

# Institutional Elitism: Critical Discourse Analysis of Private Educational Institutions

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**Abstract:** The fact that graduates from western or foreign countries, or at least those with qualifications from these countries, are highly prized is probably a marketization ploy in order to enhance the international atmosphere and reputation of the host institution. In a country like Bangladesh, very few get the opportunity to study beyond the shores of their home country, and most of the fortunate few are usually from the upper middle class. By somewhat surreptitiously opening the doors of employment to the very privileged few, the advertisers are not only being elitist and discriminatory but also contribute to the (re)production of the ideology that anything foreign is better than local. To separate this reality from the rhetoric in Bangladesh's private education discourse, this paper analyzes a sample of web-based recruitment advertisements of the country's private institutions and attempts to illustrate how institutional elitism is practiced in the country.

## Introduction

To all apparent intents, as information and communications technologies proliferate, the increasingly networked-world is becoming smaller by the day as more and more people begin to achieve a kind of virtual contact with each other in the 'imagined community'. In fact, this notion of inclusion seems to set the tone for terms like 'global village', 'borderless world' and eventually 'globalization', which on closer analysis reveals a wider range of meanings in a world that is also becoming a playing field for those who control knowledge and technology (Haque 2004, 2006). Hence, when the private educational institutions of higher learning in Bangladesh profess their intentions of becoming 'global players' by ostensibly appealing to everyone, it can be taken to mean also that they, like those in other perhaps more productive sectors of the national economy, do not want to lose out on their share of the spoils of 'globalization'.

The foregoing scenario has come about because with the increasing commodification of education as an industry in its own right (see e.g. Fairclough [1995: 130 -166] on the marketization of the universities in public discourse), providing higher education for a profit to the people who are able to pay for the service, promises potentially good returns to investors with the acumen to do so. In economically backward Bangladesh, where education is the key to

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development as also elsewhere in the underdeveloped world, such 'new' consumer-oriented ideologies are taking such precedence over other priorities in higher education to the extent that they constitute an emergent coercive force against which people have become powerless. It is argued that this force that usually exercises its dominance mainly through the manufacture of consent (Fairclough 2001a:3) is served by an over-riding institutionalized ideology of elitism.

In reality, and in most instances, such institutions target at only a select level of their own society, the upper middle class. These institutions apply a discursive formula that may be discerned as 'international atmosphere' + 'state-of-the-art facilities' = 'quality education'. Hence, despite the attempt to construct an international atmosphere via the use of appropriate discursive strategies, the recruitment practices of many institutions seem to be based on an elitist ideology. Graduates with degrees from North America (i.e. USA or Canada) are highly sought after, followed by natives of English-speaking countries, mostly UK, Australia and sometimes New Zealand. Alternatively, only degrees from foreign countries are preferred.

### **Private Education in Bangladesh: The Current Situation**

It was a decade ago, in 1993, that the first private university in Bangladesh, now considered one of the best in the country, opened its doors to students. It is still operating from a rented office block and only started the construction of its permanent campus last year. It may seem a mere exaggeration, but many of the private universities "still operate from rented accommodation that is clearly inadequate ... [as] some also fail to meet the demand for professionalism, commitment, and a proper academic environment" (*The Bangladesh Observer*, 5 Aug. 2003: 5). In a nutshell, this more or less epitomizes the prevailing scenario of the private institutions of higher learning in Bangladesh.

In 1992, the then eleven public universities were not enough to provide for the tertiary education needs of a growing population (*The New Nation*, 29 Oct. 2003). Each year, almost 75,000 students from Bangladesh go to study in India alone. The political situation in and out of the universities created what is commonly known in Bangladesh as 'session jams' or 'session hold-ups'. These, among many other factors, paved the way for the implementation of the Private University Act (PUA) 1992 (Haque 2004: 26). Hence, at present, there are 55 private universities with several more in the process of being approved. Of the total number, 36 were approved in a mere span of three years between 2001 and 2003. The phenomenal rate at which universities are mushrooming alone should raise doubts as to the quality and standard of education that these so-called institutions of higher learning are able to dispense.

Another doubt that concerns the quality of Bangladeshi private education is the fact that most of the private universities operate with part-time teachers from the three public universities in Dhaka, the nation's capital. It may be said that it is primarily due to the 'borrowing' of teachers from these public universities that led, among other factors, to the majority—an astounding 45 out of 54—of the private universities to establish themselves in and around the capital. The concentration of private universities in Dhaka may therefore be expected to negatively affect the quality of education in both private and public universities since many of the senior staff members of the private institutions are actually part-timers from the public universities. Due to the growing concern of the government regarding the prevailing situation in the private institutions of higher learning, the University Grants Commission (UGC), under the directive of the education minister, has formed a nine-member committee (and accreditation council) headed by the Chairperson of UGC to investigate the widespread allegations of their falling standards of education, financial mismanagement, recruitment of teachers without relevant or appropriate qualifications and various other irregularities (*The Daily Star*, 9 Oct. 2003: 12). On completing the investigation, UGC recommended the cancellation of eight private universities and warned six others to follow the mandatory guidelines and regulations (Sumon, 18 Oct. 2004). In addition, 10 to 12 were given one year to improve their quality while a further 15 to 16 were given two years to do the same (*ibid.*). The Chairperson of the nine-member UGC investigating committee (Professor M. Asaduzzaman, recently late) pointed out that the investigation team even found a private university without any students while another having six departments with only two teachers (*The Daily Star*, 22 March 2005). It was also reported (*New Age*, 19 Oct. 2004) that few hours after the submission of a report recommending shutting down eight private universities Professor M. Asaduzzaman received several death threats.

Many institutions of higher learning around the world have their own recruitment policies which emphasize that staff selection should be based on the candidates' ability to do the job that is required of them and that everyone should have an equal opportunity of applying for the vacant positions. Apparently, various private institutions of higher learning in Bangladesh, who seem to favor graduates with foreign qualification over local ones, are violating this basic principle, as it were, and in the case of prospective local applicants, their rights. Such oppressive practice is probably anchored in the ideology of elitist favoritism, which would suggest that certain people should have certain privileges over others. The social effects of this bias are that the practice is not only exclusionary but also discriminatory in nature and could therefore be detrimental to the national interest in the long run.

