

Full Length Research Paper

The impact of introducing a business marketing approach to education: A study on private HE in Bangladesh

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Accepted 20 August, 2009

The research for this paper, the first of its nature in Bangladesh, has been carried out through desk study, document review, interview, questionnaire and observation. Earlier findings had revealed that the community perceived education to be a social and public product. Significant changes to the perception of students and providers have been made recently. More recently, students and education providers have come to understand education as a commodity. However, although most academics fight against this change of attitude, they have failed to retain the traditional philosophy of education due to the privatization of education. Moreover, there are insufficient policies in place to regulate the marketing activities of private education institutions.

Key words: Brand marketing, competent human resources, customer, marketing of education, privatization of education, producer, promotion policy.

INTRODUCTION

Most countries determine a number of objectives that are to be achieved through education. Economists once argued that the purpose of education was to produce competent human resources in order for a country to develop (Mok et al., 2009; Kotler, 2006; Eunec Conference, 2003; Tan, 1998). In the 1980s, scholars argued that the purpose of education was to train individuals to become capable of contributing to the economic and social development of a country that would ultimately provide a balanced national development as well as attending to the needs of humankind. However, one question is never formally answered: what is the product of education? Informal consensus accepts that knowledge is the product of education, even though a universal definition of knowledge does not exist (Eunec Conference, 2003). It follows, therefore, that parameters for measuring 'knowledge' have yet to be defined (Alam, 2008).

According to Kotler (2006), there are a certain categories of 'products': goods, services, utility, social values, etc., which might be visible or invisible. In identifying the nature of the product and the character of a business (monopoly, oligopoly, and duopoly), marketing and advertising policies may be determined. In most cases, a 'market approach'¹ is considered for issues of marketing and advertisement or promotion (Lynch, 2006). Very few examples are to be found where state policy is available for the governance and regulatory control of marketing and advertisement (Coulson, 2003).

Knowledge as provided by an education system is neither defined as an industrial product nor a service (Alam, 2008; Kotler, 2006; Lynch, 2006). Knowledge 'manufactured' through academia always receives high status and as such it is considered as state property (Hirtt, 2005). Academics - the suppliers of knowledge - are often considered as sage and ethically endowed and are also, for the main part, responsible for carrying out

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¹ A approach that lacks the state policy and regulatory control in carrying out marketing activities.

research. This is why little academic research is conducted in order to better understand the practice of marketing activities in education, and its impact on development (Alam, 2008; Lynch, 2006).

The privatization of education can be seen as having an impact with positive and negative effect. However, one fact must be noted: the recent massive expansion of education through private provision has introduced new horizons in advertising for education (Mok et al., 2009; Svensson, 2002). No policies, principles or regulatory controls exist for the advertisement and promotion of education; consequently a 'market approach' is practiced (Alam, 2008). As stated, this may have either a positive or negative impact. In order to further explore the pluses and minuses as part of this research; some of the disadvantages of education marketing are noted:

- 1) Since the only goal of advertising or promotional activity carried by private education providers is to gain students, state goals, particularly the 'equality concept', are missing.
- 2) Education seeks funding from both the public and private sectors. Currently, advertising and promotional competition² between the providers forces higher tuition fees.
- 3) The formal language used in many of the marketing materials does not meet academic standards.

The above observations motivated an attempt to understand the impact of business marketing when applied to education. This paper seeks to answer the following research questions with regard to the study carried out in Bangladesh:

- 1) What type of marketing approach is currently practiced when marketing education?
- 2) What reasoning underpins the adoption of any particular approach to marketing?
- 3) What advantages and disadvantages result from the approach adopted?

Before identifying the research design, a literature review follows which will assist with understanding the discourse in general.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Criteria for marketing and advertising and their schemata in education have evolved out of historical social practices (Alam, 2008; Ssesanga, 2004). Interpretation of

² This competition is not necessarily for making education and institution familiar with the community.

social events is guided and constrained by the prevailing rationality, which itself reflects the dominant constellation of power. Lately, the operation of a business without being involved in marketing activities is virtually impossible. In the early 20th century, 'orthodox entrepreneurs' believed that a product and the quality of that product bore the fundamentals of promotion. As such, they ignored the role of formal advertising through media and felt that advertising was required only by those manufacturers whose products were substandard. Nowadays, such a concept is considered out of date (Eunec Conference, 2003). Every type of business, from the multinational company to the humble street grocer, gets involved with marketing (Kotler, 2006; Hirtt, 2005). Highlighted below are some of the more general advantages and disadvantages of marketing and advertising.

