

Quality and Accessibility of Higher Education in Public University of Bangladesh

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ABSTRACT

Education is the formal process by which society transmits its accumulated knowledge, skills, customs and values from one generation to another deliberately. Education is fundamental right to enhancing the quality of human life and ensuring social and economic progress. The higher education is the important major part of the education system. The key objectives of higher education are to generate the new knowledge, explore new ideas and concept on different sectors of economy which might enhance the economic growth and development and anticipate the needs of the economy and prepare highly skilled workers. In these contexts, higher education should be standard, welfare and sustainable develop oriented. In this paper contents the quality and accessibility of higher education in the public universities in Bangladesh. The main objective of this study is to standardize of higher education in public university of Bangladesh. The paper emphasizes on the students and ordinary people opinion that represent the present education system of public university, its existing problems, challenges, the quality, diversity and accessibility of higher education system in Bangladesh. Dhaka University and National University was selected to collect the data purposively for both qualitative and quantitative methods have been applied. The findings of the study show the different branches of higher education its quality and accessibility of the students as well as the educational cost effectiveness perceived by their guardian. The findings of the study would be able to represent the overall scenario of higher education system of Bangladesh that may guide to the policy makers further.

Keywords: *Higher Education; Public University; Accessibility; Quality*

I. INTRODUCTION

A right of education is a universal entitlement to education, a right that is recognized as a human right. According to the international covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights the rights to education includes the right to free, compulsory primary education for all, an obligation to develop secondary education accessible to all, in particular by the progressive introduction of free secondary education, as well as an obligation to develop equitable access to higher education. The right to education also includes a responsibility to provide basic education for individuals who have not completed primary education. In addition to these access to education provisions, the right to education encompasses the obligation to rule out discrimination at all levels of the educational system, to set minimum standards and to improve quality of education.

Higher education promotes such values and improves people's capacity that sustains environment and development issues of any countries. Higher education increases the awareness and welfare attitudes, skills and behavior as well as sense of ethical responsibilities among the people. Among the primary, secondary and university i.e. higher education is the path of growth and development. In this regards higher education should be standard, welfare and sustainable development oriented. One

of the key aims of higher education is to anticipate the needs of the economy and prepare highly skilled workers to make it competitive.

The role of higher education plays very important rule and it is badly need to build up our human capital and achieve and sustain the quality of work force as well as life. But it is hard reality is that the higher education now in many ways of commercialized and as a result the quality of higher education is ignored and business attitude prioritized, in the third world countries. In terms of quality and accessibility, in Bangladesh, the scenario is more vulnerable.

II. OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this paper is to explore the present scenario of public university through the student and society's point of view. The other specific objectives are:

- a. To explore the quality of higher education system
- b. To know the accessibility of higher education
- c. To know the way out to overcome the challenges faced by the higher education institution.

III. METHODOLOGY

The study has applied the informative through the descriptive and exploratory methods in unfolding the higher education system of Bangladesh in respect of quality and accessibility. The qualitative and quantitative methods have to be used for analyzing the data. In order to collect information from the field survey from the existing and previous student and guardian those who have children is studying or passed recently from the universities.

By using purposive sampling method can use and around 50 respondents were provide information to us. Both questionnaire survey and observation methods have used for collecting primary information of the study. Apart from these, Focus Group Discussion method has used for conducting the study.

Quality of Education

The new Oxford dictionary defines quality as excellence or a degree of excellence. In this context, quality can be thought of as the ‘best of its kind’, a standard against which similar things may be measured. The problem with the dictionary definition is that one has to go on and debate what is meant by excellence. In the area of higher education, here are those – Boyle and Bowden [”1”] for instance – who believe that debate on the term itself is a waste of time. “Most progressive thinkers,” they say, “and those motivated by positive practical outcomes, have moved on from the endless esoteric debates on conceptions of quality.”

