

Evaluating the Quality of Higher Education in Private Universities of Bangladesh: Challenges, Developments, and the Path Forward

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ABSTRACT

After the Private University Act was passed in 1992, Bangladesh saw a fast growth of private universities, so changing the higher education scene in the nation. This rise was mostly a reaction to public universities' inability to meet the rising demand for tertiary education. Although private universities have brought contemporary academic models, including American-style courses and semester schedules, their spread raises questions about academic governance, quality assurance, and fair access. With an eye toward four key areas: faculty resources, infrastructure, research culture, and regulatory mechanisms, this paper looks at the quality of education in private universities. Employing a mixed-methods approach, the study makes use of both quantitative and qualitative information gathered from six particular colleges. While key informant interviews were conducted with legislators, UGC officials, and university administrators, surveys were administered among students, professors, and guardians. Results expose notable differences in educational quality between universities. While some colleges satisfy international academic criteria and help to build human capital, many others suffer from poor infrastructure, over-reliance on part-time faculty, little research output, and inadequate regulatory authority oversight. Concerns also surround commercialization and a lack of academic rigor in some universities. The report ends with a set of focused suggestions meant to enhance Bangladesh's private higher education scene. These include the creation of a strong accreditation body, so enhancing the legal and regulatory power of the University Grants Commission, and using performance-based funding to encourage institutional quality improvement. Meeting national development objectives and improving world competitiveness depend on private higher education guaranteeing sustainability and quality.

Keywords: Private Universities, Higher Education, Faculty Quality, Infrastructure, UGC, Bangladesh, Policy Reform, Research Development.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The higher education landscape in Bangladesh has undergone significant change in the past thirty years. Originally controlled by public universities like the University of Dhaka, founded in 1921, the industry saw an amazing change when the Private University Act was passed in 1992. This change let private companies open universities, so increasing access to tertiary education and bringing competition into an area that had been under monopoly. The inability of public universities to satisfy the great demand for higher education, particularly in metropolitan areas, drove most private university (PU) development. Four-year undergraduate degrees, American-style semester systems, and revised modular courses are just a few of the scholarly innovations PUs brought about quickly. These developments responded to the demand of the market for qualified, career-ready graduates and more closely matched Bangladesh's private higher education model with international practices. However the fast spread of PUs also brought forward a number of difficult issues and criticism. The main issues are weak institutional control, commercialization of higher education, and lack of academic practice standardizing. Allegations about inadequate research engagement, insufficient infrastructure, over-reliance on part-time teachers, poor faculty recruitment standards, and lack of full-time qualified staff continue to abound. Many times, these problems are ascribed to the profit-driven goals of some institutions and the University Grants Commission's (UGC) laxer regulatory enforcement. Many private universities still run without enough permanent faculty, research funding, or access to contemporary laboratory and library facilities, according to UGC reports and national evaluations. While some institutions such as NSU demonstrate effective administration and academic rigor, a large segment of the sector struggles to meet even basic compliance requirements. In some cases, universities continue to function in rented spaces in residential or industrial buildings many years after their establishment.

Moreover, studies carried out by groups like UNESCO-IIEP (2007) and academics like Andaleeb (2006) offer empirical data on the different performances among private universities. Although graduates of respectable private universities were found to have good employment results, many other institutions came under fire for providing easily obtained degrees with little academic worth. The absence of a strong quality assurance and accreditation system has aggravated these differences even more. Notwithstanding these obstacles, private universities have clearly helped to boost tertiary enrollment and stop the brain drain of students looking for foreign education. It is imperative to assess the degree to which PUs are providing quality education so that this expansion is sustainable and in line with national development goals.

This study investigates the quality of education in several private institutions in Bangladesh, with a particular focus on faculty resources and infrastructure. A mixed-methods approach was used, combining qualitative interviews with academic leaders, UGC representatives, and legislators with quantitative surveys from

students, teachers, and guardians. The findings aim to inform policy decisions and provide recommendations for enhancing the standard, equity, and administration of higher education in the private sector.

