

Analysis of Quality in Public and Private Universities in Bangladesh and USA

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ABSTRACT

To meet the growing need for increased capacity in higher education, the government of Bangladesh encouraged development of private universities in 1992. Currently, there are sixty private universities, thirty-four public universities and three international universities in Bangladesh. Although the increased number of universities has provided opportunities, a debate has emerged over the quality of education at these institutions due to the significant difference among these institutions. These inconsistencies in quality may be due to the lack of regulatory oversight and inefficiencies of the regulatory agencies of the government. The cost of education at private universities is high compared to the significantly lower cost at public universities that are subsidized by the government. In spite of the higher cost, student satisfaction levels have not been higher at private universities in the past. The work presented in this paper seeks to determine the quality of education in public and private universities in Bangladesh using student satisfaction as a measure of quality. It is well understood that student satisfaction measure may not be the only indicator of quality, but it can be considered as one of the important indicators. The Noel-Levitz student satisfaction index (SSI) survey questions were modified to adapt them to the context of Bangladesh. The twenty-two question survey results from private and public university students of Bangladesh were compared to determine the level of student satisfaction. The results of the current study were compared with the SSI data of US private and public universities. In contrast to past results, results of the current study showed that the students in public universities of Bangladesh had lowest level of satisfaction and the private universities of Bangladesh had highest satisfaction. The results derived from this data can be used by both public and private universities for improving quality in higher education.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Since the 1980's, there has been a growing trend in higher education to pursue quality management practices in preparation for the business world. In general, university faculty protested against the application of some of the current quality management trends, especially rejecting those that defined students as "customers." Some of these trends, such as Total Quality Management (TQM), were passing movements[1], but, others are still widely recognized in other industries. Despite the faculty resistance, interest in applying quality management methodology in higher education continues, perhaps, because of the rise of private universities. Although for-profit universities have existed for quite some time in most developed countries,

the unprecedented growth of private universities in the 1990's and 2000's has led to more efforts toward quality management in higher education [2]. Also, with the rise of private universities has come an effort to determine which type of university, public or private, can provide a higher quality education to students. It is important to note that, in many cases, university location plays a role in the determination of which type of university prevails. In Canada, for example, public universities are considered to be much more effective than private universities, and are ranked higher in national ratings [3]. In Jakarta, Indonesia, private universities are more highly rated [4]. It is also generally agreed that private universities provide more opportunities for an increasing number of students seeking quality higher education. There is a common perception that the cost at private universities is unreasonably high, despite the higher quality [5]. However, a previous study of private and public universities in Bangladesh provides preliminary data suggesting that it is possible that students may still be more satisfied with private universities in Bangladesh than with public universities. For example, students at Ahsanullah University of Science and Technology (AUST), a private university, were shown to be more satisfied than students at Chittagong Veterinary and Animal Sciences University (CVASU), a public university [6].

This study seeks to determine students' levels of expectation and satisfaction with various services (professor, curriculum, university resources and extracurricular activities) at each type of college in order to determine whether private or public universities in Bangladesh provide better educational services. Comparing and contrasting across universities, specifically private and public, and using the gap between expectations and satisfaction levels for each service as indicators, we will provide recommendations for improvement at each university based on the university type. The research questions or hypothesis is to evaluate whether there is a significant difference in

- 1) Importance and satisfaction with professors, curriculum, campus resources and extra-curriculum activities between public and private universities in Bangladesh
- 2) Satisfaction of male and female students in public and private universities in Bangladesh

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

While some studies have shown that private universities provide better quality education, there are some disadvantages of private universities, including the high cost of attendance and lack of consistent regulatory practices. Also, it remains to be determined whether or not students are actually more satisfied with the overall quality at private universities in Bangladesh or just with some aspects that are contributing factors to quality. Private universities are expected to take initiatives to provide a higher quality education by implementing best practices in pedagogy, curriculum, instructional methods and necessary resources. With the higher cost of tuition, private universities have an economic advantage that enables them to use state of the art curriculum and faculty in efforts to maintain higher quality. The challenges faced by private universities include motivation for profit, inability to attract talented students who lack sufficient financial resources, and reliance on revenue from students that force the institutions to view students as "customers" who are paying for services. Although, it cannot be conclusively determined from this limited study whether the private university or public university in Bangladesh are of higher quality, the current study will be able to shed some light on the issues and provide directions toward quality improvement initiatives.