### Realising 'the American Dream'

It was probably towards the end of the 1970s and early 1980s that the American dream colonised the consciousness of the middle class young in Bangladesh. As elsewhere the process was aided in the main by the onslaught of mediated culture that was pouring in through the entertainment industry in the form of movies, TV series, music and dance, fashion, and so on. Popular movies and TV series such as *Saturday Night Fever*, *Grease*, *The Six Million Dollar Man*, *The Bionic Woman*, *Star Trek* and later *Knight Rider*, *The A-Team*, *MacGyver*, *Hercules*, just to name a few, were practically household names. Michael Jackson and later Madonna, though not embraced by everyone, were synonymous with all that is desirable in pop music and popular culture. Muhammad Ali was the ultimate boxing and sporting icon, at least during the 70s; and when he visited Bangladesh in the late 1970s, he was presented with an honorary citizenship. A combination of all the above may help explain how 'the American dream' has become part of the Bangladeshi world-view in the era of globalization.

The American dream apparently entered the consciousness of even the ordinary people in Bangladesh at the end of the 1980s:

American lawmakers introduced the DB40 system, so that a number of Bangladeshis could become eligible for American citizenship every year through a lottery, [and when] the American dream took hold of even the ordinary Bangladeshi—America was now only a roll of the dice away. (Alam 2002: 32).

This period was also the harbinger of the socio-economic and the socio-political changing of the guard: as the sun began to set, as it were, on the British Empire, the American dawn appeared on the Bangladeshi horizon. In the Bengali mind, the dollar was slowly engulfing the pound (Haque and Malik 2005:108). Hence, with the global increase of American domination via the firmer onset of *pax Americana* culturally, economically, politically, and militarily, 'the American dream' appears to have entrenched itself within the Bangladeshi metanarrative of its place in a globalized world. In short, anything American symbolized one of the best, if not the very best, and education, jobs, products, and services from the most powerful nation on earth were highly sought after. As always, the means to access, and more importantly, to dominate discourses of power in these areas were with the elite, upper classes of Bangladeshi society.

### Institutional Elitism and CDA

The assumption that everything foreign is superior to and more prestigious than anything local—be it a product, service or as in the present case, an academic/professional qualification—already prevails in the society in question. The logical strategy on the part of educational institutions has been to

(re)construct a foreign and international atmosphere in the country by producing favourable discourses about their state-of-the-art facilities, foreign educational infrastructure, international links and especially foreign expertise and foreign-qualified academics. It is probably difficult to lure foreign academics to Bangladesh, so the next best strategy would be to invite Bangladeshi candidates with qualifications from mainly western universities.

According to the discursively constructed 'market needs' of the private institutions of higher learning in Bangladesh, graduate qualifications from foreign countries may be divided into two categories, namely, degrees from North America (USA and Canada), UK, Australia and, sometimes, New Zealand are considered in the international category and those from other countries in the foreign category. The fact that certain institutions explicitly or implicitly encourage applicants with qualifications from specific foreign countries in general promotes an elitist ideology. This ideology is reproduced by the specific promotional discourses on institutional web pages used to inform the public about the institutions, the facilities and the programs of study they offer. Primarily, this is a marketization ploy to enhance the reputation of the institutions. In most instances, such institutions target at only a select level of the society, the upper middle class. These institutions try to apply a discursive formula that may be discerned as *international atmosphere + state-of-the-art facilities = quality education*.

The term 'ideology' appears to be commonly misinterpreted, and misrepresented, in socio-political discourse practice in that there can be 'good' ideologies as there can be 'bad' ideologies (van Dijk, 1998) vis-à-vis the potential for empowerment or oppression of the masses, especially in satisfying the legitimate needs of the disenfranchised and the marginalized. Hence, the link between dominant ideologies and the Gramscian construct of hegemony would seem clear. Put simply, ideology may be approached as a set of ideas, beliefs and values held by an individual, a group, a society or a culture. It is by such sociocognitive and discursive elements that particular individuals acting as a group with a given set of vested interests are able to exert dominance on society at large (van Dijk 1998; Fairclough 2001a). Further, the type or amount of control, implicit or explicit, they have over the actions and minds of other people could be defined as elite power (van Dijk 1993: 44).

It follows, then, that elitist ideology is hegemonic in nature as it only serves the interest of a small group of individuals of a society. Van Dijk (1998: 97) notes that the plausibility of ideological elites having control over the means of ideological production, like in politics, education and the media, does not necessarily mean that the larger social (dominant) groups will actually adopt such representations. However, being powerful and having a voice in society, "elites have the special means of media access and control, and discursive strategies of

manipulation of knowledge and opinion" (*ibid*: 185). Society may be oblivious to such discursive strategies and the related practice of elitist discourse, which aid in the dissemination and the propagation of elitist ideology; people in general, probably, are not conscious of the fact that they are being taken advantage of (Cf. Bourdieu's concept of *doxa*). Again, even if they are aware, more often than not they fall victim to what has come to be known as the 'TINA' effect (that is 'There Is No Alternative') given the 'master discourses' of global identity (after Fairclough 2000, in Abdullah 2004:125) constructed for them mainly through neo-capitalist language, and more recently by the 'War on Terrorism' by the US-led 'coalition of the willing' which leaves very little democratic *third space*-- 'Either you're with us or against us' (Faiz Abdullah 2004:125).

The ideology that 'anything foreign is better than anything local' may have been in existence in the Bangladeshi society for quite sometime, but the manner in which this is expressed, propagated, emphasized upon and formulized is essentially a 'top-down' process. Van Dijk (*ibid*: 174) correctly points out:

a small number of more or less conscious and articulate leaders, intellectuals, or 'ideologues' tend to formulate the ideological principles of a group. Then, through various forms of intra-group discourse (debate, meetings, propaganda, publications) and other institutional and organizational practices, such ideologies are slowly propagated among group members and society at large.

