



**Graduate School of Development Studies**

**DETERMINANTS OF QUALITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION?  
Bangladesh Perspective through Private Universities**

A Research Paper presented by:

Touhida Tasnima

(Bangladesh)

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for obtaining the degree of

MASTERS OF ARTS IN DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

Specialisation:

**Public Policy and Management  
(PPM)**

Members of the examining committee:

Dr Jos Mooij (Supervisor)

Dr Sunil Tankha (Second Reader)

The Hague, The Netherlands  
12 November, 2008

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***Inquiries:***

Postal address:           Institute of Social Studies  
                                  P.O. Box 29776  
                                  2502 LT The Hague  
                                  The Netherlands

Location:                 Kortenaerkade 12  
                                  2518 AX The Hague  
                                  The Netherlands

Telephone:               +31 70 426 0460

Fax:                       +31 70 426 0799

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

The research could not have been undertaken without the support and assistance of many people. Special thanks to my supervisor, Dr Jos Mooij for her inspiration and guidance on this research paper. Gratitude and thanks to my second reader, Dr Sunil Tankha, whose many comments have added to the value of this report.

I am grateful to the authorities of North South University, East West University, Eastern University, State University and Chairperson of University Grants Commission for their kind cooperation and assistance in providing information. Appreciation and thanks to all the students who participated in the focus group discussions and shared their candid thoughts and experiences. Finally I am grateful to my family for their good wishes and support during the entire study period.

# Table of Contents

List of Tables and Figures.....	7
Abbreviations and Acronyms.....	8
Abstract.....	10
The Issue of Quality in Private Higher Education .....	11
1.1    Introduction.....	11
1.2    Emergence of Private Universities in Bangladesh.....	11
1.2    Quality Concern in the Expansion of Private Higher Education .....	14
1.3    Goals and Objectives.....	17
1.4    Research Methodology.....	18
Primary data .....	18
Secondary Data:.....	19
1.5    Limitations .....	19
1.6    Structure of the Paper .....	19
Different Perspectives of Quality in Higher Education.....	21
2.1    Introduction.....	21
2.2    Quality in Higher Education .....	21
2.3    Approaches to Quality Assurance in Higher Education .....	23
2.4    Areas of Quality Assessment.....	24
Policy Framework and Quality Assurance Mechanism of Higher Education.....	26
3.1    Policy Shift towards Private Higher Education: Private University Act.....	26
New Initiative: Private University Act 2007 .....	27
Ban on medical faculty: .....	28
Campus: .....	28
Restriction on Part Timers:.....	28
Administration: .....	28
3.2    Role of University Grants Commission .....	29
3.3    Quality Assurance Practices in Public and Private Universities .....	30
3.4    Current Status of Private Universities in Bangladesh.....	31
Courses offered by Private Universities: .....	32
Management and Administration: .....	32
Financing Arrangements: .....	33
Physical Condition: .....	33
Faculty profile in Private Universities:.....	33

Teachers in Private Universities of Bangladesh 2003:.....	34
Teacher and Student Assessment: .....	35
Research:.....	35
Job Placement of private university graduates: .....	35
UGC Overview on All Private Universities:.....	35
Comparative Analysis of the Selected Universities.....	37
4.1 North South University (NSU) .....	37
Five Strategies Undertaken by NSU to Fulfil Their Institutional Goals:.....	38
Management and Administration: .....	38
Academic Support Services: .....	38
Other Services:.....	39
4.2 East West University (EWU) .....	39
Mission.....	40
Management and Administration .....	40
Academic Support Services .....	40
Other Services:.....	40
4.3 Eastern University (EU).....	41
Mission.....	41
Governance.....	41
Academic Support Services .....	41
4.4 State University of Bangladesh (SUB) .....	42
Mission.....	42
Goals of SUB.....	42
Academic Support.....	42
4.5 UGC Comments on the Selected Universities .....	42
4.6 Comparative Analysis of the Internal and External Quality Assurance Policy Practice amongst the Selected Universities .....	43
Policy Differences .....	45
Admission policy and selection of student .....	45
Faculty Recruitment, Promotional Criteria .....	46
Scholarship opportunity and investment in research .....	47
4.6 Additional Remarks .....	48
Key Findings and Implications of Policy .....	52
5.1 Summary of the Findings.....	52
5.2 Conclusion .....	54
References.....	55

Annex A: Research Tools .....	59
List of Interviewee .....	59
Semi Structured Interview 1 .....	60
Semi Structured Interview 2 .....	61
Focus Group Discussion: .....	62
Annex B - Evidences .....	64
Evidence 1: Job Ad.....	64

## LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

Figure 1: Number of Teachers in Private Universities of Bangladesh 2003.....	34
Figure 2: Comparison of four universities based on their spending on research .....	47
Table 1 Five Years Student Enrolment in Private and Public Universities in Bangladesh .....	31
Table 2: Number of Private universities, total enrolment and number of teachers (1997- 2003).....	34
Table 3: Number of Graduates in EWU .....	41
Table 4: Comparison on four universities based on UGC Annual Report (2006) .....	44
Table 5: Comparison of Universities Based on Their Tuition Fees in Business Administration Program .	49

## **ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS**

APUB	Association of Private Universities in Bangladesh
CGPA	Cumulative Grade Point Average
EWU	East West University
EU	Eastern University
GPA	Grade Point Average
HE	Higher Education
MOE	Ministry of Education
NSU	North South University



PHE	Private Higher Education
PRUA	Private University Act
QA	Quality Assurance
SUB	State University of Bangladesh
UGC	University Grants Commission
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
VC	Vice Chancellor
WB	World Bank

## **ABSTRACT**

Despite much growth of private higher education in Bangladesh, it is facing challenges of quality issues in terms of financial sourcing, standards compliancy, qualified faculties and market demand for skilled workforce. This paper focuses on private higher education in Bangladesh with the objective to explore the issues that determine quality and influence the performance of private universities. The paper analyses the internal and external quality assurance policies as practised by the four selected universities that were studied as part of the research, with focus on quality of teaching, quality intake, sources of revenue and related issues. One of the major findings is that financial resource play a major role in ensuring quality education in private universities in Bangladesh.

## **Keywords:**

Private universities, quality, quality assurance, higher education, Bangladesh.

# **DETERMINANTS OF QUALITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION? Bangladesh Perspective through Private Universities**

## **THE ISSUE OF QUALITY IN PRIVATE HIGHER EDUCATION**

### **1.1 Introduction**

Private Higher education is one of the fastest growing sectors in Bangladesh. Due to deteriorations of quality in public university, impact of privatisation policy, technological advancement and new demands of market forces, large numbers of private universities have emerged and represent nearly twice the number of public universities in the country. The expansion of these private institutions has ensured a large number of student enrolments.

There are 51 private universities and 29 public universities in Bangladesh (UGC Annual Report, 2006). Though the number of private universities is far greater than public universities, the total number of students enrolled in public universities is much more. Thus the number of existing private universities does not represent the dominant role in student enrolment. Only a few of the private universities are performing well and have gained academic acceptance in the society (Masum, 2008: 19- 20). The purpose of this study is to find out the mechanism within the policy practices that creates variation in their performance and issues that act as a constraint in quality education.

### **1.2 Emergence of Private Universities in Bangladesh**

The evolution of higher education system in Bangladesh is influenced by a multitude of political and economic factors. Higher education in Bangladesh was provided by public institutions until the 1990s (Alam, Haque and Siddiqui, 2007: 20). After the independence of Bangladesh, in 1971, higher education was provided by the state and public universities were the only option for higher education. There were only four public universities in Bangladesh at the time of independence and all were publicly financed autonomous entities. The idea of allowing private provision for higher education was encouraged in the first half of 1981 (Alam and Haque, 2004: 64). The pressing reason to create private universities was to allocate a large number of students who are unable to gain access to admission due to limited number of openings in the public

universities where the demand exceeds the supply. The substantial widening of access to primary and secondary education has combined two other factors to impel the expansion of the higher education system: (i) a rapid increase in the number of people at the traditional ages for attending higher education institutions, 7 and (ii) a higher proportion of secondary school graduates progressing to higher education (World Bank, 2000). The public sector was also unable to cope with demand, and by 1992 there were still only 8 public sector universities, that were only able to accommodate around 25% of the 80,000 students who applied for admission (Hopper, 1998). Every year more than 200,000 students complete their higher secondary education (HSC) and 120,000 of them proceed to seek admission in the public universities. The existing 29 public universities in Bangladesh have limited capacity and can accommodate only 10% to 12% students of high school graduates (Siddiqui, 2002: 162). Public universities were unable to expand and satisfy the growing social demand for higher education in terms of number and type of programs offered due to funding constraints (Varghese, 2002). This vacuum has created a demand for private universities. Therefore, formerly existing public system of education has adopted the legislation that allows for the development of private higher education.

Another factor for establishing private universities in Bangladesh is related to the continued political unrest and violence in the campuses of public universities. The populist political regime in 1972 enacted politics oriented university rules, for example the Public Universities Ordinance 1973<sup>1</sup> this is sometimes seen as the root cause of much of the politicization of the public university campuses (Middlehurst and Woodfield, 2004). The accountability and quality assurance of public universities is mainly practiced through the Senate (the highest policy making body), Syndicate (the executive body headed by the Vice Chancellor), the Vice Chancellor, faculty Deans and other committees such as the academic council and finance committee. Each public university relies on its own mechanism to ensure quality. This resulted into a politically influenced administrative structure, teacher selection and promotion. This increased the politicization of university administration. Political favouritism affected the quality of education in public universities because faculty selection was based on serving political goals and not qualification of the teachers. This resulted in grade inflation of graduates (Alam, Haque and Siddiqui, 2007: 16). Continued political unrest reflected itself through student politics and violence in various public university campuses. The presence of political affiliation in the

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<sup>1</sup> Public Universities Ordinance (1973) is the governance framework for public universities in Bangladesh. This order dictates the selection procedures for the 4 statutory bodies of the university -- syndicate, senate, academic and finance councils (Public University Ordinance, 1973).

public universities among the teachers, students and authorities resulted in frequent academic session delays (Hopper, 1998). Leading political parties have often used their student fronts to achieve political objectives. Power struggles among conflicting political parties degraded the academic environment of public universities (Chowdhury, 1997: 12). Therefore the impact of political unrest and declining quality in public universities in the country for the last twenty years is another factor for the dire need to establish private universities in Bangladesh and private universities are the assurance to provide a politics-free educational atmosphere and completion of academic sessions in due time (Alam and Haque, 2004: 64-65). The suggestion for allowing the private sector to provide quality higher education was put forward by a number of educationists, industrialists, philanthropists and entrepreneurs who were frustrated with the existing quality of education in public universities (Chowdhury, 1997: 7). With a view to creating change and a positive environment, the government formulated a legal framework within which private individuals or organizations could establish universities to offer degrees.

Thirdly, there was a change in the country with more reliance on market forces for development, the decline of centrally planned economies and created conditions conducive to the growth of private universities (Siddiqui, 2002: 161 -165). The impact of privatisation policy and expansion of the private sector created new demand for courses and subjects of study that are mainly market driven. In the changing economy the growth of information technology and business related programs attract more applicants in the higher education sector. Increased foreign investment, reduction of state owned enterprises and commercial incentives provided by the state for setting up multinational companies in Bangladesh resulted in the growth and expansion of an economic market that requires skilled labour force trained in such fields (Kitamura, 2006). As a result in the early 1990s private sector initiatives with the establishment of private universities became a new phenomenon in the country to fulfil the demand of the market. Through a higher education degree it's possible for a graduate to secure a better paying job, climb up the corporate ladder and secure a rewarding future. These perceptions, market demand and the growth of private higher educational institutions has resulted in the enactment of Private University Act in 1992(PRUA) by the Bangladesh government. Originally the state did not plan to set up new universities in the public sector with this new orientation. To fulfil the demands of the new labour market, private universities are considered as a superior option by the government to fulfil the demands of the market.

