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Notes from the Editor

Teachers' preparation and professional development in the main stream secondary schools in rural areas is the subject of the first article in this issue. Rifat Afroze, Md. Mahbubul Kabir and Arifa Rahman report on BRAC's training activities for secondary schools. They examine the effect on English teachers' classroom practices. The author's conclusion is that most teachers perceived the training as useful, but there was not much difference in actual classroom practices of trained and un-trained teachers. The teachers believed that Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), the focus of the training, could not be effectively applied to the classrooms in rural schools.

The authors suggest that "a set of ingrained beliefs" influenced teaches' attitudes and behaviour in the classroom. Perhaps, but professional development and performance standards of teachers call for a rethinking of human resource policies and practices including the incentives and career ladder of teachers, proposed as one of six priorities regarding education and human resource development recommended from the Harvard Conference on Bangladesh, also included in this issue under Topical Note. Another of the conference recommendations was about the need for promoting a new and effective pedagogy, appropriate for the challenges of the 21st century.

The role of civil society and NGOs in educational development is covered in two articles. Mohammad Muntasim Tanvir, on the eve of the once-a-decade International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA VI) to be held in Brazil in May 2009, proposes an agenda for action for the civil society at national, regional and international level. In CONFINTEA V, held in 19997 in Hamburg, Sheikh Hasina, the Prime Minister of Bangladesh then, was the invited keynote speaker.

Mohammad Nazmul Haq, on the other hand, traces the history of government-NGO relationship in the sphere of non-formal education and suggests ways of making it more productive. The impression one cannot escape is that the relationship, characterized by tension and the lack of a common ground, is yet to become a real partnership.

One aspect of the governance issue is highlighted in the article by Saad Andaleeb, reporting on a small sample survey of alumni of selected higher education institutions about their perception of the quality features they expect to see in institutions. The author offers suggestions about how these quality markers could be taken into account in managing institutions. The Harvard conference also underscores the need for making education governance and management in general accountable and effective.

The conclusions of the breakaway session on education and human resources from the wide-ranging Harvard Conference on Bangladesh in the 21st Century held in July, 2008 are presented under Topical Note. The six point recommendations resonate well with the priority for reform and change being voiced in much of the on-going discussion in the country.

Manzoor Ahmed, Advisory Editor

Contents

Stakeholder Insights For Effective Higher Education Management

Syed Saad Andaleeb[1]

Abstract

This paper looks at human development in higher education through the lens of its users (the alumni). Tertiary education in Bangladesh has recorded over a five-fold growth since its birth in 1971. Yet, the participation rate of only 7 out of every 1000 persons in higher education in the country has to be considered meager.

Higher education in Bangladesh faces many challenges. Efforts have been made to capture the insight of one stakeholder group-the alumni of higher education institutions. In Bangladesh, the higher education system has often failed to deliver value to its beneficiaries, diminishing its value to its stakeholders largely because of its failure to meet expectations. The image of the HEIs has also been seriously compromised and the semblance of quality markedly eroded by political involvement of the teachers and students and the lack of an effective governance mechanism. Consequently, many aspiring students are seeking their education, goals and dreams in universities abroad. The paper attempted to provide insights into various quality dimensions of higher education and their subcomponents, namely, Teacher Quality, Peer Quality, Course Quality, Campus Politics and administrative Support.

I. Introduction

The quest for development has remained elusive for many developing countries. The leadership in many of these countries has often failed to understand that without human development, all other goals may be far more difficult to achieve, or even impossible, in the long run. The importance of human development is evident from Harbison (1973):

> "Human resources - not capital, nor income, nor material resources - constitute the ultimate basis for wealth of nations. Capital and natural resources are passive factors of production; human beings are the active agents who accumulate capital, exploit natural resources, build social, economic and political organizations, and carry forward national development."

Unless human resources - their energies, skills, talents and knowledge - are adequately and effectively developed and appropriately utilized, national development in its true sense will remain ephemeral (Andaleeb 2003).

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Development strategies since the 1990's, accumulated international experiences, and the lessons learnt from them have put human development at center stage. Empowering people with certain types of knowledge and skills is vital in shaping a country's development path. Education can therefore become a key element of poverty alleviation. In fact, lack of knowledge about one's choices and opportunities in life and the lack of capacity to assess and exercise these choices fuels poverty. According to Sen (2003) deprivation from education is an onerous factor that sustains poverty, not only of income and wealth, but also of the mind, the spirit, and one's physical well being.

