Micro-politics of Neoliberal Policy Formulation in the Higher Education Sector in Bangladesh

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Notice 1

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Declaration

I, hereby declare that this thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at any university or equivalent institution and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

Signed

Date

This research project was granted approval by the Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC) from 8 March 2013 to 8 March 2018 (Reference number: CF13/435 – 2013000187)
Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to:

My parents, Dabir Uddin and Anwara Khatun
&
My wife, Farjana Akter, and my daughter, Shiesta Ayaat Kabir
Publications and Presentations Relating to the Thesis

Book chapters
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Conference presentations

Kabir, A. H. with Alam, S. (2014). *Neoliberal ideas and thinking in the higher Education policies in Bangladesh: Politics of local elite*. Paper Presented at the European Conference on Educational Research (ECER) 2014, Porto, Portugal. [http://www.eera-efer.de/efer-programmes/your-programme-full-view/conference/19/?contributionUid=32095&cHash=aaabe8a2bf529194cc916f6e5bc6b87d&addToBookmark1=1&bookmark_contriUid=32095#c1826](http://www.eera-efer.de/efer-programmes/your-programme-full-view/conference/19/?contributionUid=32095&cHash=aaabe8a2bf529194cc916f6e5bc6b87d&addToBookmark1=1&bookmark_contriUid=32095#c1826)
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<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>APUB</td>
<td>Association of Private Universities of Bangladesh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BBA</td>
<td>Bachelor of Business Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BNP</td>
<td>Bangladesh Nationalist Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BoT</td>
<td>Board of Trustees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BUET</td>
<td>Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology</td>
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<tr>
<td>CEO</td>
<td>Chief Executive Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CD-ROMs</td>
<td>Compact Disc Read-Only Memories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DCCI</td>
<td>Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DUCSU</td>
<td>Dhaka University Central Students Union</td>
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<tr>
<td>EFA</td>
<td>Education for All</td>
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<tr>
<td>EKE</td>
<td>Education for the Knowledge Economy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>European Commission</td>
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<tr>
<td>FBCCI</td>
<td>Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GATS</td>
<td>General Agreement on Trade in Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HE</td>
<td>Higher Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>HEC</td>
<td>Higher Education Commission</td>
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<tr>
<td>HEQEP</td>
<td>Higher Education Quality Enhancement Project</td>
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<td>HRD</td>
<td>Human Resource Development</td>
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<td>HRM</td>
<td>Human Resource Management</td>
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<tr>
<td>HSC</td>
<td>Higher Secondary Certificate</td>
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<tr>
<td>IAG</td>
<td>International Advisory Group</td>
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<tr>
<td>IBA</td>
<td>Institute of Business Administration</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICT</td>
<td>Information and Communication Technology</td>
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<tr>
<td>IER</td>
<td>Institute of Education and Research</td>
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<td>IFIs</td>
<td>International Financial Institutions</td>
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</table>
IMF  International Monetary Fund
INGOs  International Non-government Organisations
MDGs  Millennium Development Goals
MEd  Master of Education
MOP  Ministry of Education
MP  Member of Parliament
MPhil  Master of Philosophy
MUHREC  Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee
NGO  Non-government Organisation
NPM  New Public Management
OECD  Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PAs  Personal Assistants
PhD  Doctor of Philosophy
Pro-VC  Pro-Vice Chancellor
SJTUIHE  Shanghai Jiao Tong University Institute of Higher Education
SPC  Strategic Planning Committee
THER  Times Higher Education Ranking
TOR  Terms of References
UGC  University Grants Commission
UK  United Kingdom
UNESCO  United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
USA  United States of America
VAT  Value Added Tax
VC  Vice Chancellor
WB  World Bank
WTO  World Trade Organisation
Abstract

This thesis has explored the development of policy in the higher education sector in Bangladesh since the 1990s. It sought to understand the processes that led to the policy formulation based on neoliberal ideas and traces why, how and by whom these policies were developed in the higher education sector in Bangladesh. In order to understand the formation processes the study also reviewed the history of previous policies, and the discussion contextualizes the present policy formation within a discussion of the earlier development of higher education in Bangladesh. The theoretical framework of this research was developed and informed by the concept of policy borrowing. The methodological approach in this thesis was predominantly that of a case study within a broadly qualitative framework where neoliberal higher education policy making of Bangladesh was selected as a case. The case study used two main methods for collecting data: firstly, from the key neoliberal policies since the 1990s and secondly from the key policy actors involved in the development of these neoliberal policies in higher education.

The findings of this thesis suggested that the way in which the neoliberal ideas were shaped in the higher education policies in Bangladesh could be defined as a ‘Bangladeshi’ form of neoliberalism. Although the overall features of this ‘Bangladeshi’ form of neoliberal ideas still embraced the idea of ‘Americanisation’ or ‘Westernisation’, these neoliberal ideas were developed in slightly different ways by actors who considered the socio-economic and political context of Bangladesh. The findings also demonstrated that many concepts put forward by policy borrowing models were found exemplified in the Bangladeshi case study. For example, the construction of ‘policy problems’ involved a process of ‘externalisation’ to solve the policy problems in the higher education sector in Bangladesh, which ensured that neoliberal ideas as developed elsewhere were looked at. In particular, the analysis supported the arguments of several scholars in the policy borrowing models that neoliberal globalisation has become the key
source of solutions to policy problems, and the spread of these ideas has worked as a catalyst to solve problems in different national spaces. In the policy formation processes, the references to ‘lessons learnt’ or references to the ‘best practices’ from other countries became the policy tools to justify the adoption of neoliberal ideas in the higher education policies at the state level in Bangladesh.

By demonstrating these characteristics of the process, this thesis has contributed to knowledge both in ‘comparative policy studies’ and policy borrowing models. This thesis has argued that the ‘micro-politics’ of a context need to be studied to understand the reasons why neoliberal ideas were formulated in the developing countries like Bangladesh. The argument about the importance of studying the ‘micro-politics’ of policy development contributes to knowledge in ‘comparative policy studies’. In addition, this research has argued that the concept of ‘semi-peripheral references’ as externalisation has become one of the dominant higher education policy strategies in Bangladesh. In shifting away from references to the ‘best practices’ or ‘international standards’ to references to the practices in ‘semi-peripheral’ countries that have similar non Western socio-economic and political spaces to Bangladesh, policy actors have been able to justify the adoption of contested neoliberal ideas into the higher education policies of Bangladesh.
Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Overview of the study

Higher education in Bangladesh has been embroiled in the politics of the construction of Bangladesh as a state from the very beginning. Therefore, any analysis of current policies related to higher education in Bangladesh needs to be set in the context not only of those policies worldwide, but also in relation to the history of the development of higher education in Bangladesh. This thesis is about recent developments in higher education in Bangladesh. It looks at the policies and the politics of those policies with a particular focus on those policies incorporated into the higher education sector since the 1990s. My argument traces the shift toward neoliberalism in higher education. The thesis explores where these neoliberal ideas came from, and traces how they are currently being developed in Bangladesh. In order to understand how these policies were being developed it looks at the history of previous policies and the earlier development of higher education in Bangladesh where this history is relevant to the understanding of current policies.

