

CURRICULUM OF BACHELOR LEVEL BUSINESS EDUCATION IN UNIVERSITIES OF BANGLADESH: A CASE STUDY

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Abstract

This study explores how an academic department in business school of a university in Bangladesh designed its bachelor level curriculum during the eight years period from 2008 to 2016 and also on what contents the curriculum has. This study also analyzes some specific research/case questions for providing some strategic comments for improvement. This study uses the category scales to analyze the data collected through sample survey on 30 international students. This study also conducts dept interview on 03 Professors as experts. It is found that the academic department in the business school followed a traditional, rigid curriculum system with central academic rules and regulations of the university. Most of the respondents and experts focused on e-education services with online course registration system, digital knowledge sharing system, extracurricular activities and firm visits as non-credit courses and more than one major with more general education (GED) related courses, more contact hours in the form of tutorial class with supports from teacher assistant (TA) to show videos, to do group discussion in a class and finally they concentrated on internship report or organizational attachment report with standard guidelines. It is observed that through the strong and effective co-ordination with all concerned offices and commitment of the academic department would be able to adopt the comments as best practices. These findings and some general comments for improvement have implications to the users of curriculum and decision makers in education sector.

Keywords: Bachelor Level Business Curriculum/Case Study/Academic Department of a University/Bangladesh.

1. Introduction

Academics and practitioners are taking profound interest in professional adoptability of curriculum all over the world. It has been defined in many ways by different authors since the introduction of the concept of curriculum. Among all other definitions of curriculum, one relevant and best definition is given by Self-Assessment Manual, 2016, Ministry of Education, Bangladesh, University Grants Commission of Bangladesh, Higher Education Quality Enhancement Project (HEQEP), Quality Assurance Unit (QAU), is that “curriculum refers to a well-defined and prescribed course of studies, lessons and activities, which students must complete to fulfill the requirements for acquiring the degree. The curriculum plays a crucial role in achieving the mission and objectives of the university including the intended learning outcomes and overall effectiveness of the programs. Reviewing and updating of the curriculum, a continuous process, is the essential ingredient of any vibrant academic system.”

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Research Significance

An understanding of how to design the curriculum and how to conduct the academic program in a university has become a significant issue for both academicians and decision makers in the recent years. The educational institutions specifically universities in Bangladesh are realizing that they should follow the world-class standard curriculum. This calls for a study on how an academic department in business school of a university in Bangladesh designed its bachelor's degree curriculum during the eight years period from 2008 to 2016 and also on contents of the curriculum. The researcher also observed that the academic value of the curriculum and quality of market-oriented education and whether the employers simply accepted the credentials of the students those who already passed the academic degrees using the existing curriculum. Sometimes, the researcher contributed to update the different curriculum at university level in Bangladesh. Therefore, it is significant and justified to write a practical case and to analyze this case for the sake of providing some strategic comments as the guidelines to design a world-class curriculum and to publish a brochure. It is said that a successful curriculum implementation will satisfy stakeholders of the curriculum and to have a holistic view of each and every one of the stakeholders like students, teachers, guardians, employers, regulators, scholars, researchers, and a society as a whole.

Objectives of the Case Study

The broad objective of the study is to examine the existing curriculum of bachelor level business education in a university of Bangladesh with a view to improve it. Therefore, the specific objectives are as follow:

- to explore the designing practices of curriculum included in the brochure for bachelor level business education in a university of Bangladesh during the eight years period from 2008 to 2016;
- to analyze whether the contents of the curriculum in the brochure comply with the academic rules and regulations of the university selected for this case study;
- to compare the contents of curriculum with other universities' curriculum in home and abroad; and
- to provide suggestions for improvement of the existing curriculum of bachelor level business education in universities of Bangladesh.

2. Methodology of the Study

Nature of the Study: The research is analytical and descriptive in nature.

Population: International students, professors and experts are the population of the case study.

Sample Size: total 33 in which 30 international students selected from high level MBA program-2016 at School of Business Administration, South China University of Technology availing YES-China 2016 program's Chinese Government Scholarship and 3 professors selected from China and Bangladesh for expert depth interview.

