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Challenges in Quality Assurance in Education in Private Universities in Bangladesh: Teacher Perspective

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Abstract

This study systematically investigates the key issues that quality assurance systems in Bangladesh's rapidly growing private university sector must address. The research examines institutional and administrative issues, faculty-related challenges, student-related challenges, and external and regulatory challenges in the conflict between massification and educational quality. The study was carried out using a quantitative, cross-sectional survey approach. Fifty private university instructors of various ranks participated in the survey; half of the respondents were male, and the other half were female. The data was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The results indicate that the most urgent QA issues in Bangladeshi private universities are excessive teaching workloads and a lack of incentives for teaching excellence. These issues are followed by poor faculty participation in decision-making, minimal faculty development, and putting enrollment ahead of academic standards. Although physical infrastructure was still a concern, governance and difficulties pertaining to academic processes were thought to be more significant. However, gender does not seem to be a distinguishing factor across most quality assurance measures, indicating that systemic institutional flaws impact all faculty members equally, regardless of gender.

Keywords: Quality Assurance, private universities, Bangladesh, teacher perspective

I. INTRODUCTION

The quality of higher education can significantly contribute to developing a country's competencies. It is often believed that the quality of education is the key factor in determining a nation's place in global competition (Ali, 2011). In an age of globalization and the growth of a knowledge-based economy, Bangladesh needs to identify a significant mechanism to improve

the quality of higher education (Blanco & Haque, 2016). The quality of a country's higher education sector, as well as its assessment and monitoring, is not only key to its social and economic well-being; it is also a determining factor affecting the status of that higher education system at the international level (Farashuddin, 2013). In the arena of higher education in Bangladesh, private universities play a very crucial role (Barai et al., 2015). The proliferation of private universities in Bangladesh since the enactment of the Private University Act of 1992 has fundamentally transformed the nation's higher education landscape, accommodating the burgeoning demand for tertiary education while precipitating acute quality-assurance crises (Charman, 2006). However, the quality of higher education is considered one of the most important aspects of human resource development, knowledge creation, and social uplift in recent times (Baird, 2006). The formal quality assurance and accreditation mechanism is the key to entry into a knowledge-based global society and to gaining access to the competitive global market for talent and merit (Blanco & Haque, 2016). In Bangladesh, it has to make sure that the academic standards and quality provisions are satisfactory so that students, their families, employers, tax-paying citizens, and the founders of private universities all get a good deal on their investment in higher education (Habibullah et al., 2012). But not much is known about the challenges in ensuring the quality of higher education under the circumstances of rapid enrollment and program expansion, and in the face of a multitude of constraints, including faculty reactions to institutional changes required to introduce the QA scheme (Hoque et al, 2013). Hence, this study focuses on analyzing the challenges to ensure the quality of Bangladeshi higher education in private universities in Bangladesh.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The rapid expansion of private higher education in Bangladesh, particularly over the last two decades, has brought forth significant concerns regarding the consistent delivery of quality education (Blanco & Haque, 2016). This proliferation, driven partly by an increased demand for tertiary education that public institutions alone cannot satisfy, has inadvertently led to a landscape where ensuring rigorous academic standards becomes exceptionally challenging (Alam, 2019). Despite the offering of diverse and job-oriented curricula, many private institutions struggle to meet minimum quality benchmarks, particularly concerning state-of-the-art teaching facilities, laboratories, and research infrastructure (Rahnuma, 2020). A critical issue compounding these infrastructural deficits is the prevailing perception of private higher education as a commercial endeavor rather than a public good, often leading to a focus on enrollment numbers over pedagogical excellence and robust quality assurance mechanisms (Alam, 2009). This situation is further exacerbated by the fact that the regulatory framework, primarily overseen by the University Grants Commission, often operates with an outdated mandate and insufficient autonomy, hindering its capacity to enforce stringent quality control across an ever-growing number of institutions (Ehsan, 2021). The rapid growth of private universities, now educating approximately 60% of campus-based students, necessitates a robust and adaptable quality assurance framework to address these systemic deficiencies and uphold academic standards (Barai et al., 2015). This challenge is further complicated by issues related to financial sourcing, faculty qualifications, and the alignment of curricula with market demands for skilled labor (Tasnima, 2008). Addressing these multifaceted challenges requires a comprehensive understanding of both internal institutional dynamics and external regulatory pressures influencing quality culture development (Rahnuma, 2020). However, there is a lack of systematic research on the challenges to quality assurance from the perspectives of the private university teachers who are at the very core stakeholders of this educational context. Hence, the study titled “Challenges in Quality Assurance in Education in Private Universities in Bangladesh: Teacher Perspective” bears great significance.

III. RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

The primary objective of this study is to analyze the key challenges hindering the assurance of quality higher education in private universities in Bangladesh. The specific objective of this study is to identify and examine the multifaceted constraints affecting quality assurance in Bangladeshi private universities, including the impact of rapid enrollment and program expansion, infrastructural and faculty-related deficiencies, and the institutional challenges associated with introducing formal quality assurance (QA) mechanisms.

IV. RESEARCH METHOD

A cross-sectional, quantitative survey design was employed. This design seems appropriate for capturing teachers' perceptions of Quality Assurance (QA) challenges at a single point in time, allowing for statistical description and comparison of variables across different demographic groups (e.g., rank, experience, gender). Full-time and part-time faculty members who are currently teaching in private universities accredited by the University Grants Commission (UGC) of Bangladesh are the target population of the study. Based on the availability of the respondents, the convenience sampling technique was employed to select 50 respondents from the 5 private universities in the Dhaka district. During the selection of the participants, teachers' gender and professional rank were considered to elicit valid data. For data collection, a structured, self-administered questionnaire was developed based on a review of QA literature (e.g., CHEA, INQAAHE guidelines) and prior qualitative studies on Bangladeshi private universities. The instrument consisted of two sections: Section A: Demographics and Section B: Perceived QA Challenges. The initial item pool was reviewed by a panel of three experts: two professors in educational administration and one senior QA officer from a UGC-approved accreditation body. The Content Validity Index (CVI) of the questionnaire was computed, retaining items with a CVI $\geq$ 0.80. During data analysis, means (M), standard deviations (SD), frequencies, and percentages were computed for demographic variables and each Likert-scale item. Challenges were ranked by mean score to identify the most pressing issues. Besides, an independent samples t-test was employed to compare mean QA challenge scores between male and female faculty. Furthermore, One-way ANOVA was used to examine differences in perceived challenges by academic rank (Lecturer, Assistant Professor, Associate Professor, Professor).

V. FINDINGS OF THIS STUDY

A structured, self-administered questionnaire was developed based on a review of QA literature and prior qualitative studies on Bangladeshi private universities. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the data. The findings from the analysis have been presented below:

Table 1: Demographic information of the participants

		Column N %
Gender	Male	50.0%
	Female	50.0%
Rank	Lecturer	22.0%
	Senior Lecturer	18.0%
	Assistant Professor	22.0%
	Associate Professor	18.0%
	Professor	20.0%

Table 1 describes the demographic information of the participants. The table shows that 50% of the participants were male teachers and another 50% were female teachers. Among the participants, 22% teachers were lecturers, and 18% teachers were senior lecturers. On the other hand, the percentages of participants who were assistant professors and associate professors were 22% and 18%, respectively. Finally, the percentage of professors was 20%.

Table 2: Summary of the Descriptive Analysis of the Questionnaire

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Q1. The university lacks a transparent and well-communicated academic calendar.	50	1	5	2.72	1.179
Q2. There is insufficient budget allocation for library, laboratory, and IT facilities.	50	1	5	3.18	1.082
Q3. Classrooms and physical infrastructure are inadequate for effective teaching.	50	1	5	2.50	.886
Q4. The university administration rarely seeks faculty input in quality-assurance-related decisions.	50	2	5	3.48	1.015
Q5. There is no systematic mechanism for addressing student feedback on course quality.	50	1	5	3.40	1.030
Q6. Semester breaks are too short, leaving no time for course preparation or grading.	50	2	5	3.38	.901
Q7. My teaching load is too heavy to allow for quality lesson planning and assessment.	50	2	5	3.64	.898
Q9. There are few or no opportunities for faculty development workshops (e.g., pedagogy, assessment design).	50	2	5	3.48	1.074
Q9. The university does not provide incentives or recognition for teaching excellence.	50	2	5	3.98	.937
Q10. There is insufficient time for research or scholarly activities due to teaching demands.	50	2	5	3.42	.906
Q11. External QA guidelines are often unclear or change without adequate notice.	50	2	4	2.98	.820
Q12. The university prioritizes enrollment growth over maintaining academic standards	50	2	5	3.56	.837
Valid N (listwise)	50				

