

# University Civic Engagement in Bangladesh and Potential Alternative Pedagogies

Meghna Guhathakurta

*Research Initiatives, Bangladesh (RIB), Banani, Dhaka - 1213, Bangladesh*

*Corresponding author. E-mail: meghna.guhathakurta@gmail.com*

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## ABSTRACT

**T**his study examined the history and potential of university civic engagement in Bangladesh. Post-colonial models of civic engagement of universities contested earlier models of alienation between universities and surrounding communities. Such trends were located in western academia, as well as embedded in the thinking of the East, e.g., Rindindranath Tagore's community of practice embodied in Sriniketan, a college which inspired and assisted community initiatives in Bangladesh and South Asia. Bangladesh has undergone tremendous changes since its independence in 1971. The role of public universities has been prominent in the reconstruction of the nation and hence the relationship between the community and academia has been close and engaged. But this has been more apparent in political and civic discourses and social movements, rather than in curriculum content and structure. While a few exemplars of university civic engagement in Bangladesh exist, they are mostly initiatives of innovative teachers and institutions; no systemic attempt has been made to incorporate civic engagement into the university curricula in Bangladesh. Thus, while the legacy and terrain for civic engagement is rich in Bangladesh, the number of programs is few, mostly due to lack of funding and time constraints inherent in the semester system. There is, however, potential for alternative pedagogies to evolve. Appropriate institutional linkages and intellectual endeavor are needed to support and channel this trend into effective civic engagement practices.

**Keywords:** Civic engagement, Universities, Bangladesh