

# Higher Education in Public Universities in Bangladesh

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**ABSTRACT:** The key aims of higher education are to generate the new knowledge, explore research works on different social and development issues, anticipate the needs of the economy and prepare highly skilled workers. Throughout the World, universities change the society and remain the center of change and development. In Bangladesh a number of universities both public and private were set up so far theoretically emphasized on unlocking potential at all levels of society and creating a pool of highly trained individuals to contribute to the national development. But in practice these universities are very weak and do not change anything. Better understanding among teachers and students, introduction of modern teaching methods and dedication of teachers and students can improve the culture of higher education in Bangladesh. A proper academic calendar can bring discipline. To make the universities free from the clutches of politics can also improve the situation.

Keywords: Higher Education; Bangladesh.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In Bangladesh there was a time when higher education used to be considered a luxury in a society of mass illiteracy. However, towards the turn of the last century the need for highly skilled manpower started to be acutely felt every sphere of the society for self-sustained development and poverty alleviation. Highly trained manpower not only contributes towards human resource development of a society through supplying teachers, instructors, researchers and scholars in the feeder institutions like schools, colleges, technical institutes and universities. They are also instrumental in bringing about technological revolution in the field of agriculture, industry, business and commerce, medicine, engineering, transport and communication etc. The development of a modern society depends to a large extent on the nature and standard of higher education. Thus the role of higher education is to prepare competent, knowledgeable and far-sighted people for assuming various higher responsibilities. The growing importance of knowledge in the modern world can hardly be overemphasized, especially in the era of globalization and in a global environment which is fiercely competitive<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup>Pakistan Journal of Social Sciences (PJSS); Vol. 30, No. 2 (December 2010), pp. 293-305

## 2. 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.

### **3. PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN BANGLADESH**

After the liberation of Bangladesh in 1971, during the last 35 years, higher education scenario has greatly been transformed. The number of public universities has increased significantly. Public universities are the foremost choice of the majority students seeking higher education. This is for various reasons. First, these universities offer wide range of subjects in Science, Commerce, Liberal Arts, Humanities, Engineering and Technology, Law, Education and Medicine disciplines. Second, public universities attract the best brains and researchers as teachers although monetary compensation for them is anything far from attractive. Third, library, laboratory, internet and research facilities are much better there than anywhere else in the country. Fourth, seminars, symposiums, workshops, debates, exhibitions and visiting teachers lecture series are often held in these institutions with a wide scope for national and international exposures for promising young knowledge seekers. Fifth, residential and boarding facilities at low cost/subsidized rates are available in these public universities<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup>Pakistan Journal of Social Sciences (PJSS); Vol. 30, No. 2 (December 2010), pp. 293-305

**Table 1: Annual Total Intake and Total Number of Students**

<b>Name of the university</b>	<b>Annual Total Intake</b>	<b>Total students</b>	<b>Male students</b>	<b>Female students</b>
University of Dhaka	5219	28772	19119	9653
University of Chittagong	3773	19301	14192	5109
University of Rajshahi	4305	26909	19133	7776
Khulna University	642	4423	3440	983
Comilla University	350	591	417	174
Jahangirnagar University	1361	10417	7082	3335
Islamic University	1210	10109	7913	2196
Bangladesh Agricultural University	757	4621	3211	1410
Jagannath University	2415	25896	21774	4122
Bangladesh University of Engineering & Technology	885	7218	5865	1353
Shahjalal University of Science and Technology	1160	7930	6156	1774
Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib	Na	1116	695	421

Medical University				
Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Agricultural University	100	535	333	202
Hajee Mohammad Danesh Science and Technology University	335	1494	986	508
Mawlana Bhashani Science and Technology University	350	1350	1039	311
Patuakhali Science and Technology University	265	1350	1039	311
Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University	375	1542	1033	509
Chittagong University of Engineering & Technology	431	1761	1562	199
Rajshahi University of Engineering & Technology	480	1842	1659	183
Khulna University of Engineering & Technology	115	2464	2252	212
Barisal University	Na	Na	Na	Na
Noakhali Science and Technology University	180	518	383	135
Dhaka University of Engineering and Technology	440	1822	1685	137
Jatiya Kabi Kazi Nazrul Islam University	108	483	310	173
Chittagong Veterinary and Animal Sciences University	70	315	245	70
Sylhet Agricultural University	71	539	435	104
Jessore Science and Technology University	Na	590	350	240
Bangladesh University of Professionals	Na	868	649	219
Begum Rokeya University	300	300	221	79
Pabna University of Science and Technology	240	440	400	40
Bangladesh Open University	Na	265274	169109	96165
National University	160871	939730	551015	388715