The perspectives of faculty members about several quality assurance (QA) difficulties in private institutions in Bangladesh were evaluated by a descriptive analysis. 50 faculty members (N = 50) provided data, and their answers ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Greater agreement that a difficulty exists is indicated by higher mean scores. "The university does not provide incentives or recognition for teaching excellence" was the most strongly perceived problem (Mean = 3.98, SD = 0.937). This points to a serious deficiency of incentive frameworks for high-quality instruction. The second-highest response was "My teaching load is too heavy to allow for quality lesson planning and assessment" (Mean = 3.64, SD = 0.898), suggesting that having too many teaching responsibilities compromises the quality of instruction. The statements "Enrollment growth prioritized over academic standards" (Mean = 3.56, SD = 0.837), "Administration rarely seeks faculty input in QA decisions" (Mean = 3.48, SD = 1.015),

"Few opportunities for faculty development workshops" (Mean = 3.48, SD = 1.074), "Insufficient time for research due to teaching demands" (Mean = 3.42, SD = 0.906), "No systematic mechanism for addressing student feedback" (Mean = 3.40, SD = 1.030), and "Semester breaks too short" (Mean = 3.38, SD = 0.901) were found to be highly challenging. These results highlight persistent institutional deficiencies in feedback loops, faculty development, research funding, and participatory governance. At the same time, "Insufficient budget for library, lab, and IT facilities" (Mean = 3.18, SD = 1.082) was a notable resource-related concern, though slightly less severe than governance and workload issues. Finally, "External QA guidelines unclear or change without notice" (Mean = 2.98, SD = 0.820), "Lack of transparent academic calendar" (Mean = 2.72, SD = 1.179), and "Inadequate classrooms and physical infrastructure" (Mean = 2.50, SD = 0.886) were just below the midpoint, suggesting moderate but not universal concern.

Table 3: Summary of t-Test Results

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Q1	Equal variances assumed	6.385	.015	-1.205	48	.234	-.400	.332	-1.067	.267
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.205	44.820	.234	-.400	.332	-1.068	.268
Q2	Equal variances assumed	1.598	.212	-.129	48	.898	-.040	.309	-.662	.582
	Equal variances not assumed			-.129	46.403	.898	-.040	.309	-.662	.582
Q3	Equal variances assumed	.904	.347	-2.521	48	.015	-.600	.238	-1.079	-.121
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.521	47.834	.015	-.600	.238	-1.079	-.121
Q4	Equal variances assumed	1.080	.304	-.833	48	.409	-.240	.288	-.819	.339
	Equal variances not assumed			-.833	47.365	.409	-.240	.288	-.819	.339
Q5	Equal variances assumed	.745	.392	.821	48	.416	.240	.292	-.348	.828
	Equal variances not assumed			.821	46.503	.416	.240	.292	-.348	.828
Q6	Equal variances assumed	.165	.686	.155	48	.877	.040	.257	-.478	.558
	Equal variances not assumed			.155	47.460	.877	.040	.257	-.478	.558
Q7	Equal variances assumed	.779	.382	-3.068	48	.004	-.720	.235	-1.192	-.248

	Equal variances not assumed			-3.068	47.618	.004	-.720	.235	-1.192	-.248
	Equal variances assumed	.430	.515	-.523	48	.603	-.160	.306	-.775	.455
Q8	Equal variances not assumed			-.523	47.777	.603	-.160	.306	-.775	.455
	Equal variances assumed	4.972	.030	.752	48	.456	.200	.266	-.335	.735
Q9	Equal variances not assumed			.752	42.804	.456	.200	.266	-.337	.737
	Equal variances assumed	3.070	.086	.465	48	.644	.120	.258	-.399	.639
Q10	Equal variances not assumed			.465	44.324	.644	.120	.258	-.400	.640
	Equal variances assumed	4.678	.036	1.575	48	.122	.360	.229	-.100	.820
Q11	Equal variances not assumed			1.575	45.494	.122	.360	.229	-.100	.820
	Equal variances assumed	.333	.567	-.672	48	.505	-.160	.238	-.639	.319
Q12	Equal variances not assumed			-.672	47.746	.505	-.160	.238	-.639	.319