Ideologies which aid institutional elitism benefit only a small group of a society while overlooking the needs of the majority. Critical discourse analysis (henceforth, CDA) endeavors to expose the issues and ideologies that appropriate the 'common sense' of the public and thereby empowers them with the knowledge of knowing how power structures and dominance operate in a society. Fairclough (2001b: 229) observes that "it is critical in the sense that it aims to show non-obvious ways in which language is involved in social relations of power and domination, and in ideology." Wodak (1996: 16) concurs with the view that the purpose of CDA "is precisely to expose veiled power structures."

Put differently, CDA makes non-transparent issues transparent and thereby deal with social inequality that may prevail in a society in a way that empowers the common people directly affected by it. Though this social inequality may be mitigated from many angles, CDA analysts focus on "the role of discourse in the (re)production and challenge of dominance... [that may be defined as the] exercise of social power by elites, institutions or groups that results in social inequality" (van Dijk 2001: 300). The goals of CDA as a means of describing, interpreting, and explaining the socially constituted and constitutive nature of discourse as social practice (Fairclough 1995a, 1995b, 2001a; Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999) crucially include the discursive provision to empower the oppressed and the dominated in that 'discursive practice may be effective in

transforming, dismantling or even destroying the status quo' (Wodak *et al.* 1999: 8). CDA is, therefore, rightly invested with an emancipatory function, and by extension, the possible resolution of social problems largely caused by the manufacture of consent through the strategic deployment of selected orders of discourse and appropriated language (Abdullah 2004). Fairclough's (1995a: 39) related terms of 'subjects' and 'subject positions' are germane to the present line of reasoning in that the 'subject' as either 'agent' or 'affected' is only 'qualified to act through being constrained—"subjected"—to an institutional frame'. Accordingly, Fairclough (1995a: 93) refers to 'social subjects' and 'institutional subjects', the latter occupying subject positions in various institutional discourse types. He concurs with Gramsci (1971), and suggests that:

It is the hegemonic control of the dominant class over the institutions of civil society (education, family, work, leisure, etc.) within the "outer defences" of the repressive state apparatus that makes revolutionary transformation of modern capitalist societies so difficult. (1995a: 93)

### **The Present Study**

This paper contends that at least some aspects of elitist ideology may be traced by analyzing the discourse of recruitment advertisements of the private universities as well as other private institutions of higher learning in Bangladesh. Hence, the objective of the study reported here was to address the issue of elitism in the recruitment advertisements of such private institutions. In order to do this it attempted to identify the various elitist, discriminatory, and/or exclusionary strategies together with the language that has been appropriated in web-based recruitment advertisements, to marginalize, discourage and particularly to exclude altogether potential Bangladeshi applicants from applying for certain positions. Sometimes the question of where one got her / his degree from (e.g. North American, UK, Australian, New Zealand, etc.) becomes more important than experience, publication and research experience. This is a marketization ploy to enhance the reputation of the institute whereby only members of certain elite groups have the privilege of applying and working. In sum, the study attempted to illustrate how institutional elitism is practiced in the country in question.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

The sample recruitment advertisements were collected from the Internet over a period of one year 15 days or 381 days, that is, from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2003 until 15<sup>th</sup> April 2004. Most of them were selected from [www.bdjobs.com](http://www.bdjobs.com), the largest web site advertising jobs in Bangladesh, while some were selected from the web sites of the individual private universities. The [www.bdjobs.com](http://www.bdjobs.com) web site allows jobs search to be made based on categories such as, *Accounting Finance*,

Banking/Insurance/Leasing, Commercial/Purchase, Education/Training, Engineer/Architects, Garments/Textile, Gen Management/Admin/HR, Government Services, IT-Information Technology, Marketing/Sales, Media/Advertisement, Medical/Pharmaceuticals, NGO Development Agencies, Research/Consultancy, Secretary/Receptionist, Others. The category that advertises vacant positions available in the various educational institutions in Bangladesh is Education/Training. The selection of the sample recruitment advertisements was based on the elitist/discriminatory/exclusionary criteria.

The actual data from the sample recruitment advertisements have been compiled and tabulated in Table 1 (Appendix). The table comprises of various columns—'PIHLS' (Private Institution of Higher Learning Serial), 'sample' (i.e. samples of recruitment advertisements), 'vacancies' and 'advertised' (which are divided into academic and administrative positions), 'source' (i.e. the general source rather than the specific source to ensure the anonymity of the PIHLS), 'date' (on which the advertisements were collected from the Internet), and 'elitist/ exclusionary/ marginalizing/contradictory/vague language'. Table 2 has been compiled from Table 1; this table lists the various elitist / discriminatory / exclusionary criteria (as found in the sample recruitment advertisements) as well as supporting them with exemplary language / rhetoric.

### Results and Discussion

Table 1 (Appendix) gives the details of the sample recruitment advertisements that were selected for analysis. Out of the total 39 samples from 18 private institutions of higher learning, most of the vacancies were for academic positions. Majority of the academic positions comprised lecturers, assistant and associate professors, professors, while others like senior lecturer, teaching assistant, instructor and teacher were less frequent. The faculties/schools fields at which the academic positions were vacant included disciplines from business administration, engineering, computer science, natural science, social science, law and medicine. The administrative vacancies, fewer in number, consisted of positions like pro-vice chancellor, dean of a faculty, controller of examinations, assistant /deputy registrar, student's counsellor and administrative officer. The language of the sample advertisements, which described the requirements of potential applicants, was rather restrictive in nature, which may be perceived as elitist, exclusionary, marginalizing, contradictory or vague, depending on how one looks at them.

Table 2 presents the results of the discursive analyses of linguistic elements of the restrictive recruitment language from Table 1. Based on the analysis it lists eight elitist / discriminatory/exclusionary criteria—tertiary / graduate degree(s) from a specific region or country, Alternative degrees from foreign or general universities, reputation of university, degree from specific institution, monetary requirement, gender, age, personal habit; the various criteria are substantiated with exemplary rhetoric.



