



Qualitative Education and Impact of Private Universities Role in Bangladesh Education

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The Article is sponsored by: **CBC News**, CBC P.O. Box 500 Station A Toronto, ON Canada, M5W 1E6

Abstract:

The main purpose of the study was to analyze the students' assessment of private higher education sectors in Bangladesh with particular reference to the quality of education. The sample was taken on a random basis from about five private universities in the Chittagong and Sylhet metropolitan area. The respondents (students) were asked to evaluate the quality of education at private universities in Bangladesh. Respondents ranked the attributes according to a number of itemized five point scale ratings bounded at each end by one of two bipolar adjectives. The results of this study show that faculty credentials, the academic calendar, campus facilities and research facilities are associated with quality education, and that the students' feel most of the private universities in Bangladesh provide quality education.

Keywords: Private universities in Bangladesh, Quality education, Students' assessment.

1.1 Introduction:

Universities in Bangladesh are mainly categorized into three different types: public (government owned and subsidized), private (private sector owned universities), and international (operated and funded by international organizations such as the Organization of Islamic Cooperation). Bangladeshi universities are affiliated with the University Grants Commission, a commission created according to the Presidential Order (P.O. No 10 of 1973) of the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. Most universities focus on general studies, mixing together such areas of study as business, engineering and technology. Seven universities have specialized curricula. Two of these are focused on Islamic studies, two on agricultural science, one on healthcare science, one on veterinary medicine, and one on women's studies.

Establishment of private universities in Bangladesh was initiated after the institution of the Private University Act 1992. There are 80 such universities that are operational in five out of seven divisions of the country. Another 12 universities has been approved by UGC recently but yet to start operation. So the total number of approved private university is now 97 (as of April 2018). Most of the private universities are in Dhaka Division, totaling 51. All of them have their campuses in Dhaka city, concentrated mostly in the Gulshan, Dhanmondi, Panthapath and Uttara regions of the city. Two private universities in Dhaka specialize in science and technology, one specializes in women's studies, and the others are general



universities. Six private universities are located in Chittagong Division. All six have their main campuses in Chittagong city. One has its urban campus in Kumira, outside the main city. Five of them are general universities, while one specializes in science and technology. The only private university in Rajshahi Division has its campus in Bogra. In Sylhet Division there are four private universities, all having their main campuses in Sylhet city.

As of today, there is nobody to regulate private universities and to assure the quality of education other than through the weak supervision of the University Grant Commission (UGC). Since private universities receive no funding from the UGC, there is little that the UGC can do except report some facts for the government (Alam et al., 2007). The issue is, therefore, an important variable for higher educational private institutes that aspire to that degree of excellence. This study is, thus, an attempt to examine the opinion or satisfaction level of the students regarding the quality and cost of education in the private sector in Bangladesh.

1.2 Quality in Education and the Factors of the Quality of Higher Education in Bangladesh:

In terms of quality in education, the World Bank (1995: 46) puts forth the following concept: Quality in education is difficult to define and measure. An adequate definition must include student outcomes. Most educators would also include in the definition the nature of the educational experiences that help to produce thus outcomes—the learning environment.

Murgatroyd and Morgan (1994: 45–46) offer two different definitions of quality. One is related to quality assurance, and the other is from consumers' points of view, which are as follows:

Quality assurance refers to the determination of standards, appropriate methods and quality requirements by an expert body, accompanied by a process of inspection or evaluation that examines the extent to which practice meets these standards; and consumer-driven quality refers to a notion of quality in which those who are to receive a product or service make explicit their expectations for this product or service and quality is defined in terms of meeting or exceeding the expectations of customers.

Murgatroyd and Morgan (1994) argue that the concept of quality includes a customer-driven perspective that is a derivative of economic theories. In fact, service quality has now become an important dimension for education providers, as with any other business organisations. Hence, customer evaluations of the quality of education should be an integral part of overall quality management in any of the organisations (Haque, 2004).

This study includes the five factors to influence the quality of higher education in Bangladesh. These factors are faculty credentials, the academic calendar, campus facilities, research facilities and cost of education. As an underlying premise of the present study, these factors are briefly elucidated below.