T.W. Schultz (1962) has also broadened our perceptions of the positive effects of education on human productivity. It is through education that a nation's greatest asset is effectively shaped and developed. Both Nobel laureates have emphasized the importance of human development as the basis of national growth and emancipation.

According to the noted British economist, E.F. Schumacher (1973), "Development does not start with goods; it starts with people and their education, organization, and discipline." Referring to the World Wars, he says, "every country, no matter how devastated, which had a high level of education, organization, and discipline, produced an economic miracle." But education cannot make a quantum jump. It must evolve step by step, becoming the property not merely of a tiny minority, but of a whole society.

Unfortunately, the developing countries are generally characterized by widespread underdevelopment of their human resources. A large proportion of the population is illiterate and there are serious shortages of strategic skills, reflecting how education as a key variable for development has been routinely ignored. As a consequence, people's mastery over needed skills is limited and productivity very low.

Underutilization of human resources is another characteristic of developing countries. Persons with scarce skills often waste their time in the wrong kind of activity (e.g., doctors serving as administrators in the national health program in Bangladesh), others perform tasks unsuited to their backgrounds (a college graduate working as a night guard), while the capacities of highly educated persons are wasted in environments offering little incentive or challenge (persons with PhD degrees having little or no opportunities for research in the academic institutions, resulting in the 'brain drain' phenomenon). Clearly, the country's leadership must coordinate the twin functions of developing strategic skills and utilizing them in ways where the opportunities are commensurate with one's abilities.

Background

Education represents the totality of all experiences through which a person comes to know all he knows. It should enable a person, to deal more effectively with others, with his work and also with himself. The role of education is to upgrade the abilities of the people to deal effectively with problems that may stand in their way of progress. It must be able to bring about a change in their level of consciousness and develop a new awareness among them to define realistic and appropriate goals that one is best able to achieve.

Numerous studies have shown the positive relationship of education to human growth and development in all its various aspects such as intellectual and emotional growth, the formation of habits, attitudes and character, and social change as a result of the interaction between education and society. Research has contributed substantially to building awareness of education as an instrument of personal and social development (World Bank 1995). Its value as a means of achieving human and social goals is increasingly well recognized.

Cross country comparisons show that countries with high literacy had high life expectancy and tended to grow faster in the 1960s and 1970s (Chapman 2000). That conclusion remains valid even today. Sustained economic growth depends on a long-term strategy to improve the educational environment, leading to human development by way of improving the levels of consciousness of the people and by making them more intelligent, more ready, and more capable in their evolving nature of work in a globalizing and rapidly changing world.

Within the total education system, higher education is of strategic importance not only as an engine for human development, but also as an incubator and repository of knowledge with untold potential (Andaleeb 2003). Today governmental and societal groups are scrutinizing the performance of higher education institutions (HEIs) and the quality and value they deliver (Kember 1994; Nordvale 1996; Pounder 1997). Demanding greater accountability from the education system, many of these countries are introducing industrial concepts, formulae, and techniques including TQM (total quality management) applications to the management of HEIs. Malaysia is a case in point where quality practices from industry (TQM, six sigma, ISO 9000) are being rapidly introduced (Kanji, Tambi, Wallace 1999). India's rapid economic growth and the country's transition from socialism to free markets has also brought higher education under intense pressure to become more innovative and value-oriented.

Underscoring the poor quality of universities in developing countries, Lim (1999) attributes their underachievement to the fact that the staffs are often burdened by multiple tasks that limit research. In addition, archaic systems in the HEIs do not reward excellence in teaching and research, inhibiting the overall performance of even well qualified staff.

The World Bank (1993) also called for more diversity in the post-secondary institutions, stressing the need to enhance academic quality and to introduce greater accountability, along with greater autonomy for universities and better management and evaluation procedures in the operation of these institutions. Importantly, The World Bank urged post-secondary institutions to examine the relevance of their academic programs and to track student performance among other recommendations.

Ultimately, the HEIs must serve their communities by establishing minimum standards of instruction for universities and using assessment and accreditation procedures to enhance the role and performance of the HEIs. In the area of management education in India, for example, Jagadeep (2000) indicates a significant mismatch between demand and supply.

