

Higher Education in Bangladesh: Status, Issues and Prospects



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Introduction

The development of a modern society depends to a large extent on the nature and standard of higher education. Thus the role of higher education is to prepare competent, knowledgeable and far-sighted people for assuming various higher responsibilities. The growing importance of knowledge in the modern world can hardly be overemphasized, especially in the era of globalization and in a global environment which is fiercely competitive. Particularly, higher education has enormous potential to promote prosperity in the developing nations (UGC : 2006).

In Bangladesh there was a time when higher education used to be considered a luxury in a society of mass illiteracy. However, towards the turn of the last century the need for highly skilled manpower started to be acutely felt every sphere of the society for self-sustained development and poverty alleviation. Highly trained manpower not only contributes towards human resource development of a society through supplying teachers, instructors, researchers and scholars in the feeder institutions like schools, colleges, technical institutes and universities. They are also instrumental in bringing about technological revolution in the field of agriculture, industry, business and commerce, medicine, engineering, transport and communication etc (UGC : 2005)

Institutions which are grouped together to comprise the higher education sector vary from country to country. In the case of Bangladesh, higher education, also called the tertiary level education is generally used to comprehend the entire range and dynamics of post higher secondary education.

Higher Education in Bangladesh: The Present Scenario

Higher education in the public sector is a legacy of the British colonial education system. At present there are 80 universities in Bangladesh of which 26 are public and 54 are private universities. Of the public Universities ten are general universities, five are engineering, three agricultural, five science and technological and one is university of arts and culture, one affiliating and one offering education only on distance mode. The number of students in the public universities is around 92000 excluding those in the affiliating National University and Open University offering distance mode education. The number of students in the latter two were 800,000 and 437500 respectively in the year 2004-05. Thus at the moment above 1.3 million of population receive higher education in Bangladesh of which 74 percent were male and 26 were female students in the year 2004. The percentage of female students enrolling at the universities is on the rise (UGC :2005). Higher education facilities of the public universities are spread over the

entire country, so that students of different regions can receive higher education without going very far from their familiar environment at home. Thus there is at least one public university in all the administrative divisions of the country.



Structure of Higher Education in Bangladesh

There are 5 types of higher education available in the country. These are: i. General Education; ii. Science and Technology and Engineering Education; iii. Medical Education; iv. Agricultural Education; v. Distance Education. In addition, the higher education sector also provides Vocational and Madrasha education.

In Bangladesh higher education consists of a 3 year pass-course or a 4 year honours course for the bachelor's degree, followed by a two year Master's course for pass graduates and a one-year Master's course for honours graduates.

Number of Students and Teachers in Higher Education

There are just over 1 million students studying at higher education level in the country. The following table shows their composition: the total number of students in the public universities is 112,430 while the affiliating National University (NU) and the Bangladesh Open University (BOU) have total of 777,492 and 437,500 students respectively. However, in the BOU only 84,271 are pursuing higher education studies.

The number of teachers in public universities other than NU and BOU is 6280 of whom about 17 percent are absent for different reasons. Leaving aside the absentees, the average student/teacher ratio in the public universities is about 1:18 (UGC :2006).

The number of National University Affiliated colleges in 2001 was 1297. There were 32278 teachers and 773492 students in these colleges, which meant a 1:24 teacher student ratio. At present, among the graduate and post-graduate students, 83% were studying in national University affiliated colleges and the rest in the public universities (UGC :2006).

Public Universities in Bangladesh

The area comprising the present Bangladesh was to have no university for a long time during the British rule. A teaching cum residential university was set up first in Dhaka in 1921. The second university was set up in Rajshahi in 1953. In total there had been 6 public universities in the country before 1971. After the liberation of Bangladesh in 1971, during the last 35 years, higher education scenario has greatly been transformed. The number of public universities has increased significantly. Let us look at some features of Public Universities-

- Enrollment rate has increased over periods
- There has been commensurate expansion of faculty in the universities. The teacher-student ratio, on average, has not varied much. On paper, teachers in the universities have better academic qualification now than before. There appears to be more publications made by academics now than before.
- The expansion is mostly quantitative. Quality of education has not improved.
- In general higher education is highly subsidized. In absolute term the extent of subsidy has been increasing over time.