APPENDIX

Table 1: Tabulation of web-based recruitment advertisements with Elitist / Exclusionary / Marginalizing / Contradictory / Vague language

PIHL <sup>1</sup> / SI:	Sample <sup>2</sup> / SI:	Vacancies Advertised		Source <sup>3</sup>	Date <sup>4</sup>	Elitist / Exclusionary / Marginalizing / Contradictory / Vague language (in <i>italics&gt;</i> )
		Position	Discipline			
1.	Lecturer, Assistant Professor, Associate Professor, Professor	Business, Computer Science / Engineering, Math, Economics, English, Environmental Studies		Institutional website	01.04.03	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Master's degree from <i>foreign university, preferably North American</i>, for Lecturer position</li> <li>Ph.D., <i>preferably US / Canadian</i>, for Asst. Prof. &amp; above Excellent academic background</li> </ul>
2.	Assistant Professor, Associate Professor, Professor	Business, Computer Science		Institutional website	31.03.04	<i>Candidates for all positions must have Ph.D. from a North American or equivalent university.</i> (This sentence was already <i>bolded</i> in the advertisement.)
3.	Associate Professor	English, Business Administration		www.bajobs.com	27.08.03	Ph.D <i>preferably from North America, the UK or Australia</i>
4.			Assistant / Deputy Registrar	www.bajobs.com	21.11.03	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At least 3 years experience as an Assistant/ Deputy Registrar of a <i>private university</i> with expertise of handling campus software</li> <li>Candidates with MBA and/or <i>foreign degree(s)</i> will be given preference.</li> <li>Age: <i>Below 35 years as of December 1, 2003</i></li> </ul>
5.	Teaching Assistant	Business Administration, CSE, Law, English		www.bajobs.com	09.03.04	Candidates must have a Master's degree with excellent academic background from a <i>reputed</i> University. The Candidates possessing credentials/degrees from <i>North America, UK and Australia</i> will be given

<sup>1</sup> Private Institution of Higher Learning (PIHL)—universities, institutions, organizations, companies that provide tertiary level education.

<sup>2</sup> Sample of recruitment advertisement.

<sup>3</sup> General rather than the exact source is given to the PIHLs anonymous

<sup>4</sup> Date on which the recruitment advertisement was downloaded

PHIL <sup>1</sup> Sl.	Sample <sup>2</sup> Sl.	Vacancies Advertised			Source <sup>7</sup>	Date <sup>4</sup>	Elitist / Exclusionary / Marginalizing / Contradictory / Vague language (in italics)
		Position	Academic				
			Discipline	Administrative			
6.	Lecturer	Business Administration, CSE, Law, English, Library Science, Math and Statistics		www.bdjobs.com	09.03.04	<p><i>preferance. Expatriate Bangladeshis residing/working abroad are encouraged to apply for the teaching positions in the Website ... Part-time employment for teaching positions during Summer Semester, 2004 may also be offered. Attractive remuneration packages may be allowed to them.</i></p> <p>Candidates must have a Master's degree with excellent academic background from a reputed University.</p> <p>The Candidates possessing credentials/degrees from North America, UK and Australia will be given preference. Expatriate Bangladeshis residing/working abroad are encouraged to apply for the teaching positions in the Website www.easternuni.org. Part-time employment for teaching positions during Summer Semester, 2004 may also be offered. Attractive remuneration packages may be allowed to them.</p>	
7.	Assistant Professor	Business Administration, CSE, Law, English, Library Science, Math and Statistics		www.bdjobs.com	09.03.04	<p>Candidates must have a Master's degree with excellent academic background from a reputed University.</p> <p>The Candidates possessing credentials/degrees from North America, UK and Australia will be given preference. Expatriate Bangladeshis residing/working abroad are encouraged to apply for the teaching positions in the Website www.easternuni.org. Part-time employment for teaching positions during Summer Semester, 2004 may also be offered. Attractive remuneration packages may be allowed to them.</p>	
8.	Associate Professor	Business Administration, CSE, Law, Mathematics and Statistics		www.bdjobs.com	09.03.04	<p>Candidates must have a Ph.D. degree from a reputed University.</p> <p>The Candidates possessing credentials/degrees from North America, UK and Australia will be given preference. Expatriate Bangladeshis residing/working abroad are encouraged to apply for the teaching positions in the Website www.easternuni.org. Part-time employment for teaching positions during</p>	

