

EDUCATION MANAGEMENT AT TERTIARY LEVEL: A CASE STUDY OF BANGLADESH NATIONAL UNIVERSITY (BNU)

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ABSTRACT

Education is the birth right of human being and higher education has become a must to explore one's talent in the world of Information Technology (IT) and mass globalization. This study entails the current academic and administrative scenario of tertiary level education in Bangladesh. The study attempts to present the realities and the challenges of Bangladesh National University (BNU). In order to execute the study, focus group discussion (FGD) has been made with a team of 12 current students and recent graduates of BNU. Related literatures have also been reviewed. A total of 18 variables are identified from FGD and literatures that describe the current scenario of BNU. Factor analysis has been conducted to reduce the number of total variables. Bartlett's test of Sphericity has been used along with the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) statistic. Some suggestions are made for the authority of BNU to overcome the current problems prevailing in BNU.

Keywords: *Bangladesh National University (BNU), Education, Management, Tertiary Level Education*

1. INTRODUCTION

A common proverb says, 'education is the backbone of any nation'. A nation can never succeed until it ensures proper education to its inhabitants. Bangladesh is a developing country and its level of literacy is on the boom. The education system of Bangladesh is promulgated and governed by Ministry of Education (MoE) and University Grant Commission (UGC) (Monem and Baniamin, 2010). The entire education structure can be divided into three (3) major stages: Primary, Secondary, and Higher (Ahmed et al., 2005). Primary education is scheduled for a 5-year cycle at a stretch where basics of fundamental courses are taught. Secondary education lasts for seven (7) years with three sub-stages: three (3) years of Junior Secondary, two (2) years of Secondary, and two (2) years of Higher Secondary level. Higher education, also termed as Tertiary education, is provided for a period of 3 to 5 years through universities. Currently, there are 34 public and 56 private universities in Bangladesh (UGC, 2013). At the same time, there are a total of 1840 affiliated colleges of BNU delivering higher education to the students (National University Website, 2013). Students can choose the medium of education, especially while appearing at the examination depending on the course nature, at both bachelor and master level: Bengali or English.

Tertiary education in Bangladesh comprises two categories of institutions: degree awarding universities and colleges affiliated to Bangladesh National University (BNU) (Ali et al., 1991). The number of colleges providing tertiary level education is around 1,900. Most of them offer BA (pass) education of three years' duration and only one-third of them offer B.A. (Honors) courses

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(Monem et al., 2010). Only about 12 percent of the year twelve graduates can enter into higher education. More than 83 percent of these students are in the BNU affiliated colleges (UGC, 2013). Others are in the public and private universities.

Bangladesh National University is the only self-funded public university in Bangladesh. All other public universities are partly funded by the University Grants Commission (UGC), apex body of the government for higher education (Ministry of Primary and Mass Education, 2003). The responsibility of BNU is confined to setting up curriculum and organizing and administering examinations. Private universities do not get any government assistance in terms of funding. Still they need to receive approval from the UGC to operate and award degrees (Campaign for Popular Education, 2003). The purpose of higher education is to generate and explore knowledge resulting in skilled manpower (UNESCO, 2006). Autonomy is a must for the centre of higher studies to be implemented under some set rules (United Nations, 2007). UGC places a monitoring system to observe whether the set regulations are being implemented properly (Ahmed et al., 2006).

Among all the universities of Bangladesh, BNU is the most neglected and underprivileged soon from its birth in 1992 (Wikipedia, 2013). The tertiary colleges under BNU rarely receive benefits as compared to other public universities of Bangladesh. Even the students graduating and post-graduating from BNU hardly get preference in the job market. Statistics show that out of total employment, only 1% belongs to BNU (Unilever Recruitment, 2012). However, this situation is yet to be resolved. For the overall development of Bangladesh, this vast educational sector needs to be flourished to its utmost potential.

2. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The main purpose of this study is to illustrate the current scenario of Bangladesh National University (BNU). Moreover, it focuses on following specific objectives.

