

# UNIV TEACHER RECRUITMENT: Doing away with early performance

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STUDIES show that early academic performances, reflected in the Secondary School Certificate and the Higher Secondary Certificate results, often fail to predict success in higher education and professional careers. A Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics study indicates that about 30 per cent of students who perform below average in at the secondary level end up excelling in university studies. This underscores the disconnect between early academic records and later academic achievements, especially in the fields that demand advanced research and critical thinking.

A research published in the Journal of Higher Education suggests that universities should prioritise post-secondary academic performances over early academic results as students mature and demonstrate academic aptitude through university coursework. The findings from top universities worldwide validate this trend, highlighting how high school performances have minimal correlation with research output and faculty potential. Top universities worldwide do not consider high school results in hiring teachers. Instead, they focus on research contribution, teaching experience and subject expertise of the candidates. The process in Bangladesh must evolve to align with international academic standards.

## **Penalising late bloomers**

THE phenomenon of students improving academically during their university education is particularly notable in Bangladesh, where many students face socioeconomic pressure, limited access to resources and family constraints. According to Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies data, more than 40 per cent of students from underprivileged backgrounds perform significantly better in higher education compared with their secondary and higher secondary results. The rigid recruitment criteria, however, prevent many from securing teaching positions, depriving universities of potential intellectual asset. The World Bank's Education Strategy Report data further supports this, stating that students from rural areas in Bangladesh often show exceptional intellectual growth once they have access to higher education. The current recruitment system that overemphasises secondary school results exacerbates these inequalities, hindering the development of an inclusive and meritocratic academic environment.

## **Structural inequality**

THE structural inequality in the education system remains a significant barrier to students from rural and economically disadvantaged backgrounds. Transparency International Bangladesh research has highlighted that students from urban, well-funded schools perform disproportionately better in secondary and higher secondary examinations because of their access to better resources, including coaching centres and online learning tools. In contrast, students from rural areas, such as those from the south-west, face systemic disadvantage, making it harder for them to meet the high cut-off marks required for teacher recruitment, even when they excel later in their academic careers.

In fact, a 2022 Bangladesh Education Watch study found that students from rural backgrounds were 35 per cent more likely to improve their academic standing in university than their urban counterparts, illustrating the potential for growth when they are given the proper educational environment

## **Right criteria for university teachers**

GIVEN the data supporting the need for reforms, it is essential to rethink teacher recruitment criteria to reflect a candidate's academic potential. In alignment with international best practices, universities in Bangladesh can adopt a

weighted evaluation system:

- Research publications and impact (40 per cent): Candidates should be evaluated based on their contribution to high-impact research publications.
- Undergraduate and postgraduate performance (30 per cent): There should be a focus on academic excellence at the university level.
- Teaching experience and pedagogical skills (20 per cent): Past teaching experience, including curriculum development and student mentorship, should be considered.
- Professional and international exposure (10 per cent): There should be an emphasis on candidates with exposure to global bachelor's and master's degree. More weight should be given to performance in higher education, where subject-specific expertise is developed.

### **Feasibility for reforms**

SEVERAL institutions in Bangladesh have successfully implemented merit-based teacher recruitment policies that focus on postgraduate achievements, research output and teaching experience. Such institutions have reported an increase in the quality of teaching staff, a higher rate of international collaboration and an improvement in research impact.

— International comparison: According to the Times Higher Education World University Rankings, global universities like the University of Melbourne in Australia, University of California, Berkeley in the United States and the University College London in the United Kingdom give no weight to high school marks during teacher recruitment, focusing, instead, on academic publications and research funding.

— Local studies on talent gaps: A 2020 Bangladesh University Grants Commission study shows that only 10 per cent of Bangladeshi university teachers have international exposure while a significant 65 per cent still rely on outdated recruitment methods. The numbers suggest the urgent need for reforms to bridge the talent gap.

— Economic impact: The Asian Development Bank in 2021 reported that the lack of a globally competitive academic recruitment process is one of the reasons for Bangladesh's low standing in global research output, affecting economic development through a less skilled work force.

The reliance on secondary and higher secondary results in teacher recruitment is an outdated practice that undermines the selection of the most capable candidates. By shifting the focus on research excellence, postgraduate achievement and teaching experience, Bangladesh can elevate its higher education sector to global standards. The University Grants Commission must consider the facts and advocate reform in recruitment. Reforming the recruitment process is an urgent need to ensure that the brightest minds, regardless of their early academic history, shape the future of universities.

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**Tags** university teacher