

## THE ROLE OF PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES IN DEVELOPING HIGHER EDUCATION OF BANGLADESH

---

Md. Ruhul Amin\*

Md. Rezaul Karim Hawlader\*\*

### ABSTRACT

*This study is designed mainly with a view to evaluating the contribution of private universities in the growth and development of higher education in Bangladesh. It is based both on primary and secondary data and information. Primary data were mainly collected from the sample private universities located in Dhaka. A brief statement on problems of private universities (PU), the role of private universities along with the role of the Board of Trustees / Entrepreneurs / Sponsors in enhancing higher education, quality of higher education etc. have been included in this study. A good number of relevant literatures on different aspects of management relating to private sector education have been reviewed. Besides these, some recommendations for overcoming the current problems and for ensuring quality of higher education have been discussed. The paper concludes that the business in the name of education must be stopped and the private universities must be compelled to abide by the law if they want to run their function.*

**Keywords:** *Private University, Higher Education, Quality Education, Mismanagement, and Conflict.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Generally, Private University is such type of university that is run without the control of any government entity except concerned legal framework as opposed to public universities. Tuition fee at private universities tend to be much higher than at public universities. Private universities are found in operation in some countries like in Australia, Austria, Bangladesh, Brazil, China, Chile, Germany, India, Iraq, Ireland, Japan, Lebanon, The Netherlands, Malaysia, Mexico, Pakistan, Portugal, United Kingdom, and the United States etc. but do not exist yet in many countries of the world.

Private university system in Bangladesh started in 1992 and all the private universities in Bangladesh are established under the Private University Act 1992. During the early 90's government as well as the civil society of Bangladesh felt that existing public universities are not sufficient to meet the constantly increasing high demand for higher education in Bangladesh. Moreover, to maintain the quality education most of the reputed public universities kept themselves extremely selective and each year a large number of students failed to get admitted into the higher educational institutions. All those issues were leading them to establish universities in private sectors. On August 9, 1992, the Private University Act (Act 34) 1992 was passed by the National Parliament and within the next few years a good number of private universities were established in Dhaka, Chittagong, Rajshahi and Sylhet. At present (**up to 2014**) 80 (eighty) private universities are run in the country with Government and UGC approval. Most of them are established in Dhaka city.

---

\* Professor, Department of Management, Faculty of Business Administration, Islamic University, Kushtia, Bangladesh, [ruhuliu@ib@gmail.com](mailto:ruhuliu@ib@gmail.com).

\*\* Deputy Director (Finance & Accounts), University Grants Commission of Bangladesh, Dhaka, Bangladesh, [mrkhbd@yahoo.com](mailto:mrkhbd@yahoo.com)

Till now, not a single private university among the existing **80 (eighty)** private universities has acquired a permanent certificate by fulfilling all of the Government imposed rules and regulations.

After enacting of Private University Act 35 of 2010, July 18, 2010 a huge number (over fifty) of private universities were under processing for approval (2011).

In spite of better facilities as to instruction, accommodation and research, public universities in Bangladesh could not expand and cater for the needs of growing students seeking higher education due to constraint of limited number of seats, availability of fund and other limitations. So the demand had to be met from somewhere other than public universities. In such a context, it was found that a significant number of students went abroad to study at a much higher cost or took admission in the affiliated colleges working under national universities, most of which lack adequate facilities to offer quality higher education at a satisfactory level. Considering the problems of expansion of existing public universities and the difficulties to set up new ones, the University Grants Commission of Bangladesh advised to the Government of Bangladesh to allow the functioning of private universities in Bangladesh. In fact the establishment of private universities became essential to release the pressure of admission seekers in public universities, to accommodate desired needs of students, to meet growing and changing needs of a market economy to save the foreign currency for those who are interested to go abroad to get education easily etc.

Now 80 (eighty) private universities (up to the year 2014) have been set up in Bangladesh. However, most of them have not yet emerged as full-blown universities. Most of the universities have not yet fulfilled all the conditions provided in the Act of 1992, as Modified in 1998 & Amended in 2010 and thus yet to get a certificate of incorporation. All of these institutions are functioning under temporary permission. After enacting of the Private University Amendment Act (PUA) 2010 a huge number (over fifty) of private universities are under process of approval and get permission to run their activities. Further, the management pattern, administration system, academic aspects varies from university to university and there are allegations of mismanagement and business oriented look in some cases. Though 23 (twenty three) years past these institutions are run in the country, but researches and writings on private universities in general are found to be very few. In fact, only a few seminar papers and newspaper articles have found on this subject till today. Thus, it should be undertaken a depth study on different issues of private universities along with the relevant aspects of academic performance and this study is made particularly to assess the overall conditions of private universities in developing higher education in Bangladesh.

