

Quality of HE in Private Universities of Bangladesh: The Four Fundamental Perspectives

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Abstract

Since its inception, Higher Education (HE) has always been playing a critical role for national development through the development of skilled manpower and intellectual civic society. Continuous paradigm shifting in HE in term of institutions' pattern and course delivery mode and method has always been the part of the process of HE transformation. Consequently, private HE bears a long heritage and history. However, 'commercialisation' of HE through private provision is relatively new and the developing nation has been experiencing this since early 1990s with rapid expansion. The modernistic concept known as 'commodification in HE' has significantly impacted HE by changing the course curricula, targeted students', teachers' community, delivery mode, and methods of HE. The current research which is first of its kind in Bangladesh is a qualitative study using interviews, 'perception survey' and observation conducted in private universities, which covers 71% of university students. Findings show that legislators, stakeholders, students, parents and academics consider private HE as a tool for individual gain without deliberating HE as public goods which is vital for national development.

Keywords: Higher Education, Private HE, Education Quality, Bangladesh

1. Introduction

Inception of HE in 1970 was initiated by the private provision in the Middle East with an aim of catering competent religious leaders in order to run the country (Altbach, 1999). Later, Europe started dominating the HE operation through public provision (Alam, 2008). While the basic postulate of HE remains same, European HE focussed on science and medicine compared to its Middle East counterparts did (Tilak, 1999). US HE was not in the limelight till the 1900s. The revolutionary paradigm shifting in HE was encountered by US system both through public and private provisions (Alam, 2013 and Alam, Mirsha and Shahjamal 2014). This transformation made the society to realise that every profession demands competent professionals to have a balanced development across all educational sectors for national development. As a result, the universities now provide a wide range of training and education in all the areas, which may have caused the recent IT and e-commerce revolution (Alam, Hoque, Rout & Priyadarshani 2010). Although, the private sector plays a major role in US HE, the basic aim and objectives of both private and public HE are to help the USA for distinct national development. Decent governance, participation of industries with universities' researches and the commitment of alumni always help the US private HE to function desirably. These are the solid reasons that never allow the US system to compromise with HE quality by denting the syllabi, pedagogy, students, academics and infrastructure (Brennan, King and Lebeau, 2004).

British HE was leading in exporting its syllabi and instructional technology till the US system took over the market in late 1970s (Zumeta, 1992). The US HE started dominating the international HE since 1980s especially through Business Studies and IT based programmes. While British HE was expanding with a 'soft hand' called British Council, US system used multiple tools for spreading its market in the developing world (Alam, Hoque, Ismail & Mishra PK. 2010). These tools included 'soft and hard' hands like USIS, USAID, World Bank and Ford Foundation under US public and private organisations (Alam & Khalifa, 2009). Many scholars see these as central for the development and rapid expansion of private HE (Alam, 2013). Since the developing countries are struggling with a tight budget, the international organisations have come forward to help them in increasing their quantitative primary and secondary enrolment at the cost of quality (Alam, Haque; Siddique and Varghese., 2007). An increase in low quality primary and

secondary graduates has created a big market for HE which is difficult to be absorbed for the lack of competent academics, insufficient infrastructure, and incompetency of artificially increased graduates. Long term planning and its proper implementation can only ensure meaningful HE (Varghese, 2004). There are no shortcuts to achieve this. Under these limitations, private HE has been established to accommodate the increased graduates (Ravinde, 2010). The private sector currently shares 57 % of total global enrolment in universities, while in Asia, it shares 69% and in Bangladesh, it shares 71% (Alam, 2008).

Using the market theory as a central explanation, adherents of private provision are justifying the increased enrolment as a parameter for being in the right direction. However, we need to go beyond the market theory to answer the questions that follow: (1) Are these increased secondary graduates capable to shoulder the challenges in HE? (2) How do the private universities manage to have competent academics within the short span? (3) How do the private universities manage to have a conducive academia to cover the market at such a short notice?

Moreover, the design of quality syllabi and their proper implementation are always guided by academics, students and infrastructure. Therefore an in-depth investigation on these selected parameters is mandatory to understand the education quality without the market driven theory.

2. Education Quality and Scope of this Study

Before focussing on education quality in HE, let us explain the concept of quality. Quality of a product is determined mainly by its acceptability to the consumers (Alam et al 2010). The level of acceptability of a product is directly proportional to its quality. This tenet is only applicable to consumable items where the customers use the products without having an in-depth idea about it. 'Survey on customers' acceptability' can be used as parameter to judge the quality of a product. However, many products have to travel beyond the boundary of customers' acceptability to prove its scientific validity through laboratory test (Aslam et al, 2012). In order to ensure their quality, state and international statutory bodies play a vital role for its governance. Undoubtedly, the quality of a visible product is easier to measure in comparison to invisible product (Soomro & Ahmad, 2012). Moreover, if the customers, buyers, users and beneficiaries of a product can be identified with their roles, measurement of quality will be easier compared to an unidentified counterpart (Alam, 2008).

