

Unpacking Quality of Higher Education: A Case Study on Economics Graduates of Jagannath University

Dr. Tabassum Zaman¹

Soma Bhattacharjee²

Abstract

The unemployment of graduates' is a critical indicator of the poor state of a country's education system. The tertiary education and skill gap are of grave concerns for Bangladesh. It results in remittance outflow and unemployment. This study aims to evaluate the quality of higher education imparted to the graduates. Specifically, the study evaluates the higher education status of economics graduates. In this vein, the case was taken of Jagannath University, Department of Economics in particular. The research involves analysing the perceptions of both the graduates i.e. the alumni and their potential employers. The perceptions of the respondents were quantified, using a Likert scale, to rank the severity of their responses and were analysed later using descriptive statistics. The study finds that there are ample scopes to increase the quality of higher education offered to its graduate by the institution. It was evident that the institution is not performing up to its potential, where the institution is lagging behind in terms of providing practical training, industrial exposure and professional courses. Moreover, the institution lacks developing presentations skill, English proficiency, problem solving skills, etc., of the graduates. The results suggest that developing infrastructural arrangements, governance of the department, teachers' quality and voluntary activities through student clubs are key to enhancing the quality of higher education.

Key Words: Jagannath University, Economics Graduates, Higher Education, Employers, Job Market Requirements

Introduction

Higher education is essential to national, social and economic development. In the general education stream in Bangladesh higher secondary is followed by college/university level education through the Pass (3 years) and Honours Graduate Courses (4 years). The duration of the Master's Degree is 1 year for holders of a Bachelor's Degree (Honours) and 2 years for holders of (Pass) Bachelor's Degree

¹ Associate Professor, Department of Economics, Jagannath University, Dhaka-1100, Bangladesh
Email:tabassumzamanjnu@gmail.com

² Associate Professor, Department of Economics, Jagannath University, Dhaka-1100, Bangladesh
Email:soma450@yahoo.com

(Saha, 2014). Higher education in the technical area also starts after higher secondary level. Engineering, agriculture, business, medical and information and communication technology are the major technical and technological education areas (Dutta & Islam, 2017).

Achieving and maintaining quality higher education is a tough challenge for the rising chorus of criticism of higher education system all over the world. This is reflected through the growing concern of graduates' employability in Bangladesh, as their job market is going through relatively rapid and dramatic changes. The increasing importance of the private sector, coupled with the intensifying forces of globalization, has considerably changed employers' needs with regard to graduate employment (Matin, Ali, and Wiebe, 2003). Evidence shows that, although graduates are more likely to acquire a business education which is more transferable to the job, they are frustrated by the burden of education due to the concurrent occurrence of joblessness (Chisty, Uddin, and Ghosh, 2007). It is also identified that the high university enrolment in business and management programs turned the graduates as generalists with a broad socio-economic knowledge which lack specific technical or broad interpersonal skills (The Economist, 2014).

The evidence of higher education employment is very grim in Bangladesh. The incidence of prolonged unemployment among graduates explains the job readiness and relevance of skills that tertiary educational institutions in Bangladesh imparting to their students.

Labour market surveys have consistently demonstrated that employers struggle to fill job vacancies for highly-skilled positions such as professionals, technicians and managers: around 69 percent of employers reported a shortage of skilled applicants for professional positions. Similarly, employers would like universities and colleges to strengthen skills training on information and communication technology, English and higher-order thinking such as communication, problem-solving and teamwork etc. (World Bank, 2016).

According to the Economist Intelligence Unit Report (2014), the graduate unemployment rate in Bangladesh is reported to be 47%, the second-highest in the world after Afghanistan (with 65%). The World Bank (2016) findings add that though Bangladesh had witnessed a 22.1% growth in total employment from 2002 to 2010, and speculated to hit 30% by the end of the year 2016, the graduate unemployment rate is estimated to be 9 times higher than the country's current 4.3% total unemployment rate. This means that nearly half of all graduates in the country are currently unemployed. The paradox is also directing to the fact that the rising labor costs in China and India compared to Bangladesh is leading to a growth in industrialization where primarily less educated and mostly non-university graduates are employed (Bangladesh Labor Market Profile, 2014). Apart from the graduates' lack of technical and interpersonal skills mentioned earlier, it is also found that there is a miss-match between the employers' expectations regarding the skills and attributes of job applicants and those that they actually possess (The Economist, 2014). It is further explored by others that, university students are ill-equipped to begin professional practice and that universities are therefore required to modify their

curriculum and teaching methods to produce graduates who are better equipped to enter the competitive job market (Kavanagh & Drennan, 2008; Mathews, 2000).

The study summarizes the literature findings regarding higher education and employability at home and abroad. Studies have been done on the higher education, learning outcome and job market employment relation. Literature focuses on the unemployment rate and the tertiary education enrolment in Bangladesh to understand the severity of unemployment of the educated youth. It is found by some studies about how job candidates can use their education and skill in the proper manner so that they can be employed. Specific job attributes required by employers from their employees is highlighted by many research works. University responsibility to provide practical skills along with academic knowledge to the students got attention in many recommendations of researches. Higher education is also recommended to systematically get structured through policy guideline for a better outcome.

It is found by the researchers that, in the literature, the general employability of the candidates are analyzed regardless of their specific academic background. If a specific background could be considered, the qualities required by the employers could be changed and the policy prescription could be specific to address the challenges from the mismatches between employers' need and candidates' quality. This study is attempting to fill this gap in the literature domain. This article, therefore, largely aims at building the relationship between specific education quality of the jobseekers and job market requirements to evaluate education quality imparted by the educational institutions. Accordingly, the article intends to inspect whether the education quality of the economics graduates of Jagannath University is responsive to the job market demand. This may also explore the significance of hard skill and soft skill for career success.

