

# Impact of Personal Habit/Interest on Higher Education

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## Abstract

*Getting higher education is a journey for every student but reading only text books or reference books is not the only solution to achieve the goal. Students need to enrich their knowledge by doing multiple tasks in daily life. It means that habits or interests, for example reading newspapers, magazines or books, watching educational channels on television, doing social/creative works or cultural activities, using dictionaries regularly, produce major impact both in personal life and in student life. Usually, personal habits or interests play a vital role in human life because individual psychology or philosophy has been developed through this. It controls individual cognition and intelligence. It also creates a significant impact on student's higher education in any discipline. Growing good and innovative habits are very important to make the mind a creative one. It is true that creative mind brings new ideas and thoughts. So, we cannot ignore student's personal habits or interests in higher education. Students need to be focused in their study but their external activities sharpen their intelligence. In Bangladesh, most of the students in tertiary level do not consider the importance of their habits but in abroad, most of the students in tertiary level do various activities and extend their knowledge for a better future. In this issue, self-motivation and self-realization plays effective role in higher education and for this, students need motivation in all senses. Motivation is working through different ways and habits/interests make the ways of success. This article highlights the impact of personal habit/interest on higher education.*

Key Terms: Personal habit, personal interest, motivation

## Introduction

At present, doing higher education is necessity for students because the job market has become a very competitive sector where students need to show their capabilities to achieve success. When Bangladesh became independent in 1971, the role of higher education was to be part of nation building (University Grants Commission, 2006). According to World Bank

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(cited in Kabir, 2013), human development is illustrated in the higher education policy as the key to Bangladesh's development to be achieved by higher education. In Bangladesh, we have many public and private universities and with the establishment of these universities higher education moved towards a new phase in the education sector. It was expected that socio-economic, political and cultural condition of the majority Muslim populace in the then East Bengal would be uplifted by ensuring modern higher education (Rahman, 2009). But the British rulers created a university (University of Dhaka) in East Bengal as part of dealing with social unrest and political difficulties within a country they ruled. However, higher education was seen as a catalyst to achieve political goals during British and Pakistani regimes. Under the Pakistani regime from 1947 to 1971, both students and faculties contributed toward the establishment of democracy and liberty of the country (Quddus and Rashid, 2000). A new phase of higher education began in the 1990s in which a remarkable transformation took place in the higher education system, largely based on market-driven economic forces and the private universities started its journey from 1992 which is playing a significant role in the country. Since then this sector has experienced major changes and these changes bring new policies and planning in educational sector of Bangladesh. According to World Bank (cited in Kabir, 2013), a twenty-year strategic plan for higher education, adopted in 2006, is identified as a ground-breaking initiative. It addressed the current problems and issues of higher education and recommended a set of prescriptions to the problems. Actually, higher education is such an education where we need our focused attention to make the study effective and coherent. But, automatically it will not come; proper planning and self-motivation play the fundamental role in it. That means, our background education and personal habits may have a great impact on higher education. In all senses, our personal habits/interests make our ideology or point of view towards life including our study life and we cannot ignore this vital point in education. Basically, it is a journey where we have a beginning but there is no ending.

This study is talking about a fundamental issue, impact of personal habits on higher education, of doing higher education regarding the positive motivation and the success of a student which starts before he or she entered into it i.e. the pre-stage of higher education. In this stage, student's personal habit or interest plays vital role to make his or her positive motivation and success in the study. This study will motivate the students and will explore the importance and the impact of personal habit/interest on higher education and will be helpful for the future researchers in this area.

## **Literature Review**

### **Higher Education and Creativity**

In higher education, a student needs to explore his or her own ideas in a logical way i.e. he or she has to show the creativity of mind through the study. To do this, a student must use the cognitive ability to do the study in detail. For all of these, personal habits or interests may play the vital role in higher education because it will make his ideology or philosophy in life. But, it will come in stages; it needs proper motivation and practice. This journey should be started from his or her personal life. A student needs to grow good personal habits/interests for making the higher education a successful one and an easier one. Because personal habit(s) will open a student's creative mind and in this way a student can be able to bring new idea or ideas in the education of higher level.

