

The Pattern of Quality Education: A Comparative Analysis on Public and Private Universities in Bangladesh

Mir Abdullah Shahneaz^{1*} Sk. Shamim Ahmed² Rashadur Rahman³

1. Lecturer, Department of Business Administration, Shanto-Mariam University of Creative Technology, Uttara, Dhaka, Bangladesh
2. Assistant Professor, Department of Business Administration, Shanto-Mariam University of Creative Technology, Uttara, Dhaka, Bangladesh
3. Lecturer, Department of Business Administration, Shanto-Mariam University of Creative Technology, Uttara, Dhaka, Bangladesh

* E-mail of the corresponding author: major.navana@yahoo.com

Abstract

From the beginning of the last decade the private universities have been playing massive role at tertiary education in Bangladesh. It has almost changed the total scenario, story line of the education system of the last 200 years. Private universities started with a vision, goal and amid so many barriers and obstacles. It has also sound attainment and contribution to the nation. Quality education is a prerequisite for sustainable development. For finding the determinants of quality tertiary education, studies suggest inclusion of relevant variables, as the customers are well diversified with students, their parents and guardians, and academic and administrative staff- each having different needs and objectives. Thus, this paper tries to incorporate forty nine “Quality Characteristics” which previously found significant by various studies with a few uniquely appropriate local characteristics. The results show that the quality of private university education mainly depends upon the competence of their academic and administrative staff, the content of their curriculum, reliability of the institution, and the attitude of their staff.

Keywords: Quality Dimensions, Customers, Public Universities, Private Universities

1. Introduction

It has been over a decade that private university education has started in Bangladesh. As of today, there are more than fifty private universities actively operating in this country. Though the number is very large compared to the few public universities here, yet the general notion of preference among the students, especially the better ones, for acquiring higher education, is still biased toward the public universities. This situation has a big impact in terms of improvement in quality of higher education in Bangladesh. Despite the fact that quite a number of the private universities are well equipped with modern teaching tools and techniques, quality of education there have not been improved. On the other hand, even though the demand for public university is still very high, due to lack of competition the quality of education there is either stagnant or even deteriorating. But if we look at the examples of other countries, both the developed and developing, we find that public and private universities are competing against each other for improvement in quality of education for attracting students.

2. Purpose of the Study:

The conceptual framework proposed for quality in higher education provides a basis for the measurement and, consequently, improvement of quality of its environment. It is based on a study of possible interpretations of quality dimensions in non-educational context as well as reviewing published quality factors proposed for higher education. A first step in satisfying customer needs is the determination of how quality dimensions/factors are perceived by different groups of customers. This information, together with the prioritized objectives of a particular institution will form the platform from which a quality program can be developed.

3. Objective of the Study

- a) To find out the major quality dimensions of public and private universities.
- b) To measure the effectiveness of each quality dimension of higher education in the context of Bangladesh.

4. Literature Review

4.1 Quality Dimensions:

Quality dimensions, according to Gönroos (1990), can be classified into three groups: *technical quality*, *functional quality* and *corporate image*. This is similar to those proposed by Lehtinen (1991)- i.e. *physical quality*, *interactive quality* and *corporate quality*. The dimensions are associated with technical quality that can be objectively measured regardless of customers' opinion, while those concerned with functional quality are related to the interaction between the provider and recipient of the service and are often perceived in subjective manner. Sometimes, the interaction between customers themselves become important; this is true for higher education when considering the influence of students on one another. The corporate image dimension relates to the overall picture of an organization perceived by the customers; it is the result of combination of technical and functional quality dimensions as well as factors like the price of the products (or service) and the reputation of the company .

