

BANGLADESH



TERTIARY EDUCATION

SABER Country Report
2017

Policy Dimensions

Status

1. Vision for Tertiary Education

There is no overall vision for tertiary education in Bangladesh. For the TVET sector, there is an established vision, while strategies for the universities and colleges are under development.



2. Regulatory Framework

There is extensive legislation that covers public and private providers, and includes key guiding principles. Aspects of the legislation are somewhat outdated, and should be revised.



3. Governance of System and Institutions

The governance system for universities is well articulated. Universities have substantial autonomy, although colleges and TVET institutions have low levels of autonomy. The politicization of tertiary education institutions is a key risk for the sector.



4. Financing

Public resources cover recurrent and some capital expenditure. Funding mostly follows historic patterns and it is not linked to performance indicators. Existing scholarship programs for disadvantaged students could be extended.



5. Quality Assurance

Initial steps towards establishing quality assurance cells have been taken in universities. The Parliament has recently passed an Accreditation Council Act. Quality assurance is lacking in the college sector. While data on the system exists (HEMIS), it does not cover all tertiary education institutions, and it is not clear whether this data is used for policy purposes.



6. Relevance to Social and Economic Needs

Although there are documented concerns about the relevance of tertiary education, there is substantial policy to strengthen economic development, to foster research, development and innovation and to strengthen environmental protection through tertiary education.



Introduction

SABER-Tertiary Education is a diagnostic tool to assess how education systems perform and to identify priorities for reforms at the national level. It is part of the World Bank’s Systems Approach for Better Education Results (SABER), which aims to benchmark education systems at the country level.

SABER-TE focuses on six dimensions of tertiary education policy (see Box). The general idea is that a strong policy environment is a prerequisite to better-performing tertiary education institutions, including universities, colleges, and technical and vocational institutes. The diagnostic tool aims to help countries assess best practices, and to diagnose which policies need urgent attention. For some policy areas, countries are scored on specific “policy levers” to help make concrete recommendations for improvement.

Each of the six policy dimensions can contribute to the outcomes of tertiary education systems, although they work together in a holistic way. By matter of illustration, a vision without an effective governance structure is just a collection of ideas that will not be implemented; a well-designed governance structure without a vision is a meaningless bureaucracy.

The World Bank has identified best practices in each of these dimensions in a review of the world’s most effective tertiary education systems (World Bank 2016). The best practice indicators used for scoring are made available in the appendix of this report. Countries are scored and then benchmarked on these policy dimensions with four different scores:

1. **Latent:** this topic has received too little attention;
2. **Emerging:** there are some instances of good practice;
3. **Established:** there is systemic good practice; and
4. **Advanced:** the country follows international best practice and is an example for others.

SABER uses an extensive questionnaire to collect data on the policy environment for tertiary education. The questionnaire is populated through an analysis of the most recent versions of relevant legislation, policy documents and reports on the sector. The SABER team also carried out fieldwork in Bangladesh between March 4 and 17, 2017 with visits to several universities, government agencies, and other stakeholders. After data collection is complete, the policy dimensions are scored on a rubric (see Appendix 1 for a full overview of the rubric). Both the answers to the questionnaire and the rubric scores are available from the SABER website (<http://saber.worldbank.org>).

This report proceeds as follows. First, we describe the context of the tertiary education system in Bangladesh. We then proceed with scoring the six policy dimensions with descriptions followed by a conclusion with a few general observations about tertiary education in Bangladesh.

Six policy dimensions of successful tertiary education systems (World Bank 2016):

1. A strong vision for tertiary education
2. A clear regulatory framework
3. Modern governance and university autonomy
4. Financing that promotes performance and equity
5. Independent quality assurance
6. Relevance to the country’s social and economic needs

Context

Bangladesh faces an optimistic scenario in terms of social and economic development. It is one of the world’s most populous countries with an estimated 160 million people. The country has the tenth highest population density in the world, with 1,237 individuals per square kilometer of land area (World Bank 2015a). With a per capita income of US\$1,409 in 2016, it is well above the threshold for lower-middle-income countries. In recent years, driven by manufacturing and services, its GDP rose by 6.5 percent on average since 2010, with an officially reported growth rate of 7.05 percent in the 2016 fiscal year. Progress has continued to be made in reducing extreme poverty and boosting shared prosperity through human development and employment generation. Poverty incidence¹ declined from 44.2 percent in 1991 to 18.5 percent in 2010 (latest available poverty data) and is projected to have further declined to 14.9 percent in 2016. Bangladesh’s performance against the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) is impressive compared with that of other countries in the South Asia Region on most indicators.

In this context of growth, it is no surprise that Bangladesh’s tertiary education system is growing quickly and is already vast (see Table 1). The total number of students in tertiary education reached 2.84 million in 2015, up from 1.60 million in 2010 (BANBEIS 2016). At current rates, the share of the youth population with a tertiary education degree is projected to rise from 11 percent in 2010 to 20 percent by 2035.² This is reflected in the growth of tertiary education institutions. Between 2010 and 2015, the number of tertiary education institutions grew by over 60 percent from 1,748 to 2,893. This growth was mostly in the private sector, which increased from 1,478 institutions to 2,417 institutions (by 2015). Public tertiary education institutions grew at a smaller rate of 23% from 306 to 376 institutions in 2015.

Table 1: Number of Institutions and Students by Subsector, 2015

	Public institutions	Private institutions	Total institutions	Students (millions)
Universities	37	85	122	0.87
Colleges	265	1,494	1,759	1.7
TVET institutions	74	938	1,012	0.27
Total	376	2,417	2893	2.84

Source: BANBEIS 2016, BANBEIS 2011

As shown in Table 1, the tertiary education system in Bangladesh is comprised of three distinct subsectors: (1) the university subsector, (2) the college subsector, and (3) the technical and vocational education and training (TVET) subsector. Each of these can be further subdivided into a public and a private. Each subsector is governed by different rules and regulatory bodies and faces different challenges on the key dimensions of governance.

The university subsector consists of teaching and research universities that offer undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral degrees. Public universities can be either research or teaching oriented, whereas private universities are typically teaching oriented. The sector accounts for 872,891 students studying at over 37 public and 85 private universities (BANBEIS 2016). Each public university is governed by a charter, which must be approved by Parliament. Private universities, on the other hand, are governed by the Private Universities Act, which was passed in 2010. As a whole, the university subsector is regulated primarily by the University Grants Commission (UGC), which oversees their financing, governance, and quality assurance arrangements.

¹ Based on the international poverty line of \$1.90 per capita per day. Poverty is measured on the basis of the Purchasing Power Parity exchange rate.

² Figures from the Wittgenstein Centre for Demography, <http://www.wittgensteincentre.org/en/index.htm>.

The college subsector consists of teaching-oriented colleges that offer pass degrees, honors degrees, and Masters degrees. This is by far the largest subsector, comprising 3.1 million students studying at 1,494 private colleges and 265 public colleges (as of 2015). Most colleges are affiliated with the National University, which was founded in 1992 to oversee the growing college subsector.

The TVET subsector consists of polytechnics and other TVET institutions that offer four-year diplomas at the post-secondary level. There are roughly 0.5 million students in the subsector studying at over 938 private and 74 public TVET institutions. The public TVET institutions are governed by the Directorate for Technical Education (DTE), which is part of the Ministry of Education. The curriculum and academic standards are governed by the Bangladesh Technical Education Board (BTEB), a regulatory body with some independence from the ministry. Moreover, the government has recently created a National Skills Development Council (NSDC), which is overseeing the Industry Skills Councils and industry associations; and coordinating with the broader TVET sector.

It is a challenge for policy-makers to manage such a vast tertiary education sector with many different interests. This is especially the case because the governance of these institutions is somewhat politicized (Monem & Baniamin 2010). For instance, there is evidence that political criteria play a role in the hiring and promotion of academic staff (UGC forthcoming; Transparency International Bangladesh 2016), with significant negative effects on the quality of education (Panday & Jamil 2009).