Sampling Technique: Convenience sampling

Data Collection Sources: Both secondary and primary data have been collected for this case study. Secondary data have been used for this study from websites of the university selected for this case and concerned government regulatory body (in it is University Grants Commission of Bangladesh- UGC), existing Bachelor's curriculum and academic rules and regulations of the university, different individual outlines for the courses studied in the Professional Master's and bachelor's degree program of School of Business Administration at South China University of Technology and different curriculum of different universities of Bangladesh, different articles, publications, books, speeches in conferences and seminar classes, etc.

Data Collection and Measurement Techniques: A sample survey and expert depth interview have been to collect the contents of curriculum. The questionnaire has been designed based on the items such as web-based computerized system, non-credit course, more than one major, internship report, tutorial class, class size, knowledge sharing modern devices, etc. Discussion with experts has been held online through WeChat/Skype, e-mail and/or personal contact. This study uses the category scales having only three response categories, such as Rating scale 5–Very Important; Rating scale 3–Somewhat Important; and Rating scale 1–Not Too Important. Measurement techniques have been illustrated in table 5-3 and described below:

- List the principles of program conduction in Column 2;
- Determine individual rating score from 5.0 (Very Important) to 1.0 (Not Too Important) based on the respondents' opinion on that factor by multiplying a number of respondents with value of rating category scale, and then calculate total rating score followed by average rating score in Colum 3;
- Weight each factor measured by Formula: (Total rating score/sum of total rating score using % in Colum 4. The total weights must sum to 100%;
- Multiply each factor's weight times its average rating score to obtain each factor's weighted score in Column 5; and
- Use Column 6 for ranking the principles.

Data Processing, Analyses and Presentation Techniques: The data have been analyzed descriptively with the help of researcher's cognitive ability. By using computer software like Microsoft office package, the qualitative data and limited quantitative data have been tabulated to make the analysis understandable. A great effort has been made to avoid data error. However, though the study is qualitative based, some tables, figures, charts has been used to make the interpretation more clear and to reduce the descriptive statements.

3. Literature Review

The website of UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) published and explained the different perspectives and meanings of curriculum as like "intended" (what societies imagine), "written" and/or "official" (printed into official documents), "implemented" (what is actually delivered in the class), the "achieved" or "learned" (what learners actually learn), and hidden

curriculum (the unexpected and unintended development of personal values and beliefs of learners, teachers and communities).

Kelly (1999) indicated the negative view for a productive curriculum as a syllabus which may limit the planning of teachers to a consideration of the content or the body of knowledge they wish to convey or a list of the subjects or courses to be taught or both.

Any design about decision making and specifically, curriculum design is a process of deliberating, generating ideas, brainstorming and raising issues in order to resolve a problem (Walker, 1971).

Views of Curriculum Design from 1910s to 2010s: This study also viewed curriculum design from beginning in early 1900s up to 2010s and differently as from more of a science with principles and methodology (Bobbit, 1918) to a series of objectives determined by variations of ideals that students must attain (Charters, 1929) to the way of conceptualization of curriculum and its major components as the subject matter content, instructional methods and materials, learner experiences or activities to provide direction and guidance to learners as we develop curriculum (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2009).

This study also focused on review on assessment approach to student learning and the Instruction as Lynn (2013) indicated in his research paper titled Analysis of 100 Years of Curriculum Designs and mentioned student assessment elements within curriculum designs listed chronologically by time periods from beginning in early 1900s up to 2010s as judging (where the teacher should be able to judge the purposeful activity), pre assessment (where the student is at in their learning and challenging them just enough for them to learn more), pre-summative assessment (where teachers find out what students need before planning and later choose how to evaluate objectives), formative assessment and summative assessment (where teachers should find objectives measureable and observable). Bobbit (1918) focused on criteria to perform activity properly where teachers establish criteria to determine whether students have the abilities to perform activities properly. Charters (1929) concentrated on verifiable as a summative assessment where teachers should find objectives measureable and observable.

Caswell and Campbell (1935) focused on evaluation as a summative assessment where teachers will evaluate the outcomes of instruction. Tyler (1950) concentrated on purposes attained as a summative assessment where educators can determine whether the purposes are being attained. Taba (1962) focused on diagnosis of needs and evaluation as a pre-summative assessment where teachers find out what students need before planning and later choose how to evaluate objectives. Bruner (1977) focused on readiness as pre assessment knowing where the student is at in their learning and challenging them just enough for them to learn more. Hunkins (1980) focused on diagnosis and evaluation as pre summative assessment where teachers find out what students need before planning and later choose how to evaluate objectives. Witte (2012) in his most recent book titled classroom assessment for teachers emphasized the actual utilization of pre, formative, and summative assessments can help answer the three questions like where are my students? where do my students need to be? And how do my students get there?

