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Bangladesh Import Education from New Zealand: Opportunities & Challenges

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**Abstract**

Bangladesh is an emerging economy and has been earning about 7% GDP growth during the last two decades. It has 150 universities which can accommodate 3 million students. Every year, about 5 million young students enter university level education. Therefore, about 2 million young people desire to move overseas for higher education. Existing literature focusses on the need for young generation to go overseas for higher education but the challenges as well as opportunities for studying overseas have not been addressed. This study aims to investigate the opportunities and challenges for Bangladeshi students in choosing New Zealand as a study destination.

**Key words:** New Zealand; Bangladesh; education export; opportunity; challenge

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**1. Introduction**

Bangladesh is a South-Asian developing country flourishing in the world market. The country's fast escalation is influenced by the development among its common folk where the youth are fascinated by overseas qualification. The historical background of the nation motivates its citizen's drive for knowledge and self-development. There is a common belief all over the nation that "Education is the backbone of a nation". However, the scarcity of resources limits the country's ability to ensure higher education for all its meritorious students.

Although the government subsidises primary, secondary and even higher secondary education to some extent all over the country, the policy makers are unable to facilitate quality higher education for all of them. Only those who obtained promotion in higher secondary school and desire to continue studying are subsidised. There is tough competition among students for admission in the public universities which can be roughly estimated as ten thousand students fighting to secure one seat in a public university. This hardcore competition leads to a particular group of students with sufficient financial support looking for higher study opportunities abroad.

On the other hand, New Zealand, is a developed country located in the southwestern Pacific Ocean. The country is well reputed for providing world class quality education and offers a wide range of student visa facilities each year to gain the attention of international students. Like all other developed western countries New Zealand exports education and its immigration office introduced the specific set of rules and regulation for international students.

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The major target market is Asian countries such as China, India, Pakistan, Philippines, etc. There are a large number of students from Japan, Russia, South Korea, Middle East countries and so on. The country is well known for offering excellent study opportunities and support services by ensuring a safe learning environment.

## **2. Background**

A majority of Bangladeshi students who are capable of studying by self-funding prefer to study in United States of America, United Kingdom, Canada, Germany, Japan, and some other developed countries. Some excellent students look for international scholarships. Each year a large number of students go for higher studies to its neighbouring country, India. New Zealand's education export market is expanding to Bangladesh gradually. The global recession in 2008-2009 resulted in a downfall in American and European economies and diverted Bangladeshi students' attention from those countries towards New Zealand. At the same time, changes in New Zealand Immigration rules and regulations to boost up this industry resulted in more Bangladeshi students considering this country as their next destination. As New Zealand ensures quality education at cheaper cost compared to USA or Europe, significant numbers of Bangladeshi students are interested in choosing New Zealand for higher studies.

New Zealand's education system follows the British education system. The country has eight public institutions and some tertiary and private institutions for offering education to its domestic as well as international students. A wide range of academic, professional and vocational studies are offered at universities, polytechnics, colleges of education, secondary schools and private training establishments. However, all international education providers are bound to offer pastoral care service to International students under the Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International students. This is actually a document introduced in 2002 to ensure the high standard of pastoral care to meet international students' needs and to secure a safe and quality learning platform (New Zealand Tourist Guide Report, 2015). Thus, the scholarship opportunity for an international student is very limited in this country. In spite of this, New Zealand is one of the major destinations for higher education among Asian countries including Bangladesh.

Bangladesh's education system is quite similar to the British education system. The whole system is divided into five levels from primary to tertiary. The country introduced the slogan "Education for all" to facilitate and to create concern for education at the grassroot level. Although the Government encouraged spreading the light of education among its local folk at all levels, poor to rich, the country's infrastructure and resources are not well equipped to ensure higher education for all. There are a significant number of educational institutions all over the nation along with 29 public universities. However, the public universities' limited capacity makes a large number of students to turn towards private universities.