Given the invisible complexity of education as a product, measurement of quality is a complex task (Barratt, Chawla-Duggan, Lowe, Nickel, & Ukpo, 2006). Although knowledge is a central product of education, it is impossible to define knowledge and to measure its quality using agreed parameters (Barratt et al, 2006). Moreover the identity of the buyer, user, customer and beneficiary of education are always ambiguous (Soomro & Ahmad, 2012). These ambiguous identities are shared by state, employer, student and parents without demarcating their roles. Under these constraints, education institutions are considered as manufacturers and sellers which satisfy their sponsors. Consequently, education quality is controlled by their sponsors (Kabir, 2012).

Education institutions use examinations as a parameter to measure its quality without resolving the above constraints (Kabir, 2012). However, these examinations are not above criticism. They are biased by a number of factors like policy, region, teachers, students, politics, state and institutional mission and vision. Despite these shortcomings, examination is still the main parameter to assess education quality. Therefore, a paper qualification is more important than knowledge. Owing to a lack of perfect and acceptable examination system, some onshore and offshore Institutions of Higher Learning (HLIs) and prospective employers whether inland or overseas refuse to accept these paper qualifications.

The HE quality is primarily judged by graduates' employability. However, obtaining jobs in developing nation is not always connected to knowledge. The qualification is a documentary prerequisite for a job which is incomplete without the social and political link (Self-identifying citations deleted³). Another quality measurement system is known as 'input and output' framework which determines a difference between output (passed graduates' competency) and input (enrolled graduates' knowledge). An enhanced output indicates positive correlation for education quality. Accurate results through input and output framework is achievable if the prerequisite factors are same as in pre and post stages. This framework works well in developed countries where proper policies and their implementation are in place. But this may not work well in a developing country like Bangladesh because of 'artificial grades' which are provided without ensuring same academic atmosphere at the pre and the post stages. Moreover, if a disqualified input is given an access to HE unethically, what is the point to measure his / her quality at output stage which is leading to an artificial grade?

Under these limitations, a revised input and output framework suitable for HE in the developing countries may provide better results. Such a revised input and output framework is impossible for HE in Bangladesh because of shortage of

funds and expertise. Therefore, we conducted a qualitative research with an aim to provide an in-depth scenario of four selected parameters that principally influence HE quality. These findings may also supplement designing a potential input output framework for the private universities. The justification in selecting the four parameters and the scope of the study are outlined below.

Studies on private HE of developing nations have been conducted since late 1990s (Altbach, 1999) W. Since then, most of the studies have not focussed exclusively on the selected four parameters like students, academics course curricula and atmosphere. However these studies which have other focusses briefly discussed about these parameters without providing the detailed facts (Altbach, 1999). A study is yet to be conducted internationally and in Bangladesh providing an in-depth picture of these four selected features (Alam, 2013; Hopper, 1998). Since these parameters are the key for education quality, depending on assumption cannot be judgemental. Therefore this paper thoroughly covers these features exclusively.

To defend the argument of excluding other auxiliary parameters on quality, we intend to provide a detailed and in-depth picture of the selected fundamental parameters because the auxiliary parameters cannot perform well without ensuring the quality of these four parameters. Therefore we need to concentrate on key issues with a multiple angling focus on each parameter without giving a snapshot of all.

In an incompatible input and output framework and the absence of any benchmarking of parameters, it is advisable to compare between two counterparts using the same parameters to justify the quality. Hence, a full comparison amongst influencing factors of education quality of private and public universities is not feasible owing to different operational culture and heritage. We merely compare both the counterparts to have the metaphors.

3. Expansion of Private Universities in Bangladesh

Dhaka University and few HLIs were established under the British rule. Therefore the genesis of HE was influenced by the British system (Alam, 2009, Alam, 2013). Non-commercialised private HE as a substitute for public HE was observed in the three different administrative eras (i.e. Britain, Pakistan, and Bangladesh). With an US advocacy, commercial private HE theoretically known as not-for-profit was commenced by the virtue of the Private University Act of Bangladesh 1992 (Alam, Mirsha and Shahjamal, 2014). Without explanation, data presentation and hypothesis, this Act stated that there is a need to establish private universities to provide HE for the local community to meet the high demands (

Alam, Hoque, Ismail and Mishra 2010). It is important to know about the seven phases of development of the private HE before we discuss the research methodology and findings. The following discussed is made based on Alam, 2008 and Alam, 2013)

Phase 1: (1992-1996). This is the BNP (Note 1)'s period which was primarily responsible for the massive growth of private universities. Eleven universities out of fourteen universities established during Phase 1 are located in the *elite* areas of Dhaka while two are in Chittagong having Dhaka campuses, and the other one in Comilla. One university based in Dhaka has also recently established a small campus in Syllet. Many of the universities established in Phase 1 initially offered courses in Business Administration and Computer Science.

Phase 2: (March-June 1996). This phase which saw the establishment of two private universities was under a caretaker government. Although the basic purpose of a caretaker government was just to conduct a general election, they also took policy decisions and their implementation.

Phase 3: (June 1996-July 2001). Four universities mainly offering Business Administration and Computer Science were established in the elite areas during Phase 3 under the Bangladesh Aouwami League. While Phases 1, 5 and 6 saw the growth of private universities, phase 3 was the witness for the development of private HLIs.

