

Private Universities of Bangladesh: Problems and Prospects

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Abstract: Private university education has become a burning issue in Bangladesh. Now-a-days, it creates a huge hue and cry due to its failure in implementing the educational programs properly. The present article deals with the problems and prospects of private universities in Bangladesh. It looks into the relation between private university owners and the government, representation of private universities in policy-making, student-teacher ratio, library facilities for the students, teachers' recruitment policy in private universities, infrastructural facilities, maintenance of quality education in private universities and so on. The article has also tried to search relevant information on those matters stated above and identified some loopholes that raise obstacles to make a better academic environment in private universities. Finally, it made some recommendations for minimizing the problems the private universities keep facing.

1.0 Introduction

The history of modern higher education in Bangladesh dates back to the establishment of Dhaka University in 1921. The establishment of Dhaka University was considered an imperial concession made to appease the adverse feelings of the Muslim middle class of East Bengal following the annulment of the partition of Bengal in 1911, which resulted from the movement of protest led by the more privileged Hindu Community. Quite a few post secondary schools and colleges existed before the establishment of Dhaka University. However, entry and education in those schools and colleges were often limited to middle class or the upper middle class children while children from lower income or lower middle class background often could not enter the educational institutions imparting even basic primary education. Parents and guardians either could not afford to send their children to school or thought it wiser to engage their children in helping them in their profession, mostly as agricultural labours. Practically all schools were established by wealthy Zemindar (the land owners) and were founded on religious practices. Lessons on the matters speaking of religious belief, mostly Hinduism and Islam were given priority. The teaching method encouraged memorizing and there were no room for creative learning or thinking.

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Before the establishment of Calcutta University in 1857, however, there were a few intermediate colleges in East Bengal. Later, most of such colleges were upgraded as degree colleges and got affiliated with Calcutta University, viz., Chittagong College in 1869, Rajshahi College in 1873, Barishal BM College in 1884, Sylhet MC College in 1892. As a result, there had existed at least one higher secondary school and college and side by side with other religious schools in each major district of the undivided Bengal in 1947 when Bengal was divided permanently.

2.0 The Beginning of Private Higher Education in Bangladesh

In 1988 and afterwards, individual initiatives were made to set up two medical colleges, one in Dhaka and another in Chittagong. Plans for establishing general universities in the private sector were made by the sponsors of North-South University in Dhaka in 1988-1989. The North-South University project was a brain-child of Mr. Muslehuddin Ahmed, a former Secretary and Ambassador of GoB. He discussed the idea with a group of businessmen and intellectuals. They accepted the idea and the 30-member Foundation for Promotion of Education and Research was formed in May, 1990. FPER was registered as a non-profit organization under the Societies Act 1860. Although, private universities existed in other countries for long, the first private university in Bangladesh did not make it appear till 1992. With the approval of 'Private University Act 1992' by the Parliament, the door was opened for a new system of higher education in Bangladesh. On 5 November 1992, the government approved of the establishment of North South University and it was granted the charter to offer degree level courses. The then Prime Minister Begum Khalada Zia formally inaugurated North South University on 10 February 1993 with 143 students. Mr. Muslehuddin Ahmed was the first President of the university. FPER, the founder of North South University, was later renamed as the North South University Foundation and Mr. Iftekherul Alam, a business leader, was the founding Chairman of the foundation. Within a year or two, however, four to five new universities were set up. USTC, IUB, DIU and IUBAT followed North South University. Today, the country has 56 such private universities (annex-1).

3.0 Growth Pattern of Private Universities in Bangladesh

The spectacular growth and expansion of the private universities in Bangladesh is depicted in Figure 4. The first private university named North South University (NSU) was approved by the government of Bangladesh (GoB) on 5 November 1992. The government in power at

that time (1991-1996) showed a favourable stance towards opening the door to more private universities in Bangladesh. The figure shows that, during the period of 1991-1996, sixteen private universities (mostly in metropolitan Dhaka, with only two in Chittagong) were opened. During 1996-2001, the government was not favourable disposed toward the concept of private sector of education. Data shows that only four new universities were added to the list during 1996-2001. After 2001, the private university concept got a significant boost again. The figure shows data taken from UGC that in a 6 to 7 years period, the total number of private universities has gone up to 56 (UGC 2008). The promoters of private universities in Bangladesh includes- a. Retired bureaucrats; b. Businessmen; c. Academicians; d. Politicians; e. NGOs; and the combination of some of the above.