## 2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main objective of the study is to assess the role of private universities of Bangladesh in higher education. Other specific objectives are as follows:

01. to analyze the influential roles of the governing body of private universities ;
02. to find out the quality of higher education or the standard of higher education in the private sector and whether it is continuing or not;
03. to identify and analyze the problematic areas of the private universities of Bangladesh and its possible solutions.

### 3. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

#### **3.1. Pattern of data**

This study is based both on primary and secondary data and information. Primary data were collected from the sample Private universities located in Dhaka. It was also included the University Grants Commission of Bangladesh as well as the Ministry of Education of Bangladesh. These data were collected through questionnaire, evaluation of reports and opinion of concerned people. Beyond these, some academicians and experts engaged in private university functions have also been consulted. Secondary data were collected from various research journals, books, articles, newspapers, annual reports, research reports, seminar and conference proceedings and online journal on private university's literature.

#### **3.2 Sampling Design**

The study was conducted on 09 private universities as samples out of 42 operating in the Dhaka City under the approval of University Grants Commission of Bangladesh (up to 2011). In this study, the universities were selected by using random sampling techniques. Again a total number of 72 respondents engaged as top level executives in the university, including VCs, Pro VCs, Treasurers, Registrars and Controller of the Examinations were selected based on the random sampling techniques from the selected areas for the present study.

Besides these certain numbers of general students of the universities and their guardians have also been selected.

### 4. LITERATURE REVIEW

About 23 (twenty three) years have elapsed since the establishment of private universities in Bangladesh. But during this period, no significant research and in depth study is found in this field. Only some newspaper articles and reports are found in this regard, but most of them are not research based. A very few seminar papers, online articles are found. Till now no M. Phil or PhD level research work is available in this field. So, the scarcity of resources of literature review in secondary level exists, most of the present work are based on primary data were collected through an appropriate design questionnaire. However, some important available literatures are explained bellow:

The first private university in South Asia in SAARC region), Aga Khan University, was established in Pakistan in 1983. Here (the 'Deemed Universities' that are founded in India are not considered a category of full-fledged universities until 1991, there were only two recognized private universities, Aga Khan University and Lahore University of Management Science (LUMS) established in 1985. During the 1990s, many private institutions of higher learning were established with the approval of the government.

He added the case of India is interesting. India has the most developed largest private sector. It has the second largest higher education system in the world which comprises approximately 304 universities, including 62 'deemed universities', 11 open universities, 14600 colleges, 10 million students and 0.5 million teachers (Gupta, A. 2004). In spite of this, India decided, unlike Pakistan and Bangladesh, to encourage full-fledged private universities only very recently. However, it has a large number of a separate category of universities that India calls 'Deemed to be University' (Siddiqi, 2006)

Deemed universities were conceptualized by the UGC on the recommendations of the Radhakrishnan Committee set up in 1948. But on January 18, 2010, the government filed an affidavit in the Supreme Court proposing withdrawal of deemed-university status in the case of 44 private higher education institutions out of existing 132 deemed universities in the country for deficient in terms of academic curriculum, research, governance, and infrastructure and gave them three years to improve their functioning, spread over 13 states with an aggregate enrollment of 200,000 students (Gupta, 2011).

Unlike in some developing countries where government plays a key role in promoting private sector's education, the government of Bangladesh has contributed little apart from enacting the private university authorization law, which itself came into existence after years of haggling between authorities and promoters. The seed money for private education has come from individuals and corporations (Chowdhury, 2007).

In the modern competitive world where, unfortunately, everything is determined by the capital or to use the Marxist's phrase, by 'economic mode of production', there should be a balanced amalgamation between the liberal education and technical education (Rukanuddin, 2008).

Almost our private universities that they have managed to create self-contained enclaves within our society. In an environment of deteriorating governance, there is a belief that by privatizing our consciousness and aspirations, a small class of Bangladeshi can aspire to practice a form of social apartheid, which effectively disconnects them from the world around them (Sobhan, 2006).

Huge students from wealthy families get admission to this type of universities for obtaining untroubled and session jam free degree by investing a huge amount of money. The initial objectives of private universities, whatever it may be now becoming as business enterprises (Bhattacharje, 2007).

UGC Annual Report – 2005 was published in January 24, 2007. The report recommended that public universities admit a limited number of student's based on its resources. But private universities are admitting more and more students with a view of their business not quality (UGC Annual Report - 2005).

In a report of UNESCO of 1993 page 87, it is clearly mentioned that the University is a non-profit institution, and, especially in countries with limited economic resources. The report also mentioned on page 23 that autonomy is indispensable to the role and work of the university (Islam, 2007).