Advantages

Increasing the market size: Historically, people had no prior knowledge when modern, scientific products were introduced. Then the advertisement and promotion of new goods made people aware, helping them to avail themselves of and benefit from their use (Lynch, 2006). It can be said that an improved quality of life has been attained from the utilization of scientific innovation and technological advancement. This has become possible because of the rigorous marketing and promotional activity carried out by public and private initiatives. Education has now come to be considered as a fundamental need to be pursued, thanks to rigorous campaigning and promotion (Alam, 2008). Considering this, the promotion of any new product or piece of technology helps the individual decide to take advantage of that product or service. Product or service promotion creates a larger market, which sometimes encourages the product producer to lower the price, thus allowing more customers access to the benefits of that particular product (Hirtt, 2005).

Bridge between producer and customer: Good communications between customer and producer help recognition of a product's existing quality and can help identify any further need for development. Advertising and promotion not only provides the details of a product, but information as to how it should best be used. This increases benefits after a comparatively small investment of money and time (Kotler, 2006; Lynch, 2006). Within this context, advertising and promotion can act as the link between producer and customer.

Ensure competition: Customers will change their choice of product if the quality is not of the standard noted from advertising by the manufacturer or service operator. Ergo,

producers have to take care to ensure the product quality is as stated in the advertising. Falling short of the required standard may lose the market partially or even totally, as competitors will always note any advertising distributed by their competitors to make their own product and promotion policy-rich (Coulson, 2003).

Uplift the intention of the customer: Successful advertising and promotion can often create intense interest from consumers wishing to consume/use the product. Lynch (2006) asserts that customers remain keen to buy a product when affected by 'advertisement craze'. This situation creates a money market that breaks the 'money fridge' (Alam, 2008). A country with more idle money suffers from a 'liquidity crisis', which may hinder development. Thus, the 'money market' caused by the advertisement/promotional activity helps with the country's development (Kotler, 2006; Svensson, 2002).

Supplement the recreation activity of media: Historically, publicly funded media was the only tool for promoting recreation. Then, after a time, media providers began to earn significant sums of money from their commercials (Morzyk, 2008). This income reduced the pressure on public subsidies. More recently, the media has been fully controlled by private funding, with the largest portion of it gained from advertising income. In addition to providing financial support to the media, advertisements or commercials circulated for marketing purposes can also support alternative forms of recreation (Kotler, 2006; Hirtt, 2005). Producers may also choose to sponsor sports and other educational or recreational activities, which in turn subsidize the state budget for recreation.

Disadvantages

Increased production costs: Marketing activities can consume a large proportion of a company's total budget. For example, advertising consumes 72% of Coca-Cola's budget (Coulson, 2003). Within current practices, soft drink producer such as Coca-Cola are eager to compete with each other for a marketing 'show down', which does not essentially focus on the product itself, but will help the consumer be more alert to the finite details of their particular product and identify user benefits more readily (Kotler, 2006; Svensson, 2002). This type of competition does not create new markets (Lynch, 2006). For instance, when Coca-Cola and Pepsi were introduced in the market, advertising policies were not concentrated solely on competing with each other but also used an analytical approach to create a larger soft drinks market.

Currently, soft drink producers do not necessarily advertise to create a market or increase their market

share, more to competing with the others. Ultimately this will result in higher production costs and a therefore a higher retail price. So, in many cases, the poorer groups of societies find they cannot afford to purchase such soft drinks. While the advertisement of some products (that is, soft drinks, 'hard' drinks, fast food) in developed countries³ helps to create a 'money market' by breaking into liquid reserves, people in underdeveloped countries are unable to progress to this level in the money markets via advertising, as many are denied access to even the basic fundamentals (Coulson, 2003). Advertising costs may increase production costs to such an extent that these people are unlikely ever to experience the perceived benefits of such products.

Unfair competition: Production of a quality product requires significant levels of funding. As a result, the quality of the product itself and service levels remain secondary. Conversely, an advertising campaign that consumes a higher proportion of the money available is considered to be the first option for marketing purposes. A parallel investment towards quality control as well as advertising and promotion needs large amounts of funding, so that producers and service providers can put their efforts into advertising and not into quality control (Coulson, 2003).

Loss of civic value: Advertisement and promotional activities connected to social development and awareness give high priority to ethics and civic values. A commercial business will concentrate on increasing profits. In order to catch their target market, producers use eye-catching advertisements that might have a negative impact on social ethics and values (Hirtt, 2005). For example, while state and donor agencies put their best efforts into ensuring students follow lessons in detail, the advertising and promotional policies adopted by some organizations (that is, Ice-cream Company, publishers of story and cartoon books) are committed to teach an attitude that interrupts the students' concentration on the lesson.