Phase 4: (July-October 2001). The only university established in this phase is located in Syllet offering programmes in IT which was set up under a caretaker government.

Phase 5: (2001-2006) Twenty-eight universities in Dhaka (most of them in *elite* areas), three in Chittagong and two are in Syllet were established in Phase 5 under BNP. Sixteen and twelve universities were established in 2002 and 2003 respectively.

Phase 6: (November 2006 to 2009). The country was once again under a caretaker government which did not set-up any new university.

Phase 7: (February 2009- Till date). Besides licensing 20 new universities, the Aouwami League government equally expanded HLIs in this phase. It may be noted that it expanded private HLIs massively with a lesser focus on universities during phase 3.

In short, the massive and rapid expansion of the private universities is unquestionably an unforeseen scenario. Politicians and legislators have contributed for the imprudent development of the private universities. Non-accountability in decision-making is exceedingly common in the corrupt Bangladeshi politics and bureaucracy. Many HE graduates are currently unemployed (Alam, Hoque, Rout and Priyadarshani, 2010; Alam and Khalifa, 2009). However with this terrifying situation, parents still send their children for HE as it is still the best 'official alternative' to obtain jobs.

4. Methods

Individual semi-structured interviews were held with different targeted groups (table: 1). A survey for getting the perceptions and background information was conducted with students and academics on the investigative parameters (table: 2). This was to investigate about four impartial perspectives of quality education from multiple angles which are not limited to dependent and independent variables that are central to quantitative study using statistical tools. This is a qualitative study since it is exempted from using statistical tools which are fundamental for a quantitative study (Hammersley 2004). The survey also helped us in preparing the interview questions for different targeted groups especially the legislators.

The paper also concentrated on the data of a comprehensive documentary review of materials from the UGC, the Ministry, universities and observation of educational facilities. Fifteen years of research working experience with HE in Bangladesh gave us an insight to reflect on our arguments. The authors used the same techniques to analyse the data that they used in the previous published study (Alam, 2008)

4.1 Sample for University

Seventeen private universities were selected from six phases. In spite of a large sample which considered different phases, different regions based on different scales of achievements and different political objectives, we were able to make an in-depth explanation for our research objectives. Subjects offered were also tabulated for sampling. As an example, if more than one university were selected from a phase, it was considered according to the region, subjects offered and their performance.

To have the metaphors, five public universities were chosen. Two universities were from Dhaka, one from Sylhet, one from Chittagong, and the other from Khulna (Note 2). These selected specialised public universities are considered at par with the private universities by the programmes they offer.

4.2 Sample and Ethical Issues

Triangulation of samples is important to extract proper data for analysis (Cohen and Manion 2002). Views of different groups of people within the sector were considered for the investigation of the entire sector (Hammersley, 2004). Views of the students, academics, support staff and parents were collected through questionnaires and interviews before interviewing the key people and legislators from private and public universities and legislative bodies. This coherence was because their views helped to construct a precise and meaningful interview with the important respondents. However necessary cross-examinations were done by repeated interviews.

In spite of random sampling to complete the questionnaire, concept of demography was also considered. Different categories of students were selected for interviews to triangulate the data. We selected academic and administrative staff both from more and less responsible positions (Alam, 2008). Positional power prejudice was considered in selecting the respondents from the controlling agencies (MOE, UGC). Identity labels for the respondents for both interviews and questionnaires were issued for confidentiality (Cohen and Manion 2002). The details of the labels for interview and questionnaires were provided in table 1 and 2 respectively to maintain the confidentiality. These labelling were used to interpret the findings.

Table 1. Labelling of Respondents of Interviews

Labelling	Details of Respondents	Number of Respondents
IPVHS	Private University Students	46
IPUHS	Public University Student	23
IPVHT	Private University Academics	15
IPUHT	Public University Academics	15
IPVHST	Private University Support Staff	12
IGUDPVH	Guardians of Students in Private University	11
IGUDPUH	Guardians of Students in Public University	9
IUGC	Employee of UGC	7
IMOEO	Employee of MOE	5
IKPV	Key Personnel in Private University	5
IHPU	Key Personnel in Public University	3

Table 2. Labelling of Respondents of Questionnaire

Labelling	Details of Respondents	Number of Respondents
PVHS	Private University Student	367
PUHS	Public University Student	260
PVHT	Private University Academics	123
PUHT	Public University Academics	78
PVHST	Private HE Support staff	103
PVHAS	Private University Admission test Student	279
PUHAS	Public University Admission test Student	189

5. Findings and Discussions

The findings and their discussions of the four selected parameters are presented below.

5.1 Student

Table 3. Student Population of Private Universities

Year	Total Private Universities	Total Students Enrolled	Average Number of Students Enrolled in a Private University
2000	18	32791	1822
2001	23	27245	1185
2002	38	34432	906
2003	52	46080	886
2004	53	45009	849
2005	54	46780	866
2006	54	46650	863
2007	**	**	***
2008	**	**	***
2009	62	63890	1030
2010	72	97887	1360
2011	73	134300	1839

Source – UGC annual reports

** = Data is not available. However it is important to know that during 2007 to 2008, there was no political party in power. The country was ruled by a care-take government and they did not provide new lenience in operating private

universities.