The private universities are miserably poor from the infrastructural point of view even though they are rich as long as financial strength is concerned. Most of the private universities are based in Dhaka and located with – in 1 or 2 km area. The PU Act does not specify the required teacher-student ratio in a private university (Mazumder, 2000).

Private universities have no session jam, that's why students can complete their education within a limited period and look for a job earlier their public universities counterpart. The environment of private universities is more focused to the study than that of public ones. (Kashem, 2010).

UGC has reported that the standard of education in most of the public universities is not up to the mark. The reasons include student politics, irregular and interrupted classes and examinations, unsatisfactory teacher-student ratios and so forth. In this context, most of these problems are non-existent in the private universities (Mahbub, 2009)

Bangladesh has a large education market other than 20 – 22 developed countries in the world. So to attract foreign investor in this sector national education policy should be reformed and take it easy. Specially, private university and same ranking organizations should be declared as education

industry. Then, complications to foreign investment in the higher education sector will be removed. It is recognized that within last 16 years private universities influence significantly in education and culture of our country. So to get optimal results from private universities proper planning should be taken and implemented. By declaring private educational institutions as an education industry would standard education through private universities can be provided (Rahman, 2008).

It is observed that most of the private universities face the acute problem of senior and qualified teachers. It is revealed that most of the private universities do not have a rich library and computer facilities good enough to cater to the need of their students. But the enrollment in the private universities hardly fulfills these expectations (Huq, 2001).

On April 27, 2011 Dr. M. Anisuzzaman, emeritus professor of Dhaka University incorporate in his speech as special guest on UGC Awards 2008 – 09 at UGC Auditorium that ‘in the twelve century, more universities were established in a small building in the capital cities of western countries but in the course of time their education system is put on present scenario.’ Just like that in the twenty first century at Bangladesh when one is walking alone on some roads of important areas of Dhaka city, the signboards of several private universities in the same building would let assume that establishing a private university is more easier than establishing a coaching center.

From the above study it is clear that no depth study was made on private university education. So it is believed that a sound study of the practice of private universities may help to ensure the quality of higher education in private universities that will make-up the hammerings of admissions in public universities of Bangladesh as well as save foreign currencies of Bangladesh by stopping the students going to abroad for higher education.

## 5. ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

### 5.1. Role of Private Universities in Bangladesh in Enhancing Higher Education

In 1992, the government enacted the Private Universities Act 1992 to facilitate the establishment of private universities with the assumption that these universities would supplement the government efforts to meet the demand for higher education. According to recently published UGC Annual Report 2010, 2,20,752 students are now studying at private universities as opposed to 1,79,128 at public universities (number of students not including of National University and Bangladesh Open University- Annual Report of UGC - 2010).

Private universities have not only been checking the exodus of students and the outflow of foreign currency, but also helping the government in accommodating the growing number of students seeking higher education and in reducing its enormous expenditure. These universities have also been able to present a politically free conducive academic environment and create a vast employment opportunity within the country and abroad.

### 5.2. Quality of Higher Education in Private Universities

From the establishment period of private universities in Bangladesh (about 23 years back) people were demanding quality higher education from these ends, but yet would not be possible to ensure them about that demand, whereas the quality of higher education in the private sector is continuously deteriorating over the years. In the connection with that ingredient, allied components were not up to the mark or not in attendance in maximum private universities which might be ensured the quality of higher education in the private sector. To meet the existing demand of quality higher education, to diminish the pressure of public universities, to save foreign currencies, to stop brain drain Private universities should uphold quality higher education in the private sector of Bangladesh.



The connections of the study, the hypothesis have been analyzed with the null hypothesis and an alternative hypothesis. It can show as follows:

**H<sub>0</sub>**: Private universities do not play the vital role in the quality of higher education in Bangladesh.

**H<sub>1</sub>**: Private universities play a vital role in the quality of higher education in Bangladesh.

**H<sub>0</sub>: μ = 5**

**H<sub>1</sub>: μ ≠ 5**

It was the two tailed tests of mean by using the **z** distribution.

Here,  $\mu = 5$

$$x = 4.8525$$

$$n = 122$$

$$s = \sigma = .49246$$

$$\alpha = .05$$

As known,  $\sigma_x = \sigma / \sqrt{n}$

$$= .49246 / \sqrt{122}$$

$$= .0446 \text{ Chart \# 2:03: shows the role in the quality of higher education}$$

Calculated value of **z** :

$$z = x - \mu / \sigma_x$$

$$= 4.8525 - 5 / .0446$$

$$= - 3.3072$$

**Observed value of z :**

Level of Significance,  $\alpha = .05$

As it was a two tailed test. So,  $\alpha = .05 / 2$

$$= .025$$

So observed value of **z = 1.96**

According to the above test, the calculated value was more than the observed value, it rejected the null hypothesis. So, the result is “Private universities play a vital role in the quality of higher education of Bangladesh”.