The theoretical framework of this research has been informed by comparative education and the concepts of policy borrowing taking a qualitative case study approach. Neoliberal higher education policies in Bangladesh since the 1990s constitute the case, and the study seeks to understand the processes which includes why, how and by whom neoliberal ideas have been developed in the higher education policies at the state level in Bangladesh. Within the case, I collected data from policy documents and policy actors, who had been involved in the development of neoliberal policies. I used qualitative content analysis to analyse the documents to explore the underpinning ideas and to identify the extent of the neoliberal nature of higher education policies in Bangladesh. The policy actors were interviewed to examine the processes of neoliberal policy development in Bangladesh and to inform our understanding of the construction of the policy texts.
In this chapter I trace the political process and the historical roots informing the adaptation of a western higher education system in Bangladesh to aid in conceptualising the policy shifts in higher education over the years 1990-2013. I problematise the development of neoliberalism in higher education in Bangladesh. I also offer a rationale for the research, and a brief account of my personal and professional experiences that led me to do this research. Finally, I state the research purpose and questions, and significance of this research.

1.2 The historical context of the development of a western higher education system in Bangladesh

This section briefly traces the political processes and the historical roots of the introduction of a western higher education in Bangladesh and the importance of identifying these political processes and the historical antecedents for understanding the nature of the contemporary higher education system and the present day cultures and values in Bangladesh.

The origin of current higher education in Bangladesh is discussed in order to understand the development of the British-Indian higher education system, as Bangladesh (then East Bengal) was part of India until 1947. According to Aggarwal (2007), the beginning of a western education system in the Indian subcontinent might be traced back to the year 1835. The now infamous Macaulay’s minute of 1835 triggered the rapid reformation aligned with British-based education system in the Indian subcontinent (Zastoupil & Moir, 1999). Based on Macaulay’s minute of 1835 the British colonial rulers formulated the English Education Act 1835 in which they set up the aim, content and medium of instruction of Education in British-India (Aggarwal, 2007).

Accordingly, the universities as institutions adopted the westernised model with English as the medium of instruction and with the introduction of the new areas of studies. On the pattern of the London University the first three modern universities were set up in three metropolitan cities of Calcutta (now Kolkata), Bombay (now Mumbai) and Madras (now Chennai) in 1857 (Vats, 2008), and another university in Lahore in 1969 (Aggarwal, 2007). The British education policies, for example, Wood’s Despatch in 1854, also promoted the growth of
higher education through the establishment of Colleges at the private level across British-India (Aggarwal, 2007).

Although the territorial boundaries now comprising Bangladesh had no university until 1921, some first grade affiliated colleges of East Bengal, for example, Rajshahi College (1873), Dhaka College (1881) and Jagannath College (1884), had the authority to offer higher studies under the University of Kolkata at that time (University Grants Commission, 2009a). In 1921, British rulers established the first university, University of Dhaka, in East Bengal (now Bangladesh) (Kabir, 2010). The decision to establish a university in Bangladesh came as compensation for the annulment of the partition of Bengal in 1905. The partition provided a hope to the majority Muslim community in East Bengal, and Assam (now one of the provinces of India) for socioeconomic and political development. However, the Bengal partition was lifted in 1911 in the wake of massive protests by the west Bengal-based intelligentsia groups and powerful Hindu leaders in India. Such a decision left deep anger and dissatisfaction among the Muslim community of East Bengal (University Grants Commission, 2009a). Subsequently, the Muslim community led by the Muslim leaders met the Viceroy and expressed their fear that the annulment could impede the educational progress of the Muslims in these regions. To assuage the feelings of the Muslim community and to ensure the progression of the backward Muslim community in these regions, the British ruler promised to establish a university in the capital of East Bengal – Dhaka (University Grants Commission, 2009a).

It was expected that the socio-economic, political and cultural conditions of the majority Muslim populace in the then East Bengal would be uplifted by ensuring modern higher education (Rahman, 2009). However, the British rulers had created the University of Dhaka in East Bengal as a way of dealing with social unrest and political difficulties within the country they ruled (Chowdhury & Kabir, 2014). The British rulers had intended to achieve political reconciliation between Muslims and Hindus in Bengal through the establishment of the University of Dhaka. The view of the British rulers was expressed by the then Chancellor of the University of Dhaka
and the Governor of Bengal, Lord Lytton, in the course of the Convocation address in the University of Dhaka in 1922. He commented that the University of Dhaka was “an imperial compensation to the Muslims for the annulment of the partition of Bengal” (University Grants Commission, 2009a, p. xviii).

The whole process of evolution of this university in East Bengal could be described using the words of the first vice chancellor of the University of Dhaka, Dr. P. J. Hartog, as the “political origin” of the institution (cited in Majumdar, Ghose, Chatterjee, Bandyopadhyay, & Chatterjee, 1994, p. 31). The overall feature of British education in the Indian subcontinent was to create a class that would be Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste (Macaulay, 1835, cited in McLeod, 2000). In particular, once India came under the direct rule of the British Royalty and Parliament in 1857 the British ruler designed and provided higher education “to a class of people whose sympathy it was necessary to win in the political interests of the Britishers” (Singh, 1989, p. 2).

The British left the Indian subcontinent in 1947 by splitting it into two countries – India and Pakistan – based on a predominantly religious Two-Nation theory. Since then, Bangladesh (then East Bengal) became East Pakistan as part of the newly formed colonial state of Pakistan (Chowdhury & Kabir, 2014). The state under Pakistani rulers (1947-1971) formulated several policy documents, for example, the 1957 Educational Reforms Commission for East Pakistan, Commission on National Education in 1958 (Government of Pakistan, 1958), the New Education Policy in 1970, and set up five more universities in East Pakistan (University Grants Commission, 2009a). In its first National Educational Conference held in Karachi in 1947, the Pakistani rulers reassessed the British Education System in Pakistan and set up the Islamic religious ideology as a vision for the entire education system. The Commission on National Education in 1959 asserted that the fundamental value of education is “to preserve the Islamic way of life. … The moral and spiritual values of Islam combined with the freedom, integrity, and strength of Pakistan should be the ideology which inspires our educational system” (Government
of Pakistan, 1958, p. 11). The Pakistani ruler positioned religion, tradition and the past British traditions in the education system for building up Pakistani nationalism by ignoring the diverse socio-political and economic factors existing in different regions in Pakistan. As a new state, Pakistan designed its education system from its colonial past to construct the ‘citizens’ “in the same image – obedient, loyal, hardworking and able to subordinate themselves to authority” (Saigol, 2003, p. 12).

Although the British rulers introduced English education system as a means to gaining political and economic interests, the Indian leaders and English-educated class saw “in the English the key to the west” (Basu, 1974, p. 73). English as the new language arrived with a new world view to the Indians. The Indian English-educated class became the driving force in Indian politics and shaped English education to generate new political life and ideas. They recognised English as the medium of expression that would forge the unity of all Indians (Basu, 1974).

Indeed, the establishment of University of Dhaka by the British ruler in East Bengal in 1921 helped an East Bengal-based intelligentsia to emerge, which produced a politically unintended consequence at the end of the British regime and around the turn of the Pakistani regime (1947-1971). Once the British rule departed, East Bengal became part of Pakistan, but the political leaders and educated class felt no basic changes between the British and Pakistani rulers. The political leaders and educated class of then East Pakistan saw higher education as a catalyst to achieve their political goals during Pakistani regime (Kabir, 2010). Consequently, the role of higher education in the society changed, turning against the Pakistani rulers. Similar to what education did for India, the development of the East Bengal-based intelligentsia created the climate and the actors for a social movement to push forward the establishment of a new country – Bangladesh – in 1971 (Basu, 1974). Under the Pakistani regime from 1947 to 1971, both students and faculty (academic staff) contributed toward the establishment of democracy and liberty of the country (Quddus & Rashid, 2000).
Undoubtedly, British colonial legacy influenced the nature of the contemporary higher education system in Bangladesh. For example, the university structure, academic hierarchy, curricula and examination system of the university, have all been influenced by the British higher education system (Altbach, 1989). However, these political processes and historical ascendances influenced the cultures and values of the post-independence Bangladeshi society (Alavi, 1972). The western-based higher education in Bangladesh began as a political project by the British to develop an elite class to do the bidding of colonisers. Once Bangladesh became independent in 1971, this elite class became also the elite class in the post-independence Bangladesh. They wanted power for themselves and used the colonial organisational context to do their politicking to develop ideas to lead the country (Kochanek, 2000).

