

Academic Studies and Job Examinations: The Reality in Bangladesh

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Abstract

The given research paper deals with the study of complicated connections between academic education and job examinations in Bangladesh. Even with the steady growth in the availability of education, it is clear there is a distance between academic education and employment needs. The paper critically analyses the role of education system, job recruitment processes, and socio-economic conditions of having a total impact on the reality of the students and the graduates. Applying the mixed methodology of the research, the study examines structural flaws in academic curriculum, the increasing value of competitive employment test, and the disparity between academic credentials and employment. It also examines the psychological, social and economic impact of lengthy preparation on getting employment both in the public and the private sector. The findings imply that although academic schooling offers theoretical background, professional mobility is subjected to job examinations, and knowledge may be of little performance as the academic schooling ignores practical knowledge. The paper concludes by suggesting changes to be made to curriculum structure, the way of conducting the tests and the hiring policies so that education can be made relevant to the world

Keywords: Academic Study, Job Test, Bangladesh, Education Syllabus, Employment, Skill Shortage, Public Service Commission, Syllabus Revision

How to cite this article:

Hossain MM, Farid S. Academic Studies and Job Examinations: The Reality in Bangladesh. Research Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences.2025;4(5):97-120.

Source of support: Nil.

Conflict of interest: None

DOI:doi.org/10.58924/rjhss.v4.iss5.p15

Received: 15-10-2025

Revised: 18-10-2025

Accepted: 27-10-2025

Published: 10-11-2025



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1. Introduction

It is a common knowledge that education is one of the strongest attainment that can transform social change and national development. The reliance on academic education as the tool of upward social mobility, financial success, and personal development has long been an Indonesian, and, more specifically, a socially-conscious, notion in the context of Bangladesh. The state has widened access to education considerably over the past five decades with improvement in literacy levels and millions of students now seeking tertiary education in the state run as well as privately run institutions. In correlation with this expansion, a second but equally strong reality began to also take shape-one in which entry into the work world is dependent on the results of a job examination over and above academic performance. This has left a paradox where even though the aim of the academic studies is on accumulation of knowledge and the development of an intellectual ability to evaluate such a paradox has evolved where job exams have been the real gatekeepers of jobs. This has been especially true in Bangladesh where government jobs are considered a prestigious opportunity and a guarantee of economic security and the status of an adequate background education can simply take second place to performance in examinations like the Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) examination. This has led to the position whereby academic degrees are no longer enough; instead, several years devoted to exams preparation are a necessity. This is because universities concentrate much on theoretical education whereas in the employment exams, memorization of general knowledge, aptitude, and analytical skills is required which is not much in focus in formal curriculum. This has resulted in the misalignment

of what students learn in the classrooms and the demands in the job market. As a result, there is a lot of frustration, unemployment, or underemployment of graduates, thereby influencing the economic growth of the country at large.

1.1 Background of the Problem

Bangladesh has a young population that is referred to as the country's demographic dividend. The age pyramid is skewed with almost half of the population below 25 years, and it places enormous strain on the education sector to provide quality learning outputs and the labor market to absorb the young so that they can be put to productive use. Although the teaching institutions have increased exponentially in number the quality is variable with more than 50 universities and more than 100 colleges currently in operation. The skills gap many employers bemoan in graduates tends to centre around the practical side of their training, with students complaining of an overcompetitive system that makes the workplace more examination-focused. Social and cultural values also contribute to further complications of the situation. The secure government job is perceived as the ultimate goal of many of the families. This idea has generated a culture of examination, where the youth spend years, sometimes decades, in preparing to take BCS, bank or other recruitment tests held by the government. Coaching institutes in this ecosystem flourish with special training of exams and the academic education is given less importance. Unemployment and underemployment have become a burning concern as well. It is indicated that a large proportion of people graduating in universities are unemployed even after three or more years of graduating. This challenge says something about the disjointedness between academic education, on one hand, and labor market needs, on the other. The system instead of promoting research, innovation and creativity, promotes rote learning and continuous exam preparation.

1.2 Research Problem

The defining research problem may be put as follows: Although there are growing possibilities to access academic education in Bangladesh, there still exists a mismatch between academic education and professional labor needs where employment tests have become defining factors of career choice. This mismatch causes ineffectiveness within the education system, a waste of human resource and a frustrating experience within the society.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The main goals of the following research are:

- ❖ To survey on the association amidst academic education and work examinations in Bangladesh.
- ❖ To determine the deficiency between the school curriculum and required (job exam) skills.
- ❖ To investigate socio-economic and psychological consequence of job examinations to students.
- ❖ To conduct an analysis of the importance of the role of public service examinations (e.g., BCS) in determining employment patterns.
- ❖ The need to suggest reforms that bring academia studies into harmony with the job market

1.4 Research Questions

- ❖ How are academic study being prepared to the job examinations in Bangladesh?
- ❖ What are the principal incompatibilities between the education curricula of higher education and requirements of job examination?
- ❖ What effect do job examinations have on the career choices of graduates and their mental health?
- ❖ How significant is the socio-economic background in developing the dependence of students on the job examinations?
- ❖ What can be done to education and recruiting systems in order to minimize the disjunction between schooling and the work world?

1.5 Methodology

This study uses qualitative, analytical approach, with a support of review secondary data. The works of previous studies, reports by the Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics (BANBEIS), publications of the World bank and UNESCO and academic publications

constitute the basis of the literature review. Case strategies and other comparative analysis with other South Asian countries is also included and have been used to enable them have a full picture of the issue.

1.6 Significance of the Study

The results presented in this study are relevant to many stakeholders:

- ❖ The insights will assist policy makers to amend the curricula and recruitment procedures in the higher education institutions.
- ❖ Higher learning institutions have inspiration on how they can be better in their skill-based learning and career advice matters.
- ❖ The level of awareness of students and families about where academic studies and employment opportunities will lead them will be improved.
- ❖ Employers can be helped by advice that helps to fill the gap that exists between graduate education and workplace performance.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The connection between the academic research and the employments test has gained attention among the interested scholars, policy, and educator especially in the developing countries like Bangladesh. In this section, the international, regional, and local literature is reviewed to gain insights on how education systems are structured relative to work realities and, in particular, to the situation in Bangladesh. The review is based on the theoretical formulations, empirical studies, and comparative research in South Asia and other places.

2.1 Global Perspectives on Academic Education and Employment

Education has long since been considered a means through which people can improve their chances of getting a good job and social mobility. The theory of human capital was the first to be authored by Becker and focuses on the fact that education raises the productivity and employment of people. But current arguments break this direct correlation. Increasing Higher education does not necessarily mean that you are guaranteed to get employment particularly when the economy is unable to create enough opportunities to hook the graduates (Brown, Lauder & Ashton, 2011). In developed economies, like the United States, the United Kingdom, and Japan, employers are requiring more practical skills and digital literacy as well as problem-solving skills (OECD, 2019). However, university systems are slow to implement changes to the curricula in order to address such needs. This has seen graduates being retrained, re-certified, or being put through competitive tests in order to be accepted into the employable job market. The worldwide transition to knowledge-based economies has also increased the significance of so-called soft skills (communication, teamwork skills, and adaptability) and technical skills (World Economic Forum, 2020). There is a gap here, not unique to Bangladesh, between the expectations of the labor market and what students are prepared to deliver, throughout the world. But in the countries that have less strong labor markets and rigid systems of recruitment like Bangladesh, the gap is even more critical.