*The modern world of science and technology which public universities could not provide ample opportunities in al the need –related disciplines due to fund constraints, the private universities could provide and offer*

*courses which are guided by the market related phenomena. The higher education in the private sector can reduce the financial burden of the government. The private higher education institutions can help maintain academic schedules and avoid session jams (Lamagna, 2006).*

The “Private University Act of 1992” and “Amendments in 1998” paved the way for establishing higher education degree awarding universities in the private sector. Within a period of 14 to 15 years there has been a greater number of private institutions created in the country than public ones and has become an integral part of higher education. The first government approved private university (North South University) started operating in January 1993 (Siddiqui, 2002: 162). Presently there are 51 registered private universities compared to 29 public universities. All the private universities are located in different major cities of Bangladesh (University Annual Report, 2006). The aim of these universities is to facilitate skilled manpower, creating ability to respond market demand, students with opportunities, resources and expertise to achieve academic, personal and career goals within a stimulating and supportive environment with academic excellence and quality education. The collaborative arrangement of these private universities (hired faculty members) with countries like USA, UK, Canada and Australia were believed to improve the standard of higher education to an international level (Chowdhury, 1997: 15).

## **1.2 Quality Concern in the Expansion of Private Higher Education**

The present situation of the numerous private universities at large is questionable as far as quality education is concerned. Regardless of the rapid increase in the enrolment of students in the private universities for the last 15 years, quality of education has remained a cause of concern. Most of private universities have failed to meet the minimum requirement<sup>2</sup> set by the University Grants Commission (UGC), the regulatory body for both public and private university (Aminuzzaman:2). These include insufficient number of qualified academic staff, absence of strong administrative and financial control, poor quality intake, infrastructural facilities and market acceptability of graduates. According to UGC survey conducted in 2004, out of 52 private universities roughly nine universities (NSU, BRAC, EWU, IUB, AMA, UDA, Stamford, Daffodil, IIUC) are performing highly satisfactory. Based on the academic standards of UGC, it singled out

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<sup>2</sup> The UGC listed minimum requirements like physical infrastructure, own campus, outer campus and its description, student number per course and semester, teacher student ratio and details of fulltime faculty members and ratio of part time and fulltime faculty members, detailed description of VC, Governing body, syndicate and academic council, salary structure, financial statements, etc.

35 universities as they failed to meet the minimum requirements. UGC appointed a fixed time-limit for these universities to improve their performance so they could meet the standards. The committee also recommended cancellation of the permission of the remaining eight universities. The report, undoubtedly, gave an impression that conditions are not satisfactory in the majority of the private universities (Prothom Alo, November 2004).

*Quality varies significantly between private universities; there are differences of quality even amongst departments of the same university. Course contents vary widely among private universities. Sub-standard intakes, inferior faculty standard and poor classroom environment are some of the usual complaints. These universities use attractive names; circulate colourful and glossy brochures and make unrealistic promises in order to attract admission seekers (Jamal: 46).*

According to Luxton (2005: 25) physical condition of an academic institute is an important element to ensure quality in higher education. Thus the presence of physical facilities like lab, library and over all environment are all associated to ensure quality. Many private universities in Bangladesh are actually established within one structure or, in some cases, only on several floors of a building. Such a constrained physical learning space affects the quality of teaching and learning at these private universities (Kitamura, 2006). The main source of revenue of private university comes from the tuition fees paid by students. Therefore many private universities in Bangladesh enrol large number of students without considering the quality intake of students and physical conditions (lab, library number of classroom and teachers) required to provide quality education (UGC Annual Report 2006: 145-146). Some aspects of the UGC report were also covered in a major newspaper in Bangladesh:

*Another significant area of weakness of universities is the quality of students. The bulk of the students they offer admissions are not up to the standard in merit and aptitude for becoming university students. This lack of standard hampers the quality of education. In such cases, when the authorities become commercially motivated, the students are given grades that they actually do not deserve. The real truth behind this situation is that many of these universities cannot stage a competition among the admission seekers. A handful of private universities are however free from this malady (Financial Express, 2008).*

The importance of well staffed and qualified faculty cannot be underestimated to ensure quality education. Even in the most respected universities in Bangladesh that are perceived to provide quality education, the lack of qualified faculty has always been a concern. Hopper reports that

there is a perception in Bangladesh that the increasing involvement of the private sector in higher education, its international links and the need to provide value for money, will accelerate the introduction of international standards for quality and accountability. However, in 1998 he reported that inspections by the UGC showed that private providers were of variable quality (Hopper, 1998). All private institutions have difficulties in recruiting sufficiently qualified staff.

Though the universities have full-time staff, a lot of universities have to hire part-time lecturers because some of professors are better qualified and highly in demand. The professors can only work full-time at one institution but because of the high demand by other universities, they will often work at other places as part-time lecturers. Working at multiple places often dissipates the quality of teaching and the attention students require. The UGC report (2004) also stated that because of their commitment in too many places the teachers can't fulfil their responsibility in of these.

*Private universities with inadequate full time faculty members depend heavily on part-time teachers drawn primarily from public universities, which adversely affect quality of education in those universities (Masum, 2008).*

According to a TV report (program called Explosive) on a private Channel (ETV) in Bangladesh broadcasted on 23rd August 2008, a number of issues were addressed by the UGC member about the quality in private universities in Bangladesh. In the TV report some private universities operating in Dhaka were exposed how they were not ensuring minimum quality or even following the rules and regulations set by the government. In one report it was identified that the Vice Chancellor of one university did not have the required 20 years of working experience. The reported VC was also running a private school aside from the university. He was also acting in multiple roles as VC, Founder and Chairman. Due to lack of financial support, employees in that university took up multiple roles in management and other activities. Additionally, there are some universities who have no concern for scholarship provision set by the UGC criteria and most universities have stated mission, motto or vision, but these usually remain on paper (Aminuzzaman : 9).

Higher education is a vital mechanism to produce knowledgeable, competent leaders, businessmen, entrepreneurs and skilled workforce in the economy. There is an increased demand for qualified workforce holding university degrees in Bangladesh. This demand is a result of nation building and national development efforts, economic activities, growing opportunities and investments in the marketplace. The creation of private universities in Bangladesh has opened up new opportunities for the youth with new possibilities of higher education. The



significance of higher education is increasing in Bangladesh, with the creation of new employment opportunities provided by the emerging private Banks, telecommunication and IT (information technology) sector. The new trend of the private universities with the relevant market-driven degree programs is therefore attracting many students towards these new institutions. Better skilled graduates equal a better workforce for the nation. The interpretation of the requirement for better and greater skills in the marketplace directly translates as a requirement for quality in private higher education. This report is an attempt to highlight the issues affecting the quality of private universities in Bangladesh within their policy practices.

### **1.3 Goals and Objectives**

This research is guided by the following priorities:

- To analyze how internal and external quality assurance policy practices of these universities influence their performance.

This research attempts to answer the following question:

What explains the variation in performance of private universities in Bangladesh?

This research is based on number of following hypothesis:

- Internal quality assurance policy of universities is one of the most important factors that influence quality of education and performance.
- Sources of revenue and access to resources play a dominant role in ensuring quality of education and performance.
- Faculty recruitment policy of the university influences on quality education.
- Part timer trend of the university has a negative impact on quality teaching.

The research sub questions are designed to test the hypothesis.

- What are the internal quality assurance policies among these universities?
- What is their source of revenue?
- How are they dealing with tuition and budgetary issues?
- What is their policy for faculty development, recruitment and promotion?
- What challenges do the private universities face to ensure quality of teaching?
- Does the performance of part-time faculty teaching affect quality?

## **1.4 Research Methodology**

This qualitative research relies both on primary and secondary data. The research provides comparative analysis of four selected universities and compares their quality assurance mechanism and performance variation. The four universities selected for the research study were based on the UGC survey and evaluation list<sup>3</sup>. Two of the universities were amongst the top 9 that met all the minimum set of UGC standards. The other two universities were selected from the broad category listing of UGC. The broad category lists universities that have some limitations and weakness in view of UGC standards. There is a third category of listing provided by UGC that was not looked into because universities in this list are soon to be shutdown as a result of receiving government legal show-cause warnings. Additionally some common selection criteria were applied when choosing the universities. These common criteria were locality, courses offered, sources of revenue (tuition fees), cooperation to supply information and accessibility.

### ***Primary data***

The primary data includes twelve semi-structured interviews with authorities and faculty members of different universities and the UGC. Given the nature of this research, there was a preference to select the highest authorities like Chairperson and Assistant Director of Private University Wing of UGC, Vice Chancellors and Pro Vice Chancellors, Deputy and Assistant Registrars, Deans and Heads of the different departments and faculty members from four universities. Additionally there were some focus group discussions with 32 students in total from selected universities about their perception on quality. Due to the absence of organised alumni association in the universities, the population of focus group members were mainly 1<sup>st</sup> year and 2<sup>nd</sup> year students. The discussion was mainly focused on their perception of quality and other related issues like expectations, reason for choosing the university, comment on learning facility and the challenges. During the university visits, documents and publications were gathered and in-depth interviews were conducted. At each campus administrators and experienced professors from the major academic disciplines were interviewed. The policy of these universities were analysed in terms of faculty recruitment process, admission criteria for students and curriculum

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<sup>3</sup> The UGC survey in 2004 was conducted based on some selected criteria like physical infrastructure, own campus, outer campus and its description, student number per course and semester, teacher student ratio and details of fulltime faculty members and ratio of part time and fulltime faculty members, detailed description of VC, Governing body, syndicate and academic council, salary structure, financial statements, etc and universities were evaluated based on their performance in fulfilling those criteria.

development and minimum standard criteria selected by University Grants Commission to measure their performance.

### ***Secondary Data:***

A number of documents have been used as sources of secondary data. The range of the documents includes the following:

- Case study from other researchers in the same field
- Comparative study and review of literature on other countries
- Website information from the Ministry of Education (MOE) and University Grants Commission (UGC)
- Government reports on the Private University in Bangladesh.
- Variety of contextual and Theoretical material will be used from the course material and from the ISS library.

## **1.5 Limitations**

The research is limited by several constraints. Some of the required information was restricted, confidential and not easily available. My institutional position and association with one private university was a limitation to get access in some universities. Due to time constraints for further research, graduates acceptability in the job market and reputation of the universities were not looked into. The absence of an organised alumni association in these institutes was a barrier to look at the perception of graduates on quality. Some universities were reluctant and did not provide their financial data in terms of revenue collected from the tuition fees, resource allocation and budget for academic and development plan. Because of the non-availability of financial data, salary structure of faculty members and academic expenditure could not be analyzed.

## **1.6 Structure of the Paper**

The paper has been structured in five chapters. This chapter explained the quality concern in the private universities, pointed out the research questions, described the methodology and limitations encountered during the research process. The second chapter is about the different approaches of quality assurance mechanisms and reveals some areas of quality assessment in higher education to address the current situation in Bangladesh. The third chapter highlights relevant issues of private university act, and current status of private universities in Bangladesh.

The fourth chapter provides the findings and comparative analysis carried out on the selected four universities and how the internal policy and other issues affect their performance. The final and fifth chapter presents the general conclusions and addresses the required policy changes and measurements to ensure quality and performance in the private higher education in Bangladesh.

# DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES OF QUALITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

## 2.1 Introduction

The importance of quality in higher education cannot be underestimated. Quality itself can be vague and difficult to measure. This chapter focuses on the various aspects of quality and how it relates to higher education. Different approaches of quality assurance mechanisms and views are looked into in the perspective of Bangladesh. The chapter further reveals some areas of quality assessment in higher education to address the current situation in Bangladesh.

One of the objectives of this research is to analyse the quality assurance mechanisms and explore the issues which determines quality. For the purpose of the study quality is defined as “fitness for purpose” in the internal quality assurance of an institution i.e. meeting or conforming to generally accepted standards as defined by institutions, quality assurance bodies and appropriate academic and professional communities. The study also emphasizes the minimum requirement of external quality assurance practices which is applicable in the context of Bangladesh. It further identifies certain areas (for example, financial, faculty quality and personnel policy) for assessing quality in higher education especially in the context of developing countries. The identification of these issues is intended to act as guide to answer the research question.

## 2.2 Quality in Higher Education

Quality in higher education has become the prime agenda of countries worldwide with the changing context of globalisation and economic activities. Many countries have been pressurised to assure quality in higher education compared international standards at the national level. Consequently various countries initiated “national quality assurance mechanisms” and many more are in the process of evolving a suitable strategy (Stella, 2002: 13). According to Tammamo’s report on quality assurance (2005), Harvey and Green (1993) have identified the following five concepts of quality in higher education:

Quality as Exceptionality (high standards): It is associated with the notion of providing a product or service that is distinctive and special, and which confers status on the owner or user. In higher education, an institution that demonstrates exceptionally high standards is seen as a quality institution. This approach aims for excellence but if quality assurance agencies follow this approach then they are likely to face practical problems because it does not serve accountability and self improvement practices (UNESCO, 2007: 8).

Quality as conformance to standards: The second notion of quality refers conformance and compliance to standards. As Green (1994) stated:

*The quality of the product or service is measured in terms of its conformance to the specification. Quality control in this context relates to testing the product or service to see whether it meets the standard sets and rejecting those that don't conform (Green, 1994: 13).*

The major advantage of measuring quality against standards is that we can have many set of standards suitable for not only different institutions but also different set of institutions under national agenda, demographics and other market factors (Green, 1994:13-14). This approach allows objectivity and easier measurement of quality – hence the implementation is also more practical and can be monitored against various benchmarks. The measurement of progress is easier and corresponding planning and development also becomes result-oriented. The assessment can be done by a number of factors like the number of full-time professors, the percentage of faculty with advanced degrees, the number of articles published per full-time equivalent (FTE) faculty members and more. But this approach can be misleading because it is usually possible to comply with formal requirements without paying any attention to the actual effectiveness of such standards in relation to quality (UNESCO, 2007: 9).

Quality as fitness for purpose: It argues that quality has no meaning except in relation to the purpose of what a product or service should deliver. Therefore it is judged in terms of the extent to which a product and service meets its stated purposes. This approach is developmental and it recognises that objectives change over time and require constant reevaluation of appropriateness to fit the purpose (Green, 1994: 15). It is used to analyse higher education at a number of levels like quality can be measured in terms of providing appropriately educated workforce, or an institution achieving the purpose it has set for itself in its mission statement. Most analysts and policy makers in higher education adopt this approach as it is versatile and developmental.

Quality as effectiveness in achieving institutional goals: This is another version of the 'fitness-for-purpose' approach mentioned above, in which the purposes are determined by institutions themselves. In this approach, a high quality institution is one that clearly states its mission (purpose) and is efficient in achieving it. This approach may raise issues such as the way in which the institution might set its goals (high, moderate or low), and how appropriate those goals could be (UNESCO, 2007: 9).

Quality as meeting customers' stated or implied needs: Meeting and identifying customer needs is another approach in defining quality. This approach places high priority on customer

needs and wants as the basis of measuring quality. For higher education it may be difficult to clearly define who the customer and supplier is. For example a student can be viewed as both the customer of a university as well as its product (Green, 1994: 16 -17).

All the above mentioned approaches has it's own strength and weaknesses, but in the context of this report, the “fitness for purpose” approach has seemed to be the most suitable because it is seen by quality assurance experts as a meaningful way of defining quality and encompasses most of the definition of quality in higher education (UNESCO, 2007:11). However, different stakeholders in higher education may have different views of purpose in this approach (Green, 1994:25). Therefore the approach also looks at the question of who will determine the purpose and what are the appropriate purposes. According to UNESCO (2007:9) report the answer depends on the context and the purpose is determined by the institution itself, the government or a group of stakeholders.

### **2.3 Approaches to Quality Assurance in Higher Education**

In this study the purpose is viewed on the basis of the policies of the government and private universities. The following section explains how the purpose of quality in the “fitness for purpose” approach is set within the institutions as internal mechanism and also externally by government.

Quality assurance (QA) agencies differ in the way they define quality. Their methodologies and perceptions primarily differ on the basis of policy mechanisms of different institutions. It differs also in terms of internal and external mechanisms of policy practices. According to Dill (2007: 1), internal quality assurance refers to those policies and practices whereby academic institutions themselves monitor their performance within the university itself. On the other hand, external quality assurance refers to national level institutional policies and practices whereby the quality of higher education institutions and programs are assured. Individual universities have always possessed policies and practices designed to assure the quality of education, but they have also operated within a national policy framework designed by the state to assure academic standards. According to UNESCO (2007) World Conference on Higher education quality assurance means:

*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 the conditions are in place for students to achieve the standards that the institution has set (UNESCO: 2007).*

To address the quote above, quality is understood as “fitness of purpose” where institutions have adequate mechanisms to ensure quality and achieve the aims and objectives of the institutions. The advantage and significance of “fitness of purpose” is that it gives to importance to the education process. Another point to note is that the difference in quality assurance policies and program objectives are a cause of institutional diversity. “Fitness of purpose” also addresses this diversity of higher education missions (Ekong, 1998:5).

On the other hand, some QA agencies set standards of high quality for the pursuit of excellence. In these cases, the frame of reference for assessment is ‘excellence’ and not just fulfillment of minimum requirements. Such standards of excellence usually co-exist with other mechanisms of minimum requirements (UNESCO, 2007). Quality can also assured with by imposing a predetermined a set of standards for higher educational institutions to follow.

There are some agencies who determine quality on the basis of minimum requirements. These minimum requirements may be set by various regulatory bodies at the national level. The minimum requirements are often sanctioned and approved by the government. This is especially important for developing countries because of the lack of coherent systems to ensure quality (UNESCO, 2007: 27). Developing countries often follow the minimum requirements for quality as a regulatory approach. This is applicable in the context of Bangladesh where private universities are regulated by UGC on the basis of a set of criteria. The report also considered this model of quality assurance in the comparative analysis of the selected universities (discussed in Chapter 3 and 4) and their status in terms of fulfilling these requirements.

## **2.4 Areas of Quality Assessment**

Different areas are taken into consideration by the QA agencies for their assessment of quality of individual intuitions. In some cases it takes place throughout the various teaching and learning process. It includes several aspects, for example screening of candidates for admission, staff recruitment and promotion procedures, curriculum reviews, teaching and learning facilities, quality of research, policy development and management mechanisms, student evaluation of staff, academic reviews and audits (Materu, 2007: 31). The importance of qualified staff and their improvement through continuous professional development within the internal quality assurance policy mechanism is also emphasized by many reputed organizations like UNESCO and WB in their deferent study on higher education. UNESCO (2007) has stated that the role of staffing is an important area for quality assurance in higher education. In addition the education background of faculty and academic training, continuing professional development of staff is also important for quality assurance (Ekong, 1998: 11). Also other factors that affect quality in tertiary



institutions include institutional vision and goals, employability of its graduates (relevance to the labor market), management effectiveness, governance and leadership (Materu, 2007: pp 3).

Financial management and financial constraints faced by the institutions especially in the context of developing country also are significant factors in the quality assurance process. Institutions need adequate financial resources to achieve quality. According to the UNESCO report (discussion note 2007), the declaration by Asia and Pacific UNESCO Consultations emphasize that higher education institutions need appropriate financial and human resource to achieve quality education (Ekong, 1998: 8). Lack of resources also translate in inadequate planning, under-prepared research, unclear assessments in quality areas like mission, vision, academic programs, curriculum, teaching aids, facilities, and leadership. The assurance of quality and the strengths and weaknesses of programs are not assessed due to the absence of any accreditation body. In addition to that there is a complexity in setting the standard of accreditation as the whole question of quality culture is a matter of institutional preferences (Aminuzzaman: 5).

The internal and external quality assurance mechanisms that were discussed in this chapter will be used in the comparative analysis of the 4 selected private universities in Bangladesh in Chapter 4. Among the different external mechanisms to measure quality, “quality as minimum requirement” will be used to determine the performance variations as it is relevant in the context of Bangladesh and UGC quality assurance mechanism. In addition the following specific areas of quality assessment will also be considered: financial issues, quality student intake and faculty quality issues.

The following chapter will highlight the existing policies and the role of the regulatory body (UGC) for governing higher education in Bangladesh. Internal as well as external mechanisms practiced in both public and private universities will be addressed with special focus on private universities.

## **POLICY FRAMEWORK AND QUALITY ASSURANCE MECHANISM OF HIGHER EDUCATION**

This chapter explains the policy, legislative context, quality assurance policy practices among the universities and the current status of private higher education in Bangladesh. It gives an overview of the Private University Act (PRUA) 1992, PRUA-2007 which governs the private universities, regulatory body and its mechanisms. An overview of all the private higher educational institutions status in terms of governing structure, management, administration, student and teacher profile, and the practiced policy is explained. Finally the chapter is concluded with the quality assessment of UGC Survey 2004 about all the private universities in Bangladesh.

### **3.1 Policy Shift towards Private Higher Education: Private University Act**

The Parliamentary Act in 1992 on higher education bill was one of the most important reforms for establishing private universities in Bangladesh. The policy reform has created a favorable condition for the establishment and encouragement of private universities to grow. Today Private universities are one of the fastest growing sectors and increased the educational opportunities in the country. The Private University Act (PRUA) of 1992 stipulated major conditions to set up a private university are as follows:

- A deposit of BD TK 10000000 or approx. Euro 115 thousand (Euro 1 = BD TK 87, 4 Nov 2008) as a security money in interest bearing government bonds
- At the initial stage a minimum of two faculties are needed to pen and establish.
- Qualified teachers for each faculties to be approved by the UGC
- Curriculum and syllabuses to be approved by the UGC. Programs and courses to be offered must be approved by the UGC before students are admitted
- Having started in a rented premise, the university must move to its own campus by the end of the fifth year. It should own land of five acres.
- Five percent of the enrolled students are to be granted free students status to allow poor but meritorious students (University Grants Commission, 2007)

- Apart from those conditions, one of the major conditions is that a house rented or owned having 10000 sft of floor space is required for class rooms, academic and administrative activities, library, laboratories, seminar room and other facilities.

The enactment of PRUA of 1992 created a large expansion of private universities in Bangladesh. In 2000, the number of private university was 17 and now (2008) it has reached a total of 51. But the PRUA 1992 was criticised in various ways by academicians and scholars and one of the primary concerns was that the PRUA 1992 lacked explicit and detailed framework to ensure governance of private universities (New Age, August 2006). A few sections of the act were amended in 1998 and the deposit money requirement for private universities were raised to TK 50 million or approx. Euro 575 thousand (Euro 1 = BD TK 87, 4 Nov 2008) and teachers salary scales and tuition fees were to be made public (Alam, Haque and Siddiqui, 2007:18). The other shortcomings identified by Jamal in his article titled as “*Role of Private Universities in Human Resource Development in Bangladesh*” are as follows.