Specifically, the study aims at evaluating the quality of higher education offered by the Department of Economics, Jagannath University of Bangladesh from the perspective of the beneficiaries. It will measure it through the lens of the skills offered by the university. Accordingly, the specific objectives of the study are:

How effective are the knowledge and skills offered by the department to the students?

How effective is the practical exposure and training offered by the department to the students?

The organization of the study deserves some attention before we delve deep into the findings. The study explores the literature related to the quality of higher education firstly to identify the skills needed to become competent graduates. In this regard the study introduces the analytical framework of the research which portrays the study objective. This section will be specific about the attributes of higher education the study will focus on. In the following section, the methodology of the study is explained. It specifies the research method, unit of analysis, sample size, data collection tools and analysis techniques. The following two sections are data presentation and data analysis respectively. Finally, the study concludes with some recommendations and way forward.

Theoretical Background

Theoretically the need to steer higher education in an effective way was recognized from the previous century. The economic direction was an attempt to drive the education system in an efficient way. This was first done in the Soviet Union with the identification of new economic policy to shape higher education strategies in a well-organized manner (Carr, 1971). It may hint how the universities should equip their students with academic and technical skills for the job market.

At universities, learning occurs when graduates first learn theory from textbooks. But the learning continues to occur when they actually put it into practice at their workplaces. Universities have a responsibility to assist graduates to become professional learners so they can learn effectively at work and acquire and use knowledge (Nagarajan, Vilapakkam, & Edwards, 2015). Accordingly, the consistency between employers' requirement and the skills of the employees is a necessity for employability.

Some studies identified the employability issues for candidates with higher education from a different point of view. Pool & Sewell (2007) defined 'employability' as possessing "a set of skills, knowledge, understanding and personal attributes that make a person more likely to choose and secure occupations in which they can be satisfied and successful." They also found that employability consists of four main elements. The first of these, a person's "employability assets", consists of their knowledge, skills and attitudes. The second, "deployment", includes career management skills, including job search skills. Thirdly, "presentation" is concerned with "job getting skills", for example, CV writing, work experience and interview techniques. Finally, as Hillage and Pollard (1998) also argue that for a person to be able to make the most of their "employability assets", a lot depends on their personal circumstances such as family responsibilities and external factor such as the current level of opportunity within the labor market. Hampson and Junor (2010) described employability skills as "skills required not only to gain employment but also to progress within an enterprise to achieve one's potential and contribute successfully to enterprise strategic directions".

Lockhart (2013) opined that employers aren't looking for a perfect employee; they are looking for the right employee. As per the employers, employees can meet the objectives of the employers by being on time – always, following directions and accept feedback, not texting or talking on the cell phone when working, maintaining a positive attitude at all times, treating your supervisor and co-workers with respect, taking job responsibilities seriously, avoiding the "that's not my job!" mentality. Davis (1996) identified that most employers target candidates with similar qualifications and those with transferable skills are the most sought after—skills such as strong interpersonal skills, team players who can also lead a team, IT and language ability, good commercial awareness, problem-solving skills.

Some graduates and their employers are of the opinion that more could be done to develop students' wider skills and attributes, including team-working, communication, leadership, critical thinking and problem-solving. These are known

collectively as employability skills. Findings show that everyone seems to agree that work placements and internships make a huge difference to employability skills (Lowden, Hall, Dr Elliot and Lewin, 2011).

Much research has been conducted on the recruitment, selection and job interviews of entry-level job applicants. Nearly all of these researches have focused on graduates' expectations of their potential employers (Jackling & Lange, 2009; Andrews & Higson, 2008), employers' hiring decisions based on the applicants' criminal history (Holzer, Raphael, and Stoll, 2004), student perceptions and employer expectations of the skills, attributes, technical and non-technical skills required (Kavanagh & Drennan, 2008; Cappel, 2002), the psychological contract between employers and employees (Rousseau, 1990), the relationship between internship participation and student employment marketability from the employers and graduates' perspective (Gault, Leach and Duey, 2010; Tomlinson, 2008), and student-employer evaluation of the hiring criteria regarding entry-level job positions (Ackerman, Gross and Perner, 2003; Kelley & Gaedeke, 1990).

The relationship between higher education and employment found significantly positive by some studies and it was evident that higher education strongly affects and applied as a predictor of employment (Ali and Jalal, 2018). It is also evident in South Asia that there remains a gap between employers' expectations of skill and job expectations of the graduates.

A study finding reveals that the possessions of university graduates of key skills sought by employers are lacking. Universities do not generate the required labor skills for society and undergraduates' lack knowledge about the reality of the labour market situation. This skill mismatch leads to more number of unemployable graduates in the economy (Weligamage, S. and Siengthai, S., 2003). A study on Bangladesh revealed that there remains a substantial gap between the quality of fresh university graduates and the quality standard needed by the professional world (Ahmed and Azim, 2016).

The situation for the context of Bangladesh is worthy to explore further. With 41 public and 103 private universities having more than three million students (around 28 lakh students in public universities and 3.37 lakh students in private universities as per the Annual Report 2016 of the UGC) greater than the population of some countries—Bangladesh's tertiary education system is one of the most overcrowded in the world. However, the highly educated in the country have fewer chances of employment today as per the annual report of the University Grants Commission (2016).

