



# The role of higher education institutions in attracting global talent

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Bangladesh's struggle with brain drain is not new. According to data collected from 175 countries between 2007 and 2024, the 'Human Flight and Brain Drain Index' indicates that Bangladesh has the 37th highest propensity for brain drain. The reasons behind this high loss of human capital are multi-faceted and range from broad issues like political volatility and socioeconomic instability to infrastructural failings like unfriendly job markets and limited scope of career advancement. However, more often than not, talented young students are eager to leave the country, usually as early as after attaining their high school diploma, largely because of the deplorable conditions of higher educational institutions in

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Bangladesh.

While the number of universities in the country has steadily increased to over 150 in the past two decades, the same cannot be said about the quality of education. The University Grants Commission (UGC) is the body responsible for overseeing all tertiary educational institutions in Bangladesh. Even though the UGC is responsible for ensuring quality standards are being maintained across these institutions, its success is nearly abysmal. Dil Afroze Begum, an ex-member of the UGC, attests, "I tried for eight years to advise universities for their betterment, all to no avail."

On the systemic failings of the educational sector, Bahreen Khan, Assistant Professor at the Department of Law at Southeast University, says, "Students are frustrated with the entire system. They feel that due to internal politics, they are deprived of what they deserve from their university. Bangladeshi universities employ a backdated teaching system where teachers place excessive emphasis on memorisation. The teacher-to-student ratio in most classes is imbalanced. Teaching Assistants and Research Assistants are not available in many universities."

The summation of these problems means that the students do not end up receiving an education of a quality comparable to many foreign universities. The educational atmosphere lacks the practical training that is often necessary for skill translation into professional settings. The lacklustre facilities and resources are not helpful in the provision of quality education either. Muhammad Ihsan-Ul-Kabir, Lecturer at the Institute of Health Economics at the University of Dhaka, laments, "Quality education requires quality input like qualified teachers and multimedia classrooms. However, most of our university classrooms are not multimedia-supported. We don't even have access to international journals, which is a must so we can share the latest knowledge with students. These issues are

massive detriments to tertiary education and a huge reason behind the ongoing brain drain epidemic."

- » Bangladesh's brain drain is fueled by poor-quality higher education, outdated curricula, limited research opportunities, and inadequate infrastructure in universities.
- » Systemic issues like political interference, rote learning methods, lack of qualified faculty, and minimal access to international resources hinder academic growth.
- » Students pursue education abroad due to high costs of private universities, limited subject diversity, and better research facilities in foreign institutions.
- » Reforms should focus on updating curricula, improving research funding, fostering industry-academia links, and enhancing career counseling and job placement services.
- » Government collaboration with educational institutions, policy-makers, and global experts is essential to create a competitive, innovation-driven higher education environment.



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in this country. The government fails to provide sufficient funding for laboratory development and private universities are not too keen to invest either. There is little scope to teach research or laboratory work to eager students," says Dil Afroze Begum who was also a Professor of Chemical Engineering at the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) in the past.

Usually, there are two kinds of master's degrees offered—a research-based master's and a course-based master's. In Bangladesh, the educational environment is not conducive to doing a research-based master's. Through a course-based master's, there is an avenue for completing a thesis work. However, the research work done for the thesis is not extensive, and certainly not enough to prepare students for pursuing a PhD.

There is the added fact that PhD offerings in Bangladesh are few and far between. As of now, only 56 public universities in the country are allowed to offer PhD programmes. While the UGC said that they will allow private institutions

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## METROPOLITAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY, DHAKA: ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY ONE YEARS OF SERVICE

ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY ONE YEARS is not a very long span of time in history. Indeed, history abounds with instances of institutions which survived and flourished for longer periods. Yet, a trade organization which could weather many vicissitudes for as long a period as 121 years has learned many lessons that can be of significance not only to the trade and industry but to a wider public. Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Dhaka is fortunate to be such an organization.

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