Total Quality Management (TQM) and other quality management practices have been used since the early 1980s, often to improve credibility with the public, but in many cases they have been used only in order to satisfy internal accountability [7]. While many educators and administrators have suggested a "best-practices" framework, recommending that educational quality be assessed holistically, it is too often the case that, instead, educational quality is assessed by focusing too narrowly on one or two areas of achievement [8]. It is also often the case that higher education institutions assess their programs independently, instead of comparing and contrasting them with other universities. The advantage of comparing and contrasting one university to other universities is that a university can identify areas where they can improve competitiveness, and also learn from what another university is doing well. The Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI) is useful both for assessing one university independently and also for comparing and contrasting that university to other universities. In this study, the Noel-Levitz SSI is used because it offers students the option to rate their levels of expectation and satisfaction within a university. Determining the aspects that the students feel are important and which are not is useful so that a university might avoid spending valuable resources improving services that students are not actually interested in [9]. Then, the gaps between the importance ratings and satisfaction ratings are compared and contrasted across universities of the same type, public or private.

Previous studies of universities in Bangladesh have provided evidence of the many reasons these universities should be assessed by student importance and satisfaction levels, rather than by the "areas of achievement", as mentioned above. A previous study conducted by the author revealed that students value

qualifications of the professors and condition of campus facilities as an important determinant of quality. It is not clear whether or not the high costs of private universities in Bangladesh are justified [10]. One of the professors of a public university noted, “The overall education system in Bangladesh has been subject to severe criticism as the government has intensified its privatization program...However, a mere change in the ownership through a privatization program does not produce better results” [11]. Another study noted that though private university graduates are considered “above average” in a number of categories, they “have not yet reached satisfactory level.” This study also suggests that in order to satisfy employers’ concerns about the preparation of graduates, private universities must guarantee a high quality education [12]. Yet another study also highlights the disparities in cost between more established private universities in Bangladesh, and those that are newer [13]. Consequently, it is the case that while the addition of many private universities in Bangladesh has expanded opportunities for the increasing numbers of students seeking a higher quality education, it remains to be determined whether or not these private universities can achieve and maintain high quality educational services and whether or not high costs of private universities are reasonable. Investigation of student satisfaction in one private university and one public university showed higher levels of satisfaction among students in the private university [14]. To validate the previous study, the work presented in this paper investigated student satisfaction in five different public and private universities across different geographical regions of the country. This study seeks to determine which areas (professor, curriculum, university resources and extracurricular activities) students have high expectations, and whether or not they are being met. Therefore, the analysis of the results have developed recommendations for universities so that they can continue to provide high quality educational resources or to begin providing such services if they are not doing so already.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

The survey questionnaires were distributed to all public and private universities of Bangladesh through HEQEP (Higher Education Quality Enhancement Project) sub-project managers. Only five universities responded to the survey because the other universities were unable to see any tangible benefit from this study. This may indicate that most of the higher education institutions fail to consider student satisfaction as a priority. The five universities that participated in the study demonstrated their commitment to making initiatives towards improvement of quality by placing a high value on their students’ points of views. The survey questions used a seven point Likert scale to measure students’ perceived level of importance and level of satisfaction. The questions were developed using Noel-Levitz student satisfaction index (SSI), a reliable instrument widely used by a large number of universities in the USA to improve student satisfaction [15]. Another reason for using this instrument is the availability of previous data from US universities that can be used in this comparative study. The questions were grouped in four major categories to summarize the results. Questions 1-7 were related to the professor, questions 8-13 were related to curriculum and questions 14-19 related to campus resources and extra-curricular activities.

