

Critical Overview on Present Education System of Bangladesh: Quality vs. Quantity

Subtitle: Suggesting some ways to enhance quality education to overcome impediments

Sumya Alam

Author: Sumya Alam, Lecturer, Department of English, BSMRSTU, Gopalganj-8100, Dhaka, Bangladesh
Email: [summasumya\[at\]yahoo.com](mailto:summasumya[at]yahoo.com)

Abstract: *This essay intends to explore and investigate present education system of Bangladesh. It will focus on some crucial factors and indicators of quality education in both public and private educational and academic institutions. The purpose of this paper is to suggest some fruitful ways to improve the quality of Bangladeshi education system. The main goal of identifying key issues is to give a critical summary of ways to enhance quality education and talk about impediments and their probable solutions. Through the reviews of some researches and journal articles, this essay tries to find out the inherent meaning of quality education and how this can be institutionalized in Bangladeshi education sector. At the end, this paper will discuss some problems and barriers to the enforcement of quality education in different Bangladeshi education sectors. Some recommendations will be suggested on the basis of problematic factors.*

Keywords: Quality Education, Bangladeshi Education System, Impediments, Implied Suggestions

1. Introduction

From the point of education as ‘the backbone of a nation’, development and improvement of educational sector depend much on quality rather than quantity. If we consider Bangladeshi context, the quantity of educational institutions and learners is becoming huge in number even though the quality or standard is under question. In primary, secondary and tertiary levels of private and public sectors, the number of students and educational institution is ample but there is a crucial need to analyze whether the quality of education is going ahead in keeping pace with the present modern world or not.

It is however observed that the competition is, day by day, becoming harder and harder for getting admitted into every educational level. In comparison, the basic learning environment along with other facilities after admission is not that much satisfactory. It is, no doubt that to acquire as well as gather sound knowledge in a sound and fresh environment is one of the human basic rights. But in Bangladesh, the education sector faces many deep-routed and intertwined challenges. It is a matter of great concern and sorrow that in some private universities, the authorities fail to give sufficient and enough convenience. Even some public universities are reported unable to facilitate students properly. What is more upsetting is that some private universities are not only giving poor education but also selling certificates although this case is low. In this regard, some ways and techniques should be incorporated in every sector as soon as possible to ensure the best quality education.

Some ways of being successful in maintaining quality in every level of education system might include efficient management of practical classes and case study, assignment on current world, class participation, practicing appropriate methods and techniques in classrooms, apply theoretical knowledge in practical life, teachers training, survey for investigation, preparation for the midterm and final exams, giving feedback by teachers on time, giving emphasis on

ICT use appropriately, close monitoring by academic faculties, new curriculum and syllabus design, encouraging students to use library, inspiring eligible candidates to participate in workshop, seminar, symposium, study tour and industrial visit, internship, making them prepared for viva voce, making them encouraged in debate, sports and other cultural extracurricular activities. But overall, my focus will be on **counseling both educators and learners for mental health, following unique interesting approach, need analysis and logistic support, remuneration for workload and assessment.**

However the combination of quality and quantity is badly needed in terms of establishing accountable and reliable results in this case. For example, this year in 2020, the number of GPA holders in S.S.C board examination is one lac thirty five thousands eight hundred and ninety eight. In 2019, it was one lac five thousands five hundreds and ninety four. SSC exam result has been published on 31 May 2020. There are 16, 90,523 students passed and success rate is 82.87% (alormela.org, 2020). But who can certify that all of them are eligible and worthy enough of getting admitted into different renowned universities and having higher education further? It is mostly seen that the overall pass percentage is on rise but the number of self educated and real knowledgeable people is very low. Here lies the question of quality VS quantity.

2. Literature review

Some studies show that there are a clear difference between quality of public university education and private university education. In some studies, it is found that external academic facilities, for example, classroom environment, infrastructure etc. are satisfactory in most of the renowned private university while public universities lack in modern technological equipments. But it is regarded that students and teachers of public universities are more qualified and meritorious than students studying in private universities.