Consequently, the All India Council of Technical Education under the Ministry of Human Resource Development permitted a large number of institutes to start MBA or equivalent programs. The consequence has been dire. Many of the newly minted institutes are beset by:

- Limited number of core faculty and heavy dependence on visiting/guest faculty.
- Poor quality of faculty on competence, qualification, and experience.
- Poorly structured courses with little or no guidelines for content, coverage, and depth.
- Admission norms greatly relaxed to maximize revenues and profits.
- Poor assessment criteria and emphasis on promoting students and awarding degrees.

Although the concept of human development can be treated from various perspectives such as health, nutrition, environment, employment, etc., this paper looks at human development in higher education through the lens of its users (the alumni) who are well-positioned to offer strategic insights about their experiences with higher education.

Higher Education In Bangladesh

Structure of Higher Education

The major components of the higher education network include the 21 public general and specialized universities, 54 private universities, 1500 colleges of different kinds affiliated with the National University, as well as the Bangladesh Open University (National Education Commission Report 2003; The University Grants Commission (UGC) 2005).

Historically, the University of Dhaka, and the degree colleges in the district centers had earned a reputation for academic excellence and as centers of intellectual pursuit. A massive expansion of the system and demands of the times have altered the character of higher education over the last half century. In numbers of institutions and enrollment, tertiary education has recorded over a five-fold growth since the birth of Bangladesh in 1971. Yet, the participation rate of only 7 out of every 1000 persons in higher education in today's "knowledge economy" and "information society" has to be considered meager. Students and teachers in higher education as reported by UGC in 2005 are shown below:

Enrollment in 21 public universities	1,073,726
Teaching staff in 21 public universities	6,921
Enrollment in private universities	88, 669
Teaching staff in private universities	N/A

(Source: University Grants Commission 2005, pp. 107-9).

Bangladesh Open University (BOU), established in 1992, offers a variety of courses in the distance education mode including degree courses in business and education and diplomas and certificates in various fields. The Open University (as well as the Open School under

BOU auspices, that allows students to sit for SSC and HSC examinations) has contributed to broadening access to higher education and meeting both social and market demand for it. BOU has six "schools" under it: Open School; School of Education; School of Social Science, Humanities and Language; School of Science and technology; School of Agriculture and Rural development; and School of Business. It operates from its main campus in Ghazipur through 12 Regional Resource Centers, 80 Local Coordinating Centers and 700 Tutorial Centers. In 2003, registered participants in various BOU courses were reported to be 400,000 (NEC 2003, p.293). Less than a quarter of those who register complete the required courses and take the examination and about half of them receive the diploma.

In response to social as well as market demand, the tertiary education system has grown. An expansionist approach has been followed, particularly in the sphere of degree colleges under the National University and in liberally approving the charters for private universities. Private Universities have also grown rapidly in number and enrollment since the Private Universities Act was adopted in 1992. Between 1998 and 2005, the number of students increased more than ten-fold from 8,700 to 88,669. The number of institutions also increased eight-fold to 54 by 2005. The politics-free environment in contrast to public universities, assurance of completing the courses of studies within the designated time, and programs of studies that are responsive to market demands have attracted a growing number of students to private universities (NEC 2003, pp. 107-9).

State of Higher Education

Research on the performance of HEIs in Bangladesh is limited. Yet, persistent problems are evident from various sources including the print media. What emerges from these sources is that higher education in Bangladesh faces numerous challenges: quality has deteriorated substantially, mismanagement is rampant, standards are poor, lack of qualified teachers is pervasive, course design is archaic, and there is wide variation in student quality. These problems cause serious mediocrity in the HEIs and hamper producing productive and employable graduates (Andaleeb 2003). Yet, with increasing demand, new private universities seem to be coming on-straem everywhere. However, the rapid growth in number and size of private universities and the absence of effective self-regulation or regulation have raised concerns about their quality. Questions are also being raised about whether consumers (students and their families) are receiving adequate protection from unscrupulous "entrepreneurship" (i.e., low caliber universities and their profit-driven founders).

In fact, a large number of the private universities are deficient on quality, rigor, relevance, and value for money. A recent UGC investigation of the private universities revealed that most of the 52 universities did not meet the requirements laid down by the government under the Privacy Act 1992 (Hossain 2005). It is important that both types of HEIs (public and private) should come under greater scrutiny to provide much needed impetus for change so that they can better serve the needs of a dynamic and evolving environment.