These differences also posed a practical challenge to the SABER diagnostic tool, as tertiary education is normally analyzed for the tertiary education system as a whole. This is not feasible in this case, because of the differences between universities, colleges and TVET institutes. Wherever possible, this report will try to allude to the different challenges faced by the various subsectors of the tertiary education system in Bangladesh. The only exception is policy dimension 6 (relevance), for which we have used just one overall scoring system as policies do not differ among subsectors.

The rest of this report will discuss the scores for each policy dimension in detail, starting with the vision for tertiary education.

Policy Dimension 1: Vision for Tertiary Education

Overall score: Emerging ●●○○

Universities	Emerging ●●○○
Colleges	Latent ●○○○
TVET Institutions	Advanced ●●●●

For SABER-TE, the main question to be answered as part of this dimension is whether the country in question has a vision for the tertiary education sector and whether policy-makers are willing to translate its vision into a concrete action plan. The SABER-TE instrument assesses these issues using two distinct best practice indicators, one that evaluates the existence of a recent vision or strategy for tertiary education and another that evaluates to what extent key stakeholders were involved and whether it is based on an analysis of key social and economic trends. Within this policy dimension, we analyze the three tertiary education subsectors within Bangladesh separately. **The overall score of the Vision for Tertiary Education in Bangladesh is Emerging.** The country’s vision for universities is being developed, and the work on a vision for the college system is just starting under the College Education Development Project.

For TVET, a comprehensive vision document is in place. Bangladesh does not have an overall vision for the tertiary education system.

Universities

Emerging ●●○○

Bangladesh has a long tradition of adopting national strategy documents pertaining to the university subsector. Its most recent such document is the *Strategic Plan for Higher Education in Bangladesh: 2017-2030*. This document includes the most up-to-date vision for the university subsector in Bangladesh: “To achieve excellence in higher education comparable to global standards; to establish equity and guarantee access to higher education by anyone qualified to pursue it, and to prepare the learners as ideal citizens” (UGC forthcoming, p. 36).

This vision is not included in the national legislation governing tertiary education. However, the *Strategic Plan for Higher Education in Bangladesh: 2017-2030* includes policy and program suggestions pertaining to the three key missions of higher education: (1) teaching, (2) research, and (3) service. It also mentions the importance of enhancing the quality of teaching by increasing the number of faculty members holding PhDs (UGC forthcoming, p. 80). The document proposes the creation of a National Research Council, which would be responsible for planning national research priorities, coordinating activities between different partners and funding sources, increasing the research capacity of the country, and awarding competitive research grants (UGC forthcoming, p. 83). The government has prepared a draft of a new education law, which is scheduled to be enacted in the near future.

The social mission of higher education is not excluded from the country’s national strategy documents. The *Strategic Plan for Higher Education in Bangladesh: 2006-2026* stipulated that “higher education should ensure social mobility, increased living standards, and internal and international harmony and peace, based on human rights and the principles of democracy” (UGC 2006, p. 13). Similarly, its successor, the *Strategic Plan for Higher Education in Bangladesh: 2017-2030*, mentions the importance of using higher education to meet the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals, to provide equitable education, and ensure gender parity (UGC forthcoming, p. 37).

The *Strategic Plan for Higher Education in Bangladesh: 2017-2030* encompasses both public and private institutions. The document also highlights the roles and functions played by the University Grants Commission (UGC)—the leading regulatory body for higher education in the country. The strategy document states that the role of the UGC is to improve the governance of the higher education sector. It also advocates the adoption of performance-based funding and the diversification of funding sources as well as the creation of a student loan program to increase equity (UGC forthcoming, pp. 74-79). The plan stipulates actions to enhance the quality assurance framework in the country and to facilitate the involvement of external stakeholders in the governance structures of the universities (UGC forthcoming, pp. 32-33). Lastly, the document views higher education as an instrument to achieve socioeconomic development (UGC forthcoming, pp. 43-44). Representatives of key stakeholders were involved in drafting the strategic plans (UGC forthcoming, p. 29).

Colleges

Latent ●○○○

The vision for universities set out in the *Strategic Plan for Higher Education in Bangladesh: 2017-2030* also covers the National University. At present, this Strategic Plan does not include any references to colleges.

Instead, the College Education Development Project aims to develop a separate strategic plan for the college subsector (World Bank 2016b). A strategy planning committee will be created under the Ministry of Education to oversee the process. The vision will be broken down into six areas: namely, (1) vision, size and scope (2) access and equity, (3) quality and relevance, (4) management of the college system, (5) science, technology, and ICT, and (6) financing of college education. Once finalized, the strategy should be implemented over the next fifteen years.

TVET Institutions

Advanced ●●●●

The recent National Skills Development Policy (NSDP) published by the NSDC sets out the wider vision for the TVET sector in the coming years (NSDC, 2011a). The NSDP argues that the TVET sector is diverse, with inconsistent quality standards. It proposes the creation of a National Technical and Vocational Qualifications Framework (NTVQF) to regulate qualification levels. It also suggests that qualifications should be based on competency profiles, defined in collaboration with industry. Moreover, it proposes a quality assurance system for skills in the country. Following the adoption of the NSDP, a detailed action plan has been agreed to implement the vision (NSDC, 2011b).

The *Seventh Five-Year Plan FY2016-FY2020. Accelerating Growth, Empowering Citizens* (GEDPC 2015) also includes a strategy for skills development in Bangladesh pertaining to the TVET subsector that is shared and supported by the government, industrial workers, and civil society. The document states: “Skills development in Bangladesh will be recognized and supported by the government and industry as a coordinated and well-planned strategy for national and enterprise development. The reformed skills development system will empower all individuals to access decent employment and ensure Bangladesh’s competitiveness in the global market through improved skills, knowledge, and qualifications that are recognized for quality across the globe.” (GEDPC 2015, p. 604).

The vision for TVET has similar levels of detail and specificity as the vision for the universities and college including references to quality assurance processes, funding, lifelong learning, and teaching. The vision is also accompanied by explicit links to social trends such as employability and gender disparity (GEDPC, pp. 604-609).

Policy Dimension 2: Regulatory Framework

Overall score: Established ●●●○

Universities	Advanced ●●●●
Colleges	Established ●●●○
TVET Institutions	Established ●●●○

SABER-TE attempts to measure whether the tertiary education system is based on an appropriate regulatory framework that supports the work of tertiary education providers to the benefit of students and the public. This policy dimension includes questions like what types of higher education provision are supported, the extent to which buffer bodies are used, and the extent to which regulation explicitly mentions key principles. **The overall score for Regulatory Framework in Bangladesh is Established.**

There is a substantial body of legislation and lower level regulation that applies to tertiary education in Bangladesh. The following list provides the most important pieces of legislation:

- The *University Grants Commission of Bangladesh Order 1973*, amended in 1978

- The *Private Universities Act No. 35 of 2010*
- The *Accreditation Council Act, of 2017*
- The *National University Act of 1992*, which governs the National University and TEIs affiliated with the National University.
- Other individual University Acts, which provide the legal basis to function as a university in Bangladesh.
- The *Technical Education Act of 1967*, which established the Bangladesh Technical Education Board (BTEB), the body that oversees technical and vocational education in Bangladesh.

The provision of distance and online education in Bangladesh is subject to the general regulatory system for tertiary education. The Bangladesh Open University is the only tertiary online education providers in the country. The university is regulated by the Open University Act of 1992 (GoB 1992b).

While there is a significant amount of legislation, Bangladesh does not have one comprehensive law for its tertiary education sector, not even a single umbrella legislation for all public universities and the need for such a law is mentioned in the *Strategic Plan for Higher Education in Bangladesh 2006-2026* (UGC 2006, p. 22). Some of the legislative acts governing tertiary education were enacted more than 10 years ago.

