

# Integrating 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills into the Academic Program of a Private University: An Evaluative Study

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## **Declaration**

It is therefore proclaimed that

1. The thesis conceded is my own authentic work while accomplishing my degree at BRAC University.
2. The thesis does not contain substantial previously released or written by a third party. Moreover, this paper is accordingly alluding to through proper referencing.
3. The thesis does not accommodate materials which has been conceded or accepted for any other degree at any other university or other institutions.
4. I have taken help from authentic resources and acknowledged help from the main sources.

Student's Full Name and signature

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## **Approval**

The thesis titled “Integrating 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills into the Academic Program of a Private University: An Evaluative Study”

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## **Abstract**

This study investigates the provision of teaching 21<sup>st</sup> century skills to the undergraduate students at a private university. The world is changing faster and to cope up with the modern world universities are constantly focusing on developing students' skills that may require for the future jobs. These include communication skills, technological skills, collaboration skills and critical thinking skills. Using qualitative data this study investigates to what extent one of the leading private universities of Bangladesh is emphasizing on developing students' 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. The study concluded that the university through its curriculum and teaching learning activities promotes 21<sup>st</sup> century skills and develop students' 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. It also concluded that although students rely on memorizing to some extent, in most of the cases students are required to engage in activities in and outside the class and required to complete assignments and various tasks that are conducive to d which may be helpful to teach 21<sup>st</sup> century skills effectively.

## **Dedication**

I would like to dedicate this work to my mother, Mahmuda Akter Mukul and to my father Md.

Jahangir Alam Khondaker.

## **Acknowledgement**

I would like to praise the Almighty Allah wholeheartedly who has given me enough blessings to utilize my potential as well as to implement my analytical abilities. I want to thank my family for being there and to understand me as well as for supporting me always. I am forever grateful to my father and my mother which I cannot describe in words. I also want to thank my sisters (Rimia and Jinia) for believing in me. In addition, I am thankful to my late maternal grandfather (Bhaiya) Khondaker Abdul Wahab (May Allah bless him with Jannah) and to my maternal grandmother; Ferdousi Begum. Moreover, I am forever grateful towards my maternal uncles and aunts for their unconditional love and support towards my academic life. I want to show my heartfelt gratitude to my teachers of my schools and college. Most significantly, I must appreciate my university teachers. I am thankful to Shenin Ziauddin Miss to make linguistics an interesting area for me. Furthermore, I am more than forever grateful to miss Lubaba Sanjana to help me to understand and analyze and to make my cognition process meaningful in my study. Last but not least, none other than Dr. Al-Amin, my thesis supervisor as well as instructor for my several undergraduate courses has been immensely supportive throughout my thesis journey. Without his continuous guidance and support it would be near to impossible for me to finish this research and my journey of thesis.

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## **Chapter 1 Introduction**

The world is changing faster and with the emergence of the new technologies and various inventions lots of changes happening. A job that may be considered essential, with the advent of technology suddenly becomes outdated. On the other hand, lots of new jobs are created continuously. It is often predicted that the knowledge that an undergraduate learns in their first year, by the time they move to the third year their acquired knowledge and information that they gathered in the first year become outdated. Thus universities around the world are constantly emphasizing on preparing their graduate developing their skills that may necessary for the future jobs. Among the skills that are valued highly include communication skills, critical thinking skills, technological skills, higher order thinking, global awareness and technological skills. These are also known as 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, although the term 21<sup>st</sup> century skills are wide open and there may be many other skills required to become a successful and competent graduate in the future.

Unfortunately, many of the Bangladeshi universities lag behind to keep pace with the world universities. Thus when the QS World University Rankings or Times Higher Education World University rankings published there is hardly any Bangladeshi university get any acceptable place there. It can be further argued that a higher study in Bangladesh, most of the cases, is still memorization based. Other important examinations including various job related examinations in Bangladesh, in most of the cases, test a student's memorization skills.

This study aims to investigate at a private university's context, whether the students of that university get the chance to develop their 21<sup>st</sup> century skills; whether the curriculum and various courses that this university offers are conducive to develop 21<sup>st</sup> century skills.

21<sup>st</sup> century skills are the weapons of practical skill based learning. The 21<sup>st</sup> century skills are also those skills that are needed to implicate because the new century demands more of practical experience based learning. This is that approach of learning which requires analyzing, creating, communicating, being able to use technological tools smartly.

In this research, I explored the emergence of 21st century skills in a private University of Bangladesh. Moreover, I also briefly talked about the skills first and then I discussed about the practice of teaching 21<sup>st</sup> century skills in our country. Furthermore, she also focused on whether the private universities are maintaining those skills and what is the scenario. I have conducted interview sessions to collect data for this research and I have chosen two courses to look at the course outlines as well as analyzing them briefly by matching with the 21st century skills along with those course topics to explore the phenomena in depth.

## **1.1 Background**

There are some critical 21st century skills every student needs to survive and succeed in this competitive world. The abilities and traits serve the young generation in a time that's changing and developing so rapidly. Today's generation needs not to work hard rather they should work smart by utilizing their knowledge which will help them in the long run. Their knowledge is not confined within a book or bookish knowledge rather it's more practical. It is more open and it is more about the use of the knowledge one has acquired. According to a study it is found that the courses which are structured in the shade of addressing the 21st century skills give the students a chance to communicate; these also help them to have an "ideal context" to teach critical thinking skills because they are closely related to communication skills as well (O'keefe ,1986,1995).

Moreover, various courses are needed for the students to do oral presentations which adds value to respective learning strategies to make the students' cognitive process more effective.