- In the last decade the share of university allocation to total education reveals a saw-tooth trend with, however, a decreasing trend for last three years.
- The employee-student ratio reveals interesting trend. Against teacher student ratio of 1:17 on average, this ratio is 1:5 on the average.

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

Financing Public Universities

Most of the public universities are dependent on government for funding. However, of the 26 public universities the National University is financially independent of the government and very solvent. It derives its entire fund from students' registration and examination entry fees. The Open University of Bangladesh can cover about 30% of its revenue expenses from the fees collected from its enrollees and the rest is financed by the Government through the University Grants Commission of Bangladesh (Mahfuzul Huq :2003). The other public universities meet their needs in the following ways:

Students Tuition Fees and Other Fees:

Public universities cater the educational needs of the thousands of meritorious students at a nominal cost of TK. 12 (about 20 US cents) per month which has remained static for about the last 75 years. Thus, it goes without saying that sum does not even cover the cost of collection and maintenance records. Other incidental fees such as registration fees, sports, students union fees and examination fees have, however, increased to a large extent over the years so as to cover cost and even generate some income for their universities. But the tuition fees can not be enhanced due to strong pressure from students union and opposition political parties. Neither the university

administration nor the government is keen on taking serious steps to increase the tuition fees simply because of the fear of students' unrest and opening up a new front for political opposition.

1. Government Funding:

In the face of the above vis-à-vis a huge rise in costs of university administration the government has to spend a large amount of money for the public universities from the public exchequer every year. About 95 percent of the fund for higher education is provided by the government while a maximum of 5 percent on average are generated by the universities from their own resources.

Table 1: Public Expenditure on revenue account in some public universities

Universities	2002	2003	2004
Dhaka (general)	31027 (24559)	37496 (22616)	34413 (22683)
Bangladesh Agricultural	83123 (5001)	87761 (5172)	77359 (5596)
Bangladesh Engineering and Technology	34317 (7215)	36007 (7278)	35515 (7501)
Medical University	n.a.	161111 (522)	154430 (553)

Source: UGC Annual Report, 2005 (Note: Figures in parentheses are the total number of students)

The table indicates that expenditure per head varies from year to year and types of public universities. Thus, average expenditure for medical students and agricultural scientists has been the highest (Tk.154430 and Tk. 87761 respectively) particularly because of fewer number of students vis-à-vis high fixed costs while for general universities the average expenditure is rather low. Against the per head tuition fees of less than 150 (about 2.5 US dollars) per year released from the students this sum of public expenditure appears to be colossal in the backdrop of a poor country like Bangladesh. Yet, tertiary education receives inadequate importance in the public budget. This is true for both revenue and development allocations. While education is of all types of has received the highest priority in the budget allocation (about 10-11 percent of total revenue budget), funding for university/higher education has never reached even 1% of total revenue budget allocation during the last 10 years.

Table 2: Revenue Allocation for Education and Higher Education in the National Budget (in Crore Tk.)

Financial Year	National Budget	Allocation for Education	Allocation for Universities	Share of Percentage of University in Education Budget	Share of Universities in National Budget
2000-2001	34597.00	3587.46	288.67	8.05%	0.83%
2001-2002	35479.29	3738.97	293.57	7.85%	0.75%
2002-2003	39945.45	3960.39	323.53	8.17%	0.81%
2003-2004	46263.62	4474.80	389.85	8.71%	0.84%
2004-2005	50069.36	4608.85	409.11	8.88%	0.82%

Source: Bangladesh University Grants Commission, 2006

One striking feature of the revenue expenditure on education is that about 71% of the fund allocated for education was spent on teachers' salaries, pension and fringe benefits, 16% on general contingency and the rest 13% only was available for education contingency in 2003-2004. Yet, more surprising is the fact that only a tiny percentage of fund is allocated for research. Thus in the year 2001-2002 only 29 million taka out of 3773 million taka was earmarked for research and this is certainly a low percentage compared to the developed countries (Mahfuzul Huq :2003).