There are some inconsistencies among the key principles for universities, colleges, and TVET institutions included in the regulatory framework. This is partly because the laws governing the three subsectors vary in terms of breadth and levels of detail. For example, there are multiple strategic plans for the university subsector that include guiding principles such as equity, quality, accountability, transparency, and autonomy (UGC forthcoming, p.27). For the TVET subsector, the National Skills Development Policy stipulates that the Bangladesh Technical Education Board will “create and support an Equity Advisory Committee to monitor and address issues related to under-represented and disadvantaged groups” (Ministry of Education 2011). The policy references multiple key principles, including the need for quality assurance, and the need to preserve the autonomy of institutions. The regulatory framework for colleges is much less extensive and contains fewer references to key regulatory principles. However, the *1992 National University Law* refers to the need to improve the quality of instruction (GoB 1992a).

Universities

Advanced ●●●●

The first question to ask is whether the regulatory framework covers the establishment, market entry and operation of both public and private providers. Indeed, the regulatory regime in Bangladesh includes provisions that regulate and monitor the establishment and market entry of new *public* universities. The 1973 law stipulates that the UGC is responsible for advising the government “on the establishment of new universities or on proposals for the expansion of the existing universities.” (GoB 1973, p. 3225). New universities in Bangladesh are established by the national government through laws passed by Parliament (UGC 2006, p.30). The 1973 Act empowers the UGC to monitor the activities of public institutions by examining their development plans, collecting statistical information, and evaluating their academic programs. The legislative framework pertaining to the entry of new public providers is somewhat outdated, as it was last updated more than 10 years ago.

The entry and operation of *private* universities is regulated by the Private Universities Act of 2010, and the government through the Ministry of Education must grant permission for a new private institution to be established. The ministry initially grants provisional permission to new providers pending their

fulfilment of multiple governance and infrastructure-related criteria (GoB 2010, pp.3-4). It then grants permanent operational permission after the subsequent criteria are met by institutions at the request of the government (GoB 2010, p. 6). The ministry can revoke this operational permission if the institution does not meet the regulations or if any corruption is detected. The UGC Act of 1973 and its amendments in 1998 and 1983 assign responsibilities to further monitor private institutions to UGC. The *Strategic Plan for Higher Education in Bangladesh: 2017-2030* recommends the creation of a quality assurance unit, which the UGC has recently established through the Higher Education Quality Enhancement Project (HEQEP) supported by the World Bank. This unit is responsible for monitoring the quality of both public and private institutions (UGC forthcoming, p. 6). In the future, this function will most likely be taken over by the Accreditation Council, following the adoption of the Accreditation Council Act in March 2017. While the regulatory framework does not distinguish between for-profit, not-for-profit, and cross-border tertiary education providers, the regulatory framework pertains to all types of private institutions (GoB 2010, p. 2).

The UGC in turn is monitored by the Ministry of Education. As per the *University Grants Commission Act of 1973*, the UGC needs to submit an audit report and an activity report annually to the national government (GoB 1973, p. 3226).

Colleges

Established ●●●○

National regulations allow for the establishment and operation of short-term colleges and institutes or non-university institutions. Most tertiary-level colleges in the country operate under the umbrella of the National University, which was established in 1992. At its inception, the institution was “entrusted with the responsibility for all matters relating to, and the administration of, colleges” (GoB 1992a, para. 1). As such, the National University is responsible for regulating the entry of colleges and for monitoring their activity, and must submit an annual report and an annual financial audit report to the UGC (GoB 1992a).

TVET Institutions

Established ●●●○

As discussed above, most public TVET institutions are governed by the Directorate of Technical Education (DTE) and the private TVET institutions are affiliated with the Bangladesh Technical Education Board (BTEB). The curriculum and academic standards are governed by the BTEB, which was established by the Technical Education Act of 1967 with some independence from the ministry. The BTEB is responsible for implementing the National Skills Quality Assurance System and the new National Technical and Vocational Qualifications Framework as well as for strengthening the inspection and evaluation procedures for TVET institutions (DTE 2014, p. 48). Both the BTEB and the DTE are closely monitored by the Ministry of Education (GoB 1967).

Policy Dimension 3: Governance of System and Institutions

Overall score: Emerging ●●○○

Lever	Policy Level 1: Articulation	Policy Level 2: Autonomy
Lever score	Emerging ●●○○	Emerging ●●○○
Universities	-	Established ●●●○
Colleges	-	Latent ●○○○
TVET Institutions	-	Emerging ●●○○

The goal of this policy dimension is to assess whether the tertiary education system has adequate structures, policies, and processes in place to enable tertiary education institutions to operate efficiently and effectively. The questionnaire also asks whether the main tertiary education authority at the central level has sufficient staff and resources to guide, support, and monitor tertiary education institutions. This dimension is comprised of two distinct policy levers: (1) articulation and (2) institutional autonomy. **The overall score of the governance dimension of tertiary education in Bangladesh is Emerging.**

Policy Lever: Articulation

Emerging ●●○○

The first policy lever included in this dimension relates to articulation, which is the ability to integrate and manage a diversified tertiary education system. It aims to discover the extent to which the regulatory framework enables the different kinds of tertiary education institutions to coexist and collaborate. **On this policy lever, Bangladesh scored as emerging.**

The regulatory framework distinguishes between the functions of universities, colleges and TVET institutions. While the distinct functions are not clearly specified, various documents point towards the fact that universities have full autonomy when compared to colleges and TVET institutes (World Bank 2014). Also, teaching functions differ between universities and TVET institutions. The aim of the curriculum of universities is to “inspire the creativity and liberal thinking of learners” (Ministry of Education 2010). Meanwhile, the distinct teaching mission of non-universities, specifically TVET institutions, is specified in a separate regulatory regime and set of qualifications (DTE 2014). According to the *National Education Policy 2010*, one of the main missions of the tertiary education sector is to build skilled manpower to accelerate the economic development of the country (Ministry of Education 2010).

There is substantial collaboration between specialized institutions, particularly among agriculture, medical, engineering, and between departments (e.g. social sciences, law, business studies, etc.). Moreover, the *National Education Policy 2010* stipulates the importance of enabling collaboration between engineering institutions to create better apprenticeship programs (Ministry of Education 2010).

One aspect of collaboration is not clearly articulated in policy, namely student transfer between different types of institutions. An example of such policies is the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System in the European Bologna Process, which enables students to freely transfer between any type of institution inside the European Higher Education Area, by recognizing their prior experience. While students in Bangladesh can transfer between institutions depending on seats and the passing of the admission test, no formal procedures are in place to recognize the existing credit. The procedures enabling students to transfer between institutions are not clearly formulated at the policy level, except for those

governing transfers from TVET institutions to universities. The *National Education Policy 2010* specifies that students with a Secondary School Certificate are eligible for admission to various diploma programs and students with technical diplomas are eligible for admission to Bachelors programs in the same kind of subjects (Ministry of Education 2010). The BTEB is responsible for setting standards for the admission and transfer of students in the TVET subsector (World Bank 2006, p. 15). As colleges have no quality assurance framework, there is no procedure for students to transfer between colleges and from colleges to other types of institution (World Bank 2014, p. 25). The development of a national quality assurance procedure and the implementation of the new National Technical and Vocational Qualification Framework (DTE 2014, pp. 50-51) should make it easier for students to transfer between institutions.

Finally, the tertiary education system has no enabling governance structure that would facilitate collaboration between primary, secondary and tertiary education. Such formal collaboration could take the place of policy dialogue between different ministries, deliberative networks of schools, institutes, colleges and universities or policy plans on the alignment of different kinds of qualifications and entry routes.

Policy Lever: Institutional Autonomy

Emerging ●●○○

Tertiary education institutions need autonomy to fulfill their missions. The aim of this policy lever is to find out how different types of autonomy manifest themselves within the system. The types of institutional autonomy assessed by the SABER-TE tool for both public and private institutions are (1) the ability to negotiate performance standards, (2) academic autonomy to set curricula, (3) staffing autonomy, (4) governance autonomy, and (5) financial autonomy including the freedom to diversify funding sources. **On this policy lever, Bangladesh is considered emerging.** In the case of this policy lever, we discuss universities, colleges, and the TVET institutions separately, noting any relevant distinctions between the public and the private sector.