4.2 Quality Dimensions In Higher Education:

In the case of higher education, students and lecturers participate a great deal in the process, but other groups like the employers deal mainly with the final product of the system, i.e. graduates. For the students and lecturers themselves, the level of participation may vary in different processes. This seems to support the hypothesis that dimensions of quality in higher education vary in level of importance for different groups of customers. (Mohammad S. Owlia and Elaine M. Aspinwall, 2002). Despite recent research on general service's quality dimensions, most of the works have been concentrated on public services and in particular higher education. They examine models proposed for different environments for a consistency with higher education. Although few references addressed the quality dimension aspect directly, some useful elements were found in some studies. From the "quantity features" developed by Ashworth and Harvey (1994), "quality criteria" by Harvey *et al.* (1992), "alumni satisfaction scales" by Hartman and Schmidt (1995), "quality criteria" by Jacobson (1992), "curricula design factors" by Izquierdo (1993), "quality dimensions" by Madu and Kuei (1993), a quality questionnaire by Yorke (1993), and a quality function deployment experiment (Ermer, 1995), factors detailing curriculum, examinations, staff capabilities and equipment were identified. The results of Harvey *et al.* were based on an empirical study on the opinions of all the stakeholders in higher education.

Adding the new items to the previous findings, 30 attributes called "quality characteristics" were developed for the present study. Based on similarities, they were grouped into six dimensions named tangibility, competence, attitude, content, delivery and reliability.

4.3 The Definition of Customer in Higher Education

Quality dimensions and customer groups in higher education, the definition of customer is quite different from that in manufacturing or general servicing since groups such as students, employers, academic staff, government and families are all customers of the station system with the diversity of requirements. This is further exacerbated when it comes to the choice of quality dimensions.

Investigating framework for these reveals that all attributes do not render the same degree of interest and feeling among different groups of customers. For example, call six dimensions are relevant to students, but their applicability to academic staff and employers may be more tenuous because they do not have the same level of contact with the corresponding processes. Employers as the "external customers" of higher education are more concerned with "product" of the system, i.e. graduates, and so the capabilities of graduates as well as the reliability of the institution to deliver them (Dimension 6) are of interest. Note that these attributes are important to two other groups of customers, i.e. *family and society (government)*, implying that employers can be regarded as representative for all external customers. On the other hand, academic staff used university facilities (Dimension 1) that interact with their colleagues, benefiting from their "competence" (Dimension 2) and they care about the "contents" (Dimension 4), of the courses that teach as well as "credibility" (Dimension 6) of the institution.

4.4 Research Questions and Variables, Constructs and Operation Definitions

The main research question, the study will try to answer is the following:

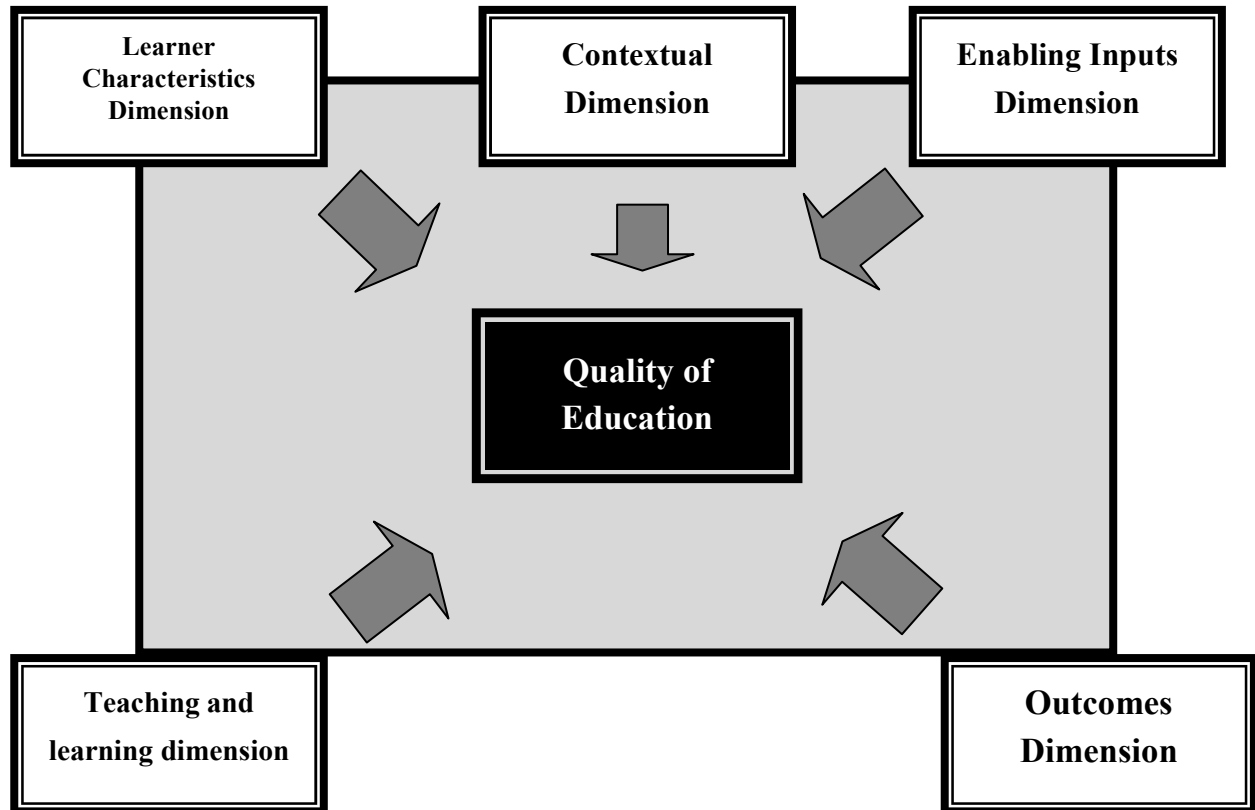
What are the major dimensions that affect the quality of public or private universities, and how can we make private university education more attractive to students?