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There are 53 public universities and UGC approved 107 private universities in Bangladesh (according to UGC ranking and list, 2019). Ensuring quality in education is a major concern for both types of universities. In one of the research articles, titled "Factors to Improve the Quality of Higher Education" Alrafa (2017), mentioned that with the higher cost of tuition, it is both an advantage and challenge as they can use their profit in state of art technology, modern curriculum and trimester system, highly paid motivated faculties in effort to maintain quality but cannot attract talented students who cannot afford to pay financial resources and tuition. Private universities rely mostly on revenues of students who can be regarded as "customers" who are paying for services. On the other hand, although having qualified teachers and top level students, public universities cannot provide infrastructural and technological facilities, for example, classrooms and labs are not well-equipped with multimedia projector and other instruments in the public educational institutions like private ones.

According to Sarkar, Rana and Zitu (2013), the main challenges of quality higher education of public universities of Bangladesh are teaching aids, library facilities and availability of books, journal articles, research facilities and laboratory facilities.

There are many other quality education indicators which are suggested by different researchers. Sayed Saad Andaleeb (2003) focused nine critical factors: teachers quality, method and content, peer quality, direct-indirect facilities, administrative facilities, political climate, gender effect, expected satisfaction etc. from some surveys and ranking of private universities, it is seen than most of the private institutions are running their academic activities in rented buildings without having their own campus. They have no research facility.

None of the above mentioned studies talked about innovative teaching methods and psychological factor. Along with all these factors, counseling not only students but also instructors for mental health; remuneration for extra load; logistic support etc. should be major concerning aspects relevant to quality education.

3. Quality Education

To define quality education, Sean Slade (2017) (Senior Director, Global Outreach, ASCD), said that it is a kind of education that is 'pedagogically and developmentally sound' in nature and it helps students become a productive and active member of society. A Quality Education is not one that is measured purely by a test score or by how many words per minute a 5-year-old can read. The contributing factors of quality education are implementing best practices in pedagogy. According to a non-profit organization 'The Flemish Association for Development Cooperation and Technical Assistance' (VVOB)'s definition, "A good **quality education** is one that provides all learners with capabilities they require to become economically productive, develop sustainable livelihoods, contribute to peaceful and democratic societies and enhance individual well-being. The learning outcomes that are required vary according to context but at the end of the basic education cycle must

include threshold levels of literacy and numeracy, basic scientific knowledge and life skills including awareness and prevention of disease. Capacity development to improve the quality of teachers and other education stakeholders is crucial throughout this process." Six Crucial Dimensions of Quality Education are proposed by VVOB.

VVOB believes that education leads to *empowerment*: a process of strengthening individuals, organizations and communities so they get more control over their own situations and environments. Quality education is a crucial factor in combating poverty and inequality in society. In quality education, VVOB distinguishes six dimensions that all interventions of the organization need to meet.

Equity

The VVOB definition refers to "all learners". This term refers to non-discrimination and equity. Equity in education means that personal and social circumstances such as gender, ethnic origin or family background are not obstacles to achieving educational potential and that all individuals reach at least a basic minimum level of skills. VVOB in particular focuses on gender equity.

Contextualization and Relevance

Quality education cannot be based on a blueprint that is applicable in all situations. Solutions and adaptations of education systems must be based on the real **needs** of a country and/or community.

Child-friendly Teaching and Learning

Quality education puts the child in the centre and helps it to reach his or her full potential. Quality Education requires children's active participation. Here it can be applied to adult learners.

Sustainability

Educational change processes often need time to be realized. By enhancing the capacities of local education authorities, VVOB aims to institutionalize these processes

Balanced Approach

Quality education aims at developing a balanced set of capabilities of children they require to become economically productive, develop sustainable livelihoods, contribute to peaceful and democratic societies and enhance individual well-being.