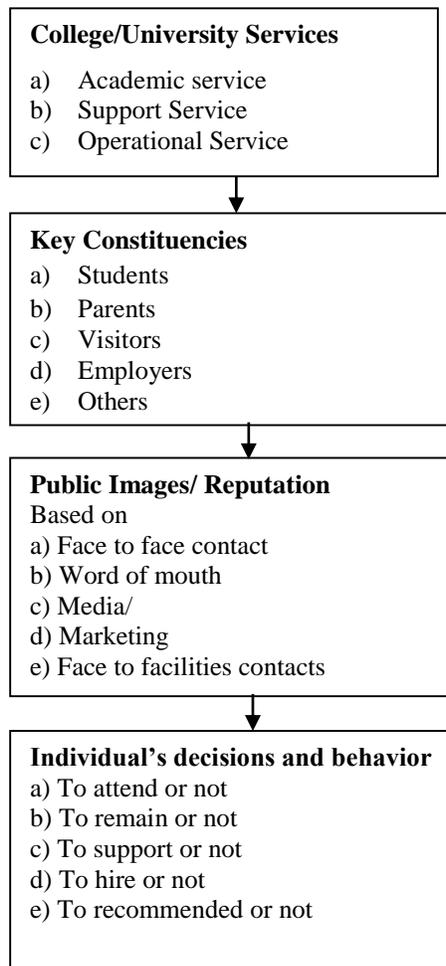
Acknowledging that attempting to define quality can drive you mad “[2]” it remains important to try. Boyle and Bowden’s view is that we should simply accept ‘fitness for purpose’ “[3]” as the most workable definition. But this definition has its own problems because it ignores multiple or competing purposes. Even if the debate about quality cannot be resolved, it is essential to engage in it. Not to do so is to give the field to those who have the power to enforce their purpose. Quality as ‘excellence or goodness’ was the definition preferred by philosophers. ‘Fitness for purpose’, is the definition preferred by business people. It is in the world of business that both the

definition ‘fitness for purpose’ and the quality assurance movement had its origins. The definition works well in business because the stated aim of business is straightforward – that of making a profit. The steadier and more long-term the profit making is, the better. Quality is therefore assured when the processes of production, sales and distribution fit the stated aims of the company – the largest possible long-term profit. Harvey and Green “[4]” also states that, “total quality control implies total involvement by everyone in the organization to provide customers with reliable products and services that fulfill their needs.”

In determining quality assurance procedures, much emphasis is placed on criteria or attributes that maximize profit. Elements such as speed, economy and efficiency tend to take precedence. Another way to describe this concept of quality is ‘value for money’ “[5]”. However, ‘fitness for purpose’ has now gained such universal acceptance that it is applied today in more complicated contexts than just profit-making businesses – in the universities, for example. Quality assurance agencies in Britain, Hong Kong, the Netherlands, Scandinavia and Australia make use of it. But ‘fitness for purpose’ begs an important question—whose purpose? In industry the answer is easy: that of the shareholders or owners. But who owns the universities? And what is that purpose?

Harvey and Green “[4]” observed that the purpose of quality control is to make a product ‘error free’. So if a product is tangible (whether it be a soap or a computer), it is in the best interests of the manufacturer or industry supplier to ensure the result is error free, thus protecting future profits. In order to do so, the management of the factory or industry utilize good quality raw materials, modern tools, machinery and technology. But it is skilled and efficient manpower that plays the most important role in making sure the result is error free. If the product on offer is a service (i.e. banking or insurance), the organization still needs to use modern techniques, technology, and communication processes, adopted by skilled manpower resources, in order to ensure the same need for freedom from errors.