Conflict with national aims and objectives: In some countries, a number of problems are caused by advertisements that contradict the national aims and objectives may be noticed. For instance, Morrow and Barraclough (2003) finds that, while the government in Malaysia and the Philippines are committed to reducing the number of people who smoke, unsurprisingly, cigarette companies do not support the government. The vigorous marketing campaigns carried out by cigarette companies put the government's efforts into a 'wastage

³ Where a decent fiscal policy is in place to narrow the gap of living standard of different groups

box'. The government of the USA and some other countries do not like their adolescent children to talk on their mobile phones instead of studying and sleeping at night. However, mobile providers offer special packages aimed at this particular group. This huge promotional activity of the mobile phone providers makes the government's campaigning ineffective.

Building a uniform culture: According to Alam (2008) the culture of Southern Asian countries is rapidly becoming more of a western pattern. He identifies that private education entrepreneurs support and promote the practice of western culture through their marketing activities. These days, producers do not just market their products, but also promote western culture in order to catch the attention of the potential client. Practice of different types of culture within one geographic boundary and having same kind of religious faith may restrict the building of a distinct national character (Lynch, 2006). Without a national character, achieving desired levels of development is constrained.

BRAND MARKETING

The concept of branding is not a new phenomenon. However, the marketing of brands is a relatively recent concept. These days, branding is obsessive and many producers choose not to sell their products under their own name, but prefer to seek the help of a particular brand for marketing purposes. This usually results in a higher price for the product, which will limit the consumption capacity of underprivileged groups (Coulson, 2003).

There is another type of brand marketing, which does not provide details of product and benefits but focuses on the identity of producers and sellers. For instance, a number of universities do not focus on the quality of the course and the part it plays in national development while carrying out promotional activities. They concentrate on promoting their name and the eminent persons involved with their establishment. Hence, we may note that some social services and awareness activities, as well as education, health, and gender equality, require marketing as social responsibility (Holbrook, 2005). For instance, students and their parents may have misconceptions about a course. They may believe that this particular course will improve employment prospects. However, academics with more information and knowledge may judge that this particular course could result in unsuitable employment for the graduates because of the incorrect perceptions of employers. So employment at such positions does not provide a significant contribution towards national development. In such circumstances, the marketing responsibilities of the university should make it

clear to the students in undertaking such courses by providing awareness through accurate data and information. But unfortunately, many of the universities are doing business using the 'innocent ignorance' of students through ostensible brand marketing policy. This may be of benefit to the university and the individual who pursues the course, but ultimately contributes very little towards state development. It also provides inverse returns, as the time and money invested to gain such an education is a poor investment (Alam, 2008).

GENESIS OF EDUCATION AND ITS MARKETING

Guru-Shishsho provision

Education in Southern Asia was introduced through a process known as 'Guru- Shishsho'. An individual with good analytical knowledge was considered a 'Guru' and his or her followers were known as 'Shishsho'. Exercising knowledge through Guru-Shishsho had always been a fundamental part of education in Bangladesh. With the gradual increase in demand for education in contemporary Bangladesh, there has been an increase in formal education provision, although many acknowledge that education should be the fundamental concern of public policy (Alam, 2008). However, before the introduction of formal education provision, education was a trade limited to the house of a privileged group, known as lodging master provision.

Tutor/Lodging-master

Altbach (1999), Al-Samarrai (2001) and Alam (2008) claim that this style of education is the first stage in the history of education. They assert that, before the introduction of a formal school system in many British colonies and similar regions, privileged parents (for example, landlords, district commissioners, district clerks) would employ private tutors (known as a lodging-master in certain countries) to educate their children.

Research by Tooley (1999) suggests that this style of education has remained in many developing countries, even after the introduction of a formal schooling system. However, the prime purpose of private education is to help the economically elite primary and secondary students improve upon their school performance, in order to help them complete further education where access is limited.

Formal schooling

Gaining education and knowledge through 'Guru-Shishsho' tutors and lodging-master provision has become increasingly popular as communities come to realize the importance of education. The wiser members of a community establish schools through community

participation. Although some research (Hasan et al., 1994) alleges that community participation is a new concept in education, Alam (2008) demonstrates that it has a long history and heritage. According to Narayan (1995) communities collected subscriptions in a variety of forms (money, rice, bamboo) in order to establish schools. Once a school was established, the government took on the responsibility of running the school, putting into place public policies and administration. The government would also ensure some level of community participation in management of a school through the involvement of a managing committee. Nowadays, education is considered a development tool and public and private initiatives are involved at every level – primary, secondary and tertiary (Narayan, 1995).