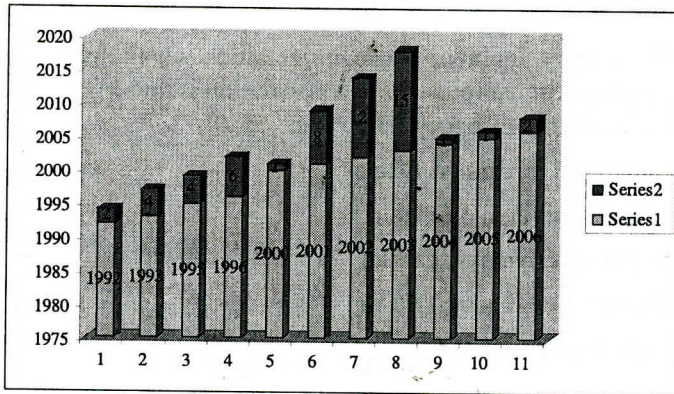


Figure 1: Growth of private universities in Bangladesh, 1992-2008.

Series-1 shows years of establishment of private universities.

Series-2 shows the number of private universities established.

4.0 Categories of Private Universities

The government has drawn up five categories of private universities according to which they have to shift to their own permanent campuses. So far only eight universities have managed to move to their own campuses in accordance to the regulations. These have been identified as the 'good universities'. Three universities are running with a stay order from the court. These are the i. America Bangladesh University, Dhaka; ii. Queens University, Dhaka; and iii. Central Women's University, Dhaka.

There are five categories of universities in Bangladesh. Eight universities are in the first category who have met the government's regulations shift to their own permanent campuses. They are:

- i. North South University, Dhaka
- ii. University of Science and Technology , Chittagong
- iii. International Islamic University, Chittagong
- iv. Ahsanullah University of Science and Technology ,Dhaka
- v. International University of Business Agriculture and Technology, Dhaka
- vi. BGC Trust University, Chittagong
- vii. BRAC University, Dhaka
- viii. Bangladesh University of Business and Technology, Dhaka

The second category includes those universities which have procured land for the permanent campus where construction is underway. There are five universities in this category. They are:

- i. Independent University, Dhaka
- ii. East West University, Dhaka
- iii. Gono Biswabidyalaya, Dhaka
- iv. South East University, Dhaka
- v. City University, Dhaka

The third category universities are those which have land procured, but their construction is not underway. There are nine in this category:

- i. American International University, Dhaka
- ii. Asian University of Bangladesh , Dhaka
- iii. University of Asia Pacific, Dhaka
- iv. Daffodil International University, Dhaka
- v. Shanto Marium University of Creative Technology, Dhaka
- vi. United International University, Dhaka
- vii. University of South Asia, Dhaka
- viii. Southern University of Bangladesh, Chittagong
- ix. Dhaka International University, Dhaka

In the fourth category, which are housed in their own campuses, but they do not have the prescribed area of land. There are nine such universities which include:

- i. People's University of Bangladesh, Dhaka
- ii. Manarat International University, Dhaka
- iii. State University of Bangladesh, Dhaka
- iv. University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh, Dhaka
- v. Metropolitan University, Sylhet
- vi. Northern University, Dhaka
- vii. Premier University, Chittagong
- viii. Daffodil International University, Dhaka
- ix. Dhaka International University, Dhaka

The universities which have taken no initiative for their own campuses are in the fifth category. These universities include:

- i. Darul Ihsan University, Dhaka
- ii. Leading University, Sylhet
- iii. Sylhet International University, Sylhet
- iv. Bangladesh University, Dhaka
- v. University of Development Alternatives, Dhaka
- vi. Stamford University, Dhaka
- vii. IBAIS University, Dhaka

There are private universities of another category operating in Bangladesh; they are the Bangladesh campuses of some low profile overseas private universities and colleges.

However, these universities were given provisional approval on condition they would shift to their own campuses within five years. The youngest among these has been running for seven years now while one has been functioning for the past 19 years but they have still no permanent campus of their own. In fact, they want another 15 years to establish their own universities.

The creation of private universities can be thought of as the outcome of the trend of growing number of students leaving the country in the eighties. The primary reasons were the inability of the public universities

in providing enough seats to admission seekers and the frequent political unrest and campus problems resulting in unscheduled closure of universities which prolonged academic sessions.

Education in private universities is expensive as these universities do not receive any financial support from the government but are heavily taxed. They have to bear the entire recurring and development expenditure from the fees received from the students. The courses offered in all private universities are job focused as learners would like to have some sort of assurance that they will be able to recover their high educational expenses once they graduated from a private university.