Private universities in Bangladesh started with an aim to provide modern education. Here, teachers are accountable and they are very dedicated to teach their students necessary skills that they need for the future. They want their students to become independent when they are done with their graduation. Usually the subjects they learn in their academic courses are based on applied knowledge as well as practical experience.

In the next chapter I will review some of the relevant research and try to position my research within the existing literature.

## Chapter 2 Literature Review

### 2.1. Previous scenario of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills in Bangladesh

Deco states that a programme was launched in 1997 to determine the result to which students who are about to end their schooling (age level around 15) have gained knowledge and necessary skills required to cope up with the real life challenges in this competitive world (Deco, 2010). This study covered two important features. Firstly, students' ability to apply knowledge and skills in some sole subject areas so that they can do analysis and communicate effectively as they go to higher levels in their studies. Moreover, they can also solve and interpret problems in a variety of situations. Secondly, it was also focused on checking students' learning experiences for a lifetime; so their cognition is not temporary rather it is permanent.

In the developed countries like USA various educators (e.g. Linda Darling-Hammond, Don Coretz) criticized the exam based education stating that these are helping learners to pass the examination without gaining necessary knowledge or acquiring skills. Linda Darling- Hammond criticized the high stake test in USA stating that because of these tests students in America are falling behind in terms of achievements in Mathematics and Science. On the other hand small countries like Finland and Singapore have achieved significant results in PISA ranking as these countries have abolished exam in their schooling systems (Darling Hammond, 2017). The education system in Bangladesh can be said as highly exam oriented and students, parents and other stakeholders are ready to do anything for the good results in the examination( Al Amin & Greenwood, 2018, Ali Hamid & Hardy, 2018). The big question is whether the students are acquiring necessary knowledge and skills required for the future jobs.

## **2.2. Critical 21st century skills that every student needs**

The European Commission's Cedefop glossary (Cedefop, 2008) describes 21<sup>st</sup> century skills as follows: the ability to perform tasks and solve problems, while the ability to properly apply learning outcomes in a given context (education, job, personal or professional development) is a competence that is not limited to conceptual elements (involving the use of theory, principles or tacit knowledge). Consequently, a competence is much more wider term which may include skills (as well as behaviors, expertise, etc.) and competences of the 21st century. Thus, abilities to perform, to think critically and to analyze in a given context is much necessary in today's world.

Moreover, Brown and Duguid (2000) explained the role of technology in the the future education where they emphasized on 21<sup>st</sup> century literacy skills as essential tools that every student's needs.

## **2.3. University Teachers' training regarding 21<sup>st</sup> century skills**

Private Universities of our country are providing many facilities. Some of them are developing their contexts and environment and as well as they are nowadays concerned with developing the skills of the students and some of the private universities have already developed their condition and are well ahead in terms of providing the good quality education as well as good environment. Moreover, the way private university teachers should teach the students is a matter of great concern. It is necessary for the teachers' to know the exact approach to deliver the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills in a systematic way. Here, systematic way refers to teaching them in such a way so that the students' get to learn effectively. Furthermore, university teachers should also be thoughtful and tricky while teaching so that their teaching sustains for a lifetime as well as

students can utilize the learning beyond academia. So, cognition process should have a long term effect on the students. However, the concern is why it is necessary to train the private university teachers? Teachers should know the approaches to teach because the 21<sup>st</sup> century is quite different than the previous era. The present era is the time of digitalization and technology. Nevertheless, lack of proper knowledge regarding literacy skills such as technology literacy and media literacy can create a hindrance to the students. For this reason, students should be capable enough and very much skilled in technology literacy. To ensure this, the private university teachers should know the way first. They should also be acquainted enough with the sophisticated and delicate use of technological tools. The type of work done by a human being has replaced with technology nowadays. Computers and technology are doing tasks that human do .Technology is even making it less time consuming and even faster than we can imagine.

Furthermore, economist Frank levy and Richard Murnane (2004) has explained that a significant amount of 21<sup>st</sup> century knowledge and skills require a component which is disdaining that part of the labor force work or human task which is nowadays easily and quickly done by technological tools. For instance, technological tools like computers can work faster than human beings. They can function in such a way which is quicker than human brain functions. Weinberer (2007) has stated that the power of “digital disorder” takes in expedience of the fact that realistic information can surpass the small amount of properties of physical objects like books. Here, wenberger (2007) mainly suggested an alternative idea in order to fulfill a person’s particular technological needs. He further added that this creates a new set of assert 21<sup>st</sup> century skills centered on “Disorderly “ knowledge sharing and co-creation. So, teachers should know it better to apply proper method of teaching as well as ensuring that students’21<sup>st</sup> century skills based cognition should be up to the mark. So, the idea is to be updated with the upcoming context of

the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills so that there is no gap between the cognition process and students' learning environment. Nevertheless, literacy skills should be mastered properly by the teachers so that they can train the students the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills .If one knows how to operate computers then it is definitely easier for them to utilize the 21<sup>st</sup> century learning skills as well. So, things are connected and the necessity of mastering these skills cannot be overlooked in any way.

#### **2.4. How can it be addressed more? Is it a necessity or just a choice?**

The 21<sup>st</sup> century skills should be mandatory rather than being just a option .It should and must be addressed more so that students can become more aware of it and their skills are developed more.21<sup>st</sup> century skills are not a choice rather a necessity nowadays.