Quality of higher education images and impact:



Dimension of quality of higher education:

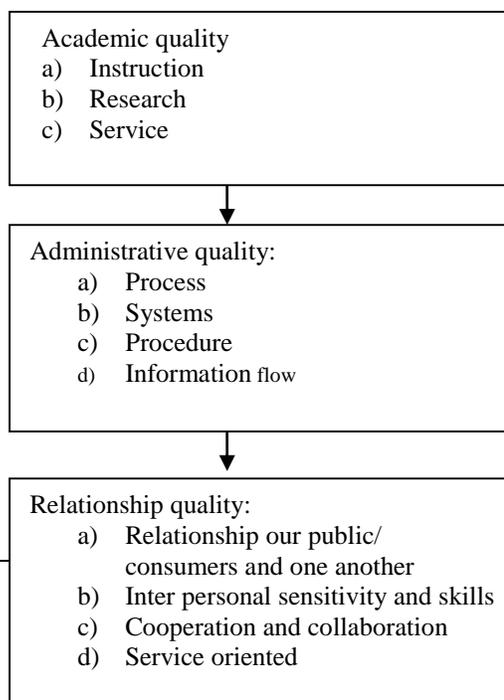


Table: Number of Teacher in Public University in last three years

| Year | Professor | Assoc. Professor | Asst. Professor | Lectures | Others | Total |
|------|---------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|--------------|----------------|
| 2007 | 2453 (30%) | 1338 (17%) | 2518 (31.20%) | 1731 (21.45%) | 28 (.35%) | 8068 (100%) |
| 2008 | 2524 (30%) | 1398 (17%) | 2709 (32%) | 1688 (20%) | 45 (1%) | 8320 (100%) |
| 2009 | 2793 (30%) | 1651 (18%) | 2824 (20%) | 1869 (20%) | 104 (1%) | 9241 (100%) |

Source: BBS 2012

In 2007 in total 27 public university total teacher was 8,068 whereas in 2008 total teacher 8,320. In 2008 high educated teacher in term of percentage 58% which indicate that the teacher decline 8% in term of percentage over a period of time. In 2009, in total 31 public university, total teacher was 9,241 out of the total teacher only 7,405 was in service and 1,607 was in vacation i.e. 80% teacher was in service and 20 % teacher in absent.

Table: Public University Teacher (According to their degree)

| Year | PhD | Other degree | Diploma | Total |
|------|---------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|
| 2007 | 2701 (33%) | 1930 (24%) | 3437 (43%) | 8068 (100%) |
| 2008 | 2796 (33%) | 2051 (25%) | 3473 (42%) | 8320 (100%) |
| 2009 | 3021 (33%) | 1813 (20%) | 4407 (47%) | 9241 (100%) |

Source: BBS 2012

The percentage change of the teacher of the public university is that the gradually decline. Only diploma and others qualification is little bit rises because the limitation is possible in this sector.

The ratio between the teacher- students in the public university: The quality of education is maintaining is possible if the teacher- student ratio is adequate. The public university of Bangladesh is not satisfactory. The following table sees the ratio of the teacher and student.

Table: Teacher–Student Ratio of Public University

| Year | Teacher | Students | Teacher-Student Ratio |
|------|---------|-----------|-----------------------|
| 2007 | 7887 | 13,99,843 | 1:177 |
| 2008 | 8320 | 11,76,969 | 1:141 |
| 2009 | 9241 | 13,82,216 | 1:150 |

Source: BBS 2012

Class Conduct and the Teacher Responsibilities

The role of the teachers has always been vital in the all round personality development of the students. In fact, a teacher is a role model influencing every facet of the student's growth and developing their innate potentials, in addition to being a motivator, guide and friend.

Besides, the teacher of today is also responsible to enable and empower the learner to emerge as a competent youth, ready to take on the challenges of the rapidly changing world. Hence, it is imperative that the teacher continuously upgrades his/her knowledge and methodology in order to enhance the quality of teaching. If the quality of teaching is good and the commitment of teachers is high, the standard of the Institution is bound to rise. But in the present study shows 37.5% respondents have claimed

about holding irregular classes in their departments. That means the major classes have not been held properly in a good number of department.