Data was collected from students at different class rankings ranging from first year to fifth year to assure that the samples were collected from a diverse group of students as shown in Figure 1. The survey respondents included 31% female, 64% male students, and 5% who chose not to respond to the question related to gender. This distribution of male and female students is representative of students at higher education institutions in Bangladesh. Explaining research chronology, including research design, research procedure (in the form of algorithms, Pseudocode or other), one of the previous study discussed how to select statistical test and data acquisition [16]-[18]. The description of the course of research should be supported references, so the explanation can be accepted scientifically [17], [19].

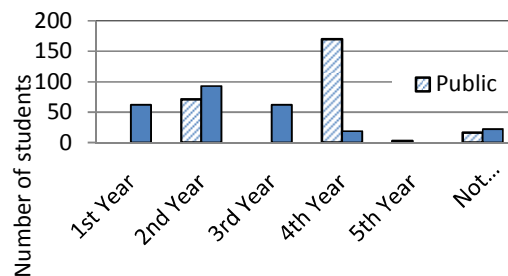


Figure 1. Diversity of Students Responded to the Questionnaire

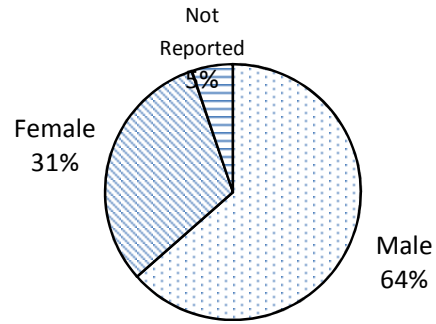


Figure 2. Gender Distribution of Participants

This study used a modified Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI) and expands upon 216 data points in an earlier study [18] to include 518 data points. Three public universities and two private universities were surveyed. An array of geographic locales were surveyed, with two universities from the capital city of Dhaka (IUBAT, AUST), one university from the southeast (CVASU), one from the southwest (KU) and one from the central part of the country (BAU) to provide a representative sample across the country. The importance-satisfaction performance gaps were calculated for both private and public universities of Bangladesh and compared with results from USA universities.

4. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

4.1. Analysis of Results

Table 1 shows the results of a t-test to compare between public and private universities. The importance and satisfaction of each category of survey questions were analyzed as shown in Table 1. The analysis results showed significant differences in importance in professor ($p=0.001$) and campus resources ($p=0.000$). Significant differences in satisfaction were observed in all four categories ($p < 0.005$). There was no significant difference in how well the universities were able to meet the students' expectations.

Table 1. Importance and Satisfaction in Public and Private Universities (N=518)

Criteria	University Type	Mean	Significance (p-value)
Professor	Public	5.95	0.001
	Private	5.55	
Satisfaction	Public	4.31	0.000
	Private	4.29	
Curriculum	Public	6.03	0.178
	Private	5.71	
Satisfaction	Public	4.78	0.000
	Private	4.53	
Campus Resources	Public	6.21	0.000
	Private	5.93	
Satisfaction	Public	4.53	0.000
	Private	4.5	
Extra-curricular Activities	Public	5.85	0.170
	Private	5.67	
Satisfaction	Public	4.25	0.000
	Private	4.48	
How Well Expectations are Met	Public	2.27	0.028
	Private	2.14	
Overall Satisfaction	Public	59.78	0.004
	Private	65.25	

Analysis of importance and satisfaction between males and female students using t-statistics showed no significant difference in any of the four categories, but the mean values indicated female students to be more satisfied than male students. The importance and satisfaction responses for each question were averaged to calculate the performance gap. The performance gap is the difference between importance and satisfaction for each question. A positive gap indicates that the student level of satisfaction is lower than the level of importance.

The survey questions were grouped into four different categories to further evaluate categories that showed largest gap. The questions related to each category were described in the methodology section of this paper. For example, the satisfaction responses of questions 1-8 were averaged to calculate the average satisfaction with professors as these questions are related to professor category. The categorized average responses are presented in Table 2 showing higher performance gaps among public university student responses. Using the performance gap analysis results, the five universities were ranked based on student satisfaction measures. The analysis considered the lowest gap in a category to be highest performance in that category and, therefore, was ranked number one. For example, in the professor category, IUBAT had the lowest performance gap of 0.62 and, therefore, ranked number 1 in Table 3.