To show creativity is essential for every student in higher education but it is a complex and diverse activity. According to Greenwood (2013), creativity brings the energy of new thinking and offers new ways to look at the world, needs an accompanying criticality to harness its energy so that it can be directed at changes that have been carefully examined and considered to be desirable. Greenwood also says, at its simplest it might be defined as a process of exploring new ways of working or discovering new solutions.

Brookfield (1986) found that for people learning about a hobby outside any formal educational setting, 'other people' were the main learning resource cited. According to Bidart and Lavenu (2005), learners' acquaintances provided social resources for learning: information, support, feedback and models of learning or performance and these resources in turn are linked to long-term evolutions of personal networks and life events. Social Network Theory represents people as living within networks of relationships. Through these networks, resources such as information or gifts are transferred between people, and people's activities are facilitated or constrained by their social networks (Benson and Reinders, 2011).

Learners in different contexts will learn within different kinds of social networks; for example, their learning may draw on the resources of a work-based group, a peer group or a neighborhood. The family is a network of relationships, and also a site where various kinds of 'capital' can be accumulated (Benson and Reinders, 2011). A language learned is usually not a static body of knowledge, but is mobilized and shared with others. It constitutes not just human capital, but also social capital too. Making language skills learnt in the classroom relevant to use outside the classroom can capitalize on learners' investment in real or imagined communities of which they wish to be part (Benson and Reinders, 2011).

‘Out-of-class’, ‘out-of-school’, ‘after-school’, ‘extracurricular’ and ‘extramural’ learning all focus on location or setting and usually imply something that is supplementary to classroom learning and teaching. ‘Out-of-class’ and ‘out-of-school learning’ are often used to describe non-prescribed activities that students carry out independently to broaden their knowledge of a subject (Benson and Reinders, 2011).

### **Motivation in Higher Education**

The principal way that teachers can influence learners’ motivation is by making the classroom a supportive environment in which students are stimulated, engaged in activities which are appropriate to their age, interests and cultural backgrounds, and, most importantly, where students can experience success. This, in turn, can contribute to positive motivation, leading to still greater success. It is also plausible that early success heightened their motivation or that both success and motivation are due to their special aptitude for learning or the favorable context in which they are learning (Lightbown and Spada, 1999).

Motivated students are usually those who participate actively in class, express interest in the subject-matter, and study a great deal. Teachers can easily recognize characteristics such as these. They also have more opportunity to influence these characteristics than students’ reasons for studying the second language or their attitudes towards the language and its speakers. Students enjoy coming to classroom because the content is interesting and relevant to their age and level of ability, where the learning goals are challenging yet manageable and clear, and where the atmosphere is supportive and non-threatening (Lightbown and Spada, 1999).

The individualized perspective on educational difficulties arises from certain assumptions about the purposes of schooling, the nature of knowledge and the purpose of learning (Ainscow, 1994). According to Fulcher (1989), the dominant perspective that guides the organization of responses to children who experience difficulties in school has been characterized as an ‘individual gaze’. This involves constructing or interpreting problems without reference to the wider environmental, social and political contexts in which they occur. Within the UNESCO Resource Pack, we refer to this as ‘the individual pupil view’, within which educational difficulties are defined in terms of pupil characteristics (Ainscow, 1994).

Pupils who are perceived as being unable or unwilling to take reasonable advantage of the opportunities that are provided are taken to be in some way deficient: the focus is on them as individuals and those of their attributes that would seem to be preventing their progress. The dominant perspective is usually individualized, thus requiring a process of

identification and assessment based upon a scrutiny of those attributes that are assumed to be interfering with the individual learning. Surely a focus on the problems of individual pupils is a basis for positive actions that can help overcome their difficulties (Ainscow, 1994).

Ainscow (1994) asserts that even as adults, our understanding continues to develop as we test our new ideas against previous knowledge. Old ideas can be changed in the light of new experiences. In this point, Ainscow (1994) also claims that even if a whole group of children or adults are exposed to the same experience, the learning that takes place will be different for each individual. This is because each individual, child or adult, brings to every situation a unique blend of previous experience.