Learning Outcomes

After completing a certain level of education, children must have developed a minimum standard of skills. Quality education requires a results-oriented approach.

One of the United Nations' (UN) seventeen Sustainable Development Goals is Quality Education. Goal number 4 focuses purely on education where quality education means inclusive and equitable education that promote lifelong learning. The above mentioned dimensions are important for every level of education. In Bangladeshi context, these are contributing factors along with some others issues discussed below:

3.1. Teaching and learning environment: how it affects quality education

A healthy, secure, sound, motivational learning environment is a key factor of quality education. The teaching learning methods, well organized curriculum framework, well management system of institutions, infrastructural facilities are included in environment to reinforce quality education. Besides, counseling, need assessment are two other essential factors.

Innovative techniques: After analyzing VVOB's projects and programs for quality education, it is clear that a balanced approach is necessary to enhance quality. In teaching, to get students connected and interested, there is no other way than to put them in different unique activities to ensure their involvement. Teachers and instructors can think of a new beneficial approach which is a combination of different approaches of language teaching and learning. For example, a new blended approach is called eclectic approach which is required especially in language teaching.

Instead of written textbooks, students can be instructed to listen and watch music videos or other interesting stories according to their levels and engage them into different activities like listen, watch, take notes, speak, and write on it etc. Some grammar practice of formal language format can be done and knowledge of different cultures and Geography can be learned by showing videos. In this way, they will be more attracted to study materials.

Counseling: When it comes to teaching and learning in educational institutions, everybody is concerned about other factors related to direct and external facilities. But along with sound environment, sound mind of the stakeholders is also an important factor to ensure quality education which is emphasized in my paper. Counseling should be a regular part of education field. It is meant for not only students but for teachers and other administrative workers. Because when a teacher feels fresh and independent to choose whatever befits her teaching without any external pressure from the authority of the institution, she/he can give best efforts in teaching.

Most of the time, learners get frustrated for their poor grades, poor speaking skill, financial problems, coping with other fellow mates, unable to understand lectures especially because of their rural background and lack of basic knowledge and difficulties adjusting in new environment. In these cases, they will have to be counseled and given advises by both parents and teaching practitioners.

The question is –how many students and teacher are getting motivational speeches in their institutions. Rather the females are not supposed to get discriminative attitudes from others. In some cases, they are ill-treated by the male counterparts in different ways. Female teachers have family and institutional workloads in Bangladesh because of stereotypes about male dignity. Even after facing many problems in their families, they do not get any support from their family members and male colleagues. It is an alarming issue in many job sectors in Bangladesh.

Needs Assessment and teachers' training:

Assessing the needs of learners is a must to obtain information about learners' needs. According to the second dimension suggested by VVOB as mentioned earlier, it is a basic tool to contextualize needs and make all the needs relevant to system adaptation, solutions, and material development. To identify goals and objectives of the course of a particular curriculum, teachers and curriculum designers will have to analyze needs of learners. Need assessment is of crucial importance because it aids teachers and administrators to determine course content and to help develop materials, choose teaching methodologies. According to Richards, (1985) need assessment gives accountability and "evidence of relevance and outcomes of educational programs." Richards (1984) emphasized on some major goals and approaches of assessment. One of the goals is determining needs. To find accurate information, qualitative and quantitative data has to be taken into account and this requires a variety of formal-informal data gathering procedures. In education, employed participant observation, interviews, questionnaires, content analysis are included in this assessment although it is generally done for language courses. Both government and non-government institution should upgrade their courses on a regular basis according to the needs.

Teachers' training is another indicator of developing education sector. A teacher needs to be trained well to give her a specific idea about the use modern useful technologies. To enlighten teaching professionals, students and trainees of the nation, a government teachers' training college was established in 1909. Some in service trainings are associated with the following courses: Digital Content Development by TQI-SEP, Digital Content Refreshers, Subject Based CPD training sponsored by TQI-SEP, Training on LSBE under DSHE sponsored by UNICEF Bangladesh, Creative Questions by SESIP6, Autism, Disaster Management. The problem is only one training college is not sufficient enough to meet all the needs and criteria of the national institutions. Besides, training courses should be implemented by establishing special training centers in every college and university to make practitioners, professionals, administrative officers more competent.

