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SORRY STATE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Lack of quality teachers to blame: Sir Abed

DU Correspondent

Brac founder and Chairperson Sir Fazle Hasan Abed yesterday said the existing teacher-student ratio and a lack of qualified teachers are the two main reasons behind the low quality of higher education in the country.

He said this at an assembly on higher education held at the Nabab Nawab Ali Chowdhury Senate Building on Dhaka University (DU) campus.

While presenting the keynote speech, Sir Abed said it is difficult to enable the university teachers to get engaged in teaching and outside class advising, and to pursue research and professional development as there is a wide gap between the number of students and teachers.

Referring to the Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2017, he said the top 800 universities have an average of 16.5 students per staff member whereas in Bangladesh, the teacher-student ratio in public universities is 1:26 and in private universities 1:22 -- far from achieving the international standard.

He also said the graduates are failing to meet the market demands due to a lack of required skills.

“Professional development of university teachers is limited to obtaining an advance degree in the respective discipline and they are seldom trained to acquire pedagogical skills and engage students in an active learning process,” added Abed.

In order to achieve global competitiveness, he stressed that the teachers should enhance their knowledge and skills so that they can guide students effectively.

In order to bring desired changes in higher education, Sir Abed suggested the Open Educational Resources (OER) and Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), which include full courses, course material modules, text books, videos, tests, software, and other means of conveying knowledge.

He said a bunch of tech-savvy students is already taking advantages of this, which is creating a digital disparity.

Therefore, he underscored the need for a concerted and systematic effort to adapt these materials for the majority of students. The instructors have to feel encouraged to be the intermediary to help students access the open resources, he stressed.

International relations and history departments of DU in association with Freidrich-Ebert-Stiftung Bangladesh organised the programme to brainstorm ideas on challenges and opportunities faced by the country's higher education.

Students from different universities across the capital, researchers and teachers attended the programme.