Table 3 confirms the average size of student population in a private university is relatively small (Note 3) without an increasing trend except for the year 2003, 2010 and 2011. An increase was seen at 2003 because the newly established private universities under the new government enrolled students illegally by allowing a student studying in the first year at the HLIs to study in the final year in a private university. That was a huge shift from HLIs to private universities which collapsed many HLIs with a declining enrolment from 15000 to 1253. The transformation of two HLIs into universities in 2003 also contributed to the increased enrolment.

The new government which came into power in 2009 provided licence to 20 new private universities which increased the enrolment in 2010 and 2011. The larger enrolment was the result of giving artificial grades with almost hundred percent pass to higher secondary graduates to help the private universities sustain with a bigger market. The academic and family background of targeted students follows.

5.2 Students' Academic Competence

Alam (2008) and Alam et al, (2010) that economically well-off students chose private universities when rejected by public universities. The question, "Is public university the first preference for students?" was asked to three groups: PUHT, PVHT and PVHST. The findings are in figures 1 to 3.



Figure 1.

Figure 2 .

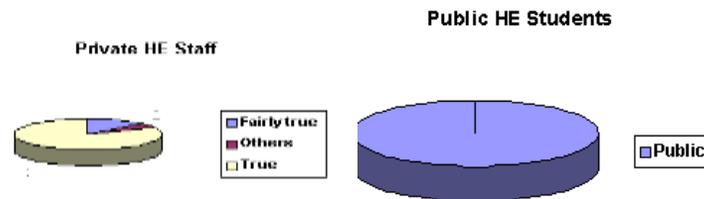


Figure 3.

Figure 4.

The results indicate that public universities are indeed the first choice. This was critically examined by the questionnaires given to PUHS and PVHS. 100% of PUHS said that they were more interested in studying in a public university (Figure 4). 19.14% of them were studying their preferred subject (Figure 5), 41.30% were studying in their preferred public university (Figure 6), whereas less than 1% were studying their preferred subject in their preferred university. However, a reasonable number of economically well-off students did not prefer private universities to pursue their preferred subject, even if they were studying a less popular subject at a non-preferred public university. No-one opted for private university exclusively even if they were given the choice of being financed by an organisation. 84.21% favoured the public universities exclusively, while the rest had no preference. However, 71.79% of PUHS might consider private university after being rejected by public university if they could be financed.

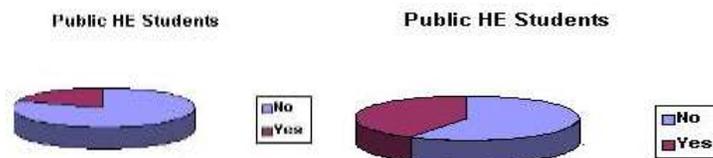


Figure 5.

Figure 6.

To explore further, we examined data from PVHS, where 54.13% took the admission test for public universities, (Figure 7), without an offer for their preferred subject. Only 1.21% were selected by their preferred public university, while 10.14% received an offer from a non-preferred public university. The rest (45.87%) did not qualify for the admission test (Figure 7). In consideration of private universities, 100% PVHS declined if they had an offer for their preferred subject from any public university, while 74.75% declined if they had an offer for any subject from the latter (Figure 8). 76.31% of PUVAS prefer to study any subject at a public university (Figure 9). However, the situation changes if the students are financed by donors. Results indicate that 58.33% would prefer to study in a public university and 38.88% would not mind going to any university, while 0.0277% would wish to go to a private university (Figure 10). 53.48% of PVHAS took the admission test conducted by the public universities. Only 0.34% received an offer from their preferred public university and none received their most wanted subject from a public university.

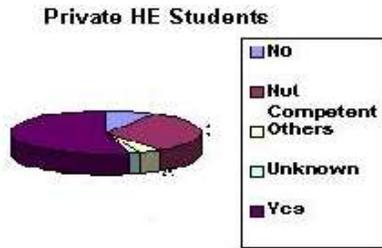


Figure 7

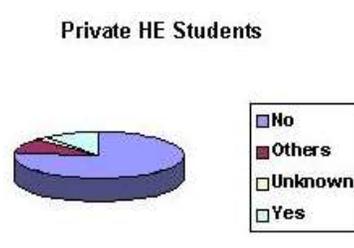


Figure 8

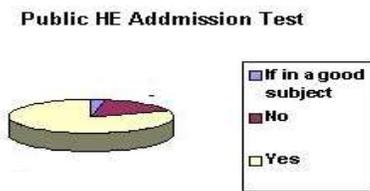


Figure 9.

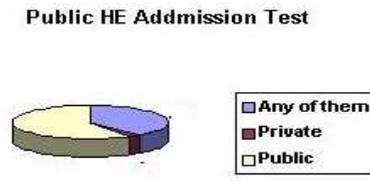


Figure 10.