Since the close of the last century the public universities started facing huge amount of deficit in revenue budget. Thus in the year 2002-03 it was observed that 11 older universities in the public sector had an estimated deficit of around Tk. 100 crores. Most part of this deficit is accountable to inadequate release of fund in the revenue budget by the government vis-à-vis the demand by the universities to the Government (placed through the University Grants Commission).

On the other hand, student tuition fees and other dues could not be adjusted upward due to the vehement opposition from the pressure groups. Ad-hoc arrangements were made to make up this deficit in the form of spending from teachers and staffs provident fund, development fund and borrowing from banks. As a result, much needed development works, repair and maintenance suffered (Mahfuzul Huq :2003).

Trust Funds: The older and also some relatively newer universities receive trust fund from benevolent elite members of the public. Usually these funds are donated for particular purposes e.g. for awarding scholarship/research grants or medals for distinct performance in academic fields etc. in the name of some near or dear ones and hence can not be utilized by the recipient universities for other purposes such as infrastructural development or defraying particular expenses that may be urgently required.

Other Incomes: Some bigger universities have a few additional sources of income rental income from immobile properties (as residential houses, shops and related lands), income from forestry, fisheries, orchards and dairy. However, these incomes are often negligible and hence are not shown in the budget (UGC: 2005).

Modus Operandi of Budgeting Tertiary Education

Several stages are involved in the budget preparation for funding the tertiary education sector. The focal points of budgeting are three such as the University Grants Commission, the respective universities and the Ministries concerned (Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Finance). In general, the Ministry of Education asks the University Grants Commission (UGC) to submit a provisional budget on the basis of expenditure for 3 months (July, August and September of the current year) by the 31th October of each year. Accordingly, the respective universities are notified by the UGC. These universities, on the basis of demands for appropriation by each academic faculty/department, institute and administrative office prepare a provisional budget for the following year and a revised budget for the current year and submit the same to the University Grants Commission which is statutorily obliged to handle all financial matters of the public universities with the government. The UGC aggregates all the university budgets item wise, then submits these to the Ministry of Education with a marginal upward adjustment of 10% to 15% of the previous year's budget (UGC: 2004).

Again in February –March the university budgets are finalized by the UGC on the basis of previous 6 months' expenditure pattern of each university. Scrutinizing of individual budget through visit to the university at this stage are made by the UGC accounts officials in order to check the accounts and verify the authenticity of claim for appropriation. In the process necessary amendments/cuts in the budget are made. The UGC then negotiate with the Ministry of Education on behalf of the universities. The budget is ultimately finalized in March-April in a joint meeting of the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Finance. On receipt of the aggregate sanction by the

Ministry the UGC apportions this among individual universities on the basis of its subjective evaluation of each university's needs (UGC: 2004).

Quality Assurance

In the context of Bangladesh various Education Commissions that were set up so far theoretically emphasized on unlocking potential at all levels of society and creating a pool of highly trained individuals to contribute to the national development. For example, National Education Commission-2000 under the title Higher Education inter alia states that the goal of higher education will be acceleration and inventing new knowledge and creating skilled persons (MOE :2000). But these objectives can not be achieved if quality of education can not be ensured. Quality assurance in this context denotes “All the policies, systems and processes directed to ensuring the maintenance and enhancement of the quality of educational provision within an institution. A quality assurance system is the means by which an institution confirms to itself and to others that conditions are in place for students to achieve the standards that the institution has set”(Donald Ekong: 2003). It is important to note that quality is not static; with changing environment and advancement of technology it needs to be dynamic and always endeavor for excellence.

