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A Study on Job Satisfaction and Retention of BRAC University Faculty Members

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ABSTRACTS

This study aims to find out what attracts faculty to join BRAC University (BU), analyze issues related to job satisfaction, and reasons for their leaving the university. The target population consists of the existing full-time as well as dropout faculty members. For exploring the attitudes and opinions of current faculty, Visualization in Participatory Programmes (VIPP) method was used. A questionnaire was sent to each dropout faculty member via email, snail mail, and through personal contact. In addition, six case studies of the dropouts were conducted with in-depth interviews. Secondary information on the dropout cases was also gathered from the university database. The time period considered was from inception of the university (April 2001) to when the study was undertaken (March 2006). We have found that BU enjoys a comparative advantage over other private universities in attracting good faculty members due to its affiliation with BRAC as well as its own vision and leadership. However, despite its reputation it is yet to create its own pool of talented and diverse faculties. A significant portion of its faculty members does not stay at BU. Forty-nine dropouts in five years is an evidence of this problem. Most importantly, many dropout faculties are going to the same organizations which they ignored at the time of joining BU. And, the possibility of further dropout is real. Thus, we recommend that the university should recognize that the environment and nature of academia is different than that of NGO or corporate sectors. Moreover, issues regarding salary structure, service rule, job responsibilities of the faculties may be rationalized as well as more emphasis should be given to professional development of faculties.

INTRODUCTION

Since its inception in 2001, BRAC University (BU) endeavoured to provide good quality higher education in line with BRAC's continued support to education as a force of change and development. To support these objectives, BUILD (BRAC University Initiative for Learning and Development), a strategic think tank, has been established to review and assess the functioning of the university. The idea of present research came from a BUILD meeting which emphasized the importance of better understanding of faculty issues. Specifically, the objective of the study is to find out what attracts faculty to join, analyze issues related to job satisfaction, and reasons for their leaving BU.

METHODOLOGY

The target population is divided into two groups- (i) existing faculties, and (ii) faculties who have left (dropouts).¹ Only the faculties from undergraduate programmes were included in the study. There are some common elements like job satisfaction which are applicable for both the groups while some specific issues such as reasons for dropping out are only related to the second group.

Primary data were collected from 48 existing faculty members. For exploring the attitudes and opinions of current faculties, Visualization in Participatory Programmes (VIPP) method was used.² For the study, dropout has been defined as full-time faculty members who left BU. In addition, faculties who returned to Bangladesh after completing study leave but did not join BU and those who did not return to Bangladesh after completing their higher studies were also considered as dropouts. We did not consider the faculty members who are currently on leave as dropouts. The time period considered was from inception of the university (April 2001) to when the study was undertaken (March 2006).

In total 49 dropouts were identified from HR department and department chairs.³ A questionnaire was sent to each dropout via email, snail mail, and through personal contact. After a series of follow-ups, responses from 26 dropouts were received. Several dropped out faculty members refused to participate in the survey despite repeated requests. However, these 26 cases may be considered as a valid sample as they represent dropouts in each relevant department, and cover all the three criteria of dropouts as mentioned above. In addition, 6 case studies of the dropouts were conducted with in-depth interviews. Secondary information on the 49 dropout cases was also gathered from the university database. In selecting the sample for current faculty, due consideration was given to several characteristics such as department, academic background, period of stay at BU, etc. We also discussed the broad issues pertaining to the research questions with university officials including department chairs, and two visiting faculty members from abroad. Anonymity of all faculty members was strictly ensured in the study. Table 1 provides a breakdown of the departments and sex of the faculty members who

¹ One individual who was offered a job at BU but did not join was also interviewed.

² VIPP is a participatory question-based planning method where every idea is captured because responses to questions are written instead of speaking and thus ensuring equitable participation

³ It is possible that the actual number of dropouts is higher because the data about faculties before 2003 is incomplete.

participated in the two components of the study as well the total number of dropouts identified.⁴

Table 1. Department and sex of faculties

Department	VIPP participants (current faculties)		Total number of dropouts		Surveyed dropouts	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Managements and Business (MGB)	8	5	14	7	8	5
Computer Science and Engineering (CSE)	6	4	8	2	3	1
English and Humanities (ENH)	1	7	2	7	0	6
Economics and Social Sciences (ESS)	6	5	0	2	0	2
Mathematics and Natural Sciences (MNS)	4	1	4	3	0	1
LAW	0	1	0	0	0	0
Architecture (ARC)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	25	23	28	21	11	15

The VIPP session was held on February 28, 2006. No faculty from ARC was present in the VIPP. Ninety six percent of the faculties who participated in the VIPP sessions were full-time. Average age of the VIPP participants was 29 years while the average period of service is 1 year 4 months.

ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

We used multi-level analysis to investigate faculty attitude and behaviour:

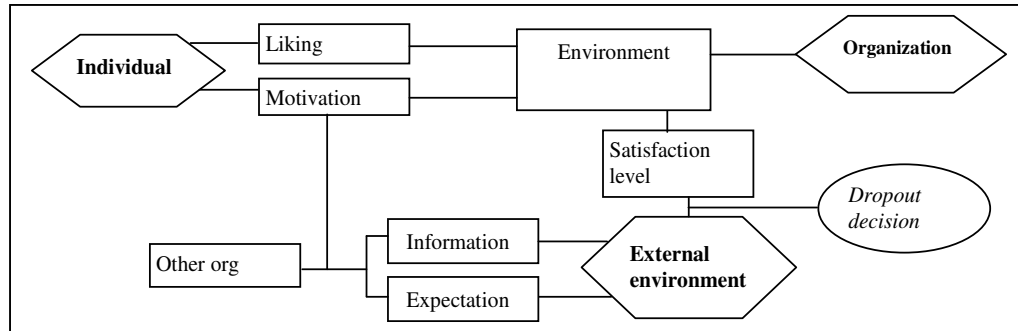
- Internal individual-level determinants
- Determinants that operate at organizational (work context) level
- Determinants stemming from interactions with the broader (external) environment