As the act does not specify clearly defined roles between founders and management, it has created administrative problems among the various private universities. The UGC only approves the curriculum when it is presented for approval but does not monitor the curriculum changes that take place thereafter. The Act does not specify in qualitative and quantitative terms the facilities that private universities have to provide for students in terms of number of qualified teachers, books, journals, computers and internet facilities, classroom space and other physical facilities. In addition to that while the UGC is responsible for regulating, monitoring and facilitating functions all private universities, its capacity has not been increased and the act does not nor provide any “Teachers Development Program” for teachers such as scholarship and financial assistance for higher studies. Finally the act does not empower the UGC to carry out financial audits of the University accounts by a professional audit firm (Jamal: 45).

### ***New Initiative: Private University Act 2007***

Recently the interim government in Bangladesh has modified the previous Private University Act and formulated the Private University Act of 2007 with focus to improve the quality of education in private universities. The new Act was formulated to address the allegations against some private universities that were selling certificates and offering substandard of education without ensuring quality. Low academic standard, absence of students and faculty, temporary and over crowded campuses, misleading marketing information like inflated number of students and faculty members and lack of proper administration were the reasons which caused eight

universities founded in 2004 to be shutdown by UGC (Daily Star November, 2007). The new Act has made several important changes to address the above discussed issues.

***Ban on medical faculty:***

As proposed law, no private universities will be entitled to offer medical degrees Based on the allegations of selling medical certificates.

***Campus:***

Under the new act a private university has to maintain only one campus whether in Dhaka or elsewhere in the country. The proposed act relaxes the previous restriction on possession of campus land. Now a private university requires two acres of land dedicated to its campus which was five acres previously. In case of expansion the universities will have to get permission from the government and deposit an extra Bangladeshi Taka 20 million equivalent to approx. Euro 230 thousand (Euro 1 = BD TK 87, 4 Nov 2008).

***Restriction on Part Timers:***

The Act also restricts the number of part-time faculty members. Part-timer staff should not exceed 20 percent of the faculties of a private university. Also a public university teacher is not entitled to work as a part-timer or consultant in more than one private university. UGC sources say around 2,000 public university teachers are engaged in part-time activities with different private universities. The UGC chairman observes:

Both the public and private universities are being affected, as one cannot be a part-timer in more than one university. Those who are doing part-time jobs in several universities cannot give sufficient time to their mother institution. The part-timer trend at present has not reduced and continues to prevail.

***Administration:***

Private universities will have to hold regular meetings of syndicate, academic council, curriculum committee, financial committee and teacher's recruitment committee. All of these bodies will have to be formed according to the rules of Dhaka University (Daily Star, November: 2007). Additionally, the earlier deposit requirement as FDR (fixed deposit receipt) of € 476.190,48 was increased to the amount to € 2.380.952, 38 in the new Act.

The new Act also proposed for the establishment of an accreditation council. It will be responsible for evaluating and assessing the quality of education in private universities. It would require the private universities to abide by the rules and regulations of the council; otherwise the

government would take action against them on its recommendations. All the private universities of the country would be the members of the council and bound by its rules. All degree programs of the private universities would require accreditation within a stipulated time frame, failing which UGC would withdraw the permission for the programs (Lamanga, 2006). However the Association of Private Universities in Bangladesh (APUB) made some remarks about the new Act. Though the proposed ordinance requires a 'Board of Trustees' for all private universities, APUB criticized that the role and responsibilities of members of the “Board of Trustees” is not clear. APUB further commented that the proposed Private University Act 2007 will have a negative impact on pursuing higher education as the Act had given the Government, UGC and the proposed Accreditation Council excessive authority to exercise power on private universities in comparison to public universities (Financial Express May, 2008).

### **3.2 Role of University Grants Commission**

The Ministry of Education (MOE) is the policy making body and the University Grants Commission (UGC) works as the administrative agency. UGC also acts as the intermediate body between the government and the universities in Bangladesh. The UGC has been mandated by the Private University Act 1992 as the monitoring and supervising authority for higher education of the country. It works as the “approving authority” because without its recommendation, the Ministry of Education does not grant permission to establish a private university. The approval of UGC legitimises the operation of private universities. The UGC creates standards, makes recommendations to the Ministry of Education, sets faculty qualification guidelines and monitors compliance of the Private University Act. UGC works towards supervising, assessing needs and coordinating the activities of universities (source: UGC website). The UGC also regulates the plans and programs of different private universities. The UGC publishes annual reports that supply basic information on the operation of both public and private universities. UGC also defines the administrative, financial and other parameters for these private universities and is responsible for over viewing quality. UGC works as a mechanism to ensure the quality of private universities in terms of minimum level of standards of legal requirements.

### 3.3 Quality Assurance Practices in Public and Private Universities

Historically Bangladesh never had any clear consensus or guidelines about how higher educational institutions should perform (Aminuzzaman: 1). Different commissions<sup>4</sup> have been set up since the 60s to address issues of major changes in society from politics to economics to post-independence reforms. One common aspect of these commissions was to address development of quality in higher education. The need for relevance was always stressed. In 2003 the Ministry of Education in Bangladesh decided to develop the Twenty Year Strategic Plan for higher education sector. The plan proposed a number of policy reform and interventions which are as follows:

- Depoliticization of public universities
- Setting up a national search committee for selecting Vice Chancellors and other senior officials
- Strengthening role of UGC
- Establishment of Accreditation council
- Enhanced support for research
- Development of strategies for retaining and developing quality teaching staff (Aminuzzaman: 10)

Both public and private universities in Bangladesh have no external system or agency until now to review the academic programs of institutions. Approval from the UGC is required for operation of private universities only. In case of public universities, there are hardly any external methods of quality assurance and quality enhancement (Lamanga, 2006). The assessment of quality of teaching and learning process is absent and faculty members are not evaluated by student assessment which is present in private universities. The public universities in Bangladesh limit their internal quality to student enrolment, faculty recruitment, curriculum development, examination process, certification, and maintaining discipline through the “Board of Residence and Discipline.” Guidelines for student enrolment include admission qualification and test requirement, identity verification, etc. Faculty recruitment is based on requirements set by the Academic Council. For example, in public universities, it is mandatory to make public

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<sup>4</sup> Successive commissions included the commission on national education, the New Education Policy, Bangladesh Education Commission 1974, Kudroti Khuda Commission 1978, Bangladesh National Education Commission 1978, Commission for National Education Policy 1997, National Education Commission 2003 (Aminuzzaman: 1)

announcements for vacant posts. Final hiring has to go through a Selection Board as prescribed by the University Statutes (Aminuzzaman: 4 – 6). Though public universities have their internal quality assurance mechanism but it is not used to analyse higher education at a number of levels like quality can be measured in terms of providing appropriately educated workforce and achievement of institutional goals (Opinion of UGC Chairman, 2008).

On the other hand, the Private Universities Act of 1992 provided for complete autonomy in the matters of academic function and the recruitment of teachers and staff for the private universities. Curriculum of private universities requires prior approval from the UGC. They also enjoy financial authority to charge tuition fees and salaries to hire faculty members (Alam, Haque and Siddiqui, 2007: 27).

### 3.4 Current Status of Private Universities in Bangladesh

The total number of private universities in Bangladesh is 51 (UGC Annual report 2006)<sup>5</sup> with a total number of 124,267 students (498 foreign students) in comparison to 29 existing public universities with 1,241,352 students (171 foreign students). The intake capacity of private universities has a steady rise according to the national education survey of 1999. The highest number of students was found in Stamford University to be 12,342 and the least in Green University of Bangladesh with only 118 students.

**Table 1 Five Years Student Enrolment in Private and Public Universities in Bangladesh**

Year	Number of Institutes		Total Students		Change From Last Year		Change in Percentage	
	Private	Public	Private	Public	Private	Public	Private	Public
2002	37	15	34432	92152	+7187	-410	+26	-0.44
2003	52	19	46080	104736	+ 11648	+12584	+34	+13.66
2004	53	19	62856	112327	+16776	+7591	+ 36	+6.76
2005	54	19	88669	116397	+25813	+4070	+ 41	+3.62
2006	51	23*(excluding National and Open University)	1,24,267	153249	+35598	+36452	+ 40	+31.66

Source: UGC Annual Report 2006

<sup>5</sup> In 2005 the number of private universities in Bangladesh was 54. The Government appointed authority asked five universities to close their operation. Two new universities got approval at the end of 2006 so the final number of private universities is 51 now (UGC Annual Report 2006).

There is no clear policy on income and expenditure (tuition, administrative and other, salary of faculty members etc) of private universities in Bangladesh. Therefore the tuition fees and salary of staff differ vastly from one university to another. According to UGC report (2004) the fees charged by different universities vary from TK 200 or approx. Euro 2.30 (Euro 1 = BD TK 87, 4 Nov 2008) to TK 7500 or approx. Euro 86.23 per credit (Masum, 2008: 20). The private universities mainly offer four-year bachelor's degrees and two years masters programs on a limited number of subjects. None of the private universities offer doctoral programs (PhD and MPhil) like the public universities in Bangladesh.

### ***Courses offered by Private Universities:***

Private universities are different from public universities – their purpose of establishment and orientation of operations are totally different. The academic system in public and private universities is different thus the assessment of quality is also different from public to private universities (UGC Chairman, 2008). As many of the private universities are self-financed through revenues, the courses they offer depend on market opportunity and demand. Commercial consideration is one of the primary objectives that reflect on the curriculum of these institutions. The top ranking private universities in Bangladesh like North South University, East West University and BRAC University offer degrees mainly in Business Administration, Economics, Information Technology, English Language, Economics and Environmental Studies. Very few universities offer courses in music, fashion, product design, interior architecture and hospital management. According to Masum (2008:20-21), the UGC report 2004 reveals that, in the 52 private universities in Bangladesh, in 2003, out of 46,080 students enrolled, 23420 i.e. 50.8% studied business Studies. Computer Sciences, Engineering, liberal arts, medical science, English and other languages, Social Sciences, Law and Education accounted for 23.6%, 5.5%, 4.3%, 4.1%, 3.9%, 2.6%, 2.1% and 1.6% of enrolment respectively.

### ***Management and Administration:***

Private universities are based on two-tier administrative structure: The Board of Governors is in the 1st tier and the Vice Chancellor, Dean and Registrar and other administrative staff at the 2nd tier. The Board of Governors is the highest executive authority and trustees of the sponsoring foundation. A Chairperson elected by the members of the board is responsible for policy decisions regarding development, long-term financing and overall management of the university. According to the Private University Act, a pro vice-chancellor is to be appointed for assisting the vice-chancellor and for supervision, co-ordination and monitoring of activities of the faculties or



schools of studies of a private university. Matters relating to assets of a private university and its finance are to be taken care of by a finance committee of at least five members headed by a treasurer. The Registrar is the top administrative official. They also have different committees responsible for day to day activities, admission of student, recruitment of administrative and academic staff, scheduling of courses and examination. Other important academic and administrative positions in a private university include deans of faculties, a controller of examinations and chairpersons of departments ([www.banglapedia.org](http://www.banglapedia.org)).

### ***Financing Arrangements:***

In the initial stages of private university boom, most of them started functioning with limited capital funds and were dependent on part-time faculty members who were hired from public universities. Private universities don't receive any fund from government like the public universities. The universities run their operation based on the collection of academic charges and student fees (Alam, Haque and Siddque, 2007: 23).