2.2 Employment Examinations and Credentialism

Credentialism, which attributes the existence of gatekeeping by means of formal degrees or certifications, has already been researched extensively (Collins, 1979). In Asia, mainly China, India and Japan, university grades are given lesser weight than competitive tests. The traditional example is the Chinese civil service examination system that shaped the organization of education and has previously contributed to career success. In India, the Union Public service examination (UPSC) carry clout in who gets access to elite administrative professions. Researchers claim that such education schooling systems tend to focus on either memorizing and test-taking skills as opposed to innovativeness and creativity (Gupta, 2006). This has the potential of creating an exam culture resulting in a shadow education industry of karim and tutorials dominating over academic institution. Indeed, in South Korea, the mania of passing the university test has forced

young people into great social pressure, triggering various mental illnesses and social inequalities (Park, 2013). These countries have much in common with Bangladesh wherein their career aspiration is dominated by examinations like the Bangladesh Civil service (BCS). Academic study results are less appreciated than the passing of exams though the degrees are required in order to take the exams.

2.3 South Asian Context: Education and Employment

In South Asia, expansion of higher education has come at a faster rate than the absorption of the labor market. At the same time, graduates in India total more than 7 million every year, with disproportionately high unemployment rates justifying the perception of higher education as an unnecessary evil (World Bank, 2018). Research findings indicate that the Indian employment sector values competitive examinations like UPSC, State Public Service Commissions, and exams like those of the banking sector more than regular university scores (Jain, 2019). This is also the case in Sri Lanka and Nepal. In Sri Lanka, the graduates experience challenges in getting jobs as schools teach mostly theoretical aspects, unlike the employers who prefer individuals who have practical and technical skills (Fernando, 2015). Public employment in Nepal via its civil service exams organized by the Public Service Commission is highly favored over the less prestigious option of a lucrative and well-paying private-sector career, and hence competitors are numerous, not spared by the existence of an accompanying industry of exam-academies made to prepare the candidates. Such regional trends underline the larger issue of a skills mismatch, graduate unemployment and the over-promotion of job exams, which speaks to the situation in Bangladesh today.

2.4 Bangladesh's Education System and Employment Reality

Bangladesh has exemplified tremendous growth in the provision of education coverage ever since independence in 1971. The number of primary schools is close to universal, and the enrollment at the secondary and tertiary level has been growing significantly (BANBEIS, 2022). By the expansion of the number of privately established universities in the 1990s, the accessibility of higher education further has expanded. Nonetheless, there are apprehensions of the quality, relevancy, and employability. It has demonstrated that the higher education system in Bangladesh is highly dependent on rote learning and assessment based on exams (Asadullah, 2016). This system supports students into memorizing not thinking or solving problems or researching. Consequently, graduates are found to be lacking in the practical expertise required in the work place by both the state and private sectors. The labor market, in its turn, is defined by the scarcity of white-collar jobs available in the market as compared to the high number of graduates annually entering the labor market. The issue of match with education and employment demand consequently influenced the higher rate of graduate unemployment in Bangladesh compared to national unemployment rates as discussed by the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS, 2020).

2.5 Job Examinations in Bangladesh: The Central Role of BCS

The BCS is the most competitive exam of all job examinations conducted in Bangladesh. Administered by the Bangladesh Public Service Commission (BPSC), the test qualifies candidates to work in various elite services of the government administration, diplomatic services and others. Graduates at every year apply in hundreds of thousands, and only a small drop succeed. The BCS exam is not about any university studying subjects, but it is focused on general knowledge, analytical skill, English and aptitude (Peter and Ed, 2008). Thus, hundreds of graduates spend years of their lives BCS-exclusive, and often at coaching centers. This brings a gap between learning of academic studies and jobs. According to scholars (Chowdhury, 2019; Rahman, 2021), the hegemony of BCS study weakens the academic system because students stop finding any motivation in research or subject knowledge. Instead, they concentrate on highly specific exam-driven content and in doing so they create a cycle whereby the role of academic study becomes nothing more than a necessary regulatory formality to take exams.

2.6 Psychological and Social Implications

There are severe psychological consequences of pressure of job examinations. Research has reported a rise in the number of stressed, anxious, and depressed young people who have studied years with no guarantee of success; they train to get a visa to go abroad (Islam & Akter, 2020). There is also an additional pressure created by family expectation, social status brought by jobs in government and financial security. The social effect of this phenomenon is that it strengthens inequality. Students with higher-income urban backgrounds have the means to afford one-on-one coaching, high-quality support resources and other advantages, whereas low-income or rural students do not. This has led to the reproduction of class differences in examinations, unlike those situations where it is seen as an equalizer.

2.7 Theoretical Frameworks

The aspects of the reviewed literature can be placed into a number of theoretical frameworks.

- ❖ Human Capital Theory - Education as future income. In Bangladesh, however, success in the job exams acts as a mediating factor in the expected return.
- ❖ Credentialism - Employment success relies more on gaining a certificate and passing exams and not on what people have learned.
- ❖ Social Reproduction Theory (Bourdieu, 1977) - Education and exams tend to preserve the current social structure; they are not always used to diminish inequalities.
- ❖ Skill Mismatch Theory -There is a gap between academic content and market-based requirements, which creates inefficiency in the utilization of human resource.

2.8 Research Gaps

Although a lot has been written about education system in Bangladesh, graduate unemployment, and job examinations, there are still gaps that need to be filled: There are few empirical studies that directly compare academic course material with exam material. Basse absence de recherche longitudinale sur les conséquences de la culture des examens sur la dveloppement carrière. Most of the literature on the effect of repeated failures in exams focuses on the academic effects and neglects the mental health effects. A lack of investigations concerning the alternative professional routes (entrepreneurship, vocational training) in Bangladesh.

Conclusion of Literature Review

As seen in the literature, the similar interaction of the academic studies, and job test in Bangladesh is both of a global nature and a regional quality. There has been no elimination of jobs or an overhaul in curriculum with the expansion in education thus creating an imbalance in the number of jobs created with the number of people getting higher education. This has great repercussions to graduate employability, psychical wellbeing, and equity. Nonetheless, there are still significant gaps in the research and in bridging the gap between academic learning outcomes and employment exam performance in particular. It is important that these gaps be addressed in policy changes that make education synchronised with labor market.

Chapter 3: The Education System in Bangladesh

The education sector of Bangladesh has a history of an onerous evolution since its independence in 1971. Bangladesh has grown and spread its education arena largely over the past five decades, with an emphasis on accessibility and inclusivity. Primary schooling has become nearly universal, secondary schooling has grown by leaps and bounds, and higher schooling establishments have doubled, most notably in the advent of the non-public university. In spite of this expansion, the quality, equity and employability have been questioned. This section discusses the shape, strengths and weaknesses of education system in Bangladesh with specific reference to its relation to jobs and job examination.

3.1 Structure of the Education System

Bangladesh has a multi-tiered system of education that may be broadly categorized into the following levels:

- ❖ **Primary Education (Grades 1 to 5):** Obligatory and taught mostly at no cost in state schools. The enrolment rates are up to almost 98 percent (BANBEIS, 2022). The major obstacles still exist in dropout rates, the quality of instruction, and rural-urban disparity.
- ❖ **Secondary Education (Grades 6 12):** Compulsory schooling divided into junior secondary (658), secondary (910) and higher secondary (1112). Students sit two open examinations which include the Secondary School Certificate (SSC) and the Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC). Parallel education streams are general education, madrasah education and technical /vocational education.
- ❖ **Higher Education (College and Post-graduation):** Offered by state universities, independent universities, national universities (affiliated colleges) and special schools. By 2022, there are 53 public universities, 111 private universities in Bangladesh with over 2,000 colleges affiliated to the National University. The higher education institutions are governed by the University Grants Commission (UGC). This organizational structure demonstrates a bold move in expanding enrollment as well as showing structural flaws of the system in quality assurance, curriculum planning, and resource appropriations.

3.2 Public vs. Private Universities: The most obvious transformation in the higher education sector has been the increment of the number of private universities following enactment of the Private University Act of 1992.