As to the public universities, quality assurance deserves more attention because these universities are established by the government and financed through state exchequer. Compared to private universities, the cost of education in these institutions is less as it is highly subsidized. In such a context and wider scope of entrance, vast majority of students enroll themselves in these institutions. On the whole, in Bangladesh the quality of graduates of public universities seems to have deteriorated as seen from the reports of the Public Service Commission and the analysis of opinions of employers both in the public and private sector jobs. This, however, does not mean absence of a small percentage of very high quality of students.

Quality Assurance: Major Issues and Problems

Quality assurance must be understood with clear idea about what to be assured. The relevant aspects in this regard assumed to be admission access policies, equal opportunities, credit accumulation, programme design course review, resource allocation for courses, research student's supervision, assessment and degree, academic staff appointment and development, academic staff appraisal, teaching and innovation, academic standards, interaction with

accrediting bodies and professional organizations, securing of student's view on academic matters (Mikas Sanyal :1992).

Though unfortunate it is largely true that quality education in the public universities has declined and that quality assurance faces internal and external problems.

1. Internal Factors

a. Student Intake :

University education is likely to be adversely affected by its poor base line i.e. intake. Quality of education at primary and secondary level is not satisfactory in most cases. Thus the outputs they provide as inputs of universities are found to have adversely affected quality of graduates in line with 'low level trap' (UGC: 2005).

b. Faculty Recruitment

There are four grades of university teachers such as Professor, Associate Professor, Assistant Professor and Lecturer. There is set rule of recruitment for which UGC has provided a guideline. But universities are found to have modified the rules through their respective syndicate in a lenient way. But the crux of the problem is that the best talent to jobs in education sector cannot be always ensured due to real pay and facilities compared to civil services and private sector opportunities.

c. Staff Development:

Quality of faculty is not up to the desired level. Selection procedure though theoretically more or less ideal yet in some cases proved faulty resulting from various factors. The situation as to appointment in the positions of Assistant Professor and above through upgradation/restructuring have proved to be counterproductive. Staff development, both as idea and practice, suffers from a lamentable lack of infrastructure facilities too. Teachers' commitment to search for knowledge, adequate teaching norms of academic behaviour is not above question. Teaching has become another job for some, where consultancy has become more important. The process has been further complicated by absence of faculty evaluation in the Universities. Improving the quality of faculty is made more difficult by the ill-conceived incentive structures. Faculty pay is generally very low in relation to that offered by alternative professional occupations.

d. Teaching Method:

The present method of teaching the basic subjects, particularly teaching science at all levels, have been made ineffective by outmoded method and lack of broader aspects of disciplines. The growth of quality education at all levels is based on teaching method to a greater extent which need to be supported with required infrastructure and facilities. Such a situation is very much lacking which needs upgradation.

e. Library and Laboratory:

Library and laboratory conditions are not conducive for quality education. There is no denying the fact that the use of library facilities by students and teachers have declined over the years. The teachers in most cases seem to rely on particular texts and the students seems to possess increasingly poorer language ability to comprehend and explore the vast expanse of scholarship that the libraries hold. The libraries are poor as they lack adequate resources to buy recent publications and order for the basic journals. Likewise, the laboratories suffer from inadequacy of equipments. Import dependence for such items have made the problems much more complex (Monjur Morshed Mahmud: 2002).

2. External Factors**a. Politicization:**

Of the external forces, the prevailing political culture of the country has been identified as being mainly responsible for the fact that the administration, the teachers and students body have all been thoroughly politicized. The net result is factionalism: chaos and session-jam. In fact, the system of linking political parties with their student wing resulting in the open political patronage to student politics has meant many things at once; a student leader can take out a noisy procession on the corridors of an academic building in complete disregard of the classes in progress and this without any permission from any authority he has free access to the highest political leaders either arising form national issue or local/university issue leading to disturbance, closure, strike at the university causing unscheduled suspension of classes.

b. Unplanned Expansion:

In absolute terms there has been an impressive quantitative expansion in the general university education even though the rate of increase in science and technology sector in not significant. There is no objection to such increase in line with population increase and increase in primary

and secondary level output. But the crux of the problem is that such increase always does not correspond to the needs, required infrastructure, faculty and financial facilities (UGC: 2006).

c. Financial Constraints

University administration faces a host of pressing problem to ensure required facilities for academic development and quality assurance under condition of severe resource constraints. For years it is observed that the governmental budgetary allocation to university education has declined considerably vis-à-vis other levels of education. Another significant feature has been that recurring expenditure increased rapidly at the expense of development grants (Taherul Islam: 2002).