2.0 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND ANALYTICAL CONTEXTS

Designed to increase access to higher education, the Private University Act of 1992 (changed in 1998) established private universities in Bangladesh. The government has approved these institutions and might work with foreign universities. The rise of these colleges is a mirror of more general projects to democratize higher education and solve public sector flaws. In higher education, quality has several complex and multidimensional meanings. According to Harvey and Green (1993), there are five main ways to define quality: transformative potential, fitness for purpose, value for money, perfection (zero defects), and exceptional (high standards). In a similar vein, Cheng and Tam (1997) propose that the quality of education is multifaceted and relative, consisting of three interconnected elements: processes (teaching methodology, student engagement), outputs (graduate competence, research productivity), and inputs (faculty credentials, infrastructure). International organizations like the World Bank and UNESCO add more perspectives to the discussion of quality. The World Bank (2007) asserts that infrastructure, governance, faculty expertise, assessment standards, institutional vision, and graduate employability all influence the quality of higher education. As the foundation of excellent education, UNESCO also emphasizes social values, sustainability, and cultural relevance. The Delors Report (1996) emphasizes the four pillars of learning: learning to know, to do, to live together, and to be that line of sight matches.

In our socio-economic context, quality must take into account the demands of national development, which include reducing poverty, creating jobs, and developing technology. Salauddin (2007) and Ehsan (2008), dependable infrastructure, campuses free from violence, the availability of full-time faculty, and the institutionalization of academic practices are important indicators of quality. Measuring quality is made even more challenging by a lack of a national accreditation framework, diverse academic programs, and shifting international standards. Carley & Waldron (1984) and Ellis (1993) claim that quality assurance comprises systematic processes for maintaining and enhancing learning outcomes. Globally accepted models like ISO 9000 and GATE offer structured quality metrics, and the input-process-output model is still a frequently used evaluative framework. Indicators used to evaluate the quality of higher education include teaching facilities, library and lab resources, research participation, academic credentials, student services, and faculty selection procedures. Studies by Andaleeb (2007), Alam et al. (2007), and UNESCO workshops in Dhaka and Macao have proposed a comprehensive set of quality variables that highlight the importance of both academic and administrative dimensions.

This study identifies infrastructure facilities and faculty resources as important independent factors affecting

the dependent variable of education quality. Selection procedures, academic credentials, teaching effectiveness, opportunities for advancement, and research involvement are sub-variables under faculty. The campus, classrooms, libraries, and labs are the main areas of focus for infrastructure. In the end, external perceptions and results are used to assess the quality of higher education at private universities in addition to internal inputs and procedures. These include the degree's international recognition, graduates' employability, and the institution's capacity to significantly advance national development objectives. The evaluative framework of the study is based on this theoretical and analytical framework.