- ❖ **Public Universities:** Are relatively inexpensive to students who may belong to the middle- and lower-income classes. Admission is very competitive and in many cases requires an entrance exam. The strengths are lengthy academic traditions, and potential research, and weaknesses are overcrowding, jams in sessions (academic delays), and the political interference.
- ❖ **Private Universities:** Offer an avenue of entry to learners who fail to gain entry into government Universities. Offer flexible compacts in business, IT and applied sciences. Tuition fees are also very high and only middle- and upper-class families who live in cities have significant access. Critics contend that some of the private universities focus on profit making and not necessarily academic excellence thus benefitting in variable quality. This format forms imbalance within higher education, as academic possibilities tend to depend on the social-economic background of the students.

3.3 Curriculum Design and Pedagogy

There has been criticism on the curriculum used in Bangladesh, which is very theoretical and exam focused, as opposed to skills-oriented. The curriculum in the secondary level stresses on rote-learning, where learning in SSC and HSC is based on learning by heart and not on critical thinking. In the university, courses are not often updated and they do not focus on market needs. Most degree programs especially in roles in the humanities and social sciences fail to serve applicative or job-seeking competencies. The improvement of the level of English language is a major obstacle among the graduates because a number of job examinations as well as jobs in the private sector require the applicants to be very eloquent with the language. Digital literacy and ICT are becoming a basic requirement but are not fully integrated into standard curriculums and particularly in non-metropolitan regions. The disparity between curriculum planning and labor market demands is a decisive opportunity that justifies that academic achievement does not always permit direct access to labor market in Bangladesh.

3.4 Examinations and Assessment System

In Bangladesh, examinations take centre stage in entire education. Success is valued based on grades and certificates as opposed to skills or competencies. National Examinations (PSC, JSC, SSC, HSC): There are a number of national standardized tests which students are required to pass before entering university. Such exams are bias towards rote memorization. University Examining: Universities take examinations in written form and are usually on a semester or yearly basis. The components of coursework and practicals as well as research are minimal. After

Graduation: Students must again go through the competition of job examinations like the BCS, Bank examination and the privately conducted tests. These tend to measure holistic ability, and not subject knowledge learned in an academic institution. Such a strong reliance on examination implies a culture in which assessment is favored ahead of learning, so a cycle of rote learning should be constructed as one progresses through life in primary schools to further education and eventual work.

3.5 Issues of Quality and Governance

Access has improved, whereas quality of education is a problem.

- ❖ **Faculty Shortages:** There is a lack of the adequacy of qualified teachers in the public universities. A good number of the privately owned universities depend on the part-time or even adjunct facilities.
- ❖ **Research Deficit:** Bangladesh has a low research output in comparison with the surrounding countries like India and Malaysia. Research funding is sub-optimal and most universities insist on teaching.
- ❖ **Political Interference:** Politics, corruption of administrators, and nepotism weaken the academic standards. Hiring of faculty and allocation of resources are politically biased more often than not.
- ❖ **Urban-Rural Divide:** Students in rural classes have a bad infrastructure, poorly trained teachers and have less access to digital resources. Therefore, this places them at a disadvantage during academic studies and in their future job examinations.

3.6 Expansion vs. Employability

It is one of the central challenges of the education system in Bangladesh because there is a conflict between the expansion of enrolment and employability outcomes. There is immense growth in enrollments in higher education and also graduate unemployment has grown. The Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (2020) presents the rate of unemployment among the university graduates as nearly two times higher than the national rate of unemployment. Employers lament the fact that graduates lack problem-solving skills, communication and on-the-job experience. Learners also feel that their degrees are only useful in case they pass their competitive employment tests. This disproportion means that there is a clear necessity in curriculum change, ties with industries and more sensible education.

3.7 Technical and Vocational Education

Bangladesh has been neglecting the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), a criterion that should help tackle the reduction in skills. Only a percentage of less than 15 percent of students enroll in educational streams at secondary school level. Vocational training is also looked down upon as being lower in output than general studies. The manufacturing industry, ICT, and the service industry are facing inadequacy of skilled technicians and middle level professionals. The trend that seems to be reducing the reliance on general education degrees and offering alternative employment opportunities by expanding TVET.

3.8 International Comparisons

The issues relating to the education system in Bangladesh regarding education in other neighboring countries are similar and a difference.

- ❖ **India:** Flourishing growth of the private universities with under concern on quality and employability.
- ❖ **Sri Lanka:** Literacy is high, good indicators on education but high unemployment among graduates as there is little job creation.
- ❖ **Malaysia:** Learnt to combine higher education and industrial development by encouraging vocational and technical competence. Such comparisons indicate that Bangladesh should move beyond both the quantity-oriented growth and quality-oriented reform to ensure that academic studies are related to the needs of the labor market.

3.9 Summary of Key Issues

The general overview of the system of education in Bangladesh outlines some of the major concerns:

- ✓ Overindulgence in testing on all levels of education.
- ✓ A culture of rote learning that does not encourage creativity and problem solving.
- ✓ Academic curriculum-labor mismatch.
- ✓ Unequal access among the kinds of universities, and urban and rural students.
- ✓ Higher unemployment among graduates even in the ascending enrolments
- ✓ Failure to consider vocational education as a broad option to a career path.
- ✓ Poor leadership and political influence in tertiary education.

Conclusion of Section

The education system of Bangladesh has achieved important progress in terms of access, and yet its structural characteristics are still clearly inadequate. Although necessary, academic studies do not always equip the students to survive the search of their jobs and the demands of the labour market. This discrepancy between theory-guided curriculum and job-oriented skills training has ascribed to a situation wherein job examinations take pre-eminence over career destiny, downgrading the significance of academic education. To bring effective change to the system, education should not only work on access, but also on quality, employability and its linkage to national development ambitions.

Chapter 4: Job Examinations in Bangladesh

Job interviews are a domineering characteristic in Bangladesh employment sector especially when seeking employment in the public sector. Competitive examinations are a pathway to livelihood, and also a source of dissatisfaction in a nation where secure employment is hard to find. They dictate those who get privileged positions in distinguished government services, banking and other positions in the formal sector. Albeit with minimum academic requirements, it is at the end when jobs finally take their toll in shaping careers. In this part, an explanation of the historical background, workings and challenges of job examinations are examined in the light of their socio-cultural meaning and implications in Bangladesh.

4.1 Historical Context of Job Examinations

Early origins of competitive job tests is found during the colonial period in Bangladesh. The British used the civil service examinations to recruit administrators, an aspect that was followed by India, Pakistan and later by Bangladesh after it gained independence in 1971.

- ❖ **Colonial Legacy:** The British Indian Civil Service exam created a tradition of merit-based but highly competitive recruitment.
- ❖ **Post-independence Bangladesh:** The Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) was established in 1972 under the Public Service Commission, continuing the tradition of nationwide competitive examinations.
- ❖ **Evolution:** Over time, job examinations expanded beyond civil service to include banks, state-owned enterprises, and even private sector recruitment.

This history shows that examinations have long been considered the “fairest” method of allocating scarce and prestigious jobs, even though their fairness has often been debated.

4.2 Types of Job Examinations

In Bangladesh, the number of available conceptions of job examinations are diverse and this can be categorized as below:

- ❖ **Civil Service Examinations (BCS):** Conducted by the Bangladesh Public Service Commission (BPSC). Prestigious and highly competitive, with nearly half a million applicants each year. Covers administrative, police, foreign service, customs, and other cadres.
- ❖ **Banking Examinations:** Conducted by Bangladesh Bank and other state-owned banks. Exams test general knowledge, mathematics, English, and analytical skills.