To the best of knowledge of the author of this study, no other similar research on curriculum contents in the brochure for bachelor's degree level business education of universities in Bangladesh has been reported in Bangladesh or in other countries, except the above mentioned literature. To fill the literature gaps, the present study explores the case in Bangladesh related to curriculum contents incorporated in the brochure for the purpose of analyzing the case to solve the problems of existing curriculum to create a guide to design a world-class standard curriculum and to publish a brochure.

4. Description of the Case

This study explores the case by addressing a theme titled "Bachelor's Degree level Business Education's Curriculum Contents for the Brochure from 2008 to 2016 of an Academic Department or School of a University in Bangladesh: Leading a Fixed Course Structure and Centralized System in Practice" as described below:

Background Situation of the Case and Academic Programs

Firstly, the academic department/business school of the university started its academic activities with a curriculum following the other university's curriculum since its inception. From 2006 to 2008 the school followed written and approved curriculum but not publishing the brochure. Then the department published its two sets brochure under the tile of "academic curriculum" in 2008, one is for the bachelor's students of academic sessions 2005-06, 2006-07 and 2007-08 and another is for the bachelor's students of academic session 2008-09 onward. In 2015, the department also republished another official curriculum for the students of academic sessions 2012-13, 2013-14 and 2014-15. In 2016, the department has planned to change the existing curriculum course structure and contents for the students from academic session 2015-16 onward. This department also conducts the academic activities for Master's degree, Master of Philosophy (MPhil) degree and Philosophy of Doctorate (PhD) degree following the university central rules and regulations. To make the research more specific, this case study only focuses on academic curriculum for the bachelor's degree students from academic session 2008-09 to 2014-15.

Practices of Central Academic Rules and Regulations

The university has central academic rules and regulations titled "Rules and Regulations for Bachelor's Degree (Semester System) with effect from the session 2005-06 onward" for the academic programs of all academic departments under all faculties (schools) including business school of the university. The published brochure of the department contained relevant contents of curriculum and all sections of Rules and Regulations for Bachelor's Degree (Semester System), other information including course structure with distribution of credit points and marks and detailed syllabi of the courses for the program with course overview and books recommended. According to Section 6 (a) of the Rules and Regulations, the curriculum designed the program course structure for eight semesters in four academic years. The syllabus or curriculum contained theoretical courses, internship and viva-voce as a separate course number and credit points. The department conducted two classes duration of 1 hour and 25 minutes each in a week for a theoretical course of 3 credits. The department also conducted a

viva-voce examination and a defence by the members of the examination committee. According to Section 7 of the Rules and Regulations, the departmental syllabus committee formed by the departmental academic committee prepared a syllabus clearly indicating the courses, credit points by semester and year and updated each year by taking due process of approval from academic council and syndicate of the university. According to Section 9 (a-i and a-ii) of the Rules and Regulations, total credit points offered by the department in the whole program was 132 and there was a 15 fixed offered credit points in the first semester of the each of four years and 16.5 fixed offered credit points in the second semester of the each of four years. The department followed a uniform grading policy with all other universities, which has been provided by University Grants Commission (UGC) as a regulator or guardian for activities of all universities in Bangladesh.

Planning, Designing and Developing Activities of Curriculum Development Team

There was a curriculum development team formed by internal members from all faculty members of the department, external members from other university professors as the subject matter specialists. To assist the curriculum development team, there was an editorial body and/or syllabus committee formed by the senior faculty members of the department to write and revise curriculum. Firstly, the syllabus committee proposed a list of courses and other contents of the curriculum according to the policy given by Rules and Regulations for Bachelor's Degree (Semester System) to the meeting of the academic committee of the department and then members of the academic committee discussed about the design of the syllabus and proposed some changes to modify the courses and other contents of the curriculum. After that, a draft copy of the curriculum had been prepared and the head of the department called for a meeting of the committee of courses where all members of academic committee of the department also present and they discussed about the contents of the curriculum. Then, the committee approved the curriculum with some modifications and then the revised copy of curriculum had been forwarded to the meeting of academic council of the university, and the academic council forwarded the curriculum with some modifications (if any) to the meeting of the Syndicate of the university presided over by the Vice-Chancellor of the university for final approval of the curriculum and after getting approval, curriculum development team of the school took necessary steps to publish brochure.