Most of the private universities in Bangladesh follow the US model of higher education with four-year bachelor degrees, a credit-hour system and a similar academic calendar.

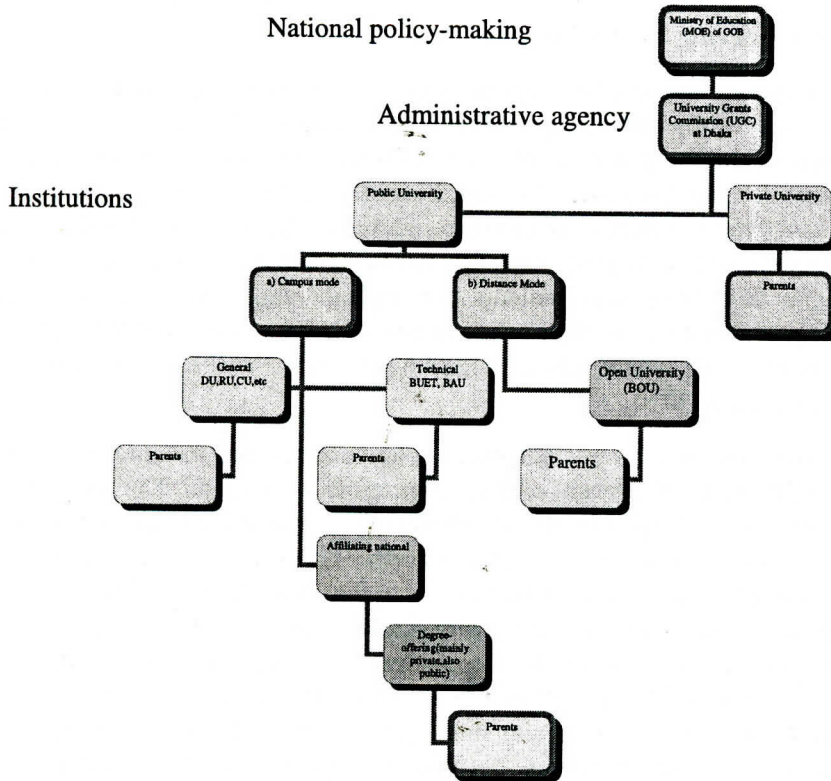
Private universities offer a variety of courses and charge differing tuition fees, although all private sector costs are significantly higher than the costs of studying in the public sector. Tuition fees are high compared to the average per capita income of \$350 per year. However, the majority of courses are priced for the growing middle classes, at between \$1000 and \$4000, which has raised accusations of social elitism. The social elitism is accepted in Bangladesh, as higher education is perceived to benefit the individual rather than the taxpayer. All private universities teach in English, which limits enrolment due to poor standard in English amongst much of the population, due to the Bangla Language policy at both the secondary and higher secondary levels.

The curricula in Private universities reflect the type of courses that are most valuable to students, e.g., internationally marketable courses such as Business Administration, Computer Science, Engineering, and Medicine that public universities are unable to offer in sufficient quantities. They also offer other innovative courses relevant to the particular Bangladeshi context including disaster management, physiotherapy, and textile engineering. The introduction of vocationally based courses is challenging public universities to restructure their curricula in order to compete, although the public sector offers pure sciences and engineering courses that are not generally available in the private sector, so there is an element of complementarity.

5.0 Management and Administrative control of higher Education:

Organization of the higher education sub-sector in Bangladesh takes into

account this reality of the emerging private sector. Figure 2 presents a graphic picture showing how tertiary-level education in Bangladesh is organized.



The Ministry of Education (MoE) is the apex policy-making body in Bangladesh. The University Grants Commission (UGC) of Bangladesh is the main administrative agency headed by a Chairman (with help of other 5 members) to regulate and co-ordinate plans and programs of different public and private universities.

The private university stream of tertiary education in the country whether an institution offering a degree, first degree or beyond, has to be accountable ultimately to UGC. Formally, UGC defines a number of administrative, financial and other parameters to these universities. The universities have autonomy (by the Parliamentary acts) to work within the UGC given parameters. Quality assurance, equivalency and other similar aspects are supposed to be taken care of by UGC.

The University Grants Commission of Bangladesh (UGC), established in

1973, acts as an intermediary body between the government and individual universities, and is responsible for all higher education. It reports to the Minister of Education through the Secretary of Education.