1.2.1 Faculty Credentials

Faculty credential is important in assurance of quality of education. By and large, faculty's main function is to equip the students with the pragmatic knowledge which is most needed and



suitable in the concurrent and emerging new age of science and technology. In doing so, educational entities inevitably require hiring and retaining talented faculty. For this reason, Tsinidou et al. (2010) emphasize on talented faculty member and maintained that the well-being of the university depends on its ability to recruit and retain a talented professoriate.

As a whole, the well-being of any nation depends on the ability to develop a happy, emotionally healthy, and productive next generation (Ashraf, 2012). According to Poole (2010), the excellence of higher education is a function of the kind of people it is able to enlist and retain on its faculties in different cultural environments. Thus, all these scholarly qualities of the faculties need to be ensured in order to secure quality of education in the universities.

1.2.2 Academic calendar

Academic calendar is another factor that is extremely important in the context of the private universities of Bangladesh. In most of the cases, the semester is run irregularly and there is no tight schedule, which affect the students in proper planning of their studies that affects quality of education negatively. This fact is particularly relevant in the present political condition in Bangladesh which frequently interrupts the routine-flow of class and examinations. However, the curricula structure is there and every university is found to pursue to follow the routine-structure strictly which is tantamount to enhancing quality of education.

1.2.3 Campus facilities

Campus facilities is now one of the important factor that is extremely significant in the context of the private universities of Bangladesh. It is package of facilities such as Modern campus building, Transport, Dormitory facilities, Dining facilities, Recreation and gym facilities, High-speed Internet access, Extensive library, Computer lab facilities etc.

1.2.4 Research facility

In similar fashion, the research facility is also underdeveloped. Most of the universities do not have research bureau and the publication facility is also scanty, because altogether four or five journals are published among more than fifty private universities in Bangladesh. Due to lack of adequate reference source in the library, the teachers and the students face enormous problems and difficulties (Alam et al., 2007). So the variable of campus facility has an important impact on the overall quality of education in these higher learning centers of Bangladesh.

1.2.5 Cost of education

Cost of education in private universities in Bangladesh is also an important concern where about 42 - 45 percent of households live under absolute poverty line (Alam et al., 2007). Only rich parents can think of affording the high fees and other costs of studies for their children. In exchange of high tuition fees and other costs, the students of the rich families expect to have a quality education from these private universities (Ashraf et al. 2009). The private universities in fact spend most of their funds for renting the campus (Alam et al., 2007) but not for high salary for hiring the scholarly faculties. So there is a serious question about the quality of education rendered by these universities.



2.0 Literature Review:

There are a large number of reports and theoretical works on quality from the perspective of quality assurance and quality improvement. In many of them, research scholars have identified different views on the issue of quality education and its determining factors (Tsinidou, Gerogiannes and Fitsilis, 2010; Gallifa and Batalle, 2010; Poole, 2010; Ehlers, 2009; Lim, 2008). However, a very limited empirical work is available on this particular issue in the case of Bangladeshi private higher educational organizations (Ashraf et al., 2009).

The term “quality” is evolved from the Latin word “qualitas” that means the degree of excellence of a thing (Oxford Dictionary, 2003). According to Tsinidou et al. (2010), qualitative dimensions mean more than the quality of education as customarily defined and judged by student learning performance. The authors also emphasize that quality, in the case of Greece, also relevant to how well it fits the present and future needs of the students depending their particular circumstances and prospects. Tsinidou et al. (2010) identify six factors that can affect quality in education which are academic staffs, administrative services, library services, curricula structure, location, facilities and career prospects.

Gallifa and Batalle (2010) examine quality of education in Spain. They state that quality assurance refers to service quality in terms of the determination of standards, appropriate methods and quality requirements by an expert body, accompanied by a process of inspection or evaluation that examines the extent to which practice meets these standards. The authors also add that consumer-driven quality refers to a notion of quality in which those who are to get a product or service make clarify their expectations for this product or service and quality is defined in terms meeting or exceeding the expectations of customers.

Hence, service quality of education has now appeared to be an important concern to education providers similar to any other commercial organizations. Thus, student evaluation of the quality of their education is considered to be a necessary part of total quality management which “quests for excellence” in all of the private universities in Bangladesh now (Haque, 2004). In this regard, the present study is justified to have an initiative to make an empirical assessment analyzing data from the consumer-perspective how quality can be assured.