The strategic role of the HEIs in human and national development necessitates that it must be carefully planned. In particular, its backward linkages with secondary education and forward linkages with the market for employment must be clearly and creatively articulated at the highest levels and energized with the right measures and incentives. To do so requires that its role and direction be addressed from the perspectives of multiple stakeholders: employers, employees, students, educators, policy makers, and society itself. The needs of each stakeholder must be identified and integrated to nurture, reposition, and rejuvenate higher education and make it more comprehensive, relevant, rigorous, coherent, and socially responsive.

Focus of the Study

To gain better stakeholder insight, we focus here on one stakeholder group: the alumni of one institution of higher education. As users of the higher education system, the alumni are perhaps best positioned to provide such an understanding. Based on their experiences, the strengths and shortcomings of the higher education system can be understood clearly. This paper attempts to assess whether and to what extent higher education in Bangladesh has been able to deliver value to this particular constituency (the alumni) and satisfy it.

II. Research Method

Research Design

The study began with exploration of secondary sources to obtain insight about higher education in Bangladesh. Unfortunately, no "research" was found that dealt with the perspectives of the beneficiaries of higher education and their evaluation of the system. Consequently, information was gathered directly from the actual beneficiaries and users of higher education. In the first step, exploratory in-depth interviews were conducted with a small but representative sample of conveniently chosen graduates of the chosen institute. Participants responded to open-ended questions. The in-depth interviews led to identifying the seven factors teacher quality, course quality, student quality, facilities (direct and indirect), administrative efficacy, and political climate deemed most important in explaining their satisfaction with higher education.

The questionnaire was designed next and pre-tested on a cross-section of university graduates. The pretest was useful in assessing the quality of the measures and in determining whether the questions were easy or difficult to comprehend. After minor modifications, the final version was planned to be administered to a representative sample of 250 respondents.

Measurement

The questionnaire was designed to assess the attitudes and perceptions of the respondents on six-point Likert scale items (see Table 1). Each scale item was anchored at the numeral 1 with the verbal statement "Strongly Disagree" and at the numeral 6 with the verbal statement "Strongly Agree". This format has been recommended and successfully used in a variety of satisfaction surveys where a positive or negative valence is sought in terms of responses.

Sampling

The population was defined as those who had graduated from the institution and were gainfully employed. It was felt that deeper insight would be available about the quality of higher education and its relevance, rigor, and coherence from the alumni who were in a position to use the acquired knowledge. Respondents were selected from the public, private, and non-profit (NGO) sectors of the economy.

A combination of cluster and systematic sampling was used to administer the questionnaire (limited to Dhaka largely because of resource constraints). The instrument was designed to be self-administered. A brief explanation of the survey and its general purpose was provided before giving the questionnaire to each respondent. Respondents were also asked not to identify themselves in any way to ensure anonymity. Whenever possible, respondents were asked to complete the questionnaires at the time they were contacted. If they were unable to do so, a suitable time was agreed upon to collect the completed questionnaire. If at this time the questionnaire was still not completed, a second attempt was not made to contact the person due to time and resource constraints. However, they were asked to mail the completed questionnaire to a designated address. No questionnaires were received at the address.

Two hundred and fifty questionnaires were distributed. One hundred and eleven were completed and returned, resulting in a response rate of 44 percent. Three of the questionnaires were eliminated from the analysis due to excessive missing data and response sets, leaving a total of 108 questionnaires for data analysis.

The sample demographics were as follows: They included 68% males and 29% females. The ages of the respondents were distributed as follows: <25 (19%); 26-30 (21%); 31-35 (21%); 36-40 (26%); 40+ (13%). In the education category, 19% of the respondents had a bachelor's degree, 78% had a master's degree, and 3 % had a PhD degree.

Analysis

Table 1 contains descriptive summary statistics including frequency distribution, mean scores, and standard deviations that form the basis of policy prescriptions in this paper.