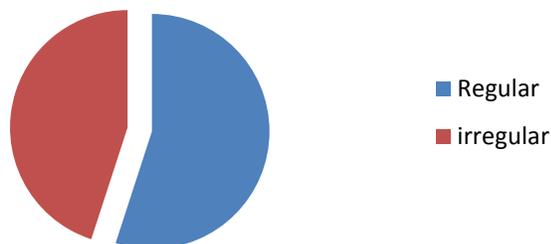


Figure-1: Nature of Classes in the department

Among the 40 respondents 25 of students have given positive responses about the class conducted by their teachers regularly and others in negative. Moreover, they provide interesting information regards the irregularities issues. Maximum students pointed out the involvement of teachers with other professions like projects, job in private university, business etc are the main reasons behind the irregularities. In addition due to hartal, personal and familiar affairs as well as the lack of teaching staffs behind irregular class in their departments.

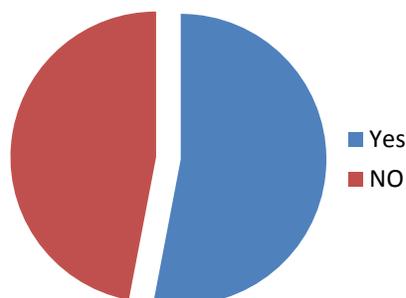


Figure-2: Nature of Comments of the Respondents about the class taken by their teacher on time.

Table: 1 causes behind the irregular Class

| Causes | No. of Respondents | Percentage |
|--|--------------------|------------|
| Busy for personal affairs of teachers | 8 | 20 |
| Meetings of academic affairs | 6 | 15 |
| Political programs | 10 | 25 |
| Lack of teaching staffs | 8 | 20 |
| Lack of cordial attitude and willingness of teachers | 14 | 35 |
| Involvement with others professions | 18 | 44 |

According to the Dhaka University and national university rules the duration of class most of all teachers do not care. The respondents pointed out that either they enter the class in late or go out before the schedule time. Interestingly is that 100% of respondents have ready to accept that the schedule time for class is not sufficient at the university level. As a result, the students have deprived from the class live learning.

Table-2: Respondents opinion about expanding class hour

| Class Time | Number of Respondents | Percentage |
|------------|-----------------------|------------|
| 45 | 6 | 15 |

| | | |
|-------|----|-----|
| 60 | 12 | 30 |
| 75 | 14 | 35 |
| 90 | 6 | 15 |
| 120 | 2 | 6 |
| Total | 40 | 100 |

Educational Curriculum

Completion the Syllabus

About 48.00 percent respondents said the syllabus of each courses does not completed by their course teacher in time. On the other hand, about 52.00 percent given positive answer in this regard. Due to the different types of engagement of public university teachers, in most of the cases they do not complete their assigned courses.

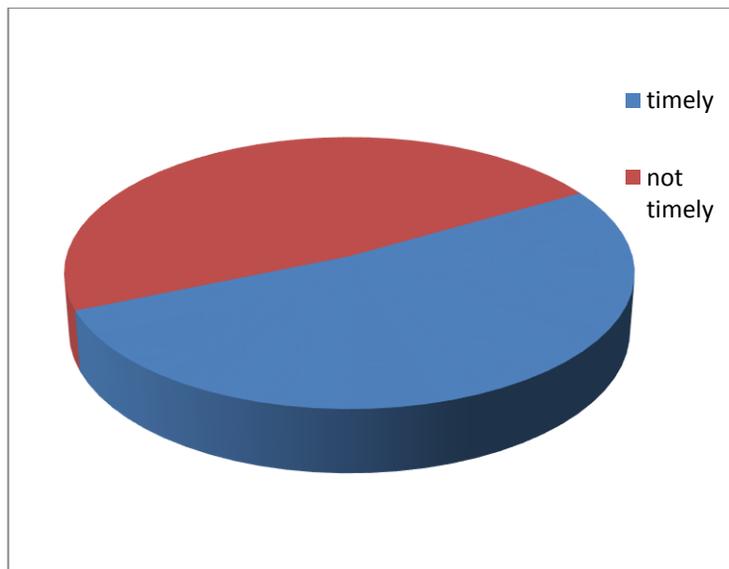


Figure-4: Comments of the Respondents about the completion of syllabus on Scheduled time