Triangulated data confirms that the academically less able and the under-qualified and the disqualified students consider private university if they could afford it. This situation generates the question: “Are students studying in the private universities academically capable of pursuing HE?” These low performers at the prerequisite level pass out with good artificial grades from private universities at the cost of an image crisis for HE.

Further, PVHT, PUHT and PVHST were requested to review the level of competence of their students (Figures 11, 12 and 13). These figures illustrated that all PUHT considered their students to be ‘excellent’ while PVHT and PVHST considered the competence level to be ‘bad’ (Note 4).



Figure 11

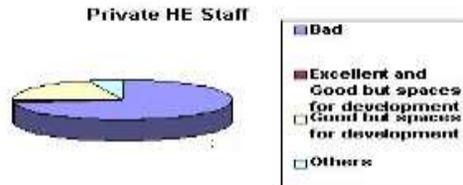


Figure 12

Private HE Teachers

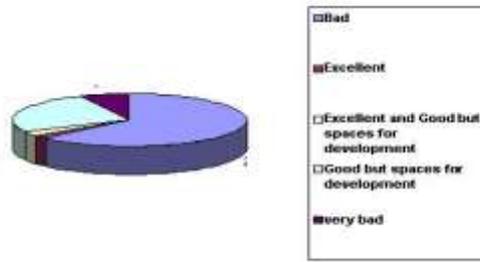


Figure 13

Private HE Teachers

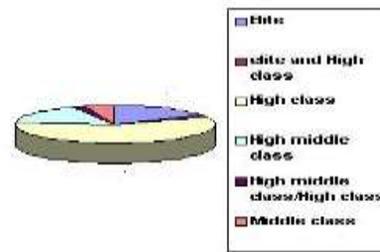


Figure 14

Public HE Teachers

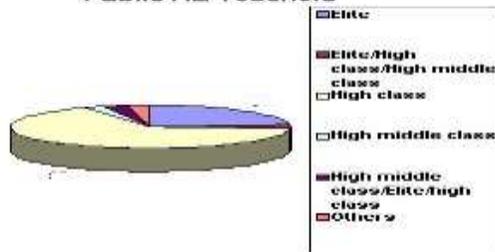


Figure 15

Private HE Staff



Figure 16

5.3 Family Background of Students

Figures 14, 15 and 16 present the views of PVHT, PUHT and PVHST concerning their students' family background. Tables 4 and 5 indicate that a considerable number of disqualified (Note 5) students who are studying are sponsored by their parent(s). Conversely, a considerable number of students in public universities are financed by relatives other than their parents (PUHS, IPUHS). (IPVHS, PVHS).

Table 4. On the issue of 'economically solvent but academically poor' students admitted to the private University

	Academically poor but economically solvent students?		
	True	Fairly True	False
PVHST	75%	20%	0
PUHT	89.47%	7.89%	0
PVHT	83.72%	16.27%	0

Table 5. On the issue of 'meritorious but economically poor students not capable of being admitted to a private university

	Meritorious but economically poor students not capable?		
	True	Fairly True	False
PVHST	75%	21%	0
PUHT	92.10%	5.26%	0
PVHT	76.74%	18.60%	4

There are students for MBA and professional programmes who are self-funded.

"If you want to run a private university, your location must be in the most urban area, especially in Dhaka, not in Comilla."

said an ex-VC of Dhaka University, presently the VC of a private university in Comilla. Documents show that of 73 private universities, including 66 in Dhaka, one in Comilla, and the rest are in Chittagong and Sylhet. Private universities have positioned themselves in these areas because of the wealthy.

PVHS shows that many students studying in private universities are children of high-ranking officials of public enterprises (Note 6) and business executives. Public officers in Bangladesh receive low salaries with high illegal income (Note 7) for which their children failed to supply accurate figure related to family income. According to PVHS, IPVHS, PVHT and PVHST private HE students are not only rich but also belong to well-educated families. Scholarship in private universities is a sweet trap to attract more students who may not be very intellectual. It is interesting to note that the scholarships offered in private universities are solely funded by the tuition fees and not by any sponsor. Therefore such tricky scholarships for a few raises the tuition fees for everybody. Many private universities advertise that students with a GPA of 5 can study without paying fees. However, this qualification can help such students to study free of cost in a public university. Private universities use a business technique known as ‘*sale tuition*’. A non-elite private university charges a minimum of TK80,000 through ‘*sale tuition*’ per academic year excluding other charges such as examination fees, library charges, and charges for accommodation and transport. Only the wealthy can afford this.

5.4 Academics

The marketing materials of private universities highlight only the excellent profiles of their staff. The IKPV claims that some eminent international academics are guest faculties of the private universities. We contacted two of them who are in the UK and the USA to clarify their involvement as guest faculty who have refuted such claims from IKPV. Some reputed national academics from public universities appear on faculty list of different private universities. Actually the private universities have academics who are either guest speakers from public universities or on their full time faculty.

5.5 Guest Speakers

The PUVT and PVHT were asked whether they were involved with other organisation as part-timers. No academic from the private universities is involved with other organisations. Conversely, 86.84% of academics from public universities were involved with the private universities while 13.16% were not involved because the private universities do not offer their subjects (Figure 17). The private universities label them as guest speakers.