An understanding of the political processes and the historical roots of the introduction of western-style higher education system in Bangladesh helped me to conceptualise how the current higher education system is shaped and what attitudes the policy actors are likely to have had to deal with. It could be that the policy actors have been shaping the current system in different ways for different purposes, and they are used to being influenced and influencing the people through different means. It has also helped me to justify doing this comparative policy work in the Bangladeshi context, given that it has not been done before. The development of policy in one context based on that from another context needs to take into account the differences between the contexts. The tracing of the political processes and the history in this thesis pay attention to these differences.

1.3 Problem statement and relevance

Since Bangladesh’s independence in 1971, the state under several governments has formulated various policies to shape and recontextualise the education system from a broader nationalistic view (Chowdhury & Kabir, 2014). In its first education commission in 1974 – Bangladesh Education Commission – the government emphasised the importance of nation building through higher education (Ministry of Education, 1974). In this post-independence
period, the new government set up two interwoven goals for higher education: to contribute to
the newly born country's overall development, and to contribute to creating an equitable society
(Ministry of Education, 1974). Since independence from Pakistan in 1971 and until 1990 the
country had six public universities and some affiliated colleges. All universities and affiliated
colleges in Bangladesh adopted the same role in the higher education system until 1990
(University Grants Commission, 2009a).

Subsequently, a new phase of higher education began in the 1990s in which a remarkable
transformation took place in the higher education system in Bangladesh, largely based on market-
identified in the education policy as the key object of Bangladesh’s development to be achieved
by higher education (University Grants Commission, 2009a; World Bank, 2009). Consequently,
creating a knowledge-based society has become the key driver of the current higher education
system (Kabir, 2011). This transformation underpins the neoliberal changes in the higher
education sector, which will be discussed in the thesis.

In a broader sense, neoliberalism refers to an economic model or paradigm (Steger &
Roy, 2010). However, three intertwined dimensions need to be understood in order to
conceptualise neoliberalism: neoliberalism as an ideology, a mode of governance, and a policy
package (Steger & Roy, 2010). "Ideologies organize their core ideas into fairly simple truth-claims
that encourage people to act in certain ways...legitimize certain political interests and to defend or
challenge dominant power structures (Steger & Roy, 2010, p. 11)". The second dimension
encompasses the idea of neoliberalism as a mode of governance refers to what Foucault (1991)
called “governmentalities” (cited in Steger & Roy, p. 14), which are deep rooted in
entrepreneurial values; for example, competiveness, self-interest and decentralisation. This
emphasises individual empowerment and decentralisation of the power to local units, and thus
neoliberalism promotes a self-regulating free market in order to ensure proper government. The
final dimension, a policy package, refers to the deregulation of the economy, liberalisation of
trade and industry, and privatisation of state-owned enterprises. It also includes "massive tax cuts; reduction of social services and welfare programmes; replacing welfare with 'workface'" (Steger & Roy, 2010, p. 14).

Since the 1980s, neoliberal policies of the International Financial Institutions (IFIs) have played a crucial role in reshaping socio-economic policies in many developing countries (Torres, 2009). One of the key agendas of neoliberalism is the conviction that human welfare is best served by the withdrawal of the state from welfare policies (Harvey, 2007). The state is presumed to create a congenial atmosphere for the economy by reforming laws, policies and institutions necessary for the market (Olssen & Peters, 2005). Bangladesh as a developing country began introducing a pro-market economic policy once the military junta came into power by overthrowing the post-independence socialist government in 1975 (Kabir, 2013; Nuruzzaman, 2004). Since the early 1980s, the neoliberalising project affected various sectors of its economy, for example, development in agriculture, industry, and finance and banking was accelerated as a result of enormous pressures from the IFIs, and the economic and political interests of the ruling military-civil elites (Kabir, 2013). By accelerating the neoliberal reforms through structural adjustment policies, the successive military rulers (1975-1990) attempted to build up a coalition between dominant socio-political forces – military-civil bureaucrats, businessmen and industrialists (Quadir, 2000). These new initiatives also aimed to reform public policies and redefined the role of the state in serving its citizens (Nuruzzaman, 2004).

In keeping with this trend, the democratic regimes since the 1990s have continued to introduce neoliberal reforms such as privatisation in service-related sectors (Kabir, 2013). More recently the higher education sector in Bangladesh has also experienced significant changes. The first move was to promulgate the first Private University Act 1992 on August 9, 1992 (Government of Bangladesh, 1992). In April 1998, the government amended the Private University Act 1992 (Government of Bangladesh, 1998). In 2008 the army-backed Caretaker government repealed all private university Acts, and promulgated the Private University
Ordinance 2008 (Government of Bangladesh, 2008). However, the state under the following democratic government did not ratify the Ordinance 2008. Rather, the current government repealed all previous Acts and enacted the new Private University Act 2010 (Government of Bangladesh, 2010b). The previous government has also initiated a number of reform programmes in the higher education sector under the supervision and guidance of the World Bank. One of these reform policies is the introduction of a 20-year Strategic Plan for Higher Education in Bangladesh: 2006-2026 (University Grants Commission, 2006). The government and the World Bank identified this plan as a ground-breaking initiative to address the current problems and issues of higher education and it adopted a set of neoliberal solutions to the problems (University Grants Commission, 2009b; World Bank, 2009).

The way in which the British colonial rulers brought a western higher education system to the Indian subcontinent could be identified as ‘adapted education’ (see for reference, Steiner-Khamsi & Quist, 2000), and the use of the system was tightly connected to colonial interests (Altbach, 2004, 2005). In post-independence Bangladesh, higher education played the role of shaping the national identity and political system rather than broadening the social base and serving as a driver of the economic system. Since the 1990s, a new role is being adopted in the higher education system, that is, to serve the market. The government’s introduction of the private university Acts and the Strategic Plan focuses on shaping the entire higher education system in line with global trends. All these changes are indicative of a neoliberal reformation in the higher education sector implemented by various governments. This thesis has attempted to understand the formation processes of these neoliberal policy shifts that have been undertaken in the higher education policies at the state level in Bangladesh since the 1990s.

1.4 Rationale for the study

Neoliberalism as the dominant model of socio-economic policy has emerged since the late 1970s, based on “the classical liberal ideal of the self-regulating market” (Steger & Roy, 2010, p. 11). It rapidly spread in the western world with the generalised capitalist crisis associated with
the end of the post-war reconstruction boom, and emerged as an ideological response to the crisis of the “Keynesian welfare state” (Clarke, 2005, p. 58). Harvey (2006) identifies four features of neoliberalism: privatisation, financialisation, the management and manipulation of crisis, and state redistributions. The neoliberal policy agenda has spread into the higher education sector around the world since the 1980s (Ross & Gibson, 2007). In this sector, the neoliberal agenda proposes four major areas for reforms, namely, efficiency and accountability of the university, accreditation and universalisation, international competitiveness, and privatisation (Juan, 2002, cited in Torres, 2009).