The issue of faculty retention and dropout is a process influenced by the combination of factors that originate from all three levels. With this broad frame, the study was designed to find the intervening factors or determinants that are influencing overall faculty satisfaction and behaviour. Specifically, we explored the factors that influence individuals to join BU, the positive and negative factors at the organization that shape the decision for retention/dropout. We also tried to elucidate the factors stemming from the external environment for both existing

⁴ Of total current faculties (excluding ARC and LAW), the department wise percentage break down are: CSE (29%), MGB (26%), ENH (14%), MNS (11%), and ESS (20%). Of current faculty members who participated in VIPP, we get broadly similar department wise break down—CSE (21%), MGB (28%), ENH (17%), MNS (11%), and ESS (23%), reflecting a department wise proportionate to total representation. The department-wise break down of total drop outs are—CSE (20%), MGB (43%), ENH (18%), MNS (14%), and ESS (4%). Of drop outs surveyed, the department wise distribution looks like this—CSE (15%), MGB (50%), ENH (23%), MNS (4%), and ESS (8%). Thus the drop out survey sample that responded is over represented by MGB (by 7%), ENH (by 5%), and ESS (by 4%) while under represented by CSE (by 5%), and MNS (by 10%). Such biases influence the findings and needs to be kept in mind.

and dropout faculties. The factors of perceived benefits of the external environment are particularly significant for faculties who left. Figure 1 shows the analytical framework used in the study.

Figure 1. Analytical framework



FINDINGS

FACTORS THAT MOTIVATED FACULTIES TO JOIN BU

The study explored the reasons or motivating factors for faculties to join the university. These factors provided important insights into the individual career goals and their subsequent attitude towards the organization. As the average age and years of work suggest, most of the faculties were fresh or recent graduates, and in a formative stage of building their professional career. For many, BU was an attractive first choice organization to work with. In fact, around 72% of the surveyed (existing and dropout) had other job opportunities at the time of joining BU. Instead, these faculty members decided to join BU by ignoring offers from prominent private universities such as North South University (NSU), American International University Bangladesh (AIUB), East West University (EWU), Independent University Bangladesh (IUB) as well as corporate sector including Grameen Phone, Standard Chartered Bank, Aktel, etc.

Both existing and dropped out faculties had similar motivating factors (Table 2). A high percentage of faculty members considered the reputation of both BRAC and BU as a major factor for joining (56% of existing and 76% of dropped out faculties). In addition to the reputation of the university, its unique position as a part of BRAC has been an important factor. The vision of BU in providing quality broad-based education and the relative superiority of BU compared to other private universities are also a positive drawing factor for around 19% of the existing faculties.

Table 2. Factors that motivated faculties to join BU

Factors	Existing	Dropout
	Frequency (percentage) n=48	Frequency (percentage), n=26
(Perceived) Good working environment	17 (35%)	9 (36%)
BRAC/BU reputation	27 (56%)	19 (76%)
Research potential	9 (19%)	8 (32%)
BU leadership	7 (15%)	2 (8%)
BU vision/mission	9 (19%)	-
Career prospect in teaching	16 (33%)	15 (60%)
Attractive salary	-	5 (20%)
Opportunities for higher studies	-	3 (12%)

Both existing and dropped out faculties expected a good working environment at BU. We found that BU's reputation of having a good job environment attracted around 35% of the faculty members. Specifically, this relates to the flexibility in designing the course, scope of interaction with colleagues and good quality of students. Nineteen percent of the current and 32% of the dropouts specifically pointed out the scope for research at BU. Dropped out faculties had higher expectations regarding both research potential and opportunities for further studies.

The introduction of some programmes like economics and mathematics, which are not common in other universities, has opened up opportunities for some faculties. Leadership of BU, especially, the vice chancellor, also motivated some faculties to join.

BEST ASPECTS OF WORKING AT BU

An overwhelming number of faculties pointed out the congenial relationship among faculty members within and across departments as an aspect they liked. The scope of interaction among faculty members was highlighted by 33% of existing and 81% of dropped out faculties. Some mentioned renowned part-time faculties as a source of inspiration. BU is also seen as good place for networking. Both current and dropped out faculties expressed their satisfaction regarding facilities and logistic support especially computers, high-speed Internet and multimedia facilities. However, current faculties are less satisfied with the available facilities (Table 3).

Around one-fourth of the current faculties see continuing to work for BU as a good basis for career development. The current faculties are more or less happy with the existing scope for research (31%). In contrast and significantly, the dropped out faculties did not identify the existing scope for research and career development as facets they liked. Although the current faculties felt that working at BU is good for getting national and international exposure, there is a perception that there was more scope of exposure in the early years of BU when numerous seminars, talks, discussions were held, than now.

The faculties are happy with the quality of students. Around one-third of the faculty members consider the good quality of students as one of the best aspects of working at BU. Faculties considered that BU had comparatively better quality of students than other comparable private universities. Flexibility in designing courses was also mentioned as a good aspect of teaching at BU. Generally faculties are satisfied given flexibility in choosing courses to teach.

Table 3. Best aspects of working at BU

Best aspects	Current frequency (percentage) n=48	Dropout frequency (percentage) n=26
Flexibility in curriculum design/course choices	14 (29%)	2 (8%)
Good quality of students	18 (37%)	8 (31%)
Good facilities and logistics	13 (27%)	12 (46%)
Scope for research	15 (31%)	-
Scope for career/professional development	12 (25%)	-
Salary	2 (4%)	-
Working environment (good colleagues)	16 (33%)	21 (81%)
BU vision/mission	-	3 (12%)

PROBLEMS FACED AND ASPECTS DISLIKED AT BU

A major cause of dissatisfaction was the 40 hours a week working time and the punch in system. Around 81% of the current and 58% of the dropped out faculty members mentioned this as a serious problem. A general perception is that strict office hours constrain productivity, and lead to mental fatigue. Faculties also mentioned the workload as excessive, especially due to the number of tutorials on top of the courses taken. This situation is further aggravated by the quite rigorous academic calendar. The fact that there are no breaks in academic calendar like summer break accentuates the already demanding working hours. According to many faculties, the current academic calendar leaves no time for research, relaxation, or career development and non-stop work is not suitable for the academia.