Figure 17

Figure 18

PVHS shows that a substantial number of public university academics work as ‘guest speakers’ in private universities. Additionally, 97.67% of PVHT say that a considerable number of their colleagues are full-time employees of public universities (Figure 18). Before analysing the role of ‘guest speakers’, we can consider the data presented by the UGC (Note 8). The data supplied by private universities for the UGC reports are confusing and unreliable as they are fed by the private universities which are trying to be prestigious with misleading data. For example, that UGC report of 2011 contradicts the figures given by a university about its guest speakers. (Note 9) However we have to bank upon the UGC report since it is impossible to collect data from individual universities (Note 10).

Table 6. Academics of private University

Total number of Universities	Total number of Academics	Average number of Academics	Full-time Academics	Average number of Full-time Academics	Guest Speakers	% of Guest Speakers
73	6363	85.80	3877	53.11	2486	38.00

Source – UGC Annual Report 2011

Table 6 confirms that the average size of the private universities’ academics is small. It also indicates that 38.10% of them are ‘guest speakers’. In addition, a considerable number of public universities’ academics specialising in market driven subjects are working in many private universities simultaneously either on paid or unpaid leave. Furthermore, retired academics from the public universities are working as full timers with them. Many of the ‘guest speakers’ are from Dhaka where most of the private universities are located.

An important point is illustrated by a full-time academic from a public university:

‘Before I became a guest speaker, I was experiencing hardship. I used to commute by bus. Life was miserable. I had been thinking that, my life would have been better had I been a professor because of the consultancies. A promotion to professorship demanded for more publications for which I had to walk long distances for data collection. But now I have a house and cars for myself and my family. Currently I need to lecture once a week in Dhaka University and I lecture from 10 am to 9 pm in different private universities. I don’t bother anymore for consultancy.’

Despite academic’s satisfaction, it raises a few serious issues:

1. If the employment market of the private university is occupied by the academics from the public universities, what are the prospects for unemployed fresh graduates?
2. If public university academics are widely engaged with the private universities, who are going to meet the demands in the public universities?
3. An increased income of some academics specialised in popular subjects will dissatisfy the rest.

IPVHS and IPUHS report that ‘guest speakers’ are very ‘erratic’ in taking classes. Therefore the real workload is given to their own faculties, who are poorly paid (IPVHT). They point out that public university academics are employed for universities’ image. Hence, we argue that there is a huge shortage of experienced, competent academics in market-driven subjects, since their inception in 1990s. We believe that this shortage leads to an over engagement of academics from the public universities. However, if the academics of public universities can shoulder the workload of the private universities, why cannot they increase their own enrolment in their parent universities? The public universities can offer various shifts (Note 11) as their academics are lecturing in various shifts at private universities to meet the differentiated demands. We argue that the job market within the private universities remain small when compared to the number of universities. The sector does not extensively provide jobs for new graduates and its contribution towards addressing unemployment is negligible.

5.6 Own Faculty

According to the UGC rules, each private university must have a significant number of own academics. However, we noted that there are no ‘own academics’ in seven universities. Old private universities generally have more ‘own academics’ than the recent ones. The involvement of both experienced and inexperienced academics is ensured when ‘own faculties’ are recruited (Figure 19). The number of ‘own faculty’ are always dominated by inexperienced academics (Figures 19, 20, Table 7). In recruiting new graduates, private universities included both ‘excellent’ and ‘not-so-excellent’ groups, as the excellent graduates frequently changed jobs (Figure 20 and 21).

Percentage of recently graduated teachers involved exclusively with this university

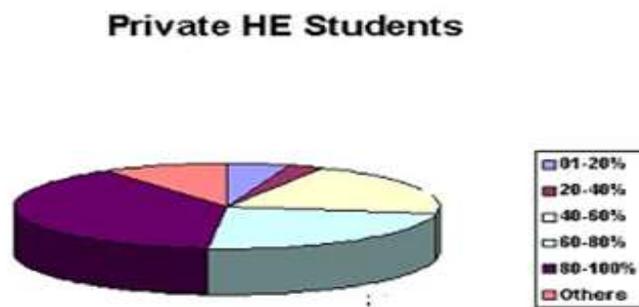


Figure 19.

Percentage of experienced teachers involved exclusively with this university:

Private HE Students

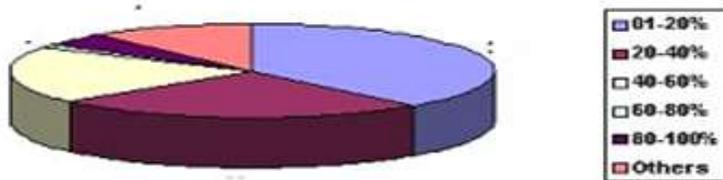


Figure 20.