The analysis revealed statistically significant gender differences on two items. First, for Q3 (Classrooms and physical infrastructure are inadequate for effective teaching), Levene's test was not significant ($F = 0.904$, $p = .347$), indicating equal variances could be assumed. The t-test showed a significant difference between groups, $t(48) = -2.521$, $p = .015$, with a mean difference of -0.600. Female faculty ($M = 2.80$) perceived physical infrastructure inadequacy as significantly more problematic than male faculty ($M = 2.20$). The 95% confidence interval for the mean difference ranged from -1.079 to -0.121, confirming that the true population difference does not include zero. Second, for Q7 (My teaching load is too heavy to allow for quality lesson planning and assessment), Levene's test was also not significant ($F = 0.779$, $p = .382$), allowing equal variances to be assumed. The t-test revealed a highly significant difference, $t(48) = -3.068$, $p = .004$, with a mean difference of -0.720. Female faculty ($M = 4.00$) agreed significantly more strongly than male faculty ($M = 3.28$) that an excessive teaching workload undermines quality planning and assessment. The 95% confidence interval ranged from -1.192 to -0.248, further supporting the robustness of this finding. For the remaining ten items (Q1, Q2, Q4, Q5, Q6, Q8, Q9, Q10, Q11, and Q12), no statistically significant gender differences were observed ($p > .05$ for all). This indicates that male and female faculty hold largely similar perceptions regarding most quality assurance challenges, including budget insufficiency for library and IT facilities, lack of faculty input in administrative decisions, absence of systematic student feedback mechanisms, short semester breaks, limited faculty development opportunities, lack of incentives for teaching excellence, insufficient time for research, unclear external QA guidelines, and prioritization of enrollment growth over academic standards.

Table 4: One-way ANOVA results (Differences by Faculty Rank)

ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
	Between Groups	3.111	4	.778	.539	.708
Q1	Within Groups	64.969	45	1.444		
	Total	68.080	49			

	Between Groups	8.673	4	2.168	2.003	.110
Q2	Within Groups	48.707	45	1.082		
	Total	57.380	49			
	Between Groups	9.257	4	2.314	3.561	.013
Q3	Within Groups	29.243	45	.650		
	Total	38.500	49			
	Between Groups	18.966	4	4.741	6.770	.000
Q4	Within Groups	31.514	45	.700		
	Total	50.480	49			
	Between Groups	5.653	4	1.413	1.372	.259
Q5	Within Groups	46.347	45	1.030		
	Total	52.000	49			
	Between Groups	1.260	4	.315	.368	.830
Q6	Within Groups	38.520	45	.856		
	Total	39.780	49			
	Between Groups	2.797	4	.699	.857	.497
Q7	Within Groups	36.723	45	.816		
	Total	39.520	49			
	Between Groups	10.226	4	2.557	2.487	.057
Q8	Within Groups	46.254	45	1.028		
	Total	56.480	49			
	Between Groups	4.111	4	1.028	1.190	.328
Q9	Within Groups	38.869	45	.864		
	Total	42.980	49			
	Between Groups	11.820	4	2.955	4.689	.003
Q10	Within Groups	28.360	45	.630		
	Total	40.180	49			
	Between Groups	5.567	4	1.392	2.285	.075
Q11	Within Groups	27.413	45	.609		
	Total	32.980	49			
	Between Groups	9.784	4	2.446	4.486	.004
Q12	Within Groups	24.536	45	.545		
	Total	34.320	49			

A one-way between-subjects analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to determine whether there were statistically significant differences in perceptions of twelve quality assurance challenges across five faculty ranks: Lecturer, Senior Lecturer, Assistant Professor, Associate Professor, and Professor. Statistical significance was set at $p < .05$. "The university administration rarely seeks faculty input in quality-assurance-related decisions" showed the strongest and most highly significant rank-based difference ($F = 6.770$, $p = .000$). Examination of group means revealed that Professors ($M = 4.30$) and Assistant Professors ($M = 4.00$) perceived the lack of faculty input most severely, while Associate Professors ($M = 2.78$) and Lecturers ($M = 2.82$) reported notably lower concern. This suggests that senior and mid-career faculty feel more excluded from governance decisions than junior or associate-level faculty.

Besides, “There is insufficient time for research or scholarly activities due to teaching demands” also demonstrated significant variation across ranks ($F = 4.689$, $p = .003$). Assistant Professors reported the highest mean ($M = 4.18$), indicating severe research time constraints, followed by Professors ($M = 3.60$) and Lecturers ($M = 3.36$). In contrast, Senior Lecturers ($M = 2.89$) and Associate Professors ($M = 2.89$) reported the lowest concern. This pattern suggests that Assistant Professors who are typically under pressure to publish for promotion experience the greatest conflict between teaching and research expectations.