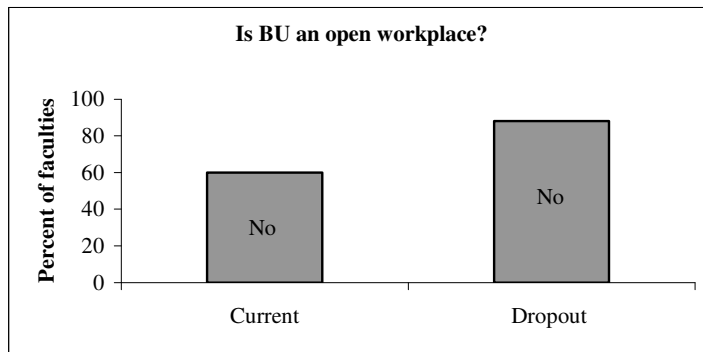
Salary related grievances raised by both the groups of faculties have several dimensions. Firstly, there is a perception that the current salary is not adequate. What seems to be a major concern is the inconsistency or discrimination or lack of uniformity in salary and compensation. This inconsistency remains both among faculties and across departments, among faculties with different and even similar academic backgrounds. One faculty commented, "There is no transparency as far as salary is concerned. [It] seems like a fish market where you need to haggle." The absence of scope of extra income, which is possible in other universities (e.g. - working part-time elsewhere), was also mentioned by some respondents.

Around 23% of the current and 38% of the dropped out faculties expressed that their good performance was not recognized. Rather, many complained that favouritism was widely practiced at various levels. There is a feeling that there should be a stronger and fairer mechanism of evaluating the faculty performance and promotion policy should be streamlined accordingly. The process of monitoring of faculty activities by the administration is also a source of displeasure. Some faculties commented that they were monitored by lower level staff (Table 4).

Table 4. Problems faced by faculty

Problem areas	Current frequency(percentage) n=48	Dropout frequency(percentage) n=26
Poor/inconsistent salary	30 (62%)	10 (38%)
Working hours/punch-in	39 (81%)	15 (58%)
Workload	7 (14%)	2 (8%)
Rigorous academic calendar	7 (14%)	
Lack of research opportunities	5 (10%)	6 (23%)
Non-responsive and interfering management/bureaucracy	19 (40%)	24 (92%)
Poor student quality	6 (12.5%)	2 (8%)
Lack of facilities	18 (37%)	9 (35%)
Undue BRAC influence	3 (6%)	4 (15%)
Poor academic planning	9 (19%)	3 (11%)
Poor HRD	2 (4%)	
Lack of recognition or proper evaluation of faculty performance and favouritism	11 (23%)	10 (38%)
Limited freedom and scope of participation	12 (25%)	4 (15%)
Lack of staff training	1 (2%)	
Lack of career development/progress		4 (15%)

Forty percent of current and more than 90% of dropped out faculties believed that the organization was suffering from administrative rigidity, bureaucratic practice and lack of transparency in dealing with faculty issues. Faculties were also unhappy with the non-cooperation and interference of management. They felt unnecessary pressure on them from the administration. Around one-fourth of the faculties feel that the scope of participation and freedom of expression were limited. In response to a specific question whether BU is an “open” workplace where you can discuss your professional concerns, 60% of the current and 88% of the dropped out faculties answered negatively (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Faculty view of whether BU is an open workplace to express views

Interestingly, while BRAC brand name is a key motivating factor for joining, for 6% of the current and 15% of the dropped out faculties, the paternalistic attitude or undue influence of BRAC towards BU is a problematic issue. Also, an underlying feeling among the majority of the faculty members is that the university should have a more academic environment and mindset than corporate mentality. One former faculty said, “They [the administration] don’t seem to understand the difference between a university and NGO!” The faculty members felt that BU should function more independently of the parent organization and be administered differently.

In terms of facilities, the following items were mentioned: small office space, lack of teachers' lounge, inadequate library, insufficient parking space, poor lab facilities, and no phone on desk. Other problems or disliking include trip to Savar, lack of job security, no clear job description, and more attention being given to some programmes like Public Health.