Marketing practice in education

Marketing of education is not a new concept. The state, partners for development, controlling agencies and providers (schools, colleges, universities, public and private provision) involve themselves in the marketing of education long ago. The state and partners are committed to ensuring that the beam of education enters every household and, to make education popular, different types of education marketing have already been put into place. The purpose of such marketing activities is to make the education 'product' popular. This type of education marketing can be identified as product marketing.

Product marketing of education was introduced at an early stage in the history of education, making the product of education popular within communities. Afterwards, more marketing was carried out in an attempt to make different areas of learning (such as science, commerce, arts, vocational) popular. Success with such types of marketing has created a huge and diverse market. These days, a significant number of 'customers' are ready to procure different types and levels of education and this has resulted in the expansion of private education. Private provision is now available at every level of education (that is, primary, secondary and tertiary). However, it is mainly centred around tertiary, training and admission coaching options as there is little public funding available. The rapid expansion of private education has resulted in the introduction of a 'brand marketing' concept.

In consideration of marketing practice in education, it may be noted that three main types of approach currently exist: 'product', 'category' and 'brand' marketing.

State and donor agencies are heavily involved in the marketing of education as a product. Moreover, to ensure gender and other equality (That is economic, urban and rural, ethnic minority) in education, a 'demographic seg-

mentation concept' of marketing education is also introduced. While religious groups involve themselves in product marketing, they also work to establish 'psychographic segmentation' of marketing in education to reflect their outlook. The introduction and rapid expansion of education through private provision opens up the marketing horizon of 'geographic segmentation' in education in order to service the targeted elite groups.

Segmentation of marketing in education provides different services to different groups and communities, and that should generally bring about a number of advantages and disadvantages. For the main part, this research investigates the advantages and disadvantages that have evolved through the business marketing approach to education in Bangladesh. It adopts the following research design:

Methodological approach

A primarily qualitative approach to the collection of data was carried out throughout the project. This was considered to be the most appropriate approach given the nature of the question and the circumstances of the research, which was limited in terms of small size of the sample of faculty members and students, and of the time available (Bell, 1999). Triangulation was required to promote the objectivity of the research (Cohen et al., 2002). As researchers with a background in educational management, we were aware of our own cultural history and our ability to be completely objective. We tried to be aware of possible power issues that might arise from particular positions within the research process, where perceived power differences could affect the data collection or the way it was analysed.

Document review: The main subject of this paper is advertisements as published by educational institutions in local daily newspapers. In order to identify the pattern of an organisation and its operational philosophy and outlook, the quantity, language and style of advertisements published by various organisations in different media was to be examined. The advertisements published in seven national daily newspapers within the last three months were studied in order to examine the ongoing business position of education. The reason for selecting seven newspapers was that each of the newspapers reflected a specific outlook; it had been proven by earlier research that at least five of the country's newspapers cover a huge reader population.

Electronic media was not considered seriously as the target student population was found to watch international/Indian TV channels for the most part, in which commercials are dominated by international/Indian business organisations. Leaflets, posters, banners and

prospectus were reviewed.

This study also considered the opinion of a number of people working at various levels with different types of education providers (kindergarten, secondary school, university and coaching centre) through semi-structured interviews.

Semi-structured interviews by qualitative approach were held with: 1) Key personnel at the Ministry of Education in Bangladesh; 2) Key personnel at the University; 3) Grants Commission of Bangladesh; 4) Key personnel in the public and private education sector; 5) Lecturers/teachers in the public and private education sector; 6) Social elites with a reputation as an educator; 7) Guardians of students in both the public and private education sector, and 8) Students.

Other data was collected by an empirical data survey⁴ approach. This approach was considered most appropriate for people who were easily accessible.

Questionnaires were used for: 1) Lecturers/teachers selected at random from the public and private education sectors; 2) Staff at private and public education sectors, selected at random; 3) Students in the private and public sectors, selected at random; 4) Students preparing for an admission test for the public and private education sectors, selected at random.

The opportunity to ask relevant questions of the policymakers, legislators and stakeholders was available in an interview session. Non-participatory observation was also deemed important.

In addition, a number of official and/or unpublished documents and newspaper articles were studied for this research.⁵

OBSERVATION

Facilities for lectures were observed. The paper will concentrate on the use of data collected through document review and observation. In addition, 12 years spent working alongside the Bangladesh education system allows for some of the arguments to reflect personal observation during that time.

Before analyzing the findings, it should be noted that this is the first study of its nature to be conducted in Bangladesh.

⁴ quantitative

⁵ Since no academic research has been conducted, news paper articles and policy/official documents would be secondary source of the data collection.