Table 1: Frequency Distribution Means And Standard Deviation

	Strongly Agree					Strongly Disagree		
Variables	6	5	4	3	2	1	$\bar{x}$	s
TEACHER QUALITY								
1. My teachers have/had high academic qualifications	20 (18.5)	32 (29.6)	25 (23.1)	20 (18.5)	4 (3.7)	7 (6.5)	4.21	1.39
2. My teachers were/are highly experienced	7 (6.5)	34 (31.5)	28 (25.9)	21 (19.6)	12 (11.1)	6 (5.6)	3.86	1.31
3. My teachers have/had good communications skills	7 (6.5)	24 (22.2)	30 (27.8)	16 (14.8)	18 (16.7)	13 (12.0)	3.51	1.47
4. My teachers are/were good researchers	7 (6.5)	17 (15.9)	24 (22.4)	22 (20.6)	18 (16.8)	19 (17.8)	3.22	1.52
5. My teachers pay/paid close attention to my academic needs	6 (5.6)	9 (8.3)	30 (27.8)	28 (25.9)	15 (13.9)	20 (18.5)	3.10	1.41
6. My teachers are/were able to bring new knowledge to class	6 (5.6)	29 (26.9)	30 (27.8)	19 (17.6)	14 (13.0)	10 (9.3)	3.67	1.39
STUDENT QUALITY								
7. My fellow students have/had good academic background	21 (19.4)	30 (27.8)	36 (33.3)	13 (12.0)	7 (6.5)	1 .9	4.39	1.18
8. Students in my class are/were intelligent	22 (20.6)	35 (32.7)	41 (38.3)	5 (4.7)	2 (1.9)	2 (1.9)	4.60	1.04
9. Students in my class are/were meritorious	20 (18.9)	35 (33.0)	26 (24.5)	22 (20.8)	3 (2.8)	0 (0.0)	4.44	1.10
COURSE QUALITY								
10. Teaching methods (e.g. course system, lecturing, etc.) are/ were effective	7 (6.5)	22 (20.6)	27 (25.2)	24 (22.4)	9 (8.4)	18 (16.8)	3.44	1.50
11. Course contents/curricula are/ were appropriate	8 (7.5)	19 (17.8)	30 (28.0)	21 (19.6)	16 (15.0)	13 (12.1)	3.47	1.45
12. Testing procedures (exams) are/were effective in judging students' academic ability	6 (5.7)	14 (13.2)	31 (29.2)	20 (18.7)	13 (12.3)	22 (20.8)	3.19	1.51
13. My course content reflects/ reflected good combination of theoretical and practical knowledge	3 (2.8)	13 (12.1)	39 (36.4)	20 (18.7)	13 (12.1)	19 (17.8)	3.21	1.38
FACILITIES - I								
14. Library facilities are/were adequate.	6 (5.6)	17 (15.9)	26 (24.3)	20 (18.7)	25 (23.4)	13 (12.1)	3.25	1.43
15. Laboratory facilities are/were sufficient	-	9 (9.8)	27 (29.3)	22 (23.9)	13 (14.1)	21 (22.8)	2.89	1.32

16. Class room facilities (space, desks, etc.) are/were adequate for learning	3 (2.8)	18 (16.8)	24 (22.4)	27 (25.2)	18 (16.8)	17 (15.9)	3.16	1.40
FACILITIES - II								
17. Hostel facilities are/were satisfactory	-	4 (3.9)	15 (14.7)	23 (22.5)	26 (25.5)	34 (33.3)	2.30	1.19
18. There are/were enough facilities for extracurricular activities	3 (2.8)	3 (2.8)	20 (18.7)	27 (25.2)	29 (27.1)	25 (23.4)	2.59	1.27
19. There are/were enough provisions for scholarship	1 (1.0)	3 (2.9)	12 (11.4)	17 (16.2)	32 (30.5)	40 (38.1)	2.13	1.18
20. Recreation facilities are/ were adequate	5 (4.7)	4 (3.8)	15 (14.2)	25 (23.6)	27 (25.5)	30 (28.3)	2.54	1.38
ADMINISTRATIVE EFFICIENCY								
21. The administration was effective in maintaining discipline on campus	1 (.9)	6 (5.6)	8 (7.5)	22 (20.6)	30 (28.0)	40 (37.4)	2.19	1.23
22. Administration of my department was effective in maintaining teaching regularity	7 (6.5)	16 (15.0)	35 (32.7)	18 (16.8)	16 (15.0)	15 (14.0)	3.39	1.45
POLITICAL CLIMATE								
23. Fellow students' involvement in politics adversely affects/ affected my academic objectives.	20 (18.9)	22 (20.8)	24 (22.6)	13 (12.3)	7 (6.6)	20 (18.9)	3.76	1.74
24. Campus environment (strike, violence) of the university affects/affected my education adversely	39 (36.8)	29 (27.4)	14 (13.2)	11 (10.4)	5 (4.7)	8 (7.5)	4.58	1.55

III. Findings

The advanced industrial nations have gained tangible and lasting benefits from their higher education systems. By addressing indigenous problems and concerns, their education systems have enabled them to surge ahead in social, political, economic, technological, and human affairs.