### ***Physical Condition:***

Compared to public universities the physical conditions and facilities in private universities are usually better in terms of class room, library, computer centers and Internet access. Most of the class rooms are air conditioned and has audio-visual equipment. Multimedia is used by many teachers who are trained abroad. Richard Hopper, a doctoral candidate in Harvard University, has written an article entitled, 'Emerging private universities in Bangladesh: public enemy or ally?' In it he says, 'Bangladesh image of poverty and natural disasters seems a world away from the air-conditioned computer lab at the private North South University (NSU) in Dhaka. Here undergraduate students of business administration... in spite of the crowded squalls on the streets below... work at computer terminals with Pentium processors and laser printers. But the UGC report (2004) reveals that the physical conditions of many private universities (with a few exceptions) are not sufficient to provide quality education (UGC Annual Report, 2004).

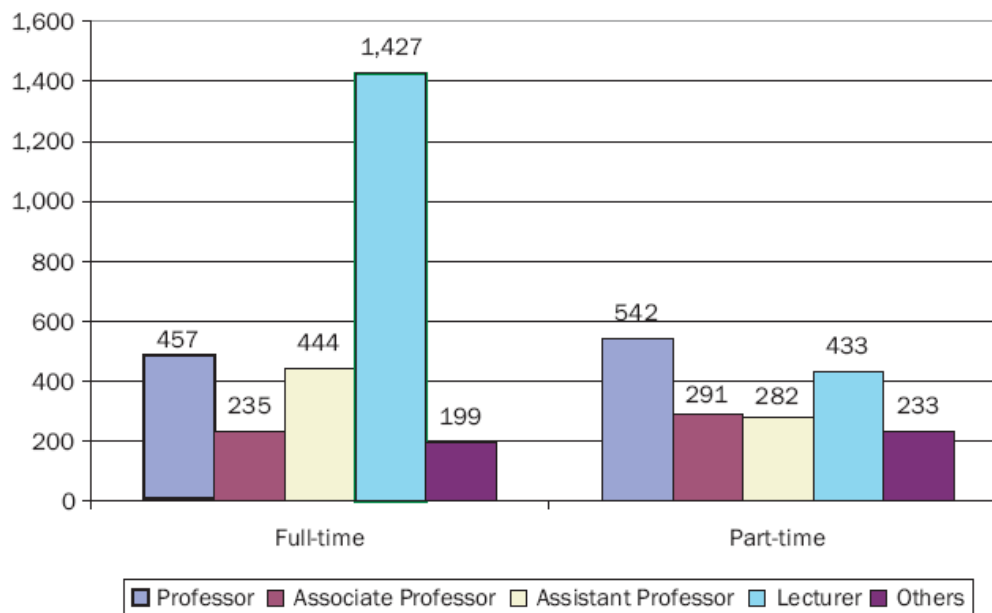
### ***Faculty profile in Private Universities:***

Many of the private universities are operated by part-time faculty and a limited number of full-time teachers. Reliance on part-time faculty is a common phenomenon in the private universities of Bangladesh due to the lack of available full-time qualified teachers. In some leading private universities like North South, East West and BRAC, different departments are headed by professors from public universities. Relying on teachers from public universities is considered as a mechanism to ensure quality education (Varghese, 2004: 18).

### ***Teachers in Private Universities of Bangladesh 2003:***

The following figure shows that out of about 4,000 faculty members, roughly 60% are full-time faculty; therefore a significant number are part-timers. Another important aspect revealed by the figure below is that the majority of the faculty is young aged professionals, i.e. lecturers (56% of the total full-time teachers). Among the part-time teaching staff, the professor category (i.e. the most senior faculty) dominates.

**Figure 1: Number of Teachers in Private Universities of Bangladesh 2003**



Source: BANBEIS, *Bangladesh Education Statistics - 2003*, 2003, Dhaka.

**Table 2: Number of Private universities, total enrolment and number of teachers (1997- 2003)**

Year	Number of Private Universities	Number of students	Number of Teachers
1997	16	5668	636
1998	16	8718	914
1999	16	13340	1214
2000	19	32791	1608
2001	22	27245	2205
2002	41	34432	2948
2003	52	46080	4543

Source: Bangladesh Education Statistics 2002-2003

In comparison to the private universities, there are 7,905 faculty members in the existing 25(except National university and other affiliated colleges) public universities (UGC Annual Report, 2006).

### ***Teacher and Student Assessment:***

All private universities have introduced terms and semester systems. They offer courses that are calculated in credit hours (US standard). Students are evaluated and graded from A-F for each course. The total grade is calculated using the weighted Grade Point Average (GPA) system. Students are also given the flexibility to take courses according to their interest which is different from the public universities where the perceived prestigious courses are reserved for the most meritorious students. This flexibility of course intake option allows a student to take two to five courses per semester in a program. Some private universities in Bangladesh have systems of faculty evaluation by students. Variety of assessment procedures are followed in these universities for both student as well as teacher evaluation. Students scoring Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) between 1 and 2 after the first two semesters in private universities are generally placed on probation for the next two semesters. If a student can't improve their grades within two semesters, they face dismissal from the university.

### ***Research:***

Research is a personal concern of the faculty members in most of the private universities in Bangladesh. Private universities neither encourage nor discourage the faculty members and usually there is no research grant available (Aminuzzaman: 9).

### ***Job Placement of private university graduates:***

The state level agencies like Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) and University Grants Commission do not keep any record of job placement of the private university graduates. The two leading private university, NSU and Independent University of Bangladesh from their internal record reveals the following pattern of job placement among their graduates:

- The graduates are mainly entering the private sector jobs and firms like manufacturing, textile, financing and banking institutions, telecommunication, software, multinational/multinational agencies.
- The average income level of these jobs are significantly higher than the counter parts from public universities (except the graduates from Institute of Business Administration under the University of Dhaka) (Alam, Haque and Siddique, 2007: 33).

### ***UGC Overview on All Private Universities:***

On July 15, 2003 the Ministry of Education created a 9-member committee to report the status of private universities in Bangladesh. The committee was headed by the Chairman of UGC.

According to the report the private universities suffer from proper accommodation facilities (rented classrooms and offices), ill-equipped labs and libraries shortage of senior and qualified faculty members. Curriculum of the private university which needs approval from the UGC are well drafted but hardly implemented due to the acute shortage of well qualified teachers in most discipline of such universities (Masum, 2008: 21). The report also includes that poor quality of students in the private universities are a cause of a weakness. The bulk of the students they offer admissions are not up to the standard in merit and aptitude for becoming university students. Often the authorities focus on finance and revenues but do not pay the same attention to quality education. This naturally results in students getting grades that they don't deserve (New Age, June, 2006). Public universities in general have been able to maintain certain standards of teaching despite the variation in quality of education amongst public universities. Meritorious students prefer public universities and the availability of qualified teachers assert this fact. On the other hand, though a few of the private universities have established themselves in the marketplace in terms of graduate acceptance and quality intake of students (Masum, 2008: 20 - 22).

Whether the current assessment by UGC about the private higher education sector in Bangladesh matches the findings of the report will be discussed in the next chapter. Before moving on to the findings, it can be concluded from the discourse of this chapter that there are various lacks in the robustness of policies, measurements and standards in the current prevailing status of private higher education in Bangladesh.

## COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE SELECTED UNIVERSITIES

This chapter provides a comparative analysis of four selected private universities (NSU, EWU, EU and SUB) in Bangladesh. The analysis includes their common features, internal quality assurance policies, performance differences in terms of quality intake of students, faculty standards and overall academic acceptance in the society. The findings are based on interviews with authorities of the selected universities and focus group discussions with students. The four universities were selected based on the UGC evaluation list. North South University and East West University were amongst the top 9 universities that met all the minimum set of UGC standards. The other two universities Eastern University and State University of Bangladesh were selected from the broad category listing of UGC. The broad category lists universities that have some limitations and weakness in view of UGC standards. The four selected universities were cooperative and helpful in the research process by providing information. However the selected universities except East West University were unwilling to share financial data like salary package of faculty, revenue and expenditures.

### 4.1 North South University (NSU)

North South University was the first private university established in Bangladesh. The stated vision of the university reads:

*To become a leading university and a centre of excellence in Higher education in South Asia.*

The founding members of the university were composed of philanthropists, industrialists, bureaucrats and academicians. NSU was approved by the Government of Bangladesh in 1992 under the Private University Act. The university was inaugurated in February 1993 (source: North South Catalogue 2007).

The total number of graduates produced by NSU is 3,230 (three thousand two hundred and thirty) till date. NSU has academic collaboration with various international universities. Programs offered at NSU are as follows: Business Administration, Computer Science and Engineering, Economics, Environmental Studies, English, Development Studies, Applied Sciences (Architecture, Pharmacy, Biochemistry and Biotechnology). In 2001, NSU's enrolment was about 3,000, including international students from India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Thailand, Malaysia and some other countries ([www.banglapedia.org](http://www.banglapedia.org)).

### ***Five Strategies Undertaken by NSU to Fulfil Their Institutional Goals:***

NSU's mission statement includes producing skilled manpower, visionary leaders and enlightened citizens. To fulfil their mission NSU claims to have undertaken 5 strategies (source: website information):

- Offer courses and curriculum that are socially relevant, accommodate students with diverse backgrounds and different career goals
- Hire internationally qualified and experienced academicians
- Employ rigorous selection process for student admission
- Provide necessary infrastructural facilities and logistic support conducive to education
- Practices good governance that encourage academic freedom and faculty development

The UGC policy includes one of the strategies above regarding infrastructure. The rest of the strategies are evaluated by NSU's own internal mechanism.

### ***Management and Administration:***

The university is run by the Vice Chancellor who acts as the CEO and the Pro Vice Chancellor including the following statutory bodies: Academic Council, Curriculum Committee, Finance Committee, Planning and Development Committee, Library and Faculty Research Committee, Disciplinary Committee. The Registrar maintains the university records including admissions and examination results. Registrar also maintains relationships with the Ministry of Education, University Grants Commission and other relevant authorities (source: North south Catalogue 2007).

### ***Academic Support Services:***

The library has an area of 10,400 square feet (966 square meters) in a five storied air-conditioned independent building. The libraries can accommodate 400 students in the reading rooms. Currently the library owns 28,147 (twenty eight thousand one hundred and forty seven) books and 5,700 (five thousand seven hundred) journals and magazines. The computer laboratories and other electronics, digital electronics, telecommunications, microprocessor and VLSI are equipped with modern facilities according to UGC report (June, 2008).

### ***Other Services:***

NSU has Career and Professional Development Services to help students with job placement. The institute provides online advising for course registration. There is a research wing of the university which is functionally autonomous within the administrative jurisdiction. The university also has various student clubs and extra-curricular activities.

The North South University Foundation (NSUF) prepares its own financial statements. Fees collected from students as revenue are transferred to NSUF account where it is invested in banks. Tuition and academic fees and interest earned on bank deposits are the main sources of revenue and financing at NSU. The foundation pays an honorarium to members of the sponsors for attending meetings as well as financial aid to students (source: North South University).

## **4.2 East West University (EWU)**

The East West University (EWU) was established in 1996. It has about 190 faculty members (including 68 part-time teachers) and approximately 5,000 students. The philosophy of East West University is to promote eastern culture, values and meaningfully blend them with western thought and innovation. Adoption of western thought and innovation is a sign of advancement but by also promoting eastern culture EWU claims to ensure that the indigenous values are preserved. This is reflected in their course offerings, academic systems and various extra-curricular student activities. There are three academic faculties (1) Business and Economics, (2) Science and Engineering, and (3) Liberal Arts and Social Sciences. Amongst the 3 faculties, Business and Economics is the most important and has more demand from students than the other 2 faculty. The number of teachers in Business and Economy faculty is also greater than the other faculties. (Source: Chairperson of Business Administration Department).