Findings and Discussion

Current approach of marketing in education

The language used in the advertisements published by educational institutions in Bangladesh makes it clear that motivation behind private education in the country is business-orientated. It is interesting to note that 78.98% of all advertisements in daily newspapers are published by the education sector and, within that percentage, 97.65% are published by the private education sector.

The remaining percentage is published by NGO and government provision. The institutions also publish promotional material such as leaflets, posters, banners, and prospectus. Academics indicate that, on average, more than 37% of the total budget available is allocated to the commercial marketing of an institution. The above data confirms that a significant amount of available funding is set aside for advertising, and it is therefore important to understand the purpose and impact of the huge funds invested.

Closer inspection of the published advertisements reveals that 94.46% is concentrated on marketing the actual institution. Only a few NGOs and institutions working in the fields of technical and vocational education, and newer areas of training and education, use a smaller portion of the funds for marketing their new products as well as marketing their institutions. None of the institutions surveyed appear to be interested in marketing a complete educational product, or a specific product of education. The institutions are too busy with marketing themselves. They work in areas of education which have already become popular as a result of 'misinformed and market-driven' promotion, or in a market created through an 'education product' approach.

Most private institutions target groups that can afford to pay higher tuition fees. To examine this more closely, data at Figures 1, 2 and 3 represents the views of three groups: private higher education teachers (PVHT); public higher education teachers (PUHT); and private higher education staff (PVST). Table 1 and 2. This will be directed towards the family circumstances of students at private universities.

In this context, it is worth noting that a considerable number of students at private education institutions do not have the necessary qualifications⁶ for the programme of study they are taking (interview with students and their parents, and teachers, based at a private university). It is

⁶ Few respondents studying for a Bachelor (Hon) degree in the private HE sector, especially university provision, pass SSC and 'O' level but to study a Bachelor course, students have to have at least HSC or 'A' level.

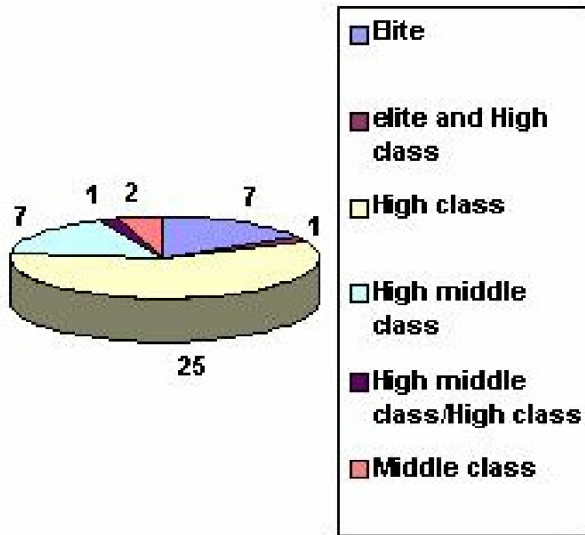


Figure 1. Private HE teachers.

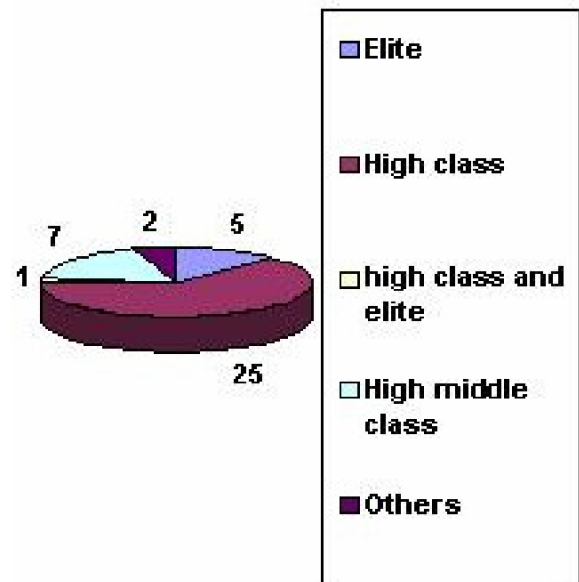


Figure 2. Private HE staff.

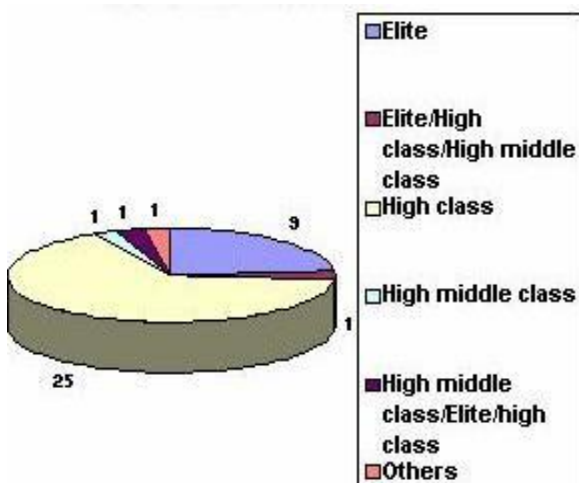


Figure 2. Public HE teachers.

also important to note that many students in the private education sector are sponsored by one or both parents (interview with parents and students based at a private university). There are cases where students studying for an MBA or other professional degree are self-financing. Conversely, many students in public education are financed by relatives other than their parents (interview with teachers at a public university).