Moreover, researchers are studying on facts that ideas like guided inquiry based learning is becoming helpful and this kind of learning is quite helpful for the students. If they are guided properly regarding the 21<sup>st</sup> century learning and literacy skills; they can learn properly. As a result, their proficiency level regarding their 21<sup>st</sup> century skills based knowledge will be enhanced and addressed properly. Day by day the idea of learning and the ways of cognition process is changing. However, Guided inquiry is a planned and systematic way of involvement in the inquiry process in learning. The standards and establishment of Guided Inquiry introduced in Guided Inquiry: Learning in the 21st Century by Kuhlthau, Maniotes and Caspari (2007) depend on strong research discoveries grounded in a constructivist way to deal with learning. The Information Search Process (ISP), established and explained in more than two many years of studies and research, (Kuhlthau, 2004) gives proper knowledge into how to direct understudies in the request procedure that underlies Guided Inquiry (Figure 1) regarding cognition process. The model of the ISP outlines considerations, activities and emotions in six phases of request:



inception, determination, investigation, plan, assortment, and introduction. Model of the Information Search are based on the skill based learning which paves the way to make tomorrow's learning experiences better and more effective.

Although much has been discussed internationally, there is hardly any study conducted in Bangladesh that focus on necessary skills required for the Bangladeshi graduates to become competent locally and globally. Thus this study will focus on how graduates can be effectively taught these skills.

In the next chapter I will discuss the methodology of this study. The research design, participants' data collection and data analysis process will be discussed in this part.

## **Chapter 3 Methodology**

In this chapter the researcher has explained the research design, research procedure as well as methodology in details which has been applied in this research study. Firstly, the researcher has talked about the purpose of the study. Secondly the researcher has explained why she has chosen qualitative method for this study. Furthermore, in the following; the researcher has added the data collection procedure. Then she has given analysis and interpretations on this study. She has also attached the collected data as well as the research questions and the answers of the interviewees based on the research questions. Lastly, she has stated the ethical considerations on which she has carefully focused on to conduct this study.

### **3.1. Purpose of this study**

This study aims to investigate to what extent the students of a private university in Bangladesh get the opportunity to develop their 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. It also focuses on whether the existing courses that the students have to study provide opportunities to develop 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, teachers teach in a way that help students to develop 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, and other required course work, exam and additional assignments that students are required to finish help students to develop 21<sup>st</sup> century skills.

This study is guided by the following research questions:

1. Do the curriculum of private universities of Bangladesh allow students to attain 21<sup>st</sup> century skills?
1. Are the students of private universities in Bangladesh attaining 21<sup>st</sup> century skills?

Although the questions are in general, I will try to answer by studying a particular university. In doing so along with the data from a private university, I have collected documents from various relevant sources.

### **3.2. Research design**

This is qualitative case study as the researchers try to understand the phenomena in depth. The focus is collecting rich data so that the phenomena can be explored in details. Moreover, the quantitative study may provide information from a large number of participants, but it may not be sufficient to explore in depth. Time, access and opportunity were also influenced me to adopt a qualitative design.

### **3.3. Participants of the study**

Data are collected from participants especially from two courses and in every case I used pseudonym to maintain confidentiality.

#### **3.3. 1.List of participants**

##### **Students of Course 1.1**

<b>Sl.</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>University</b>	<b>Gender</b>
1	Ayesha	DOTS University	Female
2	Fatema	DOTS University	Female
3	Aiman	DOTS University	Male

## Students of Course 1.2

Sl.	Name	University	Gender
1	Priyoti Saha	DOTS University	Female
2	Khadija	DOTS University	Female
3	Aiman	DOTS University	Male

### 3.4. Data Collection procedure

The researcher conducted this research in a systematic way and there were consecutive interview sessions among the researcher and the interviewees'. All of the interviews were taken chronologically throughout the research session. The critical analysis and overall study of this research has been conducted in the following procedure; one of them is by collecting information through the interviews and lastly, by doing others analysis.

#### 3.4.1 Interviews

I have chosen candidates for my interview who are Private University Students as my topic solely focuses on the private university students. I have chosen students from one of the private universities of our country and the interviewees are all mostly from 3<sup>rd</sup> year or fourth year undergrad students of that university.

#### 3.4.2. Resources of the Analysis

Once the data are collected, I organized them for the analysis. Some of the recordings were transcribed where necessary and I analyzed all the data by myself. No computer software was used to analyze but recordings were saved in a personal computer.

### **3.5. Data analysis**

Data were analyzed thematically. The aim of this thematic data analysis is to provide the influential factors thematically. The participants (students) who were a part of this research gave their personal experiences and the researcher has kept their analysis and responses on mind. Later on, the thematic data analysis was conducted to get results on this research topic. Nevertheless, the themes were selected depending on the spotlight of this research.

### **3.6. Ethical Considerations**

The researcher focused on the research topic and to analyze the topic firmly she followed authentic principled ground in order to conduct the research. Firstly, the researcher informed and talked to the interviewees (participants who are currently students of a private university of Bangladesh) regarding the research. She took their permission and informed them about the context and introduced the content. Moreover, the researcher also did not state any partial comments on any participants' response regarding the research. Secondly, the researcher did not reveal any of the participants' identity which might cause any harm to them further. Thirdly, interviewees' took part in the interview sessions willingly. They were interested to be a part of this research. Lastly, the researcher was very concerned regarding all the participants' different educational background, context, ideology, respect and honor. She took care of their opinion and did not state any biased opinion on their responses. In addition, the researcher has also cited all the resources appropriately. That's how, ethical considerations were fully taken care of by the researcher.