Teaching Procedure, Materials and Syllabus:

To teach all students according to today's standards, teachers need to understand subject matter deeply and flexibly so they can help students create useful cognitive maps, relate one idea to another, and address misconceptions. Teachers need to see how ideas connect across fields and to everyday life. This kind of understanding provides a foundation for pedagogical content knowledge that enables teachers to make ideas accessible to others [6] (Shulman, 1987).

Transformation. The key to distinguishing the knowledge base of teaching lies at the intersection of content and pedagogy in the teacher's capacity to transform content knowledge into forms that are pedagogically powerful and yet adaptive to the variety of

student abilities and backgrounds. Comprehended ideas must be transformed in some manner if they are to be taught. Transformations require some combination or ordering of the following processes:

1. *Preparation* (of the given text material), which includes the process of critical interpretation
2. *Representation* of the ideas in the form of new analogies and metaphors (Teachers' knowledge, including the way they speak about teaching, not only includes references to what teachers "should" do, it also includes presenting the material by using figurative language and metaphors [Glatthorn, 1990].)
3. *Instructional selections* from among an array of teaching methods and models
4. *Adaptation* of student materials and activities to reflect the characteristics of student learning styles
5. Glatthorn (1990) described this as the process of fitting the represented material to the characteristics of the students. The teacher must consider the relevant aspects of students' ability, gender, language, culture, motivations, or prior knowledge and skills that will affect their responses to different forms of presentations and representations.

Instruction. Comprising the variety of teaching acts, instruction includes many of the most crucial aspects of pedagogy: management, presentations, interactions, group work, discipline, humor, questioning, and discovery and inquiry instruction.

Evaluation. Teachers need to think about testing and evaluation as an extension of instruction, not as separate from the instructional process. The evaluation process includes checking for understanding and misunderstanding during interactive teaching as well as testing students' understanding at the end of lessons or units. It also involves evaluating one's own performance and adjusting for different circumstances.

According to the survey 60% respondents believe that the teachers are not well prepared and Not up to the mark for the new method and technique. Although few teachers are very good and very efficient. On the other hand, most of the respondents think that the curricular of their syllabus is not enough and only 28.00 percent thinks it is okay. They pointed out the study curricular should be modified according to the changing scenario of national and global context.

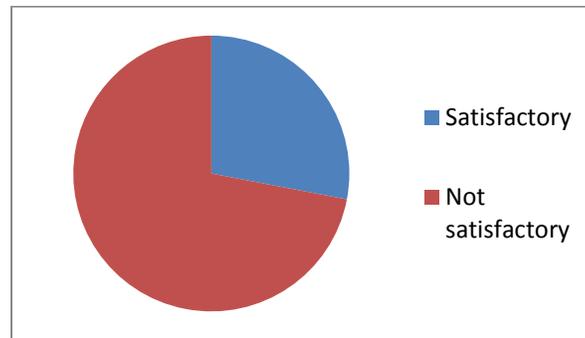


Figure-5: Comments of the respondents about the subject matter of syllabus

IV. RESEARCH AND QUALITY EDUCATION

Research is considered to be an integral part of teaching and scholarship at the higher education institutions and is directly related to quality. In Bangladesh, the higher education institutions show a less than satisfactory track record in research and extension work. There is a strong realization on the part of educators, educational policy planners, teachers and various professional groups that in the global and national contexts, institutions that perform poorly in research will not be able to get into the knowledge society of today. A denial of such entry will reflect adversely not only on the production and dissemination of new knowledge, but also on the goals of national and human development. Research activities in higher educational institutions are severely constrained by a number of factors:

i) *Inadequate financial support:* The public higher education institutions in Bangladesh are funded by the government through the University Grants Commission (UGC). The funding is perennially less than the institutions' requirement. Consequently, the institutions can only allocate a small amount for Research and Development. In some universities, it is less than 1%.