Scenario of Curriculum Implementation and Evaluation

Finally, the approved curriculum and/or brochure was ready to implement to conduct academic program activities after distributing the brochure to the teachers, students, concerned sections of the university. The head of the academic department monitored the academic practices followed by policies available at curriculum and/or brochure and if any anomalies found, then he raised these in the meeting of academic committee for self-corrections among the faculty members and others concerned. The curriculum was not reviewed and renewed every year by the academic department except in 2009 and in 2016 but a due procedure had been followed to approve the curriculum by the syndicate of the university every year for every academic session of the program. By an informal way, student feedback, comments from examiners and employers' views were taken into account in reviewing and updating curriculum.

5. Analyses and Findings

Compliance of some Selected Rules Compared with Published Brochure

Based on the case description and published brochure, this study compared and found some gaps and compliance status which are stated in table 5-1. Overall, responsible administrators or faculty members of the academic department and/or school comply with all academic rules followed by some changes and amendments for every academic year for every batch to cope with globalization, to ensure quality education.

Table 5-1: Gaps and compliance of some selected rules compared with published brochure

Sections of rules	Definitions of rules	Gaps in brochure	Compliance status
BDAR* 07	Syllabus -shall be a syllabus of the programme for every Department for each batch prepared by the syllabus committee as mentioned by the University Act.	Only approval on previous curriculum for new batch students and no updated till 2015	Moderately Comply
BDAR 08A	Types of courses -shall be theoretical (class-teaching), practical courses (lab, internship, project, field work) and viva-voce (class instruction, may be a part of practical/theoretical/field work course and shall have specific number of credit point.).	No policy about internship	Moderately Comply
BDAR 08C	Related courses -shall be 20% of total courses	Only two GED courses like Bangladesh Studies and Business and Society out of 38 taught courses	Moderately Comply
BDAR 09A	Course title and credit points - every course shall have a short representative course title and a number including the total credit points as well as reference to prerequisite course, if any. Total credit points offered in the whole programme shall be 125 to140.	No prerequisite course and no clear policy about credit points of viva-voce and internship; total credit points is 132	Moderately Comply
BDAR 09B	Contact hours - shall be at least 15 (fifteen) per theoretical credit point.	No gap	Comply
BDAR 11	Examination procedure -shall be double examining system for semester final examination script	No gap	Comply
BDAR 12A	The proportion of the total marks -each theoretical/practical course shall covers either 50 or 100 marks in proportion of continuous assessment 40% and semester-final examination 60%.	No gap	Comply
BDAR 12B	Continuous assessment for each theoretical/practical course consists of mid-semester examination /in-course /class test (minimum two) weighting 50% and case study/quiz/field work/class performance/assignment weighting 25% and class attendance weighting 25%.	A minimum number of case study and field work lessons were taken	Comply
BDAR 12J	Grading policy -uniform grading policy in all public universities in Bangladesh	Fixed and rigid grading policy	Comply
BDAR 15	Degree conferred/awarded - a minimum CGPA of 2.25 within six academic years.	No gap	Comply

*Bachelor Degree Academic Rules-BDAR

Source: Author's analysis

Other Universities' Curriculum Structure to Design and Develop the Brochure

This study examined brochures of the other universities (such as South China University of Technology, University of Dhaka, ASA University Bangladesh, Bangladesh Open University, North South University, and United International University, The University of British Columbia, Canada etc.) and compared. This study found some gaps which are depicted in the table 5-2.

