

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Triple Benefits of Part-time Jobs for Private University Students: A Case Study at International Standard University (ISU)

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ABSTRACT

Part-time job opportunities for university students have long been recognized as a means to ensure substantial benefits to the concerned students, the universities, and the employers. Students can subsidize the major part of their high tuition fees and living costs and thereby ensure the continuation of their studies. The universities can ensure enrollment of the expected number of students and the employers are benefitted by way of minimizing the cost of employment. In recognition of these triple benefits, the authorities in Western countries have long been encouraging part-time job opportunities for university students. In Bangladesh too, the concept of part-time job opportunities for students, especially in private universities, has become the need of the day to ensure (i) the needy students continue their studies; (ii) the newly established private universities enhance student enrollment, and (iii) the employers reduce the cost of employment. Initial initiatives taken by International Standard University (ISU) to popularize the attempt among all three stakeholders have received wide acceptance. Further, attempts are underway to institutionalize the concept of “Part-time jobs” for private university students in Bangladesh.

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1. Introduction-The Western Experience

Western universities attract students from around the globe but since their tuition fees are exorbitantly high, most of the students face financial

crises to pursue their desired academic programs. For them, earning through part-time jobs¹ provide a unique option to solve the problem to a great extent and also to help gain some skill and experience in jobs before graduation. The universities also find it as a scope to enhance student enrollment for their survival². Thus part-time jobs have become very attractive and unavoidable for both the students and the universities concerned. The employers³ are also benefitted out of part-time jobs since they can employ very young, educated, and energetic part-timers at a lower cost⁴ and thus the net effect is that all the three concerned stakeholders, i.e. the students, the universities, and the employers are the beneficiaries under the system of part-time jobs for university students.

2. Relevance to Bangladesh

In Bangladesh, also a part-time job is considered one of the best options for most of the current students of private universities to solve financial problems. It provides them an opportunity to subsidize a part of their high tuition fees⁵ and also to have job experience before passing out with graduation. In the developed world, students at the tertiary level, usually prefer to be self-dependent and can earn through a range of part-time jobs, both within⁶ and outside the campus. There the practice of doing a part-time job by university students is very much common and is preferred by both the employers and the students concerned (as

¹ The concept of part-time jobs for students, especially of private universities, has evolved in conjunction with implementation of the arrangements like (i) flexible work hours and (ii) work sharing. Under the first one, the employee has to perform a particular job at his/her suitable time of the work-day and the task, not the period of work time is the employer's concern. Under the second one, two persons (employees) are to share a full-time job, may be, each will work for four hours a day.

² Western countries have been allowing, since long, the foreign students to find jobs and work up to 20 (twenty) hours a week, either within or outside of their universities.

³ The employers may be either the universities concerned where the students are enrolled or the corporate enterprises in the neighboring areas.

⁴ The university students, showing eagerness to work on part-time basis, usually agree to accept a lower pay than that of the full-time regular employees. Moreover, they remain outside the purview of fringe benefits and commitments to be allowed under service rule.

⁵ Private University students in Bangladesh have to pay tuition fees at a very high level which, compared to that of Public Universities, is almost 300 (three hundred) times higher in most cases.

⁶ The Universities in the developed countries provide in-campus part-time jobs to the deserving students so that they can earn and meet a substantial part of their educational expenses.

employees). Maybe, it also helps employers to reduce the total cost of employment⁷ and for the students, it provides a source of soft skills and income.

The concept of earning while learning is not that much popular among the students of public universities in Bangladesh, mainly because they have to pay very low tuition fees and most of their guardians discourage them to opt for part-time jobs by saying, “Now is the time to study only, you should not think of earning before passing out as graduates”. But the condition of private university students in our country, most of whom come from a lower-middle and middle-class background, is different. Their parents have to bear the cost of their education, which in most cases appear exorbitant and is considered unbearable.

This situation needs to be addressed meticulously to ensure that the private university students, who need immediate financial support, are provided with part-time jobs as paid work with reduced and flexible work hours, adjustable with their class routine. However, in the context of our country where the education system is not designed in a career-friendly manner, the adjustment of students’ class time with that of part-time jobs is difficult.

In the age of globalization, achieving higher education and working experience simultaneously play a vital role for graduates to achieve a chosen career anywhere. But the opportunities for working alongside studying, especially in private universities of Bangladesh, is almost unavailable although most recruits are asked about job experience and inevitably the candidates with previous work-environment experience get an edge in the selection process. Also, there is little doubt that part-time jobs alongside education help students to master the practical application of skills, deal with people in realtime, and face challenges upfront.

