Coloniality as a Frame of Understanding:
Interventional Politics in the Privatisation of Bangladeshi Higher Education

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What the book is about

- Explores the *political* dimension of the privatisation of higher education in Bangladesh

- Explores neoliberalism as a Western economic and ideological construct, a mode of governance, and a ready-made policy package

- Explores the metamorphoses of policy reforms, massification, and a sustained friction between autonomy and control

Preface:

- A conscious effort to recognise our geo-political and onto-epistemological positionalities as diasporic and hybridised scholars by rejecting epistemological exclusion inherent in the colonial present

- **Theorising from within 'Global South' postcolonial *and* decolonial research literature**

Writing the Preface:

Locating our Selves

- Australian-Bangladeshi?
- Bangladeshi- Australian?
- Australian-Bengali?
- Bengali-Australian?

- Global Citizen

- Gender, Religion, Age, Sexual Orientation, Education, Spatiality and temporality

- 'Common' journey of having had the privileged opportunity to have studied and taught in Bangladesh and Australia

- Socioeconomically and culturally privileged, Western-educated, male, Bangladeshi-Australians of a certain age, living and working in the first quarter of the 21st century

- Integration of divergent identities to construct 'hybridity' Bhabha (1994)

COLONIAL LITERATURE
VERSUS
POSTCOLONIAL LITERATURE

Colonial literature is the literature written during the colonisation, using colonies as a setting	Postcolonial literature is the literature that expresses opposition or resistance to colonisation
Often written from the perspective of the coloniser	Written from the perspective of the former colonised
Portrays colonisation as a natural, unproblematic, often 'correct' process	Portrays the problems and consequences of colonisation and decolonization
Often portrays indigenous people and culture savage or primitive	Attempts to describe indigenous people, places and practices to counteract the stereotypical images portrayed by the colonisers

Pediaa.com

Growing up in the 90s

- 'Third World Literature' vs. 'Continental Literature'
- Third World Country
- Least Developed Country (LDC)
- Under-developed country (UDC)
- Developing Country

- 'South-East Asian' country
- 'Asian' country
- The (Indian) Subcontinent
- An 'overpopulated' country

The 'Third World'

- Break up of Russia, failing of *de*colonisation → Quijano (decoloniality)

- Ethno (Euro-) centric approaches to development and political systems – democracy and capitalism (World Bank, IMF)

- *Under*differentiation - tendency to ignore cultural diversity & homogenisation of less-developed countries

- Development projects assume that the 'nuclear' family is the basic unit of production and land ownership.

Hence:

'over-population', 'under-developed' etc.