Earlier, private education institutes would target students from an elite, high class family background; therefore, marketing activities were mainly based in Dhaka and other metropolitan cities. Recently, some

private institutions have targeted students from middle and higher-middle class families and, as a result, marketing activities have not only broadened into cosmopolitan cities but also into some richer districts. Little effort is made by private institutions to attract people from different religious backgrounds. Advertisements for some of the institutions focus on specific groups with interests dominated by western culture.

In order to cover different groups and outlooks, approaches adopted in the advertising policies of different institutions include the 'demographic', 'psychographic' and 'geographic' segmentation of marketing in education. However, it is important to note that, although three distinct marketing segments are being practiced, all of the effort is directed towards marketing the institution. Almost no effort is made to market the product. Given the nature of the marketing process, general product marketing or specific product marketing in education is lacking. Institutions do not currently carry out 'education product' marketing; rather they are harvesting the 'education product marketing' cultivated earlier or the 'misguided market' developed more recently.

Government and development parents mainly practice marketing activities to include underprivileged groups, with a particular focus on girls and young women. The introduction of new courses and different styles of education suited to the Bangladesh economy is almost zero and thus, new educational products are not available. Although a few private institutions of education offer some courses that they claim are new products, further investigation disproves this. Upon making further

Table 1. On the issue of 'economically solvent but academically poor' students admitted to the private HE sector.

	Academically poor but economically solvent students		
	True	Fairly true	False
PVST	75%	20%	0
PUHT	89.47%	7.89%	0
PVHT	83.72%	16.27%	0

Table 2. On the issue of 'meritorious but economically poor students not capable of being admitted to a private university/institution.

	Meritorious but economically poor students not capable		
	True	Fairly True	False
PVST	75%	21%	0
PUHT	92.10%	5.26%	0
PVHT	76.74%	18.60%	4

enquiries, it becomes clear that such private institutions do not offer new courses; they simply rename their old courses. An observation by an academic is noted:

“Renaming a course¹ without making essential changes cannot distinguish the actual job market for business graduates and their competence in carrying out the job. Business graduates are not working in their own field: they are working in an area that would have been filled previously by Commerce graduates. Accordingly, offering Business Studies cannot open up new employment markets for the graduates.”

The Government occasionally focuses on types of product marketing in training provision through the Ministry of Labour and Manpower and the Ministry of Youth and Sports. The main objective of this kind of marketing approach is to attract school leavers to job-oriented training programmes.

In conclusion, we must note that within the current climate, the creation of new products in the Bangladesh education system is limited. This restricts the practice of the product marketing concept in education. Institutions of education are not concentrating on the creation of new educational products suited to the development of Bangladesh and its workforce pattern. Institutes of educa-

tion have increased their education marketing budget, but their activities are geared towards marketing the institution. This attitude will probably provide Bangladesh with an educated community, but it will, at the same time, lose our research capabilities in education. This will ultimately bring danger as we will no longer be able to develop our educational materials and the system. Moreover, new education products related to national development will only happen if noteworthy research contributes to the creation of new education products. The creation of new education products, and marketing those products, motivates academics to contribute more to multi-diversified areas and disciplines. Some impacts of education marketing are noted here; further details will be found under the section 'Advantages and Disadvantages'. However, before moving to the advantages and disadvantages, the reasons for adopting such approaches will be outlined below.

Reasons for adopting a Business Marketing approach

“We have invested a huge amount of money, time and resources in order to do the business. We are not a charitable organization. Businesses always believe in profit and our success is only measured through the amount of profit gained. The Government does not provide us with funds and it is the time for 'free economic market', thus gaining profit is the only motive. Considering this, we should adopt such marketing as ensures our profit. Ensuring social awareness, value and ethics is not the area of our concern. It must be the concern of Government, so they should do their work. The

¹ For example, the renaming of Bachelor of Commerce in Accounts as Bachelor of Business Administration – Accounting.

Government also needs to find out the mechanism to make us obliged to help with development, otherwise we must follow the 'survival of the fittest formula' to remain in the market and gain profits."