- To track the problems of BNU from existing and former students
- To identify major factors that lead to all these problems
- To suggest ways in order to resolve these hurdles

3. METHODOLOGY

This study begins with an exploratory approach in order to get insight of the current scenario of National University of Bangladesh (BNU). A focus group discussion (FGD) has been conducted among 12 current and ex-students of this university. The discussants belong to different discipline and different colleges under BNU located in different locations. Apart from this, several literatures have been reviewed. Based on the outcome of FGD and other literatures, the questionnaire has been developed containing some demographic questions to classify the respondents and some 5-points likert scale statements in order to get interval scaled data. Using the questionnaire, primary data have been collected through surveying. The sampling frame for this study is all current and former students of BNU. The sample size is 50 considering 95% incidence rate and 90% completion rate. The respondents have been selected through stratified sampling technique based on following criteria:

Duration	Subject			Total
	Science	Humanities	Business Studies	
Less than 4 years	1	4	5	10
4 to 6 years	2	5	14	21
More than 6 years	4	7	8	19
Total	7	16	27	50

Statistical software SPSS 16 has been used to conduct factor analysis based on the collected data.

4. LITERATURE REVIEW

Bangladesh National University is neglected since its birth in 1992 (Wikipedia, 2013). There is hardly any literature or study conducted based on BNU. This research has been carried out to describe the current academic and administrative situation of BNU based on primarily collected data through focus group discussion (FGD) of a panel of current and former students of BNU. An extract from the published journals on BNU is described below.

Billah M. (2011) focused on session jam, lack of inter-departmental coordination, lack of monitoring, indiscipline in taking classes and exams, delay in result publication, corruption, and political recruitment of the teachers and other administrative staffs while describing the scenario of BNU.

A team of Bangladesh English Language Teachers' Association (BELTA, 2000) conducted a study in order to find out the problems. According to BELTA, long process of printing questions is a significant factor for session jam. Thus, they suggested establishing separate printing press for BNU. They also emphasized on teachers' training and making libraries informative. Lack of research activities and lack of opportunities for students to go for higher education also get importance in their study.

Apart from the aforementioned variables, some more variables have been identified by conducting focus group discussion of a team of 12 current and former students of BNU. These variables are somehow correlated and thus it is necessary to eliminate such multi-collinearity by reducing the number of variables. In this aspect, factor analysis is seemed to be appropriate.

5. ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

In this study, 18 variables have been taken into consideration. The variables are derived from the FGD and reviewing the literature on related subject matter. And for the factor analysis to be appropriate, the variables must have to be correlated. These variables are as follows:

- V1 – Timely Session Completion
- V2 – Timely Result Publication
- V3 – Political Influence
- V4 – Exam Center's Helpfulness
- V5 – Timely Held Classes
- V6 – Similarity in Syllabus
- V7 – On Time Exams and Viva
- V8 – Transportation Facility
- V9 – Accommodation Facility
- V10 – Good Number of Teachers

- V11 – Practice of English Language
- V12 – Available Books
- V13 – Student Quality
- V14 – Income Motive on Admission Test
- V15 – Self Motivated Teachers
- V16 – Students’ Motivation by Teachers
- V17 – Proper Teaching in Classroom
- V18 – Preference in Job Market

To test the null hypotheses that aforementioned variables are not correlated, Bartlett’s test of Sphericity has been carried out. The null hypothesis stated that the correlation matrix is a unit or identity matrix where all the diagonal terms are 1 and all the off-diagonal terms are 0. The test statistic for sphericity is based on a chi-square transformation of the determinant of the correlation matrix. A large value of the test statistic will favor the rejection of the null hypotheses. If this hypothesis cannot be rejected, the appropriateness of the factors will be questioned. Another useful statistic is the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy. This index compares the magnitudes of the observed correlation coefficients to the magnitudes of the partial correlation coefficients. Small values (below 0.5) of the KMO statistic indicate that the correlations between pairs of variables cannot be explained by other variables and that factor analysis may not be appropriate.

KMO and Bartlett’s Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.591
Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	325.060
	df	153
	Sig.	.000

Consequently, from the table above, it is apparent that the value of KMO is 0.591, which is between 0.5 and 1.0, and thus conducting factor analysis is appropriate. The approximate chi-square statistic is 325.06 with 153 degrees of freedom, which is significant at the **0.05** levels. Therefore, the null hypotheses can be rejected and it can be said that the variables taken for this study are correlated. To analyze the variables ranging from V1 to V18, it is wise to use factor analysis for data reduction. This analysis divulges the most important factors that describe the current scenario of National University of Bangladesh.