Michel Foucault → Edward Said

Gayatri Spivak (1942 -)
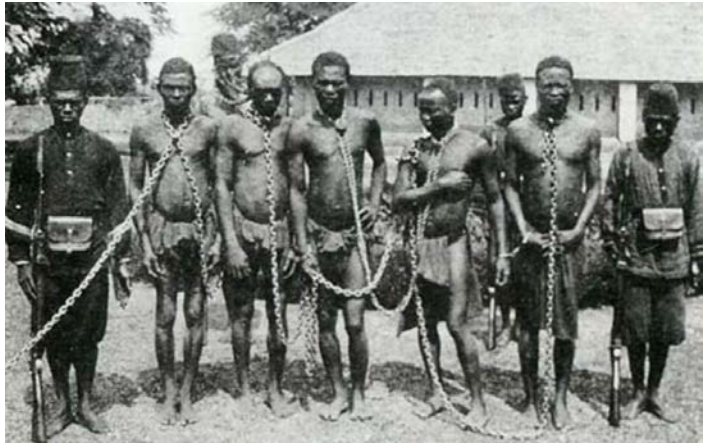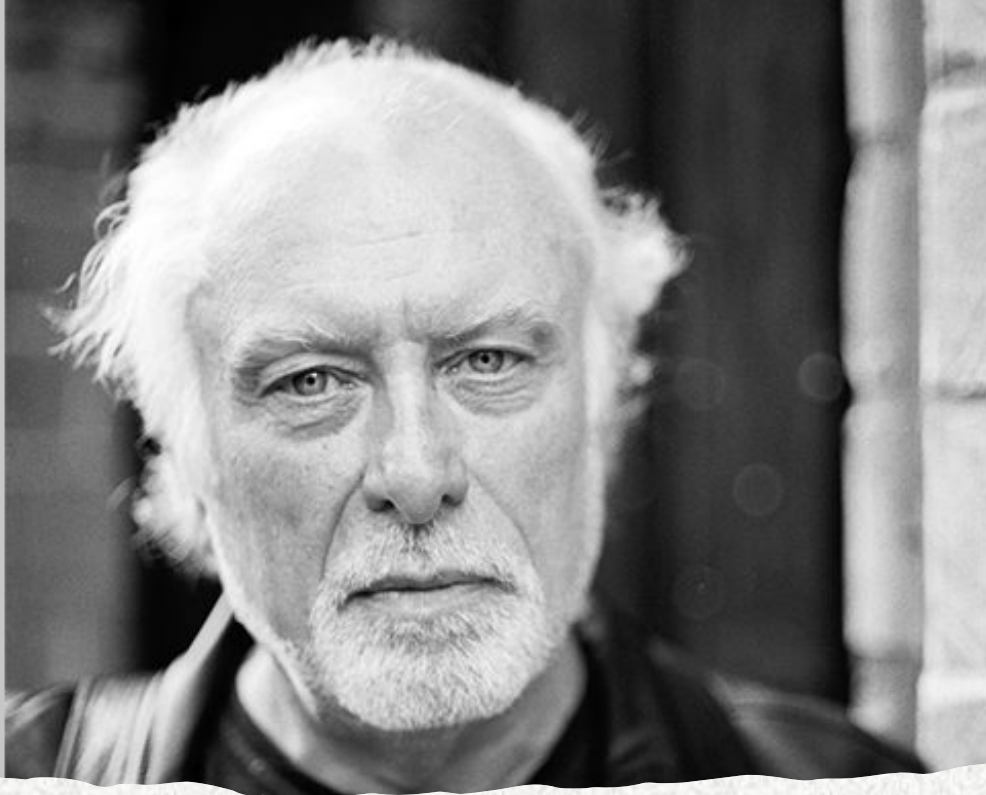
Homi Bhabha (1949 -)

Colonialism and Coloniality

- The Ruler
- The Ruled
- The Subaltern

Walter D. Mignolo (1941-)

Aníbal Quijano (1930 – 2018)

Postcolonialism

- From the Palestinian/Arab and Indian tradition (Said, Bhabha, Spivak)
- Interrogating British colonial practices 17th - 20th centuries
- Drawing on Marx, Foucault, Derrida
- **Position against imperialism and Eurocentrism**
- Power/resistance; deconstruction; ideological critique
- The Subaltern can't speak (but…)
- Possibilities for transnational solidarities among the Subaltern

- The case of Thailand

Coloniality (and decolonial theory)

- 'Latin' American tradition - Mignolo, Quijano (*Grupo Modernidad/Decolonialidad*)
- 'Geopolitics of knowledge'
- Rising from critique of Spanish, French, Portuguese colonialism
- **Capitalism and modernity** - the historical outcome of colonialism
- **Forms of knowledge and social order** - legacy of colonialism
- **Racial and gender hierarchy** (skin colour, male privilege) - production of colonialism
- These are (mostly) European constructs
- The Subaltern *can* speak

Concept of time

We are all trapped in a universal time that is owned by a particular civilisation (Europe)

'Post-colonial'

- Western notion of 'time' as singular and universal

- 'Post'- a unipolar and linear time conception

'De-colonial'