From the 1980s, it has been a worldwide trend for universities to adopt commercial models of knowledge, skills, curriculum, finance, accounting, and management organisation (Levidow, 2007). Entrepreneurial practices are adopted in many universities in North America in which the universities not only develop profit-making activities but also become business partners. Similarly, higher education institutions in the United Kingdom are treated as ‘borderless businesses’ (Levidow, 2007). Australian higher education has also been commercialised, targeting foreign students for generating export revenue (Marginson, 2006a). In the same way, other developing countries like Chile, Argentina, India and China also have reformed the higher education sector to create a knowledge-based society (Altbach, 2004).

Higher education has never been considered to be as “ubiquitous” in modern society as it is in the neoliberal era (Marginson, 2011, p. 412). Marginson (2011) argues that the notion of higher education as ‘public good’ has disappeared due to hegemony of the neoliberal doctrine in this sector. Higher education institutions are increasingly becoming a part of private economic interests. In this context, education is treated as a ‘private good’ and is identified as a commodity used for “money and status” (Olssen, 2002, p. 19). The people involved in higher education institutions are using various resources to produce “new circuits of knowledge” for the market economy (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004, p. 1). Often the humanities, arts, and social science knowledge have been ignored. The young generation is being taught how to maximise profit,
while ignoring the skills that are needed to function effectively in a democracy. It has been argued that profit motivated higher education is eroding the critical insight of the young generation (Nussbaum, 2010). Corporate culture portrays citizenship within privatised cultural affairs in which individuals develop self-interest and material gains (Giroux, 2002).

The proliferation of neoliberalism across the world is understood to be a consequence of policy borrowing (Steiner-Khamsi, 2004a). The term “borrowing” refers to the processes involved when a country initiates interest in ideas and concepts from an experience abroad (Phillips & Ochs, 2003, p. 451). Specifically, borrowing implies “a decontextualization process in which a model, practice, or discourse is transplanted from its original context and applied to a new one, the process of recontextualization, ‘indigenization’ or local adaptation” (Steiner-Khamsi & Quist, 2000, p. 275). Several scholars promulgating the policy borrowing models argue that the concept of policy borrowing is a useful tool to understand the neoliberal reformation in the higher education sector around the world (see for reference, Steiner-Khamsi & Waldow, 2012). This will be developed in literature review (Chapter 2).

However, most of the studies of policy borrowing in education have been concerned with transatlantic and inter-European policy transfers (Steiner-Khamsi, 2006). Little attention has been paid to explain what Ball (1987) calls the ‘micro-politics’ of neoliberal policy borrowing in the developing countries’ perspective. By the term ‘micro-politics’, I refer to understanding how the power relations of different policy actors and their networks, and their ideas and positions shape the neoliberal policies at the state level in the developing countries. To be specific, this model has left one of the most significant issues unexplained, which concerns the varieties of interests for policy borrowing in the developing countries. This conceptual vacuum led me to conduct research on the ‘micro-politics’ of neoliberal policy borrowing in the higher education sector in Bangladesh. My study explores how policy actors in Bangladesh deal with neoliberal ideas and shape them either by surrendering and taking them as a complete panacea, or by re-designing them keeping in mind the local context. Most importantly, this study aims to look at why a
variety of policy actors’ interests design a particular policy in connection with the doctrine of neoliberal development planning.

1.5 **Motivation for doing this study**

The personal, cultural and professional interests of a researcher can have a significant influence on research (Creswell, 2013). The motivation in doing this research derives from my own personal and professional experiences over the years. The first motivation for the study is my own trajectory of going from school to university. At an early age I valued the idea of studying in a discipline that could lead to business-oriented employment and devalued the broader general conceptual disciplinary knowledge. The notion that I had at my early age is identified in the broader literature. Giroux (2002) argues that in the neoliberal society, corporate culture is treated as the model for the perfect life and for individual success. Indeed, I completed my pre-higher education studies in the field of commerce because this could help me to pursue my higher studies in this area. However, I failed to get into the business area because of the high competition and found myself studying broader disciplinary knowledge. This experience gave me certain insights into why business knowledge is being valued over the general disciplines like sociology or anthropology. Through study in sociology I developed the interest in wanting to understand further how the current higher education system is developing in Bangladesh so that certain disciplinary areas carry greater value than others.

The second stimulus came from responses I experienced to some of the problems of current policies that had led to a reduction of the state funding for research and the introduction of different fee schemes for students under different names. Since the 1990s the governing authority of the University of Dhaka took the initiative to reduce funding for research and steadily increased various kinds of fees. I also experienced that often various departments, particularly those with business and technology-related subjects, introduced fee-earning ‘evening courses’ to mitigate the financial burdens. Being a student of this university I became active in resisting that decision made by the university in the late 1990s. Again this experience gave me
certain insights to raise the question: Why is the state reducing its financial contribution to higher education; what is going on and where has this idea come from?

The third motivation stems from my learning through doing sociology and as a teacher of the sociology of education. The sociological learning helped me to develop sociological approaches to explain the development of education policies in Bangladesh. In the same way, as a teacher at the Institute of Education and Research at the University of Dhaka since 2006 I learnt that many people perceive the lack of ‘world class and standard’ higher education as one of the causes of underdevelopment of the country. Again these experiences helped me to develop some intellectual orientations on the current higher education policies. I raised questions about why people think in that way, why the government reformed the higher education sector in relation with market-economic forces, and where these policies have come from.

And the final source of inspiration of this research derives from my own research on the neoliberal impacts on the higher education sector in Bangladesh. In 2011, I conducted a small-scale research study in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education (see Kabir, 2011). The research showed that the higher education sector has undergone enormous changes since 1990s. The stakeholders interviewed, such as students, teachers, education experts, government employees, politicians and student activists, indicated that not only have philosophical and pedagogical aspects of higher education changed over the years, but higher education has also become a most expensive commodity in contemporary Bangladesh. My previous study focused on the perceptions of the stakeholders about the impact of neoliberal policy changes on the higher education sector and its consequences for the overall socio-cultural, political and economic patterns of society in Bangladesh. This research led to further questions directing my attention to the neoliberal ideas being adopted in the higher education policies since 1990s, and to how, why and by whom these ideas were adopted.

In keeping with the above experiences I embarked on research on the development of neoliberal policies in the higher education sector at the state level in Bangladesh. I believe that
these experiences will help me to do research on this issue rigorously and optimise my understanding of why and how these ideas have come into being. I now take the opportunity to look at the neoliberal higher education policies and the politics of these policies in the higher education sector in Bangladesh.

1.6 Purpose of the study and research questions

In this study, first, I was interested in identifying the degree to which neoliberalism is a prominent feature of the higher education policies in Bangladesh. Apparently market-forces are becoming a determining factor in shaping the nature of the higher education system over the years (Kabir, 2010). However, I intended to explore the key neoliberal ideas developed in the higher education policies since the 1990s. Second, I was interested in exploring how those neoliberal ideas and practices have been adopted, re-contextualised and modified in higher education policies in Bangladesh. Third, I wished to examine the processes and practices of mediating actors in the neoliberal policy formation in the higher education policies in Bangladesh. These processes and practices of actors could be called the ‘micro-politics’ (Ball, 1987). Although I consider the global stage of neoliberal globalisation as the macro or broad context for education, I see the micro-politics as the context (including the processes) in which a variety of policy actors’ interests are reproduced, and how they shape and re-contextualise global neoliberal ideas in the higher education policies. This needs to be examined.

To accomplish the stated purpose, in this study I wished to broadly understand the processes which include why, how and who have been involved in adopting the neoliberal ideas and thinking in the higher education policies at the state level in Bangladesh since 1990s.