## **Methodology**

### **Research Method**

This research shares features of both qualitative and quantitative methods with numeric representations from collected data and opinions from informal/unstructured interviews. The combination of qualitative and quantitative data helps to explore the fundamental aspects of the importance or impact of personal habits/interests on higher education. The study was conducted with seven (07) teachers of different private universities in Dhaka, twenty five (25) undergraduate students and fifteen (15) graduate students of different private universities in Dhaka, and nine (09) researchers of M.Phil/Ph.D. program of different public universities in Bangladesh. All the seven teachers are teaching English literature and English language in different private universities in Dhaka, all the fifteen graduate students are doing their MA in English, all the twenty five undergraduate students are studying at BA in English and all the nine researchers of M.Phil/Ph.D. program are doing their research on English Language Teaching and on English Literature including Contemporary Theories.

### **Participants and Data Collection Procedure**

Following the suggestions of Bryman and Gall (cited in Datta, 2014), Gall and Borg (2007), both observational and non-observational techniques have been used for data collection in this study. The data were collected directly from the participants and a short informal/unstructured interview was taken with everyone to know their opinion for this study. Following Leed's suggestion (cited in Datta, 2014), all data were managed in three phases: (i) "data preparation" (i.e. entering data to prepare a data base), (ii) "data identification" (i.e. placing data into analytically meaningful and easily locatable segments) and (iii) "data manipulation" (i.e. searching for categorizing, retrieving, and reorganizing the data). After all these data were examined to find out the importance or impact and present status of this research to provide possible suggestion(s) for future research on this topic.

In this research the same questionnaire was used for everyone (Appendix A), and all the participants gave answers in “yes-no” format. Both the questionnaire and the brief informal/unstructured interviews were conducted in English. The unstructured interviews were conducted on centering a rough checklist (Appendix B). The focus was only on the importance and the impact of personal habits on higher education. The researcher keenly observed the facial expression and the body language of the people (especially when they were talking) to identify their psychological perspective regarding the subject in this research. The researcher wanted to evaluate the necessity of this kind of research from the persons (both teachers and students) who are directly connected with the universities. All the procedures were done in a week in different private universities. The purpose of this study is to find out how habits or interests work on higher education and how the students can connect all these to their study.

### **Findings**

All the participants gave their opinions through the questionnaire which was same for all regarding the impact and the importance of personal habits/interests on higher education.

**Table-1: Findings from University Teachers and from M.Phil/Ph.D. Researchers**

		University Teachers		M.Phil/Ph.D Researchers	
		Yes	No	Yes	No
1.	Importance of other activities in student life	07	00	09	00
2.	Necessity of creative works in student life	05	02	07	02
3.	Importance of creative mind in higher education	06	01	06	03
4.	Necessity of good habit in personal life	07	00	09	00
5.	Personal habit motivates to do study properly	06	01	07	02
6.	Impact of personal habit in higher education	05	02	07	02
7.	Personal habit gives success in higher education	05	02	06	03
8.	Personal habit makes creative mind	06	01	07	02
9.	Necessity of previous experience in education	07	00	08	01
10.	To connect personal experience in education	06	01	08	01

From Table-1, we can see that university teachers and researchers gave emphasis on activities in student life, good habit in personal life, and previous experience in education.

**Table-2: Findings from Undergraduate and Postgraduate Students**

		Undergraduate Students		Graduate Students	
		Yes	No	Yes	No
1.	Importance of other activities in student life	21	04	12	03
2.	Necessity of creative works in student life	20	05	13	02
3.	Importance of creative mind in higher education	16	09	13	02
4.	Necessity of good habit in personal life	25	00	15	00
5.	Personal habit motivates to do study properly	20	05	12	03
6.	Impact of personal habit in higher education	17	08	14	01
7.	Personal habit gives success in higher education	17	08	13	02
8.	Personal habit makes creative mind	19	06	13	02
9.	Necessity of previous experience in education	15	10	12	03
10.	To connect personal experience in education	15	10	11	04

From Table-2, we can see that both undergraduate and graduate students gave emphasis on good habit in personal life.