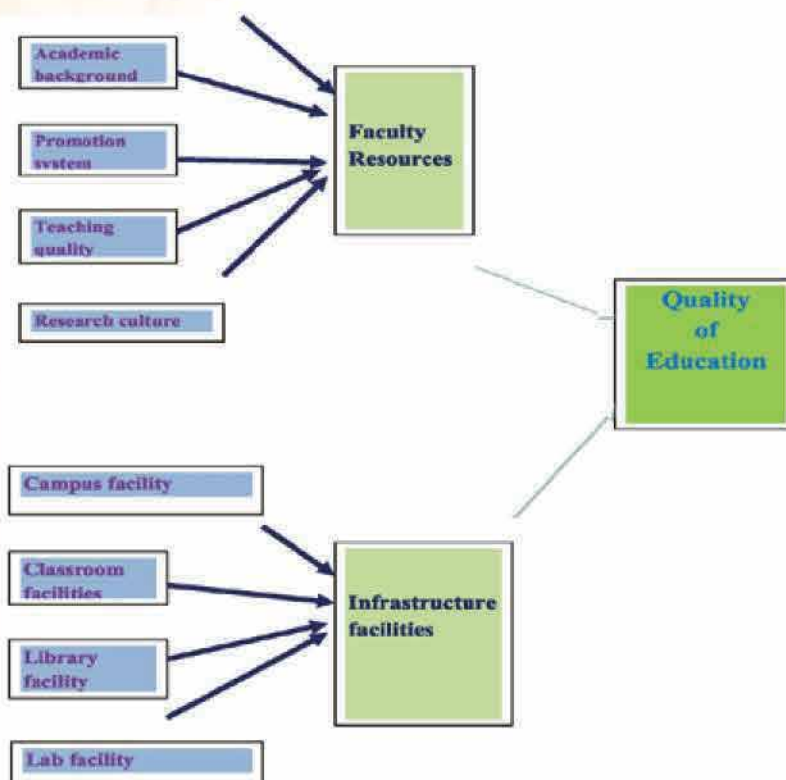


Figure 01: Framework for Analysis

2.1 Higher Education Contextual Background of Bangladesh

According to the University Grants Commission (UGC), there are 158 universities in Bangladesh as of April 2025, with 108 of them being private and 50 being public. The demand for tertiary education has grown dramatically as secondary and higher secondary education have expanded. Due to capacity constraints at public universities, the government established the Private University Act of 1992 to encourage private sector

involvement. This change in policy created a competitive environment in higher education in addition to increasing access.

2.2 Roles in the Public and Private Sectors While private universities prioritize effectiveness, creativity, and responsiveness to student needs, public universities concentrate on offering necessary educational services and infrastructure. When it comes to increasing access and funding skill development, the private sector is essential.

2.3 The Private Sector's Suitability Private universities are excellent at implementing job-oriented programs, keeping flexible academic schedules, and embracing customer-centric approaches. Students find these institutions appealing because they frequently offer an academic environment free from political disruptions and session jams.

2.4 Educational Stream and Structures Primary, secondary, and postsecondary education make up our educational system. With subjects ranging from business, engineering, and information and communication technology to the arts and social sciences, higher education is divided into general, technical, and madrasah streams.

2.5 Higher Education in the Public Sector The public university system faces capacity constraints, session jams, and governance issues despite its historical roots.

2.6 Private Postsecondary Education Private universities grew quickly after the 1992 PU Act was passed. Although there are still differences in infrastructure and compliance, prestigious universities like NSU, BRAC University, and East-West University are the excellent examples of governance and education.

2.7 Mechanism for Quality Assurance Bangladesh lacks a comprehensive national accreditation body. Although regulatory enforcement is still lacking, UGC approval serves as the main oversight mechanism for private universities. Changes to the PU Act and the establishment of a quality assurance authority are being considered.

2.8 The Founding Authorities Philanthropists, business executives, non-governmental organizations, or local government entities frequently establish private universities. ASA University and BRAC University are the two examples that were started by significant NGOs.

2.9 Trends in Enrollment Private universities have seen a steady rise in enrollment, providing options for students unable to gain admission to public universities. Timely course completion, state-of-the-art facilities, and ICT-based learning environments are all factors that influence preference.

2.10 Private University Faculty The hiring of faculty is still a major concern. While some universities use competitive pay to draw in qualified faculty, many rely largely on part-time instructors, which has an impact on student engagement and academic consistency.

2.11 Enrollment of International Students Due to large areas in urban campuses, flexible academic schedules, and specialized programs in business, engineering, and medicine, private universities can continue to draw more international students than public ones.

2.12 Distribution by Region Most private universities are located in Dhaka. There is still a discernible regional difference despite its minor presence in divisions like Rajshahi, Khulna, Barisal, and Rangpur.

2.13 Offerings of Subjects Computer science and business administration programs are given priority at the majority of private universities. On the other hand, new fields like public health, telecommunications, and environmental studies are becoming more popular.