5.0 Research Methodology

A method has been designed to meet the objectives of research. For this purpose a questionnaire has been adapted from three different research studies [1.Salman Khalid et al (2011), 2.Uma Shankar et, al (2010) and 3.Khaled Al-Hashash et, al (2008)] and circulated in 4 different cities of Bangladesh (Dhaka, Chittagong, Khulna, Sylhet). This questionnaire consists of two different parts. The first part is showing respondents personal data such as gender, university type, income, age, qualification and the second part asked respondent to rate their

satisfaction level to their bank from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree” on such variables which lead to build strong relationship with customers such as prices, reliability, technology, customer service, location and infrastructure etc. This questionnaire was given to 500 different respondents out of which 351 questionnaires were returned. Most of these responses were conducted ourselves and rest through the help of friends and family.

6.0 Research Model



[Learner characteristics: How people learn – and how quickly – is strongly influenced by their capacities and experience. Assessments of the quality of education outputs that ignore initial differences among learners are likely to be misleading. Important determining characteristics can include socio-economic background, health, place of residence, cultural and religious background and the amount and nature of prior learning. It is therefore important that potential inequalities among students, deriving from gender, disability, race and ethnicity, HIV/AIDS status and situations of emergency are recognized. These differences in learner characteristics often require special responses if quality is to be improved.

Context: Links between education and society are strong, and each influences the other. Education can help change society by improving and strengthening skills, values, communications, mobility (link with personal opportunity and prosperity), personal prosperity and freedom. In the short term, however, education usually reflects society rather strongly: the values and attitudes that inform it are those of society at large. Equally important is whether education takes place in the context of an affluent society or one where poverty is widespread. In the latter case, opportunities to increase resources for education are likely to be constrained. More directly, national policies for education also provide an influential context. For example, goals and standards, curricula and teacher policies set the enabling conditions within which educational practice occurs. These contextual circumstances have an important potential influence upon education quality. International aid strategies are also influential in most developing countries.

Enabling inputs: Other things being equal, the success of teaching and learning is likely to be strongly influenced by the resources made available to support the process and the direct ways in which these resources are managed. It is obvious that schools without teachers, textbooks or learning materials will not be able to do an effective job. In that sense, resources are important for education quality – although how and to what extent this is so has not yet been fully determined. Inputs are *enabling* in that they underpin and are intrinsically interrelated to teaching and learning processes, which in turn affects the range and the type of inputs used and how

effectively they are employed. The main input variables are material and human resources, with the governance of these resources as an important additional dimension: Material resources, provided both by governments and households, include textbooks and other learning materials and the availability of classrooms, libraries, school facilities and other infrastructure. Human resource inputs include managers, administrators, other support staff, supervisors, inspectors and, most importantly, teachers. Teachers are vital to the education process. They are both affected by the macro context in which it takes place and central to its successful outcomes. Useful proxies here are pupil/teacher ratio, average teacher salaries and the proportion of education spending allocated to various items. Material and human resources together are often measured by expenditure indicators, including public current expenditure per pupil and the proportion of GDP spent on education. Enabling school-level governance concerns the ways in which the school is organized and managed. Examples of potentially important factors having an indirect impact on teaching and learning are strong leadership, a safe and welcoming school environment, good community involvement and incentives for achieving good results.