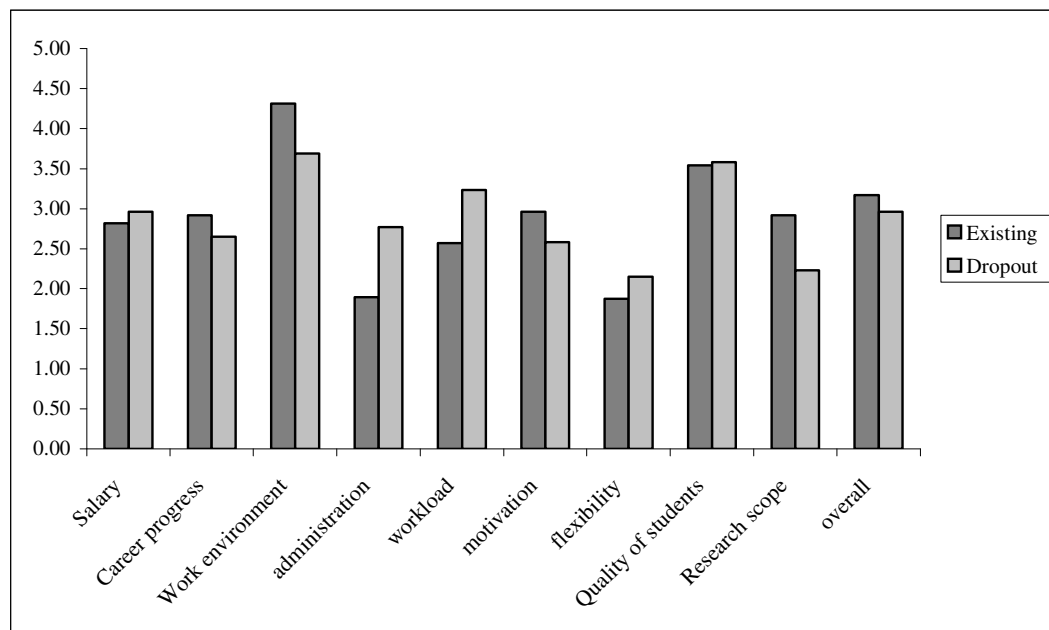
LEVEL OF JOB SATISFACTION

To measure the job satisfaction, 48 existing and 26 dropped out faculties were asked to indicate their level of satisfaction in some key areas of their profession. A 6-point scale was used with 1 indicating high levels of dissatisfaction and 6 indicating high levels of satisfaction. Figure 3 provides a comparative picture of average level of satisfaction in each area and also between existing and dropped out faculties.

The figure reinforces the earlier findings that a key positive factor is an amiable environment, which is facilitated mostly by interaction among colleagues, between students and faculties. The faculties also have comparatively higher levels of satisfaction about the quality of students. On the other hand, administrative matters and rigidity are sources of dissatisfaction, particularly inflexible work hours, and bureaucratic practices.

Comparison between current and dropped out faculties reveal some important features. Both the groups had very similar level of satisfaction about salary, quality of students, and flexibility. In other areas of their profession, some key differences can be seen. Dropped outs have higher level of satisfaction regarding workload and administration. In contrast, they had much less satisfaction about career progress and scope for research. This means that dropouts were generally more concerned with the lack of professional development and career growth than aspects of the day-to-day job.

Figure 3. Level of satisfaction in key areas of profession



ISSUES RELATED TO CURRENT FACULTY

For this section two specific questions were asked to the current faculties. The first one dealt with finding out the most significant factors for their continued work at BU; the second question explored the professional elements that may force them to leave.

The BRAC/BU factor is very strong for the continued employment. Vision of BU to become a leading institution as well as the broader objectives and prospects of BRAC motivate faculty members to stay. The already gained reputation by BU and its position compared to other private universities is also an important consideration. Almost half of the faculties were optimistic about BU reaching a destination envisioned. This vision was also reflected in department level although the degree varied. Analysis of VIPP findings suggests that the ESS faculty members were more motivated in this regard. A significant number of the participants genuinely felt that they could prosper professionally by working at BU. This vision was more important than salary. Some faculties admitted that they stayed here because of inertia. Some other important aspects of job satisfaction identified were improving quality of students, good colleagues, scope of research and promotion (Table 5).

Table 5. Important factors for continued employment at BU

Factors	Frequency (Percentage) n=48
Better salary	7 (15%)
Improvement of management	9 (19%)
Flexible office hours	1 (2%)
Career inertia	6 (12.5%)
BU reputation and vision of becoming a top educational institution	15 (31%)
Good colleagues	12 (25%)
Good career prospect	8 (17%)
Job satisfaction	18 (37%)
Good quality of students	13 (27%)
Promotion	5 (10%)
Anticipation of change	6 (12.5%)
Research prospect	5 (10%)

Table 6 highlights the professional elements that would cause the current faculties to leave. Fifty-six percent commented that salary would be a cause for leaving. They felt that the salary was not compatible with work hours or load. There is discontent across majority of the faculties with regard to the management and administration. Specifically, they wanted to see some improvement regarding flexibility in working hours, less bureaucracy and less interfering management. Overall, the expected institutional change is a less rigid regime, which would give more professional recognition/respect and be more sensitive to the needs of the faculties. There is room for closing the gap between the administration and faculties.

Table 6. Professional elements that would cause faculty to leave

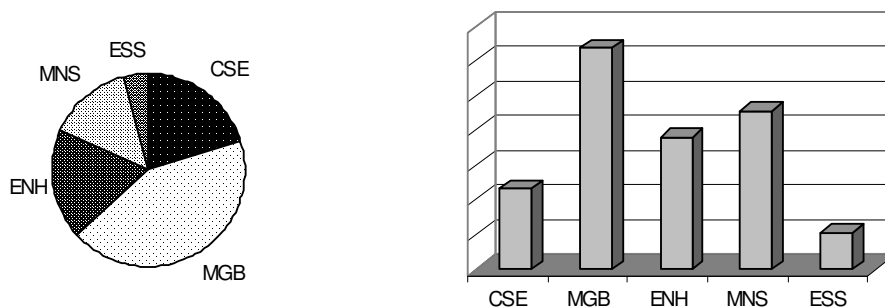
Factors	Frequency (percentage) n=48
Poor salary	27 (56%)
Rigid working hours	7 (15%)
Management problems	23 (48%)
Lack of research scope	5 (10%)
Lack of scope for further studies/individual development	17 (35%)
Lack of promotion/professional recognition and poor motivation	3 (6%)
Lack of academic diversity	1 (2%)
Tenure at another university	3 (6%)
Career change	4 (8%)
Undue BRAC influence	2 (4%)

Another critical factor is the limited scope of higher studies for the faculty. Without incentives like paid study leave and job security, many faculties are discouraged to pursue higher studies. According to the faculties, there was scope for improvement in BU as an institution with respect to offering more diverse programmes and having exchange programmes with universities abroad. There are some grievances that are department-specific. For example, one ENH faculty commented, “If El-Pro merges with English department, I will quit.”

Comparing the probable reasons for staying or leaving provided a clear picture of the most critical factors that shape faculty attitude and professional decisions. It was observed that a combination of factors is at play in consideration of faculty staying vis-à-vis leaving. Significant areas include anticipated institutional changes, salary, management attitude, and long-term career prospects.