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- ❖ **Non-Cadre and Specialized Examinations:** Recruitment tests for government agencies, autonomous bodies, and universities. Focus on subject-specific as well as general aptitude.
 - ❖ **Private Sector Examinations:** Large private companies and NGOs conduct their own recruitment tests. These exams are less standardized and often followed by interviews and group discussions.

4.3 Structure and Content of Job Examinations

The format of job tests is diversified, although they are all directed at general knowledge, aptitude and memorizing.

- ❖ **Preliminary Exams:** The preliminary exams will be aiming at objective-type questions on the subject matter of Bangladesh affairs, international affairs, English, mathematics, and ICT.
- ❖ **Written Tests:** Language, literature and history, science and subject specific written tests involve essay-type questions.
- ❖ **Viva Voce (Oral Exams):** The oral examination will consist of interviews to judge the personality, self-confidence, and communication abilities. The BCS exam is a three-stage test, e.g.
 - ❖ Preliminary Test (MCQs)
 - ❖ Written Examination (few topics, 900 marks in total)
 - ❖ Viva Voce (200 marks) This structure focuses more on breadth in knowledge, probably at the expense of much depth. Graduates with varied educational backgrounds need to be ready with a standard list of topics and many of which do not relate to their university education.

4.4 Coaching Culture and the Shadow Education Industry

Coaching centers become one of the most notable characteristics of the job examination system in Bangladesh.

- ❖ **Scale:** Hundreds of coaching centers operate in Dhaka, Chattogram, Rajshahi, and other cities.
- ❖ **Services:** They offer crash courses, model tests, study guides, and personalized tutoring for BCS and bank exams.
- ❖ **Costs:** Fees range from a few thousand to tens of thousands of taka, making coaching accessible mainly to middle- and upper-class students.
- ❖ **Consequences:** Students spend years preparing in coaching centers, often neglecting their academic research or professional skills development. This parallel education sector indicates the need of preparing students in exams as well as large failure of universities in equipping students with skills required in competitive job markets.

4.5 Corruption and Fairness Issues

Although introduced as a meritocracy, the job examinations in Bangladesh have been criticized in terms of corruption and nepotism and irregularities.

- ❖ **Question Paper Leaks:** Question papers have on several occasions leaked, as has caused a dent on trust.
- ❖ **Political Influence:** Sometimes recruitment is also affected by political persuasion that decreases the fairness of examinations.
- ❖ **Regional Inequality:** The rural students are usually disadvantaged as compared to the urban students basing on absence of resources. These are matters, which impair the integrity of examination system despite it being the most popular mode of recruitment.

4.6 Psychological Impact on Youth

There is no doubt that the psychological toll of job examinations is massive.

- ❖ **Long term preparation:** Some of the students train 3 to 5 years to take BCS, bank exams and in many cases they delay their marriages, responsibilities as parents and becoming entrepreneurs.
- ❖ **Pressure and Anxiety:** Strong competition and failure, putting people under great pressure lead to Anxiety and other mental executions like depression, and low self-esteem (Islam & Akter, 2020).

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- ❖ **Social Stigma:**when one fails examinations there is always a social embarrassment that is attached to it as a personal failure.

This mental burden points to the fact that the exams do not only decide career but individual lives and identities as well.

4.7 Socio-Cultural Importance of the Job Examinations

In Bangladesh, there is a strongly symbolic aspect of employment associated with examinations to enter the job:

- ❖ **The Status of Government Jobs:**Passing in BCS is regarded as the ultimate in success: in its wake comes social status, and family pride.
- ❖ **Marriage Market:**Marriage should be better by passing the civil service exam and this should demonstrate how marriages are strongly linked to lies in the exam.
- ❖ **Urban Middle-Class ambitions:**In numerous families, a government job is regarded as secure and prestigious career path, which is often preferable to a career in sports, or a private sector employment, as well as entrepreneurship. So exams are not only professional bumps in the road-they are cultural rites of passage.

4.8 Comparison with Academic Studies

The differences between scholarly research and employment tests is conspicuous:

- ❖ **Academic Studies:** Be subject-specific (e.g. economics, history, physics). Evaluate workload with course work, exams and research.
- ❖ **Job Examinations:** Need to have some basic knowledge in all fields, such as history, politics, literature, current affairs. Make no big deal out of expert knowledge in the subject to be taught. This mal-alignment compels the students to start off anew as they gear up to take employee tests, their years of academic education being largely irrelevant to their chances of employment.

4.9 Case Studies and Statistics

- ❖ **BCS Examinations:**In the 41st BCS (2021), 475,000 plus applicants competed about 2,135 jobs which is less than 0.5%. These figures show the level of competitiveness in terms of the prestigious job positions in relation to the number of graduates who are qualified to fill these places.
- ❖ **Bank Exams Recruitment:** In 2020 there were more than 150,000 candidates that competed to take a selection exam to get 5,000 vacancies in banks. Intense competition indicates both the unemployment related needs and attractions of stable employment.
- ❖ **Graduate Unemployment:** In a study done by BIDS (2020), it indicated that the rate of unemployment among the graduate increased to more than 11% in contrast to the national rate which was 4.2%. Most of the graduates have been underemployed, doing jobs that are not in their study area.

4.10 Challenges of the Job Examination System

There are numerous challenges to the system

- ❖ **Over-Centralization:**The question of over-dependency on some of the exams like BCS.
- ❖ **Skill Mismatch:**Exams fail to test skills that are practical and technical with the type of skills required in the labor market.
- ❖ **Inaccessibility:**Students of well-to-do families can afford to have more access to coaching and resources.
- ❖ **Time Wastage:**Years of exam preparation means that one delays a place in the workforce, wasting years of productivity.
- ❖ **Gender Attributes:**The genders have their social constraints in taking competitive exams that may be lengthy.

4.11 Reforms and Policy Discussions

Policymakers and scholars have proposed a set of reforms:

- ❖ **Curriculum Alignment:**Ensure that there are job-related skills in the university curricula.

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- ❖ **Modernization of Exams:**Incorporate problem-solving, ICT and analytical skills rather than rote learning skills.
 - ❖ **Transparency:**Increase exam integrity with tightened surveillance and with the use of digital systems.
 - ❖ **Diversification of Employment:**Minimize the dependence on government jobs through creation of entrepreneurship and the growth of the private sector.
 - ❖ **Career Counseling:**Helping the students to counsel early on on how to match studies with realistic long-term employment techniques.

Conclusion of Section

In Bangladesh, job examinations are also essential in the employment process, but are also indicative of underlying student and socio-economic problems in the education process and the job market itself. They act as a screening device of the limited opportunities, a means that propagates stress, disparity and inefficiency. The supremacy that exams such as the BCS enjoy yields a scenario wherein theoretical studies end up playing second fiddle and years of university time get wasted in favor of the specialized preparation. To fully achieve the demographic dividend, the reforms of the job examination system should not only embrace the aspect of equitability and transparency; they should also be made to balance the academic curricula and the actual employment needs in the labor market.

Chapter 5: Academic Studies vs. Employment Reality in Bangladesh

The connection between the academic researches and employment prospects in Bangladesh is very intricate. Although there has been a phenomenal increase in accessibility and people who obtain degrees in the education system, the linkage between student achievements in the academics and employment opportunities has been patchy. In this section, the author critically analyses the disconnect between school studies and what job market requires and proves how structural frailties in the academic education system along with the prevalence of competitive job tests are contradictions creating crises in the career path of any Bangladeshi graduate.

5.1 The Mismatch Between Academic Learning and Job Requirements

Skill mismatch is one of the burning issues in the education - employment continuum in Bangladesh. Universities focus on theory knowledge which is not always connected with practical skills needed at work.