Teaching and learning: The teaching and learning process is closely nested within the support system of inputs and other contextual factors. Teaching and learning is the key arena for human development and change. It is here that the impact of curricula is felt, that teacher methods work well or not and that learners are motivated to participate and learn how to learn. While the indirect enabling inputs discussed above are closely related to this dimension, the actual teaching and learning processes (as these occur in the classroom) include student time spent learning, assessment methods for monitoring student progress, styles of teaching, the language of instruction and classroom organization strategies.

Outcomes: The outcomes of education should be assessed in the context of its agreed objectives. They are most easily expressed in terms of academic achievement (sometimes as test grades, but more usually and popularly in terms of examination performance), though ways of assessing creative and emotional development as well as changes in values, attitudes and behavior have also been devised. Other proxies for learner achievement and for broader social or economic gains can be used; an example is labor market success. It is useful to distinguish between achievement, attainment and other outcome measures – which can include broader benefits to society.]

7.0 Findings

Background of Respondents

The first part of this questionnaire was designed to collect personal information of respondents such as their gender, Age, bank type, income and qualification and the investigation shows that 65% of the respondents are male and 35% are female of which, 42% of the respondents are having their account in public universities and 58% have their account in private universities. 72.6% respondents are from age group 18 – 25 years, 16.9% are from age group 26 – 33 years, 5.7% are from age group 34 – 41 years, 1.7% is from age group 42 – 50 years and 3.1% are from age group 51+ years. In terms of qualification only 0.6% are under graduated, 1.6% are under M.Phil, 4.4% respondents have done M.Phil, 76.2% are graduated and 17% respondents are post graduated.

Mean Std. Deviation of Each Question

Question	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
There are sufficient number of equipments in the labs of my university	350	1.00	5.00	1.8195	1.10592
Course fees of my university is competitive.	351	1.00	5.00	2.0514	0.93188
My university has a rich library.	348	1.00	5.00	2.1519	1.06262
There are enough hostel seats available in my university.	348	1.00	5.00	2.2000	1.07325
Hostel seats are easy to obtain in my university.	350	1.00	5.00	2.2659	1.19120
Modern teaching tools (multimedia and overhead projectors) are frequently used in our classes.	349	1.00	5.00	2.3642	1.19917

My university provides various opportunities for co and extra-curricular activities.	344	1.00	5.00	1.8971	1.05480
My university has sufficient number of teaching staff.	345	1.00	5.00	2.1810	1.05415
Educational background of the teachers are of good quality in my university.	350	1.00	5.00	2.1821	1.12357
Teachers in my university are knowledgeable.	350	1.00	5.00	2.1368	1.14072
It is easy to communicate with the teachers in my university.	351	1.00	5.00	1.9484	1.00440
Academic background of my classmates are good in my university.	348	1.00	5.00	2,1686	1.11473
Teachers in my university understand my specific needs.	347	1.00	5.00	2.2486	1.25921
Teachers in my university are always willing to help.	349	1.00	5.00	2.0460	1.14543
Teachers in my university give me individual attention.	347	1.00	5.00	2.0259	1.14169
My university curriculum is relevant to my future jobs.	347	1.00	5.00	2.1326	1.09751
Infrastructure of my university is attractive and friendliness.	351	1.00	5.00	2.2393	1.19718
My university education helps me to develop good communication skills.	350	1.00	5.00	2.0543	1.19511
My university education helps me to develop team-working capabilities.	345	1.00	5.00	2.0812	0.98496
My teacher use highly effective presentation techniques in class.	347	1.00	5.00	2.1729	1.06660
My teachers are available when needed.	350	1.00	5.00	2.2000	1.13552
Exams in my university are fair.	347	1.00	5.00	2.1441	1.09491
Teachers show sincere interest in solving my problems.	348	1.00	5.00	2.1810	1.12810
My university ensures internship programs.	345	1.00	5.00	2.1710	1.08493
My degree ensures better prospects of getting a job.	348	1.00	5.00	2.3247	1.14170

