

Dhaka University Shiksha Paribesh Parishad

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THE Dhaka University Shiksha Paribesh Parishad (Educational Environment Council) is one of those recently undertaken positive steps that helped us involve the students and teachers at some areas of policy-making with a view to improving the academic environment. The assumption has been the traditional maxim that a good government is one which is based on the consent of the governed and we are happy to note that it has yielded good results. The Paribesh Parishad is significant not only for what it has done but also for what it is likely to do if properly guided. It is an achievement in the sense that by involving the students. We have been able to bring them closer to administration and elicit their attachment to it.

The Paribesh Parishad is not merely an institution; it is indeed a programme of actions and an ideal. It symbolizes the ideal of a significant collectivity to live and work together in a setting much like an extended family. It reflects the enlightened ideal of free actions and thought without hindering similar actions of others. As a programme of actions, the Parishad intends to bring unity in diversity through building a broadbased consensus among the bewildering variety of opinions professed by student's organizations and projecting a code of conduct among them. As an institution, it represents the willing co-operation of the students in matters of maintain order so that the lofty and of academic excellence can be achieved in a creative environment. Though it is an informal body. It exists to support formal structures and ensure their proper functioning.

Structure of the Paribesh Parishad

The Shiksha Paribesh Parishad comprises beside the Vice-Chancellor, Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Treasurer, all the teacher-members of the Syndicate, Deans of all Faculties, Provosts of all halls, 5 teacher-members of the Senate, 5 members of the executive committee of the Teacher's Association, Treasurer of DUCSU, 46 student leaders (two from each Organization), two members of DUCSU and representatives of the Officers, Class III, Class IV, and Technical employee's Associations (two from each association). The Proctor convenes its meeting. The Paribesh Parishad, which is chaired by the Vice-Chancellor, concentrates mainly on policy making, but the standing committee of the Parishad, comprising 15 members and chaired by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor deals with complicated problems at the implementation level. Such issues as use of arms, undesirable activities of the armed ones, unauthorized occupation of seats in the halls, disciplined actions both in the halls and campus, offences in the examination halls, other irregularities, inter and intra organizational conflicts fall within its jurisdiction.

Its origin

Though Paribesh Parishad came into being on 10 June 1987 and its standing committee, on 15 June 1987,

the idea and motivation leading to its formation can be traced back in the early 1980s. The large scale students' unrest, and widespread violence in the campus in its trail, which were due partly to social and political uncertainty in the country and partly to deep erosion of

authorities in the University mostly as a consequence of undesirable interferences from different circles including the government, constitutes its background. The process of erosion of University authorities started in the mid-1960s; as a result, the norms and value system, which the University community has cherished so long and has all the time been proud of began to disintegrate since then. The process seemed to have been complete in the 1970s; the rules for accommodation in the halls were honoured more in their breaches than in observance, inter and intra-organisational conflicts, in most cases accompanied by violence of the highest order, Proliferated; examination indiscipline reached a point of no-return. A significant technological change also became visible; the uses of hockey sticks and knives became replaced by those of revolvers, pistols, guns and bombs. In fact, the environment in the University

underwent a thorough change which was good enough for any activity but academic. Even during the hey days of student politics the University environment fostered and encouraged the force of argument in its community; under the changed environment only the argument of force could prevail. By any standard it was an alarming situation, and this became a matter of great concern to the teachers and students. I must say with deep satisfaction that some of the teachers and students took it up as a challenge and undertook measures to turn the tide. In one of the first steps, we (Professor Fazlul Halim Chowdhury, the then Vice-Chancellor myself as the Proctor, Professor K.A.M. Saaduddin as the President, Teachers Association) discussed the matter with the members of DUCSU headed by Mahmudur Rahman Manna in late 1980. In a series of meetings, we tried to evolve a code of conduct among the students and students organizations. At that time we tried to impress upon the students that existing proctorial rules should be observed faithfully, meetings and processions should be held without affecting academic pursuits and inter-organizational disputes should be settled on the basis of agreed principles.

These efforts could not however be sustained because political environment at the national level, which quite speedily percolates and affects the academic environment in the University, was not conducive. The assassination of President Zia, Presidential election of 1981, Promulgation of the Martial Law in 1982 and certain Policy-measures of the Military regime such as the new education policy and in consequence the formation of the Sangram Parishad by the students and their movement for the restoration of democratic system in the country had rocked the academic environment in the University to the bottom. The University authorities had alternative but to look on vacant and passive,

while the campus turned into a roaming ground for the warring opinions.

During this period what disturbed the campus most were the consequences of national elections of 1986; the students became squarely divided into anti-election and pro-election groups; these groups remained looked up in bitter feuds and fights; some of the modern weapons raised hue and cry in the campus. We did not sit idle. We (Professor Abdul Mannan was the Vice-Chancellor; the author was the Provost of Haji Mohammad Muhsin Hall) started an intensive dialogue with the student leaders and we succeeded in bringing about a rapprochement in November 1986 between the two of the leading student's organizations i.e. JCD and SL (H). A memorandum of agreement was signed by their leaders (Jalal Ahmed and Abdur Rahman) to the effect that the students irrespective of group and party affiliation would profess their ideals and carry on programmes, abide by the rules and regulations and help restore peaceful academic environment in the campus.

The last phase in the formation of the Parishad was completed on 10 June 1987. It was preceded by a bitter feud between two of the major Students' organizations i.e. JCD and SL (MN) when on 7 June 1987 two groups confronted with each other with lethal weapons in the gate of one of the halls. About a hundred rounds of ammunition were used. Professor Abdul Mannan, the Vice-Chancellor of the University was then visiting the United States, and the author was the acting Vice-Chancellor. Throughout the 8th and 9th of June, intensive

activities involving the leaders of 22 student's organizations remained on, and thanks to the creative leadership of such students as Akhteruzzaman, Mostafa Farukh, Jahiruddin, Asaduzzaman, Mushtaque and many others, the ground was prepared for its permanent structure so that on a continuing basis the Parishad might take care of those incidents. At the penultimate stage in a meeting of the provosts, house tutors, deans, some members of the syndicate and senate, the proposal of Professor Ahsanul Haque for the Shiksha Paribesh Parishad was accepted, and the Parishad thus created began to function since then. It must be remembered that the Teacher's Association played a big role in the sense that on many occasions it came out vociferously with its proposal for making the environment conducive to

academic pursuits, and several times it demonstrated its determination to keep the environment so.

Its future

The Paribesh Parishad is still in its infancy, and much of its success in its historic role depends on how we make use of it and how we can ensure the unity among the different students' organizations. Much of its success again depends on how the University authorities handle the student's problems. We have to be, under the circumstance, not only neutral but also demonstrate that we are so. Moreover, we have to go by the norms we uphold and to enforce these as strictly as possible. The Co-operation of the Government is also a must in this regard.