According to the Labour Force Survey 2016–2017, the unemployment rate among those with tertiary education qualifications stood at 11.2 percent, much higher than the national average of 4.2 percent in 2017. Regardless of the type of institution, more than a third of graduates are found to remain unemployed one or two years after graduation. Many are still in further studies to gain more skills and qualifications. It seems evident that graduate unemployment, possibly with a long-spell of joblessness, has become a fact of life for many tertiary education graduates

in Bangladesh (World Bank, 2019). The other underlying reason behind the positive relationship between higher education and unemployment may be the value addition from higher education. If the marginal learning from each additional year of education is zero, then employers will be indifferent between hiring less educated and more educated workers. However, since workers that are more educated usually claim higher wages than less-educated workers do, employers will tend to prefer less-educated workers for employment since they have the same level of skills but will work for fewer wages (Rahman, 2014).

The Pedagogy for Employability Group (2004) provided a list derived from research carried out over the last 25 years and suggests that employers expect to find that the following generic skills have been developed in graduates: imagination/creativity, adaptability/flexibility, willingness to learn, independent working/autonomy, working in a team, ability to manage others, ability to work under pressure, good oral communication, communication in writing for varied purposes/audiences, numeracy, attention to detail, time management, assumption of responsibility and for making decisions, planning, coordinating and organizing ability, and ability to use new technologies (Ahmed and Azim, 2016).

Specifically in this connection, employers in Bangladesh rank three higher-order cognitive and soft skills as most relevant for the current work environment: problem-solving and independent thinking; work attitude; and positive personality (World Bank-2019).

But market demand of employees with a specific academic background is not explored for Bangladesh in the literature so far.

The above theoretical construction of the study directs the researchers to rely on the analytical framework where the quality of higher education will be evaluated from the viewpoints of the beneficiaries. In this regard, the beneficiaries are considered as the employees and employers who can get the benefit of higher education either directly or indirectly. The perceptions of the beneficiaries will be evaluated to judge the quality of higher education offered to the economics graduates of Bangladesh. Accordingly, the perceptions of the employers of the economics graduates and the graduates who are the job seekers will certify the quality of higher education offered by their institutions. The quality of higher education will be evaluated by the employability skills of the employees. Accordingly the beneficiaries in this regard will assess the quality of higher education with respect to knowledge, skills and practical exposure it offers to the economics graduates.

Methodology of the Study

The study administers a qualitative research approach comprising two groups of beneficiaries of higher education. One is the economics graduates and the other is the respective employers of economics graduates.

For the purpose of data collection, the study uses a random and non-random sampling technique. For the data collection from the potential economic graduates, the sample includes the graduate alumni of the Department of Economics, which

consists of students from the 1st to 8th batch of the department, who have job market experience for two to eight years. The targeted respondents are selected by random sampling techniques. A total of 330 alumni are selected for the survey from the population of 651. On the other hand, the potential employers of economics graduates are selected by non-random sampling techniques. These sample employers are Human Resource managers of organizations where the organizations include the group of companies, public companies, partnership firms and sole proprietorship firms in the sectors like banks, readymade garments, power generation, IT, consumer goods manufacturer, defence, NGOs, academic institutions and trading. Sample size is determined in relation to saturation with specific focus on 'code saturation' (where no additional issues are identified) and 'meaning saturation' (where no further insights are gained). It was found that among 25 transcripts of semi-structured interviews most codes (53%) occur in the first interview analysed, and 91% by the sixth interview. The point of meaning saturation is defined in terms of the last interview in which a novel code 'dimension' is identified. Meaning saturation is usually achieved earlier for codes representing concrete notions (normally by the 9th interview) (Hennink, Kaiser, and Marconi (2017)). Accordingly 9 categories of employers of economic graduates from specific occupational sectors are surveyed for the study.

The study uses both secondary and primary data collection methods. For secondary data, it uses literature to ensure the reliability and validity of the findings of the research. During research process, the study collects secondary data comprises of books published, articles published in recognized journals and their reviews, thesis, documents like newspapers, workshop reports, Job circulars etc., as suggested by Creswell(2009). Primary data is collected by researchers directly from main sources through surveys.

Survey questionnaire is the data collection tool for the study. The questionnaire includes both close-ended and open-ended questions in the format of multiple choice questions, dichotomous questions, Likert questions and contingency questions.

The perceptions of the respondents are quantified using a Likert scale to rank the severity of their responses and then they are analyzed using descriptive statistics. The findings of the employers are also analyzed to validate the quality education offered by the academic institutions to the economics graduates.

The study manages the primary data using five phased cycle namely compiling, disassembling, reassembling, interpreting and concluding as prescribed by Yin (2011). The primary data validated by secondary materials enables the researchers to analyze the quality of higher education offered to the economics graduates.

The data collected are analyzed using SPSS software. The data are tabulated and coded, computed and presented in the form of frequencies. Graphical and descriptive forms are chosen to present the findings of the study.

Results and Findings

At this stage the study firstly presents the characteristics of the employees in terms of their socio-economic nature in the following:

Since the study used random sample technique to choose the economics graduate it found that the percentage of male (76%) exceeded the percentage of female (24 %). Sample sex combination of the study was justified by the population sex composition which consists of first to eighth batch students of the Department of Economics, Jagannath University.