## **Chapter 4: Students' viewpoint on the 21<sup>st</sup> century learning skills**

### **4.1 Students' prospect on creativity and critical thinking**

All of the students were highly enthusiastic throughout the whole interview sessions from beginning till end. They were very much interested and their responses were very enthusiastic. They have given their real classroom experiences on creativity and critical thinking. They have also agreed that being introduced to these skills is so helpful for them that they are benefited in their undergraduate education to a great extent.

However, creativity and critical thinking are two of the sub categories of the 21<sup>st</sup> century learning skills. These two sub skills are essential as well as connected. Ayesha, one of the students of DOTS University has shared her experience on one of the courses that she has done recently and said that her 21<sup>st</sup> century skills have improved lot after she got admitted into university. She said that her creative thinking has developed more than before. She also added that it is really helpful for her to get proper exposure on 21<sup>st</sup> century skills.

Moreover, Ayesha also stated that she has now learned how to make questions and she said that she is much more comfortable and much more confident in making questions for her students (If she becomes a teacher in future). So she can now come up with new ideas to make questions for her students. It is only improved in her with the help of development on creativity and critical thinking. In one of the courses she learned how to make questions and then evaluate the answers of the students. Thus creativity skills helped her to learn making questions as well as evaluating them is also not difficult for her. She further added that evaluation process is not also impossible for her because she now knows how things work and she also said she can differentiate which one is easier and which is tough for her. She says, “ broad questions or

descriptive questions are easier for me to make than multiple choice questions. Because there are several options in multiple choice questions and more choices to think of whereas descriptive questions does not require much choices rather they are more direct to make. So, descriptive questions are easier to make according to my opinion. Furthermore, when I am asked to do evaluation; I think, evaluating descriptive questions are more complex and time consuming whereas evaluating multiple choice questions are easier than evaluating descriptive questions”.

Here, Fatema implied that simple questions are easier to make. But 21<sup>st</sup> century skills are something beyond simple strategies yet necessary one. So according to her learning only simple questions are not enough rather questions should be based on by giving importance to addressing some skills like collaboration skills or critical thinking. She said the main reason to address some skills within a particular type of question is to define the different level of understanding of different students. She also said that she is more comfortable on making questions based on critical thinking so that students can first think and then answer.

In this regard Ayesha also said almost the same thing like Aiman. She responded that descriptive questions are more complicated and lengthy to evaluate. She stated that descriptive or analytical or conceptual broad question answers differ from student to student and it also requires a lot of knowledge to evaluate critically. She also emphasized that evaluating multiple choice questions are easier for her. When she was asked more specifically in general the whole question making and evaluation process whether it is a lengthy process or an easy process, she replied that making questions is more difficult than giving answers. Because, for that a teacher has to think from a teacher’s perspective as well as students’ background knowledge and their level of understanding is also mattered and also kept to be in a teacher’s mind. So, making questions is difficult and a lengthy task. Moreover, evaluating is also lengthy and tiring because a teacher has to think of

many things before evaluating. She mainly emphasized more on thinking from students' perspective while setting questions as well as while evaluating them.

One of the students named Aiman said that his ability to test and evaluate improved a lot. He also added that his critical thinking improved a lot. He also stated that teachers should know about students' strengths and weaknesses to evaluate and to teach them properly and they should cover the course materials properly before designing a set of particular test, a teacher should take a feedback on students' learning. Learners' level of understanding should also be kept in mind. He has also added that his critical thinking got a new dimension after being introduced to these 21<sup>st</sup> century skills.

Another Student from the same University named Fatema has said that her critical thinking and communication skills improved after she has done this course on testing and evaluation. She also said that critical thinking helps her in her other courses in order to explore new ideas regarding any new course material and other courses requires to communicate with peers and teachers in order to learn practically and also to do group works. She also included that 21<sup>st</sup> century skills influence us to be more skilled and be eligible in thinking critically rather than only memorizing things.

Moreover, Fatema also replied that if she becomes a teacher of a class where there are 20 to 30 students; she needs to figure out how the students answer to her questions. If they are able to answer, the questions should not be very simple. She said that as a teacher she will make questions a bit complex for them. She will be observing their chronology of answering and then she will make different type of questions where there will be chance for the students to develop their skills gradually and they will be benefited at the end. She also added that she will use



different type of methods such as word meaning, critical thinking related questions or matching words to connect them with one another.

Another student Priyoti specifically prioritize on her focus on critical thinking which is one of the sub categories of the learning skills. She said that school visits were really helpful because there was chance to visit schools of different competency level and age level and also language sufficiency. So this helped her to differentiate the environment of different schools, she replied. She also added that she could develop her 21<sup>st</sup> century skills (Critical thinking) when she was writing the school visit reports.

Furthermore, Priyoti also added that this course(How to test ) helped her significantly to develop her 21<sup>st</sup> century skills where she got the complete chance to learn more specifically the learning skills (Critical thinking specifically ) because she said that the school visit reports they were supposed to write were incomplete without critically thinking. She also added that her skills were more improved because those school (English language classroom) visits required observing the activity of the teachers and the students both, classroom management and other surroundings as well.

Furthermore, Ayesha firmly said that critical thinking is very much essential to learn from other resources. She also emphasized that this ability enables a person to take the necessary information and cut the unnecessary one when it is needed. She also emphasized that critical thinking plays an important role in case of doing any research. She also said that her critical thinking got much better after completing this course regarding how to make questions and then evaluating them for the students. Lastly she said that learning process should be more critical thinking based where students should get enough chance to think critically.