**Table-3: Total Percentage of Findings from Participants**

		Total Percentage	
		Yes	No
1.	Importance of other activities in student life	87.5	12.5
2.	Necessity of creative works in student life	80.4	19.6
3.	Importance of creative mind in higher education	73.2	26.8
4.	Necessity of good habit in personal life	100	0
5.	Personal habit motivates to do study properly	80.4	19.6
6.	Impact of personal habit in higher education	76.8	23.2
7.	Personal habit gives success in higher education	73.2	26.8
8.	Personal habit makes creative mind	80.4	19.6
9.	Necessity of previous experience in education	75	25
10.	To connect personal experience in education	71.4	28.6

By analyzing the tables, we can see the positive results of the participants regarding impact of personal habits/interests on higher education are dominating. On an average, 80.4% of the participants think that personal habit motivates the study, 76.8% of the participants say that there is an impact of personal habit on higher education, and 73.2% of the participants think that personal habit gives success in higher education and during the unstructured interviews most of the participants gave their positive views on growing good personal habits and its positive impact on higher education.

## **Conclusion**

All the findings of this study show the positive response of the participants regarding the effectiveness of the impact of personal habit on higher education. So, growing good habits will be useful for every student before entering the upper level of education and it will make them creative to do different types of activities in the higher education. In this way, students can explore themselves and can express their views properly. And then success will come automatically. For this, family members, friends, relatives and teachers can play the vital role to activate the hidden qualities of a student. Positive motivation through habits will make the study easier.

## **Theoretical and Practitioner Implications**

It is very clear that in the pre-stage (school life and college life) of starting higher education students need to do different types of activities or socio-cultural works to sharpen their creative mind. They need to enlarge their knowledge in every angle. Growing good habits could be the solution of doing better learning in the upper level. They can think differently and it will make their study smooth. In these matters family members, school teachers, college teachers, relatives, friends can play the significant role for developing habits or interests on positive subjects. In this way, a student can achieve positive point of view regarding education and toward life. Students will be more attentive and more motivated in their study and will achieve more success in higher education.

## **Limitations**

To do this study the researcher had limited books and resources regarding the subject. All the works were done within three weeks which is a very short time for a research. In this research, the researcher used one questionnaire and one checklist, and the participants were limited. To collect data and to take unstructured interviews the researcher visited only two private universities and two public universities.

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## **Appendix A**

### **Questionnaire for Participants**

Please fill out the questionnaire. It is prepared for doing research. You do not need to write your name. Give tick marks wherever appropriate.

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[ ] Teacher      [ ] Researcher      [ ] Graduate Student      [ ] Undergraduate Student

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1. Do you think student life means to do study only?  
☐ Yes                      ☐ No
2. Is it necessary to do creative works in student life?  
☐ Yes                      ☐ No
3. Is it helpful to have a creative mind in higher education?  
☐ Yes                      ☐ No
4. Do we need to grow good habit(s) in personal life?  
☐ Yes                      ☐ No
5. Does personal habit/interest motivate us to do study properly?  
☐ Yes                      ☐ No
6. Is there any major impact of personal habit/interest on higher education?  
☐ Yes                      ☐ No
7. Does personal habit/interest give success in higher education?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No
8. Does personal habit/interest make creative mind?  
☐ Yes ☐ No
9. Is previous experience necessary for higher education?  
☐ Yes ☐ No
10. Do we need to connect our personal experience with higher education?  
☐ Yes ☐ No

### **Appendix B**

#### Checklist for Unstructured Interview

- ✓ Present status of higher education in Bangladesh
- ✓ Students attitudes toward higher education
- ✓ Difficulties of doing higher education in Bangladesh
- ✓ Applicability of personal habits in higher education
- ✓ Benefits of using personal habits in higher education
- ✓ Suggestions for using personal habits in higher education
- ✓ Impact of personal habits on higher education