Eight separate departments operated under the 3 academic faculties. EWU offer degrees on 15 subjects at undergraduate and graduate level programs. The university donates about 9% of its total earnings to 20% or more students who need financial aid. In 2007 EWU provided more than Taka 32 million or approx Euro 368 thousand (Euro 1 = BD TK 87, 4 Nov 2008) as financial assistance (which was 10.4% of total tuition fees received) towards 21.73% of the total students enrolled (EWU annual report, 2007). EWU has also entered into various academic collaboration agreements with a number of universities in the USA, UK and Australia.

East West University has been ranked by Webometrics in Spain, a research organization – as the top private university in Bangladesh for 2007. It was also listed as number 3 among all “public” and “private” universities in Bangladesh for the same year. The ranking was based on

research activity, viability, volume of scholarly documents created and published, and size and impact of the website presence.

*East West University earned the unique distinction of becoming No.1 among the private universities and No.3 among all public and private universities in Bangladesh, only preceded by Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology and Dhaka University, according to Webometrics ranking of 100 top universities belonging to Indian subcontinent region in July 2008((www.webometrics.info).*

### ***Mission***

The primary mission of EWU is to provide affordable higher education characterised by academic excellence in areas that are relevant to current social needs. Central to its mission, EWU intends to provide students with opportunities, resources and expertise to achieve academic, personal and career goals. The university wants to provide a stimulating and supportive environment to help achieve its goals.

### ***Management and Administration***

The governing body consists of 14 members who are responsible for day to day management and administration of the university. The various management committees and administrative bodies are: Admission Committee, Campus Development and Construction Committee, Finance Committee, Financial Aid Committee, Discipline Committee, Audit Committee, Appointments, Review and Promotion Committee, and Procurement Committee.

### ***Academic Support Services***

The university has 7 computer labs that are equipped with 300 computers. The library has 16,000 books and 2,312 journals. According to UGC report the facilities at EWU are well equipped. Facilities include computer laboratories, electronics and digital equipment for education and learning, telecommunications, microprocessors, etc.

### ***Other Services:***

EWU has career counselling centre to guide students about jobs and prospects. The career counselling centre maintains relations with prospective employers. It arranges internships and part time jobs for students and graduates.



**Table 3: Number of Graduates in EWU**

<b>Total Number of Graduates</b>	<b>2851 (from 2002 -2008)</b>
Employed	2305
Unemployed	Not known
Own Business	175
Out of Bangladesh	141
Studying	219

Source: East West University Career Counselling Centre

### **4.3 Eastern University (EU)**

Eastern University was established in 2003. The university has four main faculties – (1) Faculty of Arts, (2) Faculty of Business Administration, (3) Faculty of Engineering and Technology and (4) Faculty of law. The university has provided admission to 4,000 students till date. The total number of faculty members is about 130 of which 70 are working as full-time faculty.

#### ***Mission***

The stated mission of the institute is to be a “Centre of Excellence” by setting new standards of quality teaching and education in Bangladesh. The university’s goal is to produce future leaders with knowledge and skills for private and public sector enterprises to become more competitive globally.

#### ***Governance***

The governance of the university is controlled by several bodies: the board of governors, the syndicate, the academic council, finance committee, planning and development committee, faculty selection and placement committee, official and staff selection committee, procurement committee, curriculum committee and disciplinary committee. The key policy making decisions are taken by the syndicate which consists of all the members of the Board of Governors, the Vice Chancellor, Pro-vice Chancellor, Treasurer, Deans of Faculties and Departmental Chairs.

#### ***Academic Support Services***

The library has 10,000 books and journals. Eight student clubs and forums organise the co-curricular and extra-curricular activities of the university. Eastern University has 100 computers in 4 of their campuses. There are 4 campuses for 4 faculties. All the campuses are located in the same area. The institute has a job placement office that manages student’s internship programs and provides guidance to students for future plans and careers.

#### **4.4 State University of Bangladesh (SUB)**

The State University of Bangladesh (SUB) was established in 2002. The university offers programs available under three academic faculties (1) Health Science, (2) Science and Technology, (3) Business and Social Studies. There are ten departments operating under the three faculty offering graduate and post graduate programs.

##### ***Mission***

The mission of SUB is to contribute towards human resources development of the country. The university mission includes producing graduates who meet the requirements of the community and who are in high-demand in the employment market. The institution aims to provide ideal teaching and learning environment to help students achieve their career objectives. SUB believes that creating a blend of a national and international curriculum that will equip the graduates to face professional challenges anywhere. The University is associated with various other universities around the world.

##### ***Goals of SUB***

- To provide a challenging academic environment and inspire intellectual and artistic curiosity and creativity
- To uphold the principle of providing the best education on the latest international curricula
- To ensure an environment that is supportive to teaching, research and employment
- To attract and retain outstanding students, faculty and staff ( source: [www.subd.net](http://www.subd.net))

##### ***Academic Support***

The library resources of SUB include books, periodicals, audio-video material. At present the Library has 8000 books, 250 CDs, 200 audio-cassettes, and 8 national daily newspapers.

#### **4.5 UGC Comments on the Selected Universities**

According to the Assistant Director (Private University Wing, UGC) North South University has maintained its standard since its operation. In 2008, the UGC team went for inspection of the lab and library facilities of NSU and inquired about the faculty-student ratio. The outcome of the inspection was positive and UGC is satisfied with NSU facilities. Apart from this the only remark UGC made about NSU is that they haven't shifted to their own private campus as of 2008. UGC

remark on East West University was that their scholarship and financial assistance towards meritorious students was an “innovative scheme” to ensure quality. UGC further stated that EWU has satisfactory facilities and remarked that they should move to their own campus.

According to UGC, among the other two selected universities (SUB, EU) in this study, one has certain problems in terms of their relation and communication between Board of Trustees and Administrative Management and provision for the recommended 5% of its earnings towards scholarships is not maintained.

## **4.6 Comparative Analysis of the Internal and External Quality**

### **Assurance Policy Practice amongst the Selected Universities**

All four selected universities are located in the commercial and upper class areas of Dhaka. They are owned by private investors, and claimed non-profit<sup>6</sup> or philanthropic organizations. The selected universities offer courses that are in demand in the country. They are supervised by the administrative and academic rules set by the University Grants Commission. All these universities are affiliated (Student and faculty exchange with overseas universities, research collaboration, credit transfer facilities etc) with universities abroad and have academic programs similar to western systems (semester based academic sessions, GPA grading). Course assessment is also similar which consists of two midterm exam and on final exam in all courses. Apart from that some instructors also include assignment, quizzes and presentation in the student evaluation process. English is the medium of instruction in the universities and they all have a mission to fulfil the market demand. Since the founding of the universities they began with initial statutory deposits. In the initial stages, none of the university had their own campus except one. Rooms had to be rent to serve as classrooms and administrative offices. These universities finance themselves through revenue collected from tuition and academic fees. Tuition fees as well as faculty and administrative staff salary vary greatly from one university to another.

UGC has a set of criteria to assess quality which are defined as external mechanisms. All the four selected universities in this study are operating under the same external mechanism of UGC where quality is determined on the basis of minimum requirements. The following table provides a snapshot of performance of the four selected universities based on these external mechanisms.

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<sup>6</sup> Private non-profit institutions are owned and operated by trusts that rely heavily on endowments and fees collected from the student (Varghese 2004: 8).

**Table 4: Comparison on four universities based on UGC Annual Report (2006)**

Name of the Institution		Total number of student	Teacher student ratio	Annual spending	Fulltime and Part time Faculty members	Number of Graduate
<i>Satisfactory Universities according to UGC survey 2004</i>	1.North South University	6579	1: 28 (including the part time faculty members)	819680000TK (9,347,867.37 Euro)	Fulltime 140 and Part time 91 and 107 hold the PhD degree	518
	2.East West University	6162	1: 31 (including the part time faculty members)	262615000TK 2,995,757.40 Euro	Fulltime 120 and part time 79 and 29 PhD degree holder	416
<i>Less Satisfactory Universities according to UGC survey 2004</i>	3.Eastern University	2410	1 : 22 (including the part time faculty members)	67000000TK 764,629.69 Euro	Fulltime 69 and Part time 43, 38 PhD degree holder	45 *
	State University of Bangladesh	2297	1: 16 ( including the part time faculty members)	92665000 TK 1,059,959.24 Euro	Number of teachers 147, part time 81, 2 PhD degree holder	299

Source: UGC Annual Report (2006)

Note: Euro 1 = Bangladeshi Taka 87(currency rate as of 4 Nov 2008)

\* The number seems low because the university started operation in 2003 and most likely had a low number of admissions during first year of operation.

The table reflects that the first two universities NSU and EWU (Satisfactory Universities according to UGC List) have more students and graduates, and does more annual spending compared to State and Eastern University (Less Satisfactory Universities according to UGC List). The table also reflects that though NSU and EWU have lower teacher-student ratio but still they are performing better than EU and SUB. In terms of experienced teachers (PhD degree holders), NSU ranks first, followed by EU, EWU and SUB.

### ***Policy Differences***

This section is a comparative policy analysis of the selected universities. All the selected universities have their own individual policies and practices and operate within the national framework of UGC to ensure quality education. Quality is also determined in terms of the individual aims and objectives of the universities as stated in their mission statements.

### ***Admission policy and selection of student***

Established and proven universities like NSU and EWU have more strict requirements when it comes to new student admissions than newly founded universities. The demand to get admitted in such universities is high because of reputation and market acceptance of graduates. NSU and EWU have established themselves as brand names in the job marketplace. Both NSU and recently EWU have set minimum admission requirement to GPA 3.00, which is more than the UGC minimum requirement of 2.5 for admission eligibility. In addition to written admission exams the universities also require face-to-face interviews for the final selection of candidates. As stated in the EWU admission policy:

*Student seeking admission in EWU must qualify both in admission test and viva (source: admission policy of EWU)*

Only NSU has been following the strict admission policy of GPA 3.0 requirement from the beginning of their establishment. On the other hand EU and SUB (which were founded much later than NSU and EWU) does not have as strict admission requirements like NSU and EWU. Revenue and financing is an important factor for newly founded universities (EU and SUB) and to maximize student enrolment their admission requirements is also lower. Lower admission requirement policies can be seen to have a direct correlation with quality. As stated in the web site of Eastern university:

*Candidates with a minimum average GPA of 2.50 at both the SSC/Dakhlil and HSC/ Alim/ Diploma from Bangladesh Technical Education Board are eligible for admission ([www.subbd.net](http://www.subbd.net)).*

There are also innovative strategies (like full tuition waver towards students achieving top scores in admission test, top ranking HSC students), taken by one of the selected private universities (EWU) to attract meritorious student who need financial support.

*For a larger quality intake, some private universities (namely EWU) have taken up a number of innovative schemes. Private philanthropies are requested to support the tuition fees and related costs of less well-off but meritorious HSC graduates (Alam, Haque and Siddiqui, 2007: 52).*

### ***Faculty Recruitment, Promotional Criteria***

NSU emphasizes more on the recruitment of foreign trained faculty members than any other private universities in Bangladesh. It is very much visible in their recruitment policy and maintained that practice so far. It does not allow teachers without a PhD to teach in the Master's program. Masters Degree from USA, UK, Canada, and Australia are mostly preferable for recruiting lecturer in the undergraduate level. NSU has also established a tenure track system for recruitment at higher ranks (NSU personnel policy).

