Some Salient Features of Public and Private Universities

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THE emergence of private universities in our educational arena responds to the needs of the time. The limited seats of public universities in comparison to the increasing number of students seeking higher education, unavoidable session jam, lengthy academic year and above all serious political turmoil in the campus led the authorities concerned and the government to give rise to private universities. Every opportunity has its loopholes and taking this advantage many private universities have mushroomed hither and thither of the country seriously undermining the standard of higher education. The situation also casts a slur on the spur and reputation of already established private universities.

A roundtable discussion on corruption in the public universities by Transparency International Bangladesh on February 8, 2007 in Dhaka, attracted wide public attention and added a new dimension to the critical observations on the state of affairs in the public universities, The discussion revealed the inefficient management in most private universities. Mismanagement, abuse of autonomy given to major public universities under the 1973 university ordinance, corruption, teachers' and students' politics are posing threat to quality higher education. Because of low tuition fees and rich infrastructure and qualified teaching staff the rush in public universities is still strong.

Political parties still wrongly consider the public universities as some sort of power base because of student and teacher politics. Public universities are almost fully dependent on government grants. Hence, the party in power exercises evil and illegal influence in the universities. Students also exercise evil power and the campuses turn into political play ground forgetting the place of receiving education and conducting quality research. Private universities don't harbour any politics and hence political chaos does not prevail in these campuses. Of course, students engaged in politics may have some scopes to learn something extra if we could have scrapped its dark side.

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Library facilities are mostly not available to the pupils of private universities which is the prerequisite of a highest seat of learning. These phenomena keep the private universities far away from being matched with the public universities. Again, for mental nourishment of the learners open space and outdoor games prove to be the integral part which private universities fail to cater. Without ensuring these essential facilities, healthy and quality education cannot be expected to impart. Education cannot be bought for money only though it's a commodity. Huge tuition fees of private universities indicate the fact of selling this commodity mostly for money where commoners don't have access. Public universities offer open rooms for all financial classes So, a serious vacuum lies in the sector of higher education having two dimensions.

Important professional journals published by different foreign universities which used to be available earlier times are disappearing now. Books and manuscripts are poorly maintained and rarely updated. This picture is discerned mostly in public universities though huge library rooms and buildings exist.

Public universities usually boast of residential halls for students. Once the famous professor and ex-Vice-Chancellor of Jahangirnagar University Zillur Rahman Siddique told the audience in a huge student and teacher gathering " Living in the university dormitories and campus is a kind of education which books cannot give". Really it is an important fact that the students living in the university halls gather very important and life orientated learning and experience. The students of private universities are devoid of this phenomenon. It tends to prove a little bit imperfection in receiving education from private universities. Almost all our twenty seven public universities boast of residential halls except Open University and National University (as their functions and mode of operation are different).

Brilliant teachers of public universities don't dedicate themselves to field based research due to lack of availability of suitable amount of financial package. Moreover, the increasing scope to earn outside, them work outside and in private universities.

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