Private universities charge high tuition fee. The quality of education varies widely based on the education provider's service price. Moreover, only a few Bangladeshi education providers are recognised worldwide. The best example in this circumstance is Dhaka University. On the other hand, private universities' quality of education and brand value affects its students' career path. This indicates, a significant number of students pay highly for securing their basic right to education but obtain ill-treatment due to the country's insufficient resources. To avoid this obvious scenario, each year a remarkable number of youth target overseas educational institutions that provide quality education with nearly the same cost that a renowned private institution of the nation offers. Compared to other developed

countries, the cost of education imported from New Zealand is comparatively cheaper. Moreover, the country's socio-economic condition and recognition as the world's top listed safe nation encourage students as well as their parents to consider New Zealand as their next destination for higher education.

### **3. Literature Review**

New Zealand an island nation in the southwestern Pacific Ocean country has limited hard power but an extensive amount of soft power assets in terms of students, soldiers, sports, sheep and silver screen. One of the major sources of New Zealand's soft power intensity is internationalisation of its education sector that resulted in New Zealand having one of the highest permanent inflows of migrants per capita among countries belonging to the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

Within OECD countries, New Zealand is the eighth largest recipient of international students with the highest per capita rate that is 15 international students per 1000 and among them, with 75 per cent of them coming from Asia. Education is one of the top export earning generators for this country. Apart from cultural, social and historical diversities, New Zealand's economic links with South Asia are only part of its engagement with that region as the country shares domestic values with multiple South Asian countries including China, Japan, Korea, India and its neighbouring countries. Internationalisation of New Zealand's education system results under the Commonwealth bond that drew Colombo Plan that was incepted in 1950. Since then, several thousand students moved toward New Zealand under the Colombo Plan from India, Sri Lanka, South Korea and some other nations.

Although the plan was intended to last a few years, its impact was long lasting for the education industry of New Zealand. The rate of international students that moved to New Zealand declined significantly after the discontinuation of the Colombo Plan. Yet the number of fee-paying students was noticeable, which contributed to drawing the government's attention for introducing effective initiatives to flourish this industry (Butcher, 2012).

There are approximately 400 secondary schools and most of them are state-funded. On the other hand, there are 27 English language schools affiliated to New Zealand universities or polytechnics and over 100 private language institutions. Most of the private institutions are registered under New Zealand Qualification Authority (NZQA) to ensure the quality of education in tandem with world standards. Although all the tertiary institutions and eight state-owned universities are offering a number of courses in Bachelors, Masters and Doctoral degrees from the field of Commerce, Science and Arts, New Zealand is considered as world leader in some disciplines such as bioscience, biological technology, creative & innovative research, including resource management and indigenous issues.

The country has 21 state-funded Polytechnics and institutes of technology that offer both academic and applied skills. The New Zealand Government introduces a specific set of rules and regulation to boost its education industry and ensure international students' hassle free knowledge acquiring journey. With that aim, New Zealand introduced the mandatory Code of Practice with pastoral care provisions for all international students' well being. Furthermore, anyone with visitor visa may study in New Zealand for less than three months without needing student permits (Stevens, 2015).

The education industry plays a vital role in the economic growth of New Zealand along with establishing international relations, human capital development and acquisition of highly skilled people. As an international education exporter, New Zealand's economy earned \$2.5 billion in 2012. Thus, the

government established ambitious goals with an estimated additional earning of \$2.3 billion per year from this sector that is desired to be achieved by 2025. The major objective is to double the annual value to \$5 billion by increasing enrollments of international students.

To achieve this objective New Zealand specified a set of goals such as:

- Increase offshore education service revenue by approximately \$0.5 billion per year.
- Increase number of students enrolled in providers offshore from 3000 to 10000.
- Double the international postgraduate students from 10000 to 20000.
- Increase visa transition rate from student to resident from bachelor level qualifications and above.
- Improve cross culture literacy through skill and knowledge acquiring.