In comparison to this huge number of students, the number of teachers available in public universities is quite low. Moreover, not all of them are excellent enough to make the students skillful and knowledgeable. Also a large portion of them are involved in teacher

politics as they were employed in the universities on the basis of that. This makes the standard of the public universities low.

#### **4. CHALLENGES OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN BANGLADESH**

There are a lot of challenges faced by the public university in Bangladesh. Corruption is one of the barriers of higher education. Besides, nepotism, recruitment of less meritorious teacher by political identities are created obstacle in the higher education. Nevertheless, financial crisis, lack of residential halls, shortage of seats for the applicants as well as the involvement of teachers with other activities are also been identified by the respondents as the barriers of quality education in Bangladesh.

The traditional teaching method is the common feature in our universities. Here, the sharing of knowledge and students participation is very minimal. The brain storming discussions and presentations by the students enables them for a better grooming up. But this is almost absent in our university education system. Moreover, the monologue type of teaching and learning, the traditional system of distant relationship between teachers and students act as barriers in the congenial atmosphere of free learning in the universities of Bangladesh. Simultaneously, modern teaching methods and facilities like internet, multimedia, sound system are also been absent at the public university of Bangladesh. Poor quality of teaching staffs who fail to satisfy the students needs both in quantity and quality. Most of them have lack of specialized research and training on higher education. Moreover, due to the recruitment of political consideration a good number of teachers have no scientific and update knowledge that assist them to change their teaching methods.

**Table 2: Number of Teaching & Non-Teaching Staff**

<b>Name of the university</b>	<b>Teaching Staff</b>		<b>Non-Teaching Staff</b>	
	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Officers</b>	<b>Class (III &amp; IV)</b>
University of Dhaka	1159	394	605	3197
University of Chittagong	750	211	294	1686
University of Rajshahi	668	364	617	2060
Khulna University	280	46	168	145
Islamic University	284	25	221	507
Jahangirnagar University	365	107	2049	1371
Bangladesh Agricultural University	481	48	394	1788
Bangladesh University of Engineering & Technology	463	90	156	943
Shahjalal University of Science and Technology	304	68	120	355
Jagannath University	207	152	32	188

Comilla University	19	04	13	25
Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University	301	93	722	1879
Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Agricultural University	76	06	50	182
Hajee Mohammad Danesh Science and Technology University	119	20	60	345
Mawlana Bhashani Science and Technology University	66	01	57	254
Patuakhali Science and Technology University	104	06	47	260
Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University	108	23	108	401
Sylhet Agricultural University	54	05	16	76
Rajshahi University of Engineering & Technology	132	06	54	200
Khulna University of Engineering & Technology	179	08	61	192
Dhaka University of Engineering and Technology	114	15	49	164
Chittagong University of Engineering & Technology	116	13	62	181
Noakhali Science and Technology University	27	02	19	92
Barisal University	Na		Na	
Jatiya Kabi Kazi Nazrul Islam University	29	05	15	37
Chittagong Veterinary and Animal Sciences University	51	09	18	82
Jessore Science and Technology University	Na		06	06

Bangladesh University of Professionals	Na	11	37
Begum Rokeya University	11	1	03
Bangladesh Open University	79	26	285
National University	39519	19316	649
			1024

Adequate library and laboratory facilities are very important particularly for the university education. But the quality and other facilities both in library and laboratory are very poor and outdated. There is shortage of modern equipment in the laboratory. On the other hand, recent text and reference books, professional journals are hardly available in library. So, inadequate library and laboratory facilities are hindering the quality of higher education in public universities in Bangladesh.