2.14 Higher Education Strategic Planning (2006–2026) The World Bank-backed long-term strategy of UGC promotes quality assurance procedures, legal reform, and the development of strategic faculty and infrastructures.

2.15 University Closure A number of private universities have had their approvals revoked due to quality and compliance reviews, highlighting the necessity of ongoing oversight and standard-enforcement.

2.16 Functions of UGC The UGC, which was founded in 1973, is still the legally mandated body in charge of monitoring higher education. However, significant reform is necessary to effectively manage 158 universities due to its current structure and limited enforcement capacity.

2.17 Local Background Regulating private higher education presents difficulties.

Table 01: Total Number of Universities in Bangladesh (as of April 2025)

Type of University	Number of Institutions
Public	50
Private	108
Total	158

Table 02: Teacher Composition in Private Universities (Illustrative)

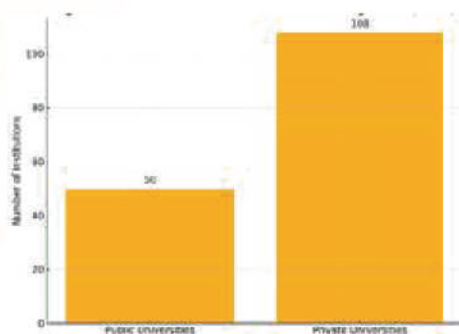
Year	Total Teachers	Full-time Teachers	Part-time Teachers	Student-Teacher Ratio
2022	11,250	6,800	4,450	1:24
2023	11,800	7,100	4,700	1:23

Table 03: Foreign Student Enrollment (Selected Years)

Year	Public Universities	Private Universities	Total Foreign Students
2020	230	1,100	1,330
2022	250	1,350	1,600

Table 04: Faculty-wise Student Enrollment in Private Universities (Illustrative)

Discipline	Enrollment (2023)
Business and Economics	85,000
Science, Engineering, ICT	50,000
Law and Social Sciences	35,000
Health, Environment, Development	10,000
Total	180,000

**Figure 02:** Total Number of Universities in Bangladesh (2025)

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design This study adopted a mixed-methods approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative techniques to examine the quality of education in selected private universities in Bangladesh. As Creswell (1994) contends, by balancing the constraints inherent in every method, the combination improves a researcher's capacity to investigate a concept fully.

3.2 Selecting a University and Study Area The following six private universities were specifically chosen: ASA University Bangladesh (ASAUB), Peoples University of Bangladesh (PUB), Green University of Bangladesh (GUB), Premier University Chittagong (PUC), University of Development Alternative (UODA), and North South University (NSU).

The selection was guided by the 2003 report of the High-Powered Committee on private universities. Institutions were chosen from different performance categories outlined in the report to ensure representativeness in terms of academic standards, governance, and infrastructure. NSU and UODA were from the top-performing group; PUC represented a satisfactory-performing group; PUB and GUB came from the lower-performing categories; and ASAUB was a recently approved institution managed by a prominent NGO.

3.3 Justification for Sample Size Due to resource and time constraints, six universities were selected to enable in-depth study and manageability. Their diversity in institutional type-city-based, NGO-based, older, and newer universities-supports comprehensive analysis.

3.4 Data Collection Primary data were collected through structured questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. Three sets of questionnaires were prepared for students, faculty members, and guardians. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with policymakers, university executives, UGC and Ministry of Education officials, and education experts.

Secondary data were drawn from government reports, academic literature, and institutional documents obtained from BANBEIS, UGC, IER of Dhaka University, BBS, World Bank, and relevant archives.

3.5 Reconnaissance Survey Initial field visits were conducted at NSU and PUB to observe institutional settings and refine data collection tools. Feedback from these visits was used to revise the questionnaire and checklist.