However, regulatory changes and natural calamities resulted in diminishing number of international student enrollments in 2012, but increased international tuition revenue for external factors like currency valuation. New Zealand's total international student ration consists of 70 per cent from Asian sub-continent, where a large portion of them come from China (27 per cent), followed by India (12 per cent). A significant number of international students eventually enrol as domestic students for Ph.D. programs in different universities of the nation.

Bangladesh's education sector is developing and changing gradually. According to the data provided in the Ministry of Education website, in 1972 the education ministry was grouped together with Ministry of Education, Religion, Sports & Cultural Affairs. Since the end of 1974, Ministry of Education and Cultural Affairs was separated from and by 1984 it was renamed as Ministry of Education, Science & Technology and in 1993 a separate education body the Ministry of Education (MOE) was established. The MoE formulates laws, rules and regulations for the management and administration of post-primary education sector and its institutions. The post-primary education sector consists of schools, colleges, madrasahs, technical schools and colleges, polytechnic institutes, engineering colleges and universities. The current scenario of this sector encompasses 35,121 post primary secondary schools/colleges/madrasahs, 37 public universities and 86 private universities (MoE, 2008).

The National University of the nation was formed in 1992 as an umbrella organisation for all colleges that offer bachelors and masters level programs. However, getting admission for higher education is the toughest competition for students who pass the higher secondary school certificate (HSC) exam. Admission in public universities depends upon certain grade point achieved in the HSC exam combined with university entrance examination results. Nevertheless, the current capacity of public universities fail to accommodate even 10 per cent of that age group. Therefore, there is an increased number of ~~the~~ private institutions ~~is~~ offering this higher education facility but the quality varies widely. A total of 1,970 institutions encompassing public institutions, private institutions, international universities as well as specialised colleges offers higher education all over the country, yet the education system of the country has not been formalised properly.

There is no formal qualification framework and quality assurance or accreditation system. Commercialisation of higher education in private universities reinforcing a mismatched among education quality provided by public and private universities through Universities Grants Commission. UGC is responsible for promoting and coordinating private universities' education quality while public universities practised autonomy policy. UGC only plays the role to ensure that an institution meets with minimum requirements ~~up~~ in respect of opening and operation of its business of providing ~~of~~ education

Surprisingly, Bangladesh does not have any educational treaties with any nation all over the world (EP-Nuffic, 2012).

A study on cross-cultural communication indicates a trend of Bangladeshi students in selecting overseas countries for higher education is shifting towards Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, and Malaysia. Students preferred New Zealand for its quality education, safe and secure environment, affordable tuition fees including living cost, flexible and innovative degree programs, etc (Ali & Subramaniam, 2010).

All the above-mentioned articles and dataset explicitly explain the current scenario of the Bangladesh and New Zealand education industries. From the discussion, it can be seen that while New Zealand is focusing on expanding its educational industry beyond its national boundary as a major source of export income, Bangladesh is struggling to manage its education sector properly in order to use it as infrastructure for national growth and development. However, none of the articles identify the facts regarding developing or identifying opportunities for New Zealand to expand its educational contribution in terms of trade in Bangladesh. The demand for quality education in Bangladesh is notable, but the country has limited capacity to meet that demand.

On the other hand, New Zealand's international education industry highly depends on South Asian countries and a major portion of this industry is captured by India and China. The unrevealed fact in the above discussion is that New Zealand considers India and its neighbouring countries as Indian subcontinent in terms of expanding its educational business. Thus, the total number of Indian students is compiled from the number of students from Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka etc. There are scarce resources to supply quality education in Bangladesh and that indicates that Bangladesh could be a valuable source of supply of international students for New Zealand. The quality of education in this third world nation is below the international standards, but New Zealand's education is world-wide recognised.

Hence, there is a huge scope for New Zealand to easily attract Bangladeshi students. However, to develop a bilateral export trade relationship with this third world nation, New Zealand faces some challenges related with the standard of education which varies widely among these two nations. Besides, complex visa procedures result in a lack of students' interest towards New Zealand. There are some other challenges to establishing educational trade relations between Bangladesh and New Zealand which is yet to be recognised. These challenges include extensive high tuition fees that is affected with currency appreciation and depreciation. Governmental policy regarding fund transferring is another source of challenge.