- Allows *multiple* time concepts of cultures and civilisations upon which Western civilisations impose its conceptualisation of time

- The 'de-' indicates the need for "re-": epistemic reconstitutions, re-emergence, resurgence, re-existence – allows "**simultaneous histories**" (Quijano)

Organisation of the book

- Neoliberalism, postcolonialism and global HE

- HE Privatisation: Contemporary trends in Asia

- HE Financial modes: Politics, power and control

- HE Governance systems

- HE Quality control mechanisms

- 'For-profit' vs. 'not for-profit' debate

- The politics of neoliberal planning in *public* HE

Neoliberal shifts in HE in the post-1990s

Year	Name of the key policies	Targeted University sector
1992	Private University Act	Private university sector
1998	Private University Act 1992 (Amendment)	Private university sector
2006	Strategic Plan for Higher Education 2006-2020	Public and private university sectors
2008	Private University Ordinance 2008	Private university sector
2009	Higher Education Quality Enhancement Project (HEQEP) 2009-2018	Public and private university sector
2010	Private University Act 2010	Private university sector
2014	'Guiding Rules for Regulating the Branch Campuses' or 'The Study Centre of Foreign University or Institute 2014'	Private university sector
2017	Strategic Plan 2017-2030	Public and private university sectors
2017	The Bangladesh Accreditation Council Act 2017	Public and private university sectors

1990 – Present: Massive Growth of Bangladeshi HE

Year(s)	Public Universities	Year(s)	Private universities
1921-1952	Only one University – University of Dhaka		
1953-1971	5 new public universities		
1971-1985	No new public university, although the Act of Islamic University passed in 1980		
1986-1990	3 new public universities	**1990-1995**	**13 private universities added**
1990-1999	4 new public universities (including National University and Bangladesh Open University	1996-2001	4 private universities added
2000-2009	18 new public universities (including 10 science and technology universities, 3 agricultural universities and 5 general universities)	2002-2007 2007-2008	37 private universities added No private university added
2010-2018	18 new public universities (including 6 science and technology universities, 2 general universities	2009-2013 2014-2018	26 private universities added 25 private university added
Total	**49 public universities**	Total	**105 private universities**

Sourcing Data for the Book

Methods of analysis	Sources of data
Document analysis	– A 20-year Strategic Plan for Higher Education 2006–2026 – Strategic Plan for Higher Education 2017–2030 – 'Guiding Rules for Regulating the Branch Campuses' or 'the – Study Centre of Foreign University or Institute 2014' – Private University Acts 1992, 1998 (amended), 2010 – Cabinet Approved Private University Act 2020 – Private University Ordinance 2008 – Public University Acts – UGC reports – University reports – Media reports
Interviews	-05 Policy administrators from UGC & Ministry of Education -11 Academics -3 Politicians -4 Journalists - 5 Private sector representatives

Neoliberalism, postcolonialism and global higher education trends

Neoliberalism … is reconfiguring relationships between governing and the governed, power and knowledge, and sovereignty and territoriality… a new relationship between government and knowledge through which governing activities are recast as nonpolitical and nonideological problems that need technical solutions. It is… a profoundly active way of rationalizing governing and self-governing in order to "optimize" … a historical process that unevenly articulates situated political constellations.

Ong, 2006, p. 4

Private University - Sources of Finance

- Unconditional grants from public welfare-oriented persons, or assemblage of persons

- Charitable trusts or institutions

- Loans from public welfare-oriented persons, assemblage of persons, charitable trusts, institutions or the government

- Donations from public welfare-oriented persons, assemblage of persons, charitable trusts or institutions

- Student fees

- University income from assets

- Other sources approved by the government or the University Grants Commission

A 'user-pays' Policy

- **Tuition fees**: the key strategy of financing private universities
- **External funding and loans**
- **Students loans**: a new product offering by commercial banks

Changing financial policies Through Acts:

Politics of power and control of private universities

Two important questions:

- Despite several efforts and in the face of sustained lobbying by the Association of Private University of Bangladesh (APUB), why has the government failed to adopt tighter measures in Act 2010 to ensure greater transparency on how funding is generated and spent in private universities?