There is one general reflection about institutional autonomy. Performance-based funding is not in place for either public or private institutions in Bangladesh (see also the next policy dimension on financing). This means that universities, colleges, and TVET institutions are unable to negotiate any performance targets with the government or with their regulatory agencies. The *Strategic Plan for Higher Education: 2017-2030* recommends the introduction of performance-based funding in which the funding allocated to institutions is dependent on outcomes such as enrollment rates, retention rates, and completion rates for courses and degrees as opposed to the historic way of allocating funds based on fixed costs (UGC forthcoming, p. 13).

Universities

Established ●●●○

The degree of *academic autonomy* held by public and private universities is mixed. As stipulated in various university statutes, public universities have the autonomy to create their own curriculum, to decide on the number of students to admit, to organize competitive admission procedures, to evaluate programs and teaching methodologies, and to grant degrees, titles, and certificates. The courses and curriculum offered by each university as well as its diploma requirements and admission process are prescribed by their individual charters (Dhaka University Order 1973). Similarly, any officer of the university authorized

by the Syndicate³ or Vice-Chancellor⁴ can inspect the academic instruction provided within the university or its affiliated colleges. In addition, the national government does not infringe on the ability of public universities to organize internships and practical training or conduct research. Private universities have a significant amount of academic autonomy but are also subject to government oversight. They are able to design their own curricula but both the design of the curriculum and any changes to its degree programs need to be approved by the UGC (GoB 2010, pp. 12-19). The UGC approves most such requests, except for isolated cases when the private universities are known not to have the capacity or infrastructure to open new programs. The academic structure of private universities is prescribed by the 2010 Private Universities Act. Private universities have the autonomy to conduct their own admission procedures as well as to determine how many students to admit (GoB 2010, p. 11), and are under little regulatory pressure to promote equity or affirmative action (GoB 2010, p. 6). The Private Universities Act also enables private universities to create internal units responsible for ensuring the quality of their education. The Act requires the annual reports of private universities to provide information about the standards of the education that they provide (GoB 2010, p. 20) and to allocate a specific fraction of their budget towards research purposes (GoB 2010, p. 6). Private universities are able to award degrees after receiving permission from the UGC (Alam et al 2007, p. 39) and to include internships and training in their curricula.

Public universities also have considerable autonomy over *staffing*. Subject to government approval, they can create new academic and non-academic posts, can hire and fire academic and non-academic staff, and define the conditions of their service (Dhaka University Order 1973). However, they do not have the power to set salaries or offer performance pay to their academic staff, because these staff are public servants so their salaries are set by the government. Nevertheless, there are systems through which academic staff can receive top-ups to their salaries. One such system is the admission exam system, which leads to considerable income for academic staff, particularly in the most prestigious institutions. In practice, there are documented cases where institutional staff autonomy was not respected (TIB, 2016). There have been anecdotal reports of political pressures and criteria playing a role in the recruitment and promotion of academic staff to public universities in Bangladesh (UGC forthcoming, p.14). Private universities in Bangladesh are able to create new academic positions, draft conditions of service (GoB 2010, p. 9), and hire, promote, and fire academic and non-academic staff. Private universities are also able to set salaries and offer performance pay in contrast with public universities (GoB 2010, p. 21).

Governance autonomy is limited for both public and private universities as governance structures and leadership appointments are tightly regulated by national legislation through the Act under which the institution is established and functions. The Chancellor of every university, whether public or private is the President of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. The Chancellor appoints a Vice-Chancellor, Pro Vice-Chancellor(s), and Treasurer for each university on the recommendation of the Prime Minister. The governance structure of each public university consists of a Syndicate, Finance Committee, Planning and Development Committee and an Academic Council. But seven public universities have an additional institutional body called Senate and six have a Regent Board in place of Syndicate. The Senate consists of members nominated by the government, various professional bodies and academics who are elected by their fellow academic staff. The Syndicate includes deans, provosts, professors, associate professors, assistant professors, and lecturers who are all elected by academic staff, as well as officials appointed by the government. The Academic Council consists of all deans, chairmen of departments and partly of members nominated by the Chancellor (Dhaka University Order 1973).

³ The Syndicate is an organizational structure within each university that has executive powers. Its members generally consist of a variety of internal stakeholders.

⁴ The Vice-Chancellor is the principal executive and academic officer of the university who chairs key institutional committees.

Public and private universities have a high degree of legal autonomy and continuity over their sources of *funding*. However, the ability of public universities to determine their own tuition fee levels is limited because government has set a moratorium due to its political sensitivity. The recently established public universities have much higher level of tuition fees compared to old ones. Although the tuition fee rate is comparatively low, public universities charge additional fees from the students that are much higher. In contrast, private universities can set their own tuition levels and other charges which are considerably higher compared to public universities (GoB 2010, p. 9). Public universities can accumulate reserves and carry out surplus state funding, borrow money, invest money in financial and physical assets, own and sell buildings, and deliver contractual services. Similarly, private universities can borrow and invest money, sell and own property, and deliver contractual services.

Colleges

Latent ●○○○

Public affiliated colleges have virtually no autonomy and are considered as government agencies. Non-government (i.e. private) colleges, on the other hand, enjoy substantial autonomy. The Academic Council of the National University is responsible for drafting the curriculum of both public and private affiliated colleges in Bangladesh (GoB 1992a). The National University is also responsible for the admission procedures of both public and private colleges, for creating new academic programs, and for determining the academic structure of colleges as well as the number of teachers per subject and the number of students that they may admit (World Bank 2014, p. 28). The Inspector of Colleges of the National University is responsible for inspecting both public and private affiliated colleges, while the Curriculum Development and Evaluation Center is responsible for evaluating their programs and the Controller of Examinations is responsible for arranging the student assessment (GoB 1992a).

Public affiliated colleges have no staffing autonomy as the government is responsible for creating staff positions and hiring academic and non-academic staff, making posting and promotion decisions, building career paths, and firing academic staff (GoB 1992a). Interviews with stakeholders suggest that private colleges have greater staffing autonomy. While their staff positions, promotion, and firing decisions follow the regulations set by the National University, private colleges can set the pay scales for their teachers and non-academic staff. The governing boards of private colleges can freely recruit teachers that are certified by the Non-Government Teachers' Registration and Certification Authority (NTRCA).

Public affiliated colleges do not have governance autonomy. The National University Act provides for Governing Bodies in all affiliated public and private colleges. In practice, public affiliated colleges do not have governing bodies and are headed by principals (World Bank 2014, p. 33). Private affiliated colleges cannot exercise much governance autonomy either. The appointment of their governing bodies is overseen by the National University Regulation (World Bank 2014, p. 29). Additionally, interviews with stakeholders confirmed that the private affiliated colleges do not have the autonomy to change their mission, or appoint internal and external stakeholders to their governing bodies. Indeed, the composition of the Governing Body follows the provision of the National University Act and its Regulation.

Public affiliated colleges have no autonomy to diversify their funding sources as the government sets their tuition fees, which go to the Treasury. The National University receives the admission and examination fees collected by colleges. According to experts, a share of these fees are provided to college teachers as unofficial salary (World Bank 2014, p. 27-28). Also, the physical buildings and land occupied by public colleges are owned by the government and cannot be sold by the institutions, and any unspent public money must be returned to the government at the end of the fiscal year. Private affiliated colleges have

more autonomy to diversify their funding sources. They can set tuition fees but must do so within the limits set by the National University (World Bank 2014, p. 29). In addition, they have the autonomy to borrow money, invest in assets, sell land and buildings, and deliver contractual services.

TVET Institutions

Emerging ●●○○

Neither public nor private TVET institutions have academic autonomy. The Bangladesh Technical Education Board (BTEB) is responsible for designing the curriculum for both public and private TVET institutions. The BTEB is also responsible for determining the criteria for student admission, assessment, and certification (ADB, 2015). The Directorate of Technical Education (DTE) is responsible for evaluating the programs provided by the TVET institutions, including their facilities.