#### **4. Scenerio of Education Sector of Bangladesh**

Bangladesh is a developing country. The country's rapid growth is as a result of its highly ambitious young generation. A majority of the common folk of this nation recognise the necessity of education for self-development. Thus, even those who belong to the lower middle-class socio-economic level are more conscious about their children's education. However, the country's educational infrastructure, lack of resources to provide support to this large demand, socio-political environment as well as corruption and other malpractice hinders this growth. The government emphasises education at primary level but insufficient resource and mismanagement restricts the nation's capacity to offer better quality of education.

Available data shows that the education sector of Bangladesh has been improving and there is a positive changing pattern. Compared to 2008, the number of institutions and the number of enrolment both appreciably increased in 2012 and resulted in an approximate average increment in GRE by 13% and in NRE by 34.93%. At the same time, the drop rate decreased by 16.73%. All these statistics prove that the country's education sector is changing gradually. However, the demand for education and the increase in number of educational institutions cannot justify the need for quality education in Bangladesh (BANBEIS 2012).

Table 1: Number of students in 2011 and 2012.

Comparison					
2011			2012		
HSC	Post-HSC	Total	University	Total Tertiary	Gap
1897339	161195	2058534	485292	1915739	142795

Source: BANBEIS 2012

Table 1 describes the number of students by level, management and gender. It shows students enrolled in higher secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education level in 2011. This is compared with the number of students enrolled in university and total tertiary enrollment in 2012, which shows that there is a gap.

Table 2: Percentage of increment of overseas enrolment

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT TOTALS BY PLACE OF ORIGIN, 2011/12 & 2012/13			
Place of Origin	2011/12	2012/13	% Change
Bangladesh	3,314	3,828	15.5

Table 2 shows that the percentage of the students enrolling overseas increased by 15.5% in Bangladesh. This indicates that the country is importing educations from different countries around the world in exchange for a significant amount of tuition fees paid by its students to the overseas institutions for better education.

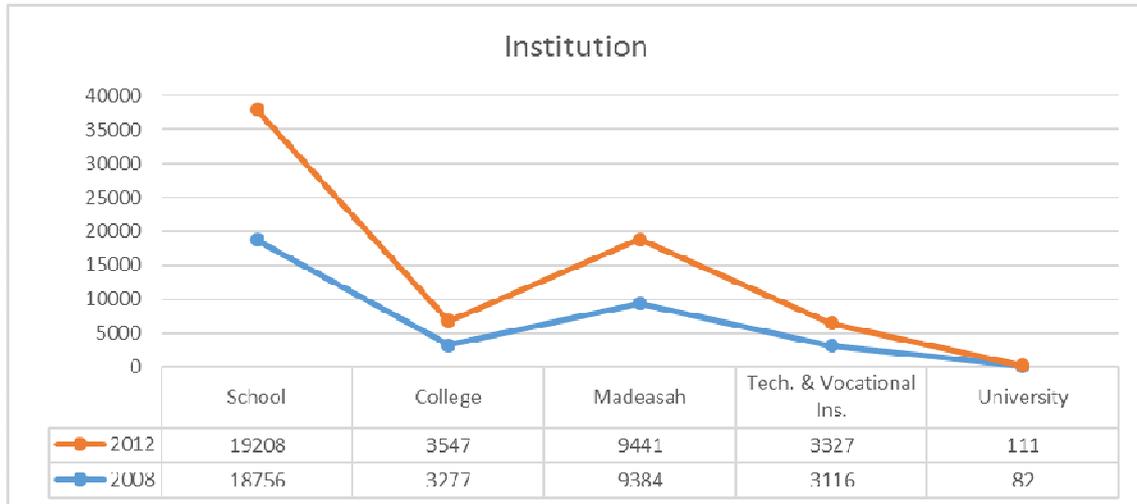
### 5. Why Bangladesh Students Desire to go overseas

There are numerous reasons to justify Bangladeshi students' desire to go overseas for higher studies. Generally, after completing higher secondary and tertiary level studies, a majority of Bangladeshi students prefer to have an international qualification to ensure a better career. The country's quality of education, the scarce resources for ensuring equal education for all students and better career opportunities abroad attract Bangladeshi students' attention to move across the border for education.