Table 5-2 Comparative analysis and findings of contents of brochure

Contents of brochure selected for this case study	Contents of brochure in other universities' bachelor's degree
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Editorial Board 2. List of Chairmen Chronologically 3. List of Teachers 4. List of Office Support Staff 5. Profile of the University 6. Profile of the Academic Department 7. Academic Rules and Regulations for Bachelor's Degree 8. Academic Program Course Structure and Distribution of Credit Points and Marks 9. Detailed Syllabi of Courses for Academic Program (With Course Overview and Books Recommended) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Vision and mission of the program 2. The academic department and university at a glance 3. The central academic rules and regulations of the university 4. Program Objectives 5. Common Learning competencies in the forms of Knowledge, Generic Skills and Attitudes 6. Common Teaching Methods 7. Common Student Assessment Strategies or Principles 8. Curriculum Structure: Curriculum structure should include credit points and hours on the following items: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Courses on basic and general education ○ Courses from other disciplines ○ Departmental core courses ○ Courses on major area of specialization/ professional courses ○ Course on second and third major of specialization (if any) ○ Courses on minor area of specialization ○ Internship report/organizational attachment report guidelines ○ Viva-voce guidelines 9. Course Structure: Course structure should include the course title with code and credit points and credit hours semester-wise. 10. Course Profile or Detailed Syllabi focusing on the following items: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Course objectives ○ Books and learning materials recommended ○ Significance of the course ○ Specific learning competencies in the forms of Knowledge, Generic Skills and Attitudes ○ Course contents (resources) with references ○ Specific teaching methods and learning experiences ○ Specific student assessment strategies or principles

Source: Author's analysis

Program Conduction Principles as Contents of Curriculum

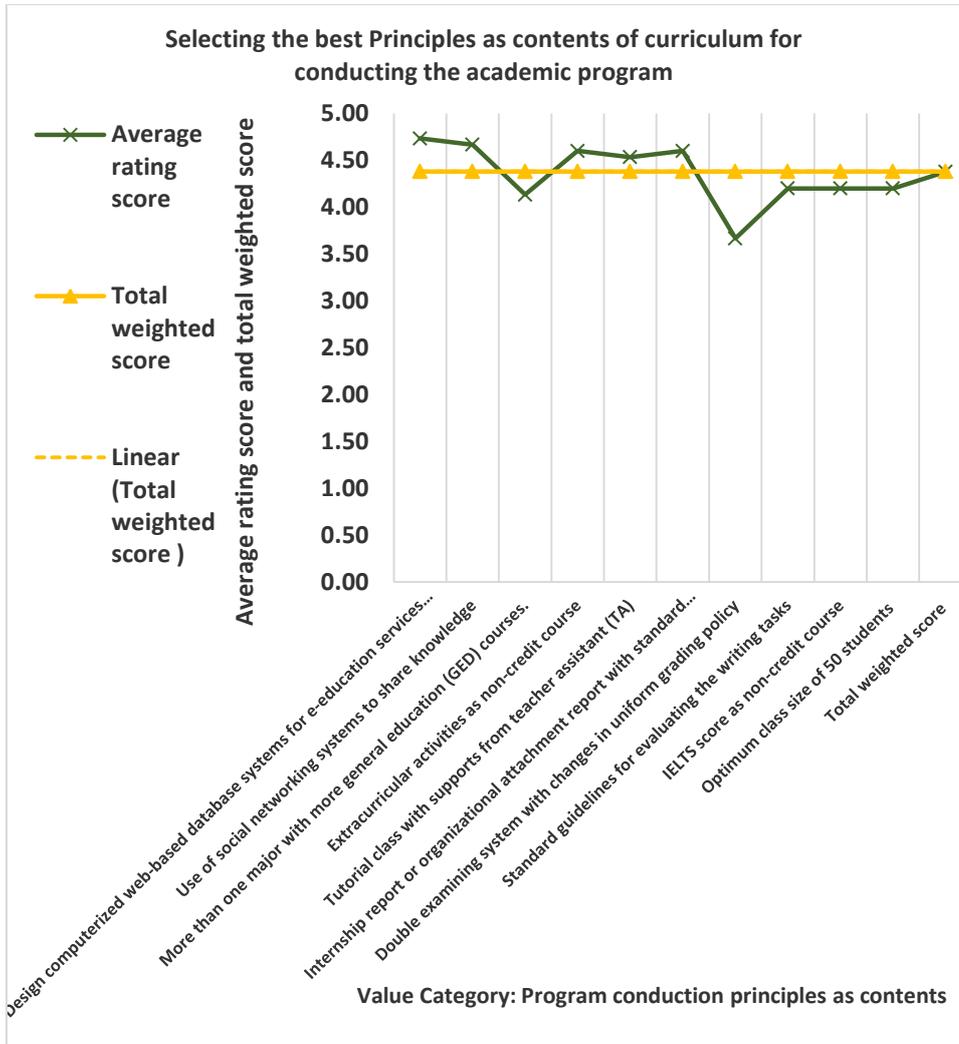
The opinions of the respondents have been converted into average rating scores and weighted scores. The total weighted score has been used to identify some

strengths as well as weaknesses of principles as contents of curriculum. The indicators with average score higher than the total weighted score (4.38) could be considered as the strengths of the curriculum and vice-versa. The views of respondents are presented in the Table 5-3 and Figure 5-1.