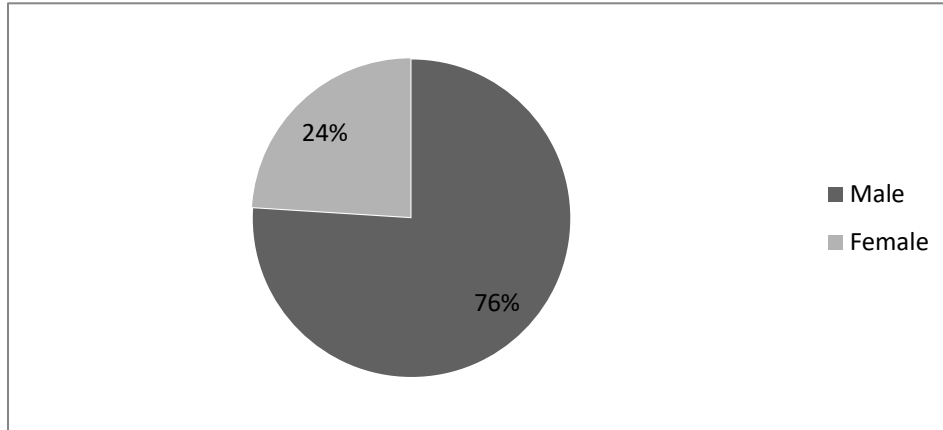


Figure1: Sex Composition of Economics Graduates

The study attempted to identify the education level of the graduates by the highest degree completed by them from the institution. It was observed that 95.5 percent of the graduates completed their highest degree from the department of economics, Jagannath University.

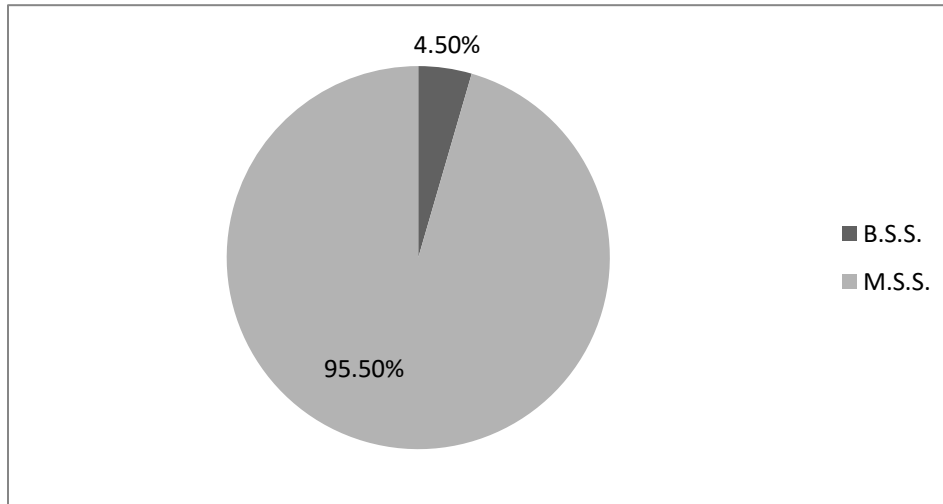


Figure 2: Degree Completed by Economics Graduates

In this phase the study explored the employment status of the graduates in the following:

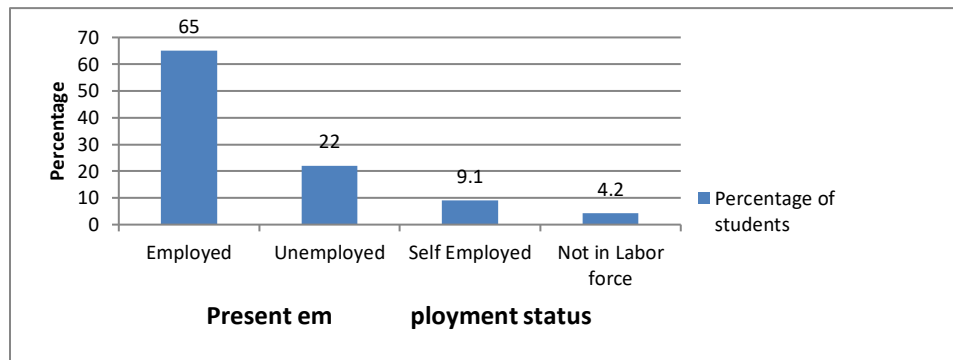


Figure 3: Employment Status of Economics Graduates

In this phase, the study wanted to identify the role of gender in the employment status of the graduates. It is found in the following diagram:

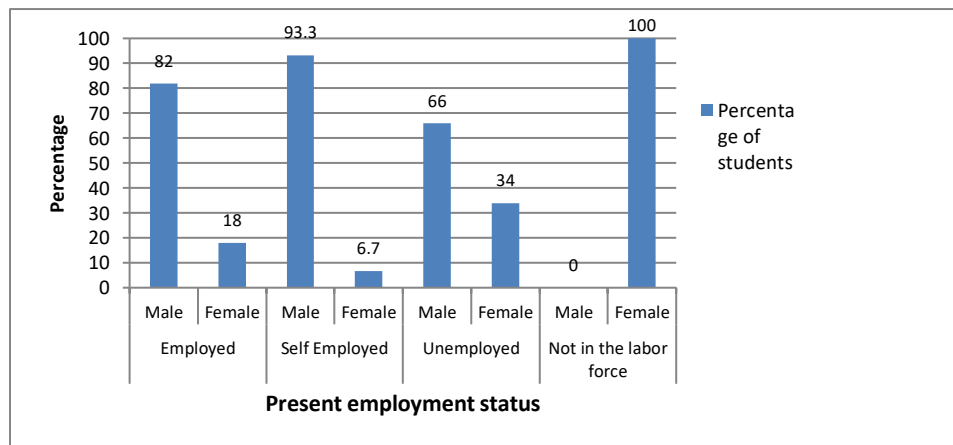


Figure4: Gender Specific Employment Status of Economics Graduates

The study attempted to identify if there is any gender specificity of the employment status of the graduates. Though the proportion of male to female in the sample is 25: 8, the study analyzed the relative dominance of male or female among the status to see if there is any gender responsiveness in the pattern of the employment status of the economic graduates. It can be delineated in the following table:

Table1: Male-Female Proportion in the Employment Status of Economics Graduates

Employment Status	Male-Female Proportion	Remarks
Employed	174/39 ≈ 5:1	2 nd Highest Male dominance
Unemployed	48/25 ≈ 2:1	Lowest Male dominance
Self-employed	28/2 ≈ 14:2	Highest Male dominance
Not in labor force	0/14 ≈ 0	Female dominance

It was found from the study that accepts the ‘not in the labor force’ category in each of the status male dominance is prevalent in which the category of self-employment is relatively showing more male dominance than that of the other status. Moreover, it is also interesting that even though the prevalence of the female graduates is only 24% in the sample composition, the female is dominating the category of not in the labor force criteria. It is found that all graduates who fall in the category of ‘not in the labor force’ are female. In this vein, the study explored the reasons behind the graduates being unemployed and not being in the labor force in the following:

Table2: Reasons Behind the Economics Graduates being Unemployed

Responses of Male Graduates	Responses of Female Graduates
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of available job • Competitive job market • Lack of preparation • Lack of job marketable skills (Communication skill, presentation skill, time management) • Communication gap • Poor quality of teachers • Higher study • Session jam • Not getting the desired job • Unconscious about the job market • Poor result/low CGPA • Lack of knowledge on mathematics • Lengthy BCS preparation deters other job preparation • lack of family support • Lack of basic economics knowledge • Academic courses have less relation to Job market preparation • Financial crisis • Lack of ability of self– employment • Depression 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of job availability • Competitive job market • Poor job preparation • Lack of experience about the job market • Still job searching • Family problems (Married and other responsibilities) • Rearing child • Poor time management • Not getting the desired job • Lack of proper guidance • Weakness of basic knowledge • Lack of job market related skills • Low computer skills • Session jam • Mathematics basic is weak • Academic courses have less relation to Job market preparation

The significant findings are those raised by both the male and female graduates and they are lack of available job, competitive job market, lack of preparation, lack of marketable skills, session jam, unconsciousness about the job market, lack of knowledge on mathematics etc. Moreover, family responsibility is found to be important factors preventing female graduates from being employed.

At this stage, the study also ponders on the factors responsible for the female graduates for not being in the labor force. It was found that except some exceptions family responsibility is still the dominating factor in this regard.

Box 1: Reasons behind the Economics Graduates Not in the Labor Force

- Getting married and husband does not allow to work outside;
- Getting married, having baby etc., prevents the female respondent to work outside;
- Getting married and heavy household work burden;
- Getting married and not interested to work outside;
- Intension to go abroad for higher study;
- Tried for job but did not get any due to poor basic knowledge as per respondent's response.

At this stage, the study focuses on the duration of work experiences gathered by the economics graduates of the department of economics, Jagannath University after their graduation.

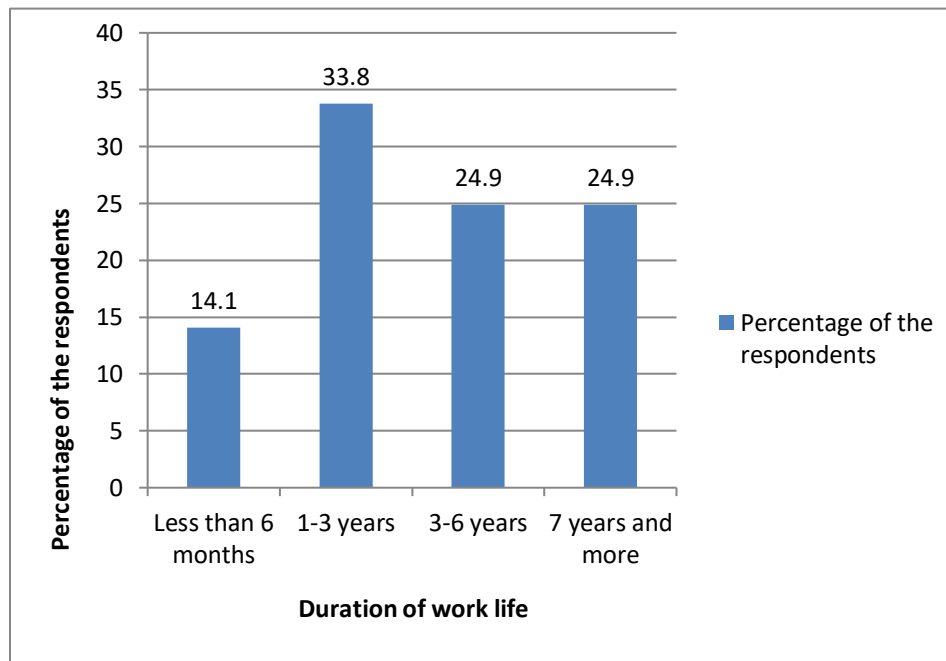


Figure 5: Duration of Work Life of Economics Graduates

The study further opted to identify how many economics graduates further showed their interest in higher studies. It was found that a mere 4 % of them are interested in higher studies.