I responded to this broader objective by looking at the following sub-questions:

1. To what extent is neoliberalism a prominent feature of the higher education policies in Bangladesh?

2. Why have neoliberal ideas and thinking been incorporated in the higher education policies in Bangladesh?
3. What strategies are being used by policy actors to incorporate a neoliberal agenda into the higher education policies in Bangladesh?
   - How do policy makers justify the neoliberal ideas and thinking in the higher education policies?
   - How are neoliberal ideas and thinking being shaped and recontextualised in the higher education policies?
   - How do other policy fields influence the higher education sector to incorporate a neoliberal policy agenda?
   - How do international financial institutions (IFIs) influence the policy makers to adopt neoliberal ideas in higher education policies?

4. How are the varieties of interest groups contributing to the formation of the neoliberal agenda in higher education policies?

5. Who is involved in the processes in developing the higher education policies in a relation with neoliberal ideas and thinking?

1.7 **Significance of the study: Bangladesh as a case to understand the ‘micro-politics’ of neoliberal policy formation in the developing countries’ contexts**

   Although the British rule introduced a modern higher education system in Bangladesh, Bangladesh as an independent country in 1971 sponsored higher education to generate, at least ideally, nation building in the society. A new phase has begun in this sector since the 1990s when the government introduced a range of policy reforms. Such policy shifts raise four questions. First, has the higher education system entirely incorporated the neoliberal ideas? Second, if so, how have neoliberal ideas been shaped and recontextualised in the higher education policies? Third, why has government adopted neoliberal ideas in the higher education policies at the state level? Fourth, who has been involved in the formation of these ideas in the higher education policies? To get closer to an answer to these questions, I found it important to investigate the
higher education policies that have been formulated since 1990s at the state level in Bangladesh and to identify the politics of these policies.

Over the years both the literatures of comparative education and policy studies have focused on the study of globalisation and its relations with policy transfer from one place to another (see for reference, Steiner-Khamsi & Waldow, 2012). However, the focuses of these two fields – comparative education and policy studies – are different. Comparative education on policy borrowing looks at the processes of policy transfer at the transnational level, while policy studies emphasise the need to understand the trans-sectoral policy transfer (Steiner-Khamsi, 2012b). By combining these two traditions Steiner-Khamsi (2012b) coins the term comparative policy studies to understand the processes associated with the recontextualisation of global policies in local settings. In the notion of comparative policy studies, Steiner-Khamsi (2012b) focuses on understanding three policy streams – policy problems, policy solutions, and politics – that move side by side. In this study, I attempt to understand the processes of neoliberal policies formation at the state level in Bangladesh. To understand the neoliberal policy formulation processes, I look at how and why different individuals came together and who came together with whom to make the neoliberal shift in the higher policies and practices. In that, I look carefully at the ideas, positions and practices in the politics of neoliberal changes in the higher education policies at the state level in Bangladesh. Not only would this investigation lead me to understand the ‘micro-politics’ of neoliberal policy formulation in Bangladesh, but it would also ultimately help advance the theoretical argument of comparative policy studies in respect of understanding the local policy context and its ‘micro-politics’, and in explaining why policy actors in developing countries do what they do as they develop neoliberal policy reforms in countries that have different socioeconomic and political structures and relationships from the developed countries.

The field of comparative education on policy borrowing looks at the transnational policy formation process. Steiner-Khamsi (2012b) argues that three generations of scholars have contributed to the theoretical paradigm of policy borrowing and lending over time. For her, the
third generation can contribute to advance the argument of *comparative policy studies* by investigating some key areas including the shift from bilateral to international reference frames (Steiner-Khamsi, 2012b). As I look at the state level policy formation process, my primary theoretical frame is policy borrowing. The policy borrowing in comparative education focuses on how the global ideas are justified in the local context. In this research, I highlight how local policy actors justify the global ideas to be adopted in the higher education policies in Bangladesh. The case of Bangladesh also contributes to the literature of the third generation of policy borrowing to understand how policy actors identify their own strategies to justify the application of neoliberal ideas in their countries and particularly to see whether and how they draw on experience from countries that have similar kinds of socioeconomic and political spaces to their own.

### 1.8 Organisation of the thesis

This thesis is structured into eight chapters. In the introductory section, Chapter 1, I conceptualised the development of the modern higher education system during different regimes from British colonial rulers to the current Bangladesh as an independent country since 1971. I problematised the situation, arguing that the policy shifts since the 1990s seem to inform new changes that are signifiers for neoliberal policy development in the higher education sector in Bangladesh. I offered a rationale for the research, and a brief account of my personal and professional experiences that lead me to do this research. I also stated the research purpose and questions, and significance of this research.

Chapter 2 reviews the literature relevant to this research. The literature reviewed in this thesis have been selected 1) to trace the root of the neoliberal theoretical paradigm and identify its impact on global higher education, 2) to illustrate the centrality of the relationship between neoliberalism and the work on policy borrowing, and 3) to develop a theoretical framework for empirical research largely based on comparative education in conjunction with policy borrowing models. In the first part of the literature review, I conceptualise neoliberalism and its theoretical
roots, the spread of neoliberalism and its relations with the IFIs, and I review evidence of how neoliberal policy change is reflected in the higher education sector around the world. In the second part of this chapter I develop the theoretical framework in this research by tracing the relationships between neoliberalism and the literature on the ‘policy borrowing’ model.

Chapter 3 outlines the methodological approach I use in this research to address the overarching research questions. The methodological approach in this thesis is predominantly that of a case study within a broadly qualitative framework in which neoliberal higher education policy making of Bangladesh was selected as a case (Merriam, 1988). I provide the justification for using thematic content analysis of the higher education policy documents and thematic analysis of the transcripts of interviews with policy actors. I describe self-reflexivity as a researcher and a teacher in a Bangladesh university. I also outline the data analysis and presentation procedures, and discuss the reliability and validity of the data collection and interpretation.

Chapter 4 explores what neoliberal reforms look like in the higher education policies in Bangladesh. I use content analysis of two key neoliberal policy phases – private university Acts and the Strategic Plan – that were formulated between 1992 and 2010 at the state level in Bangladesh. In analysing the neoliberal higher education policy documents, I explore the idea that the neoliberal features have been playing out in slightly different ways over time and have been going in a particular direction and affecting the higher education policies in Bangladesh differently from what the literature says about neoliberalism. In particular this chapter explores what comprises the Bangladeshi form of neoliberalism.

Chapter 5 draws from the 21 key policy actors interviewed, who were involved in the development of the private university Acts between 1990 and 2010. I use thematic analysis to examine the interview transcripts. In particular, I explore the process of construction of neoliberal ideas in the private university Acts by interviewing key policy actors who were involved in these developments at the state level in Bangladesh. This chapter explores how and why the policy actors mediated these neoliberal ideas in formulating the Acts.
Chapter 6 continues the discussion and analysis of interviews with the key policy actors to explore neoliberal ideas formation at the state level in Bangladesh in the Strategic Plan for Higher Education 2006-2026. I use thematic analysis to examine the interview transcripts. With a focus on the Strategic Plan, the second part of Chapter 4 traces the discursive shift in the textual products towards neoliberal ideas in higher education. This chapter explores the process, which includes how, why and by whom these neoliberal ideas have been formulated in the Strategic Plan.

Chapter 7 provides a critical discussion of the findings in the light of the theoretical framework and outlines their contributions to knowledge. This chapter comprises three sections. It first reintroduces the research focus and offers a brief reminder about the research aims. It then summarises the statements of findings of the preceding chapters. Finally, it outlines the contributions this research makes to the knowledge of ‘comparative policy studies’, and to a policy borrowing model on comparative education.

Chapter 8 discusses the implication of this research for policy and practices. It also identifies the limitations of the study and the scope of further research in the field of education policies in Bangladesh.