Table 5-3 Opinions of respondents about program conduction principles to be selected as contents of curriculum

SL	Program conduction principles as contents of curriculum	Rating Score			Comments
		Average rating score	Weight	Weighted score	
		Total score/30	(Total rating score*100/sum of total rating score)/100	Average rating score* weight	(Ranking)
1	2	3	4	5	6
1	Design computerized web-based database systems for e-education services including online course registration	4.73	0.11	0.51	1
2	Use of social networking systems to share knowledge	4.67	0.11	0.50	2
3	More than one major with more general education (GED) courses.	4.13	0.09	0.39	6
4	Extracurricular activities and company visits as non-credit course	4.60	0.11	0.49	3
5	Tutorial class with supports from teacher assistant (TA)	4.53	0.10	0.47	4
6	Internship report or organizational attachment report with standard guidelines	4.60	0.11	0.49	3
7	Double examining system with changes in uniform grading policy	3.67	0.08	0.31	7
8	Standard guidelines for evaluating the writing tasks	4.20	0.10	0.41	5
9	IELTS score as non-credit course	4.20	0.10	0.41	5
10	Optimum class size of 50 students	4.20	0.10	0.41	5
	Average of average rating score and total weighted score	4.38	1.00	4.38	

Source: Questionnaire sample survey data analysis



Source: Questionnaire sample survey data analysis

Fig. 5-1. Selecting the best principles as contents of curriculum for conducting the academic program

This study found the following best principles as contents of curriculum for conducting the academic program:

- Extracurricular activities and company visits as non-credit course;
- Computerized web-based database systems for e-education services including online course registration;
- Use of social networking systems to share knowledge;
- Tutorial class with supports from teacher assistant (TA); and
- Internship report or organizational attachment report with standard guidelines.

It is also found for the study that experts in Depth Interview felt that using standard curriculum is in initial stage in Bangladesh. They pointed out some best principles or indicators which are most important for conducting the academic program and urged to include in the brochure as the contents of the curriculum design. They focused on extracurricular activities and company visits as non-credit courses, tutorial class with supports from teacher assistant (TA), digital knowledge sharing system, e-education services including online course registration system, establishment of web-based student database system in the academic department, optimum class size of 50 students for effective teaching, more than one major with more general education (GED) courses. The experts also urged on internship report or organizational attachment report with standard guidelines which would be produced by the academic department in the school of business.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion

This study proposed a set of guidelines related to the curriculum contents in terms of selecting the best or standard contents by examining the other universities' curriculum, and also by interviewing with the international students, professors, and experts. The study is done on a small sample. Therefore, the study suffers from comprehensive study/research. There might be many opportunities for further research that may deal with issues like:

- How should the teachers know whether students learnt?
- Was there any education needs assessment/situation analysis held? How?
- How draft curriculum evaluation: piloting/seminar/ online/others was conducted?
- How can we measure the outcomes of curriculum with the world-class standard curriculum? What would be the criteria?
- How would learning outcomes of individual courses be defined and be linked with the competencies expected and its' contribution to the overall graduate profile?