ISSUES RELATED TO DROPPED OUT FACULTIES

The study identified 49 dropped outs in total. Table 7 and Figure 4 provide a breakdown of the dropped outs by department. MGB has the highest percentage among all dropped outs (43%), followed by CSE and ENH, each representing around 20% of dropped outs. MNS and ESS had 14% and 4% respectively. No dropout was identified from ARC and LAW departments. The dropout ratio in each department was also measured by calculating the number of dropouts with the average faculty size of the respective departments. It is found that MGB has the highest number as well as the highest ratio of dropout. MNS has the second highest ratio although the absolute number of dropout from the department is lower than CSE and ENH.

Figure 4. (a) Number of dropout (by dept) (b) Dropout ratio (by dept)

From the university database, information about demographic composition, academic and professional background, length of service etc. of the dropped outs was also gathered (Table 8). Of the 49 dropped outs, 57% were male. Their mean age of the dropouts at the time of leaving BU was 29.5 years. There is no significant difference in age across departments. CSE with 27 has the lowest mean age. Around 92% of the dropped outs were lecturers. Almost 73% of the faculties did not have any teaching experience while 54% had no prior work experience at the time of their recruitment at BU. With regard to experience, it is clear that a high percentage of dropped outs were fresh graduates with little or no experience. Dropouts from CSE and MNS had the least amount of experience. Around 35% had their last degree from abroad. The percentage of faculties from MGB with foreign degrees is 52%, which is significantly higher than any other department. On average, the dropped out faculties stayed at BU for 1 year 3 months. It is found that the dropouts from CSE and MGB stayed with BU for the least period of time.

Table 7. Extent of dropout by department

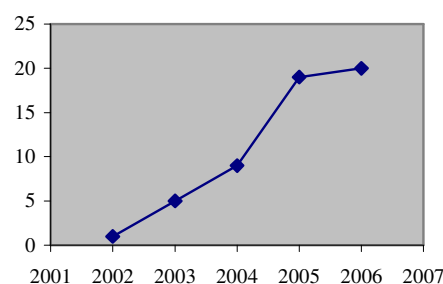
Department	Number of dropout faculty	Average number of faculty ⁵	Ratio
CSE	10	21.6	.46
MGB	21	16.6	1.27
ENH	9	11.9	.76
MNS	7	7.7	.91
ESS	2	9.7	.21
ARC	--	9.7	--
LAW	--	1.6	--

Table 8. Average age, experience at the time of recruitment, service length of dropouts

Department	Average age (years)	Average Teaching experience (months)	Average Other experience (Months)	Average service length (months)
MGB	30.1	1.06	2.44	12
CSE	27.2	.08	.00	13
ENH	30.3	.45	1.38	25
ESS	29	.50	1.50	20
MNS	30.7	.20	.00	13

There has been a gradual increase in the number of dropped outs since 2001 (Figure 5). The most significant increase in dropout was observed during 2004-2005. There was a sharp increase in the number of dropped out in the second half of 2005 in MGB and CSE. The average increase in number of faculties in all departments from the year 2004 to 2005 was 17% while the number of dropout jumped by more than 100% during the period. As of March 2006, there were 5 dropouts. If this trend continues dropout rate would surpass the rate of previous years.

Figure 5. Number of dropouts by year

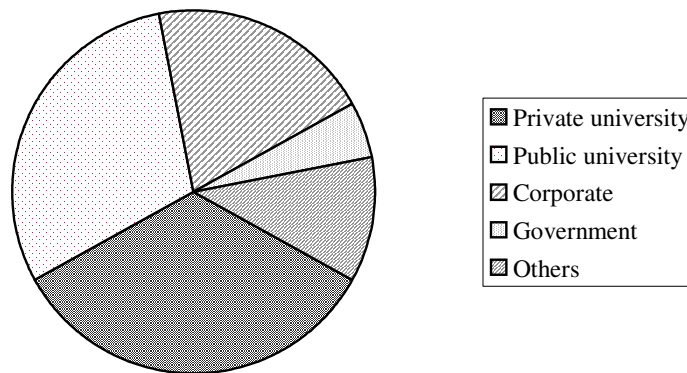


⁵ Calculated from the semester-wise average number of faculty members in each department in the period May 2004-January 2006 (See Appendix 1). The data before May 2004 is not available.

DESTINATION OF DROPOUTS

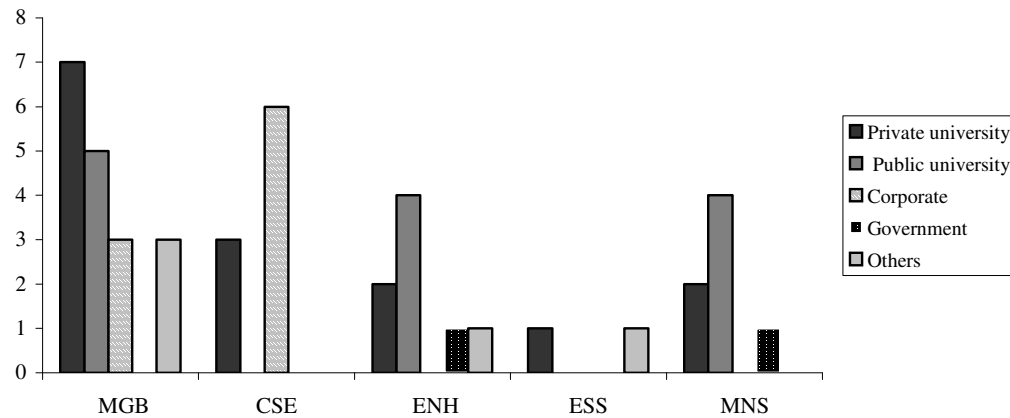
This section deals with the destination of all dropouts. Information was gathered from the university database as well as the survey. Thirty-four percent of the dropped outs joined other private universities and forms the largest destination for the dropped outs, followed by faculties joining public universities (29%). Therefore, around 60% are not changing their profession. Among private universities, NSU and EWU were the most common destination for dropped outs. For 29% who moved to public universities, it was a matter of social prestige as well as greater scope for higher studies. The fact that the faculty could work part-time at private universities while holding their full-time status at public universities is also an important economic consideration.