In the next chapter I review the relevant literature and develop the conceptual framework for this research.
Chapter 2

Literature review: Neoliberalism, higher education, and policy borrowing

2.1 Introduction

The introduction of this thesis indicated that the government of Bangladesh has been formulating a range of policies in the higher education sector at the state level since the 1990s. In this thesis I have attempted to understand the neoliberal policies formation processes at the state level in Bangladesh. The policy initiatives the government of Bangladesh has taken talk about neoliberal changes that led me to focus on global policy trends and their formulation in the higher education sector, and how policy travels worldwide. In this chapter, I review relevant literature to construct for this research a conceptual framework grounded in an understanding of two key concepts: neoliberalism and policy borrowing. I first discuss the philosophical and political processes of neoliberalism, their origin, and how they have developed within higher education. Then I outline the theoretical accounts of how ideas move and what comparative research has been able to say about that.

Consequently, this chapter consists of two parts. The first part – neoliberalism and the trends in higher education worldwide – addresses the concept of neoliberalism and its relations drawing on the theories of Hayek, Milton Friedman’s theories of monetarism, James Buchanan's public choice theory, and Theodore Schultz and Gary Becker’s human capital theory. The discussion then focuses on the role of international financial institutions (IFIs) in promoting neoliberalism throughout the world. Finally it explores the key trends of global higher education on the introduction of a neoliberal policy agenda in this sector.

In the second part the theoretical framework underlying this study concerns the relationships between neoliberalism and ‘policy borrowing’ models. The theoretical framework adopted in this study draws on the comparative education paradigm regarding policy borrowing models developed from Phillips and Ochs (2002, 2003, 2004, 2005), Steiner-Khamsi (2003, 2006,
2010), and Lingard and Rawolle (2004, 2011). The discussion identifies the need for research and the implications of applying this theoretical framework in this study.

2.2 Neoliberalism and trends of higher education worldwide

2.2.1 The concept of neoliberalism. The term neoliberalism broadly refers to economic and social transformation agenda under the discourse of free market economy (Connell, 2010). In the neoliberal discourse it is believed that human well-being could be advanced by “the maximization of entrepreneurial freedoms within an institutional framework characterized by private property rights, individual liberty, unencumbered markets, and free trade” (Harvey, 2007, p. 22). Neoliberalism as a set of economic policy reform is concerned with “privatization, financialization, the management and manipulation of crisis, and state redistributions” (Harvey, 2006, p. 44).

In relation to economic reform, Martinez and Garcia (2000) further describe four key points of neoliberalism. Firstly, the rule of market refers to liberating free/private enterprise from any restriction imposed by the state (government) no matter what social damage results. Secondly, cutting public expenditures for social services refers to reducing government support from education and health care. Thirdly, deregulation refers to the reduction of government regulation. Fourthly, privatization means to sell state-owned enterprises, goods, and services to private investors (including public education services), and finally, elimination of the concept of "public goods" or "community" means the individual has the core responsibility to manage his or her own life (cited in Ross & Gibson, 2007, p. 3).

Neoliberalism embraces market fundamentalism because it perceives that the state interference in the market mechanism contributes to poor economic performance. Therefore, it influences a number of changes in the relationships between state and society where the role of the state is shifted to create the appropriate institutional framework for the market to operate effectively (Harvey, 2007). Prechel and Harms (2007, p. 5) identify five processes of neoliberalism:
... expand markets by eliminating government policies interfering with markets, cut taxes to simultaneously reduce the resources of inefficient government and channel them to private investors for capital formation, privatize by selling public properties to private economic actors, commodify things that were not originally produced to be exchanged in the market (e.g. health, education, pollution), and eliminate social programs to establish personal responsibility.

In the recent global context, neoliberalism needs to be understood as having influence beyond the market, money and commodity (Bockman, 2013; McCarthy & Prudham, 2004). In his book, *Firing Back: Against the Tyranny of the Market 2*, consisting of a series of public lectures, Pierre Bourdieu (2003), discusses the relationship between globalisation and neoliberalism. He argues that often globalisation is treated as a form of neoliberal economic policy, yet the practice of globalisation has also another meaning beyond such economic reform. Lingard, Rawolle and Taylor (2005, p. 765) argue, “In emphasizing the ‘performative’ sense of globalization as a term or concept with particular economic and political connotations, Bourdieu noted how economic globalization is the effect of a particular politics articulated by powerful agents of neo-liberalism”.

Although globalisation has become an intrinsic feature of neoliberalism and the terms 'globalisation' and 'neoliberalism' are related to each other, they refer to different sets of mechanisms. The economic, political, and cultural aspects of society are affected by the complex values, ideologies, and practices of neoliberalism (Ross & Gibson, 2007). Steger and Roy (2010) perceive neoliberalism to be an intertwined manifestation of an ideology, a mode of governance, and a policy package. The mode of ideology refers to an understanding of how to “legitimate certain political interests and to defend or challenge dominant power structures”, whereas the mode of governance embraces the idea of a self-regulating free market to promote entrepreneurial values (Steger & Roy, 2010, p. 11). Klijn and Koppenjan (2000) argue that initially, the notion of governance emerged from the idea of reducing the state power through employing new public management (NPM) techniques and distinguishing between regulation and control.
directly by the government and governance of the self and organisations through self organizing networks. In turn, the idea of governance through self-organizing networks has shifted the hierarchical mode of governance to network governance (Fawcett, Manwaring & Marsh, 2011). However, models of NPM or network governance that ensures the state control through arm’s length government bodies and self-regulation have provided a regulatory framework to ensure the public accountability of public institutions (Ranson, 2003). Therefore, both NPM and network governance facilitate neoliberalism as an ideology because they ensure the ideas of the state are accepted. From this perspective, K. England and Ward (2011) outline its four main features: neoliberalism as an ideological hegemonic project, neoliberalism as policy and program, neoliberalism as a state form, and neoliberalism as a form of governmentality.

Although several scholars discuss the concept of neoliberalism in the broader perspective, marketisation, which is redefined in the global context, remains a key point of neoliberalism. Consequently, the market becomes the key principle of political, social and economic decisions (Giroux, 2005). Corporate power seizes individual freedom, public goods, democracy and citizenships (Giroux, 2005). Olssen and Peters (2005, p. 314) argue that "neoliberalism must be seen as a specific economic discourse or philosophy which has become dominant and effective in world economic relations as a consequence of super power sponsorship". By emphasising super power sponsorship, Olssen and Peters in fact emphasise the political aspect of neoliberalism. It is an ideology which affects political processes and legitimates policies used to accumulate capital for the dominant power block of the world (Prechel & Harms, 2007).

In summary, this section provides a brief understanding about the concept of neoliberalism. At this point, the discussion is not linked to higher education, but provides a broader understanding of the relationships among the economy, politics, and culture in a society. The theoretical underpinning of neoliberalism can help in understanding the relationships between the state and the neoliberal shift in higher education policies. In the next section I look at the philosophical and political processes of neoliberal understandings.
2.2.2 The theoretical origins of neoliberalism. Neoliberalism as a theoretical paradigm has been developed by a range of scholars from different academic fields (Peck, 2008). Prechel and Harms (2007, p. 3) noted that the classical liberal tradition expressed in, *The Wealth of Nations* by Adam Smith in 1776, provided the theoretical ground for neoliberal ideology. All the early scholarly writings provide insights valuable for the development of the neoliberal theoretical paradigm, but the systematic formation of neoliberalism was grounded in the collective works of Fredrich August von Hayek, and the theorists associated with the Chicago Schools – theory of monetarism by Milton Friedman, public choice theory by James Buchanan, and human capital theory by Theodore Schultz and Gary Becker (see for reference, Olssen & Peters, 2005; Roberts, 2007).