In recent years, quality assessment and assurance procedures in rendering Higher education have received much attention nationally as well as globally. In this regard, Lim (2008) refer quality of education as the overall performance and services which an institution provides educational environments which enable students effectively to achieve worthwhile learning goals including appropriate academic standards. Indeed, the quality issue of higher education is considered to be one of the vital concerns in all of the developing countries of the world (Nguyen, 2009).

Recently, Bangladesh has been identified as having a vibrant developing economy whose human development index is higher than India (Sen, 2013). Yet, there have been many issues which must have been resolved. Similar to Sen (2005), who expressed his deep concern about



the primary education in India, Andaleeb (2003) presented seven important aspects of higher education sector in Bangladesh which are crucial for nurturing effective education system. Those issues are: teaching quality, methodical aspect of teaching, research facilities of teaching, peer quality review, direct facilities available for teaching, indirect facilities available for teaching and political climate. In fact, all these elements that have been discussed by Anadaleeb are much important issues to ensure the quality education in the present precarious political milieu of Bangladesh. Otherwise, all efforts would be in vain.

As discussed earlier, there are two fundamental educational platforms in Bangladesh: Public and Private. There are gulf of differences between these two education sectors in many dimensions. In this respect, Sabur (2004) presented a comparison between the private and the public higher educational institutes on the basis of quality assurance. He analyzed several issues which provided deep insights but the discussion is devoid of any recommendations which can help resolve those research facilitiesious issues related to quality dimension in two different educational platforms.

3.0 Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of the study is to analyze the students' assessment of private higher education sectors in Bangladesh with particular reference to the quality of education. The specific objectives are:

- a. To find the factors that are related to quality education in private universities in Bangladesh.
- b. To find the student's perception regarding this issue.
- c. To find the role of private universities in Bangladesh to ensure the education quality.

4.0 Methodology:

The main source of data used was a field-level survey conducted during the spring session of 2018 at some selected private universities in Chittagong and Sylhet. Those universities have all been in existence for at least seven years. A structured questionnaire was used in the survey. The respondents (students) were asked to what degree the quality and costs of education services offered by the private universities corresponded to their expectations with respect to the 36 variables related to the five dimensions of the quality-cost perception difference model. The items were applied to a seven-point "Likert type" scale (Likert, 1932). For this measurement, a score of 1 on the scale indicates strong disagreement and a score of 7 indicates strong agreement. The questionnaire was pre-tested on students, and finally, data were collected from 360 students. Among them, 200 students were in Bachelor programs and 160 were in graduate programs. The students were interviewed face to face through personal visits by the authors to the university campuses. The respondents said which score best indicated how they would describe the attributes being rated.

A reliability test was conducted to verify the internal consistency of the variables obtained in the sample. For this test, the Cronbach's alpha was used; the alpha value is 0.8982, which is much higher than the minimum acceptable level suggested by Nunnally (1978). Several statistical analytical techniques such as Factor Analysis, Multiple Regression Analysis, and



Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) were used to measure the level of quality education offered by the private educational institutions in Bangladesh.

5.0 Model:

In this study we have used the quality of education as the dependent variable and the five dimensions of faculty credentials, the academic calendar, campus facilities, research facilities and cost of education as the determinants independent variables. We have run an OLS regression model to determine the significance level of the variables for private universities. The basic model for the study is therefore as follows:

Overall quality of education = *f* (tangibles, academic calendar, campus facilities, research facilities, cost of education)

Specifically,

$$QME = \alpha + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \beta_5 X_5 + e$$

Where, QME = Quality of MBA Education

- X₁ = faculty credentials
- X₂ = academic calendar
- X₃ = campus facilities
- X₄ = research facilities
- X₅ = cost of education

Where, α is constant and $\beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3, \beta_4, \beta_5$ are coefficients to estimate, and *e* is the error term, which we assume as zero for this research.

6.0 Analysis and Findings

Data were collected from 360 students. Among them, 200 students were in Bachelor programs and 160 were in graduate programs. The male respondents constitute 72% and the female 28% reflecting approximately the overall proportion of the male female ratio for higher education in the country.

Table 1 shows the mean values depicting the overall satisfaction among the students of higher education. As far as our descriptive statistics is concerned, the overall quality of education from student's perspective, in Bangladesh is above dissatisfactory level (with a mean value of 3.76 on a 5 point Liker scale).

