

# Poor funding handicaps research at public univs

Allocated funds remain underutilised, pvt univs get no govt fund

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The country's public universities receive inadequate funds for research purposes, which extremely limits the number and quality of their research.

To make things worse, the universities often fail to utilise fully the funds they get for conducting research due to mismanagement.

Academics and researchers said that conducting research was crucial for the universities to have insights into different essential areas of knowledge, benefitting the students as well as society.

But the standard of most of the research conducted by the country's public universities using low amounts of fund was below par and failed to play any significant role in society, they said.

Though the government fund for conducting research at these universities has risen over the years, the amount still remains scanty, they said.

For their poor performances in the area of research, the country's 56 public universities lag behind in different international rankings on the standards of the universities.

The country's 116 private universities, however, do not get any government grant for conducting research, said officials of the University Grants Commission of Bangladesh's research grants and awards division.

Professor SMA Faiz, chairman of the UGC, said that the universities could not improve without conducting research.

'The budget allocation for research at the public universities is very low and insufficient. The fund should be increased significantly,' he said.

Fahmida Khatun, executive director of the Centre for Policy Dialogue, a civil society think tank in Bangladesh, said that the country's public universities were placed lower positions in different global rankings as the number of research done by these universities was low in terms of the international standard.

The UGC's annual reports for 2023, 2022 and 2021 showed that the revised budget for research for the universities was Tk 121.05 crore in the 2022-2023 financial year, Tk 100.79 crore in FY 2021-22 and Tk 75.39 crore in FY 2020-2021.

In FY 2023-24, the allocation for the sector was Tk 144 crore and in FY 2024-25, it was Tk 188.65 crore. In FY 2014-2015, the allocation for the sector was Tk 2.87 crore.

Against the allocations, the available data in these reports showed, the actual expenditure of the fund for research sector was Tk 103.2 crore in FY 2022-23, Tk 85.82 crore in FY 2021-22, Tk 53.54 crore in FY 2020-21 and Tk 2.84 crore in FY 2014-15.

Professor Imran Rahman, vice-chancellor of the University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh, said that the overall number of research papers in Bangladesh was very low and these were not of international standards.

The research grants given by the government to Dhaka University is very insufficient, said Imran, who had been a faculty at the Institute of Business Administration at Dhaka University for 23 years.

‘The private universities do not get research fund from the government,’ he said.

Professor Md Fazlur Rahman, a teacher at the DU Institute of Research and Education, said that some funds for research remained unused due to bureaucratic complexities as for having these funds the researchers had to take permissions from several authorities.

Researchers do not get a sufficient amount of money to conduct a large-scale national-level research, he said.

He mentioned that a research project got maximum Tk 10 lakh that forced researchers to conduct research on small-scale samples or areas with insufficient workforces.

‘That is why most of the research are useless,’ he said.

Professor Fazlur, also served as a representative of teachers to the Dhaka University’s senate between 2017 and 2020, said that in these years no allocation was given to the Institute of Research and Education for research purposes.

Another professor from the same institute alleged that during the previous governments’ tenures, political affiliation was considered while allocating research fund for teachers.

‘Many eligible teachers connected to opposition political camps did not get the fund,’ he said, adding that as some teachers who were not qualified enough could not use the funds entirely and the funds remained underutilised.

Some public university vice-chancellors shared what types of research were conducted at their universities.

At Kurigram Agricultural University, academic activities started in February 2025 while the university did not get any funds for research in FY 2024-25 and FY 2025-26, said the university vice-chancellor, professor Md Rashedul Islam.

He said that the university teachers had already submitted some research proposals.

'Research is essential for universities and without research no university becomes complete,' Rashedul said, adding that they requested UGC officials to allocate some funds for research.

Rangamati Science and Technology University vice-chancellor professor Md Atiar Rahman said that under the university, research was conducted by the teachers only at the departments of computer science and engineering, management, tourism and hospitality management and forestry and environmental science.

The teachers got Tk 2 lakh to Tk 3 lakh for each research, he mentioned.

Fahmida Khatun also said that the authorities of public universities might say that they got poor funds for research, but it needed to be monitored if the allocated funds were being used properly.

The government should also monitor the quality of the research done by public universities, she added.

Professor Imran Rahman said that at ULAB there were three research centres and in the past one decade, they were conducting multi-country research by getting international grants competitively.

Some other private universities are also conducting good research, he mentioned.

'In Bangladesh, there is only a handful of actual university- or department- based research, which is not good,' he said, adding, 'if we do not conduct research, we will continue to depend on foreign books or knowledge.'

In response to a question, professor SMA Faiz said that he could not make comments on unused funds for research at the public universities as he joined the UGC in 2024.

The commission is trying to contribute to the research sector by ensuring transparency and accountability under the higher education acceleration and transformation project, he added.