In the book, *The Road to Serfdom*, Hayek (1944) discussed the problem of the planned socialist economy and suggested that "the absence of a pricing system would prevent producers from knowing true production possibilities and costs" (cited in Roberts & Peters, 2008, p. 12). In his paper in 1949, *The Intellectual and Socialism*, Hayek critiqued the role of intellectuals, academic institutions and their ideas for the rise of socialism. He argued that any movement in the direction of socialism leads to totalitarianism. In accordance with Hayek, economic freedom should be treated as the political and moral force that shapes all aspects of a free and open society. He argued that "the increasing of economic freedom led not only to rapid economic growth and the development of science and technology but also to the "undesigned and unforeseen by-product of political freedom"(Hayek, 1944, cited in Kohl & Farthing, 2006, p. 16).

For Hayek, individual freedom from society was a key aspect in the development of modern European history. Industrial freedom created spaces for using new knowledge to change the world rapidly in the last hundred and fifty years. Hayek argued that the money is the most important tool of freedom because it gives people choice in society. For Hayek, economic control means the control of all sorts of things in life. But economic freedom in central planning
means that planning is led by collectivism instead of individualism and it is trying to make us believe that the collective effort solves our own economic problems.

In another continent, Milton Friedman played a significant role in the formation of American strands of neoliberalism (Peters, 2001b). In his theory of monetarism, Friedman developed the idea of ‘freedom to choose’ where he argued for economic freedom, contending that two broad principles need to be addressed to create maximum opportunity for economic growth. Firstly, "the scope of government must be limited, and secondly, government power must be dispersed" (Friedman, 1962, p. 2). The liberals contributed to establishing and patronising state intervention in the name of welfare and social equity in the twentieth century. For Friedman, economic freedom is an indispensable condition for social development, while political freedom is a result of economic freedom:

There is an intimate connection between economics and politics, that only certain combinations of political and economic arrangements are possible, and that, in particular, a society which is socialist cannot also be democratic, in the sense of guaranteeing individual freedom (Friedman, 1962, p. 8).

Economic freedom is also an indispensable part of total freedom and a particular style of economic organisation ensures economic freedom. Capitalism is necessary for political freedom since it contributes to the separation of economic power from political power.

Similarly, James Buchanan introduced a major shift from liberal to neoliberal government processes of reform in which state mechanisms set out to work for economic growth (Olssen, 2002; Olssen & Peters, 2005). "Public choice", as a set of ideas about politics, emerged during the post-revolutionary and post-socialist period of intense ideological conflict and matured with the decline of Marxist views of the socialist and collectivist ideal (Buchanan, 1993, p. 67). Buchanan argued that public choice provides an explanation of the failure of political processes of the socialist system. “The consequences of public choice will presumably be reflected in the increased difficulty that collectivist-control advocates will face in restoring the status quo ante in non-
Western regimes and in expanding the range of politicization in Western settings” (Buchanan, 1993, p. 67).

In Buchanan’s view, "public choice theorists were concerned with the marketization of the public sector through the deliberate actions of the state" (Olssen & Peters, 2005, p. 319). Markets were seen as a useful technology to be used by the state. Buchanan relied on conscious action instead of faith in the concept of the 'spontaneous' ordering of market that was emphasised by Hayek (Reisman, 1990, cited in Olssen & Peters, 2005). He distinguished between the 'protective state' and the 'productive state'. The protective state is one that develops a strong set of constitutional rules whereas the productive state allows relatively free participation where the state acts merely as a 'policeman' to regulate market flow positively (Buchanan & Tullock, 1962, cited in Olssen & Peters, 2005).

Theodore Schultz and Gary Becker formulated the human capital theory in which they argued for the economic value of investing in education. Schultz (1961) identified education as an investment in people to form human capital. He argued:

Since it [education] becomes an integral part of a person, it cannot be bought or sold or treated as property under our institutions. Nevertheless, it is a form of capital if it renders a productive service of value to the economy (Schultz, 1960, p. 571).

Similarly, Becker (1993) developed a theoretical model in which he developed the argument about why people should invest in education. He critiqued the traditional form of capital, such as that held in bank accounts and the share market, because of its fragility. Rather, Becker (1993, p. 16) argued that investing in education produces human capital “because you cannot separate a person from his or her knowledge, skills, health, or values the way it is possible to move financial and physical assets while the owner stays put”.

All these theorists provided the philosophical and political basis of neoliberalism. In particular, Hayek’s political and economic philosophy provided the basis of restructuring the state bureaucracy, and prompted ‘deregulation’, ‘internationalisation’, ‘corporatisation’ and
‘privatisation’, while Friedman’s ideas of ‘freedom to choose’ and Buchanan’s idea of ‘public choice’ provided the theoretical underpinning of New Public Management (NPM). Schultz and Becker’s idea of human capital theory provided the theoretical basis for the knowledge economy. The ideas of privatisation, NPM, internationalisation, and the knowledge economy have become the dominant neoliberal discourses in higher education policies across the world, which I discuss in 2.2.4. As the aim of this research is to understand the processes of neoliberal policies formation, an understanding of the theoretical and philosophical underpinning of neoliberalism provided me much grounding in the conceptual foundation of the various neoliberal ideas in higher education policies.

2.2.3 International financial institutions (IFIs) and neoliberal policy. Based on neoliberal philosophy, in the 1980s, American President, Ronald Reagan and British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, formulated and implemented what Peters (2001b, p. 19) calls “a policy mixer based on free trade and open economy”. At the same time the Chinese government also took momentous steps towards the liberalisation of its communist economic system (Harvey, 2005). Since then, the International Financial Institutes (IFIs) including the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and some agencies of the United Nations, including the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) became involved in promoting neoliberal activities around the World (Torres, 2009). In this section I discuss why and how the IFIs have influenced developing countries in formulating neoliberal policies at their own policy level.

The IFIs, particularly the IMF, the World Bank, and regional development banks, have provided significant amounts of money to the developing world in the name of aid for policy reformation. Rizvi and Lingard (2010) argue that along with the IMF and the World Bank, some other international agencies, for example the OECD, have become the leading organisations in social policy fields over the decades. The roles of the OECD include providing technical support
to prepare educational indicators and measurement of educational performance globally. Like other international organisations, the OECD influences national politics through neoliberal discourses that it requires be accepted in their changes in policy (Rizvi, 2014; Lingard & Rawolle, 2011).

International agencies have built up networks with global civil society to construct a global policy model and to promote policies in different parts of the world (Schriewer, 2000; Steiner-Khamsi, 2004a). This is an important idea in comparative education when it examines transnational policy transfer, which I discuss in Section 2.3.2 below. The key aim of this global policy model is to shape national policy into “economisation” by adopting the idea of human capital (Lingard & Rawolle, 2011, p. 492). As discussed in the previous section, the idea of the economization of education to promote human development was proposed by Schultz (1960) and Becker (1993). Based on their premise, human resource management (HRM) and human resource development (HRD) are considered significant policy practices by transnational corporations. The idea of human development has been taken into the developing world without considering the socio-cultural consequences of the transfer of HRM and HRD practices (Turbin, 2001). Often developing countries are forced to adopt global policy model by continuous pressure from the international community, international agents and agencies. Policies are also taken from the ‘global north’ to the ‘global south’ under international agreements, for example, education for all (EFA) or millennium development goals (MDGs) (Steiner-Khamsi, 2006).