Table 2. Performance Gap by Categories in Private and Public Universities in Bangladesh

	Private									Public					
	AUST			IUBAT			KU			BAU			CVASU		
	IMP	SAT	GAP	IMP	SAT	GAP	IMP	SAT	GAP	IMP	SAT	GAP	IMP	SAT	GAP
Professor	5.92	4.0	1.92	5.20	4.58	0.62	5.83	4.20	1.63	5.95	3.61	2.34	6.07	5.13	0.94
Curriculum	6.02	4.3	1.72	5.40	4.75	0.65	6.05	5.09	0.96	5.78	3.99	1.79	6.27	5.27	1.0
University Resource	6.37	4.43	1.94	5.51	4.58	0.93	6.17	4.39	1.78	6.28	4.13	2.15	6.19	5.07	1.12
Extra-Curricular	5.97	4.21	1.76	5.38	4.76	0.62	5.73	4.61	1.12	5.72	3.31	2.41	6.10	4.84	1.26

Table 3. Relative Ranking of Five Universities Based on Performance Gaps

Category	AUST	IUBAT	KU	BAU	CVASU
Professor	4	1	3	5	2
Curriculum	4	1	2	5	3
University Resources	4	1	3	5	2
Extra-Curricular	4	1	2	5	3

4.2. Comparison between USA and Bangladesh

To compare and contrast the quality of public and private universities with those in the USA, the survey responses were further analyzed and presented in Figure 3. Noel-Levitz student satisfaction survey responses from different universities across the USA were used to compare student satisfaction [15]. The survey responses for questions 5, 7, 10, 20, and 21 were not available, as indicated in the table, and, therefore, were not compared. The overall performance gap in public universities appears to be higher than private universities in both countries. Another notable observation was that the performance gaps at the private universities of Bangladesh were higher than private universities in USA. The data indicates similar results for public universities in Bangladesh and USA.

A comparison of public and private universities of Bangladesh and USA is presented in Figure 4. The overall performance gaps are higher at public universities except in a few areas. For example, performance gap at private universities is higher for questions number 11, 13 and 17 that are related to availability of courses to students, cost of education and library resources. Students reported lower satisfaction at private universities in these areas. Students expected better course offerings and library resources from private universities as they are paying a higher tuition rate for their education.