3.6 Sample Size and Distribution A total of 50 respondents were surveyed:

- 20 Students (split evenly between lab-based and non-lab-based programs)
- 20 Faculty members (full-time and part-time)
- 10 Guardians

In addition, 10 key informant interviews were conducted:

- Former Minister of Education

- Officials from UGC and MoE
- Senior executives from selected universities
- Education experts from Dhaka University
- Member of Private University Founders Association

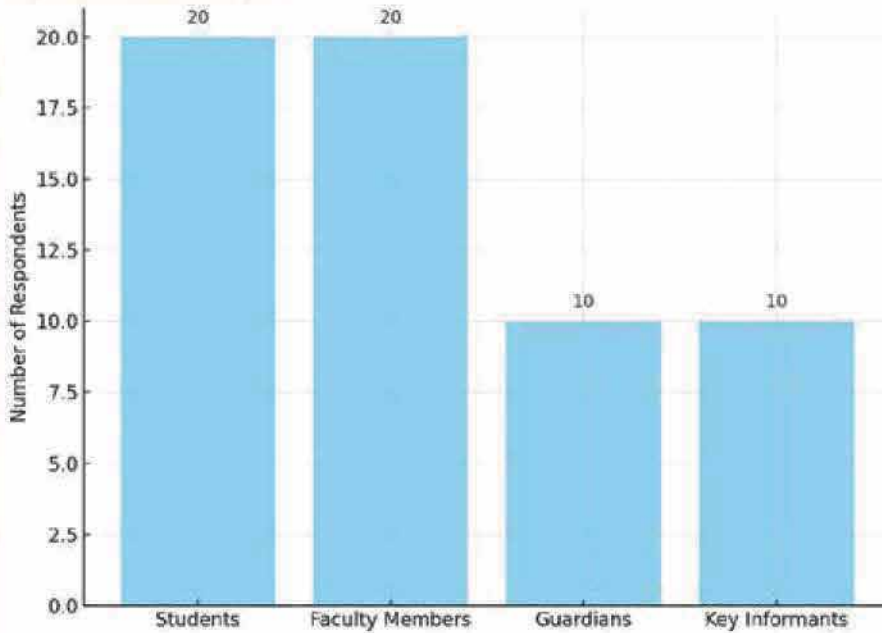


Figure 03: Sample Size Distribution by Respondent Type

Here figure 3 describes the sample size distribution by respondent Type, which visually represents the number of participants from each respondent group in your study.

3.7 Instrument Validation Data validity was ensured through methodological triangulation, using both survey and interview data to cross-verify the findings. This approach enhances the credibility and robustness of results, aligning with Punch's (1998) logic of triangulation.

3.8 Data Analysis Plan Both descriptive and content analysis techniques were applied. Close-ended responses were analyzed using frequency and percentage distributions. Open-ended responses were categorized and coded based on thematic clusters. The analysis focused on exploring faculty resources and infrastructure as input variables, while influencing the quality of education, treated as the dependent variable. The goal was analytical generalization rather than statistical extrapolation, in line with Yin's (1989) recommendations for case study research.

4.0 FINDING AND OBSERVATIONS

Twenty faculty members from six universities participated in the survey, with a balance of full-time and part-time positions across designation and academic qualifications.

Table 05: Distribution of Teachers by Type and Designation

University	Total	Part-time Faculty				Total	Full-time Faculty				Total
		Prof.	Assoc. Prof	Asst. Prof	Lecturer		Prof.	Assoc. Prof	Asst. Prof	Lecturer	
NSU	5	1			1	2	1	1		1	3
UODA	4			1	1	2		1		1	2
Premier	3	1				1			1	1	2
PUB	2			1		1			1		1
Green	3	1				1			1	1	2
ASA	3				1	1	1			1	2
Total	20	3		2	3	8	2	2	3	5	12

Among them, 8 were part-time and 12 were full-time faculty. Professors numbered 5, assistant professors 4, and lecturers 9. Only 5 respondents had PhDs, while 50% previously worked in public universities, and 10% had international teaching experience.