A report from the World Bank says that one in three graduates (in Bangladesh) remain unemployed even after a year or two past their graduation. On the flip side, employers often report that they have a lack of skilled workforce among those who are having graduation or even

⁷The University students usually agree to work part-time at a lower pay and it gives an opportunity to employers to reduce the cost of employment.

post-graduation from our universities. While the solution to this problem goes a long way up to redesigning the education system, part-time job trends among students at the tertiary level (especially those from our private universities) can effectively improve the situation. In the past few years, the opportunities for working for students, especially in private universities in cities like Dhaka and Chittogram, have enhanced significantly. Nonetheless, it is still far less than that of the economically progressive countries of the world and lacks encouragement from within our socio-economic context.

3. ISU initiative to Provide Part-time Jobs for Current Students

Under such a situation, an initiative has been taken from within ISU (International Standard University) to address the related issues properly and ensure the achievement of untold benefits of part-time jobs to (i) the students, (ii) the employers, and (iii) the university concerned.

As a matter of fact, part-time jobs provide an opportunity to those students of private universities who are financially weak and are also not academically that much sound to qualify themselves for a level of scholarship or waiver on tuition fees that may allow them to pursue their university studies unhindered. The employers of such students are also largely benefitted by way of getting an opportunity of employing an educated, smart and enthusiastic workforce at a low cost. The concerned private universities are also benefitted primarily by way of finding and providing part-time jobs for their students in mostly the service sector operating in the city areas and thereby enhancing admission through the development of their image. For the newly established private universities of our country, the efforts to provide part-time jobs for current students are deemed a necessity for their survival and are unavoidable.

Keeping the problem in mind the Vice Chancellor of ISU addressed the issues on his own and shared his ideas with the university colleagues, especially faculty members. He felt the urgency to explore part-time job opportunities both within and outside the university for ISU students who are economically disadvantaged. He narrated it to his colleagues as one of his dreams to expedite urgent financial benefits to the students who

are really needy and thereby help ensure ISU's efforts to maximize admission in the depressing situation created by Covid-19 pandemic. A team consisting of some very bright and devoted faculty members⁸ came up to take it as a challenge and since the very beginning, they have been working very sincerely and closely to find out part-time job opportunities for the needy but smart students of ISU, both inside and outside the university.

The same team arranged to serve a notice on 20th September 2021 from the office of the Centre for Research, Development and Publications (CRDP) of ISU, inviting applications from among those current students who are both deserving and desirous of earning through working part-time as a means to subsidize a significant portion of their living expenses and tuition fees of the university. Instantly, the notice received due attention of the students and within a short notice period of only 10 (ten) working days, a total of 37 (Thirty-seven) ISU students submitted applications along with required photocopies of papers (like the student ID, national ID, parents' income certificate, etc.).

The team started working with the applicants under the guidance of the Vice Chancellor and assisted by the Chairpersons of the four academic departments of ISU. A deep sense of motivation started working among all concerned and the whole campus appeared to have come to life after the long period of the corona pandemic from early 2020 to late 2021.

The applications were checked and sorted out appropriately and a short interview was arranged on October 01, 2021, for selecting the proper candidates. It was a worthwhile endeavor and initially, 27 (twenty-seven) candidates were selected as per requisition from potential employers. Out of them 03 (three) were provided within ISU itself⁹, 15 (fifteen) in

⁸ Among the faculty members, Mr. Md. Mahbubur Rahman, an Assistant Professor of the Dept. of Business Administration of ISU has been very much devotedly involved in and performing it as a responsibility to find out and provide part-time jobs for the current students of ISU, both within and outside the campus.

⁹ They have been placed in three different ISU offices as part-timers. Their office hours have been adjusted with their class-routine so that they can perform, both as students and part-time employees, effectively.

different departments of the Standard Group¹⁰, and 09 (nine) in some service organizations¹¹ within the city of Dhaka. In selecting the first batch of such part-timers, due emphasis was given, as far as possible, to the maintenance of departmental and gender parity.

Before their placement in actual jobs as part-timers, a workshop was organized for their grooming as successful performers. It was a meaningful endeavor from ISU to prepare the concerned students as acceptable and effective part-timers by the employing organizations. Eventually, each of them got an appointment as desired and since then has been working on an hourly pay basis, amounting between Tk. 5,000/- (five thousand) and Tk. 10,000/- (ten thousand) per month only.