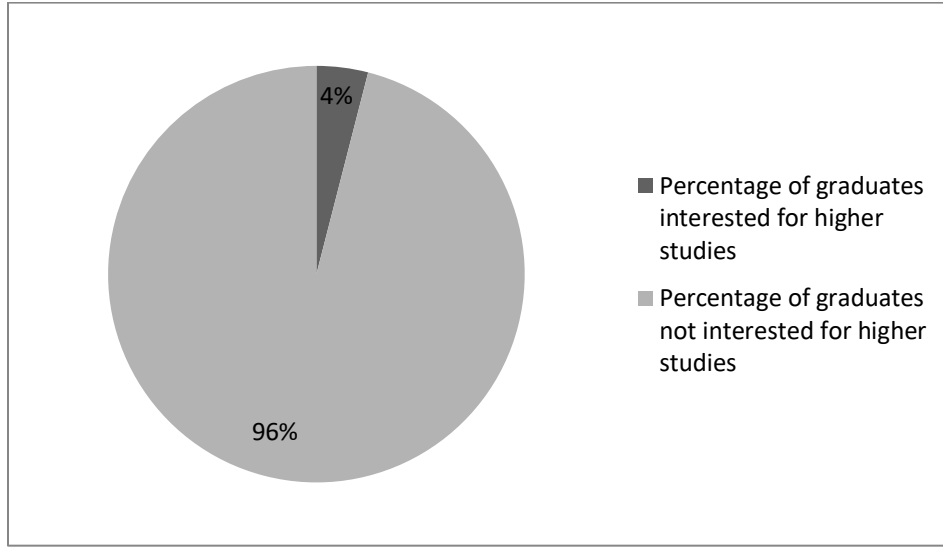


Figure 6: Higher Study Status of the Student

In this aspect, the study considers that the sector preferences of the economics graduates might play a crucial role in mapping their career objectives. It was found in the following way:

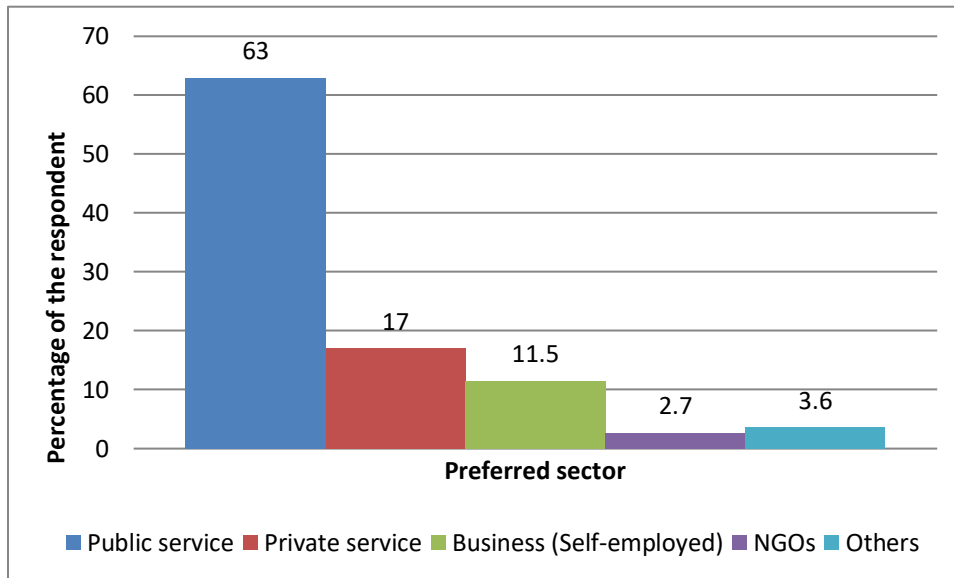


Figure 7: Sector Preferences of Economics Graduates

After introducing the economics graduates of Jagannath University, Bangladesh, the study in this regard identifies how economics graduates evaluate the standard of education they received from their institution. It is presented in the following figure

with the responses of the graduates about individual attribute of the institution.

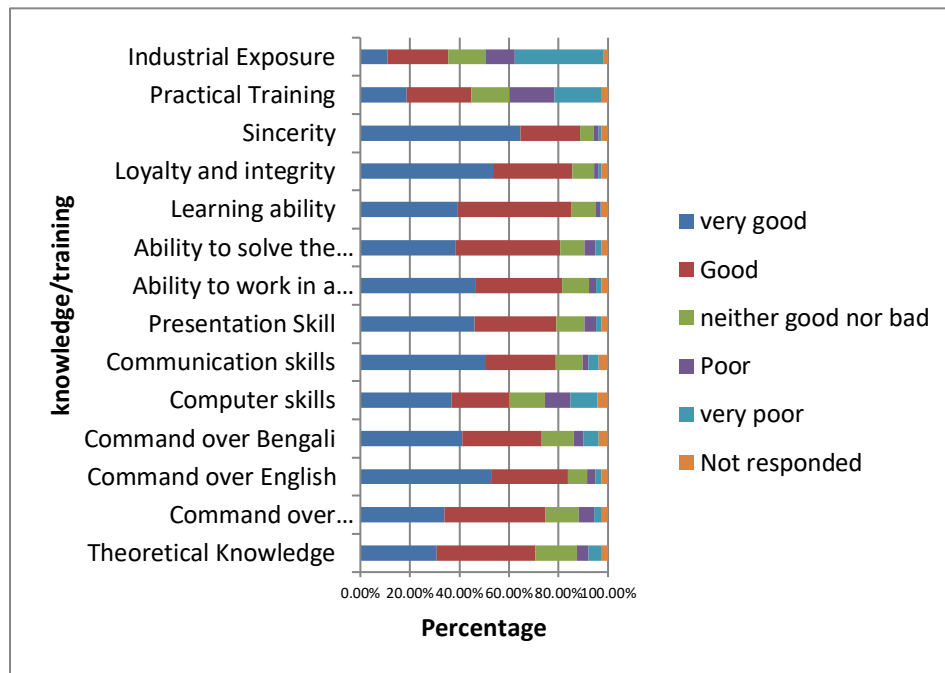


Figure 8: Graduates' Opinion about the Quality of Knowledge and Training Offered to Them

The study, in this connection, asked the graduates about their opinions regarding the quality of courses or degrees offered to them. The majority (59.1 %) responded positively about the quality of the courses offered by the institution except a mere (34.5%) percentage gave their suggestions to improve the courses further.