There is a high degree of centralization within the TVET system and *staffing autonomy* for public TVET institutions does not exist. The responsibilities for major staff decisions such as hiring and setting salaries are divided between the DTE and the BTEB. Public TVET institutions and departments have no autonomy over recruiting academic staff. Instead, the DTE has the responsibility for recruiting teachers and staff for public TVET institutions (DTE 2014 p. 51). This makes it difficult for TVET institutions to secure the number and quality of staff that they need. The one exception is that they can recruit temporary staff for limited periods of time. The *National Skills Development Policy* recommends decentralizing the responsibility of recruiting teachers for TVET institutions (Ministry of Education 2011). In contrast, private TVET institutions have substantial autonomy. Interviews with stakeholders suggest that private TVET institutions can create new positions, hire, promote, and fire staff, set salaries, and offer performance pay.

In terms of governance autonomy, the public TVET institutions are constrained by the powers held by the BTEB and the DTE. Private TVET institutions have more governance autonomy: they can change their mission and appoint external and internal stakeholders to their governance bodies. Reports from the field suggest that some private institutes fail to follow the standards set by the BTEB.

Public TVET institutions have little autonomy to diversify their funding sources. Most of the fees paid by students for their education at TVET institutions is paid to the BTEB (Dohmen 2009, p. 59). One exception is that public TVET institutions can make additional income by providing additional self-supporting short courses (Dohmen 2009, p. 40). Private TVET institutions have more autonomy to diversify their funding sources. Some private TVET institutions can set their tuition levels and fund themselves almost exclusively through this source (Dohmen 2009, p. 41). Private TVET institutions may also borrow money, invest in assets, sell land and buildings, and deliver contractual services.

Policy Dimension 4: Financing

Overall score: Emerging ●●○○

Lever	Policy level 1: Coverage of Resource Allocation	Policy level 2: Mechanism of Resource Allocation	Policy level 3: Resource Utilization for Equity
Lever score	Established ●●●○	Latent ●○○○	Latent ●○○○
Universities	Advanced ●●●●	Emerging ●●○○	-
Colleges	Emerging ●●○○	Latent ●○○○	-
TVET Institutions	Emerging ●●○○	Latent ●○○○	-

As public funding for tertiary education institutions becomes scarcer around the world, SABER-TE aims to find out if public financing is being used to steer tertiary education toward established system-wide goals. The dimension is comprised of three distinct policy levers (1) coverage of resource allocation, (2) resource allocation, and (3) resource utilization. **The overall score for the financing of tertiary education in Bangladesh is Emerging.** The first two levers in this dimension are evaluated for each tertiary education subsector, while the last lever is evaluated across the tertiary education system.

Policy Lever: Coverage of Resource Allocation

Established ●●●○

This policy lever aims to map what types of expenditures are supported by public funding allocations to both public and private tertiary education institutions. **On this policy lever, Bangladesh is scored as established.** Public universities are heavily dependent on public allocations; private universities receive public funding only in very specific circumstances. Private TVET institutions and private colleges receive public funding from the development projects. This variation explains the scoring differences between subsectors on this lever.

Universities

Established ●●●○

Public allocations can be used to support both the recurrent and capital expenditures of public universities (Middlehurst & Woodfield 2004, p.10) including land purchases, the construction of new facilities, the renovation of existing facilities, and the purchase of equipment (UGC 2017). Private universities receive limited amounts of conditional public funds in the form of grants for academic infrastructure, and more recently for research. This source of financing is known as the Academic Innovation Fund (AIF) (Ministry of Education 2015), which are allocated as part of the Higher Education Quality Enhancement Project (HEQEP) project, under the national development budget, and not as part of a recurrent and sustainable government scheme. Otherwise, private universities receive no public funding (GoB 2010, p. 21). The HEQEP was initiated by the Ministry of Education and is offered in partnership with the World Bank with the goal of promoting academic innovation and building institutional capacity. AIF research allocations are granted to public and private universities as institutions rather than to individual researchers. Individual faculty from public universities and government colleges can apply for grants for postgraduate research from the UGC. Additionally, individual faculties from public universities receive grants from the UGC for doing small-scale research. Apart from these arrangements, the Secondary & Higher Education

Division under the Ministry of Education operates a scheme of providing research grants under its non-development budget to university faculties following a competitive funding mechanism. The Ministry of Science and Technology also has a long established similar scheme of providing research grants to individual scientists and entrepreneurs.

Colleges

Emerging ●●○○

Public colleges receive funding for their non-development expenditures (World Bank 2014, p. 28) and for the salaries of their academic and non-academic staff. Improvement/renovation of physical and academic facilities in public and private colleges are done separately under the government's development budget. Neither public nor private colleges are eligible to receive research funds, but public college faculties can apply for grants for postgraduate studies (M Phil, PhD) from UGC.

TVET Institutions

Emerging ●●○○

Some private TVET institutions that are registered with the BTEB are eligible to receive basic public funding in the form of monthly pay orders (MPO) to cover selected teachers' salaries. Public funds received by public TVET institutions may be used to purchase land and to build new facilities (Dohmen 2009, p. 43). TVET institutions do not receive any research funding.

Policy Lever: Resource Allocation Mechanism

Latent ●○○○

This policy lever aims to assess the process through which public funds are allocated to tertiary education institutions, particularly the transparency with which funding is allocated and the criteria used for this process. ***On this policy lever, Bangladesh is scored as latent.***

Bangladesh has no publicly known formula for funding tertiary education institutions (UGC forthcoming, p. 13). The process of allocating financing is governed by rules, however, and there is an implicit funding formula (see below).

To some extent, performance-based funding or performance indicators are used in the funding allocation process, although not for the bulk of public funding. There is a competitive line of funding available through the HEQEP project for research aimed at promoting innovation and addressing national priorities, but this is available only to a limited number of universities. There are other competitive research funding schemes operated by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Science & Technology especially meant for university faculties, researchers and scientists.

Universities

Emerging ●●○○

In Bangladesh, block grant funding for public universities (from the government's national budget) is allocated on the basis of availability of total funding, budget proposals, historic spending patterns. The funding formula follows the expenditure items predetermined by the Finance Division/Treasury. The expenditure items are called "Economic Codes" and allocations are given against each Economic Code. The Economic Codes are clustered into two groups, i.e., (i) Revenue (salaries and allowances, supply and services, grants, repair, rehabilitation and maintenance, bloc allocation), (ii) Capital Costs (land

acquisition/purchase, asset procurement/purchase, construction/civil works, investment in share and equity, capital grants, loan and advances). The Economic Codes with allocation figures is called budget and every government and para-government institution has to submit the draft budget proposal to the Treasury/Finance Division annually for its approval and receiving allocations. Separately the Development Projects Portfolio is prepared by the Planning Commission and known as Annual Development Program (ADP) but allocation against each development project is made by the Finance Division. Therefore, ADP allocations depend on the availability of the overall level of budget availability in the Treasury. The national budget allocation, expenditure and auditing is managed by a computer program by the Finance Division called integrated budget and accounting system (iBAS) and all public and semi-government intuitions are covered by this system.

Universities can anticipate the budget that they will receive with some degree of confidence.

Colleges

Latent ●○○○

Public colleges are able to propose their own budgets, but the final decision on what to fund is taken by the national government, which allocates funding using a line-item budget.

TVET Institutions

Latent ●○○○

The central government allocates line-item funding to TVET institutions using a historic input-based system based on recommendations from the Directorate of Technical Education (DTE).

Policy Lever: Resources Utilization for Equity

Latent ●○○○

With this lever, SABER-TE aims to assess the extent to which public funding is used to advance a country's equity goals. Such policies can include government-backed student loans, scholarship programs, and financial incentives to tertiary education institutions to reach equity targets. Clear monitoring of equity goals is another best practice indicator to improve equity. ***On this policy lever, Bangladesh is assessed as latent.***

A limited number of public programs are in place to provide financial aid to students from disadvantaged backgrounds with the aim of advancing equity goals in access and retention (UGC forthcoming, p. 79). This financial aid is known as stipend and especially targeted to students from low-income families. On the other hand, the scholarships allocation scheme targets students with high academic performance scores (GPA) and known as merit scholarship. The *Strategic Plan for Higher Education in Bangladesh: 2017-2030* suggests that such stipend schemes need to be supplemented and extended to other social groups such as the children of freedom fighters and small ethnic groups (UGC forthcoming, p. 24). Currently, there is no financial cost-sharing mechanism available for disadvantaged groups and no financial incentives for institutions to pursue equity goals. However, plans exist to use endowments from international partners to create a trust for providing low-interest, need-based loans to disadvantaged students (UGC forthcoming, p. 79).