*Although foreign trained teachers are sought and preferred by the private universities, perhaps North South University has most maintained that practice so far (Alam, Haque and Siddiqui 2007: 30).*

Two of the selected satisfactory private universities view international training and publication as criteria for academic staff promotion. While the preference for faculty holding North American degrees is prevalent in NSU, it is not the sole criteria for selection in East West University. The recruitment and promotional criteria in EWU for faculty selection emphasizes more on working experience, involvement in research activity and publication in international journals. The promotional policy of East West University is:

*To become a senior lecturer from a lecturer at least one article (not necessarily per year) in a referred journal is required including a chapter in a peer reviewed book (EWU recruitment retention and promotion review, 2008).*

Teachers who hold North American degrees have a magical appeal to most private universities but sometimes they simply cannot afford to hire them. As stated by the Pro Vice Chancellor of Eastern University(14<sup>th</sup> August 2008) that even though they have the preference of choosing applicant with North American degrees, their financial constraints limit themselves to offer a good salary package to recruit foreign trained qualified faculty.

However all four of the selected universities have internal policies (such as presentation and interviews) to evaluate faculty members through student evaluation, peer review, administrative involvement and academic contribution.

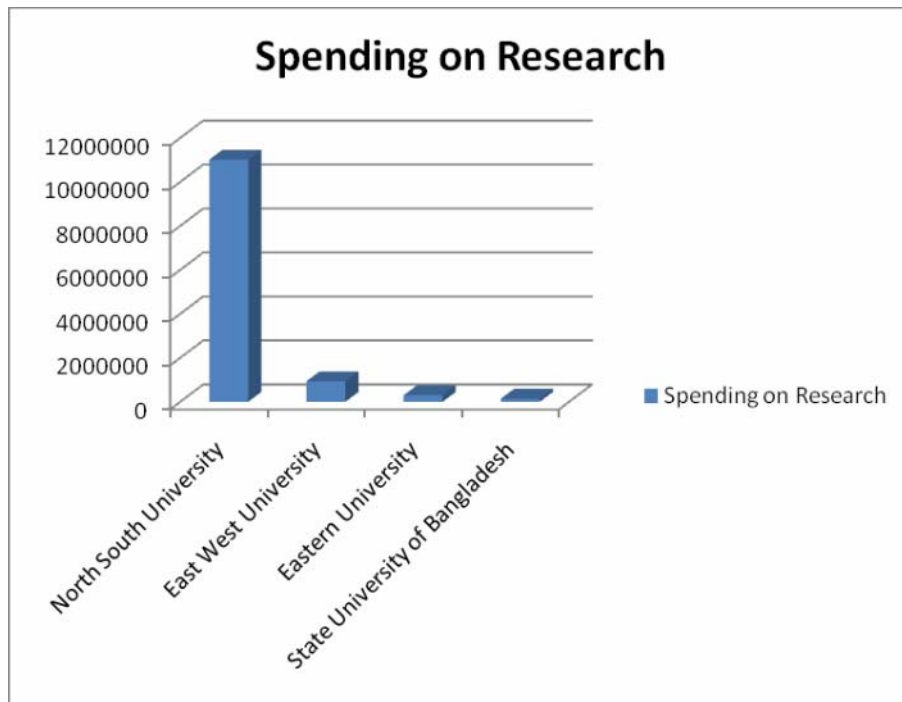
### ***Scholarship opportunity and investment in research***

Scholarship opportunities for students are available more in East West University in comparison to other universities. The provision for financial assistance to attract meritorious students (top ranks in tests) from middle class families who are unable to pay large tuition fees was incorporated in the EWU policy from the beginning of its establishment.

*In 2007 it provided more than taka 32 million as financial assistance, which accounted more than 10.40% of tuition fees received and 21.73% of the total students enrolled (EWU Annual Report, 2007).*

According to UNESCO (2007:38) expenditure on research is an important indicator for quality assesment in higher education and indicates institutional performance. The involvement in research activity among the four universities varies from one university to another. In most cases research activity is more of an individual effort than institutional provision (Aminuzzaman: 9). Despite the fact, the investment in research of NSU is considerably more than the other three universities –EWU, Eastern University and the State University of Bangladesh. The following figure based on UGC Annual Report 2006 shows the figures:

**Figure 2: Comparison of four universities based on their spending on research**



Source: UGC Annual Report 2006

The figures above indicated overall annual expenditure on research of each university. There is no data available for individual disciplines. Even the figure shows lower investment in research of EWU in the year 2006 but the current assessment by Webometrics in Spain reveals that the institute has greater involvement in the research activity and ranked first amongst all private universities.

#### **4.6 Additional Remarks**

There is a scarcity of qualified teachers in Bangladesh. The lack of qualification was felt in terms of unsatisfactory academic background, experience, involvement in research and number of international publications. According to the statement given by the UGC Chairperson, Professor Najrul Islam:

*There is a scarcity of qualified teachers in the country and private universities are facing more challenges in terms of ensuring quality teaching due to this limitation (Islam, 2008).*

Private universities that have enough funds for hiring can attract qualified faculty members from other public universities to their own institutions. Universities that depend solely on tuition fees while charging less to students cannot afford to recruit internationally trained and qualified faculty members. During the interview phase with Pro Vice Chancellor Professor Abdur Rab of Eastern University, he mentioned about this challenge that the institution is facing.

*One of our missions is to attract brilliant student from middle class family and therefore we charge less tuition fees and it limits us to offer good salary package for the qualified and foreign trained faculty members (Rab, 2008).*

Faculty members of public universities will often take leave up to 2 years so they can work as full-time employees at private institutions while also do some private research. This seems to be a clear violation of ethics though no actual rule is broken. Public universities have the provision of 2-years leave and professors who have the potential to earn more at private universities will often take advantage of the 2-years leave to work at a private university for better pay.

*Public universities lack funding for research and the low pay of teachers encourages them to undertake income-supplementing jobs, such as consulting for government departments, NGOs and Donor agencies and part time teaching in private universities (Alam, Haque and Siddqui, 2007: 31)*

In congruence with earlier presented facts it was found that public university professors in high demand will often work in multiple private universities as part-time teachers. This is in



contradiction to the PRUA 2007 Act where public university professors should not work as a part-time teacher in more than one university. Reliance on part time faculty members is a sign of low quality and inattention to students.

Full-time and part-time faculty ratio (as recommended by UGC) is largely unmet even in the selected two universities (NSU and EWU) that are performing well. None of the satisfactory or less satisfactory universities could meet the criteria for fulfilling the fulltime and part time faculty ratio. The information at the NSU website provides the data:

*One of the features of NSU, 160 fulltime and 125 part time highly qualified faculty members with degrees mostly from reputed North American universities*

[http://www.northsouth.edu/html/admission\\_test.html](http://www.northsouth.edu/html/admission_test.html)).

Therefore it couldn't be firmly established whether the increased part-timer faculty trend is a cause of low quality education. On the contrary it was seen that the less successful institutions had actually a lower ratio of part-timers than their successful counterparts.

**Table 5: Comparison of Universities Based on Their Tuition Fees in Business Administration Program**

<b>Name of the Institution</b>	<b>Tuition Fees</b>
North South University	Tuition Fees per credit TK 4000 ( 46.15 Euro)
Eastern University	Tuition Fees per credit TK 1600 ( 18.46 Euro)
East West University	Tuition Fees per credit TK 3300 ( 38.07 Euro)

Note: SUB tuition fee data was not available  
Euro 1 = BD TK 87, 4 Nov 2008

As seen in the table above, the well performing universities NSU and EWU tuition fees are higher than the less satisfactory university EU. Because of higher tuition fees NSU and EWU generate more revenues which are reflected in their investment in research and annual spending. Usually students from upper class families can afford to study at NSU as their tuition fees are the highest.

Though the mission, goals and objectives are commonly shared by the authority stakeholders of private universities, when it comes to implementation, management and administration it is often evident that there are two camps attending to their own interests. On one camp there is the Board of Trustees, who wants to maximize revenue, and on the other camp there is the Management (Vice Chancellor, Registrar, Faculty members) who wants to ensure quality intake of students and investment in faculty and facility development. The conflict

of interest is a result of absence of specific roles defined by UGC (source: State University Faculty).

A number of focus group discussions were carried out with students from the selected universities. Three factors were discovered that led students to seek admission in private universities of their choice.

The first factor is the unavailability of courses in high-demand that were offered in public universities. Unavailability of courses indicate either they are not offered or if offered there is a limited number of possible admissions. Courses in high-demand are the perceived prestigious programs like Business Administration, Economics and Information Technology. These courses seem to attract more enrolment because of prevailing beliefs of a secured job upon graduation. Not all public universities offer these courses. Some of the public universities that do offer them only have limited number of admissions. Students therefore are led to seek enrolment in private institutions that offer the courses in high-demand. This has also led to the burgeoning of many private higher institutions of education to fulfil this demand.

*These private institutions have made a conscious effort to satisfy the demand for subjects that are perceived as highly remunerative in Bangladesh and therefore popular with students—such as business administration, computer science, engineering, and medicine (Hopper, 1998).*

The second factor is the eventual fallback to get admitted into a private university after failing to secure admission into a public university. This indicates that the first preference is still public universities. Public universities will often have higher admission requirements and competition. Students who cannot secure admission into a public university will fallback and try to get in any private university regardless of their concern or practice for quality.

*Despite a sharp decline in quality, public universities are still the first choice by all admission seekers (Alam, Haque and Siddique, 2007: 29).*

The third factor is the student perception of quality and the higher expected possibility to fulfil their career goals after graduating from a private university. Students often evaluate tuition fees of a particular university, faculty members, word-of-mouth recognition of the institution among friends and relatives, brand-name, job possibility, scholarship availability, location and other demographic factors in choosing their institution of choice. According to importance scale (No.

1 is most important), the following factors are considered by students when choosing which private university they would like to get admission:

1. Tuition fees and scholarship opportunity – most important
2. Job ads encouraging graduates from specified universities for example, NSU, EWU and Dhaka University (see Appendix B, Evidence 1).
3. Courses offered

Private universities tap into all these concerns through their specialized marketing efforts, seminars, paper ads and more to meet the demand and perception of quality.

This study on the selected private universities also discovered the fact that none of universities have any organised alumni association. Only three of the universities have job placement record and details of student placement. None of the universities have any long-term plan to assess the quality of their graduates. Alumni Association is an important body for any private education institution. Luxton (2005:30) stated that the alumni of a university are important because they provide valuable services for the university wishing to evaluate its successes and areas for growth. It also indicates job placement records, public relations with companies, job trends, increased communication between graduates and university.

Based on the observation of the four selected universities, this study could not gather any expenditure data (revenue, salary package of faculty members, administrative expenses, etc) on faculty development plan. There is no clear policy on income and expenditure of private universities in Bangladesh (UGC annual report 2006). Based on the interview with UGC Chairperson and Assistant Director of Private University wing of UGC, it was found that UGC has two kinds of constraints: financial and human resource to monitor the large number of private universities.

The comparative analysis of these private universities reveals a number of issues which acts as constraints towards ensuring quality education and variation of performance amongst them. It has been noted that lack of this creates variation of performance. Admission policy, faculty recruitment policy, scholarship opportunities are vital elements of internal quality assurance mechanisms and the practice of these elements are setting apart the better performing universities from the rest. The implementation of the various elements of quality assurance mechanisms requires financial resources. Even when the internal quality assurance mechanisms are similar to the successful universities, the major cause of failure of the policies lies in implementation. This results in inconsistency of academic standards. In the next chapter, the above aspects will be discussed in detail with their relation and implications to quality in higher education. Additionally policies will be recommended to overcome the mentioned constraints.

## **KEY FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS OF POLICY**

### **5.1 Summary of the Findings**

This concluding chapter “Key Findings and Implications” provides a summary of the comparative analysis of the 4 selected universities discussed in the last chapter. Additionally some recommendations have been made to improve the quality of education in private universities in Bangladesh.