Figure 6. Destination of dropped outs



Around 20% of all dropped out faculties switched to corporate jobs. Majority of the faculties who went to corporate sector were from CSE (67%) while the rest were from MGB. This is attributable to the high market demand for flourishing computer and business sectors. As MGB faculties have higher prevalence of foreign degrees, their market demand is higher in both academic and corporate sectors. ENH and MNS faculties had a higher tendency of joining public universities. Male female ratio of faculties switching to private universities is almost equal. However, more women joined public universities (67%) than their male counterparts, and corporate sector seems to be more attractive destination for men (Figure 6).

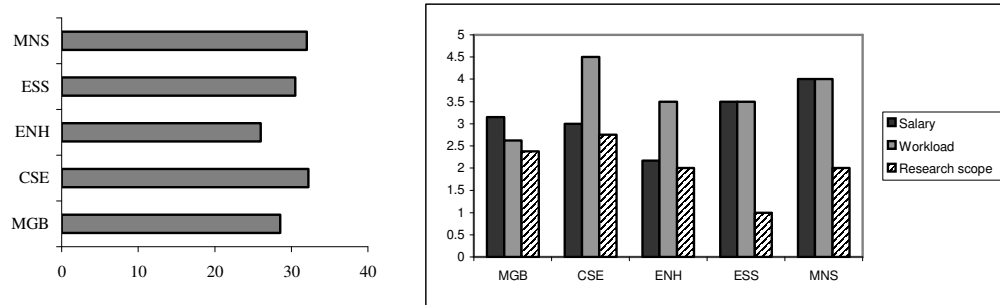
Figure 7. Destination of dropouts by department



JOB SATISFACTION OF THE DROPPED OUTS

A comparative figure of job satisfaction for current and dropout faculties was presented earlier. This section focuses on the 26 surveyed dropped out faculties to further explore their satisfaction level from different dimensions. Individual scores of dropout faculties were summed up to create a cumulative level of satisfaction (with a range between 10-60). The average score of the level of satisfaction across the faculties is 28.8. Females (27.3) have lower average score than males (30.8) indicating that they had less favourable experience. There are some variations by departments — the lowest mean score is in ENH (26) while the highest is in CSE (32.2).

**Figure 8. (a) Average cumulative satisfaction level by dept
(b) Satisfaction level in some areas by dept**



Responses for each individual areas of job satisfaction were also analyzed. No major variation across the departments was observed, particularly in terms of flexibility, quality of students, administration, and career progress. This indicates that while all the faculties were largely satisfied with the quality of students, widespread dissatisfaction was present in the whole university regarding the lack of career prospects, flexibility and administration. For the other variables, some trends can be highlighted (Figure 8.a and 8.b). With regard to salary, ENH and CSE had lower satisfaction level than other departments. MGB has significantly lower satisfaction regarding workload. ENH and ESS had comparatively poor motivation. Satisfaction about work environment was considerably higher in CSE and ESS. ESS faculties were largely unhappy with the available scope of research.

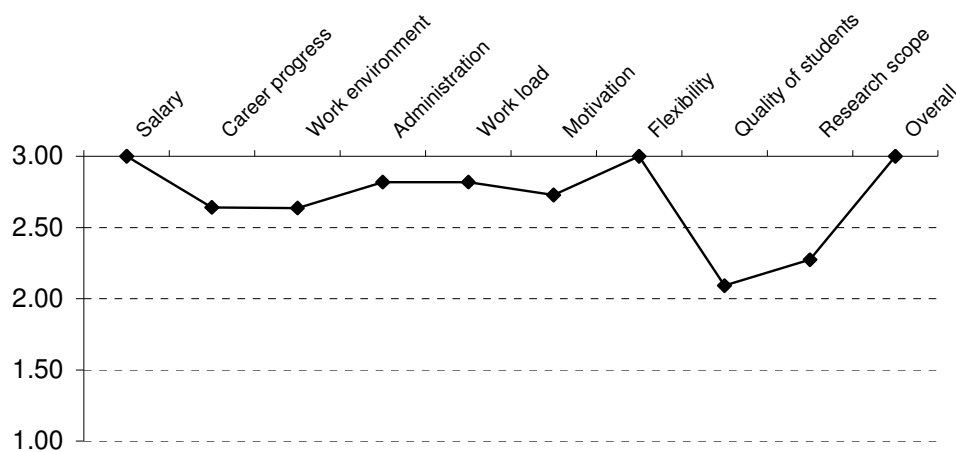
Table 9. Reasons for dropout

Reasons	Frequency (Percentage) n=26
Dissatisfaction with BU	42%
Better offer at another organization	69%
Pursue higher studies	11%
Personal/family reasons	11%
Did not enjoy teaching / wanted to switch career	11%

The extent and nature of dropout gives important insights into the reasons of dropout. Through the survey, the reasons were categorized broadly to determine whether internal organizational factors or external environment influenced dropout decision. Forty-two percent mentioned dissatisfaction with BU as a reason; this is more so for MGB and ENH. Sixty-nine percent mentioned getting a better offer at another organization as a reason for dropout. This is present across all departments. Twenty-seven percent mentioned that both dissatisfaction and better offer at another organization caused them to leave BU. For them, a combination of both organizational and external factors contributes to the decision to leave. Eleven percent mentioned the reason behind leaving BU is that either they did not enjoy teaching or wanted a different career altogether. We also explored when the dropout faculty first considered leaving BU. Seventy-seven percent mentioned that they thought about leaving soon after joining or after working there for several months. Since the period of service is very low for many, it is not clear whether these faculties went through a process of accumulation of grievances or not. For the rest 23%, it was a matter of either getting a better opportunity somewhere else or a specific event.

Box 1. Comparison between BU and other private universities

A large number of faculties joined other private universities after leaving BU. But how do they compare their new job with that they had at BU? The section explored the question by asking the dropped outs to evaluate their current level of job satisfaction in some key areas with the one at BU. Figure below shows how the dropped outs moving to private universities compared to their current job with a scale of 1-3 with 1 meaning current job being worse than BU, 2 meaning same as BU and 3 meaning better than BU. The findings indicate that BU did not compare well in most aspects, particularly job flexibility, workload and salary. Regarding work environment and quality of students, the level of satisfaction was more or less similar.