The above statement, made by an entrepreneur at a private university, indicates a number of issues related to the adoption of such marketing approaches. However, in principle, both Government and business organizations /business forums work to ensure a balanced economic development (for different groups, privileged, and under-privileged), social development, and values and ethics; although the Government is mainly accountable. With the current governance and regulatory controls involved with the management of education as a whole, it has failed to retain this principle, never mind the marketing issues, as there is no such regulatory approach.

An observation made by another entrepreneur working with a private institution of higher education is similar in a number of ways, but some new issues were added:

"Even if you put our best efforts into marketing activities that would make students aware of courses that are important for our national development, our activities would not enjoy a greater success. Students and parents have a strong perception and if we try to change their attitude, we will lose the potential market, so many providers are happy to respond to their incorrect perceptions. Thus, it is only the Government who can shoulder the responsibility. However, the Government lacks decent intentions and does not have the correct data that the link between courses and the labor market needs². On the other hand, if we talk about social and cultural issues practiced within the marketing of education, it is a complex area. Our target group of the population is teenagers. While a large proportion of our population overall is attracted by the western culture, this trend within the teenage age group is extremely high. Within our current practices, we are not making them feel obliged towards our own social culture and glue; rather we are promoting a western culture and glue, as this is the easy way to catch the market. Promoting western culture and social issues is not always bad but in our country, it is creating more of a generation gap.

Swift shifting from one to another is creating more different groups, and this is hindering our desired course of development and restricting us from gaining a distinct national character. This is obstructing the development of Bangladesh given the nature of our social culture and heritage".

Both parents and students stress that the institution of education should work towards promoting local culture, ethics and values while they carry out their marketing activities (data from questionnaire). Although, while the interviews with parents assert the same, interviews with students show that they are more interested in enjoying those marketing and promotional activities that are committed to promoting western cultures and values. The gap between interview data and data from questionnaires was revealed to be because students did not wish to express their change of attitude in the written word.

Data gained through questionnaires with students and parents shows that, when students are in a position to procure tertiary education, they have made their minds up to seek a few particular courses. These include medicine, a few engineering courses, and business administration. Most of the students and their parents have little idea about the contribution that the courses might have on national development. Nor do the institutions of education have any clear understanding about any contribution these courses might make towards national development. A similar situation is to be found at every level of education in Bangladesh. The aim of each student is to gain a higher education, and this trend is very noticeable within the privileged groups, who want to achieve higher education at any cost - even if they are less able or even unable to take the challenges involved with higher education. The purpose of every type of education in Bangladesh is to cater for the student wanting to go on to higher education. Producing a competent workforce for a world of work is entirely absent from the Bangladeshi education system.

In conclusion, marketing activities in education undertaken by private education institutes are driven by a 'market approach'. This approach can be taken as there is no attempt at regulatory control made by the Government. The Government is reluctant to introduce regulatory mechanisms for private institutions of education, as it is students from privileged backgrounds who are the consumers. This particular group also receives job market benefits by maintaining its high profile. Obtaining an entry level job in Bangladesh does not always require an education matched to the profession, rather it demands a higher degree. The main objective of private education consumers is to achieve a higher education. Thus, once a goal is set up and a product is identified, no commitment for 'product marketing' is required. Here, the

²The respondent wanted mean that there is a shortage of adequate data on supply and demand side. Moreover, policy-makers lack intention to work on the manpower planning using major economic sector as key indicators.

consumers and providers have understood that the ultimate product is 'higher education'. Even marketing activities such as those practiced by a coaching center (admission aid provider) working for different levels of education such as primary, secondary, higher secondary, cater for children ready for higher education. Given the needs of the customer, and the intentions of the providers, it is impossible to emphasize a 'product marketing concept' in education sector in Bangladesh.

Advantages

This research does not find many advantages of the current practice of marketing activities while disadvantages are manifold. The notable benefits are that students and parents can find out an institution of education easily. However, one academia observes that; "Huge marketing activities implemented by the education institution cost us more, although it may help to have some very basic information of the institute. I believe that collecting this information is easier because of the marketing activities but we need to focus more on the information about course and curricula and their relevance on development. If this information is provided, students will receive more benefit. However, this is not the marketing policy of Bangladesh; our policy-makers always deem that western countries should invent the new courses and their potential on development thus marketing for courses and curricula and providing information on linkage between development and particular course is not our prime duties.

Alam (2008) says that private institutions are more informed when compared to their public counterparts due to their modern selling tactics. They utilise every available source³ (web-pages, leaflets, prospectus, banners, sponsoring of sport) to publicise information about the institution and its courses in order to attract students. Moreover, employers can access information about course content, which helps them choose the right person for vacancies or the right course for their employee's further study.