In Bangladesh, the higher education system has often failed to deliver value to its beneficiaries, diminishing its value to its stakeholders largely because of its failure to meet expectations. The image of the HEIs has also been seriously compromised and the semblance of quality markedly eroded by political involvement of the teachers and students and the lack of an effective governance mechanism. Consequently, many aspiring students are seeking their education, goals and dreams in universities abroad. This paper attempts to provide insights into various quality dimensions of higher education and their subcomponents.

Teacher Quality

Teacher quality was measured on six attributes: academic qualifications, teaching experience, communication skills, research productivity, attention to students, and ability to impart new knowledge. The results indicate that teacher quality is perceived as modest at best with the highest rating of 4.21 on academic qualifications and the lowest rating of 3.10 on teachers paying close attention to students' academic needs. It may also be noted that teachers are seen as modestly experienced (mean = 3.86), modestly able to bring new knowledge to class (mean = 3.67), similar communication skills (3.51), and poorer research skills (mean = 3.22).

Peer Quality

Peer quality was measured on three criteria: good academic background, perceived intelligence, and merit. Interestingly, the highest ratings were accorded to these measures and are as follows: 4.39, 4.60 and 4.44. This facet of education is also a very important determinant of the quality of the educational experience. Where there is significant variation in student quality, the academically challenged students will either drag down the quality of knowledge delivery or miss out on their education if academic standards are beyond their capacities. Hence, student selection or some form of gradation is essential to the delivery of quality higher education.

Course Quality

This aspect was measured on four attributes: effective teaching methods, content and curricula, testing procedures, and the use of theory and practice. The mean scores on each of these attributes were 3.44, 3.47, 3.19, and 3.21. On a six-point scale, none of the measures exceed, the mid-point, suggesting an overall negative valence in the quality of courses offered. Clearly, each area needs improvement.

Resources

This variable was assessed at two levels: direct and indirect. Resources used directly in the pursuit of higher education include library facilities, laboratories where applicable, as well as classrooms. The ratings attained on each of these resources were 3.25, 2.89, and 3.16; none of them was seen as adequate for facilitating the learning process. Building vibrant academic centers of excellence require availability of the right resources; otherwise, the quality of education suffers in a comprehensive sense. Students only hear from teachers and read textbooks unembellished by a wider set of experiences based on hands-on learning (laboratories) and up-to-date knowledge gleaned from the most recent theoretical and practical developments in their libraries.

Indirect resources, further facilitating the learning process, include hostel (dormitory) facilities, facilities for co-curricular activities (sports, games, cultural functions, etc.), financial aid as an educational resource, and facilities for recreation (parks, theaters, etc.). On each of these items the mean scores were the lowest of the entire group: 2.3, 2.59, 2.13,

and 2.54 respectively. Ideally, the totality of the educational experience ought to include much more than classrooms and teachers to enrich that experience. Educational planners and administrators ought to work hard to provide these additional experiences. While budgetary constraints are likely to be significant, with the right combination of societal involvement -- where philanthropists, corporate donors, educational foundations etc. are brought into the scene -- such problems may be gradually circumvented to enrich the educational experience.

Political Climate

Fellow students' involvement in politics and the campus environment of strike and violence also seem to affect one's education. The mean scores on the two items of 3.76 and 4.58 suggest that strikes and violence on campus earn a high rating. The question is what should be done about this issue?

Administrative Efficacy

This construct was measured on two items: effectiveness in maintaining campus discipline and effectiveness in maintaining teaching regularity. The mean scores on the two items are 2.19 and 3.39, suggesting a low level of administrative efficacy.