PIHL <sup>1</sup> Sl.	Sample <sup>2</sup> Sl.	Vacancies Advertised		Administrative	Source <sup>3</sup>	Date <sup>4</sup>	Elitist / Exclusionary / Marginalizing / Contradictory / Vague language (in italics)
		Position	Discipline				
	9.	Professor	Business Administration, Law, Library Science, Mathematics and Statistics		www.bdjjobs.com	09.03.04	<p>Summer Semester, 2004 may also be offered. Attractive remuneration packages may be allowed to them.</p> <p>Candidates must have a Ph.D. degree from a <i>reputed</i> University.</p> <p>The Candidates possessing credentials/degrees from <i>North America, UK and Australia</i> will be given preference. <i>Expatriate Bangladeshis residing/working abroad</i> are encouraged to apply for the teaching positions in the Website <a href="http://www.easternun.org">www.easternun.org</a>. <i>Part-time employment for teaching positions during Summer Semester, 2004 may also be offered.</i></p> <p><i>Attractive remuneration packages may be allowed to them.</i></p>
3.	10.	Assistant Professor / Lecturer	Computer Science and Engineering		www.bdjjobs.com	23.11.03	<p>Masters in Computer Science &amp; Engineering / relevant field preferably from <i>reputed foreign university</i></p>
	11.	Associate Professor	Computer Science and Engineering		www.bdjjobs.com	23.11.03	<p>Masters in Computer Science &amp; Engineering / relevant field <i>preferably from reputed foreign university</i> with high level of academic standing. Candidates with Ph.D. will be preferred.</p>
	12.	Professor	Computer Science and Engineering		www.bdjjobs.com	23.11.03	<p>Candidates must have Ph.D. in Computer Science &amp; Engineering / relevant field <i>preferably from reputed universities of UK or North America</i></p>
	13.	Dean of the Faculty of Science		Dean of the Faculty of Science	www.bdjjobs.com	23.11.03	<p>Candidates must have Ph.D. in Computer Science &amp; Engineering / relevant field <i>preferably from reputed universities of UK or North America</i></p>
	14.	Dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Professor of English		Dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Professor of English	www.bdjjobs.com	23.11.03	<p>Candidates must have Ph.D. in relevant field <i>preferably from reputed universities of UK or North America</i></p>
	15.	Pro-Vice Chancellor		Pro-Vice Chancellor	www.bdjjobs.com	23.11.03	<p>Candidates must have Ph.D. <i>preferably from Universities of UK or North America</i></p>
	16.	Students Counsellor		Students Counsellor	www.bdjjobs.com	26.11.03	<p>• Age: <i>Maximum 30 years</i></p> <p>MBA / BBA <i>preferably from reputed foreign university</i></p>
4.	17.	Lecturer	Marketing, Finance, Management, Mathematics, Economics and MIS		www.bdjjobs.com	31.05.03	<p>MBA from local &amp; foreign university, <i>preferably North America</i></p>

PIHL <sup>1</sup> SL	Sample <sup>2</sup> Sl.	Vacancies Advertised			Source <sup>3</sup>	Date <sup>4</sup>	Elitist / Exclusionary / Marginalizing / Contradictory / Vague language (in italics)
		Position	Academic				
			Discipline	Administrative			
5.	18.	Faculty	Business, Mathematics, Computer Science and Engineering, Electrical and Electronics Engineering, Statistics, Tourism & Hospitality Management	English	www.bjjobs.com	29.12.03	First class post-graduate degree holders, MBA and Ph.D. from home and abroad, <i>specialty, from North American universities</i>
6.	19.	Lecturer			www.bjjobs.com	09.06.03	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Preference will be given to candidates with North American or European degrees</li> <li>Snokers should not apply</li> </ul>
7.	20.				Institutional website	07.05.03	The person who has ten years of teaching experience at university level and holding higher degree (PHD (MASTERS) from Foreign University may apply to Queen's University for teaching position. <i>Experiences from Sri Lanka, Philippine, India will be also preferable.</i>
8.	21.	Professor	Business Administration, Law, Economics, English		www.bjjobs.com	15.04.04	Candidates must have a Ph.D. degree from reputed foreign university. <i>Candidates possessing degree from abroad will be given preference.</i>
9.	22.	Professor	Computer Sc. & Eng., Business Administration, Business Management, Finance & Accounting, Mathematics, Environment, Statistics, English, Economics, Physics, Chemistry, Pharmacy, Sociology, Medical Lab Technology		www.bjjobs.com	21.02.04	Ph.D/M.Phil with good Degrees in Honors & Masters levels or Master Degree from Foreign University
	23.	Associate Professor	Computer Sc. & Eng., Business Administration, Business Management, Finance & Accounting, Mathematics, Environment, Statistics, English, Economics, Physics, Chemistry, Pharmacy, Sociology, Medical Lab		www.bjjobs.com	21.02.04	Ph.D/M.Phil with good Degrees in Honors & Masters levels or Master Degree from Foreign University

PHI, <sup>1</sup> SI	Sample <sup>2</sup> SI	Vacancies Advertised		Source <sup>3</sup>	Date <sup>4</sup>	Elitist / Exclusionary / Marginalizing / Contradictory / Vague language (in <i>italic</i> )	
		Position	Academic				Administrative
			Discipline				
	24.	Assistant Professor	Technology Computer Sc. & Eng., Business Administration, Business Management, Finance & Accounting, Mathematics, Environment, Statistics, English, Economics, Physics, Chemistry, Pharmacy, Sociology, Medical Lab Technology	www.bdjjobs.com	21.02.04	Ph.D/M.Phil with good Degrees in Honors & Masters levels or <i>Master Degree from Foreign University</i>	
	25.	Sr. Lecturer and Lecturer	Computer Sc. & Eng., Business Administration, Business Management, Finance & Accounting, Mathematics, Environment, Statistics, English, Economics, Physics, Chemistry, Pharmacy, Sociology, Medical Lab Technology	www.bdjjobs.com	21.02.04	First Class in Master or Honors from a <i>reputed University, B.Sc. Engg. (CSE) from BUET.</i>	
10.	26.	Faculty Position	Accounting, Computer Science, MIS, Mathematics, Management, Physics, English, Statistics, Communication & Information Technology	www.bdjjobs.com	27.08.03	First class post graduate degree holders, MBA and Ph.D. degree holders from <i>reputed universities from home and abroad</i>	
	27.	Assistant Professor / senior Lecturer / Lecturer	Accounting, Computer Science & Engineering, Finance, Business Management, HRM, Law, Applied Physics and Electronics, Communication Engineering, Electrical & Electronics Engineering, English, Production Management, Sociology	www.bdjjobs.com	30.03.04	First class Post-Graduate and Bachelor (Hons.) degrees from a <i>well-known university</i>	