Within the TVET sector, a range of financial assistance programs exist for trainees and students. For instance, under the Skills and Training Enhancement (STEP) project, the Ministry of Education offers scholarships to girls to stimulate entrance into TVET. The project also includes subsidies for tuition fees

for girls in TVET. These financial incentives cover only a subset of TVET institutions, and are not systemic efforts to increase equity in the TVET system.

Policy Dimension 5: Quality Assurance

Overall score: Emerging ●●○○

Lever	Policy Lever 1: Accreditation and Institutional QA Standards	Policy Lever 2: TEMIS
Lever score	Emerging ●●○○	Emerging ●●○○
Universities	Established ●●●○	Emerging ●●○○
Colleges	Latent ●○○○	Emerging ●●○○
TVET Institutions	Established ●●●○	Emerging ●●○○

This policy dimension attempts to assess the state of quality assurance. Two policy levers are included as part of this dimension: (1) accreditation and institutional quality standards and (2) a tertiary education management information system (TEMIS). **The overall score for the quality assurance policy dimension for Bangladesh is Emerging.** Most policy levers are discussed for each subsector of Bangladesh’s tertiary education system.

None of the three agencies involved in quality assurance – the UGC, the BTEB and the DTE - has developed quality assurance standards for either programs or institutions. The Accreditation Council is scheduled to develop and uphold such standards for colleges and universities (but not for TVET institutions, as the government of Bangladesh does not consider this to be “higher education”). At present, the quality assurance framework in Bangladesh does not provide any incentives for tertiary education institutions to develop management information systems. Lastly, details of sanctions for institutions not passing the accreditation and quality assurance procedures have not yet been articulated. All these procedures should be elaborated in the near future.

Policy Lever: Accreditation and Institutional Quality Assurance Standards

Emerging ●●○○

This policy lever evaluates the key actors involved in the quality assurance process, their independence, the jurisdiction of their activity, and how the quality assurance process is implemented. **On this policy lever, Bangladesh is scored as emerging.**

Universities

Established ●●●○

The UGC currently acts as an institutional accreditation agency for both public and private universities. From a legal perspective, the UGC is not fully autonomous from the government, as the head of the UGC and five permanent members are appointed by the government (GoB 1973). It is also not fully independent from the tertiary education institutions. In practice, however, the UGC has substantial autonomy, as it is freely able to recruit its 275 staff, and has its own service rules. The UGC has nationwide jurisdiction over national providers in Bangladesh but no national regulation grants the UGC jurisdiction over cross-border providers. University leaders and faculty members, as key stakeholders, are involved in the UGC’s quality assurance processes. Institutions that do not meet the UGC’s accreditation and quality

assurance standards can be expected to suffer financial consequences (GoB 1973), but the details of these sanctions have not been articulated.

The *Strategic Plan for Higher Education in Bangladesh 2006-2026* proposed the establishment of a national qualification framework for higher education and for the accreditation of study programs offered by public and private universities, which in addition to ensuring high standards, would help students transfer their earned credits to other universities (UGC 2006, p. 38). Subsequently, the Accreditation Council Act of 2017, passed by the Parliament on March 7, 2017 is expected to implement a National Qualifications Framework for higher education that was drafted by the UGC. It will also coordinate accreditation efforts and to oversee quality enhancement in higher education (UGC forthcoming, p. 112).

Colleges

Latent ●○○○

While the quality assurance function for colleges is legally the responsibility of the National University, in practice it exercises only limited quality assurance supervision. Eventually the tertiary education colleges should come under the jurisdiction of the Accreditation Council's quality assurance mechanism.

TVET Institutions

Established ●●●○

The quality assurance functions for TVET institutions rest with the BTEB and the DTE. The BTEB generates its own income by charging accreditation and examination fees. The DTE has varied portfolio of activities that include monitoring and evaluating the TVET institutions under its jurisdiction (World Bank 2014, pp. 48-51). While the two bodies are steered by the Ministry of Education, it cannot interfere in the specific decisions of the BTEB or the DTE. The two agencies have national jurisdiction in Bangladesh, but, like the UGC, they have no jurisdiction over (international) cross-border providers. Representatives of the TVET institutions are involved in the quality assurance activities of the two agencies, by participating in their governance structures but, like the Ministry of Education, they may not influence their decisions. While there are financial implications for any institutions that do not meet quality assurance standards, the details of these sanctions are not clear.

Policy Lever: Tertiary Education Management Information System (TEMIS).

Emerging ●●○○

A tertiary education management information system (TEMIS) is a management tool for tracking data on tertiary education. It can be used to disseminate information about tertiary education to the public, to plan budgetary allocations, or to evaluate the effectiveness of policy reforms. This policy lever aims to measure the extent to which in any given country there are formal procedures for systematically collecting data in the form of a single system-wide tertiary education management system (TEMIS). **Bangladesh is evaluated as emerging on this policy lever.** This is primarily because the TEMIS for all subsectors covers only a limited range of indicators, and is not yet easily accessible or used for policy-making. The country is currently in the process of revising and further developing a TEMIS system for its TVET and college subsectors (World Bank 2015b p. 46).

Universities

Emerging ●●○○

Public and private universities are covered by a TEMIS called the Higher Education Management Information System (HEMIS). The HEMIS captures student-level data including student enrollment, retention and dropout rates, and graduation rates; demographic data related to gender; financial data pertaining to tuition fees, financial aid for students, and scholarships; and data on faculty/student ratios. No data are gathered on student readiness for university, graduate outcomes, graduate placement in jobs, institutions' contributions to local economic, social, or cultural development, or research and development (R&D) and innovative research outcomes. At present, there is limited evidence that the UGC or the Ministry of Education use information in the HEMIS to evaluate or reform the university subsector.

Colleges

Emerging ●●○○

Colleges maintain a limited TEMIS operated by the National University. There exists a database of institutions, teacher database and student registration and examination database. Some of this data is published on the website of the National University⁵. The BANBEIS also publishes statistics on enrolments, disaggregated by gender. However, the system is not fully accessible online to the larger public. It also does not collect data on a range of relevant indicators, such as financial data pertaining to tuition fees, financial aid for students, student readiness for university, graduate outcomes, graduate placement in jobs, institutions' contributions to local economic, social, or cultural development, or research and development (R&D) and innovative research outcomes. At present, there is limited evidence that the Ministry of Education use information in the TEMIS for colleges to evaluate or reform the subsector.

TVET

Emerging ●●○○

The BTEB has maintained a TEMIS for online student admission, graduation results, as well as for the publication and issuance of certificates. Some of this data has been published in an extensive report that can be used for policy-making (BTEB, 2016). The BANBEIS also publishes statistics on enrolments, disaggregated by gender. However, the TEMIS for TVET is not easily accessible online, and does not collect data on a range of relevant indicators, such as financial data pertaining to tuition fees, financial aid for students, student readiness for university, graduate outcomes, graduate placement in jobs, institutions' contributions to local economic, social, or cultural development, or research and development (R&D) and innovative research outcomes. At present, there is some evidence that the BTEB use information in the HEMIS to evaluate or reform the TVET subsector.

⁵ For the database, see <http://services.nu.edu.bd/nu-app/college/>

Policy Dimension 6: Relevance to Social and Economic Needs

Overall score: Established ●●●○

Policy Lever 1: Economic Development	Policy Lever 2: Fostering RDI	Policy Lever 3: Fostering Socio-Cultural Development
Advanced ●●●●	Established ●●●○	Emerging ●●○○

This policy dimension on Relevance to Social and Economic Needs aims to assess if a given country’s tertiary education institutions are conducting research and development activities that respond to local conditions, resources, and needs, and are oriented towards social development. This dimension consists of three distinct policy levers: (1) economic development, (2) fostering research, development, and innovation (RDI), and (3) fostering social and cultural development and environmental protection and sustainability. **The assessment for this policy dimension is established.** This dimension is evaluated at the system level, rather than separately for universities, colleges and TVET institutes.