- Is such failure of government initiatives a question of **who will control the governance system of private universities?**

3 Approaches to Financing of Public Universities

Financial management system in public universities

The 'cost-sharing' model

Introduction of external involvement

Policy Shifts: From the State to 'User Pays'

- Fee-earning *evening* courses: a new mode of generating money
- Money generation through project management and consultancy services
- *Higher* tuition fees in newly established public universities
- *Public-Private Partnership* (PPP): a new bondage between public universities and industries
- National University: money surplus

Politics of government subsidies and the cost-recovery system:
Control over public universities

- Historical processes have ensured and legitimised public universities to be continued as 'politically' empowered institutions

- Government apparatuses relentlessly created pressure on public universities to be financially (if not institutionally) self-reliant, **but** it also believed that this would not be possible until national consensus was reached on matters of national interest.

- Therefore, government wanted to take this advantage through budgeting public universities.

- Government financial contribution to public universities over the last few decades has been reduced, **but** employed more regulating mechanisms on how the public universities could spend the money they have received from both the government and that earned on their own.

The governance system of private universities:
Chronological shifts

- **Between 1992 and 2008**: entrepreneur control over private universities

- **Post-2008 period**: shifting to a blending of deregulated yet state-controlled system

- **Shifting role of the VC**: from 'manager' to 'chief executive and academic officer'

Managing the governance system of public universities

- Governance system of universities operated through '73 Ordinances: neither fully autonomous nor fully government-controlled

- Governance system of public universities established before 2004 and operated with other than the '73 Ordinances

- The Strategic Plan and the governance system of public universities established post-2005

Quality control mechanisms

- The politics of 'quality' and the introduction of higher education in the private sector

- 1992 and 2008: situating the notion of 'quality' in private higher education discourses

- Post-2008: shifting from control by state to external quality assurance bodies

- *Strategic Plan*: the blueprint of adopting external bodies' involvement in the 'quality' of public higher education

Accreditation Council: a mechanism for *controlling* higher education institutions

The 'For-profit' vs. 'not for-profit' Debate

Global shifts in the concept of the private university:

Demand-driven and a new 'entrepreneurial' space

Conceptualising 'private' higher education in Bangladesh:

Private universities as sites of political struggle over 'not for-profit'/ 'for-profit'

Participant quote:

"By not declaring private universities as 'non-profit' organisations, you are giving an opportunity to a person to abuse the facilities to make it a profitable organisation"

Who really controls the private university sector?

- Founders: 30% businessmen, 23% academics and 9% career politicians

- Out of 105 private universities, 28 had no legally appointed VC; 82 no Pro-VC, and 55 no Treasurer

Two key political factors:

- First, as the private university becomes the site of political struggle between the government and the founders, both parties need to achieve political consensus on who will be appointed in top positions.

- Second, keeping these top positions as vacant is used as a strategy by the founders to retain a degree of control over the private university and use it for their own purposes.

The politics of neoliberal planning in *public* HE

- Jagannath University: a private college established in 1858 became a 'first-grade' college in 1907 and taken over by the government in 1968.

- 1975 - started offering Bachelors (Hons.) and Master degrees

- 2005 - (during the formation of SP and just before the National Election) - the govt declared Jagannath College as Jagannath University

- Governance system: State control

- Financial mode: Self-dependent after 10 years of establishment

- Public University: 'Politically' empowered – Students and Academics Movement and thus govt amended the JnU Act and continued to finance (having the lowest govt funding among public universities)

Implications for HE

- Who are the true beneficiaries of policy reforms?

- What discourses are privileged?

- What is not known?

- What are our espoused agenda?

Thank you.

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