Table 3: Effectiveness of Courses or Degrees Offered to the Graduates by the Educational Institution (Perception of Employees)

Response	yes	No	Not responded	Total
Percentage	59.1	34.5	6.4	100

At this stage to validate the graduates' perceptions the researchers explore how the employers of economic graduates respond about the quality of knowledge or training of the institutions which offer knowledge and training to the graduates.

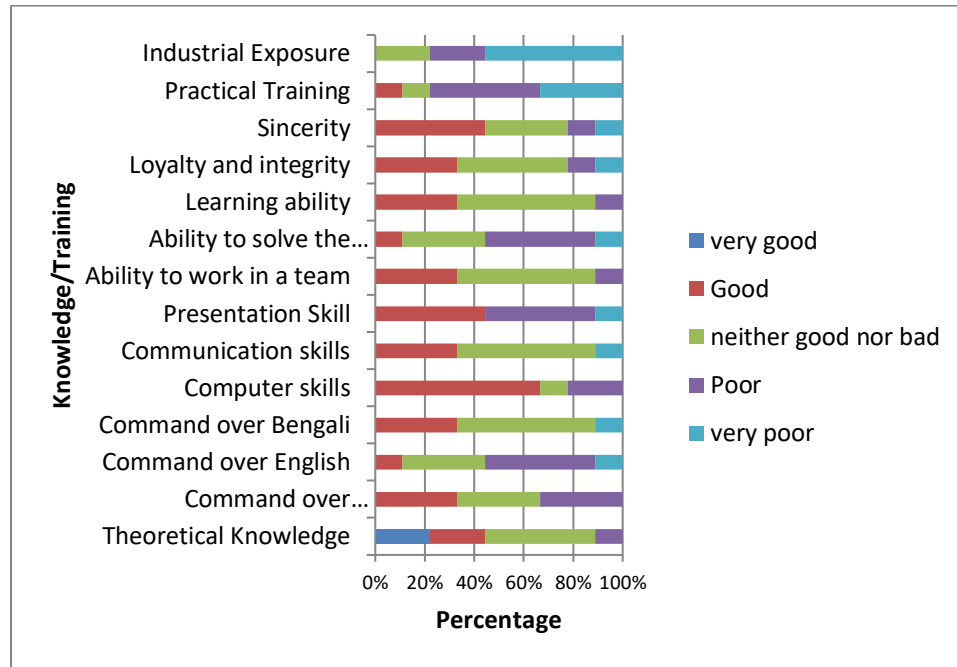


Figure 9: Employers' Opinion about the Qualities of Graduates for the Job Market

The study, in this connection, asked the employers about their opinion regarding the quality of courses or degrees offered to them. Only a mere percentage (11.11%) of the employees responded positively about the quality of the courses offered by the institution while a majority percentage (88.89%) of them gave their suggestions to improve the courses further. The responses are presented in the following table:

Table 4: Effectiveness of Courses or Degrees Offered to the Graduates by the Educational Institutions (Perception of Employers)

Response	Yes	No
Percentage	11.11	88.89

Discussions

In this section, the researchers evaluated the findings of the data obtained from the research. As per the objective the study aims to evaluate the quality of higher education imparted by the Department of Economics, Jagannath University. For this purpose, this section analyzes the views of both the beneficiaries about the quality of higher education. The beneficiaries are the economic graduates and their employers.

In this connection, it is important to identify the gap or similarities in quality evaluations as perceived by two groups of the beneficiaries. It is understandable that since the employers and the graduates have different evaluation capacity, the

differences in their rating of different attributes may be responsible for this gap. However, for the clarification of the status of the attributes the study operation arises the status in terms of satisfactory, not satisfactory and average. If the percentage of responses of very good and good is greater than that of very poor and poor it is regarded to be as satisfactory status. If the percentage of responses of very poor and poor exceeds the percentage of responses of very good and good the status is regarded to be not satisfactory. If the percentage of responses of very good and good is equal to that of very poor and poor the status is defined as average.

Analyzing the overall responses of the beneficiaries it was found that the majority of attributes of higher education offered by the Department of Economics are performing satisfactorily. But it is a matter of concern that among 14 attributes of higher education six of them are showing mixed responses from the beneficiaries. Among them, two are showing unsatisfactory performances by both the beneficiaries while the rest four are showing a gap in their responses. More specifically it can be said that the performance of some attributes such as command over English, presentation skill and ability to solve problems need some attention as these are regarded to be not satisfactory by the employers. On top of them, the two most important attributes namely practical training and industrial exposure are in an unsatisfactory status defined by both the beneficiaries. The graduates' and employers' higher education quality perception gaps are cited below:

Table 5: Graduate- Employer Higher Education Quality Perception Gap

Knowledge/training	Employers' Perception	Graduates' Perception	Perception Gap
Theoretical Knowledge	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	No Gap
Command over Mathematics	Average	Satisfactory	Moderate Gap
Command over English	Not Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Significant Gap
Command over Bengali	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	No Gap
Computer skills	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	No Gap
Communication skills	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	No Gap
Presentation Skill	Not Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Significant Gap
Ability to work in a team	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	No Gap
Ability to solve the problems	Not Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Significant Gap
Learning ability	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	No Gap
Loyalty and integrity	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	No Gap
Sincerity	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	No Gap
Practical Training	Not Satisfactory	Not Satisfactory	No Gap
Industrial Exposure	Not Satisfactory	Not Satisfactory	No Gap

In this connection to measure the overall performance of the higher education offered by the Department of Economics respective weights of the attributes are needed to be compared with their status. In this regard, the relative weights of higher education

attributes and the performance of graduates on those attributes are obtained by the perceptions of the employers.