The study also assessed the opinions of dropped outs on the issue of fairness in dealing with faculty issues. In response to the question whether the faculties think that they had been treated fairly, 46% said yes. The main reasons identified as causes of unfair treatment include not being given the courses of choice, improper evaluation of performance, loyalty to BU being exploited rather than rewarded, not getting maternity leave, lack of recognition, less salary than deserved, etc.

To explore the reasons for dropout further, the survey asked what kind of opportunities would motivate the dropped outs to return to BU (Table 10). Among the respondents, 12% categorically said that they would never return. Among the rest, better salary, fairer administration, quicker career progress, more job flexibility are the key areas if they are to return. The faculties were also asked whether they would recommend their friends and relatives to join BU – 17% said no while 39% answered yes. The majority (44%) stated that they are not sure.

Table 10. Incentives that would motivate dropouts to return

Incentives	Frequency (Percentage) n=26
Better salary	18 (75%)
Better work environment	8 (33%)
Less workload	7 (29%)
More flexibility in job	16 (66%)
Better quality of students	4 (17%)
More understanding and fair administration	15 (62%)
Quicker promotion and career progress	13 (54%)
Paid study leave	9 (37%)
Would never return	3 (12%)

STUDY LEAVE

Out of 26 faculties surveyed, four went to study leave from BU. Three faculties returned to Bangladesh and one stayed back after completing the study. Among the three who came back, two did not rejoin the university while the other one rejoined but eventually left BU. All the three faculties are currently in other private universities. The reasons for not rejoining BU varied from lack of availability of post at the time of return, negotiation for new offer at BU not worked out and getting better offer at another organization. As of now, a faculty member gets the study leave for a specific period and leaves BU with a release order. There is no commitment of the university to accommodate the faculty members on return. Also, the faculty members had no obligation to re-join BU. Importantly, there is no guarantee that faculties will get their job back. In some case, it is stated (hand-written on individual faculty files) that re-joining upon completion of study was subject to availability of the post. The BU study leave policies are not geared towards attracting the faculties after study leave. This ambiguous policy discourages faculties to pursue higher studies or to return to BU after completing their studies. Thus, the scope for professional development becomes limited. The absence of paid study leave is also a de-motivating factor. It may be mentioned that other private universities of similar stature (e.g.- NSU, EWU) currently have a paid study leave policy.

CASE STUDIES OF DROPPED OUTS⁶

Case 1. Nabila Chowdhury — Are we really interested in attracting back?

Ms. Chowdhury was with BRAC University when it started its journey in 2001. Soon she got admission from a leading university in North America. This was an opportunity of a lifetime. As the scholarship would not cover her whole expenses, she sought financial help from BU. She was more than willing to sign a bond that she would work for 3/5 years. Not only her request was rejected, the university even did not recognize her leave as study leave. Instead, she was granted an “extraordinary” leave. (at the time, BU had no study leave policy)

Despite her financial hardship, Ms. Chowdhury completed her studies, and with flying colors. She broke a long-standing university record for high grades. And when she came back a year later, she was really motivated to re-join BU. Unfortunately, things did not work out the way she would have liked. First, the university told her to wait until the next academic session, which was three months later. In the meantime, she asked the authority to come up with an offer taking into account her hard earned degree. It never came. After waiting patiently for three months, she joined another university.

Ms. Chowdhury said she had no plans to leave BU, “I was shocked to see BU’s lack of interest in me. BU did not take any initiative to offer me a good salary.” The way the whole matter was handled was upsetting for her. Ms. Chowdhury believed that BU was missing its long-term vision and commitment. “The culture of BU is detrimental to faculty development. The stopgap measures regarding faculty recruitment and a narrow outlook on faculty development is not going to help BU in the long run,” she asserted. She hoped that administration would be more attentive to the needs of the faculties.

Ms. Chowdhury is enjoying her current job a lot. The most important thing for her is the support and respect from the administration and flexibility. She has to be present only 18 hours a week. She said, “In fact most of my work is done at home”. Ms. Chowdhury added, “Just because I am not physically present 40 hours a week in the university does not mean that I am less committed, in fact, it is the opposite.....I have never been more committed and dedicated at work than I am now.” Ms. Chowdhury is trying for doctoral studies. She said that her university has a policy of giving full salary while faculties go for higher studies. “I am really motivated because this is a great incentive,” she said.

Case 2. Mozammel Hossain — The importance of the software side of things — appreciation and recognition

Mr. Hossain was very popular among his students at BU. He was also satisfied with the institutional support (facilities) he got. However, he was really disillusioned with some professional aspects. Most importantly he felt that he was not able to use his capability and also the university did not realize his potential. Mr. Hossain said that he felt that there was a kind of suppression of freedom and lack of appreciation. He added, “I was given some official responsibilities but they did not carry significance whatsoever. In fact, decisions were made without me being informed! Although I held an official title for it!” These kind of administrative problems were not uncommon. According to Mr. Hossain, BU relied too much on the big names. He felt that young faculties should be encouraged more by giving them responsibility in both academic and administrative matters. Rather than sidelining them to the corner, they have to be at the forefront. There is too much centralization of authority. In his opinion, administering teachers is one area that needs to be improved like the system of

⁶ The names used in case studies are not real

monitoring and control of faculty activities- “this is not good, it undermines teachers,” – he opined.

Case 3. Fatema-tuz-Johora — The issues of fairness and transparency

Ms. Johora did not find a free and open environment at BU which is vital for any organization, but especially for the academia. “I felt everything was done behind my back. My department had such a strict hierarchy that there was no scope of saying anything. Favoritism was quite evident - different people were treated differently and I was a victim. The double standard was so much that some people deliberately made things difficult for me. Instead of inspiration and encouragement, most of the time was spent trying to find fault in others. I was discriminated against because I did not have the habit of keeping the boss happy by pretending to work all the time” Ms. Johora narrated. She joined EWU later and had a much better experience. “EWU is bigger and I didn’t see any dirty narrow-minded politics there,” said Ms. Johora. Currently she is not working but she still continues to study at home. In her opinion, if BU is to go anywhere it has to put into practice authentic academic values. There has to be a realization that few people are not bigger than the organization.