## **4.2 Students' views on developing collaboration and communication skills**

In this regard, According to Fatema's reply, collaboration is an essential tool to encourage us in our group work, communicating with others and having any discussion with group members. She put more emphasis on it because collaboration lessens our workload where we don't have to work fully alone on our own rather our task is divided among group or teammates. She agrees completely on making collaboration skills a mandatory part of our education system. This course; testing and evaluation gave her the chance to develop collaboration skills.

Fatema also mentioned and gave importance on methods such as Communicative Language Teaching. She also added that teachers should ensure that students have enough activity where they can communicate with their teachers and communicate with themselves as well. She said that teachers should go to each group or pair when there is a discussion going on so that there is no gap between the teachers and the students. Lastly she said students should get the chance of sharing their ideas along with their teacher so that the teachers can rectify them.

Ayesha said that Collaboration is essential as one of the necessary 21<sup>st</sup> century skills because without critical thinking and sharing those thoughts along with group members or teammates, the education is left incomplete; she also emphasized that How to test and evaluate course has helped her in terms of thinking out of the box as well as her collaboration skills got improved than earlier. It also helps to think critically more and work in a cooperative as well as in a systematic way. Moreover, she also added that her communication skills got much better and it helped her in her learning process. She added that when she becomes a teacher, she can communicate better with her students and think from their perspective more. She also said that communication skills are very positively helping her in her learning process in ELT and Applied

Linguistics where she can do better day by day in her all the undergraduate courses. Moreover, she also added that she can also now make better uses of her resources and journal articles. Communication skill is also necessary and it is also helping her more to go out of the boundaries and gain knowledge by thinking critically. So communication skills matter a lot when it comes to learning practically as well as to implement the practice of learning practically as well.

Ayesha stated that this course regarding teaching which has also helped her in developing her collaboration and communication skills as well (Among learning skills).

Priyoti Saha also said the same thing regarding this matter. She said that communication skills are very essential in order to learn as well as teach. Furthermore, she also added that there was a good chance for her to develop and nourish her communication skills as well.

#### **4.3 Students' overall interpretation regarding the exposure to the 21<sup>st</sup> century learning skills**

Fatema replied that she is fascinated about creativity and communication skills. Because this enables her to learn in a way where there is more variation in the learning process. She likes creativity because she thinks it helps her to do something by her own. This course has helped her in this because she can now create different type of questions for her students.

In his reply, another student named Aiman says, "Testing grammar and testing speaking is difficult compared to testing other items. Teacher needs to focus on specific elements while testing for example while testing grammar teacher needs to only focus on grammar and while testing speaking, only learner's speaking ability (Fluency and Accuracy) should be looked upon. Lastly, he said that testing these types of questions is a bit tricky but not that much of difficult. He agreed that his confidence level grew because of the practice of 21<sup>st</sup> century creativity and

collaboration skills. Aiman also thinks that he studied several theories in his one of the courses and he had to design several assignments which included designing assignments, tests implementing theories, texts. He also said that summative assessment and other strategies were taught as well. He confidently said that he can now make questions and different type of questions for his students.

Khadija added and said that the four sub skills were met up according to her and her 21<sup>st</sup> century learning skills are developed after doing this course. There were good communication skills building up activities as well as collaboration, critical thinking and creativity as well.

Fatema said that students should be extrovert rather than being introvert in terms of learning and teachers should be very careful in terms of making students aware of the necessity of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills and there should be scope for the students to learn and to create as well as practice which will help them in their future career.

Priyoti Saha is another student from the same University .She explained that she was interested previously to do this course .Because she said that she wants to become a University Teacher in future and this course (How to teach) is very essential to know the practical strategies of teaching. She now admits that this course is gradually helping her to improve and implement her bookish knowledge in practical.

Priyoti also added that among learning skills and literacy skills she has mentioned that her creative thinking and critical thinking ability got improved as well as nourished. She also said that she can now relate to her learned theories along with her own regular classes as well as what she is learning in her other courses as well.

Aiman replied in details how the skills taught in the classroom environment helped him to modify the skills he needs. He added that he gained a lot of experiences by doing this course as there were enough chances for him to develop his 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. Moreover, this course specifically helped him to build up the teaching characteristics.

He also said that his writing skills got much better which gradually sums up that he also could develop his 21<sup>st</sup> century skills like critical thinking, creativity, technology literacy etc. He also mentioned that these courses have also helped him in doing his dissertation. Moreover, his writing skills have emerged more after doing this course (Teaching Practicum). He also said that he had taken this course deliberately to learn more practicality regarding English Language Teaching. He wanted to witness the real scenario of English Language Teaching which dragged him to take this course.

In this regard, another student Khadija stated that this course (How to Teach) helped her a lot in terms of getting ideas about teaching in details .she also added that this was solely a teaching orientated course. It also gave her the idea whether she would take teaching as a profession or not. She also added that classes were mostly based on teaching English language in a classroom. She said there was enough chance to relate the bookish knowledge along with the practical knowledge. The sub skills of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills are more less all of them were addressed in her this course. She specified that collaboration skills were built up in her because she had to do group or pair works in the class throughout the course. Moreover, there was also enough chance to build up good communication among the instructor and the peers as well. Lastly she said that she could also develop her critical thinking abilities because she had do a lot of school visit where she had to write classroom visit reports and she had to critically think and then analyze them before she used to write .

Moreover, Khadija also particularly said that she had to take demo classes and there was enough chance to develop herself as a teacher practically and this helped a lot and also helped her to nourish her teaching abilities as well as her 21<sup>st</sup> century skills were also developed.