Policy Lever: Economic Development

This policy lever aims to discover the extent to which there is a system-wide or sector-specific policy mandate to strengthen the role of tertiary education in enhancing economic development in Bangladesh. **For this policy lever, Bangladesh is scored Advanced.** It should be noted, however, that high numbers of graduates remain unemployed. It is still questioned, therefore, whether the current policy initiatives translate into effective outcomes.

Multiple policy and strategy documents mention the need to enhance economic development by consolidating the tertiary education sector. The 2010 *National Education Policy* mentioned the need to increase the supply of skilled manpower to develop information technology as a prospective area of export and to consolidate economic development (Ministry of Education 2010, pp. 16-32). Similarly, the 2011 *National Skills Development Policy*, which particularly targeted the TVET sector, was built around the premise that “skills, knowledge, and innovation are important driving forces for economic growth and social development” (Ministry of Education 2011, p. 7). The *Seventh Five Year Plan FY2016-FY2020* advocates the use of information and communication technology (ICT) to equip students at all levels with economically relevant skills. The plan recommends the development of loan and scholarship schemes for students from disadvantaged backgrounds to study ICT in order to prevent brain drain (GEDPC 2015, pp. 634-635). It also proposes improving teacher quality in the TVET subsector and introducing incentives to encourage individuals to pursue degrees and research in engineering (Ministry of Education 2010, pp. 26-27), the sciences, and ICT (Ministry of Education 2010, pp. 31-32).

Significant initiatives aimed at promoting economic development have been implemented in the country. The HEQEP project aims to foster Bangladesh’s economic development through the consolidation of human capital. The Skills and Training Enhancement Project (STEP) is financed by the World Bank and aims to improve the quality of training and increase the employability of trainees “including those from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds” (World Bank n.d.). The implementation of the project is being monitored. The College Education Development Project (CEDP) is aimed at improving the quality of teaching and governance within the college subsector and increasing its relevance to the country’s economic and social development goals. The project is sponsored and implemented by the Ministry of Education and the National University, with the support of the World Bank (Alborta 2016). Several other development projects aimed at improving the quality and capacity of colleges are being implemented in the country. These projects would contribute towards improving the stock of human capital and producing skilled graduates capable of competing in the global job market.

Policy Lever: Fostering Research, Development and Innovation

This policy lever evaluates the support provided to research, development, and innovation (RDI) activities in a given country by finding out whether a system-wide or sector-specific policy mandate exists to strengthen RDI in tertiary education and whether there are any financial incentives or specific programs aimed at encouraging this. ***On this policy lever, Bangladesh is considered as Established.***

Bangladesh has several policy proposals advocating the enhancement of RDI activities. The 2010 *National Education Policy* discussed the need to provide more Masters and PhD programs focused on agriculture-related subjects (Ministry of Education 2010, p.36) and to adjust the pay scale for faculty with Masters and PhDs (Ministry of Education 2010, p.67). The *Strategic Plan for Higher Education in Bangladesh: 2017-2030* recommends that students should be supported in studying for PhDs abroad in fields that are not well developed in Bangladesh (UGC forthcoming, p. 80) and that industries should offer fellowship programs to doctoral and post-doctoral students in technology-related fields (UGC forthcoming, p. 107). In addition, the plan suggests creating a Central Research Laboratory (UGC forthcoming, p. 7), which would support scientific and technological research as well as foster collaboration between universities and industry (UGC forthcoming, p. 116). While many of these proposals have not yet been implemented, the HEQEP is making a significant contribution towards RDI activities and is currently the major program implementing financial incentives. In addition to HEQEP, the Ministry of Education has a competitive funding program titled Research and Innovation Fund which invites research proposals from the universities and scientists of the country. The funding program awards grants through a transparent selection process done by peer reviewers. A similar research grant program is implemented by the Ministry of Science & Technology. Lastly, the *Strategic Plan for Higher Education in Bangladesh: 2017-2030* recommends that companies and entrepreneurs in Bangladesh should consider collaborating with academic institutions on RDI (UGC forthcoming, p. 105) and that public funding should be made available to build partnerships to conduct RDI activities (UGC forthcoming, p. 67). However, these proposals have not yet been implemented.

Policy Lever: Fostering Social and Cultural Development and Environmental Protection and Sustainability

The purpose of this policy lever is to gauge the degree to which a country has policies in place to ensure that tertiary education contributes to the country's social and cultural development as well as its environmental protection and sustainability. ***On this policy lever, Bangladesh is rated as emerging.***

Several initiatives exist in Bangladesh to strengthen the role played by tertiary education in fostering social and cultural development. The national government has developed the *Draft National Strategy for Promotion of Gender Equality in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in Bangladesh*, which aims to increase access to TVET education for women as to address the current staggering gender gap in education enrollment in TVET institutions (female enrolment ranges from 9% to 13% in the public institutions and 33% in private institutions). The document applies to universities that offer technical and engineering courses as well as TVET institutions. The strategy recommends using tax rebates to enhance employment opportunities for women and using loan schemes to promote women's self-employment (GoB 2012, pp. 21-26). However, the impact of these measures has not been monitored. In terms of the social development, the STEP project is providing support to students from disadvantaged backgrounds, and a few scholarship opportunities exist aimed at increasing the access of disadvantaged students to tertiary education (UGC forthcoming, p. 79).

There are currently no specific policy initiatives in the tertiary education sector to strengthen the role of tertiary education in fostering environmental protection and sustainability. However, the country has several policies and projects aimed at protecting the environment. In practice, there is a strong knowledge transfer between universities and industry on aspects connected to environmental protection and green technologies. Individual universities, such as BUET, have programs on environmental sciences, and provide outreach to industry on environmental issues.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The tertiary education sector in Bangladesh is complex, consisting of different subsectors that contain both public and private institutions. These institutions have different regulators, different academic standards, different types of students, and different interests. Because of this complexity, it would be useful for the government to elaborate a vision for the entire tertiary education system, including TVET institutes, colleges and universities. This could help students to move more freely between types of institutions, to choose programs that prepare them for the labor market, and to increase equity in the system.

There are many different laws that apply to the different subsectors of tertiary education in Bangladesh, without one overall legislative framework behind it. As a result, there are some inconsistencies between the different sub-sectors, for instance in the different levels of autonomy between types of institutions. Another major question is whether regulation is always enforced and whether policy is being implemented. The Private Universities Act has been in existence since 1992, and was recently revised in 2010. However, many stakeholders feel that this regulation is not being enforced, and that some private universities do not offer high quality degree programs. It is anticipated that the Accreditation Council can address some of these challenges.

The governance system is another area of concern. While public universities have substantial autonomy based on the legislation, there are some political restrictions in practice. Political parties, student unions, teacher unions, and other organizations see the main university campuses as their battlegrounds, rather than as centers for higher learning and research (Monem & Baniamin 2010). The private tertiary education institutions (universities, colleges, and TVET institutions) are seen as a mechanism for profit making without necessarily providing a stimulating academic environment. Finally, in contrast with public universities, public colleges and TVET institutions have virtually no autonomy on academic, staffing, funding and governance matters. In all cases, one of the key questions that needs to be answered is how tertiary education institutions can be made more autonomous while also being held accountable for their academic performance.

The financing system is one area where this autonomy goal can be achieved. In recent years, innovative financing arrangements have been introduced such as the Academic Innovation Fund under the HEQEP project, which provides competitive research funding, but more could be done to make more efficient use of public resources. Performance-based funding could be introduced to make universities more accountable for public funding. A similar system could be designed for colleges and TVET institutions if they were given more autonomy to manage their finances. The question that the regulatory agencies need to consider is whether to shift their focus to the outcomes of the system rather than just considering its inputs.