6.0 Financing Arrangements

The private universities started functioning with limited capital funds in hired premises and with part-time faculty from public universities. In the early years, there was no plan for building campuses and raising capital funds for that purpose. The initial success of the private universities to finance their current operation through the collection of fees and charges from students and generate large surpluses left them somewhat myopic about long-term requirements for capital funds. Although they are supposed to move to their own campus after 7 years of establishment, on condition 12 years after, according to the Private University Act Amendment 2010.

It may be mentioned that private universities are capable of saving roughly 40 to 50 percent of their earnings from students. The implication of high fees charged by private universities to generate large surplus may be serious for their long-term growth. These universities have been attracting students mainly from the rich families who fail to get places in public universities. It is generally known that DU, BUET and medical colleges admit most of the top students that pass the HSC/ equivalent public exams. The rest get places in other public and private universities, depending on their financial status. The result is that bright students in public universities do not get quality education as they suffer from session jams extending for three to four years mostly at public cost. On the other hand, students from the wealthy families and with lower academic credentials are registering in private universities of high cost, most of which are not offering quality education.

7.0 Regulation of Quality Control Measures

As of today, there is nobody to regulate private universities and assure the quality of education, other than the weak supervision of UGC. Since private universities receive no funding from the UGC, there is little that the UGC can do other than report some facts for the government. The Ministry of Education is the ultimate authority to institutionalize quality control measures if there are to be any. The UGC and the Government, of course, exercise little control over the quality of education in private universities. Assurance of quality in university education has been left

with the universities themselves. In turn, with a particular private university, certain bodies such as the Academic Council merely process ongoing activities such as admitting students, approving courses and panels of examiners, opening new departments, sanctioning additional teaching posts, etc.

Quality control of higher education at a private university mainly involves the following:

- i. Quality of inputs : Selection of students
- ii. Quality of processing of inputs to final products

7.1 Quality of inputs

Selection of Students: As mentioned earlier, private universities in general are not attracting top-quality students, although all of them apply some form of admission tests of their own. Despite a sharp decline in quality, public universities are still the first choice by all admission seekers. For example, Dhaka University admits less than 10 per cent of the students applying for about 5,000 places. This factor alone puts Dhaka University into a relatively higher position among other universities. Dhaka University admits the top students, after BUET and the medical colleges.

High fees charged by the private universities may be one of the reasons for not attracting bright students. These universities are yet to get general recognition for the education being imparted, although many degree colleges and some university colleges have been in place for a long time in the private sector. Newness aside, private universities are not offering courses in natural sciences such as physics, chemistry and biology, etc., and most other courses in the social sciences. Excepting one, all of them began offering courses in business administration and computer science in view of the potential demand for those programs.

In terms of the processing of students, all private universities have adopted the American course and semester/term systems and the continuous system of evaluation by course teachers resulting in letter grades and GPA.. The curriculum is also drawn up according to what is followed by American universities, excepting IUC and DIU. These two private universities have included some courses on Islamic knowledge and practices as may be found in Arab Countries. All private universities have introduced term/semester systems to offer courses of certain credit

hours by US standards. For example, the BBA program requires the completion of at least 40 courses of 120 credit hours. Unlike in public universities, students are given the flexibility to take courses according to their abilities. That is, a student may be allowed to take two courses to remain in the program when a full load may be five courses. This has allowed many students with poor performance to continue in the program for a longer period. There are also allegations of grade inflation in some of the weaker private universities. This is expected because during the initial years many private universities admitted students without sufficient testing. Excepting NSU, BRAC, EWU the practice may still be going on in other private universities.

7.2 Quality of processing of inputs to final products

An important issue in the processing of students is the supply of trained teachers, books and equipment relevant to the courses and method of delivery used in classrooms. The physical condition of the classroom is also important. The general physical condition of classrooms, libraries, and computer centers are much better in private universities. Most of the classroom facilities are air-conditioned and fitted with audiovisual equipment. Multimedia is used by some of the teachers trained abroad. As mentioned earlier, the supply of qualified teachers is limited in Bangladesh. Although foreign trained teachers are sought and preferred by the private universities, perhaps NSU has most maintained that practice so far. It does not allow teachers without PhD to teach in the Master's program, such as the MBA, and no one without Master's degree from the USA, UK, Canada or Australia is recruited as lecturer. It has also established a tenure track system for recruitment at higher ranks.