Table 1 Descriptive statistics of the universities

SQ determinants	Mean	Std. Deviation
Faculty credentials	2.869	.55389
Academic calendar	3.959	.53459
Campus facilities	3.849	.69649
Research facilities	3.716	.70643
Cost of education	3.923	.67644



Overall Service Quality of Education	3.747	.76390
Faculty credentials	3.587	.63769
Academic calendar	4.105	.51543
Campus facilities	3.115	.78462
Research facilities	3.797	.71043
Cost of education	3.375	.69887
Overall Service Quality of Education	3.773	.75754

The table also suggests the main factors on which the students of private universities are generally dissatisfied. As far as the mean values are concerned, students are fairly dissatisfied on the academic calendar level of their faculties, the cost of education method of the teaching materials, the campus facilities of the teachers and management, the research facilities, and reliability on the university, and satisfied on their intangible facilities such as libraries, hostels etc. However, a regression analysis is required to run in order to identify if those means are above the neutral level of dissatisfaction, and to determine the validity of the model used to explain the variables affecting the quality of education in Bangladesh.

The overall regression model and its variance may be summarized as follows:

Table 2: Model Summary

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
0.626	0.392	0.383	0.59705

a Predictors: (Constant), Faculty credentials, Campus facilities, Academic calendar, Research facilities, Cost of education

Table 3: ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Regression	90.299	6	15.050	42.219	.00
Residual Total	140.094	393	0.356		0
	230.392	399			

a Predictors: (Constant), Faculty credentials, Campus facilities, Academic calendar, Research facilities, Cost of education

b Dependent Variable: Quality of Education

The overall predictability of the model is shown under the table 2 above. The adjusted R² value of 0.383 indicates that the model explain roughly about 38% of the factors responsible for



quality in Higher education. The ANOVA table shown under table 3 depicting significant F values implies that the model is fit in explaining the overall quality of education in Bangladesh.

Table 4: Regression Coefficients Analysis of the Model

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	-.185	0.263		-.704	.482
Faculty credentials	0.066	0.049	0.061	1.349	.178
Academic calendar	0.402	0.071	0.280	5.684	.000
Campus facilities	0.090	0.057	0.098	1.589	.113
Research facilities	0.266	0.056	0.248	4.735	.000
Cost of education	0.015	0.069	0.015	0.218	.827

a Dependent Variable: QE

The intercept and coefficients shown above indicate the significant impact of only three variables, namely, Academic calendar, Research facilities, and Reliability; and hence, the other three variables- Faculty credentials, Campus facilities, and Cost of education were dropped from the final analysis since we have rejected any value greater than 0.01 (99% level of significance).

From the above findings we can develop the following regression model:

QE = - 0.185 + 0.402 X₁ + 0.266 X₂ + 0.254 X₃

S.E. (0.263) (0.071) (0.056) (0.060)

t values (5.684)** (4.735)** (4.256)**

R² (Adj.) = 0.383, F = 42.219**

** - Significant at 99% level

Where, QE = Quality of Higher Education

X₁ = Faculty credentials

X₂ = Academic calendar

X₃ = Campus facilities

X₄ = Research facilities

When we run separate regression for of private universities, we find the significant determinants affecting the quality of higher education among the all types of institutions remain same with each other. At 99% level of significance, there are three variables significantly



affecting the quality of education in private universities. As like our general model, campus facilities, academic calendar, research facilities and faculty credentials are found to be significantly affecting the quality in education. Thus, it also suggests that cost of education are not significant in determining the quality of education among the Group-A universities. The table 5 below shows the regression coefficients for private universities, and their significance level.

7.0 Conclusion:

Private university education in Bangladesh is getting more competitive with the significant increase in the number of universities in the country. The ineluctable forces of globalization in this new millennium make this growth path more complex and challenging. Despite the relentless and continuous effort of private educational institutions, quality has not yet achieved at the desired level. The cost of private education is another dimension to consider, as it is unaffordable in Bangladesh, and more effort needs to be made if costs are to be lowered. However, the system is proceeding gradually towards greater improvement. Nevertheless, all the problems considered here should be addressed more rigorously to ensure the quality of education in Bangladesh reaches the desired level. This study has shed the light on the dimensions perceived by students as associated with the quality of education. These dimensions are faculty credentials, the academic calendar, campus facilities, research facilities and the cost of education. The study also concludes that, in general, the cost of education in private universities in Bangladesh is somewhat expensive due to the imbalance between increasing tuition fees and an increasing amount of financial aid and scholarships.

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