Aiman again stated that critical thinking is something which is actually critical in terms of making questions because one needs to think critically and then matching the ideas with theories and then setting questions is not an easy task. He again emphasized on testing a particular test item should only test that particular item, nothing else. And he also said that a test should look like a test and that is only possible when critical thinking is experimented properly. He also mentioned content validity and concurrent validity are some strategies which he has learnt from this course and these will help him in future as a teacher, he said.

Another Student Priyoti Saha has added that she is very delighted that her skills got improved and she is now a better writer and knows her mistakes now. Thus she can fix them and can write good papers. she also added that this course was very helpful for her as there were chances for her to do school visits. This helped her to fill the bridge between her situational knowledge and practical knowledge. This course (How to Teach) also helped her in many ways. She also talked about MI theories which she had learnt in this course; she also appreciated the fact that her writing skills got much better after doing this course. She also mentioned that her writing skills were not too good previously. After doing this course, her academic writing improved a lot. Because she said that she used to make some silly mistakes which were corrected because her instructor used to give proper written corrective feedbacks. As a result, she could amend her mistakes. She there was a lot of chances to do a lot of school visits which is helping her in her other courses as well.

In his reply, Aiman said that critical thinking is something which is actually critical in terms of making questions because one needs to think critically and then matching the ideas with theories and then setting questions is not an easy task all. He again emphasized on testing a particular test item should only test that particular item, nothing else. And he also said that a test should look like a test and that is only possible when critical thinking is experimented properly. He also mentioned content validity and concurrent validity are some strategies which he has learnt from this course(How to test and evaluate) and these will help him in future as a teacher, he said.

He also added that this course is a higher level course and he already has done other higher level major courses. As a result, he is quite familiar with the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills .He also added that this course has helped him in developing 21<sup>st</sup> century skills and he said he can now differentiate among courses and also classroom environment which varies from course to course and instructor to instructor. And this kind of differentiate making is only possible for him because of his exposure to 21<sup>st</sup> century skills.

## **Chapter 5: Students' views on the 21<sup>st</sup> century literacy skills**

Furthermore, Ayesha said that her literacy skills improved as well where she only emphasized specifically on technology literacy. She added that her learning skills are being improved day by day through her literacy skills where she said technology is still working as one of the keys in her learning process.

In this matter, Fatema stated that technology is one of the tools nowadays which helps us in many sectors such as our work, teaching and learning sector. She also emphasized that technology is very effective and helpful in making different type of question in terms of taking a lot of ideas from various resources and reading materials which makes the questions more standard.

When she was asked regarding the use or necessity of technology Ayesha stated that technology is required more when it comes to making a question for a particular test. Because technology helps us to be updated in a particular question related to a particular topic or test. As a result, we can be aware of the previous questions and we can make the question more fruitful for our students. She also added that we can also analyze different type of questions before making a question for a particular test. So it makes the question more standard. It also does not make the question not so easy or not so difficult. She also added that technology actually helps our question making process easier.

Ayesha also explained that 21<sup>st</sup> century skills helped her in improving her knowledge. She mentioned that in school and colleges she never had any technological facilities. So, 21st century skills requires some technological devices and tools which she said is now available in her



university and these facilities are helping her in establishing her technology literacy which is a good turn for her.

Ayesha also stated that private universities now a days emphasizing developing students' 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. As a result students are getting smarter day by day and they can operate new technological tools as well. She also added that getting trained in 21<sup>st</sup> century skills in four years undergraduate study is necessary and these skills should be addressed more and practiced more. Ayesha also emphasized that thinking outside the box is necessary and only bookish knowledge is not enough to cope up with the advanced world nowadays. And 21<sup>st</sup> century skills are those skills which should be taken care and nourished properly.

### **5.1. Students' overall interpretation regarding the 21<sup>st</sup> century Literacy skills**

One of the students Aiman said that literacy skills are of utmost necessity in today's competitive world. He also added that technology is necessary in every aspect of our life. It is very much necessary in terms of making questions because we can observe other's sample questions and take ideas from other resources. Moreover, we can make question and get them moderated by others within a short period of time. He also emphasized on technology by saying that we can bring variation to our questions by adding pictures or diagrams with them.

Khadija more emphasized on taking demo classes and designing the lesson for the students helped her lot. She said this gave enough chance to grow the abilities of a teacher. She said it was kind of stepping closer towards teaching practically. She also learned classroom management and there was enough chance to develop the literacy skills as well as there was enough chance of using technology as well. She thinks that managing classes or classroom management helped her a lot and it is one of the topics very interesting according to her and it

attracted her more among other topics and it becomes easier for the teacher to bring variations and changes in the cognitive process when they use technological tools. She also added that as a university teacher, it is mandatory to have a good grasp over these skills to perform well as a teacher. For instance, she said that technology is a tool that is of utmost necessity in today's time .so teachers should be smart enough to be skilled in learning as well as literacy skills as well. Furthermore, she thinks that among other skills her technology literacy has developed more and it is very necessary nowadays she said. She also emphasized on the fact that classroom scenarios were different earlier, now the scenario has changed and developed. Now the students participate more in the class which is a good sign she pointed out and she said that this helps the students to develop their 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. Lastly, she said that there should be more diversity and more scope of school visits .There should be English medium schools, Bangla medium schools as well as low rank and high rank schools both. Lastly she concluded by saying that enough schools visits will create more opportunities for developing the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills and she got enough chances to build up her 21<sup>st</sup> century skills.

## **Chapter 6: Students' suggestion regarding the improvement on the 21st century skills**

### **6.1 Students' suggestion regarding the improvement on the 21st century learning skills**

Fatema thinks that students should not be stuck in one place rather they should get the chance to facilitate their learning more practically where they can get the chance, the way to think critically and utilize their learning more.