NSU, BRAC, EWU, IIUC, USTC, AUB and a few others began developing a library and a computer laboratory right from the beginning. NSU has a strong collection of foreign journals in its library. Text books on most subjects are available in the local market from Indian sources. Cheaper editions of most of the American books are bought by the students. The photocopying of unavailable books is rampant, ignoring all kinds of restrictions from publishers.

The conclusion on quality assurance in higher education in Bangladesh is that UGC has a role in setting certain minimum qualifications for recruiting teachers in general for both public and private universities. However, it lacks the ability to exercise such control due to politicized campuses and the weak structure of UGC. Individual institutions are left

to assure the quality of education and research. Private universities do try to monitor and evaluate teachers and quality of instruction through students' reports and supervision by Heads of departments. However, private universities generally do not admit brighter students, although some of them are showing talent in developing students' potential by trained and motivated teachers and better support services. The lack of highly qualified teachers is posing threat to the quality and expansion of private universities, as they are currently dependent on part-time teachers. Research is not on the agenda in private universities. Public universities lack funding for research and the low pay of teachers encourages them to undertake income-supplementing jobs, such as consulting for government departments, NGOs and donor agencies, and part-time teaching in private universities. Hence, quality control issues in higher education are seriously neglected in both public and private universities in Bangladesh. Almost all private universities (with few exceptions) are founded on rented space and buildings, campus facilities such as academically suitable building infrastructure, extensive library facilities, dormitory facilities, canteen facility, sports and recreational facilities, computer laboratories with high, speed interned access and transport systems are extremely limited.

7.3 Faculty Credential

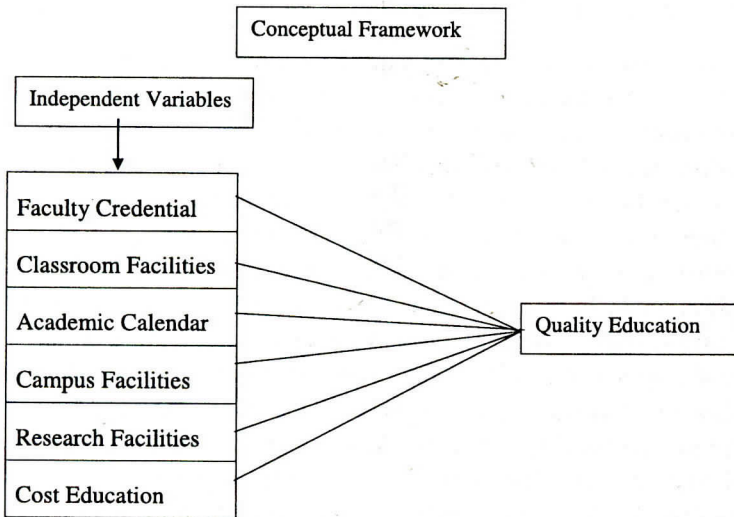


Figure 3: Conceptual framework for quality education at private universities in Bangladesh

This factor influences the overall learning of the students, which affects the quality of their education. In a similar fashion, research facilities are also underdeveloped. Most of the universities do not have research bureaus, and publication facilities are also limited, as indicated by the fact that only four or five journals are published among more than 50 private universities in Bangladesh. Due to the lack of adequate reference materials in the libraries, the teachers and the students face enormous problems. Clearly the variable of campus facilities has an important impact on the overall quality of education in these higher learning centers of Bangladesh.

8.0 Problems: The Private Universities Facing Today

Many educationists have expressed their doubts about the ability of the private sector to run as degree-awarding universities. Many feel that the government should retain the monopoly on higher education, this being a public service that is best rendered by the government. Also, these educational entrepreneurs were seen as being inexperienced in running a university and that the venture would be too risky for the society and the nation as a whole. Some even equated private universities with 'glorified coaching centres.' The proponents of private universities for their part contended that, if an enabling environment could be provided, the private sector could not only run businesses, industries, schools, colleges, hospitals or NGOs, but also universities.

The most common allegation raised against founders of private universities is that they are driven by a profit motive while investing a huge amount of money to make profit. However, founder directors/members deny that their universities are run for profit; they point out that the extra or surplus money generated from tuition fees are re-invested in university development. In the beginning, well-known educationists and philanthropists established private universities; now rich professionals, business persons and large NGOs are also establishing private universities. The five crore taka deposit which is a necessary requisite for approval results in the involvement of rich individual in the establishment of private universities. Moreover, for the first few years, most private universities have to depend largely on contributions for survival and growth. The public views with suspicion the very high salaries of the VCs/Pro-VCs and a few top officials as well as the lavish dinners and cultural functions that are held in luxurious hotels. However, private universities' high profitability in operations is an established fact.