PHH.1 SL	Sample SL	Vacancies Advertised		Source <sup>2</sup>	Date <sup>4</sup>	Eligible / Exclusionary / Marginalizing / Contradictory / Vague language (in <i>italics</i> )
		Position	Academic Discipline			
			Administrative Officer	www.bajobs.com	30.03.04	Masters degree minimum second class from a well-known university
11.	28.	Lecturer / Professor	Department of Business Administration, Computer Science and Engineering, English & Economics	www.bajobs.com	19.10.03	One M.Phil/Post Graduate Diploma from any foreign university other than the local Masters degree in the relevant field Experience at private university will be given preference in all cases
12.	29.	Lecturer	Business Administration	www.bajobs.com	14.06.03	MBA from recognized university (preferably of IBA of Dhaka University) with 1st class or at least a CGPA of 3.5 on 4 point scale
13.	30.	Art Teacher	English	www.bajobs.com	26.06.03	Final Year/Pass out student from Charukola Institute
14.	31.	Lecturer	English	www.bajobs.com	27.08.03	First-Class at both Honors & Master levels in English from any reputed University The applications should also accompany a non-refundable Bank deposit order of Tk. 500/- for the post of Lecturer favor of "Name of PHH.13"
15.	32.	Associate Professor	Business Administration, Computer Science and Engineering, English, I.L.B., Mathematics	www.bajobs.com	22.10.03	Candidates must have Ph.D. in related discipline from a reputed university
16.	33.	Professor	Business Administration, Computer Science and Engineering, English, I.L.B., Mathematics	www.bajobs.com	22.10.03	At least 7 years teaching experience 5 publications or a foreign Masters Degree with 13 years teaching experience and 8 publications Premier University is an equal opportunity employer Candidates must have Ph.D. in related discipline from a reputed university
17.	34.	Instructor	English	www.bajobs.com	07.01.04	O-A Levels/or/and Graduation with good results from well reputed University
18.	35.	Academic Counsellor	Anatomy, Physiology, Pharmacology, Pathology, Microbiology.	www.bajobs.com	23.02.04	Female
	36.	Lecturer		www.bajobs.com	13.04.03	Please apply with detailed CV, 3 recent pp size photographs, attested copies of educational & experience certificates to the Registrar. Along with a

PHIL <sup>1</sup> Sl.	Sample <sup>2</sup> Sl.	Vacancies Advertised		Source <sup>3</sup>	Date <sup>4</sup>	Elitist / Exclusionary / Marginalizing / Contradictory / Vague language (in italics)
		Position	Academic Discipline			
	38.		Bio-chemistry	www.bjjobs.com	13.04.03	<i>Bank Draft of TK, 5000/- in favor of Registrar.</i> Please apply with detailed CV, 3 recent pp size photographs, attested copies of educational & experience certificates to the Registrar. <i>Along with it Bank Draft of TK, 5000/- in favor of Registrar.</i>
	39.	Lecturer, Professor / Assistant Professor	Computer Science and Associate Engineering	www.bjjobs.com	13.04.03	<i>Bank Draft of TK, 5000/- in favor of Registrar.</i> Please apply with detailed CV, 3 recent pp size photographs, attested copies of educational & experience certificates to the Registrar. <i>Along with it Bank Draft of TK, 5000/- in favor of Registrar.</i>

Table 2: Elitist criteria and exemplary language

Sl.	Elitist / discriminatory / exclusionary criteria	Exemplary rhetoric (those in <i>italic</i> )
1.	Tertiary / graduate degree(s) from a specific countries, regions or foreign countries in general	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Master's degree from <i>foreign university, preferably North American</i>, for Lecturer position</li> <li>• <b>Ph.D., preferably US / Canadian</b>, for Asst. Prof. &amp; above; Excellent academic background</li> <li>• <i>Candidates for all positions must have Ph.D. from a North American or equivalent university.</i> (This sentence was already <i>italicized</i> in the advertisement.)</li> <li>• Ph.D. <i>preferably from North America, the UK or Australia</i></li> <li>• The Candidates possessing credentials/degrees from <i>North America, UK and Australia will be given preference. Expatriate Bangladeshis residing/working abroad are encouraged to apply</i> for the teaching positions in the Website ...</li> <li>• Candidates must have Ph.D. <i>preferably from Universities of UK or North America</i></li> <li>• First class post-graduate degree holders, MBA and Ph.D. from home and abroad, <i>specially, from North American universities</i></li> <li>• <i>Preference will be given to candidates with North American or European deuces</i></li> <li>• <u><i>Expatriates from Sri Lanka, Philippine, India will be given preference.</i></u></li> <li>• Candidates must have a Ph.D. degree from a <i>reputed foreign university.</i></li> <li>• <i>Candidates possessing degree from abroad will be given preference.</i></li> <li>• First class post graduate degree holders, MBA and Ph.D. degree holders from <i>reputed universities from home and abroad</i></li> <li>• Masters In Computer Science &amp; Engineering / relevant field <i>preferably from reputed foreign university</i></li> </ul>
2.	Alternative degrees from foreign or general universities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ph.D. / M.Phil. with good Degrees in Honors &amp; Masters levels or <i>Master Degree from Foreign University</i></li> <li>• <i>One MS/Post Graduate Diploma from any foreign university other than the local Master's degree in the relevant field</i></li> <li>• Candidates must have Ph.D. in related discipline from a <i>reputed university. At least 7 years teaching experience 5</i></li> </ul>



		<p>publications or a <i>foreign Masters Degree with 13 years teaching experience and 8 publication</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Candidates must have Ph.D. in related discipline from a <i>reputed university</i>. At least 14 years teaching experience 9 publications or a <i>foreign Masters Degree with 15 years teaching experience and 10 publication</i></li> <li>• <i>O-A Levels or/and Graduation with good results from well reputed University</i></li> </ul>
3.	Reputation of university	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First class Post-Graduate and Bachelor (Hons.) degrees from a <i>well-known university</i></li> <li>• First-Class at both Honors &amp; Master levels In English from any <i>reputed University</i></li> <li>• <i>O-A Levels or/and Graduation with good results from well reputed University</i></li> </ul>
4.	Degree from specific institution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First Class in Master or Honors from a <i>reputed University, B.Sc. Engg. (CSE) from BUET.</i></li> <li>• MBA from recognized university (<i>preferably of IBA of Dhaka University</i>) with 1st class or at least a CGPA of 3.5 on 4 point scale.</li> <li>• Final Year/Pass out student from <i>Charukola Institute</i></li> </ul>
5.	Monetary requirement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Please apply with detailed CV, 3 recent pp size photographs, attested copies of educational &amp; experience certificates to the Registrar. <i>Along with a Bank Draft of TK. 500/- in favor of Registrar.</i></li> <li>• <i>The applications should also accompany a non-refundable Bank draft/pay order of Tk. 300/- for the post of Lecturer favor of "..."</i></li> </ul>
6.	Gender	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Female</i></li> <li>• <i>(Lady)</i></li> </ul>
7.	Age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Age: Below 35 years as of December 1,2003</i></li> <li>• <i>Age: Maximum 30 years</i></li> </ul>
8.	Personal habit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Smokers should not apply</i></li> </ul>