IV. Conclusions And Recommendations

Teacher Quality

The ratings on teacher quality suggest that a clear case can be made for two priorities: teacher selection and teacher development. If the quality of higher education is not to be undermined further, it is imperative that a clear set of criteria be established for teacher selection, possibly by reviewing the criteria used by universities that HEIs in Bangladesh want to emulate. In particular, it is important to root out favoritism, nepotism, political pressure, and related factors that are purported to be largely responsible for recruiting faculty members who are unfit to teach at the HEIs. To accomplish this, it is vital for the selection decision to be widely shared and dispersed among various committees to select the best possible candidate through a well-publicized and documented process.

Teacher development must envision a program of quality improvement that enables faculty to develop themselves over time. Such development requires a multifaceted approach that must be supported by experts and mentors, and guided by administrators in many ways. Among the key ingredients for teacher development, the following are suggested (Andaleeb 2003):

1. Teachers must learn to design and upgrade courses and relevant materials that incorporate current thinking in the field. In this regard, departmental teams may be used to develop course materials and enhance the curriculum.
2. Teachers must be exposed to different approaches of reaching students that go beyond the traditional and oft-used lecture method. Thus they must be trained in the use of alternative pedagogical tools such as case-, situation analysis-, and research-

based learning where appropriate. Guest speakers and experts can also be used occasionally to embellish key topics and issues.

3. Whenever possible, new teachers must be attached to mentors or master teachers to gain teaching experience and skills. Such mentors may also occasionally sit in the classroom to constructively point out the strengths and weaknesses of the teachers being developed.
4. Teachers must also have the minimum tools to teach. Advancements in technology must be incorporated where possible to enable teachers to reach students in creative ways. Technology awareness and training is an important component of introducing new technology to classrooms for creative teaching.
5. Classroom activities and performance of teachers can occasionally be videotaped to allow them to self-evaluate their teaching style and delivery of content.
6. If resources are available, provisions could be made to support the HEIs by creating an independent Instructional Development Program (IDP) staffed by trained professionals for pedagogical improvement and teaching support. The IDP can serve as a resource center to make teaching resources available for teachers to emulate.

Teacher development must be followed by a system of evaluation that provides positive feedback and helps teachers attain goals consistent with a defined level of quality. Since there are two major aspects of quality teachersteaching and researchboth must be evaluated where appropriate. In the private universities, especially the better ones, student evaluations have become standardized. Public HEIs must also begin to incorporate these practices quickly to enable an important stakeholder group to provide insights into the system's ailments.

A culture of peer evaluation may also be introduced whereby designated teachers are used periodically (at least once every year or two) to evaluate the quality of teaching of their peers. Two additional evaluation procedures that may be adopted include exit surveys (from graduating students) and alumni surveys (to asses the long term impact of teaching).

At the same time, faculty research must also be promoted which requires solid support of this important activity by both teachers and administrators to establish a program of on-going research in areas relevant to Bangladesh.

Where applicable, such research must also be evaluated. What type of research is to be valued must be established as a policy matter after extensive consultation with the faculty as some may value basic research while others prefer applied research. It is important to recognize that if the HEIs wish international recognition, the quality of their research must be assessed against international standards.

Quality teachers must also be rewarded for outstanding performance. While automatic promotions or salary increments rooted in seniority make life simple for administrators who are relieved of making hard decisions, it does not motivate teachers to excel because rewards

are not tied to performance. Many foreign institutions first establish a balance between teaching and research and assign certain weights to each activity depending on the vision of that institution. HEIs in Bangladesh must assign importance weights to each of these major activities depending on what is valued by them. Promotion, tenure, and annual raises must be used to reward teachers who attain proficiency in these areas. Finally, a thorough evaluation is needed in the area of compensation and benefits to promote quality teaching. In an environment where there are three very distinct levels of compensations, public, private, and international, it raises serious questions of equity. If we want the teachers to perform at the international level and be evaluated against international standards, it behooves policy makers to match that performance with commensurate levels of compensation. This would also attract the best minds again to the HEIs and help revitalize the overall educational environment. The long-term payoffs of this stance can be immeasurable.

Peer Quality

On peer quality, a classroom comprised of a mixed bag of students can not only be difficult to teach without lowering standards, there is also the danger that brighter students will lose interest in what is being taught, be unable to attain their full potential, and remain unfulfilled in their academic pursuits.