The survey among 20 faculty members across six private universities revealed significant insights into teaching quality, recruitment practices, academic background, and institutional support. The faculty composition included 8 part-time and 12 full-time teachers, with lecturers being the majority (Table 5). Despite a reasonable number of PhD holders, the majority serve as part-timers, highlighting an over-reliance on adjunct staff.

Table 06: Recruitment and Selection Perceptions

Statement	Yes	No	Comment/Other
The university has a permanent recruitment policy	70%	0%	30% didn't know
Faced any formal selection process	80%	20%	-

Half of the teachers noted manipulation in recruitment.

Table 07: Authority Manipulates Faculty Recruitment

Yes	No	Sometimes	No Answer
50%	20%	20%	10%

Satisfaction with recruitment was neutral among 40% of teachers, with 30% satisfied and 30% dissatisfied.

Recruitment transparency appeared questionable, with 50% of faculty acknowledging manipulation in the hiring process and 30% dissatisfied with recruitment fairness (Tables 6 and 7). While 70% confirmed a formal recruitment policy, only 80% faced a structured selection process.

Table 08: Teacher-Student Ratio and Faculty Numbers

University	Part-time	Full-time	Total Faculty	Teacher-Student Ratio
NSU	143	150	293	1:22
UODA	101	174	275	1:15
Premier	95	93	188	1:24
PUB	83	55	138	1:11
Green	5	38	44	1:30
ASA	34	60	94	1:29

Most senior faculty with PhDs work part-time basis.

Table 09: Faculty Academic Background (PhD, MPhil/MS, Other)

University	Total Faculty	PhD (P/T + F/T)	MPhil/MS	Others
NSU	293	162	1	130
UODA	275	-	24	251
Premier	188	38	44	106
PUB	138	27	17	94
Green	44	7	4	33
ASA	94	6	-	54

60% of faculty said current teaching quality is not sufficient to ensure EQ.

Table 10: Teacher Opinion on Existing Teaching Quality

Yes	No	Moderate
30%	60%	10%

Teacher-student ratios across the universities were better than public institutions, ranging from 1:11 to 1:30 (Table 8). However, quality concerns persist: 60% of respondents reported that current teaching quality is insufficient to ensure educational quality (Table 10).

Table 11: Permanent Salary Structure Availability

Yes	No
90%	10%

Promotion dissatisfaction was expressed by 30% of respondents.

Table 12: Written Promotion Policy

Yes	No	Other Comments
50%	10%	40%

Table 13: Research Environment

Statement	Yes	No	Others
Journal Publication	60%	30%	10%
Conducted Research	30%	50%	20%

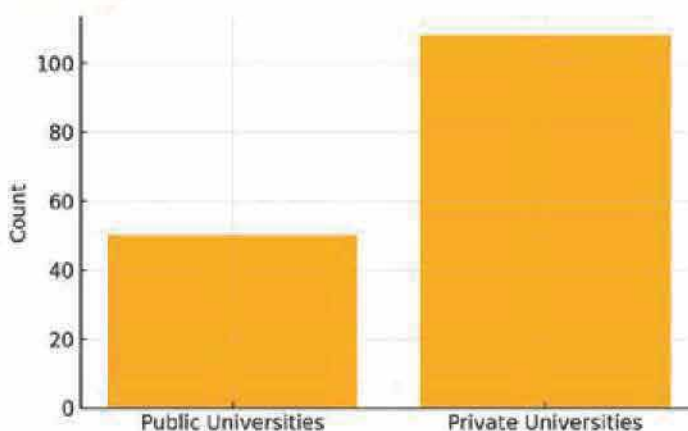
Table 14: International Recognition of Degree

Recognized	Not Recognized	No Comment	Doubtful
30%	40%	30%	20%

Though 90% of universities had a documented salary structure, 30% of respondents were dissatisfied with promotion policies, and 40% were unaware of formal rules (Tables 11 and 12). Research culture was found to be weak-only 30% conducted research post-joining, despite 60% stating their universities publish journals (Table 13).