Furthermore, in this context, the study found that the teacher-student ratio is 1:33 and supporting staff-students ratio is 1:33 in existing private universities, and the study also revealed that the overall mean is 4.251025 and overall standard deviation of the data set is 0.815995 (table 7.1, 7.109 respectively). It was observed that (47.59%) private universities did compliance the ingredients that were directly involved to maintain the quality of higher education in the private sector, (36.37%) private universities did partial compliance, (12.6%) private universities did no compliance, (0.41%) private universities believed that these were not applicable for them, and rest (3.02%) private universities did not put their comments in this regard (table-7:110).

## 6. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

Private universities contribute a lot to meeting up the great demand of higher education in the country. Although, there are serious irregularities and dissimilarities on different issues like organization structure, management pattern, education quality and so on are prevailing among the universities. Moreover, there is no mechanism to ensure or control quality of higher education.

A lot of irregularities are always spreading about private universities to the people through the various media; some are proven through the inquiry committee formed by the government as well as UGC. The study was also found out that, in general, the cost of higher education in private universities of Bangladesh is somewhat expensive due to the imbalance between increasing tuition fees and an increasing amount of financial aid and scholarships. In the context of the enormous expansion of the country's secondary and higher secondary sector, the existing public and private universities cannot meet this demand and lots of students are going abroad every year. On the other side maintaining quality is becoming a vital issue in changing global scenario. Only a few universities are ensuring a regional or global level of standard and others are not quality concern. The study has observed that there are no concrete solution to eradicate the problems regarding PUs. In that case, some initiatives may be taken by the government through the regulatory body, i.e. UGC or equivalent organization which are as follows:

1. All private universities should be placed into under the Private University Act 2010 and a strong monitoring system should be established then as before;
2. The government is required to prepare definite guidelines to create a uniform statute under the standard guidelines for university statutes;
3. Income – expenditure of universities must be audited in each financial year by registered audit firms and the audit report must be submitted to University Grants Commission by 30th September.
4. An adequate sum of money must be provisioned in each year's budget to increase and modernize the laboratory and library facilities of the universities proportionately with the demand and this must be informed to the Commission.
5. An accreditation council should be formed to evaluate the standard of higher education of private universities;
6. The government can enforce a fixed set of policies through the formation of statutes under uniform guidelines for private universities concerning academic and administrative functions;
7. Private universities shall have to decrease their dependency on public universities in case of appointment of part-time faculties.
8. Academic activities of universities can be banned who have expanded their academic programs without prior approval from University Grants Commission;
9. The government should take necessary steps against the universities those violate the rules of enrollment of students.
10. A unified teachers/faculty's recruitment rules should be formulated under the guidance of UGC and concern Universities must follow the rules;
11. The authority should be given to introduce time-befitting and international standard curriculum to prepare the students to face global challenges;
12. Government should take necessary action against the commercialization of education and selling of certificates in the name of education.

Lastly, it may be said that fundamental requirements of a university in terms of permanent campus, library, and laboratory with sufficient equipment, adequate class rooms, books and above all sufficient numbers of teachers must be fulfilled. Therefore business in the name of education must be stopped and the private universities must be compelled to abide by the law if they want to function. It has to be ensured by the government that education should not be used by anybody as a commodity for profit-making purpose.