As in other countries, weaker students should be offered some form of remedial education to bring them up to standards to do university level work. Alternative programs should also be devised for the truly bright students if the higher education system is to energize them and prepare them for significant responsibilities. In fact, the contention of some that HEIs in Bangladesh continue to churn out low caliber students who are ill prepared for significant responsibilities must be consistently examined and higher education appropriately reoriented if Bangladesh is to better place itself in the community of nations. This will also help revive the confidence of the users and beneficiaries (e.g., employers and society) of the products of the higher education system.

While classifying students into categories may seem elitist, when coupled with remedial education, it is likely to provide an equal footing to those who have a weaker educational base, strengthen their capabilities, and be brought at par with the brighter lot. However, it is possible to improve "upstream" education quality to reduce the gap or variation among students entering the HEIs.

Course Quality

Regarding course quality, updated course content and curricula today are vital to knowledge-based societies. Thus, departmental and institutional administrators must ensure that teachers do not use outdated course materials that do not meet the needs of present times. Where such practices exist, teachers must be encouraged and assisted to adapt and update the contents. To facilitate the adoption of current content in teaching materials also requires that the administration make available current materials in the form of books, journals, Internet access, etc. It is also imperative to keep a vigilant eye on course content if the value of

education is to be enhanced. Committees at the department level are best able to ensure this where appropriate. It is important to empower these committees to work with teachers; when teachers resist changing content, punitive action may be contemplated.

Traditional lectures must also be enhanced by introducing alternative pedagogical approaches to deliver content in creative ways. Where class sizes are manageable, and eventually this must be attained, individual and team projects, case analysis, analysis of current events, research presentations, etc. could be included to enhance knowledge, comprehension, analysis, synthesis, and application whenever possible as suggested by Bloom (1956).

The testing procedures in the HEIs are also very traditional and have hardly changed in the bigger scheme of things. Answering essay questions that largely test memory continues to be the norm of testing even to this day at the HEIs. Such testing must be broadened and enhanced to include alternative procedures that evaluate students' overall knowledge, comprehension, and ability to analyze, synthesize, and apply their learning, if comprehensive assessment is to be promoted and creativity nurtured in HEIs in Bangladesh. Rote learning has its place, but it is hardly adequate to developing the skills and the analytical capability needed by future nation-builders.

Campus Politics

About campus politics, some advocate that it must be banned. Others feel it is better not to curb students' freedom of expression because it is students who have often played a vanguard role in various national affairs beginning with the language movement to the liberation of the country from an oppressive regime. Probably, a middle ground must be sought so that freedom of expression is not curbed; at the same time, politics must not be allowed to intrude into higher education institutions in disruptive and unproductive ways. The appropriate path is something that the administration must decide in collaboration with the students to find a healthy middle ground. It is also important to bring in the political parties, guardians, and employers into this discussion as key stakeholders to engage in the discussion and to help chart out a path that fosters self-expression but regulates disruption, chaos, and violence.

Another strategic element that is likely to influence campus politics positively is the role played by the faculty and administration. If the faculty commits itself to delivering quality education by upholding specified standards of excellence, and is able to demonstrate the quality and value of their academic programs, more students will turn their attention to the serious business of education. It is important that faculty and administration provide leadership and act as role models to earn the respect of students. Avenues of earning this respect are through demonstrated scholarship and involvement with the student body. Joint research, seminars, debates, discussions, help sessions, publications, outreach work, etc., are some of the important activities that the faculty must embrace to win back the students and their respect. Students learn vicariously from their teachers and emulate many of their ways: When teachers and the administration demonstrate a commitment to quality and excellence

and redefine the goals of the HEIs in terms of higher standards and creativity, students will follow in their wake.

Administrative Support

Administrators may be urged to make their presence felt by propagating their value to the HEIs via fund raising, establishing scholarships, recruiting excellent scholars, organizing international cultural and intellectual exchange, building new capacity, and introducing new and exciting programs to engage students and faculty in meaningful activities.

It is also important for academic administrators to pursue the vision of the HEIs without bowing to the many undue internal and external pressures. As Bogue (1997, p.1) contends, "An academic administrator with courage, compassion, and integrity may be a more direct contributor to the cause of quality than any system of quality assurance." Administrators with these qualities must be carefully chosen to provide administrative leadership on campuses across the nation.

Building a quality higher education system is a sine-qua-non for national upliftment. It is high time that the issue, highlighted in this paper are methodically addressed.

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