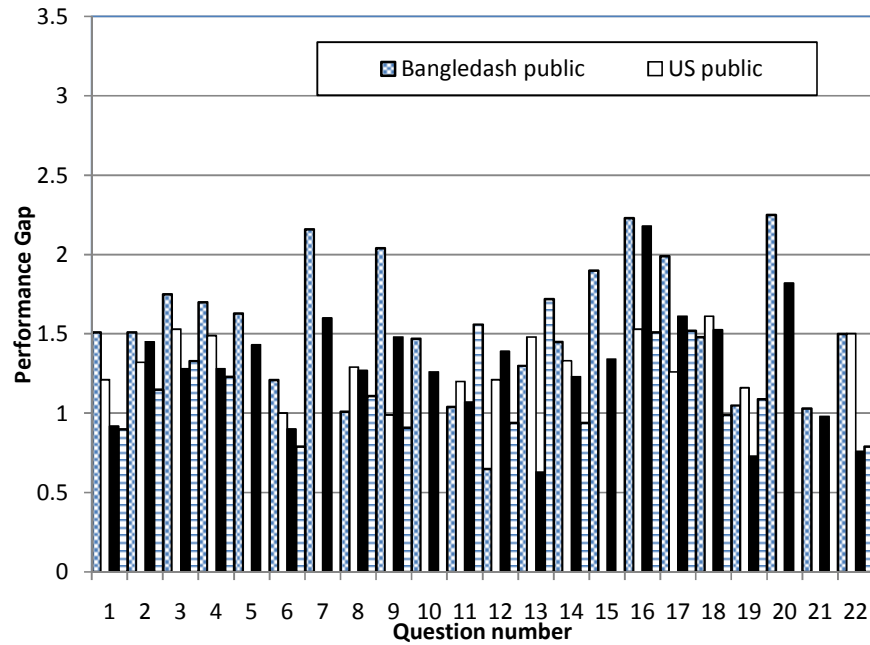


Figure 3. Performance Gap in public and private universities

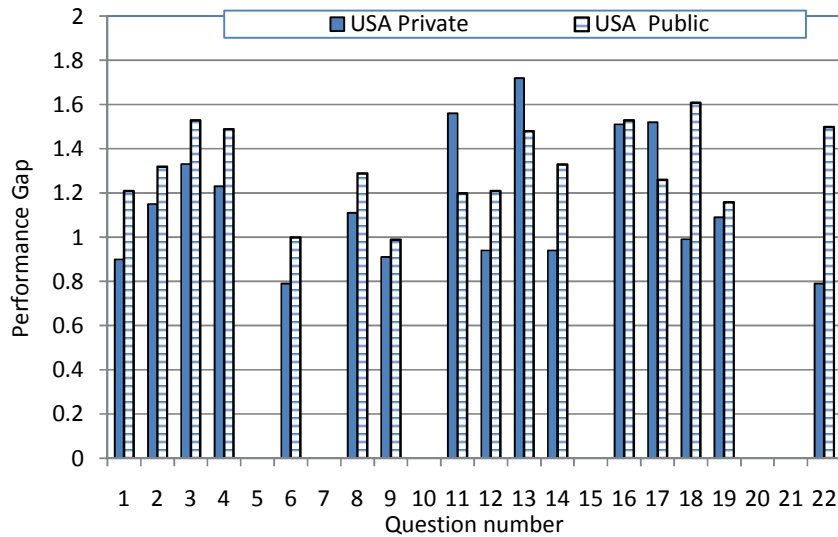


Figure 4. Performance Gap at public and private universities in the USA

Comparison of public universities of Bangladesh and USA showed higher dissatisfaction among students in Bangladesh in all areas except for the amount in which the cost of education influences the students' decisions to enroll. Comparison of gap levels for each question is presented in Figure 5. It must be noted that during this study, the cost of education at public universities in Bangladesh is negligible as these higher education institutions are fully subsidized by government. The difference in gap between Bangladesh and USA are significant in most questions with higher gaps present in data originating from Bangladesh.

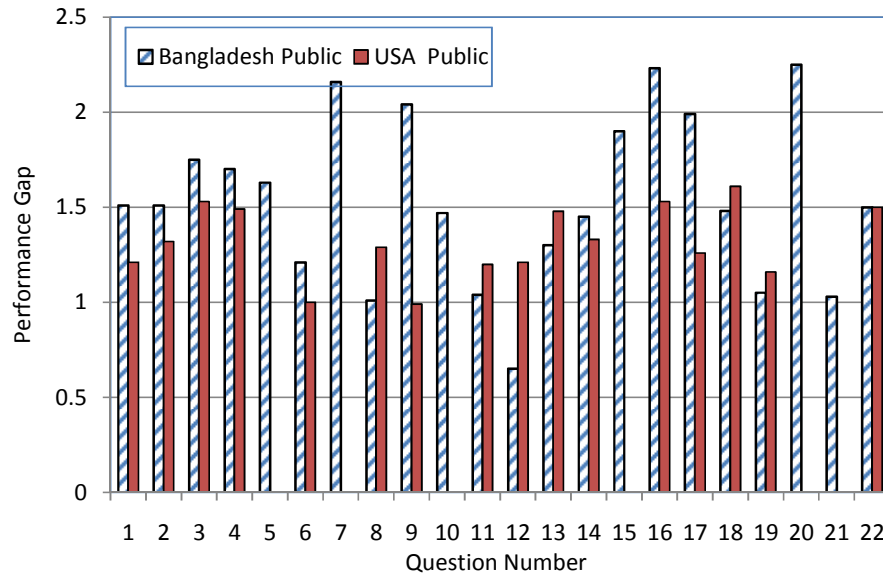


Figure 5. Gap in Public Universities in US and Bangladesh

Further analysis of private universities of Bangladesh and USA showed similar gaps in most of the questions except questions 11 and 13 where higher differences were observed. Question number 11 referred to availability of courses to students and question number 13 referred to cost of education. It appears that students in Bangladesh are more satisfied than USA in these two questions as shown in Figure 6.