8. Conclusion and Policy Recommendation

The government's concern about the quality of higher education in both the private and public universities has prompted people to come up with hypothesis favoring either of the types of universities. Even though it was beyond the scope of this paper to find out which type of universities perform better, it has, nevertheless, tried to identify the factors responsible for ensuring quality education in both the types of institutions of tertiary education. However, in our case some of the variables used to explain the quality of a service are found to be insignificant in explaining quality in higher education. Our findings also suggest that there is a minor difference in the variables responsible in explaining quality in higher education between private and public universities. The students of private universities perceives competent teaching staffs, their educational background, experiences, as well as the background of their friends and peers as the most important factors determining their satisfaction. Thus, the private university authority should be concerned with these aspects to ensure students' satisfaction and quality education. The second most important factor that also should be made available to the students of private university is their reliability which constitutes ensuring proper internship and job placement services, timely publication of their results and classers, and ensuring that the university stay free from politics, drugs, and remain safe for them. The third most important aspect is the effectiveness and up-to-date curriculum of the university and its provision of cross-disciplinary knowledge. The fourth important factor is again related to the teachers of the private university- their attitudes, which include their willingness to help and provide guidance and consultancy.

This study also suggests that the provision of tangible facilities such as hostels, library, and visually appealing environment together with the delivery such as teaching presentation techniques, feed back from the students are insignificant in determining the satisfaction of the students of the private universities.

The study also suggests the policy makers of the public universities should ensure that the content, reliability and competency remain the prime concern to ensure students satisfaction. Thus, the public university authority should be highly concerned with its up-to-date curriculum that instill team working capabilities, provide interdisciplinary knowledge, and help building good communication skills. They also should give importance to its overall reputation to the corporate world, publication of its results, and politics and drug free safe environment as well as to the quality aspects of its teaching staffs.

As the study was done with the objective of finding out the quality of university education from the customers perspective, students were taken as its only sample for the study. However, a comprehensive study may be done using the other customers namely the guardians, and the administrative staffs. The study has another limitation that for the public university, only the universities situated in and around Dhaka were undertaken. Thus, a vast population of the public universities was not considered for the study. Future research should take these aspects into consideration.

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Biography of the Authors:

Mir Abdullah Shahneaz was born in 'Shefa Kunjoo' 42, Kazi Nazrul Islam Road, Court Para, Kushtia-7000, Bangladesh on 1st January, 1986. He is pursuing PhD (with full scholarship) from Jahangirnagar University, Dhaka, Bangladesh. He received Masters in Development Studies, 2010 from Islamic University, Kushtia, Bangladesh, Masters in Economics, 2007 and Bachelor (Hon's) in Economics, 2006, from National University, Gazipur, Bangladesh. At present he is working as a lecturer in Economics in the Department of Business Administration in Shanto Mariam University of Creative Technology, Uttara, Dhaka, Bangladesh.

Sk. Shamim Ahmed was born in H#4/2, R#3, East Nandipara; Dhaka-1217, Bangladesh on 27th September, 1982. He received Masters of Business Administration (MBA), Major in Finance, 2004 and Bachelor of Commerce (Hon's), 2003 from National University, Gazipur, Bangladesh. At present he is working as an Assistant Professor of department of business administration in Shanto Mariam university of Creative technology, Uttara, Dhaka, Bangladesh.

Rashadur Rahman was born in House No # 34, Road No # 08, Sector No #11, Uttara Model Town, Dhaka-1230., Bangladesh on January 15, 1978. He received Masters of Business Administration (MBA), Major in Marketing, 2004 and Bachelor of Business Administration (B.B.A), Major in Marketing, 2004 from Dhaka University, Dhaka, Bangladesh. At present he is working as a Sr. lecturer of department of business administration in Shanto Mariam university of Creative technology, Uttara, Dhaka, Bangladesh.