Total Variance Explained						
Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	3.645	23.248	23.248	2.926	21.258	21.258
2	3.337	17.540	40.788	2.864	17.909	39.166
3	1.672	12.287	53.075	2.009	12.161	51.328
4	1.589	9.828	63.903	1.949	10.830	62.158
5	1.118	7.211	71.114	1.612	8.956	71.114
6	.958	4.544	75.657			
7	.910	4.335	79.993			
8	.840	2.667	81.660			
9	.758	2.210	84.870			
10	.629	1.995	86.365			
11	.515	1.863	89.228			
12	.482	1.675	91.903			
13	.407	1.582	94.161			
14	.272	1.513	95.674			
15	.268	1.491	97.165			
16	.211	1.171	98.337			
17	.189	1.052	99.389			
18	.110	.611	100.000			
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.						

From the above table, only 5 factors have been extracted, as cumulative percentage is greater than 70% at this point and eigenvalue is greater than 1.0 (it is recommended that factors with eigenvalues greater than 1.0 should be retained) that indicates the adequacy of the analysis using derived factors.

Rotated Component Matrix					
	Components				
	1	2	3	4	5
Timely Session Completion	-.142	.679	.093	.396	.124
Timely Result Publication	-.289	.597	.180	.204	.181
Political Influence	.091	.372	.445	.071	.577
Exam Center's Helpfulness	.800	-.078	-.024	-.215	-.136
Timely Held Classes	.770	.223	.337	.059	-.190
Similarity in Syllabus	.339	-.653	.389	.158	.057
On Time Exams and Viva	.439	-.078	.521	.143	.126
Transportation Facility	.005	.379	.162	.505	.277
Accommodation Facility	.019	.134	.039	.580	.340
Good Number of Teachers	.034	.157	-.308	.650	.213
Practice of English Language	.030	.650	.121	.171	.287
Available Books	-.154	-.702	.099	.244	-.074
Student Quality	-.141	.084	.806	-.114	.122
Income Motive on Admission Test	.016	.149	.182	-.096	.701
Self Motivated Teachers	.704	-.232	-.029	.112	.281
Students' Motivation by Teachers	.819	-.027	-.088	.295	.106
Proper Teaching in Classroom	.142	.142	.584	.284	.434
Preference in Job Market	.198	-.132	.232	.753	-.144
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.					

The extracted 5 factors can be interpreted in terms of the variables that load high coefficients. From the rotated component matrix table, factor 1 has high coefficients for Exam Center's Helpfulness (.800), Timely Held Classes (.770), Self Motivated Teachers (.704), and Students' Motivation by Teachers (.819). Thus, the 1st factor can be entitled as "Intangible Motive". Factor 2 has high positive coefficients for Timely Session Completion (.679), Timely Result Publication (.597), and Practice of English Language (.650) whereas negative coefficients for Similarity in Syllabus (-.653) and Available Books (-.702). Thus, the 2nd factor may be labeled as "Disciplined Curriculum". Factor 3 has moderately high coefficients for On Time Exams and Viva (.521), Student Quality (.806), and Proper Teaching in Classroom (.584). Hence, the 3rd factor can be tagged as "Quality Assurance". Factor 4 has high coefficients for Transportation Facility (.505), Accommodation Facility (.580), Good Number of Teachers (.650), and Preference in Job Market (.753). So, the 4th factor can be named "Extra-Curricular Aspects". Finally, Factor 5 has high coefficient for Political Influence (.577) and Income Motive on Admission Test (.701). Thus, this 5th factor can be said as "Trust in Authority".

7. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

Keeping view on the aforementioned analyses and outcomes, it is apparent that the current situation of BNU has several major problems. After analyzing each of these, some major problems have been identified as follows.

7.1. Moral and Ethical Issues

The most severe problem prevailing in BNU is the lack of quality assurance. As the quality is ensured, the students are not able to learn in depth. Exams, viva, practical/lab exams, etc. are not held timely (Eduicon, 2013). Even teachers hardly spend time in teaching in the classroom. Thus the overall quality of BNU is at a stake. To get rid of such incidence, following tasks can be carried out.

- o Students should be admitted into BNU after a rigorous admission test. Thus, qualified students can get chance to study here. A team of teachers should observe the admission process inquisitively to refrain it from all probable discrepancies.
- o Teachers should take lectures properly in the classroom. There should be regulations that no teacher can ask the students to go for private tuition in respective teachers' coaching center.
- o The midterm exams, final exams, practical/lab exams, viva, etc. should be held timely. An exam committee should be formed to supervise the affiliated colleges under BNU so that no grievance can take place.