Public Universities: Accountability Mechanism

To run universities freely as a centre for academic freedom some facilities like conducive environment for teaching and research, autonomy coupled with accountability etc. are necessary. In some public universities such as Dhaka University, Rajshahi University, Chittagong University and Jahangirnagar University, 1973 University Acts introduced the concept of autonomy, introduced the Senate and established the principle of collective leadership of the vice-chancellor in the Syndicate. But the gain proved short lived for various reasons with the result that during the period 1975-90, the changed tone of politics gave a new set of Acts for the newer universities. Autonomy, however, in the absence of universities' own adequate resources, and because of its sole dependence on the government has always been fragile, in actual terms (Zillur Rahman Siddiqui :1997). Further, it is seen that 1973 Act, provided some autonomy theoretically but the concept of accountability of administrative personnel and teachers was very much lacking. Further, neither the chairman nor the Dean who in terms of assigned responsibility, should be authorities to take note of a teacher's failure, whatever may be the nature of failure, is not in a position to play the expected role.

Absence of Faculty Evaluation at Public Universities

Evaluation of teachers help both self development of the teachers and improvement in teaching and quality education. In different countries this evaluation is done through self-evaluation scheme, peer rating, student evaluation and management evaluation. But in Bangladesh the system faculty evaluation is yet to be introduced due to fear of political victimization, although some quarters strongly feel the necessity for introduction of some form of evaluation.

Private Universities in Bangladesh

In the 1990s the government realized the need for setting up private universities as it was clear that the public universities in Bangladesh would not be able to meet the increasing demand for higher education. The government recognized and appreciated the initiatives taken, in the early nineties by a group of educationists to establish private universities. After due examination of their proposals, the government felt the necessity of enacting the legal framework under which private universities could work. As a result the National Parliament passed the Private University Act-1992. It was a milestone in the history of higher education in Bangladesh. With the ratification of this Act, the government lost the monopoly of providing higher education. The first government approved private university was established in 1992 quickly followed by several others. In 1998, the private university Act was amended to remove some inadequacies and prevent misuse of privileges granted by the Act. At present, we have 54 private universities in Bangladesh. Of the 54 private universities most are located in Dhaka. The total number of students enrolled in these universities is more than 30,000. This number is increasing yearly by 20 percent compared to 5 percent yearly increase in the public universities (UGC: 2006).

Justifications of Private Universities

Besides supplementing the functions of public universities, the establishment of private universities is justified for a number of reasons. Besides factors mentioned earlier, it was felt that in the modern world of science and technology, public universities could not provide ample opportunities in all the need-related disciplines due to fund constraints and other factors. The justifications of private universities are as follows:

- Private universities could be guided by the market related phenomena in providing higher education.
- Higher education in the private sector can reduce the financial burden on the government
- The condition of private sector answerability can help maintain academic schedules and avoid session jams
- Private universities can also offer a better student-teacher ratio compared to public institutions. As a result, attendance, participation and evaluation of students can be more easily ensured and monitored.

Regulations of Private Universities

Private universities are growing fast. However, except for a handful of universities, most of these private institutions are small in size and offer rather low quality education in a narrow range of subjects. Many of them have no proper campus and are located in rented facilities and run by part-time teachers. In this respect, the rules and regulations regarding private universities need to be strengthened and their implementation ensured. The growth of the student enrolments in the private universities suggests that some of these universities have a good prospect. A sound growth of private universities is important in achieving a balanced competition between public and private universities resulting in an improvement in the quality of education. However, the government/regulators have the responsibility of ensuring that these universities are providing adequate standards of education.