Case 4. Rahima Rahman — Grievances and opportunities

Ms. Rahman teaches in a public university. According to Ms. Rahman, she would have left BU even if she didn’t get the current opportunity. The main reason is that despite working at BU for three years, the university failed to recognize her hard work and dedication. She felt that she was discriminated against. This was particularly apparent in the issue salary. “It is understandable when teacher with foreign degrees are paid more. However, when there is discrepancy in salary between people with similar background, it hurts” she contends. “My colleague was given nearly 50% higher salary than me even though we graduated from the same institute. Apparently that faculty was able to bargain better even though it was not allowed. On the other hand, I was given extra responsibilities like course coordination and student advising” she added. After two years work, Ms. Rahman’s increment was not even 5%. The policy of hiring and salary was more determined by your background than your actual performance.

Case 5. Shafaet Anwar — Pulled by opportunity

Mr. Anwar was appointed as a full-time lecturer as a fresh graduate. He left BU after only 3 months. In fact, Mr. Anwar was among a group of faculty from his department who moved to corporate sector. Mr. Anwar saw working in the industry as more beneficial for his career development. For him it was not a matter of being dissatisfied with BU. Although he did not like that the position of lecturer is contractual job. Now Mr. Anwar works at a leading private sector organization. “I wanted to have some hands on experience on telecom, which is my major subject in undergraduate course.” Mr. Anwar has plans to return to teaching, BU or elsewhere. In the meantime, he wanted to gain practical experience, which will help enhance his teaching skills.

Case 6. Farhana Kabir — Mutual needs need to meet

Ms. Kabir is a full-time lecturer at Eastern University. When she was offered a fulltime position at BU, she was excited about moving here. “Definitely BU has better reputation,” she said. However, when she learnt that she had to go to Savar to take course, she was not so sure. Ms. Kabir has two small kids at home and felt the need to stay in nearer to her children all the time. She adds, “I have worked for nearly 3 years as a teacher and would like to continue in the profession, but I would not compromise my commitment to the family.” She was also concerned about the rigid 9a.m.-5.p.m. work hours at BU. Ms. Kabir was not totally satisfied

with the offered salary too, “They offered me a salary which is almost same as my current one.” Another consideration for her not joining was that the course she was told to teach was not her major subject. Ms. Kabir thinks she made the right decision by choosing not to join BU.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Our study on job satisfaction and retention of BU faculty members tried to understand why faculties join BU and what factors motivate them to stay or leave. We have found that BU enjoys a comparative advantage over other private universities in attracting good faculty members due to its affiliation with BRAC. BRAC’s brand name, its importance in national and international context, its development oriented mission and vision and its success to attain those visions have played a significant role in faculty members’ decision to join and stay at BU.

However, despite its reputation, BU is yet to create its own pool of talented and diverse faculties. For any university to become successful a regular, full-time, and devoted group of faculty members is a must. To this end, BU recruits recent and fresh graduates as teachers. But a significant portion of them does not stay at BU. Forty-nine dropped outs in five years is an evidence of this problem. Although each dropout case is unique, some pattern does emerge in our study. It was found that the dropped out faculties are going to the same organizations which they ignored at the time of joining BU. These faculty members described that other private universities offered less workload, less working hours, more flexibility, and a friendlier and more responsive administration. Our survey on the evaluation of satisfaction level of current and recent dropout faculties has strengthened the premise that there are possibilities of further dropout.

While many faculties developed dissatisfaction about working at BU, they are also attracted by the outside environment. And these two aspects are interdependent. However, these dissatisfactions may be minimized and BU may be able to attract and retain qualified faculty members if it formulates and/or improves some of its faculty related policies. The university has to recognize that the environment and nature of academia is different. A faculty member may be more comfortable in checking students’ exam scripts or doing research outside of the university. Thus, the accountability of a teacher should be based on his/her performance and output. For example, BU may ask each faculty members to have an assigned course load, conduct mandatory academic research and participate in student related activities.

The issues regarding salary structure, service rule, job responsibilities of the faculties may be rationalized. We recommend the formation of a committee involving members from administration as well as faculties from all departments to review existing policies, compare the BU policies with other national and international private universities and come up with transparent and consistent policies regarding salary, career development, and promotion.

In particular, more emphasis should be given to professional development of faculties. For example, BU does not have a clear study leave policy as of now. Other private universities have the provision of paid study leave for its young faculty members upon their return. In case of BU, neither the university has any obligation to absorb a faculty upon completion of higher studies nor does the faculty have any commitment to return. In this situation, using BRAC’s network and resources BU may aim at creating link programmes with reputed universities abroad and sending its young faculty members for higher studies. The opportunity of higher studies may attract talented faculty members to join BU instead of other public and private universities.

Finally, the survey has shown that the university, being a relatively new entity, has many positive sides including broad-based education, departments like mathematics and natural sciences, economics and social sciences and architecture. And things are moving towards positives. More participation of faculty members in the decision-making processes will eventually develop BU into a state of the art private university in Bangladesh.

Appendix 1. Number of faculty by department from May 2004-January 2006

Time	CSE	MGB	ENH	MNS	ESS	ARC	LAW	Total
May 2004	23	11	11	8	8	7	1	69
July 2004	20	11	12	7	8	7	1	66
Dec 2004	21	19	10	8	9	7	1	75
May 2005	22	20	11	9	6	11	2	81
Aug 2005	23	20	14	6	8	12	2	85
Dec 2005	19	14	14	7	13	12	2	81
Jan 2006	23	21	11	9	16	12	2	94
Simple Average	21.6	16.6	11.9	7.7	9.7	9.7	1.6	78.7