7.2 Curriculum Structure

The students of BNU suffer a lot due to lack of structured curricular plan. Though the books are available in the market and there is somewhat similarity in the syllabus followed among all the colleges under BNU, sessions are not completed timely, results get published a long time after the exam finishes, and English is rarely practiced in BNU (Monem and Baniamin, 2010). To surmount such indiscipline, following tasks can be undertaken:

- o A specific course syllabus can be introduced and distributed in all the affiliated colleges. Strong monitoring should be there to ensure whether the syllabus is being followed.
- o It is better to follow the same text and reference books in all the institutions. If it is not possible, there should be a list of books from which text and reference books will be selected. The booklist should be prepared keeping view on the availability of the books in the market.
- o Whatever the situation is, sessions should be completed timely. In doing so, the classes should start on time. The exams must be held on time. The exam copies should be evaluated and submitted on due date. Thus, the result should be published on time. A governing body is a must to regulate and supervise these tasks.
- o As the world is becoming globalized, knowledge of English is a must for everyone. Teachers should be trained to deliver lectures in English and motivate the students to practice English as much as possible. In some courses, English can be made mandatory to be followed.

7.3. Extra-Curricular Aspects

Apart from the curricular and disciplinary facilities, students are facing intense disorder in case of extra-curricular aspects as well. They have transportation and accommodation facilities by name only. Even there is hardly good number of teachers available. They are spending 7/8 years in completing their bachelor and masters degree, but they are hardly getting preferences in the job market. Following are some suggestions to get through these problems:

- o Transportation facility should be provided to the students, especially female students, who stay far from the affiliated college. To ensure this, every college should have three-to-four buses on different routes to carry students on different locations. To ensure better service, if necessary, colleges can charge a fee.

- o For the students who come to study from remote areas there should be accommodation facilities. Still there are some hostels/halls, but these are not adequate enough. New halls should be built in every college and distribution of seats should be based on urgency and requirement. No political influence and nepotism should be there while allocating seats.
- o Though there are a good number of teachers working in the BNU affiliated colleges, they spend very less time there. Thus BNU authority should impose some regulations for the teachers to be present at the college and serve the students at their best.
- o As there are a good number of public and private universities with good reputation, it is really hard to ensure preferences in the job market. But if the quality of the students can be enhanced and the corporate people can be made aware of the quality, the graduates of BNU can put a big fight in the job market as well.

7.4. Lack of Intangible Motive

The students are facing lack of intangible motivation. Intangible motivation in case of BNU refers to timeliness of scheduled classes, teachers' motivation, exam center's helpfulness, etc. To overcome this major problem, following actions can be taken:

- o Strong observation and control should be exercised from the government or core authority to see whether the exam centers are cooperating with the students.
- o Regular monitoring should be placed to check whether the classes are held timely. The teachers should be present in the class on time. They should not leave the classes before the class time ends.
- o Teachers should be given intrinsic and extrinsic rewards. The pay-scale of the teachers can be revised in order to motivate them to take classes regularly instead of calling students for private tuition. Performance based rewards, on due time promotion, scope for higher study and research, etc. can be provided as extrinsic rewards.
- o If the teachers can be motivated, teachers will be asked to motivate the students to attend the classes regularly. If the classes are held properly, it is very likely that the students will be loyal to the institution and the overall quality of education will be upgraded.

7.5. Trust in Authority

Apart from all of the aforementioned discussion on problems, the students should have a firm trust in the authority. Currently, it is seen that the admission test is a money making source and the decisions are politically biased. If this situation continues, the scenario of BNU can never be decorated (BNU Website, 2013). To manage the authority, following tasks are suggested:

- o The affiliated colleges can be kept free from student politics. Even the teachers involved into the politics should be called and advised not to practice it within the campuses. If the teachers do not pay heed to it despite several warning, they should be rusticated.
- o The admission test should be based on quality. The question paper should be prepared objectively. The paper should not be leaked. The exam should be conducted properly and fair selection should have to be ensured.

Education is a birth right for everyone. To keep pace with the world and to cope up with the changes being made globally, the students of any nation should be educated with updated knowledge, skills, and efforts. If there is any negligence and failure found, the entire nation can fall into the deepest hole of uncertainty. Bangladesh National University (BNU) is going through a filthy process where the students are fully unaware of and uncertain about their career path. If this situation is left go on, the largest university of Bangladesh containing more than 1.3 million students (UGC Report, 2013) will fail to serve the basic right of the students. This is the crucial time to face and overcome these challenges and build a smooth process of education so that the students of BNU as well as the whole nation can dream for a better future.

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