**Table 3: library facilities**

Name of the university	Total no. of books	Total no. of journals
University of Dhaka	621058	76000
University of Chittagong	211860	29441
University of Rajshahi	297369	40167
Khulna University	30484	4882
Islamic University	78796	16000
Jahangirnagar University	104686	12840
Bangladesh Agricultural University	21079	37511
Bangladesh University of Engineering & Technology	126468	17849
Begum Rokeya University	Na	Na
Shahjalal University of Science and Technology	56055	6881
Jagannath University	18499	Na
Comilla University	1094	20
Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University	23883	5222
Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Agricultural University	18725	258
Hajee Mohammad Danesh Science and Technology University	17329	70
Mawlana Bhashani Science and Technology University	4054	80
Patuakhali Science and	17507	2100

Technology University		
Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University	35958	11310
Sylhet Agricultural University	3986	438
National University	35240	176
Bangladesh Open University	33308	309
Rajshahi University of Engineering & Technology	27060	Na
Khulna University of Engineering & Technology	41230	2500
Dhaka University of Engineering and Technology	32796	801
Chittagong University of Engineering & Technology	45651	871
Noakhali Science and Technology University	3541	56
Barisal University	Na	Na
Jatiya Kabi Kazi Nazrul Islam University	23926	Na
Chittagong Veterinary and Animal Sciences University	3000	4000
Jessore Science and Technology University	Na	Na
Bangladesh University of Professionals	Na	Na
Pabna University of Science and Technology	Na	Na

The government allocation that is given for the university, mostly spent for the salary and allowances of the faculty and staff members. So, by the weak financial base the universities of Bangladesh do not play their assigned role. Even lack of finance some university do not spend anything for research. But higher education and research must go together.

Party politics both teachers and students have created a great problem in the higher education sectors. Both teaching and learning is greatly interrupted by the teacher and students politics. So, the respondents of the present study have clearly been identified as the major problems of this unexpected political practice in the higher education institutions.

Session jam is currently one of the most alarming situations prevailing in the universities in Bangladesh. It is hindering the higher education in Bangladesh. The problem began with the initial loss of one academic year due to the Liberation War. A university student now has to wait for almost six years to get four years honors degree.

## **5. RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.1 Modify the Syllabus**

The syllabus of university education should be modern, time-bound, need-based and international standard. The university authority has to monitor properly to add new and innovative courses and ideas in the learning process so that the students can face the challenges of new millennium. Besides, the credit transfer system should open from any Bangladeshi university to abroad.

### **5.2 Research Based Education**

Higher education should be highly participatory, reciprocal and research based. Both teachers and students spontaneously participate in this learning process and research activities. Besides, the class hour must be at least 1 hour and 50 minutes in lieu of 45 minutes so that students can get more time to participate properly in the learning process. Simultaneously, facilitators can get time to explore them in the classroom.

### **5.3 Need-Based Education**

Higher education should be need-based. That means necessary institutes or departments should be opened in every neglected field of education those have close connection to employment opportunities and income generating activities. Simultaneously unnecessary, self or specific group interest related initiatives should be discouraged. Moreover, new institutes should be opened aiming at reducing regional imbalances and resource mobilization.

### **5.4 Transparent Recruitment**

The recruitment policy should be planned and transparent. Unplanned and political recruitment reduces the standard of education. In this context, priority should be given to the merit, academic result and research work. Besides, a commission relating to teachers recruitment should be formed so that non-political and bias free recruitment is ensured.

### **5.5 Introduces Teacher Evaluation**

The university management has to introduce teacher evaluation system in the education process. The evaluation may be by the students and university authority. But this evaluation should bias free. If the system introduces teachers' consciousness, motivation and responsibilities will increase.

### **5.6 Teacher-Student Politics**

The university should free from political interfere. Student politics must be constructive and students' welfare oriented. On the other hand, teachers should avoid the servile of political parties. In order to create safe and sound atmosphere and ensure the standard of education it is burning question to reform of teacher and students politics. Moreover, the internal conflict of teachers should be removed.



## **6. CONCLUSION**

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. Comparing to the amount of students passing the HSC examination every year, the number of public universities in Bangladesh is still not sufficient enough. Moreover, many of the existing public universities do not fulfill the requirements which are needed to ensure a high quality standard in a university. The respective authorities should focus into the matter. 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.

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