For instance, in the year of 2001, out of total assets of Tk. 292.5 million, University of Science and Technology (USTC) accumulated surplus accounted for Tk 51.2 million, and North South University (NSU) accumulated surplus accounted for Tk 189.40 million out of total assets of Tk 200.70 million.

The quality of education and related facilities are the next point of controversy. Quality varies significantly between private universities; there are differences of quality even amongst departments of the same university. Course contents vary widely among private universities. Sub-standard intakes, inferior faculty standard and poor classroom environment are some of the usual complaints. These universities use attractive names; circulate colorful and glossy brochures and make unrealistic promises in order to attract admission seekers. Thus, many who should not have pursued higher education get admission into these institutions.

The very high tuition fee of private universities is a common point of criticism. Non-profit operation and an affordable education for common people are not the principles on which private universities operate. In the NSU, a student needs to pay Tk 3,50,000/- for an MBA degree and Tk 6,50,000/- for a B.Sc degree in Computer Science. In USTC, an MBBS student needs to pay Tk 14,00,000.00 to obtain a degree. However, private universities justify their high fees on the grounds that they run without any government subsidy. In fact, private universities in general do not clearly mention the tuition fees or teachers' salary. With only seven persons in the audit staff, the UGC is not able to detect financial cover-ups. The result of a survey showed that 55% were dissatisfied at the facilities the university provided them in the light of the high tuition fees that they were paying. Almost all private universities are situated in rented buildings. These buildings are not designed for academic pursuits and are not suitable for university activities. The PUA requires concerned private universities to shift to their own campus within seven years (on condition another five years may be given) of establishment, but only a few universities have met this requirement. Scarcity of suitable land in and around Dhaka and the exorbitant cost of land are used as excuses by these institutions. However, a number of leading private universities have bought land in and around Dhaka and are in the process of constructing their own campuses.

Academic programs offered by private universities are limited and market-driven and do not cater to social needs of the country. Most private universities concentrate on Business Administration and Computer Science. Many people, therefore, question the validity of calling an institution a university that offers only four or five subjects. Private universities, on the other hand, cannot afford to open programs that do not attract a substantial number of students. Private universities run a program-based education system, comprising semesters, courses and credits. In a good private university, each credit involves 15 to 16 contact or class hours. However, some private universities have reduced each credit to 11 or 12 contact hours, thus undermining the course content and program.

Courses offered by these universities are sometimes rushed through and not adequately taught. Employers often complain that graduates of private universities often lack in-depth knowledge. One of the reasons for this is that private universities try to accommodate many courses and semesters in a year to maximize earnings. Moreover, part-time teachers often take successive classes in different universities in a single day to maximize their income. In the process, the individual teacher may be benefited, but the students suffer from poor teaching and teacher's lack of commitment. Faculty strength is weak in most private universities and other than 'On the Job Training'; there is no faculty development scheme. Dearth of qualified full-time core teachers adversely affects the teaching quality of many private universities. At least, 60-70% of teachers should be full time to ensure quality teaching.

Private universities, established in rented premises, suffer from acute space shortage, especially as regards in library, laboratory and classroom facilities. There is no space/room for group discussions or seminars as there are no large hall rooms. Students are forced to loiter on pavements or streets. Private universities are located near busy roads where traffic noise and other distractions hamper classroom learning.

9.0 Advantages of Private Universities

The growth of private universities in Bangladesh is phenomenal. These universities offer both graduation and post-graduation degrees in subjects like Businesses Administration, Computer Engineering, Management Information System, Civil Engineering, Electrical Engineering, Architecture, Environment, Development Studies, Physics, Electronics, Physical & Community Medicines, English Language & Literature, Law,

Islamic History and Civilisation, Social Work, Political Science, Sociology, Bangla Language & Literature, B.Ed., MEd., and so on. Many private universities have introduced evening MBA Programs for professionals. However, significant advantages that accrue to private universities are:

i. Flexibility: Private universities are flexible and relatively free to introduce new subjects or discard non-demanding subjects based on market demand. Unlike public universities, these can readily modify their curriculum to suit changing requirements.

ii. Adherence to Schedules: There is no session jam, student unrest or violence in private universities. During the days of political violence, private universities arranged regular make-up classes on holidays and in the evenings and could successfully graduate their students on time.