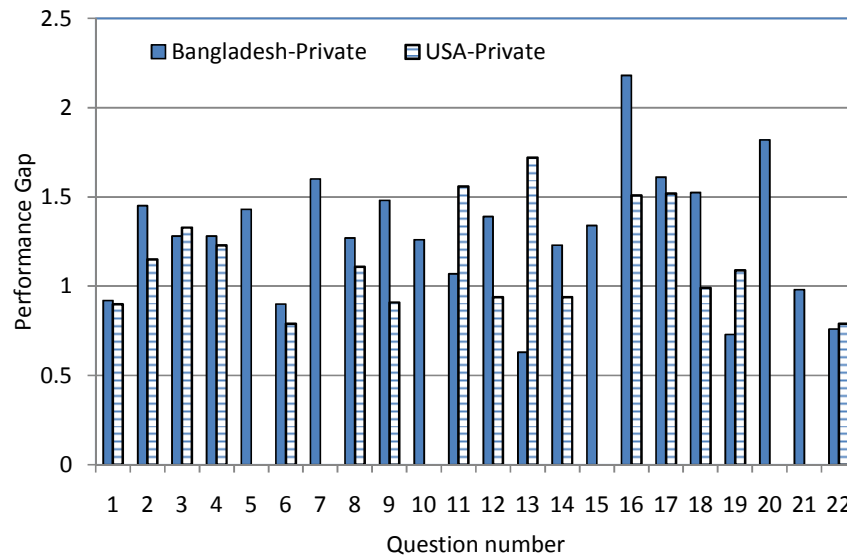


Figure 6. Performance Gap in private Universities of USA and Bangladesh

The results of the survey responses were grouped together in the four categories by averaging the responses of the questions in each category. The summary of the performance gap is presented in Table 4. The largest gap was observed among students of public universities in Bangladesh. The performance gap in private universities of the USA and Bangladesh are similar with a lower gap reported by private university students in Bangladesh.

Table 4. Comparison of Performance Gap in Bangladesh and USA

	Bangladesh Private			Bangladesh Public			USA Private			USA Public		
	IMP	SAT	GAP	IMP	SAT	GAP	IMP	SAT	GAP	IMP	SAT	GAP
Professor	5.55	4.29	1.26	5.95	4.31	1.64	6.37	5.29	1.08	6.38	5.07	1.49
Curriculum	5.71	4.53	0.88	6.03	4.78	1.25	6.46	5.21	1.25	6.40	5.16	1.23
UNIV resource	5.93	4.50	1.43	6.21	4.53	1.68	6.34	5.13	1.21	6.25	4.87	1.38
Extra-Curricular	5.67	4.48	1.19	5.85	4.25	1.60	5.63	4.84	0.79	5.82	4.32	1.50

5. DISCUSSION

To address an important question about the quality in public and private universities in Bangladesh and compare them with those of USA, a study was conducted using student satisfaction as a determinant of quality. Analysis of the results showed a larger gap in student satisfaction in public universities compared to private universities in Bangladesh in all four categories. This indicates that private university students in Bangladesh are more satisfied. However, smaller gaps were observed between private and public universities of USA indicating no significant difference in student satisfaction. The observations and results of this study is similar to a previous study but contradicts with general view of government and people of Bangladesh who perceives higher quality at public universities. One of the possible reasons for this disparity may be absence of any quality standards or accreditation bodies in Bangladesh and government oversight on quality of universities that may be biased and inefficient.

Due to their reputations and negligible tuition rates, public universities in Bangladesh were able to attract higher quality of students with higher grade point averages. However, the quality of instruction, infrastructures, bureaucratic policies and involvement in political activities results in a poor academic environment. The public universities are resistant to update their curriculum, instructional methods and adapting new pedagogical approaches such as active learning and assessment techniques. The University Grants Commission of Bangladesh (UGC) has recently developed an accreditation policy that will be only applicable to private universities as public universities expressed strong opposition to be assessed. In contrast, the private universities have been working towards developing new programs, curriculum, pedagogy and assessment to improve the quality of education at their institutions. Incorporating world-class standards and curriculum and attracting faculty members from universities across the world, their recent efforts have been successful in improving the quality. However, the higher cost of tuition in private universities of Bangladesh made them beyond the reach of students from middle-income families of Bangladesh. The higher profit motivation by the private universities is also a deterrent to investment in quality.