### 5.1 Limited Capacity

As a developing country, Bangladesh’s education sector is also developing but in a very slow and steady rate in comparison to its demand. Figure 1 depicts that the country is emphasising more on primary and secondary level education compared to the rest of the educational cycle levels and the top most educational institution (university) number is almost insignificant compared to the schools.

Figure 1: Growth of Education Institutions in Bangladesh



Source: BANBEIS 2012

The lack of opportunity to continue their education in their desired institution after completing the higher secondary level causes students to either end their studies or to move abroad to fulfill their ambition. Though the country’s per capita income is low, unequal income distribution causes a large amount of tertiary level students to study overseas through self-funding.

### 5.2 Poor Quality Education

The country’s education quality is undervalued in compared to the world’s standard. Almost all the private university’s degrees are unrecognised globally for lack of quality control measurement although, students of private universities spend a handsome amount of money on their graduation and post-graduation studies. Unfortunately, their certificates are undervalued in the job market inside the country as well as in other countries in the world. Commercialisation of education in the private sector demand results in serious scandals like certificate selling, bad quality education and cancelation of the licence of the institution. All these issues influenced a student’s decision to spend more for obtaining a world class degree.

### 5.3 Educational Structure

According to the county’s education structure, it takes more time to accomplish the higher education that results in more delay to join the workforce. A student can complete his graduation and post-graduation within three to five years anywhere in the world, whereas in Bangladesh it takes five to seven years for graduation from public and national universities and a minimum of four years from private universities.

Moreover, the volatile political conditions adversely affects its education sector through week-long strikes announced by different opposition parties regarding different national and political issues. Bangladeshi students prefer to go abroad to continue their education by avoiding all these situations beyond their control and adversely affect their career pathway and lives.

## **6 Motivation to Choose New Zealand**

The preference for higher studies abroad among Bangladeshi students is the United States of America, United Kingdom, Canada and other developed European countries. When students move abroad their only motivation is not to study and return home after spending a significant amount of money. Students look for other opportunities along with quality education to enhance their career goal. From this viewpoint, New Zealand is the best place for study. The reasons to choose New Zealand for higher studies are as following:

### **6.1 Quality of Education**

New Zealand's quality of education is world recognised. The country's education system emphasises innovation, and research and development. The pastoral care service ensure a friendly educational environment for all international students. The education system of Bangladesh doesn't encourage innovation and the country's investment for R&D is ignorable. Furthermore, a country as well as its citizen's development depends on the nation's innovation-oriented knowledge based educational and social structure. From this view, New Zealand is the absolutely right destination for Bangladesh to import education.

### **6.2 Supply/Demand**

Bangladesh has scarcity of resources to ensure higher education for all its citizens whereas New Zealand has a surplus of resources. New Zealand's capacity and ample resources boosts its education industry and contributes its economic growth. For quality assurance with an abundant scope of long term career prospects, Bangladesh considers New Zealand suitable for transforming education and culture.

### **6.3 Cost Comparison**

New Zealand has cost competitiveness in the education sector compared to USA, UK, Canada and other developed countries. On the other hand, compared to private university education institutions in Bangladesh, the cost of studying in New Zealand is affordable. In Bangladesh, a private university student needs to pay approximately USD\$7000 to USD\$8500 for graduation while there is no assurance of quality and global recognition but in New Zealand that amount is approximately USD\$15000 for tertiary institutions with ensured quality learning opportunities.