ii) *Lack of priority in deciding areas of research:* In many higher education institutions, research is not emphasized. This happens because of a lack of clear policies. Sometimes, it is because of internal politics in institutions which allows academics closer to the authority to get a share of the meagre resources for research that may suit their particular field, but which may deprive important research in other areas.

iii) *Lack of facilities:* This is an area that is showing a decline in proportionate terms (the demand vs supply; expansion of quality vs. achievement of quality, for example). Facilities such as laboratories, equipment, libraries, journals etc. are always in short supply. Archival facilities are also lacking in almost all higher education institutions. There is also a corresponding absence of these facilities at the national level, compelling many of the talented young academics to go abroad.

iv) *Lack of industry and corporate support:* in pursuing research collaboration between industry and higher educational institutes support in the areas of business, science and technology, which plays a very important role in research and development, is absent in Bangladesh. Similarly, liaison between the government and non-government think tanks, which also contributes substantially to research in developing countries, is largely missing. • Some teachers are not interested in research as they believe their job is protected.

v) *Promotion rules are also to be blamed:* In public universities, a unique system of promotion exists, which is commonly called 'restructuring.' The system is largely concerned with years of service and administrative work and other extra academic activities and only partially with research. As a result, teachers publish only a certain number of articles in a given period of time, and get the promotion. Once one becomes a professor, there is no compulsion or incentive to publish.

vi) *Lack of incentive for research and good research journals:* In the higher education institutions in Bangladesh, from the initial appointment to promotions, beyond the customary article count, there is no incentive for research and publication. Excepting a few, journals are also not of international standard. The review process is done mostly in a perfunctory manner and the anonymity of authors is not always maintained. A look at the research articles and findings of research published in the various university journals, and books published by the Universities and outside publishers will reveal many shortcomings. Besides, articles etc. published are in very low proportion to the number of faculty.

vii) *Frequent engagement in Election and Politics:* Frequent attachment with elections process by the penal of teachers in electioneering and political rivalry that affects adversely teaching quality and research. As such for most of the private universities, research is a personal concern of the faculty members. Universities neither encourage nor discourage the

faculty members. Most of the universities have no research grants for the faculty.

Accessibility of Higher Education

Accessibility of higher education means the students opportunity to get chance in university education and sufficient support from the educational institutions. The growth of enrolment at the secondary level and large number of output from higher secondary examination put a pressure for admission in the higher educational institutions. But due to limitation of capacity, annually a few number of students may be enrolled in university level. Thus, each year the vast number of students remains out of higher education. On the contrary, due to the poverty and increasing the educational expenses the students of lower middle class do not get equal access to higher education. Moreover, those who get chance in the university level they have the limited access to attain all kinds of diversified educational facilities relating to their study fields.

Economic Conditions of Students

Most of the respondents came from the middle class family because at best 37.50 percent respondents family income is based on service, 29.50 percent business, 28.00 percent agriculture based and rest of 5.50 represent of other sectors. Though Bangladesh is an agriculture based country, the students from agriculture family have reduced (figure-7).

V. CONCLUSION

Higher education sector can meet the needs of the economy. It promotes an overall development of society, viz., social, economic, technological, human resources development etc., which are highly correlated. The development of higher education plays an important role in facilitating these changes and producing adequately trained manpower. The effectiveness of higher education institutions contributes to development both internally and externally. So, higher education needs sustenance and quality with time and space. For sustaining and improving quality in the higher education it is need to reorient of curriculum and introduce vocational and job oriented courses. Due to the low

quality of training, lack of combination of knowledge and practice, poor capacity and quality of graduates, the existing education system of public university of Bangladesh is in vulnerable position. It is losing its articulation and image that making its inappropriate in the present competitive market economy. As a result, the public university is going to fail to keep the tradition as well as quality of training, research and the social accountability.

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