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ECHOES

## Career Choice Dilemma: A Day with BRACU and UIU Students

By Asrar Chowdhury



*BRACU and UIU Students at the ESS Picnic, Photo: Md. Rahmatullah Khan*

University students play a two stage game. In stage 1, they make a placement choice: what and where to study. In stage 2, they make a career choice: what to pursue in the labour market. With 100+ universities, and thousands of new candidates into labour markets each year, it's needless to say the career choice game has become an obsession. At the Savar campus of BRAC University, students of Economics and Social Sciences (ESS), BRACU and Economics of United International University (UIU) were exposed to the career choice dilemma. My father, Amirul Islam Chowdhury of UIU, and I were invited. My student ASM Shakil Haider and his colleague Adnan MS Fakir, Lecturers of ESS, BRACU were the discussants. For a change, my father and I were listeners to Shakil and Adnan, a new breed of emerging teachers -- young and innovative with the maturity of seasoned professors.



*Amirul Islam Chowdhury (L) and Shakil Haider*

Alumni associations provide a base for networking. However, they're effective for established universities that have alumni as middle and senior ranked officers. Adnan prepared a list of graduates from ESS, BRACU and what they're doing now. I noticed something that I was thinking about. There was none on the list from our civil service. With noble exceptions like my student Mashroof Hossain from Economics, NSU who's now an ASP of Bangladesh Police, the BCS is one career opportunity students of private universities either know nothing about or one that their universities have not made them properly aware of. Serving the nation is a satisfaction that money can't buy. If you want to give something back to the nation, the public sector is the place to be.

Many universities require students to do internships. This helps them build a network in the job market before graduating. It also adds to their CVs. Adnan mentioned a notion universities these days have almost forgotten. That word is 'apprenticeship'. This is how people in the old days used to learn the tricks of the trade. Is there harm working for free? Won't you learn the tricks of a trade at ground level; build a network; be able to show job experience before you graduate? Universities preach innovation in the classroom. Innovative ideas don't come from thin air. They come from experience of success and failure from the ground. This comes from apprenticeship. Almost all successful people rose through apprenticeship -- not through internship.

Teachers have a moral responsibility in contributing to the careers of their students. It was here I found ASM Shakil Haider come up with an innovative concept. Teachers can promote their innovative students to professional networks they themselves are linked to. This can be done via their university or personal website or in any other social network they are connected to. Shakil does this under the category 'Featured Students' via his website: [asmshakilhaider.com](http://asmshakilhaider.com). This idea is new, but has already caught the imagination of teachers, young and old. If we have a student who needs a small push to make a grand leap, then why won't we make that small effort to promote them? After all, it's because of the students that universities and we teachers exist. It's not the other way round. Promoting our own students is our 'CSR'. Shakil's initiative is one that may spread like wildfire.

As the day progressed, I silently observed the young students of ESS, BRACU and Economics, UIU. Today they're obsessed with how to enter the labour market, what career to choose, how to pursue it; and what not? What many of them don't see is what we see. The innocence and exuberance of student life and youth once gone is 'gone with the wind', forever. Student life is a gift that's meant to be enjoyed and appreciated. Enjoy the moment. Worry about career when the time comes, but do be prepared for it.

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