- ❖ **The Universities and the Theory-Based Learning:**History, philosophy or literature majors leave college with heavy theoretical backgrounds and little to practice.
- ❖ **Employment Examinations:**Examples of job exams include that of the BCS which focuses more on general knowledge and memorization, alien to the discipline in which the student majored in.
- ❖ **Demands of the Labor Market:** Employers (especially in the private sector) require ICT skills, good communication skills and ability to solve problems which are hardly included in university curricula. There is a paradox then that the years of academic study by graduates will give very little instructions towards tackling competitive exams or the requirements of the workplace.

5.2 Theoretical Knowledge vs. Practical Skills

The education system of Bangladesh has been criticized as an exam-oriented system instead of a skills-oriented one.

- ❖ **Training Gaps:**engineering graduates have not received much practical usage of up to date technology; business students are unaccustomed to corporate reality.
- ❖ **Internship Shortage:**Universities do not normally apply any meaningful internship programs and when they do, such internship programs are symbolic and not substantive.
- ❖ **The soft skills deficiency:**Employers keep on saying grads are weak on teamwork and communication as well as leadership skills (World Bank, 2019). This disjunction weakens their employability causing most graduates to be desperate and rely on competitive exams as the only choice in order to get a job.

5.3 Influence of Unemployment on Academic Choices

Graduate unemployment on the high level determines the student behavior at the very first steps of their academic trails.

- ❖ **Subject choices:** Students tend to make choices which are not out of passion but due to perceived value of the subjects in job market. An example is that college majors such as commerce and business studies are selected due to the level of employability in the Subjects.
- ❖ **After Graduation Plans:** Most of them develop a BCS or a banking exam plan after graduation even though they have studied subjects like literature or sociology before graduation.
- ❖ **Parental Pressure:** Families pressure the students to take up degrees that suit government job examinations than be involved in creative or entrepreneurial occupations. This dynamic has worn down the freedom to learn, deterred the acceptance of diversity in the choice of subjects and fostered an educational environment that education is only viewed as a stepping stone to the exams.

5.4 English and ICT Skills as Employment Gateways

There is a growing need in today's globally connected economy to be both digitally literate and have good command of the English language in order to be employable.

- ❖ **English Proficiency:** Most graduates, especially those in rural institutions have communication challenges with the English language. However, English grammar, vocabulary and writing are strongly stressed in competitive exams and multinational job interviews.
- ❖ **ICT Skills:** ICT training may be marginal in most curricula in spite of the government promoting a Digital Bangladesh. There are also ICT-related elements contained in the job exams, and these disadvantage those students who are ill prepared in ICT. The mismatch between the knowledge attained at universities and required skills can point at the flaws of the academic education in equipping the students not only with examination skills but with the skills needed to operate in work places.

5.5 Impact on Career Planning

The overpowering presence of job examinations reduces the career planning of the Bangladeshi students to a narrow and examination-oriented character.

- ❖ **Short-Term Goals:** Students do not intend to find something to research or become entrepreneurs or to develop in technical fields but rather focus on taking competitive exams.
- ❖ **Opportunity Cost:** When the graduates are taking years in preparing themselves to undertake numerous attempts of exams, several years of productivity have been wasted away.
- ❖ **Dependency Cycle:** Failure to pass exams can result in an extended period of preparation with a loss of interest in other potential careers. Once the graduates find themselves in this cycle, it has led to human resources being wasted through the lack of specifications thus resulting into frustration and underemployment.

5.6 The Social Construction of Success

In Bangladesh, success in the society is not defined in terms of academic achievements but an employment in government services.

- ❖ **Cultural Prestige of BCS:** The achievement of a civil servant position is held as the ultimate sign of success irrespective of whatever one is in professionally.
- ❖ **Academic Excellence Rankled:** The academic superiority is considered less by the society, as compared to cracking BCS.
- ❖ **Peer/Family influence:** Parents motivate all children to study exams first, which limits the desire and motivation to study research or abroad higher education. This social presentation does not welcome scholarly breadth, and it encourages test-oriented education.

5.7 Gender Dimensions

There are also gendered connotations to the interplay between academic learning and job exams.

- ❖ **Female students:** Some women are hindered by social barriers their families and society impose on them regarding the preparation of competitive exams in the long run. Their chances of dedicating years in preparation are lowered by their family expectations of them marrying early.
- ❖ **Access Inequality:** A gender gap exists in the number of women accessing coaching centers- which are largely male dominated.
- ❖ **Career Choices:** Women can make career choices that might be seen to be less demanding with family related issues and may make choices that make them less competitive in the labor market. Accordingly, the discrepancy between the scholarship and the employment world presents a great disadvantage to the female students.

5.8 Comparative International Perspectives

When the situation in Bangladesh is compared to that of other countries, it seems that there are peculiarities of the latter:

- ❖ **India:** Academic degrees have little value in India because of entry into UPSC or banking exams. India has a great extent of the private sector that accommodates graduates.
- ❖ **Malaysia:** Greater fusion between academic establishments and industries makes the differences between what is learnt in academic institutions and the job requirements to be minimal.
- ❖ **South Korea:** In spite of this examination-based education, reforms have led to development of skill-based assessment thus closing the gap between education and jobs. The gap is more pronounced because in Bangladesh there is less of such reforms.

5.9 Psychological Consequences of the Gap

The lost linkage between school education and the world of work has its psychological cost:

- ❖ **Stress and Anxiety:** The children think that without passing a competitive exam they are wasting their academic years.
- ❖ **Loss of Motivation:** The bright students may lose interest in the subjects they study and only learn what is there in the examination.
- ❖ **Identity Crisis:** It is also true that many graduates become unable to determine their self-worth in case their degrees do not guarantee employment. This produces a society that feels frustrated and discontented with their education.

5.10 Bridging the Gap: Emerging Efforts

There is the development of initiatives that seek to fix the gap:

- ❖ **Skill Development Programs:** Skill development programs like SEIP (Skills for Employment Investment Program) government based programs to train on ICT and Vocational skills.
- ❖ **University Reforms:** The several universities have come up with English language and computer literacy as a mandatory requirement.
- ❖ **Individual Engagement Programs:** NGOs and multinational corporations conduct internships and job skills based programs as an effort to get the students ready to the job placement markets. Such efforts are commendable but yet to come anywhere near the number of graduates.

Conclusion of Section

The difference between studies and the labor market in Bangladesh indicates the system frailty of education and employment market. Academics which is laden with rote and orientation towards theory do not equip students to work in the job market or to clear competitive tests. This has led to scenarios whereby graduates spend years studying and taking exams that do not relate to their subjects, all the time wasting human potential. The mismatch does not only lead to unemployment, but also causes social and psychological problems to the youth. Until the academic education is redesigned in view of the demands of labor markets and until the job tests are upgraded, to emphasize expertise in subjects and practical abilities, this mechanism will keep dragging Bangladesh backwards in its development.

Chapter 6: Socio-Economic and Psychological Dimensions

The association between academic research and professional tests in the case of Bangladesh cannot be informed without considering the social-economic background of students as well as the psychological effect of the system towards their lives. Adding to the academic-job mismatch, these aspects emphasize on how economic status, expectations of the family, and mental conditions influence the experiences of graduates.

6.1 Socio-Economic Inequalities in Education and Employment

Social and economic divide is also critical in ensuring that individuals are successful in their academic courses and in employment examination papers.

- ❖ **Urban Vs. Rural Divide:** Urban students have an increased access to good school, universities, coaching institute and online resources as compared to rural students who lack basic amenities and access to networks.
- ❖ **Private and Public Institutions:** The modern curricula and ICT training as well as exposure to the English language offered by the private universities has placed their graduates at an advantage in the job market. The internalities of public universities may be prestigious but not very rich in resources and updated syllabi.
- ❖ **Financial Barriers:** Competitive exams preparation also needs funds to take coaching classes, purchase books and sometimes years to study full-time without an income. The poor students cannot afford these expenses, which act as a hindrance to equal chance. In such a way, academic merit is not the only factor that predetermines the employment results but socio-economic privilege.