### **6.4 Job Market**

According to the immigration law, an international student in New Zealand is entitled to work part time (graduation/post-graduation/Diploma level) or as full-time (Ph.D. level) during his study. This opportunity provides a student opportunity to get both quality education and job market exposure. Moreover, after the completion of the particular course a student is eligible for a one year job search visa. New Zealand offers this visa to international students to implement their theoretical knowledge into a practical work environment. So, in this procedure the country is not only providing knowledge but also experience to utilize that knowledge properly.

### **6.5 Country Environment**

New Zealand is recognised as one of the safest countries in the world. The country's well-organised social system and friendly environment makes it the most secure place for international students. The government is concerned about safety and satisfaction of international students to enhance its education industry.

### **6.6 Immigration Facilities**

Flexible and easygoing immigration procedures attracts a remarkable number of students' New Zealand. The country's immigration laws encompasses the legal right for an international student to apply for permanent residency through a specific procedure and chronological change of visa status from student visa to job search visa and then work visa. This facility draws the attention of Asian countries and especially third world countries' students to select New Zealand as their next destination.

## **7. Challenges**

As there are multiple opportunities for Bangladesh to import education from New Zealand, simultaneously there are a notable number of challenges that needs to be addressed.

### **7.1 Economic Issue**

Though New Zealand's education export industry enjoys cost competitive advantages in comparison to Canada, U.S.A, UK and Australia, the country should have given attention to for further consideration regarding tuition fees for Bangladeshi students. As Bangladesh is a low-income country, the existing tuition fee structure to some extent becomes a burden to the high potential international students.

### **7.2 Complex Visa Procedure**

New Zealand considers India and a few of its neighbouring countries as the Indian subcontinent, especially for the education export sector. This is because nations such as Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Nepal have a less significant relationship with New Zealand. It is a little bit difficult for students from those nations to apply for New Zealand student visas as they are bound to accomplish all the procedures via India.

### **7.3 Diplomatic Relations**

Bangladesh and New Zealand exercise a bilateral friendly relations. However, the absence of a diplomatic office in both nations is a big constraint. There is no link of the governments between these two nations. This is a big issue to consider as it discourages students' from choosing New Zealand as their study destination.

### **7.4 Teaching Standard and Style**

Most of the Bangladeshi student come from Bengali medium where English is their second language. Moreover, teaching style and standard of both nations is quite different. So, it takes time for a non-native English practitioner to adjust to a totally new environment with new sets of learning materials and methods.

## **8. Recommendation**

Bangladesh's education industry elucidates ample opportunities for New Zealand to target Bangladesh for expanding its education export industry. As Bangladesh is incapable of meeting its local demand, there is a potential trade relation among these two countries.

- Considering all the challenges, New Zealand can form a strategic alliance with Bangladeshi or international education providers by targeting Bangladesh market and ensuring the international standard of quality education.
- Visa procedures should be simplified. Verification of document is a lengthy procedure, especially if it involves third party. New Zealand should encourage to provide local consular services to potential students.
- Due to the lack of interaction in the country and at government level in Bangladesh and New Zealand, Bangladeshi students as well as their parents are not well informed about New Zealand. This miscommunication results in misinterpretation of New Zealand's education and cultural environment. Thus, New Zealand should emphasise effective marketing of its education opportunities sector among in Bangladesh.

## 9. Conclusion

Internationalisation of education is essential in this twenty-first century. Globalisation is shaping individuals as well as the collective social life of a country. Hence, the productivity based social system is heading towards the knowledge based social structure from the last era. However, as a third world developing nation with lots of social and economic problems, Bangladesh is not capable of bringing radical change to its education sector by itself. For the development of its nation, the current education system of Bangladesh needs to be rectified. The scarcity of resources confines the government's capacity, but the private providers are earning extreme benefits by commercialising the education sector. In summarising the overall facts, the Bangladesh Government should focus on importing education from the developed countries to stop brain drain and hence utilise the potential of its own population. While considering import of education from developed countries, New Zealand is the best option for its cost effectiveness, quality service, and other socio-cultural issues.

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