Private universities are managed in accordance with the provisions of the Private University Act 1992 which is in the process of revision. Ideally, private universities should have a similar administrative structure to their public counterparts, including Vice-Chancellors and other statutory bodies. In reality, in most cases, these administrative structures are not in place. The Vice-Chancellors are appointed by the Chancellor based on the recommendation of the sponsors of these universities. Apparently these sponsors exert considerable influence in managing the affairs of the university. The major impediments of the private universities include: non-compliance with the statutory requirements, absence of consistent admission and examination policies, non-transparent financial management, lack of adequate number of full-time faculty, lack of proper infrastructure, inadequate laboratory and library facilities, absence of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities and a commercial bias in decision making.

For private universities, specific guidelines need to be developed for ensuring a good governance system. This should include restructuring their governing bodies and a more transparent appointment of their Vice-Chancellors. The Governing bodies must have a wider representation, including academics and members of the civil society. The Private Universities should ensure strict compliance in the appointment of the required number of full-time faculty and putting in place standard academic logistics and facilities. The UGC should supervise private universities emphasizing the public interest point of view. The UGC should nominate senior university professors to the academic councils and syndicates of the private universities. The growth of the private universities must be regulated both in terms of their quantity and quality. In the private

institutes a realistic tuition cap can be introduced and arrangements must be made so that poor students can also study in the private institutions.

Financing Private Universities

The private universities are financed by the Board of Trustees of the respective universities. The Board in turn derive their finances out of the tuition and other fees realized from their enrollees. The private universities earn a huge profit over costs in running the private universities through charging exorbitant tuition fees and other charges which are often comparable to those in the universities of affluent countries. Naturally, only a handful of fortunate students from high-income families can afford to avail the facilities of higher education in these institutions.

Private Universities: Quality Assurance and Related Practices

Quality in Teaching:

Offering good academic programmes is a necessary condition but not a sufficient condition to assure quality education. The degree requirements and academic programmes may be well designed in terms of both national and international standards, but this does mean that the output will be of high quality. The well meaning curricula may not produce good results if the University does not or cannot hire adequately qualified, experienced and committed teachers to teach the courses. Let us review the current status of the faculty strength of the private universities in general. While the cases of a few universities are now strong but in general, the faculty situation is very weak. When private universities started in 1993, a few expatriate teachers from USA and only part-time local teachers mostly from Dhaka University were hired. It was understandable in the early stages. But even today, with a few exceptions, most private universities rely on part-time teachers from public universities. To maximize their personal income, these teachers from public universities teach at several private universities, in addition to their full time job at the parent university. As a result, the effectiveness and efficiency of these teachers tend to drop at deplorably low level. This, naturally, lowers the quality of the private universities (Hafiz G.A. Siddiqi: 2005).

Teacher's Capability of teaching and Quality Assurance

Teaching is a special skill and effective teaching skill is necessary to maintain the quality of the university. Therefore, it is desirable that some mechanism be instituted to determine the teaching ability and or commitment of the teachers. Two such mechanisms are (a) student evaluation and

(b) peers' evaluation. In line with the American system, some private universities as a matter of routine administer compulsory students' evaluation. This system requires the students to express their views anonymously about the overall performance of the teacher in the class room by asking such question as, did you understand what the teacher taught? Did s/he cover the entire syllabus which s/he distributed at the beginning of the semester? Did the teacher explain again if you had asked for any explanation in the class? Did s/he extend academic help outside the class room? And similar other questions. These responses are evaluated by the university, and the results are forwarded to the teachers concerned. The purpose of the evaluation is to help the teacher improve his/her teaching skill. Similarly, colleagues' opinion about a particular teacher is also sought. All these indirectly reinforce the process of accountability and help improve the teaching quality of the university in general (Hafiz G.A. Siddiqi: 2005).