Table 6: Ranking of Higher Education Attributes (Employers' Perceptions)

Sl.	Higher Education Attributes	Ranking of Attributes*	Status
1	Practical Training	1	Not Satisfactory
2	Industrial Exposure	1	Not Satisfactory
3	Communication Skill	2	Average
4	Presentation Skill	3	Not Satisfactory
5	IT skill/ Computer	4	Satisfactory
6	English Proficiency	5	Not Satisfactory
7	Computing Skill	6	Satisfactory
8	Professional Courses	7	Not Satisfactory
9	Command over Bengali	8	Satisfactory
10	Theoretical Knowledge	9	Satisfactory
11	Ability to work in a team	10	Satisfactory
12	Ability to solve the problems	10	Not Satisfactory
13	Learning ability	10	Satisfactory
14	Loyalty and integrity	10	Satisfactory
15	Sincerity	10	Satisfactory

*The most important is ranked as 1

From the above findings, it is viewed that, employers have ranked the five attributes among the top seven as not satisfactory though eight of the attributes among fifteen are showing satisfactory status by them. Accordingly, the study reveals that there are ample of scopes to improve the quality of higher education offered by the department o Economics, Jagannath University.

In this connection, the suggestions of the beneficiaries may guide the institution to improve the quality of the present higher education provision in a proper way. Accordingly, the significant recommendations of the beneficiaries are given below:

Table 7: Recommendations to Improve Quality of Higher Education

Graduates' Recommendations	Employers' Recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce more practical training, workshops, seminar, internship, industrial exposures etc ., needed in their curriculum. Ensure quality teachers by fair recruitment process by avoiding favouritism, by increasing teacher student relation and more students counselling etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Practical training, industrial exposure, Internship experiences etc., to implement practical project work, real case study, economic analysis. Command over English, Bangla needed to enrich communication skill

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infrastructural development of the department by the provision of the digital classroom, lab room, seminar room etc., is needed • Professional courses on bank management, accounting, public policy, research, emotional intelligence, data analysis etc., needed to be included in the curriculum. • The overall governance of the department ensuring administrative capabilities, manpower sufficiency etc., was demanded by the graduates. • Student enrichment by the activities of career club, debating club, sports club etc., is the need of the time. • Need to enrich command over English, Bangla, and Mathematics. • Need to enrich communication skill, presentation skill. • Need to arrange job fair and job market connections. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation skill, Communication skills, ICT skills, Computing skill and soft skills (smartness, etiquettes) are required. • Skill based / professional courses are a prerequisite to become competitive. • Human resource management skill, Team Management skills etc., need to be developed. • Motivational skills to change the attitude towards the job (to work hard and avoid a short cut to success)
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Conclusion and Way Forward

The findings of the study conclude that the Department of Economics, Jagannath University has ample scope to increase the quality of higher education offered to its graduate. The higher education offered by the institution was evaluated by both the graduates and the employers. By evaluating the attributes of higher education, with respect to their respective weight, it was evident that the institution is not performing up to its potential level. It was identified that in terms of practical training and industrial exposure, the institution is lagging behind. Moreover, the institution lacks developing presentation skills, English proficiency and problem solving skills among the graduates.

This study is a new attempt to identify the status of the recent alumni of the Department of Economics of Jagannath University in terms of their employability. Their evaluation of higher education is compared with the evaluation with their employers. This will work as a guideline for the academic institution in imparting their knowledge and skills to the students in compliance with the demand of the job market. In this attempt, future graduates may find ways to improve themselves in specific attributes to become competent for the job market. Universities with identical features of Jagannath University may also consider this study useful.

The study highlights the need of specific attributes for economics graduates for their up-gradation. In this regard, the inclusion of practical training and, industrial exposure revived attention by both the beneficiaries of higher education. Moreover, employers urged the need for English proficiency, presentation skills, problem solving skills as prerequisites for graduates for being employed. Additionally, the need for professional courses in compliance with the contemporary job market was addressed by both the beneficiaries.

Graduates, on the contrary, being the products of the institution raised some of the issues which deterring them to progress. They introduced the need for logistic support that an institution should have to deliver quality education. They mentioned the need for the digital classroom, lab room, seminar room etc., to have global standard higher education. They further raised the issue of governance of the department administration. To them, the lack of sufficient manpower found to be a barrier to the good governance of the department.

The graduates also felt the need for teamwork and voluntary activities to be competent in the job market. Accordingly, they suggested making the career club, debating club, sports club more active for their value addition.

There seemed to be a gap between educated and skilled graduate in our system. This is reflected in the case of the study. The education process should be aligned with practical knowledge so that our graduates can compete in the job market.

In this regard, a unified curriculum for our higher education system is necessary where students, teachers, employers and all other relevant stakeholders should play their respective roles.

Policy planners should introduce an accreditation body so that they can regularly evaluate the quality of higher education imparted by the institutions.

To achieve its growth vision, Bangladesh will need a high-productivity economy which requires high skilled labor. We need to change the trend of unskilled and semi-skilled labor to high skilled labor by giving them quality education and technical skills. Improving the quality of education at higher education institutions of the country, for example Jagannath University, would help develop these skills that would increase the employability of their graduates at both home and abroad.

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