Perhaps the most notable development in the tertiary education sector in Bangladesh has been the swift development of the private sector. Because many new (mostly private for-profit) institutions are being

created, the government and the regulatory agencies should continuously update their practices to keep up. On the one hand, the rise of new private actors may increase the competition for the best students, and drive up standards. At present, however, it seems that only few private institutions can offer high quality degree programs. Quality standards need to be strictly enforced in the private sector. Again, the passing of the Accreditation Council Act is an important step in the right direction. The qualifications framework is also important, particularly in the TVET sector.

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Acronyms

ADB	Asian Development Bank
ADP	Annual Development Program
AIF	Academic Innovation Fund
BANBEIS	Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics
BTEB	Bangladesh Technical Education Board
CEDP	College Education Development Project
DTE	Directorate of Technical Education
GEDPC	General Economic Division Planning Commission
GoB	Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
HEMIS	Higher Education Management Information System
HEQEP	Higher Education Quality Enhancement Project
iBAS	Integrated budget and accounting system
NTRCA	Non-Government Teachers' Registration and Certification Authority
NSDC	National Skills Development Council
NSDP	National Skills Development Policy
SABER	Systems Approach for Better Education Results
STEM	Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics
STEP	Skills and Training Enhancement Project
TE	Tertiary education
TVET	Technical and vocational education and training
TEMIS	Tertiary education management information system
UGC	University Grants Commission

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Appendix – Best Practice Indicators used in SABER-Tertiary Education

1. Vision			
1.1		1.2	
The country/state has a fully developed vision/strategic plan for tertiary education that serves as a guide for steering the system		The creation of the tertiary education vision/strategic plan is relevant and representative, and includes input from key stakeholders and considers key societal factors	
2. Regulatory Environment			
2.1	2.2	2.3	2.4
The country has an explicitly stated tertiary education law for steering the system towards optimal performance.	The regulatory framework includes provisions to adequately regulate the market entry and operation of public tertiary education providers.	The regulatory framework includes provisions to adequately regulate the market entry and operation of private tertiary education providers.	The regulatory framework includes provisions to adequately regulate the market entry and operation of non-university institutions.
2.5	2.6	2.7	
The regulatory framework includes provisions to adequately regulate the distance and online education.	The regulatory framework includes provisions to adequately regulate the independent agencies and buffer bodies.	The regulatory framework embeds key guiding principles.	
3. Governance			
3.1	3.2	3.3	3.4
The regulatory framework establishes distinct functions for university and non-university institutions in contributing to system-wide goals.	The regulatory framework provides incentives to strengthen the unique mission of different institutions.	The tertiary system has an enabling governance structure that facilitates collaboration between institutions.	The tertiary system has an enabling governance structure that facilitates student transfer across institutions.

3.5	3.6	3.7	3.8
The tertiary system has an enabling governance structure that facilitates collaboration and/or communication with other educational sectors (e.g. secondary education).	Public TEIs are able to negotiate at least some performance targets with stakeholders, such as the government or tertiary education agencies (TEAs).	The governance framework for public TEIs supports their academic autonomy.	The governance framework for public TEIs supports their staffing autonomy.
3.9	3.10	3.11	3.12
The regulatory framework for public TEIs supports their governance autonomy.	The governance framework grants public TEIs significant freedom to diversify their sources of funding.	Private TEIs are able to negotiate at least some performance targets with stakeholders, such as the government or TEAs.	The governance framework for private TEIs supports their academic autonomy.
3.13	3.14	3.15	
The governance framework for private TEIs supports their staffing autonomy.	The regulatory framework for private TEIs supports their governance autonomy.	Private TEIs enjoy significant freedom to diversify their sources of funding.	
4. Financing			
4.1	4.2	4.3	4.4
Public funds are allocated to accredited public and private TEIs.	Public funds allocated to public TEIs cover recurrent expenditure and capital expenditure.	Public funds allocated to public TEIs cover research expenditure.	Public funds are allocated to private TEIs to cover research expenditure.
4.5	4.6	4.7	4.8
Public funds are allocated to TEIs through a stable and transparent process and using a block grant budget system.	There is a publicly known or publicly accessible formula for the allocation of public funds for TEIs, which specifies the amounts disbursed as fixed and variable funding.	The stakeholders that contribute to determining the different parts of the funding allocation mechanism are clearly identified.	Performance-based funding is used as part of the funding allocation mechanism.

4.9	4.10	4.11	4.12
There is a mechanism which involves data collection for monitoring the progress of institutions toward performance targets.	There is at least one competitive line of funding accessible to TEIs aimed at promoting innovation or to address national priorities.	There are public programs in place to provide financial aid to students from disadvantaged backgrounds with the goal of advancing equity goals in access and retention.	The financial cost-sharing mechanisms available effectively serve the needs of targeted beneficiaries.
4.13	4.14		
The outcomes of financial aid programs for students are adequately monitored.	There are financial incentives to reward institutions that meet equity goals.		
5. Quality Assurance			
5.1	5.2	5.3	5.4
There is at least one institutional accreditation agency (IAA) or quality assurance agency (QAA) that oversees the quality of individual institutions in the country.	The IAA(s) or QAA(s) is/are independent agency/agencies from government.	The IAA(s) or QAA(s) is/are independent agency/agencies from TEIs.	The IAA(s)'s or QAA(s)'s jurisdiction is nationwide.
5.5	5.6	5.7	5.8
The IAA(s)'s or QAA(s)'s jurisdiction includes both public and private TEIs.	The IAA(s)'s or QAA(s)'s jurisdiction includes both university and non-university institutions.	The IAA(s)'s or QAA(s)'s jurisdiction includes full time, part time, on-site and online programs.	The IAA(s) or QAA(s) has/have developed Institutional Quality Standards (IQAs) to apply in its/their evaluations.
5.9	5.10	5.11	5.12
The IAA(s) or QAA(s) has/have developed Program Quality Standards (PQAs) to apply in its/their evaluations.	The IAA(s) or QAA(s) provides incentives for TEIs to create Management Information Systems (MIS) through IQAs or PQAs.	The IAA(s) or QAA(s) involve TEI stakeholders, including students, as part of their activities.	There are practical consequences for programs/TEIs that do not meet the evaluation/accreditation standards.

5.13	5.14	5.15	5.16
There is at least one national or regional TEMIS in operation.	The TEMIS collects data on student enrollment, retention/dropout rates, graduation rates, and student transfer rates.	The TEMIS collects data on tuition levels, financial aid, grants, scholarships, and student loans.	The TEMIS collects data on students' academic readiness.
5.17	5.18	5.19	5.20
The TEMIS collects data on graduated outcomes.	The TEMIS collects data on institutional contributions to local economic, social or cultural development.	The TEMIS collects data on institutional RDI indicators.	The TEMIS collects data on faculty related indicators.
5.21			
The TEMIS is used extensively for system evaluation and reform.			
6. Relevance for Social and Economic Needs			
6.1	6.2	6.3	6.4
There is a system wide or sector-specific policy mandate to strengthen the role of tertiary education to enhance economic development.	There is a system-wide or sector-specific policy mandate to strengthen RDI activity in tertiary education.	There are financial incentives to foster RDI activity across different tertiary sub-systems.	There are programs and/or incentives to enhance the capacity of local and regional actors to contribute to RDI activities in tertiary institutions.
6.5	6.6		
There is a system-wide policy mandate or decree to strengthen the role of tertiary education in fostering social and cultural development.	There is a system-wide policy mandate or decree to strengthen the role of tertiary education in fostering environmental protection and sustainability.		

The **Systems Approach for Better Education Results (SABER)** initiative collects data on the policies and institutions of education systems around the world and benchmarks them against practices associated with student learning. SABER aims to give all parties with a stake in educational results—from students, administrators, teachers, and parents to policymakers and business people—an accessible, detailed, objective snapshot of how well the policies of their country's education system are oriented toward ensuring that all children and youth learn.

This report focuses specifically on policies in the **Tertiary Education** sector. It analyzes tertiary education on six policy dimensions: (1) the strength of the country's vision, (2) the regulatory environment, (3) governance of the sector, (4) the use of innovative financing arrangements, (5) quality assurance, and (6) relevance to the labor market and socio-economic development of the country.

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