The results suggest that there are eight categories of elitist / discriminatory / exclusionary criteria—Tertiary / graduate degree(s) from a specific countries, regions or foreign countries in general, Alternative foreign degrees, Reputation of university, Degree from specific institution, Monetary requirement, Age, Personal habit (Table 2).

The first criterion (Table 2) shows a strong preference for degrees from specific countries (mostly native English speaking), regions or in general foreign countries. Among the specific regions and countries, candidates with degrees

from North America—namely USA and Canada—UK and Australia are highly sought after. The language used in the recruitment advertisements may be very explicit (*Candidates for all positions must have Ph.D. from a North American or equivalent university; First class post-graduate degree holders, MBA and Ph.D. from home and abroad, specially, from North American universities*) or implicit (*Ph.D., preferably US / Canadian; Ph.D. preferably from North America, the UK or Australia; The Candidates possessing credentials/degrees from North America, UK and Australia will be given preference. Expatriate Bangladeshis residing/working abroad are encouraged to apply*). Other specific regions and countries are Europe (*Preference will be given to candidates with North American or European degrees*) and certain Asian countries like Sri Lanka, the Philippines, India (*Expatriates from Sri Lanka, Philippine, India will be given preferable[sic]*). Apart from the specific regions and countries, graduates from any foreign countries are also preferred, again the rhetoric may be explicit (*Candidates must have a Ph.D. degree from reputed foreign university*) or implicit (*Candidates possessing degree from abroad will be given preference; Masters In Computer Science & Engineering / relevant field preferably from reputed foreign university*). Sometimes the language is more inclusive by suggesting that local graduates may also apply (*First class post-graduate degree holders, MBA and Ph.D. degree holders from reputed universities from home and abroad*).

The second criterion (Table 2) suggests that the recruitment requirement for potential candidates with degrees from foreign universities may be relaxed (*Ph.D / M.Phil with good Degrees in Honors & Masters levels or Master Degree from Foreign University; One MS/Post Graduate Diploma from any foreign university other than the local Masters degree in the relevant field; Candidates must have Ph.D. In related discipline from a reputed university. At least 7 years teaching experience 5 publications or a foreign Masters Degree with 13 years teaching experience and 8 publication [sic]; Candidates must have Ph.D. In related discipline from a reputed university. At least 14 years teaching experience 9 publications or a foreign Masters Degree with 15 years teaching experience and 10 publication [sic]*). Sometimes non-graduate English medium qualifications like O-Levels or A-Levels are given the same status as graduate degrees from universities (*O-A Levels or/and Graduation with good results from well reputed University*).

The third criterion (Table 2) implies that those who wish to apply should be graduates from *well-known, reputed or well-reputed* universities (*First class Post-Graduate and Bachelor (Hons.) degrees from a well-known university; First-Class at both Honors & Master levels In English from any reputed University; O-A Levels or/and Graduation with good results from well reputed University*) and not merely recognized universities.

The fourth criterion (Table 2) insinuates that degrees from specific institutions are preferred, like Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (First Class in Master or Honors from a *reputed University. B.Sc. Eng. (CSE) from BUET*), Institute of Business Administration under Dhaka University (MBA from recognized university (*preferably of IBA of Dhaka University*) with 1st class or at least a CGPA of 3.5 on 4 point scale), Charukola Institute<sup>1</sup> (Final Year/Pass out student from *Charukola Institute*).

The fifth criterion (Table 2) imposes a monetary requirement on all those who wish to apply for the advertised positions to the amounts of Tk. 500 (Please apply with detailed CV, 3 recent pp size photographs, attested copies of educational & experience certificates to the Registrar. (*Along with a Bank Draft of TK. 500/- in favor of Registrar*) and Tk. 300 (*The applications should also accompany a non-refundable Bank draft/pay order of Tk. 300/- for the post of Lecturer favor of "...*”).

The sixth and the seventh criteria (Table 2) desire applicants of a specific gender (*female, lady*) and specific age (*Below 35 years as of December 1, 2003; Maximum 30 years*) while the eighth criterion discourages people with a certain personal habit (*Smokers should not apply*).

It has been almost a quarter of a century when the American dream first entered the consciousness of the young generation the late 1970s; during this period the weakness towards the most powerful nation on earth had grown, despite taking a slight blow after '9 / 11'. Though American foreign policies are not idealised, the desire for American education, products and services is still there. The ideology that anything American is world class and therefore bound to be good still prevails in the Bangladeshi society. Capitalizing on this ideology, the discursive formula 'international atmosphere' + 'state-of-the-art facilities' = 'quality education' works well in marketizing private institutions of higher learning and the education that they sell. In order to create the international atmosphere nothing works better than to have academics and staff members with North American qualification, that is American and Canadian (Ph.D., *preferably US / Canadian*). If not American, then qualifications from other native English speaking countries like the UK and Australia (Ph.D. *preferably from North America, the UK or Australia*) are sought. Qualifications from native English speaking countries are very important, primarily because the English language is synonymous with 'internal quality and / or standard', 'state-of-the-art facilities' and 'modernity', and, subsequently, because English is the medium of instruction of the private institutions. It is noteworthy that most of the private institutions in the country have English names without any Bengali equivalent. In showing preference for degrees from certain countries or region, sometimes other

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<sup>1</sup> Institute of Fine Arts

important aspects of potential academics, like teaching experience / exposure, publications, research capabilities seem to be overlooked.