Respondents were asked to give their opinion in relation to the qualification and experience of teachers involved exclusively with their particular university:

Private HE Students

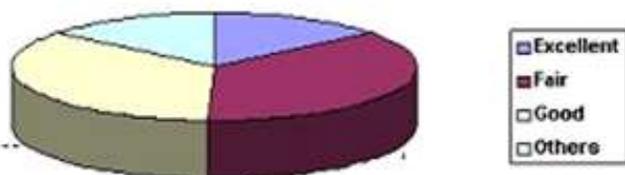


Figure 21.

Private universities do not provide scholarships to its academics to pursue HE in developed countries, which is vital for the future. In contrast, salary and social prestige are greater for academics in public universities.

An interesting point is illuminated by a respondent:

‘If I am employed by the public counterpart or with the controlling agency, I may work with different private universities as a guest speaker, which is good in order to earn more money with less work. Now, as a lecturer at a private university, I have heavy workload. One of my classmates, as qualified as I am is working with Dhaka University as well as working a guest lecturer of this private university as my supervisor enjoying a miniscule workload.’

Interview data from graduates having ‘excellent’ academic backgrounds demonstrate that they are more inclined to work in public universities or in a Public Service Commission. Many of them wish to pursue HE and emigrate to developed countries (PVHS, IPVHS, and IPVHT). The authorities of private universities employ a strategy to offer jobs to highly qualified for their own publicity and to the less qualified to take the real heavy load regardless of any time frame. The figures 21, 22 and 23 present the view of the students on this issue.

Respondents were asked to give their opinion in relation to the qualification and experience of teachers involved exclusively with their particular university:

Private HE Students

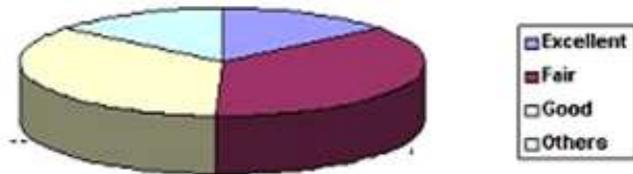


Figure 21.

Respondents were asked for their opinion in respect of the teachers' movement (transfer) situation:

Private HE Students

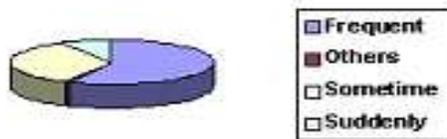


Figure 22.

presents the views of PUHS on the issue of their teachers' involvement with private HE sector.

Public HE Students

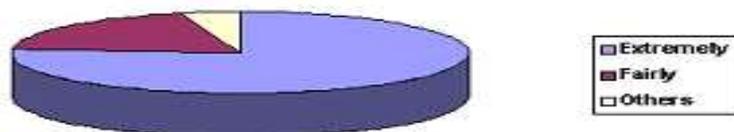


Figure 23.

Table 7. In 2010, number of academics of Public and Private Universities according to qualification

Type of University	Total number of Universities	Total number of Academics	Academics with PhD Or M.Phil	Academics without higher Degree	Percentage of Academics without Higher Degree
Public	42	8950	5680	3342	37.35
Private	73	6363	2254	4109	64.58

Source: UGC Annual Report 2011

In order to clarify Table 7, it is important to note that guest speaker academics of public universities with a PhD are also included under 'private university' failing which the total number of highly qualified academics would be low in private universities. However, the number of academics with a PhD in private universities still seems to be insignificant (Table 7). Only a few of the own academics of private universities have higher degrees. Therefore the expansion of the private university should not be at the cost of public universities' quality which can lead to the deterioration of the entire HE.

5.7 Course and Curricula

Let us have a glance through a statement of a VC on the programmes offered by the private universities.

"Each of the private universities (Note 12) usually offers a Bachelor and Master's degree in Business Administration and Computer Science. Although different universities do offer other areas of study, the number of students enrolled onto other programmes is negligible".

Students were randomly selected and asked to complete a questionnaire. 69.34% were studying Business and 20.53% were studying Computing. IKPV claims that private universities provide modern courses and curricula by North American standards vis-à-vis IPVHT's argument that the 'inept' students are incapable of coping up. They say that they do not have the competency to follow difficult subjects such as Computing, Business and Pharmacy as a result of which many private universities cannot follow the official course too rigidly. IPVHT also points out that the majority of students in the private universities are incompetent to pursue Bachelor and Masters level courses in an 'easier' subject let alone in more difficult subjects. Some academics in Business Administration illustrate an important point. They are concerned about the lack of competence amongst graduates studying American courses. Hence an academic commented:

'Since the country has been following colonial rules and regulations for different course areas, graduates of Business Administration who have been taught rules and regulations applicable in the USA will be incompetent in related jobs. This results in a clash between the old and new graduates, which is affecting the working atmosphere.'

A business graduate from a reputed private university further explained the situation:

'After graduating from the ..., I applied for jobs in the public sector. I failed to obtain one, as the graduates who had studied the colonial course and curriculum were examiners on the interview board. Finally, I joined a nationally reputed private organisation where IBA (Note 13) graduates are in the majority. Graduates of IBA are familiar with both the systems to manage all situations. I can adjust to the IBA graduates but cannot cope with other graduates who have studied in public universities. I feel uncomfortable when I am assigned to the public sector for different tasks.'