Disadvantages

Higher tuition costs: Data surveyed from five private universities, 10 private colleges and 25 coaching centers reveals that private universities spend 27% of their total

³ Some of the research finds that by advertising 'aggressively', they are mis-utilising finances and bringing 'calumny' practices into education.

budget on marketing activities; colleges 18% and coaching centers 51%. We were surprised to learn that one college, having a number of education enterprises, spent no less than 68% of its total budget on marketing. As identified earlier, the purpose of marketing activities undertaken by education institutions is to compete against each other, in a similar way to that found amongst soft drinks manufacturers. Consequently, this attitude only ensures that the money spent on marketing must come from higher tuition fees. It is also important to note that, while education institutions spend a large proportion of their funds on marketing, how can they provide a high quality academic atmosphere with the little money remaining. It is, therefore, no surprise to see that most of the institutions provide a poor quality education within a poor infrastructure.

Contrast with the local culture and value: According to 56% of academics and 72% of parents, a number of advertisements published in print media or broadcast through electronic media are not culturally acceptable. One parent said:

"A number of institutions working in the field of textiles are using images and animations of nude women. I personally do not feel that this either relates to our culture or academic atmosphere and ideology. An academy is a place for exercising knowledge and practicing modest culture."

Another parent commented:

"I wanted to send my son to a public university but I was bound, since he had been attracted to the western culture⁴ practiced in the private university. He did not even attend an admission test for the public university. Unfortunately, my son has become a drug addict and my husband always blames me for not being a good guardian. The activities and surroundings marketed by private institutions are somehow made attractive to teenagers. These institutions should take guardianship responsibilities but unfortunately, they consider students as the commodity for them to gain profits."

Academically substandard language: Scanning advertisements published in print media reveals that many coaching centers fail to use academic language. Although most of the advertisements are published in Bengali, there is no evidence of a good vocabulary or

⁴ Parents and student in Bangladesh have a misconception of western culture.

phrasing. Much of the language used is substandard and could even be classed as unsuitable for spoken informal communication within an academic environment, let alone written. The adverts carry many grammatical and spelling mistakes. Some coaching centers offer language training, especially in English, claiming that students will be able to speak and write the language correctly within three days. Has the method yet been invented whereby a complete novice may learn English in three days? It is shocking and surprising to note that private universities use written language incorrectly. We do not expect such poor standards from non-academic commercial enterprises, let alone academic ones.

Concluding remarks and suggestions

The above discussion confirms that marketing efforts are limited to marketing institutions. The private sector plays almost no part in marketing the 'education product' as a whole. Nevertheless, no institution of education (either public or private) is engaged in the development of new courses and curricula suited to the development of Bangladesh (Bartlett et al, 2004). Education institutions do not feel the need to carry out product marketing in education – they are working in areas that are already popular. The courses are popular because they are similar to those being taught in western countries, where product marketing has already been carried out by the universities. Unfortunately, education institutions in Bangladesh are delivering the courses without justifying their need or contribution to national development. Moreover, the institutions fail to amend the course or curricula to make it more suited to a Bangladeshi context, and feel no urge or enthusiasm for product marketing. Indeed, such a situation restricts the educational institutions to limit them solely to marketing the institute.

Development partners (UNESCO, UNICEF, ILO) utilize some types of product marketing for education using particular segments suited to their specific outlooks. Bangladesh is an undeveloped country and overall product marketing in education is important; ample space remains for product marketing in education in just such a developing country (Alam, 2008). Increased product marketing in education motivates academics and researchers to invent new courses and to update existing courses, making them more suitable and needs-based for development. A few suggestions follow that may help to instigate a better use of private money invested in education through the initiative of marketing activities.

- 1) The Government should provide basic guidelines for publicizing institutes of education, coupled with monitoring to ensure that the rules are being followed.
- 2) The Government should provide guidelines and

recommendations as to the proportion of an institution's total budget that is to be spent on advertising and promotion.

3) The Government should ensure that institutes of education are obliged to carry out research in order to create courses and curricula suited to the Bangladesh economy.

4) Where institutes of education run western-style courses, it is important that the necessary changes are made to make them suitable for the Bangladesh economy. Industries and school resources, such as Bangladesh teachers and other facilities within the Industrial environment and culture, are incompatible with the western style of education and learning.

Once Bangladesh has achieved the above, a number of new courses and curricula especially suited to the needs of the country should be in place. Under the changed circumstances, the requisite atmosphere for education institutions to direct their efforts towards the 'product marketing' of education will be in place. Ultimately, this will ensure better use of the private money invested.

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