In terms of global reputation, only 30% believed their institution's degree had international recognition, while 40% disagreed and 30% remained unsure (Table 14). These findings collectively underscore challenges in governance, faculty development, and research environment in private universities of Bangladesh.

A comparison of public and private universities is shown in Figure 04.

**Figure 04:** Comparison of Public and Private Universities Nationwide

There are currently 108 private and 50 public universities in operation in Bangladesh, as the bar chart illustrates. The information makes it abundantly evident that there are now over twice as many private universities as there are public ones. The private sector's notable expansion is indicative of the growing contribution of private endeavors to fulfilling the rising demand for higher education. It also shows that private universities are quickly becoming the nation's alternative higher education options. At the same time, administrative and financial issues constrain public universities in their ability to grow their infrastructure and enrollment capacity.

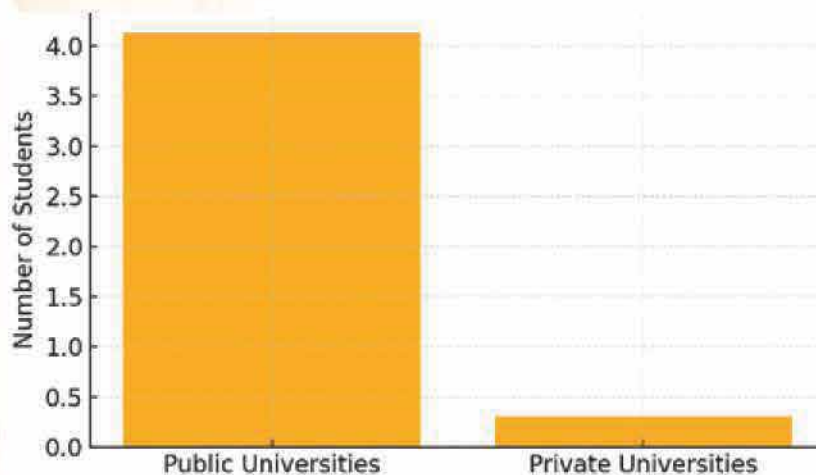


Figure 05: Disparity in Enrollment Rates between our Public and Private Universities

Figure 05 shows the clear differences in enrollment rates between public and private universities in Bangladesh. Public universities enroll a far higher number of students-4,131,610 as opposed to 310,107 even if there are more private universities. Public universities typically have larger campuses, offer a wider range of academic programs, and use government funds to help make education more accessible, contributing to some of the reasons for this difference. Most Bangladeshi students, thus, remain their first choice for public universities.

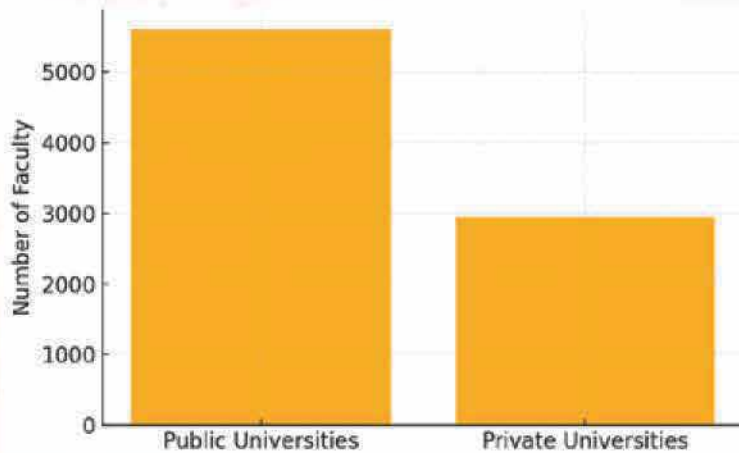


Figure 06: Distribution of PhD holders as faculty members in Public and Private Universities

Figure 6 displays the distribution of faculty members with PhDs across public and private universities in Bangladesh. According to the graph, 5,606 PhD holders are in public universities and 2,944 in private ones. This notable disparity suggests that the academic and research-focused environments in public universities are still more robust. Public universities likely have more PhD holders because of recruitment standards, better research funding opportunities, and competitive benefits. On the other hand, private universities usually find it difficult to attract and retain highly qualified faculty because of their limited funding and research infrastructure.