In this matter, another student Priyoti saha said that she also learned how to connect theories with practical learning. She emphasized on this kind of learning where she also suggested that learning should be relatable so that students' get to improve their cognition process as well as practical knowledge.

According to Aiman, making questions and evaluating them is not only a lengthy process but also a sensitive process. A teacher has to understand his/her students' proficiency level as well as to give appropriate feedback to those answers. So it is a time consuming process and a teacher has to spend a lot of time in this process. He also said that teachers should also know their students proficiency level before setting a question. He also added that descriptive questions are written based, as a result these needs to be checked carefully. Multiple Choice Questions, on the other hand, are easier to check than descriptive questions. So he agreed and said that making questions and evaluating them is lengthy and sensitive process as well. He also added that learning skills should get more acquainted with the practical exposure and real life experience.

Moreover, Aiman also added that this has [How to Test (Question Making Process) And Evaluate] created enough chance for him to do group work where his collaboration skills got much better. Those group works were based on theories and they had to make test questions of different types. To make questions in a group, he had to interact with other group members and

this developed his collaboration skills. So, designing questions was fully based on sharing knowledge with group members.

Again, Aiman thinks that How to Test course was not fully sufficient in terms of building up communication. He added that there was only communication among peers and instructor and not that much exposure to practical knowledge based communication. So, according to him, his communication skills did not completely develop during this course but it was partially convenient according to his experience. As a result, he again emphasized on proper real life communication in order to make the skill development cognition process more successful.

One of the students of the same university Priyoti Saha has briefly said that critical thinking and collaboration skills are very important and these are the skills one needs when they are graduated and moved to job sectors. She also added that her critical thinking and communication skills got better and improved a lot after doing this course. Then she emphasized on collaboration skills which she said is also helping her a lot in her learning process. She also said that these skills are indeed very helpful in case of practical learning.

Khadija suggested and gave importance on the classroom visits which were much more helpful in her learning process. She experienced different environment where different schools gave her different experiences and gradually there was enough chance to relate the theoretical knowledge along with the practical knowledge. The school visits also helped her to get an actual scenario of the classrooms and how things work. She appreciated the approach of this kind of beyond academic and practical cognition based learning process and thus suggested to keep the teaching environ more practical and also added that 21<sup>st</sup> century skills should be addressed like this more and more.

Priyoti also said that she is more interested in classroom management because her aim is to become a teacher. She repeatedly emphasized on the importance of communication skills and interacting with the students such as student teacher relationship. This attracted her more among all the skills. She also suggested that it is obvious to master these skills to become a teacher of a private university. Because there are students from several background and a teacher needs to handle them and interact with them. So 21<sup>st</sup> century skills like communication skills, collaboration skills and also technology literacy paves the way for becoming an eligible and good teacher for private university in our country nowadays. She lastly suggested that this course was full of practical knowledge and the instructor was quite helpful in terms of giving proper feedback on her learning. She added that the classroom visits should not only be limited in school visits rather there should be some college or university visits as well other than that she didn't have much suggestion to improve. Lastly, she concluded by saying that this course is well designed and she had many opportunities to learn and her 21<sup>st</sup> century skills got flourished after doing this course.

## **6.2 Students' suggestion regarding the improvement on the 21st century literacy skills**

Literary skills are indeed very much necessary to fulfill the needs of the students nowadays. Earlier it was a choice but day by day the effectiveness of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills are gradually and rapidly increasing. Education system itself is asking for the presence of technological tools as well as the skills to implement the technological tools. So, the importance of technological tools cannot be denied or overlooked. In this regard, one of the students of DOTS University has said that He says that technology is necessary in every aspect of our life. It is very much necessary in terms of making questions because we can observe other's sample questions and take ideas from

other resources. Moreover, we can make question and get them moderated by others within a short period of time. He also emphasized on technology by saying that we can bring variation to our questions by adding pictures or diagrams with them.

Aiman explained regarding this in a more detailed way. He has said that private universities are always ahead in terms of providing the good facilities such as good teachers, good curriculum, good environment, proper technological tools etc. One thing he said should get improved is practical exposure to the theoretical knowledge such as field work, projects to interact with varieties. Moreover, he added that if possible there should be more opportunities to go to other countries and participate in competitions to get introduced with other culture and making our culture familiar with other countries. Lastly, he also emphasized on saying that teachers should address the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills more and make them mandatory for all to get introduced with so that no one lags behind in the competitive world. Aiman also repeatedly said that the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills and the theories are essential to be known, learned as well as practically applied to become a teacher in a private university nowadays. The students come from different level and different background as well as different environment. So teachers need to be sufficient enough to build up their career as a teacher in a private university of our country nowadays. Among all the skills he mentioned literacy skills specially technology literacy as well as media literacy specifically. Because he thinks these tools bring variation and interest to a teacher's teaching process.

Lastly , in his reply, Aiman repeatedly emphasized on generating the practical exposures more so that students become truly eligible when they become graduate. They need to be properly trained to write good academic papers as well. Lastly he concluded by saying that ELT needs more of practical exposure so that students can relate to their learned hypothesizes along with the practical scenario.