It is ambitious for private universities to provide courses with comparative perspectives as there is a lack of good students and competent academics (IKPV, IHPU). However, without providing a suitable course curriculum of comparative content, it is impossible to produce dynamic graduates for contemporary subjects who will be capable of introducing the radical changes needed to replace the colonial system. IPVHT and IPUHT place heavy emphasis on pedagogy and academics to meet the modern courses, assessments and examinations. They believe that these factors will take care of the latest designs and the future requirements of the syllabi.

The assessment and examination system of Bangladeshi HE is subject to rigorous criticism.

'Students with Bangladeshi HE do not write assignments. They just take examinations. They are also provided selected questions to take the examinations. Answers to the questions are prepared by the tutors.'

Students simply need to memorise the answers and reproduce them in the final examinations. The students, who can perfectly copy their tutors' ideas, are the best students.' (IPUHT)

Within these constraints, a Bangladeshi student cannot be nurtured either as an innovator or as a researcher. Should a student write a paper with the topic related to the subject, it helps in exploration. If students are assigned a specific topic, they must do some research to collect data. Tutors are updated with the subject content, and with local and international debate of the subject, in order to direct their students. These situations provide much information about issues related to the subjects' local and international demands. As such, there is scope to provide tutors with sufficient information to moderate the course and curricula to meet the future demand, and motivate policy-makers to address problems which may be experienced within the different sectors.

Let us spotlight an issue that policy-makers and academics should ponder on. Findings and analysis indicate that allegiance is shifting from the British to the American systems. Bangladeshi HE appears to be replacing the British system with another 'colonial' system – the American system. In such circumstances, we suggest that a simple shift of allegiance from one philosophy (British) to another (American) cannot adequately meet local demands.

5.8 Infrastructure and Educational Atmosphere

At PVHS, 100% of the respondents agree that the educational and sports facilities are inadequate. Some private universities have facilities for indoor games. IKPV thinks otherwise. They claim that, since their students are from elite families, they are invariably more interested in playing video and computer games.

A vice chancellor said:

'Ninety-nine percent of the students in our university are interested in playing video and computer-games. We have sufficient facilities to offer computer and video games to fulfil the needs of our students. So if we buy equipment and rent a field for outdoor games, it will be a programme for wasting money and time. We may invest money for educational resources instead.'

Even if the VC confessed that they invest for educational resources, however according to the perceptions of the students and academics in private universities, there is a lack of adequate resource such as library, internet, teaching materials and well equipped classrooms. His comments on extracurricular activities are unacceptable as the students will fail to achieve their holistic personality without outdoor games. Cultural programmes are mostly neglected in private university. However, it is interesting to note that a significant number of students are involved in some form of cultural affairs, with an affiliation with local cultural clubs and organisations

Only four private universities have their own campuses while a few had purchased a land in anticipation of providing a campus in the future. Many of the universities are situated in congested residential buildings.

6. Conclusion

This study has attempted for providing an in-depth picture of the four parameters in the context of private universities with an exclusion of detailed explanation of other auxiliary parameters like governance, management, teaching and educational resources. However, these auxiliary parameters always supplement the fundamental parameters to impart quality education. In absence of excellent fundamental parameters, other auxiliary parameters do not work even if they are excellent. Moreover, if these fundamental parameters are not up to the mark, the auxiliary parameters cannot excel since they are dependent on the fundamental parameters. Findings and discussions infer that quality of these four parameters is unsatisfactory. We have provided some strategic guidelines for improvement. However there are no shortcuts to a success. Rapid expansion of private HE will not bring prospects unless the whole system is driven by quality education. Quantitative expansion of the whole system will be seriously detrimental to the quality of entire education. The overall education system should be ready to function effectively before any massive expansion. Finally, with an apposite industrial linkage, HE should provide access to the academically competent students without any discrimination against their family and economic background.

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Notes

Note 1. A political party

Note 2. Universities in Dhaka and Chittagong are older, compared to Khulna and Sylhet. Authorities of the newer universities claim that they have been established with modern concepts and are regulated with dynamic management systems.

Note 3. a few universities have fewer than 10 students

Note 4. 'bad' is used here to denote 'poor', as local respondents may misunderstand the meaning of the word 'poor'.

Note 5. Few respondents studying for a Bachelor (Hon) degree in the private HE sector, especially university provision, pass SSC and 'O' level but to study a Bachelor course, students have to have at least HSC or 'A' level.

Note 6. bureaucrats, academics, army, police and customs officers

Note 7. for example, bribes, corruption when spending official budgets, consultancy fees, private coaching fees

Note 8. the total number of guest teachers in private universities

Note 9. Data was collected in 2011/12. UGC used the data of 2011. According to annual reports (2003-2011) of UGC, recruitment of teachers in private universities was increasing thus, it would be expected that the total number of teachers in 2012 would be more than 2010/11. Unfortunately, the total number of academics in 2012 of some private universities is less than that of 2010

Note 10. this is the only source of the required data

Note 11. morning, afternoon, evening, weekend

Note 12. No private Universities are allowed to offer research degrees

Note 13. Institute of Business Administration of Dhaka University (DU). DU is the premier university in the country