iii. Credit Transfer/Collaboration : Credit transfer to foreign universities and institutions are available in most private universities. Moreover, some of the better run private universities have developed academic linkages with a number of foreign universities through faculty and curriculum exchange, exchange of course materials, post graduate research collaboration, etc. Teachers from foreign universities had also taught in these universities for one or more semesters. This enabled the university to update the curriculum, course content and teaching methods. One of the private universities has even appointed an academician from the Philippines as the Vice- Chancellor.

iv. Evaluation of Teachers: Teachers' qualifications in some of the better run private universities are higher than the public universities and UGC's guidelines. Masters/ PhD degrees from North American Universities are preferred. The teaching ability of teachers is tested through demonstrative lectures. Moreover, students and senior teachers regularly assess teachers.

v. Career Services Department: Well-run private universities have 'Career Services Department' through which final semester students are advised about their choice of profession and job prospects. Graduated students enlist their names and wait for a response. Teacher and staff responsible for this section maintain regular contact with prospective employers. The university staff assists graduates to secure suitable jobs. Frequent job fairs are arranged through the career assistance program.

vi. Graduates Employment Prospect: Graduates of better and well reputed private universities like the NSU, IUB, AIUB, and USTC get suitable

jobs. USTC teaching medical science has students from regional and developing countries such as Nepal, Sri Lanka, Palestine and Saudi Arabia. Many private university graduates seek employment abroad.

vii. **Emphasis on English Language and Computer Literacy:** The medium of instruction in private universities is English and libraries have recent texts and other reference books. Many Bangla medium students attain proficiency in oral and written English in these universities. Students also attain computer literacy. These proficiencies give them an advantage in the job market.

viii. **Collaboration with Industries and Companies:** Private universities maintain a collaborative relationship with reputed industries, multinational companies and corporate business houses, primarily to run students' internship programs. Practical knowledge acquired through internship gives an edge to private university graduates in the job market.

ix. **Financial Assistance Program:** All the private universities have financial support policies for the students. Full scholarships are given to the first few who were at the top of the merit list of SSC and HSC or equivalent examinations. Tuition waivers are also given at different rates based on individual need and academic performance. Some private universities arrange part-time employment for needy students. However, private universities in general do not cater to students from a lower income group unless they can qualify for a full tuition waiver.

10.0 Private Universities in Panic

The private universities started up on the condition prescribed in accordance to the 1992 ordinance, and then the 1998 and 2010 amended ordinances that they would shift to permanent campuses with in 7 years (on condition another 5 years may be given). Most of the universities, some over 19 years old and some just 5, have not shifted to their own campuses still now. They have failed to comply with the government's directives to shift to campuses on their own land. On the contrary, private universities have mushroomed up all over the places- in lanes and alleyways on of the capital city's bustling residential area as well as in office building for commercial use. The fact is that they have not shifted to their own campuses but remain in rented premises scattered all around the city.

According to the Private University Act Amendment 2010, the government issued the regulation that private universities must have to

have campuses on at least one acre of land in one place within the city. And if this condition will not be fulfilled by September 2011, admissions to these universities would be closed. This order has several of the private universities reeling in panic.

The private universities authorities state that it is near impossible to get one unbroken plot of one acre within the city. And even if it is found, one acre of land costs at Tk.100- 150 crore. Then to construct a proper campus will take about Tk.80 to 100 crore. They contend that it is impossible to arrange this land and funds for the campus within such a short span of time. They have appealed to the government for an extension of the time limit.

11.0 Recommendations

The following recommendations made for the improvement of the quality of education in private universities may be derived from the discussion stated above:

Firstly, unified service rules for both private and public university teachers need to be considered in order to ensure quality education in private university.

Secondly, inclusion of private university teachers in various committees under the auspices of both the Education Ministry and the University Grants Commission may be considered. Besides, appointment of at least 1 (one) private university teacher as Member of the University Grants Commission needs to be ensured. As a result, the existing discrimination between private and public university teachers will be reduced.

Thirdly, the time spent for each semester in private and public universities is different. Public universities in the country allow 6 months for each semester while private universities allow 4 months. However, duration of each semester should be equal in both private and public universities so that the private university students can be equally treated in job market.

Fourthly, collaboration between public and private universities of Bangladesh in the field of academic curriculum, research, IT, internship, and exchange of teachers and students can be useful. The years of experience and vast resources of public universities are invaluable and could enrich private universities. Similarly, the American system of education including assessment, teachers' evaluation, ideas and expertise of visiting Professors can be useful for public universities.