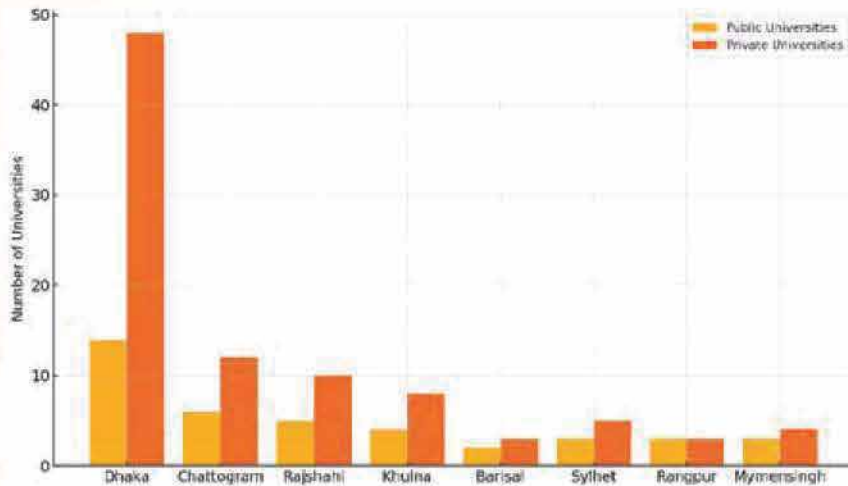


Figure 07: Regional Distribution of Universities throughout the Nation's Administrative Divisions

Figure 7 displays the regional distribution of universities across the administrative divisions of the country using a grouped bar chart. The chart shows that Dhaka Division, the political, economic, and educational hub of Bangladesh, is the home to the greatest number of public and private universities. However, particularly

in the private sector, the Barisal and Rangpur Divisions have the fewest universities. This glaring disparity draws attention to a regional disparity in access to higher education, where students from marginalized groups face significant barriers to pursuing postsecondary education in their local area. The graphic emphasizes the urgent need for targeted legislative measures to expand higher education's infrastructure equitably across all divisions, ensuring that every region has enough opportunities for academic progress.

5.0 CONCLUSION

With a focus on faculty competency, hiring practices, and infrastructure, this study investigates the quality of education in our Private Universities (PUs). The results show that while some private universities maintain high standards, the majority suffer from systemic problems like inadequate infrastructure, poor governance, random hiring practices, and a lack of research focus. One of the main problems is still the quality of the faculty. The majority of university employees are junior and part-time faculty, and hiring practices are typically transparent. Faculty development programs are either nonexistent or very limited, and there is a serious lack of research culture. Another problem at many institutions is inadequate infrastructure, especially in permanent campuses, labs, libraries, and recreation areas. Governance problems are exacerbated by the restrictions and policy gaps in the current Private University Act, which give profit-driven interests precedence over academic integrity. Quality assurance is further hampered by the lack of stringent regulatory frameworks and the UGC's limited jurisdiction. Although recent UGC initiatives and the Higher Education Quality Enhancement Project (HEQEP) show promise, long-term reforms are necessary. A revised Private University Act that prioritizes academic excellence, robust governance, faculty standards, equitable infrastructure, and research facilitation is imperative to guarantee high-quality education. Public-private cooperation, stakeholder engagement, and institutional accountability all need to be improved. The private higher education system of Bangladesh will only be able to satisfy both domestic and international standards if inclusive strategic reforms are implemented.

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