The results of this study can be effectively used by higher education institutions and the government to improve quality of education. Potential students, parent and other stakeholders can also use this information to have a better understanding of quality in terms of student satisfaction.

6. CONCLUSION

A survey was conducted to evaluate the importance and satisfaction of students at five different public and private universities in Bangladesh. The survey was based on a modified Noel-Levitz Students Satisfaction Index questionnaire. The results best exemplifies a study of students in Bangladesh, understanding education and the relationship between the quality of higher education and students' satisfaction in their education at their chosen university. This study included information from each respondent, asking for their importance and their satisfaction ratings toward their professor, curriculum, resources, and other extracurricular activities. It also compared and contrasted the deviations and means between public universities and private universities. Alongside of tested survey results, there are referenced resources that make common claims to this study. The hypothesis states that students attending private universities in Bangladesh are more satisfied than students attending public universities. After analyzing the survey results, the conclusion does in fact support that claim. The data portrays that private universities have the resources and services that meets the needs of their students and that they have a higher satisfaction levels than public universities. The higher satisfaction levels may justify higher costs, and public universities may also be able to improve services, based on private university services.

Comparison of private and public universities in Bangladesh and the USA showed the largest gap in ratings from public universities in Bangladesh followed by public universities in the USA. Performance gaps in ratings from private universities are lower than public universities in both USA and Bangladesh.

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Appendix

Student Satisfaction Survey

Name of University:- _____ Public _____ Private _____

Male __ Female __ Study Level /Year: 1 2 3 4 5 Please Mark []

1 - not important at all		2 - not very important		3 - somewhat unimportant		4 - neutral		5 - somewhat important		6 - important		7 - very important		N/A - does not apply		1 - not satisfied at all		2 - not very satisfied		3 - somewhat dissatisfied		4 - neutral		5 - somewhat satisfied		6 - satisfied		7 - very satisfied		N/A - not available				
Importance to Me																My Level of Satisfaction																		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	N/A									1	2	3	4	5	6	7	N/A											
								<i>Professors care about me as an individual.</i>																										
								<i>The instruction in my major field is excellent.</i>																										
								<i>Professors are fair and unbiased in their treatment of individual students.</i>																										
								<i>Professors provide timely feedback about student progress in a course.</i>																										
								<i>Professors take into consideration student difference as they teach a course.</i>																										
								<i>Professors are usually available after class and during office hours.</i>																										
								<i>Professors understand of students' unique life circumstances.</i>																										
								<i>The content of the courses with in my major is valuable.</i>																										
								<i>I am able to experience intellectual growth here.</i>																										
								<i>The assessment and course placement procedures are reasonable.</i>																										
								<i>There is a good variety of courses provided on this campus.</i>																										
								<i>There is a commitment to academic excellence on this campus.</i>																										
								<i>Cost as factor in decision to admission/enroll.</i>																										
								<i>The campus staffs are caring and helpful.</i>																										
								<i>Residence hall regulations are reasonable.</i>																										
								<i>Computer labs are adequate and accessible.</i>																										
								<i>Library resources and services are adequate.</i>																										
								<i>On the whole, the campus is well-maintained.</i>																										
								<i>I feel a sense of pride about my campus.</i>																										
								<i>There are a sufficient number of weekend activities for students.</i>																										
								<i>Males and females have equal opportunities to participate in intercollegiate activities.</i>																										
								<i>I can easily get involved in campus organizations.</i>																										

1. So far, how has your university experience met your expectations? Excellent/ Good/ Fair/ Others _____
2. Rate your overall satisfaction with your experience at this university. _____ %.
3. All in all, if you had to do it over again, would you enroll (Admission) here? Yes / No
4. The current university was my :- ___First Choice ___Second Choice ___ Third Choice _____
5. What was your best experience at this institution? _____
6. What is one thing you like to see changed in this institution? _____