Immediately afterwards, a notice for the second time was served on October 17, 2021, inviting applications from among the deserving students of ISU for part-time jobs and at the same time, a smart officer from admission office was assigned with the task to conduct an immediate survey of the need of the part-time job market. The result appeared very much exciting. Most of the prospective employers, engaged in shops, departmental stores, hotels, and restaurants, expressed their interest in our endeavor.

The success achieved with the first batch (of part-timers) allured a large number of existing students to seek part-time jobs and by 11th November 2021, a number of 52 students submitted applications. This called for an effort to find out sizeable part-time job opportunities in the neighboring areas within Dhaka city. Consequently, 02 (two) smart officers from the Department of Admission were deployed for making a (pilot) survey of the part-time job market in certain selected areas of Dhaka City. This time the authority also started thinking about a continuous effort through Human Resource Department (HRD) to help provide linkages between the (potential) part-time job market and the pool of current ISU students as prospective part-time job aspirants.

¹⁰ As promoters of ISU, Standard Group (a leading industrial group in the country, dedicated to both business and social service) has been providing all sorts of support including part-time jobs to ISU students in its different sister concerns.

¹¹ Mostly in restaurants, shops and departmental stores.

These have encouraged the ISU authority of taking proper institutional preparations for the development of a regular initiative as a mission to provide part-time job opportunities for its needy but deserving students and thereby help ensure triple benefits as desired. Additionally, a study of the outcome of our relevant efforts so far reveals that all the concerned part-timers from ISU are going on well with their jobs while at the same time performing satisfactorily as effective learners¹². Employers also expressed their satisfaction regarding the performance of these part-timers and have also indicated their desire to employ more such part-timers in the future. However, the top beneficiary is ISU itself by being able to reduce the rate of dropouts to the minimum and enhance the enrollment of students in the subsequent semesters.

4. Scope for Further Study

This is evident that the present study has some limitations in terms of scope and resources, which will potentially motivate academics to carry out further research in the relevant field. This study has largely relied on personal observation and real-life experiences that have been achieved through working on providing part-time jobs among ISU students. The secondary information was collected from searching a range of sources, such as published documents, reports, and so on, enabling us to properly design and articulate the research objectives. The primary data to be collected from the key stakeholders, for instance, students, and employers, could greatly facilitate enhancing the methodological rigor as well as presentation, and analysis of the study. From this viewpoint, future research could be conducted focusing on the experiences and views of both part-time employees and employers.

This study aims at helping students, growing private universities, and also government policymakers know the impacts and benefits of part-time jobs for university students. It focuses on the part-time jobs of current students at International Standard University (ISU). Most of the students would like to get part-time jobs besides their studies because they desire to get job experience and also to earn money for meeting expenses related to high tuition fees, food, and accommodation. In recent

¹² This tends to prove the hypothesis that the effective learners are those who bear the expenses of their education (at the tertiary level) themselves from their own earnings.

years, university students have become more active and conscious about their careers and that attracts them to get involved in part-time jobs.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The triple benefits of a part-time job for our private university students do have relevance to academic, social, and economic consequences. Students may find it as a scope to continue their studies and newly established private universities, struggling to survive, may use it as a means to grow. Such universities may either help their students to find such jobs outside or into different administrative and academic departments inside. However, the success of such efforts will depend upon how meticulous the concerned authorities are.

Based on the observations and real-life experiences, the study provides the following recommendations:

- (i) Academic programs of private universities are to be so devised as to allow deserving students to continue their studies while doing part time jobs as well.
- (ii) Government and the private sector should devise relevant fields for part-time work.
- (iii) Educational institutions should give their students a platform where they can apply their skills.
- (iv) Students should not run after jobs at the cost of their academic life and they should not be involved in any risky or thankless job.
- (v) Families and societies should encourage a student to be self-dependent.

The Government of Bangladesh (GoB), the private sector, and educational institutions should understand that earning while learning is very essential for the present generation. It gives them the experience of practical work which helps to find a suitable job and other associated opportunities after completing their graduation. In so doing, students of this generation can be tomorrow's leaders of Bangladesh.

Declaration of Interests

We, the authors of this research manuscript, declare that we have no financial interest. We have provided written consent to publish the paper in this journal.

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