ICT in Education: The use of computer assisted learning tools is important in academic premises. At present, in this pandemic situation, online education has become the only way to avoid attacks of corona virus. Although many private and public colleges and institution are trying hard to incorporate online education system, it is still difficult to avail internet facilities all over Bangladesh. Teachers in tertiary level in high ranked private universities and teachers of some public universities are provided with technological equipments to take flexible virtual classes. The number of students' participation is not satisfactory. In Bangladesh, students and teachers from rural setting cannot afford to but smart phone or laptop to conduct and do online classes. Technologies such as video streaming, online testing and exam tools, wireless technologies like wifi connection, collaboration, assistive online education etc are yet to emerge in rural setting of Bangladesh. Teachers are not well trained about this system.

Remuneration for extra workload, research and assessment

Some non-government and private universities, colleges and schools are paying their faculty members, and other staffs extra amount of money according to their extra course loads, overtime, work hours. But unfortunately, government employees are not paid with enough remuneration they expect. In private educational institutions, the basic salary starts with the amount which is almost equal to the gross salary of public educational institutions. In private institutions like North South University, Brac University, East West University, American International University-Bangladesh, the salary and remuneration is much higher than the salary of public institutions which is set by government pay scales and grades. The discrimination should be taken into consideration for increasing motivation and satisfaction of government employees. To meet every need in our society, financial stability is a must. Excess workload of a teacher without remuneration may reduce the quality of providing education. Last of all, teachers should get enough financial support to publish quality research paper.

Students' active participation in extracurricular activities

It is found in many researches that students who participate actively have a tendency to do better in academic achievement than the students who participate passively. Austin (1999) and Ferguson-Hessler de Jong (in Theberge, 1994) support this statement and claim that active students involvement in classroom discussion makes them more satisfied in learning environment. For the affective filter factor (Krashen, 1985), students are lacked behind in their performances. Students play complementing role in the process of learning. Effective learning occurs when educators and learners both participate actively in the classroom. Participation in different circumstances, socio-cultural activities like debate, symposium, conference, seminar cultural programs and sports are also needed to foster the quality learning of participants. As an interactive process of learning, students and educators both have to develop their intellectuals through participation in different activities. Tatar (2005) thinks that active participation plays an important role in the success of education and personal enrichment of learners in future.

Novice teachers and students should attend seminars and conference. Students should be welcome to participate and present quality papers. Furthermore, study tours, industrial visits, internship are necessary for gaining practical knowledge.

4. Problems and Impediments

There are many problems concerning the raise of quality in education in Bangladesh. Most of the rural marginalized children do not get higher secondary school education. They, especially the girl children do not get access after primary level education because of poverty, financial crisis and other religious and patriarchal stereotypes. Poverty creates child labor and economic migration as functional barrier to their primary education. In Bangladesh, child labor deprives children of the opportunity to attend schools, oblige

them to leave school prematurely. Sometimes, it requires them to attempt to join classes and do excessive heavy works simultaneously.

Students do not want to practice creativity and individuality because of poor education system of Bangladesh. Individuality and creativity are not welcome positively always. Still the preconceived beliefs and ideas are prevailing as driven force. One of the examples is -Students who study Science related subject are regarded as more brilliant than students who study Humanities. Degree and calculation of CGPA are parameters to judge a student's credentials. There is no value of other practical experiences and knowledge. The creative faculties remain hidden inside them so that they cannot explore them. Although the strength, needs, capabilities, passions are different, they are taught same prescribed subject by the same teacher in schools and colleges. According to Howard Gardner's (1983) 'Theory of Multiple Intelligences', cognitive factors are rather important but most of the institutions does not give prior attention to it.