6.2 Coaching Culture and Economic Exploitation

A parallel economy has also been established around job examinations with the number of coaching centers that have been established in Dhaka, Chittagong, and other cities.

- ❖ **Addiction to Coaching:** BCS or bank preparers have the most common problem of feeling that they cannot succeed without coaching in some expensive institution.
- ❖ **Economic Pressure:** Families spend enormous money on coaching and even sell their home or take loans in order to get a child through exams.
- ❖ **Commercialization of education:** Coaching schools run on a batch of fear of failure and has commercialized the job preparation business to a profit making industry. Such system promotes inequality since students with privilege can afford and repeat and train more, whereas underprivileged students are left behind.

6.3 Family and Social Expectations

Students are under great pressure to pass not only academic studies but also during examinations on getting a job.

- ❖ **Parental Pressure:** A family usually gauges the worth of a child by judging on the ability to obtain a government job.
- ❖ **Marriage Prospects:** Marriage prospects are also high in Bangladesh particularly in rural context where jobs in the government sector work miraculously in boosting marriage prospects increasing pressure on graduates.
- ❖ **Social Status:** Inability to pass the exams is seen as individual failure and becomes a basis of personal stigma and social isolation. This social norm makes academic research a contest not of knowledge but employment-related reward.

6.4 Psychological Stress and Mental Health

These psychological consequences are compounded by the impact together of academic-job mismatches, unemployment, and family expectations.

- ❖ **Stress and Anxiety:** The inability, especially when preparing on a long-term basis, to get assured results, causes anxiety among students.
- ❖ **Depression:** A failed result in exam over and over again can cause depression, loss of interest, and clinical depressions. Cases of suicide are reported by the Bangladeshi media in situations where

unsuccessful job seekers became frustrated and desperate. Mental health is another aspect that has been stayed up within the education and employment sector in Bangladesh and many people are left alone to fend themselves.

6.5 Gendered Experiences of Socio-Psychological Pressure

Socio-economic and psychological effects do not affect everyone the same; women are particularly disadvantaged. In conservative families, the women may not be permitted to relocate to towns to prepare exams, or attend higher learning institutions.

- ❖ **Family Pressures:** Women have other priorities in life such as marriage and they will have less time to spend in doing long-term studies and examinations.
- ❖ **Burden on the Household:** Female graduates doing their thesis also have to take care of the household on top of the pressure they already undergo due to their gender. So, the overlap of gender, social norms and economic classes leaves women at a disadvantage in the system.

6.6 Opportunity Costs of Exam-Centric Culture

The employment culture in the country that is exam-driven has far reaching some socio-economic implications to the country.

- ❖ **Wasted Potential in Youth:** Each year a range of thousands of graduates lose years of their young lives waiting to undertake examinations, rather than do gainful employment or entrepreneurship.
- ❖ **Economic Delay:** This refers to the case in which graduates stay unemployed until late twenties or early thirties to their disadvantage and economic disadvantage to their countries.
- ❖ **Migration Aspirations:** A majority of students are frustrated by incessant failures in the examinations and dream of working in foreign lands leading to brain drain. Therefore, due to the over-emphasis on job examinations the human resource development in Bangladesh is indirectly compromised.

6.7 Coping Strategies of Students

Even amid negative responses, students devise ways of dealing with the social-economic and psychological burden:

- ❖ **Support Groups:** Students form groups that often study together and share their resources and encourage each other.
- ❖ **Religious and Cultural Practices:** Most students use religion and spirituality as coping skills in a time of stress.
- ❖ **Alternative Careers:** In the event of failing the exam as many as six times, some unsuccessful candidates end up as teachers, freelancing or starting their own small businesses. These strategies are short-term measures, which are not a solution of systemic problems.

6.8 Policy and Institutional Responses

Other institutional governmental attempts are in order to tackle the socio-economic as well as psychological issues:

- ❖ **Scholarships and Stipends:** There are programs that assist poor students but such coverage is limited.
- ❖ **Mental Health Services:** A couple of universities have instituted counseling services but not many students can seek help because of the stigma.
- ❖ **Skill Dev. Initiatives:** The government plans to widen skills scope of the job market through their initiatives such as SEIP that will make government employments less reliant on govt. job examinations. Nevertheless, these initiatives are rather superficial and disjointed in their effects of addressing fundamental problems.

6.9 Comparative Insights

Other nations have lessons to offer Bangladesh as far as managing socioeconomic and psychological realms are concerned: The same coaching dependence is relevant in India but is being overcome by the rising privatization of jobs.

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- ❖ **South Korea:** The government has spent a great deal on the mental health programs that can address the mental strain experienced by students undergoing examinations.
 - ❖ **Malaysia:** Public-private partnerships help in ensuring that the graduates get absorbed in industries much faster so that they do not rely on exams. Bangladesh can adopt some of these practices so that more inclusive education-to-employment pathways are developed.

Conclusion of Section

The socio-economic and psychological aspects show that, the problems of schooling and job examinations in Bangladesh go beyond curricula and employment systems. Disparities in prosperity, the city-state divide, and access to resources become the determinant in the stratum of success, with added weight of family expectations and cultural prestige. The psychological impact in terms of stress, anxiety, and depression is representative of the devastating consequence of an exam-driven framework. Unless socio-economic inequalities are closed and the mental health practitioner is a priority, the risk is that Bangladesh could lose not only its educated young but could, in addition, feed frustration and underemployment.

Chapter 7: Case Studies and Statistical Analysis

The discussion of realities of academic studies and job examinations in Bangladesh can only be empirical with not only theoretical discussion. Case studies and statistics provide glimpses of the lived lives of students, the struggles and issues as well as the trends that they experience within various socio-economic and education backgrounds. To emphasize the lack of employability of academically-educated citizens in the country, this part includes secondary data (concerned with government reports and research surveys and media reports) as well as case examples.

7.1 Graduate Unemployment in Bangladesh: A Statistical Overview

Although there is a stable growth in higher education, it is clear that Bangladesh has what can only be termed as a paradox of increasing number of graduates but lack of sufficient professional openings.

- ❖ Youth unemployment rate 15-29: shows a higher figure in comparison to the rate of unemployment in the entire population at 10.6 and 4.3 respectively (BBS, 2022).
- ❖ An estimation by a World Bank (2020) report has shown that almost 47 percent of university graduates are unemployed in the first one to two years upon completion.
- ❖ Mismatch in skills: Employers complain that graduates are really poor in area of communication skills, ICT literacy and the ability to solve problems even though they may have obtained degrees. The BCS has been reported to receive over 350,000 candidates per session yet less than 3,000 candidates (less than 1%) are selected. These statistics explain the sinister challenges of competition and inequality in the job market.

7.2 Case Study 1: A Public University Graduate Preparing for BCS

Rafiq is alumni of Dhaka university where he completed his Masters in Political Science in 2019. And though he did very well academically (First Class), he could not get a job. It took Rafiq three years to make all the preparations to take the BCS exam and he has spent more than 200,000 taka funding coaching classes, text books and boarding in Dhaka. His parents lived in a rural region and they invested their money on his schooling hoping that he would obtain a government job. It has been reported that Rafiq suffers some depression and a lack of confidence after failing three times in a row, but feels the pressure to keep training due to social and family pressure.

- This case illuminates the fact that academic achievement is not a guarantee of getting a job and the pressure of social standards compels graduates to spend years taking job examinations.