The study found that private universities in Bangladesh face a number of issues in terms of quality assurance practices. One of the major constraints is adequate number of qualified faculty members which has a deep correlation to the quality of teaching. Faculty quality is generally accepted as the most important determinant of the overall quality of higher education institutions (World Bank, 2000: 65). However the improvement of quality of teaching and the presence of qualified faculty in these institutes is also related to their internal quality assurance policy practices such as recruitment policy, long-term faculty development plans and promotional criteria.

Based on the comparative analysis, the full-time and part-time faculty ratio of all the private universities does not meet the UGC criteria. This has also been confirmed from the UGC Annual Report 2006. Though the full-time and part-time faculty ratio does not meet the UGC requirement it could not be established if the part-timer trend lowers the quality of teaching. In reality the most satisfactory university of the study (NSU) had more part-time faculty members than the less satisfactory ones. In all cases the institutes benefit from the presence of qualified and experienced teachers even though they work as part timers (based on opinion of university authorities and students). But at the same time there should be some guidelines to restrict the number of part-timers. In PRUA 2007 Act there is provision for part-timer rules which should be implemented to improve dedication of full-time faculty members towards their parent institutions. The crisis might deepen with expansion of private universities in Bangladesh and unavailability of qualified teachers resulting in lower quality of education. To overcome the possible challenge for private universities, the government needs to consider and asses the current supply of qualified faculty before approving the establishment of any new private university.

Student selection and admission policy of the satisfactory universities like NSU and EWU create variation of quality in providing higher education. Because of the internal policy differences the quality of input (student intake) has a direct affect on the quality of output

(graduates). Poor quality intake results in poor academic performance and finally acceptance of graduates in the market. To ensure quality, the strict admission selection systems (admission tests, higher requirements) are enabling some of the private universities to ensure higher quality student intake. On the other hand, most private universities depend on tuition fees as revenues which restrict their intention to ensure high quality student intake.

The study reveals that there is a lack of meritorious student enrollment in private universities; as such students prefer public universities as their first choice of application. One of the major reasons for preferring public universities is that talented students often face difficulties financing their education in private universities (student's opinion in focus group discussion). Private university education costs can be as high as 20 times when compared to public universities in Bangladesh. The assurance of scholarship opportunity in the admission policy also determines the provision for bright meritorious student to study in private universities. This mechanism creates variation of quality among private universities. In case of EWU, the increasing investment in scholarship provision is helping the institute to attract more meritorious but financially disadvantaged students who otherwise would not have been able to afford the cost of private higher education. As Masum (2008:25) has stated, getting admitted in private university with full tuition waiver and after graduating with high CGPA can help financially disadvantaged students get high-end jobs.

To ensure more access of financially disadvantaged but meritorious students in private universities, Banks and investment institutes can offer various student financing packages to help students meet their education costs. The financial institutes can work with the private universities to provide this kind of service for students. At current there are only a limited number of such services available in Bangladesh. Availability of student loans and financing can help deserving and meritorious student's opportunities for study.

The study also found that the variations of performance of these four universities are also based on their internal policy for investment in research. It is visible in the UGC Report (2006) that the NSU investment in research is higher than other 2 less satisfactory universities including EWU (the more satisfactory university). The reason why EWU shows a significantly lower figure than NSU (see figure 2) cannot be satisfactorily explained but the Webometrics of Spain ranking of EWU as the best private university in 2007 contradicts this because one of their criteria for best university selection was research activity. In the faculty promotional policy of EWU research is given the most important criteria. Therefore their research activity is high and this was a significant reason why they were awarded by Webometrics.

Finally, the above mechanisms of the selected universities are directly or indirectly connected to the financial resources (sources of revenue). Financial sources play a dominant role in ensuring quality. As Masum (2008:27) stated, quality is a function of investment and management. Financial resources are required for recruiting qualified teachers with adequate salary packages, improve academic facilities (library, lab), investment in research and development, and providing learning materials to students. Large and established companies can also play a part to increase quality of private higher education in Bangladesh. For example, in US there are various foundations (The Ford Foundation, Rockefeller Foundation, and more) that provide grants towards universities and students. To summarize, private institutes that perform better in terms of providing quality education has sustainable financial resources, they maintain the minimum standards of UGC and additionally implement their own innovative strategies.

## **5.2 Conclusion**

The significance of higher education is increasing in Bangladesh as new employment opportunities are being created by the emerging private banks, telecommunications and IT sector and manufacturing industries. Private universities can fulfill this demand in the market place by ensuring quality graduates. The advantages of private universities compared to public ones are based on the following key aspects: collaboration with other international universities, no academic session delays, politics-free environment, and international standards based grading systems (CGPA).

Ensuring quality in private universities should be of concern nationally as the numbers of private universities are greater than public universities. Through ensuring quality the private universities can produce internationally competent graduates in the market place and the development of the country. Though this paper did not discuss much about the proposed Accreditation Council many quality issues and concerns discussed in this study could be addressed through the implementation of Accreditation Council.

The aim of this paper is not to provide solutions for ensuring quality in higher education, but an attempt to address the issues that act as constraints within the policy assurance mechanisms that affect quality. Highlighting these issues, it is hoped that both the government and private universities will consider them for enhancing the standard of quality in higher education.

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## ANNEX A: RESEARCH TOOLS

### List of Interviewee

	Name	Organization / Institution
1.	Professor Nazrul Islam (Chairman)	University Grants Commission
2.	Ms. Jesmin Pervin (Assistant Director )	University Grants Commission (Private University Division)
3	Professor Dr. Abdur Rab (Pro Vice Chancellor and Dean of Faculty of Business Administration)	Eastern University
4	Dr. Ware Newaz ((Faculty member of Business Administration Dept.)	Eastern University
5	Dr. Md Sharif ( (Vice Chancellor)	East West University
6	Professor Dr. Tanbir Ahmed Chowdhury (Dean and Chairperson of Business Administration)	East West University
7	Dr. Humayan Kabir Chowdhury (Faculty member of Business Administration Dept.)	East West University
8	Mr. Sirajul Islam (Acting Head , Department of Business Administration)	State University of Bangladesh
9	Professor A. Y. M. Ekram – Ud Daulah ((Registrar)	State University of Bangladesh
10	Dr. Azmat Ara Ahamed (Faculty member)	North South University
11	Dr SAM Khairul Bashar ((Pro Vice Chancellor)	North South University
12	Mr. B M Isa ( (Deputy Registrar)	North South University

### ***Semi Structured Interview 1***

Interviews were conducted with the authorities of the four selected university on 7, 14, 21, 24, 28 and 30 August 2008.

Name of Interviewee:
Position:
Institution:
Date:

The following issues and questions were discussed in the interviews.

1. There is a concern about quality issues in private universities. Please comment.
2. How do you ensure quality in your institution? What are the quality assurance mechanisms do you specifically follow?
3. What is the source of revenue and what is the tuition system and budgeting methods?
4. Do you think revenue generation of private universities is related with the quality of education?
5. What kinds of policies do you have to ensure quality student intake? Do you have any policy to provide scholarships to meritorious student who need financial assistance?
6. In your opinion what are the essential requirements for better teaching and learning?
7. How do you ensure quality of faculty? What policies do you have for faculty development, recruitment, and promotion in your institution?
8. How do you maintain the UGC requirement for full-time and part-time faculty ratio?
9. There is a discussion about the part timer trend and quality of teaching in private universities. What is your opinion about this issue?
10. What kind of teaching assessment and evaluation do you have at your institution? How do you use the assessment procedure, for example promotions?
11. What kind of learning facilities (lab, library, Internet connectivity etc) do you provide?
12. What policies do you have for research activities? How are students or faculty members involved in research? Is there any specific fund allocation for this purpose?
13. Do you have any budget allocation for any program aimed towards quality improvement?

14. Is there any alumni association at your institution? Do you have any record keeping mechanism or market acceptability statistics of your graduates?
15. What is the role of the Board of Trustee in policy making and quality assurance?

### ***Semi Structured Interview 2***

The interviews were conducted on 25, 27 August 2008 with the Chairman and Assistant Director of University Grants Commission.

Name of Interviewee:
Position:
Institution:
Date:

The following issues and questions were discussed in the interviews.

1. In 2004, there was a survey done by UGC to evaluate the performance of private universities in Bangladesh. What is your opinion about effectiveness of the survey?
2. What do you consider as essential requirements for quality in higher education and does it vary between public and private universities? Please comment.
3. What is the role of UGC in assessing the quality of education especially among private universities?
4. Do you consider the role of UGC to be adequate to measure the performance of private universities in Bangladesh?
5. What is your opinion about the quality of teaching and faculty in private universities and again does it vary between public and private universities? If yes why or why not?
6. Does UGC conduct any survey on quality of teaching in both public and private universities?
7. There is a discussion about the part timer trend and quality of teaching in private universities. What is your opinion about this issue?
8. Does UGC policy address the issue of tuition fee structure and quality intake of students?
9. What challenges do you think that private universities face in order to provide quality education?

10. What is your opinion about the role of the Board of Trustees in private universities?
11. Do you see any limitation in the role of UGC to measure quality in higher education?
12. What is your opinion about the proposed Accreditation Council? How far do you think this council will address the issue of quality in higher education?

***Focus Group Discussion:***

<b>Name Of The Institute</b>	<b>Number Of Students</b>	<b>Student Representation:</b>	<b>Academic Majors/Minors Represented in the Student Focus Groups Included:</b>	<b>Number of Male and Female Students</b>
North South University, East West University, Eastern University, State University of Bangladesh	32 students divided into 4 focus groups, 8 students per group	First and Second year students	Business Administration, Economics, English, Computer Science and Engineering	17 male and 15 female student

**A. Factors influencing preferred choice of institution**

1. What were the key factors in choosing a public or private university?
2. What were the key factors in choosing a particular private university? What characteristics of a private university attracted you the most for choosing it?
3. How do you assess the performance of different universities?
4. Do you consider the tuition fees of private universities affordable or too expensive?

**B. Strength and weaknesses of the own institution**

The questions were asked to discover the participant perception about the strength and weaknesses of their institution.

1. What do you hope to achieve after completing your studies at your institution?
2. How much do you think your choice of a university will matter in terms of your success after graduation?

3. What do you think will be the market perception of your degree after you graduate from your university?

4. What are the positive and negative aspects of your university? How do you think the negative aspects can be overcome?

**C. Opinion About the Difference in Quality of Teaching Between Full-time / Part-time Faculty**

1. How would you describe the faculty quality of teaching at your institute?

2. Do you see any difference in the quality of teaching between full-time and part-time teachers? Do you think part-time teachers provide less attention than full-time teachers?

## ANNEX B - EVIDENCES

### Evidence 1: Job Ad

<http://www.bdjjobs-server.com/bdjjobs/jobs/jobs.asp?ID=139351>

**bdjobs.com**  
LARGEST JOB SITE IN BANGLADESH

HOME | POST RESUME | MY BDJOBS | JOB MAIL SERVICE | CAREER COUNSELLING

Category : Secretary/Receptionist

A leading multinational company [Job Source: Bdjjobs.com Online job posting, Posting Date: November 03, 2008 ]

**Executive Secretary**  Store this Job to My BdJobs Cart

No. of Vacancies : 01

Job Description / Responsibility

- Excellent capability to drafting reports, self business correspondence & other communications.
- Must have 3-5 years experience as an Executive Secretary.

Educational Requirements

- Must have Masters in English from any recognized University or MBA from DU/ IBA/ NSU/ IUB.
- Having Secretarial Science course is a plus but not essential.

Experience Requirements

- 1 to 3 year(s)
- The applicants should have experience in the following area(s):  
Personal Secretary