The qualified, well-trained dedicated teachers are insufficient in numbers. Private schools, colleges and Universities are expensive and most teachers are not required to have teaching degrees which is negatively impacting the learning process. On the other hand, qualified and trained teachers are not motivated by the prevailing system and facilities so cannot flourish their expertise. Teachers, in most of universities, are not evaluated by Teachers Performance Evaluation (TPE), by students and administrators.

About the quality of higher education, it is seen that there are very less number of universities that maintain all criteria of quality education. Workshops, seminars and presentations are not always available in public and private universities except in some reputed universities. Private university students are thought to be less meritorious than public universities. The admission test exam, infrastructures, and administrative procedure -these are different in town and city universities. This creates a gap between rural and urban setting. Ultimately, the overall development does not come out.

5. Recommendations

Gardner (2013) asserts that regardless of which subject you teach—"the arts, the sciences, history, or math"—you should present learning materials in multiple ways. Gardner goes on to point out that anything you are deeply familiar with "you can describe and convey ... in several ways. We teachers discover that sometimes our own mastery of a topic is tenuous, when a student asks us to convey the knowledge in another way and we are stumped." Thus, conveying information in multiple ways not only helps students learn the material, it also helps educators increase and reinforce our mastery of the content.

Gardner's 'multiple intelligences theory' can be used for curriculum development, planning instruction, selection of course activities, and related assessment strategies. Gardner points out that everyone has capabilities and limitations in

various intelligences, because of which reason; educators should decide how successfully course material can be given, how well the subject-matter can be introduced to individual student of any class. Indeed, instruction designed to help students learn material in multiple ways can trigger their confidence to develop areas in which they are not as strong as expected. In the end, students' learning is enhanced when instruction includes a range of meaningful and appropriate methods, activities, and assessments.

From these views, it can be recommended that teachers and educators have to use several types of innovative ways to teach students effectively. At present, in epidemic situation, students are given online lectures. So, in this techno-friendly environment, students can be made listen songs and watch videos through screen sharing. From the lyrics of the song, they can practice pronunciation, grammar rules, open or closed questions, informal-formal languages etc. without any pressure in their brain. Both in traditional and online learning environment, active participation is an effective instructional strategy, for example- role play, discussion, finding out rules in groups can be beneficial. Tradition style should be adapted and changed according to the needs of a learner and environment. There are components of good active learning which fit in online and traditional offline learning environments as suggested by Mantyla (1999): Activities should have-definite beginning and ending; have a clear purpose or objective; contain complete and understandable direction; have feedback mechanism and include a description of the technology or tools being used in the exercise.

The infrastructures, campus environment and other facilities should be upgraded. If all the facilities become multinational, the campus would be suitable for international students and thus it will increase quality of education automatically. Along with all these issues, non-government and government educational institutions should offer their faculty members and other stuffs many benefits regarding remuneration, residence facility, incentive to motivate qualified teachers. At the same time, teachers, students, stuffs –all should be given required psychological and physical treatment. Poverty and other economical barriers should be dealt with consideration. And stereotypical ideas, prejudices should be prohibited from society. At last, to sort out problems and find out solutions, government and non-government development organizations and respective institutions should come forward with their projects, programs and researches. Competitive advantages and distinctions among all public and private institutions should be reduced by special management system. University Grand Commission (UGC) can have a great role here.

6. Conclusion

Sound, secure, reliable environment of education is a key factor to ensure quality education. Government subsidy in education budget, patronization, and legislation of Law for quality education to implement Sustainable Development Goal 4 are crucial needs to develop education system in Bangladesh. Both qualitative and quantitative measurement should be taken into consideration. It is conspicuous that the backbone of a man must be straight and well-built enough to

make him strong. Similarly, if the backbone of a nation “education” is not that much stronger, how can the expectation of making an enlightened and self-reliant nation through the light of education be met?

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