7.3 Case Study 2: A Private University Graduate in the Banking Sector

ICT training as well as English courses were accessible to Nusrat who is a business graduate of a privately funded university. She registered in various bank examinations and after one year she landed a job. Compared to Rafiq, her family could afford coaching and digital training which

provides a comparative advantage in her case. She observed however that academic courses were not enough and she had to rely on professional training programs to provide her employability.

- This scenario illustrates how employment opportunity favors the have and disadvantages the have-nots because of social-economic privilege and access to resource allocation.

7.4 Case Study 3: Gendered Challenges in Employment

An example of the life of a woman in the academic-job examination nexus is Shamima, a graduate of the Rajshahi University. Although she had a good academic performance, her parents and siblings kept her out of Dhaka to be coached because they were afraid of public opinion. She studied at home with few facilities and was unable to pass into competitive jobs. Her family eventually set her up in marriage and she gave up on the dream of a career.

- The case expresses the limits of women in terms of mobility and career due to patriarchal rules even when they have an academic degree.

7.5 Statistical Analysis of Coaching Dependence

The emergence of the coaching business is a recognition of the commercialization of job preparations. The Centre Policy Dialogue (CPD, 2021) has conducted a survey, the results of which point to the fact that 78 percent of the BCS candidates study in one or more educational centers. Preparation costs are rated between Tk.100,000 and Tk.300,000 per year and this becomes a burden to low-income earners. The cities and middle-class families that constitute the majority of the population attend these schools and leave the poor and rural population behind due to their poor economic capability and logistics. This information proves the economic abuse and inequality in the job exam system.

7.6 Regional Comparison

In order to get a closer view of the situation in Bangladesh, it is helpful to compare it to the neighbor countries:

- ❖ **India:** The Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) examination has an average of 1 million applicants every year, with a success rate of less than 0.2 percent. The culture of coaching prevails, but in the larger privatized area more alternative employment opportunities can be obtained.
- ❖ **Sri Lanka:** Graduates experience the same problem in finding employment but government sponsored skill training initiatives make the process smooth in moving to the labour sector.
- ❖ **Malaysia:** Great responsibilities through the Public-Private Partnerships guarantee an easier transition between school and the working environment, minimizing the use of competitive employment exams. Bangladesh is like India in the degree of competition associated with examinations but there is not as wide an opportunity to take a diverse variety of jobs, such that the problem is more marked.

7.7 Quantitative Insights on Psychological Impact

A couple of questionnaires identify the psychological pressure that accompanies work tests. A research study by Bangladesh Psychological Association (2020) showed that 62 percent of the job seekers experience moderate to severe anxiety in their prolonged preparation stage. 41 percent mentioned symptoms of depression when they lost the exams again and again. Students trained to get government jobs are faced with a greater risk of stress than those who are to get into the private sector, as they feel uncertainty based and under pressure of their family. This information corresponds to the results of previous case studies, indicating the impact of mismatch between academic-job at the national level.

7.8 Employer Perspectives

The employers also have the concern regarding the preparation of the graduates:

A DCCI survey (2021) revealed that 56 percent of employers feel fresh graduates are not ready to work, particularly, in communication and ICT. Employers usually want to hire candidates who

have been trained practically and gained experience of the internship which is not achieved by the majority of academic courses. Such a disparity compels the students to focus more on external tutoring over school learning.

7.9 Lessons from Case Studies and Data

The statistical evidence together with personal stories shows that there are particular points, which should be noted:

- ❖ Academics cannot stand on their own in achieving employment.
- ❖ The socio-economic status is greatly influential in passing of job exams.
- ❖ The male roles hamper the opportunities of the female graduates.
- ❖ Coaching dependency has propagated economical exploitation and inequalities.
- ❖ Mental health crisis among the job seekers is a national problem that is under-discussed.
- ❖ There is also a dire need to change the policies so that the gap between the educational settings of academia and the job market can be narrowed.

Conclusion of Section

The case studies and the statistical analysis are there to clarify that it is not an isolated problem in Bangladesh regarding the crisis in the academic and job examination system but a systemic failure. Graduates have to wait longer, pay money, and endure emotional trauma, which hamper development in the social and economic aspect of a nation. Unless the education system is overhauled and reformed thoroughly--through improvement in the curriculum, quality training in appropriate skills, and psychological support, and through a more open process of recruitment, the cycle of educated unemployment is only set to continue.

Chapter 8: Policy Gaps and Challenges

Bangladesh has accomplished much in increasing access to education and formal employment but there exist serious policy deficits and structural barriers that constrain the gains of academic studies in employment facilitation and employability. This segment marks such strategic vacuum and shortcoming in policy and institution frameworks.

8.1 Lack of Alignment Between Education and Labor Market

- ❖ **Curriculum Mismatch:** The academic curriculum is generally not aligned with labour-market skills required by employers or employers are not satisfied with the skills imparted by the academic curriculum. An example is the university teaching focuses more on theoretical knowledge and the job examinations as well as positions available in the private sector need problem solving ability, ICT literacy, and ability to communicate.
- ❖ **Skills Gap:** There is a saturation in education enrolment policies yet little is being done to ensure education is more relevant and applicable. The consequence is the graduates coming out of school academically sound yet professionally ill equipped.

8.2 Overemphasis on Competitive Examinations

- ❖ **Centralization of Employment:** The policies have not diversified the employment routes and job in the government sectors remains the most suitable expanse to achieve stable careers.
- ❖ **The culture of exam is centric:** It encourages that mentality of dependence on coaching, loss of academic learning; and leads to socio-economic disparity. Students who belong to wealthy families gain more proportionately and the bottom of the pyramid is left behind.

8.3 Insufficient Support for Vocational and Technical Education

- ❖ **Poor TVET integration of existing policies:** There are policy initiatives regarding Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) which are not well integrated.
- ❖ **Concerns on Perception:** The reason behind non-adoption of vocational streams is due to the social stigma attributed to such streams that can otherwise provide alternative employment opportunities to students.

Resource Constraints: Shortage of funding, lack of infrastructures and trained teachers affect the efficiency of TVET programs.

8.4 Inadequate Mental Health and Counseling Services

- ❖ **Lack of Incentives to Wellbeing:** There are not many policies with regard to mental health within academic and coaching settings despite high stress levels among exam candidates.
- ❖ **Counseling Pitfalls:** Very little advice is given in the field of career planning or in counseling personality by the universities or coaching centers, which further increase stress, anxiety, and depression.

8.5 Gender Inequality in Policy Implementation

- ❖ **Low Female Turnout:** Policies have not been adequacies towards the obstacles that women face such as lack of mobility and social cultural expectations.
- ❖ **Lack of Equal Opportunity to Resources:** Female students do not have equal opportunities to access coaching centers, and internship opportunities and skill-development opportunities, which further widens gender attainment gaps.

8.6 Fragmented and Reactive Policies

- ❖ **Ad Hoc Initiatives:** Current government initiatives, i.e., SEIP (Skills for Employment Investment Program), are ad hoc in nature, and are small in scale, as well as reactive in nature.
- ❖ **Poor Co-ordination:** The Ministries of Education, Public Service Commission and labor related agencies lack coordination thereby limits effectiveness of the policies.
- ❖ **Evaluation Deficit:** No high-quality monitoring and evaluation of programs to determine what impact they have on graduate employability, and job exam success.

8.7 Summary

There are educational and employment policy gaps as well as challenges in Bangladesh that combine to create academic-job mismatching. These are curriculum irrelevance, excessive use of competitive exams, undeveloped vocational education, non-existent support mental health support, inequalities along the gender lines, and the lack of a unified implementation process. Unless the systemic inefficiencies are addressed comprehensively, coordinated and inclusively through reforms, the potential of Bangladeshi graduates and human capital development of the nation will continue to suffer.

