaches over 1,000.**

**Feb 19** - The death toll from COVID-19 surpasses 2,000.

**Feb 26** - For the first time since the outbreak began, there are more new cases reported outside China, 459, than in China, 412.

**March 7** - The number of COVID-19 cases surpasses 100,000.



**March 8** - Over 100 countries report cases of COVID-19. **Bangladesh reports first cases of COVID-19.**

**March 11** - WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus declares the global COVID-19 outbreak a pandemic.

**March 13** - Europe has now become the epicenter of the pandemic.

**March 16** - For the first time since the beginning of the outbreak, infections and deaths outside China surpass those within China.

**March 18** - **Bangladesh reported its first coronavirus death.**

**March 19** - Cases of COVID-19 surpass 200,000 globally. It took over three months to reach the first 100,000 confirmed cases and just 12 days to reach the next 100,000.

**Bangladesh imposed its first lockdown at Shibchar, Madaripur.** For the first time since the outbreak began, Wuhan reports no new cases.

**March 22** - Global cases of COVID-19 surpass 300,000. It took over three months to reach the first 100,000 confirmed cases, 12 days to reach 200,000 and three days to reach 300,000.

**March 24** - Cases of COVID-19 surpass 400,000. It took over three months to reach the first 100,000 confirmed cases, 12 days to reach 200,000, three days to reach 300,000, and two days to reach 400,000. India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi announces a lockdown of 21 days for the country's 1.3 billion residents. This is the largest lockdown announced since the beginning of the outbreak.

**The government of Bangladesh deployed the armed forces, including police and army, to ensure that people maintain social distancing and quarantine to prevent spread of the deadly COVID-19.**

**March 26** - Cases in the U.S. surpass those in China and Italy — making it the new epicenter of the pandemic.

This was the first day of the 10-day shutdown that the Bangladesh government announced to contain the spread of coronavirus.

**April 2** - Cases of COVID-19 surpass 1 million.

**April 8** - China lifts its lockdown on Wuhan, the city where the COVID-19 outbreak began.

**April 10** - The number of COVID-19 deaths around the world surpasses 100,000.

**April 14** - **Infected people in Bangladesh reaches 1,000.**

**April 15** - The number of COVID-19 cases surpasses 2 million.

**April 20** - **Death toll reaches 100 in Bangladesh.**

**April 23** - The first patients are injected with the first human COVID-19 vaccine trial in Europe.

**April 25** - The global death toll from COVID-19 surpasses 200,000.

**April 27** - Globally, the number of COVID-19 cases surpasses 3 million.

**May 4** - **Novel Coronavirus cases passed the 10,000 mark in Bangladesh.**

**May 9** - The number of COVID-19 cases surpasses 4 million globally.

**May 11** - The Chinese government reports the first new cluster of cases in Wuhan since the government lifted the lockdown measures in the city at the epicenter of the pandemic.

**Bangladesh crossed 15,000 mark.**

**May 14** - The number of deaths from COVID-19 surpasses 300,000 globally.

**The first COVID-19 case is confirmed in the densely-populated Rohingya refugee camps in Bangladesh.**

**May 15** - **Bangladesh crossed 20,000 mark.**

**May 21** - The number of COVID-19 cases surpasses 5 million globally.

**May 22** - **Bangladesh crossed 30,000 mark.**

**May 25** - **Bangladesh reached the milestone of 500 deaths from COVID-19.**

**May 27** - The death toll in the U.S. from COVID-19 surpasses 100,000.

**May 28** - **Bangladesh crossed 40,000 mark.**

**May 31** - Cases of COVID-19 surpass 6 million globally.

**June 2** - The first death from COVID-19 is confirmed in the Rohingya refugee camps in Bangladesh — a 71-year-old man who was treated at a camp's isolation center.

**Bangladesh crossed 50,000 mark.**

**June 7** - The death toll from COVID-19 surpasses 400,000 globally.

**June 8** - The number of COVID-19 cases surpasses 7 million globally.

**June 10** - **The death toll in Bangladesh crosses the 1,000 mark.**

**June 14** - China reports 57 new cases of COVID-19 — the highest daily toll the country has seen in two months.

**June 16** - The number of confirmed COVID-19 cases surpasses 8 million globally.

**June 18** - **Bangladesh crossed 100,000 mark.**

**June 28** - Globally, confirmed cases of COVID-19 surpass 10 million — only six days after the global caseload hit 9 million. Confirmed deaths surpass 500,000.

[Sources: WHO, Wikipedia, Devex]