Furthermore, Aiman also said that this course created the chance to visit English Language Classrooms and he said that ELT classrooms helped him to gather teaching techniques and teaching methods and approaches as well. He said that this course matched his expectations he also suggested and appreciated the fact that this kind of practical learning where 21<sup>st</sup> century skills are addressed is very much essential for the Private University students nowadays. Moreover, he said that his critical thinking developed after doing a lot of classroom visits which was a part of that course and his collaboration skill is also improved. He further added that there was more than enough chances to communicate with others and these things actually helped him a lot. He also gave his opinion that teaching should be much practical so that students can remember and utilize their cognition for the lifetime; otherwise learning is meaningless. This course has also helped him to practically observe and then critically analyze the teaching practicum reality and it is very essential to gain practical knowledge according to his opinion after completing this course. He lastly mentions that observing learner's intelligence level and teaching techniques also developed in him. This course also motivated him to become a good teacher. Finally, he mentioned that collaboration skills, communication skills are the things that attracted him more among other skills and teaching should be done enthusiastically so that students get motivated while they learn and they don't feel the burden of learning forcefully.

## **Chapter 7 Discussion and Conclusion**

### **7.1 Discussion**

The 21<sup>st</sup> century skills are nowadays as magnificent as any other research categories. Because without these skills it is not possible for a student to cope up with the upcoming academic and technological challenges. It makes a student independent thinker and problem solver. Gradually a student becomes more mature than earlier after getting a good command over the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. A student's learning becomes more fruitful and successful when he or she gets proper exposure to the 21<sup>st</sup> century learning and literacy skills. This 21<sup>st</sup> century skill is an issue which is slowly becoming familiar with the students. The researcher has tried to portray the present scenario of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills in private universities of Bangladesh.

### **7.2 Summary of the findings**

The researcher has provided an overview of the findings in this section. In addition to this, the researcher also attempted to revisit the research question here.

#### **7.2.1 Feedbacks on 21<sup>st</sup> century skills**

##### **7.2.1.1 Students' feedback on the 21<sup>st</sup> century learning skills**

Students have agreed to the fact that the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills are undoubtedly helpful for them. The skills they have come across will help them throughout their academic career. Learning skills such as creativity, critical thinking, collaboration and communication skills help them to modify their learning and they can now practically utilize their learning because they got the chance to polish their potential abilities. According to them, it is essential to address the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills for the students to have a good command over these skills. Studies also show that the 21<sup>st</sup> century



skills are not what knowledge the students have rather it is about what knowledge the students can implement and execute. They can critically analyze and then do research work. Creativity helps them to analyze critically. Gradually, collaboration skills make them communicating with other individuals so that their learning environment becomes more practical.

#### **7.2.1.2 Students' feedback on the 21<sup>st</sup> century literacy skills**

The 21<sup>st</sup> century literacy skills are already being addressed in the private universities of Bangladesh along with the learning skills. Almost all the students agreed to the point that private universities are providing the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills through various courses and other in class and out of classrooms activities. Moreover, there are opportunities to engage in various extracurricular activities. They also added that their cognition process became easier with the help of these 21<sup>st</sup> century literacy skills. They also agreed that research process has become easier because the 21<sup>st</sup> century literacy skills enable them to do research in an organized and guided way.

#### **7.2.1.3 Overall viewpoint and final outcome**

The 21<sup>st</sup> century skills should be addressed more because it helps them to understand, analyze as well as utilize their existing knowledge and then it always adds some value to their whole learning process. They have added that the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills should be recognized in a more prominent way and it should be trained in a more specialized way so that there is no gap between the learning and the practical knowledge.

## **7.3 Endorsement**

### **7.3.1 Students' endorsement in regard to the 21<sup>st</sup> century learning skills**

Students mostly recommended addressing the 21<sup>st</sup> century learning skills more. They have agreed to the point that the courses they have mentioned are higher level course where they got the exposure regarding the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills quite almost at the end of their undergraduate life. They suggested addressing it earlier and making the students aware of it so that students can polish their inner potential since the beginning.

### **7.3.2 Students endorsement in regard to the 21<sup>st</sup> century literacy skills**

Students recommended that there should be more exposure to the 21<sup>st</sup> century literacy skills and there should be more real life tasks which help the students to implement the 21<sup>st</sup> century literacy skills in a more productive way. Nevertheless, they also agreed to the point that the literacy skills should be trained more specifically because students will not be able to utilize their learning if they do not learn it properly. So, they have to learn it first and then it becomes easier for them to utilize it.

## **7.4 Constraints and supplementary study**

### **7.4.1 Constraints**

There are some constraints because of which it is not yet completely possible to address the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills properly. These limitations are yet to be solved .For instance, not all the private universities provide all the facilities where they can fully get proper exposure to the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. Moreover, the teachers should also be trained first so that they can teach by applying methods like Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). As a result, students will get the

chance to learn with fun. Here, students will learn collaboration by collaborating along with themselves and their learning skills will be enriched. In addition, the classroom management plays a vital role as well. The surrounding should be appropriate so that students can learn effectively.

#### **7.4.2 Supplementary studies on the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills**

The research can be done in a different lens to fill the bridge with further research so that there is no gap in addressing the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. Furthermore, research can be conducted from a different outlook in order to create awareness regarding establishment of the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills at Secondary and higher secondary level.

#### **7.5 Conclusion**

The 21<sup>st</sup> century skills help one to meet up with the upcoming diplomatic and sophisticated challenging world. Firstly; this study has exemplified the scenario of the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills in one of the private universities of Bangladesh. Later on, the researcher analyzed the scenario by concluding it with the help of research questions and interview questionnaire by authentically proving the statements. The constraints and possible suggestions are also given. The researcher expects that this research has filled the gap and added something new in the research field of the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. She thinks it will help the students to realize the importance of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. Nevertheless, there should be necessary measures to bring more exposure to this issue so that private university students should know how to critically think and learn in a more strategic way as well as they can work smart rather than working hard.

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