Recommendations

This study generated the following suggestions for improvement of the existing curriculum of bachelor level business education in universities of Bangladesh while designing curriculum and preparing brochure:

Non-credit Courses on Extracurricular Activities and Company Visits: The department should increase the total credit points by offering non-credit courses on extracurricular activities and company visits like writing paper in magazine, newspapers, perform in sports, arranging, organizing and participating orientation programs, seminars, workshops, mini-training programs, anniversaries, annual picnic, study tours, etc.;

More Than One Major and General Education (GED) Courses: The business school should offer more than one major and also ensure increased proportions of general education-oriented courses related to the study areas like culture, language, religion, ethics, morality and philosophy;

Internship Report or Organizational Attachment Report with Standard Guidelines: The academic school should arrange the facilities of organizational placement for the students' internship purpose. The business school should establish an organizational attachment cell which would continue the educational communication and collaboration with different domestic and multinational corporations (MNCs) and even with companies outside the country. There should a comprehensive guide for conducting internship program including guidelines for preparing the report;

Tutorial Class and Teacher Assistant (simply known as TA): The academic program should conduct tutorial classes and there should be a provision for availing supports from teacher assistant (simply known as TA). In a theoretical course, there should have academic videos, analysis of global business cases, class interactions, group performance, etc. This would broaden the mind of students and they would be able to be a systematic thinker.

Sequence of Activities to Design and Develop Curriculum: The department should follow the following sequence of items:

- Contents selection and organization;
- Draft curriculum evaluation: pilot testing/rationale evaluation/ seminar/ workshop/ online/social networking media;
- Modification of the draft curriculum; and
- Final curriculum.

Standard Format of Brochure: The academic department should follow the standard format of brochure which has been proposed from other universities' format included in the findings section of this paper and illustrated in table 5-2;

Using Modern Devices in Teaching-Learning Process: The all concerned of the academic program should use modern devices including social networking media to share knowledge and to transfer academic materials in teaching-learning process which could save valuable time for research works;

Online Course Registration Procedure with Web-based Computerized System: The department should design online course registration procedure with web-based computerized database system for e-education services to replace traditional education service deliver process which could also save valuable time for research works;

Application of the New Curriculum in the University: The department would distribute newly developed curriculum by conducting seminars or workshops throughout the university with permission from the authority to make awareness among the all concerned. To minimize problems from resistance to changes, this study suggests to apply the three stages change model consists of unfreezing (destabilize or unfreeze the old system), changing/transition and refreezing (stabilize the new system) given by Kurt Lewin.

Acknowledgments

The author takes the opportunity to express his deepest sense of gratitude to firstly Almighty "Allah" who enabled him to complete this research work and then his father and mother for their endless, selfless and altruistic efforts, love and wishes to success in his life. The author gratefully expresses his heartiest gratitude and indebtedness to his respected and honorable Professors at South China University of Technology for the initiation of such a study of a new dimension, scholastic idea, solitary instruction, constant encouragement, valuable comments on some research questions and constructive criticism for successful completion of the research work, analysis of data and in the preparation of this article. The author expresses his gratitude and indebtedness to his respected colleagues, honorable senior Professors in Bangladesh and author's new colleagues from different developing countries those who were also enjoying Chinese Government Scholarship under China Scholarship Council's Youth of Excellence Scheme of China-2016 (CSC YES China-2016) Program and were studying as the international students of 2016 High-Level MBA program as the respondents of this research work for their valuable comments on some research questions which helped a lot in this case analysis. The author would also like to extend a million of thanks and love to his wife for her valuable suggestions, co-operation and inspiration throughout the whole tenure of his research work. All sources of external research funding in this study have been used by the researcher in the entire research process, from study design to submission.

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List of Official Curriculum and other Documents Researched:

- Academic Rules and Regulations for Bachelor’s Degree (Semester System) of University selected for this case study;
- Academic Curriculum/Brochure of Bachelor level Business Education Program of Academic Department of the University selected for this case study;
- Academic Curriculum/Brochure of Bachelor’s and Master’s Degree Level Programs in the Department of Management, University of Dhaka;
- Student Handbook of Master’s Program at School of Business Administration, South China University of Technology;
- Thesis Writing Specifications and Processes of South China University of Technology;
- Thesis of Master’s degree completion of MBA of 2017 at School of Business Administration, South China University of Technology completed by Md. Shahidul Islam Fakir, supervised by Prof Li Min, PhD;
- Seminar Paper on Curriculum & Syllabus: Concepts, Models and Evaluation presented by Dr. Rahmatullah A. B. Md., Additional Director, Institutional Quality Assurance Cell, American International University - Bangladesh;
- All Individual Course Outlines (implemented) of different courses offered for the students of high level master program under Youth of Excellence Scheme of China (YES-China Program-2016) of Chinese Government Scholarship at South China University of Technology (SCUT).