Transparency in Grading System

The examination system is a mechanism used to assess the students' performance in a course. In American system, one examiner, namely the class teacher concerned, is the single and final assessor. This has merits and demerits. One demerit is that a particular student may be favoured unduly or deliberately victimized. To avoid such possible unwanted outcome, students are encouraged to seek the examination scripts from the teacher and check the markings to find if any mistake is made or injustice has been done. The teachers are required to be transparent and explain to the student why he or she got "C" and not "A". Such accountability of teachers helps improve the quality of teaching.

Formation of Accreditation Council

The UGC is convinced about the inevitability of having an Accreditation Council to ensure maintenance of a minimum standard and guaranteeing of a quality assurance in tertiary education imparted by the universities in Bangladesh. Since the main purpose of any exercise by Accreditation Council is to inform the stakeholders and the guardians of the students as to the quality of education in an institution and/or of the value of its degree, there is a need to determine yardstick/standards that should be followed by a university in its academic and all related activities (UGC: 2005).

The UGC is at present evaluating the private universities according to a few yardsticks. It has already set a high powered committee to work out the details of the Accreditation Council. The

committee is preparing a comprehensive set of criteria to be used to evaluate both the public and private universities. The committee suggested that the proposed Accreditation Council would have the responsibilities to ascertain if (a) instructions are being imparted according to a modern, scientific and relevant curriculum (b) by well qualified full time faculty members (c) management is transparent (d) examination system is objective and impartial (e) accountability is established in respect of academic, administrative and management matters and (f) compliance of all rules and regulations is ensured. The committee suggested that the proposed Accreditation Council would be entrusted with the responsibility of assessing and grading an institution in an overall sense as well as certifying all the components so that the weighted average of the grades can form the overall grade score of the institution. In this process, those who need the assessment of specific programmes would get to know them along with an overall grading of the institution. The proposed Accreditation Council will be autonomous and free from Government control. The government, through the Ministry of Education, will play the role of a facilitator, and provide necessary funding for smooth running of the Council (UGC: 2006).

Concluding Remarks

There is no denying the fact that funding from the government for higher education and research is not at all adequate and UGC fails to provide fund according to the need of respective universities. The very amount provided to the universities is mostly spent for the salary and allowances of the faculty development, research and establishment of new departments in response to the demand of time. Though presently, the allocation budget to the education sector is higher than previous years, yet the allocation in higher education sector is still negligible. This budget cannot satisfy the demands of public universities. There are universities which do not spend anything for research.

A monitoring board under the UGC can be established to assess the quality, recruitment and efficiency of teachers. Reward to the good teachers, internet facilities, modern library and resource centre, and establishment of human resource development centers may improve the standard of higher education in Bangladesh. Throughout the World, universities change the society and remain the center of change and development. But in our country universities now-a-days are very weak and do not change anything. Better understanding among teachers and students, introduction of modern teaching methods and dedication of teachers and students can improve the culture of higher education in Bangladesh. A proper academic calendar can bring

discipline. One other important thing is that a tough measure should be taken by the concerned authority to free the public universities from the clutches of party politics.

The government must shift its focus of attention from general education to science, technology and ICT based education. The Government of Bangladesh has recently formulated a 20 year (2006-2025) strategic plan for higher education with the help and support of the World Bank. In the past World Bank's interest in Bangladesh education sector as a donor was confined to all sub-sectors but tertiary education. Hence the fund allocation to tertiary sub-sector showed remarkable stagnation vis-à-vis other sub-sectors. In the last few decades the demand for tertiary education in Bangladesh has increased tremendously. World Bank's recent interest in our tertiary education sector is an indication of its appreciation of this reality and the possibility of additional resource mobilization in this sub-sector. The strategic plan document for higher education suggests that in the face of a changed scenario of higher education, quality improvement in the higher education has to be the main focus of attention and development of science and technology based education should be given top priority by the government and the private sector in the next two decades.

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