Chapter 9: Recommendations and Way Forward

To overcome the gap between the research done by the scholars and actual situation at the workplace, in Bangladesh, it is important to embrace multifaceted changes in the areas of education, employment, and socio-economic policies. This section reports some of the most important recommendations that are put forward to improve employability, bring education and labor market needs into harmony, and to reduce the socio-psychological pressure on graduates.

9.1 Curriculum Reform and Skill Development

- ❖ **The Alignment of the Academic Curriculum to the Market Demands:** Colleges need to have a consideration of practical elements, skills and knowledge. Curriculum must incorporate ICT, thinking skills, problem-solving, communication and entrepreneurship.
- ❖ **Non-Optional Internship Programs:** Internship in the relevant industry should be required in all the undergraduate programs and graduate programs. Internships may be used to fill the gap between theory and practice by giving the student some practical experience.
- ❖ **Unending Curriculum Revisions:** Create a national curriculum review committee with industries experts in order to ensure that the courses are relevant to the changes in the labor market.

9.2 Reform of Competitive Job Examinations

- ❖ **Modernize Content of Examination:** Include competencies that are skills based like analytical thinking, problem solving and technical competencies and not rote learning.
- ❖ **Efficient Digital and Transparent Processes:** Introduce examination systems through the internet in order to reduce corruption and provide fairness.

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- ❖ **Pathways to Diversity Employment:** Decrease on the overdependence of employment in government by encouraging the non-government, entrepreneurship and craft careers. Promote hiring practices that give more importance to practical abilities and internships as well as subject-related competencies.

9.3 Expansion and Strengthening of Vocational and Technical Education

- ❖ **Market TVET courses:** Support an increase in investments in Technical and Vocational Education and Training, with an emphasis on rural locations. Create industry specific programs that meet industrial needs (manufacturing, IT, healthcare and services).
- ❖ **Increase Social Awareness:** Such behavior should be changed by creation of destigmatization campaigns that show the importance of vocational education in development of a sustainable career.
- ❖ **Public-Private Partnerships:** Encourage industries to share with vocational institutions to give training, apprenticeship and job placements guaranteed.

9.4 Addressing Socio-Economic Inequalities

- ❖ **Social funding and scholarships to disadvantaged:** Increase the number of scholarships, stipends and low interest loans given to the students who belong to the rural and low income families in order to prepare the student academically and in terms of study in examinations.
- ❖ **Ability to Access Coaching and Resources:** Create governmental coaching centers or online resources where the students can take coaching services in case they do not have enough money to spend on them.
- ❖ **Regional Development:** Strengthen educational facilities in the rural and semi-urban regions to minimise education access and job inequalities.

9.5 Gender-Sensitive Interventions

- ❖ **Foster Female Enrollment:** Make coaching facilities, vocational training, and shipping-out opportunities to be safe and accessible to women.
Promote programs which allow women to juggle housework and schoolwork, or preparation.
- ❖ **Awareness Campaigns:** Major community-based campaigns against cultural constraints of women movements and career ambitions.

9.6 Mental Health and Career Counseling

- ❖ **Institutionalized Support:** Organize special centers of career counseling and psychological assistance in the universities and consultative organizations.
- ❖ **Early Start Programs:** Organize stress levels, time management and goal setting workshops and seminars among students.
- ❖ **National Awareness:** Carry out awareness raising initiatives to ensure that mental problems regarding job seekers preparing to take examinations is not stigmatised.
- ❖ **Combined Policy Framework:** Coordinate the Ministries of Education, Labor and Public Service Commission to provide consistent policy in actions.
- ❖ **Standard Monitoring and Evaluation:** Institute nationwide evaluation tools to track graduate employment, test performance and program success.
- ❖ **Evidence-Based Policymaking:** Use data provided by employment surveys, case studies, and labor market analyses to shape the interventions that will fill in the most urgent gaps.

9.7 Encouraging Entrepreneurship and Private Sector Engagement

- ❖ **Entrepreneurial Education:** Bring in entrepreneurship courses in universities and incubation centers to provide alternative career sources.
- ❖ **Industry Collaboration:** Advocate the separate recruitment of private companies in universities on basis of merit, skills and potential and not on basis of examinations.
- ❖ **Fund Startup and SMEs:** Government policies must include funding, mentorship and training to youth led start-ups; decrease pressure on the traditional job exams.

Conclusion of Section

The path forward in Bangladesh is to implement a comprehensive approach and at the same time cover the areas mentioned above in order to generate solutions towards the issue of relevance in curriculum, the overhaul of job examination reforms, skills enhancement, socio-economic inequalities, and woman vs. men disparities, and the establishment of mental health provisions. The recommendations presented by this paper will enable Bangladesh to overcome the discrepancies in academia and workplace to emerge with a workforce competitive in the global context. This will require a coordinated, evidence-based, and inclusive strategy that would enable ensuring that its graduates have both degrees and the competencies, resilience, and access to opportunities to succeed in the new labor market.

Chapter 10: Conclusion

The review of literature and career assessment in Bangladesh demonstrates that there is a gap between academic studies in the country and outcome in the workplace. Bangladesh has increased in enrollment and degrees conferred by higher education over the past decades, but this growth is not associated with any real employment opportunities to graduates. The prevailing culture of competitive-exam-based selection of employees, especially governmental employees, has amounted to the development of an exam-centrism that tends to underrate academic performance, functional competence and innovation.

10.1 Key Findings

❖ **A false match between academic learning and job market requirements:**

University curricula have a heavy bias toward theoretical subjects and make its students ill equipped on the administrative and skills oriented competitive examination scenario and subsequently at the job placements in the private sector arena.

❖ **Socio-Economic Disparities:** During job examinations, affluence, the availability of educational resources and privately tutoring massively determine success. Rural/Low income students are seriously disadvantaged, which leads to inequality.

❖ **Gender-Specific Challenges:** The female students face several limitations imposed, such as limited mobility, socio-cultural norms, and access to coaching, which reducing the female representation to competitive labor areas.

❖ **Psychological and Social Pressure:** The long preparations to take the exams and expectations of family and society lead to stress, anxiety, and mental problems in the graduates.

❖ **Policy Gaps:** Broken policies, growingly public out-of-date curricula, and lacking vocational training and mental health assistance increase the mismatch between the academic and the employment world.

10.2 Implications Synthesis

According to the study, although the education system in Bangladesh can generate academically successful graduates, it does not provide them with the required skills and chances of succeeding in the jobs. Such job tests, though they may be aimed at being meritocratic entry passages, tend to enforce socio-economic inequality and generate mental pressures. The cumulative result is an ill-equipped, unused and often disenchanted workforce.

10.3 Path Forward

This gap between academic research and employment should be bridged on a whole-scale basis:

- ❖ Making curriculum holistic including skills, ICT and soft skills.
- ❖ Restructured Competitive Examinations with focus on ability test and open contest.
- ❖ The Expanded Vocational and Technical education that would offer alternative careers.
- ❖ Socio-Economic and Gender-Sensitive Policies which guarantee equal access to preparation resources.
- ❖ Mental Health and Career Counseling to help students attain a healthy psychology and make informed career choices.

To implement these solutions, co-ordinated policy initiatives, collaboration among different learning institutions, government and the private sector, and a cultural change in the attitude towards rewarding skill, innovation added to academic performance are necessary.

10.4 Final Remarks

Bangladesh is on a crossroad towards human capital development. The future of the nation is determined by how well we can match the education with the conditions of the job market, how we can decrease the nature of the inequality, and nurture a labor able to be skillful, robust, and creative. The gap in eliminating the academic-job examination is not only a concern related to employment rates; it also symbolizes a social equity-economic productivity-national progress issue. Through reform and strategic planning, Bangladesh can transition the education system out of an exam-based system into a dynamic natural skills focused system that can keep up with the demands of the 21 st century.



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