## REFERENCES

- Bhattacharje, S. Kumar (2007). *Aamader Uchashikhwa (Our higher education)*, The daily Sangbad.
- Chowdhury, Golam M. (2007). Challenges for private universities in Bangladesh, *NIAS Nytt*, An online article;
- Gupta, A. (2011). Deemed Universities in India: Confusion Reigns, *Journal of International Higher Education*, Vol. – 63, Spring.
- Huq, A.T. M. Zahurul. (2001). A Scenario of Higher Education in Bangladesh, Proceedings of the National Seminar on *the occasion of Foundation Anniversary of University Grants Commission of Bangladesh*, LGED Auditorium, Dhaka, April 15 – 16.
- Islam, M. Tazul et. al., (2007). Private University: A New Horizon for Higher Education in Bangladesh: Critical Review, *Journal of Faculty of Business Administration (JFBA)*, part – C, Vol. – 7, No. – 01;
- Islam, S. (2007). *Private Bissabiddalayer Proshashonik Kathamo ki hobe (What will be the Administrative Structure of Private Universities)*, *The daily Shamokal*;
- Kashem, N. (2010), Private Universities in Bangladesh: A Reality, Published by the *Articlesbase – An online journal*, <http://www.articlesbase.com/print/3057005>;
- Mahbub, M. (2009), Bangladesh: Private Universities meet demand, an online journal, <http://www.universityworldnews.com/article.php>;
- Mazumder, M. H. (2000). The Other Side of Private University Education, *The Observer Magazine*;
- Rahman, M. Azizur, (2008). Education Industry: Quality jump of private university, *The daily Jai Jai Din*;
- Rukanuddin, M. (2008). The aim of University education, *The Independent*.
- UGC. (2005). *Annual Report- 2005*. Dhaka, Bangladesh: University Grants Commission of Bangladesh
- Siddiqi, Hafiz G. A. (2006). Private universities in global perspectives, *The daily Independent*.
- Sobhan, R. (2006), The responsibilities of private education, *The Daily star*.



APPENDIX

**Table : 01**

Sl No	Name of University	Annual Students		Total Teacher	Total Staff	Teacher – Student Ratio	Staff – Student Ratio	Remarks
		Intake	Total					
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
11	ASA University	1200	3405	104	76	1:33	1:45	
22	BUBT	750	4500	150	119	1:30	1:38	
3	BRAC University	1000	3500	181	109	1:19	1:32	
4	East West University	2439	7187	282	191	1:26	1:38	
5	Daffodil Int. University	3000	8000	276	251	1:29	1:32	
6	Green University	1200	4800	78	65	1:62	1:74	
7	Prime Asia University	1800	5000	150	85	1:33	1:59	
8	North South University	3592	16000	417	709	1:38	1:23	
9	Uttara University	2340	4778	98	119	1:49	1:40	
Total / Average		17321	57170	1736	1724	1:33	1:33	

Table # 7:01 : Shows Teacher- Student Ratio & Staff – Student Ratio of 2011

**Table: 02**

Questions Number	N Statistic	Mean		Std. Deviation Statistic	Variance Statistic
		Statistic	Std. Error		
PV_01	122	4.8852	.05726	.63241	.400
PV_02	122	4.8770	.05771	.63737	.406
PV_03	122	4.8525	.04459	.49246	.243
PV_04	122	3.9262	.06804	.75151	.565
PV_05	122	3.6885	.07728	.85360	.729
PV_06	122	3.8607	.09407	1.03904	1.080
PV_07	122	4.3443	.07058	.77960	.608
PV_08	122	4.1148	.07194	.79458	.631
PV_09	122	4.0656	.07245	.80018	.640
PV_10	122	4.0082	.07851	.86718	.752
PV_11	122	4.5492	.06170	.68154	.465
PV_12	122	3.9262	.09029	.99725	.995
PV_13	122	4.4180	.07347	.81149	.659
PV_14	122	3.8934	.08215	.90734	.823
PV_15	122	4.2377	.07085	.78259	.612
PV_16	122	4.3689	.11116	1.22778	1.507
<b>Total/average</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>4.251025</b>	<b>0.073878</b>	<b>0.815995</b>	<b>0.694688</b>

Table # 7:109 : Shows Summary of Theoretical Aspects Findings in Descriptive Statistics

**Table : 03**

Question Number	Frequency/Scale					Percentage	N	Remarks
	5	4	3	2	1			
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1	117	2	-	-	3	100.00%	122	
2	116	3	-	-	3	100.00%	122	
3	108	12	1	-	1	100.00%	122	
4	20	80	18	1	3	100.00%	122	
5	20	52	45	2	3	100.00%	122	
6	25	77	9	-	11	100.00%	122	
7	59	50	11	-	2	100.00%	122	
8	38	66	14	2	2	100.00%	122	
9	34	68	17	-	3	100.00%	122	
10	36	58	24	1	3	100.00%	122	
11	77	37	7	-	1	100.00%	122	
12	44	33	41	-	4	100.00%	122	
13	68	43	7	2	2	100.00%	122	
14	32	53	33	-	4	100.00%	122	
15	46	65	8	-	3	100.00%	122	
16	89	11	11	-	11	100.00%	122	
<b>Total</b>	<b>929</b>	<b>710</b>	<b>246</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>59</b>		<b>1952</b>	
<b>Percentage</b>	<b>47.59%</b>	<b>36.37%</b>	<b>12.60%</b>	<b>0.41%</b>	<b>3.02%</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>1952</b>	

Table # 7:110 : Shows Summary of Theoretical Aspects Findings in Percentage