The next best thing that aids in creating an international milieu is to have academics from other foreign countries (*Candidates possessing degree from abroad will be given preference*) or regions like Europe (*Preference will be given to candidates with North American or European degrees*). A blend of foreigners would also help; since it would be difficult to invite someone from another country, the easier option is to attract the foreigners that are already in the country, for instance expatriates from Sri Lanka, Philippine or India (*Expatriates from Sri Lanka, Philippine, India will be given preferable* [sic]). As English is one of the languages used for everyday communicative purpose in these countries, it is probably based on this rationale that the expatriates of these countries are encouraged to apply.

It is demeaning and belittling to have one's recruitment requirement relaxed merely because she / he has a foreign degree (Ph.D / M.Phil with good Degrees in Honors & Masters levels or *Master Degree from Foreign University*). It may also be frustrating when school qualifications like O-Levels and A-Levels are given the same status as university education (*O-A Levels or/and Graduation with good results from well reputed University*). This seems to promote the fact that English medium school education is of the same standard as university education.

It seems that nowadays degrees from any 'recognized' universities will not do. The universities have to have a reputation of some kind, at least to the extent that they may be called or perceived as 'well-known' (First class Post-Graduate and Bachelor (Hons.) degrees from a *well-known university*), 'reputed' (First-Class at both Honors & Master levels in English from any *reputed University*) or 'well reputed' (*O-A Levels or/and Graduation with good results from well reputed University*). In most instances, when government (public) institutions of higher learning advertise their vacancy, they tend to use the term 'recognized' (universities) as in the sense that the universities where the applicants have graduated from would be recognized by the government of Bangladesh. However, the terms 'well-known', 'reputed' and 'well reputed' suggest that degrees from recognized universities is not enough, they have to have a reputation. The idea of having a reputation is vague and rather controversial in the sense that there are many ways universities can be ranked; moreover, there is no unanimous global standard for ranking universities. Some universities may enjoy a certain level reputation in some countries but not to the same extent in others. This may also vary from individual to individual; what an applicant may think of as a 'well-known', 'reputed', 'well reputed' university, her / his potential employee(s) may not.

The findings suggest that just like there are certain preferences for degree from the institutions of higher learning from specific foreign countries or regions, there are also preferences from specific local institutions and universities, like Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET), Institute of Business Administration (IBA) and Charukola Institute, both under Dhaka University (Table 2). Showing preference for these and other similar institutions seems to give them the status as 'elites' among other institutions of higher learning in the country; in this way the elitist ideology is not only sustained but also elevated to new heights.

Certain institutions in order to process the applications of the applicants impose a monetary requirement, for instance between Tk. 300-500 (Table 2), which by Bangladeshi standards is no small sum (*The applications should also accompany a non-refundable Bank draft/pay order of Tk. 300/- for the post of Lecturer favor of "...*). An average person can live for more than a week on Tk. 500. This means that not everyone can afford to apply for all vacancies, as it may not ensure them a job; either people of a certain socio-economic condition or those who are willing to try out their luck can apply.

Gender preference is a global issue, which needs to be examined from a neutral perspective. It seems that in many instances the issue has been researched from the women's perspective to show how they have been marginalized. It cannot be denied that Bangladesh is predominantly a patriarchal society, neither can it be denied that society has certain expectation of the men; as household heads they are expected to provide all the necessities to take care of a family, and sometimes even of certain relatives. Positions that encourage or favor female applicants do not necessarily mean that this is done as an act of empowerment of a gender that is often marginalized in a male dominant society; sometimes the preference of women for a certain position may in reality be in the interest of the institution.

In a country where politics is an integral part of the public educational institutions, the frequent political turmoil constantly disrupts the flow of academic life. Graduating on time, especially from the public universities and colleges has often proved to be difficult due to 'session jams' or 'session hold-ups' (which refer to ...). Under such circumstances imposing an age restriction for certain positions seems to be unethical; in fact, the issue of age limitation is considered a discriminatory act even in countries where the educational institutions are not plagued by political turmoil and 'session jams'. Further, it is common sense above all which dictates that professional etiquette should not infringe upon personal habits. Discouraging applicants, who indulge in a certain personal habit like smoking, from applying for a vacancy seems to go against conventions of professional ethics (*Smokers should not apply*).

### Concluding Remarks

The eight categories of elitist / discriminatory / exclusionary criteria may individually be elitist, discriminatory or exclusionary in nature or even all three at the same time, depending on what perspective they are perceived from. In a country like Bangladesh, very few get the opportunity to study beyond the shores of their home country, and most of the fortunate few are usually from the upper middle class. Opening the doors of employment, somewhat surreptitiously, to the very privileged few is not only elitist and discriminatory but also contributes to the (re) production of the ideology that anything foreign is better than local. Relaxing the recruitment requirements for foreign graduates, favouring universities with a certain level of reputation, showing preference for specific local institutions, gender, age and discouraging applicants on the basis of a personal habit may all be considered, to some extent, elitist in nature.

Looking at the issue of elitism in the recruitment advertisements of the private institutions of higher learning in Bangladesh seems to reveal the presence of and the practice of elitist discourse. It is quite apparent from the findings that the language of recruitment requirements of certain advertisements convey a 'preferred message' which implies that those who wish to apply for the vacant positions should possess certain 'special qualities'. These so called 'special qualities' may not always contribute to a candidate's ability to discharge the duties of the positions better than those who do not possess those qualities. The special qualities may vary; they could be degrees from specific countries, regions, institutions of certain reputation or people of a specific gender and age without a particular habit or even the ability to afford certain amounts of money. Whatever may be the 'special qualities', the findings suggest that there are implied and / or subtle notions of preference for certain applicants over others. This tendency of preference is rather elitist in nature and undermines the social structure of a society as well as the moral values and ethical responsibilities of reducing the gap between the haves and the have-nots; consequently, the essence of elitism is sustained with its gyrating spiral ever widening.

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