Fifthly, building of permanent campuses for private universities is essential for quality education. To meet the purpose, the government can provide required amount of money as loan for the private universities so that they can build permanent campuses on their own land.

Sixthly, the universities should conduct Post-graduate research on a regular basis as good quality research helps a university achieve credibility at home and abroad.

Seventhly, there should be a separate commission for private universities. Other than scrutinizing and recommending setting up new private universities, the primary role of this proposed commission will be to monitor the academic curriculum of all private universities through an Accreditation Body. The proposed Commission's role should be a combination of regulator and facilitator functions. Alternatively, the UGC should increase the monitoring of private universities, primarily for the newer ones and those not doing well to enable them to improve.

12.0 Conclusion

Higher education in the private sector has become more competitive with the remarkable increase in the number of private academic institutions in Bangladesh while quality education is yet to reach its desired level. The cost of private education is another dimension to be considered as it is unaffordable in Bangladesh. However, private university education will definitely be more popular in the existing socio-economic context of the country if costs are to be lowered, although the system is proceeding gradually towards greater improvement. Nevertheless, all the problems considered here should be addressed more rigorously to ensure the quality of private higher education in Bangladesh. The dimensions from which the private university students are still suffering are faculty credentials, the academic calendar, campus facilities, research facilities and the cost of education. In these regards, the gap between public and private universities will be minimised if equal facilities from the government are provided for all and thereby paves the new way of higher education in Bangladesh.

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Annex-1

List of private universities along with their year of establishment is as follows:

Sl.No	Name of universities	Year of establishment
1	North South University, Dhaka	1992
2	University of Science and Technology Chittagong	1992
3	Independent University Bangladesh Dhaka	1993
4	Central Women's University, Dhaka	1993
5	Darul Ihsan University, Dhaka	1993
6	International University of Business Administration and Technology, Dhaka	1993
7	International Islamic University, Chittagong	1995
8	Ahsanullah University of Sciences & Technology, Dhaka	1995
9	American International University Bangladesh Dhaka	1995
10	Comilla University, Comilla	1995
11	Asian University of Bangladesh, Dhaka	1996
12	East-West University, Dhaka	1996
13	Queens University, Dhaka	1996
14	University of Asia Pacific, Dhaka	1996
15	Gono Bishwabidyalaya, Dhaka	1996
16	The People's University of Bangladesh, Dhaka	1996
17	Dhaka International University, Dhaka	2000
18	BRAC University, Dhaka	2001
19	Manarat International University, Dhaka	2001
20	Bangladesh University, Dhaka	2001
21	Leading University, Sylhet	2001
22	BGC Trust University Bangladesh, Chittagong	2001
23	Sylhet International University, Sylhet	2001
24	University of Development Alternative, Dhaka	2001
25	Premeir University, Chittagong	2001
26	South-East University, Dhaka	2002

27	Stamford University, Dhaka	2002
28	Daffodil International University, Dhaka	2002
29	State University of Bangladesh, Dhaka	2002
30	IBAIS University, Dhaka	2002
31	City University, Dhaka	2002
32	America Bangladesh University, Dhaka	2002
33	Prime University, Dhaka	2002
34	Northern University, Bangladesh, Dhaka	2002
35	Southern University, Bangladesh, Chittagong	2002
36	Green University of Bangladesh, Dhaka	2002
37	Pundra University of Sciences & Technology Bogra	2002
38	World University, Dhaka	2003
39	Shanta Marium University of Creative Technology, Dhaka	2003
40	The Millennium University, Dhaka	2003
41	Eastern University, Dhaka	2003
42	Bangladesh University of Business & Technology, Dhaka	2003
43	Metropolitan University, Sylhet	2003
44	Uttara University, Dhaka	2003
45	United International University, Dhaka	2003
46	Victoria University of Bangladesh, Dhaka	2003
47	University of South Asia, Dhaka	2003
48	Presidency University, Dhaka	2003
49	University of Information Technology & Sciences, Dhaka	2003
50	Prime Asia University, Dhaka	2003
51	Royal University of Dhaka, Dhaka	2003
52	University of Liberal Arts, Bangladesh, Dhaka	2003
53	Atish Dipanker University of Sciences & Technology, Dhaka	2004
54	Bangladesh Islamic University, Dhaka	2005
55	ASA University Bangladesh, Dhaka	2006
56	East-Delta University, Chittagong	2006