Moreover, “The university prioritizes enrollment growth over maintaining academic standards” showed significant rank-based differences ($F = 4.486$, $p = .004$). Professors ($M = 4.10$) and Associate Professors ($M = 4.00$) perceived this as the most problematic, whereas Assistant Professors reported the lowest mean ($M = 2.91$). This indicates that senior faculty are more critical of institutional strategies that favor enrollment expansion at the expense of academic quality, possibly due to their longer institutional memory and broader perspective on academic standards. Similarly, “Classrooms and physical infrastructure are inadequate for effective teaching” also reached statistical significance ($F = 3.561$, $p = .013$). Senior Lecturers reported the highest concern ($M = 3.00$), followed by Professors ($M = 2.90$) and Assistant Professors ($M = 2.64$). Interestingly, Associate Professors reported the lowest mean ($M = 1.89$), indicating that this rank perceives infrastructure as the least problematic. Lecturers also reported a low mean ($M = 2.09$) with extremely low variability ($SD = 0.302$), suggesting near-unanimous but moderate disagreement that infrastructure is a major issue. The remaining eight items showed no statistically significant differences across faculty ranks ($p > .05$ for all). The lack of significant differences on these items suggests that challenges related to academic calendar transparency, budget allocation, student feedback mechanisms, semester breaks, teaching load, faculty development (though marginal), incentives, and external QA guidelines are perceived similarly across all faculty ranks in private universities in Bangladesh.

VI. DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

This study aimed to identify and analyze the challenges in quality assurance (QA) in private universities in Bangladesh from the perspective of faculty members. The descriptive statistics revealed that faculty members across all ranks and genders consistently identified several critical QA challenges. The most severe perceived challenge was the lack of incentives or recognition for teaching excellence, followed closely by excessive teaching loads that impede quality lesson planning and assessment. These findings align with the work of Harvey and Green, (1993), who identified that top-down QA systems often fail because they neglect "professional autonomy" and fail to provide meaningful recognition for teaching excellence, instead prioritizing compliance over engagement. The finding that faculty feel their input is rarely sought in QA-related decisions resonates with critiques of bureaucratic QA approaches. Mishra, (2006) argue that top-down, compliance-driven quality assurance perpetuates exclusion and dehumanization in higher education, advocating instead for participatory governance models such as the Southern African ‘kgotla’ paradigm, which prioritizes dialogue, shared responsibility, and collective ownership. The present study suggests that private universities in Bangladesh remain firmly entrenched in the former model. Interestingly, physical infrastructure and academic calendar transparency were perceived as less severe challenges relative to governance and workload issues. This may indicate that while infrastructure problems exist, faculty are more deeply concerned with process-oriented and professional recognition issues. Momen and Baniamin, (2010), in their study of Higher Education in Bangladesh: Status, Issues and Prospects, "lack of autonomy" and governance issues were more fundamental barriers to effective QA implementation. “A one-way ANOVA revealed statistically significant differences

in faculty perceptions across ranks for four quality assurance challenges. Significant variation was found for inadequate physical infrastructure, lack of faculty input in governance, insufficient time for research due to teaching demands, and prioritization of enrollment growth over academic standards. Besides, the t-test result indicates female faculty perceive significantly greater challenges related to inadequate physical infrastructure and excessive teaching workload compared to their male counterparts. However, across the majority of quality assurance dimensions, gender does not appear to be a differentiating factor, suggesting that systemic institutional issues affect all faculty members similarly, regardless of gender.

VII. CONCLUSION

This study offers factual proof that quality assurance issues are not consistently encountered in Bangladeshi private universities. Some issues are clearly gendered (teaching burden) or rank-specific, while others, such as the lack of teaching incentives, impact all staff. These results imply that a one-size-fits-all strategy for 'Quality Assurance' reform is unlikely to be effective. Rather, it is crucial to implement focused, equity-informed interventions that target the unique vulnerabilities of mid-career academics and female professors. 'Quality Assurance' systems that do not provide faculty "ownership" and respect "professional autonomy" will continue to encounter opposition and implementation failure, as Newton (2002) warned more than 20 years ago. According to the current survey, private universities in Bangladesh have not yet learned this lesson.

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