Steiner-Khamsi (2006) argues that developing countries import policy reform for economic reasons. The IFIs allocate funds under specific conditions of reform. Economic reasons for cross-national policy borrowing include the granting of loans by development banks for implementing a particular policy. For example, donors ensured funds for Central Asia [Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan] and Mongolia once the governments of these countries agreed to pursue outcomes-based education (OBE) reform systematically (Silova & Steiner-Khamsi, 2008; Steiner-Khamsi & Stolpe, 2006). The Mongolian
government imported OBE as part of a larger public sector reform in 1990s. The Asian Development Bank allocated $25 million for public sector reformation under the Public Sector Management and Finance Law (PSMF) project. Similarly, the World Bank granted $15 million credit for Kyrgyzstan for implementation of a rural education project. Torres (2009) argues that the World Bank alone has lent US$300 billion to the developing countries for economic reform since the early 1950s. The economic reform includes the structural adjustment program (SAP), which generally can be described as a broad range of policies including privatisation, liberalisation and free market economy efficiency.

Often neoliberalism is mentioned synonymously with the term 'Washington Consensus', which was coined by John Williamson in 1990 and refers to the “lowest common dominator of policy advice directed at mostly Latin American countries by the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and other Washington-based international institutions and think tanks” (Steger & Roy, 2010, p. 19). The Washington Consensus is viewed as ‘international convergence’, where it is believed that economic reform is needed for greater achievement to occur (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). The Washington Consensus has a ten-point program which includes a list of factors and ideas that are required for the 'global south' to achieve economic development. The ten points include fiscal discipline and control of the budget deficit, reduction of public expenditure, tax reform, financial liberalisation, competitive exchange rates, trade liberalisation, promotion of foreign direct investment, privatisation of state enterprises, deregulation of the economy and protection of property rights (Steger & Roy, 2010). Through the ten-point programs “market-fundamentalism” has been given priority in the policy process and practices by the IFIs throughout the world.

Neoliberal economic reforms were introduced and operated worldwide by the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) followed by the World Trade Organisation (WTO) starting in 1995 (Lang, 2011). The WTO functions as a judicialised trading system used to reach consensus between power blocks and remove obstacles to the deregulation of markets. A set of
international rules has been adopted by the powerful countries in order to create space for multilateral economic organisations in the world trading system (Munck, 2005).

Some revisions have been made in the neoliberal Washington consensus since the 1990s. However, free trade remains a core issue of this policy agenda. The Washington Consensus addresses not only tariff reduction, but also the coordination by the WTO of institutional, legal and political reforms. Deraniyagala (2005, p. 100) argues that the "WTO seeks to bring about international harmonisation of institutional, regulatory and legal standards through a variety of agreements and standards". Based on the Washington Consensus various countries have introduced reforms into their education sectors such as reducing state funds for higher education, privatisation and deregulation of education (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). Moreover, the notions of intellectual rights and property rights have been explicitly introduced in education policy in accordance with WTO. Under neoliberalism, knowledge is treated as raw material to be protected from all sorts of sites so as to preserve its patent, copyright and trademark, and to sell it at a profit on the market. For example, the University of Phoenix in the USA uses all kinds of mechanisms to protect its intellectual property (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004).

In summary, this section has provided a greater understanding of neoliberal policy transfer in the global context and its relation with the activities of IFIs. The discussion has shown that the IFIs have influenced developing countries and have used various strategies to formulate neoliberal polices at the national level. As in the introductory chapter, I problematised the fact that the government of Bangladesh has initiated a range neoliberal policy reforms, such as the Strategic Plan for Higher Education, in higher education policy with the financial and technical support of the World Bank. One of the purposes of this research is to identify and understand the strategies that are being used to formulate neoliberal ideas in higher education policies in Bangladesh. The understanding of IFIs’ activities around the world and the relation of these to the promotion of neoliberal ideas at the state level can help to develop elements to extend the concepts explored in this research.
2.2.4 Neoliberal policy in higher education sector worldwide. As discussed, since the late 1970s neoliberalism has become a key policy doctrine for every sector around the world (Giddens, 1999; Harvey, 2005). Education is treated as a further sector where a neoliberal policy agenda has been incorporated over the last three decades. Initially, the attempt to incorporate the neoliberal policy agenda was made in primary and secondary education sector (Levidow, 2007). In universities, overt privatisation has mainly targeted non-educational aspects such as catering and security. However, from the 1980s, it has been a worldwide trend for universities to adopt commercial models of knowledge, skills, curriculum, finance, accounting, and management organisation (Levidow, 2007). For example, universities in the USA have adopted business models, cutting costs, reducing academic activities, increasing faculty teaching responsibility, and privatising various institutional functions (Johnstone, 1997). Similarly, higher education institutions in the UK are treated as “borderless business” (Levidow, 2007). Government funds for the universities were reduced substantially while Thatcher was the prime minister of the UK. At the same time the first research assessment exercise was carried out in all universities in 1986 (Edwards, 1997). In the late 1990s, the UK government abolished students' maintenance grants and introduced tuition fees (Levidow, 2007).

Similar to the USA and the UK, in 1989, the government of Australia first introduced tuition fees along with the higher education contribution scheme (Naidoo & Williams, 2015). Domestic postgraduate students in non-research degrees are now charged with commercial fees. All doctoral programs are designed to recruit more foreign students in a cross-border market (Marginson, 2006a). In the same way, based on the “Third Way” approach, the government of New Zealand, a country once known as the laboratory of welfare of the world, adopted the neoliberal policy agenda more than two decades ago (Roberts, 2009, p. 411). The idea of the Third Way approach refers to the idea of mixing policies taken from the right and left of economic policy reform. Third Way policies involve the government supporting citizens to generate human capital so that they can become self-supporting and the state can reduce its role,
“rather than the direct provision of economic maintenance” by the state to its citizens (Giddens, 1998, p. 117).

The ‘entrepreneurial’ model of the university (Marginson & Considine, 2000) is becoming entrenched in many developing countries globally (Bensimon & Ordonika, 2006). For many Asian countries, along with the IFIs (Torres, 2009), the USA has also provided the ideas and fostered academic development (Altbach, 2004). Altbach (2004) argues that many Asian countries such as Japan, Korea, Singapore, and Taiwan adopted the idea of the knowledge-based economy in the higher education sector as a key factor in their national economic development. Other Asian countries, such as China and India as regional giants, have also moved towards transforming their higher education systems into those of “post-industrial information societies”, as have South Korea, Taiwan and Malaysia (Altbach, 2004, p. 21). China began adopting market-related approaches in its higher education institutions in the post-Mao period (from 1978 up to the present) (Mok, 2005), while India had begun shifting to a neoliberal economic model from state regulation in the early 1990s (Kamat, 2011a). Kamat (2011b) argues that rather than being the result of a state-level initiative, the high-tech society network in Hyderabad played the key role in spreading the neoliberal model in higher education. In 2005, the Indian government formed a National Knowledge Commission to outline a new vision for higher education (Kamat, 2011a). The key reforms related to higher education in China were aimed at deregulation and marketisation (Mok, 2003). The Chinese government opened up the higher education sector to the private sector and many foreign universities are now offering higher education in China (Mok, 2009).

Therefore, although the governments of Asian countries have developed neoliberal models in higher education in line with developments globally, they have developed their own forms of neoliberalism in their higher education systems to accommodate their different market positions. Mok (2008) argues that the key trend of this neoliberal model in Asian countries is to
open up the higher education sector to foreign entrants and provide only limited improvement to
the universities’ autonomy.

There are three processes of integrating neoliberalism in the education sector (Ross &
Gibson, 2007). First, the educational services market is opened up to profit based educational
management through international trade and investment agreements, such as the General
Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS). Second, educational costs are reduced. This reduction
often happens through downsizing, such as closing school libraries, reducing the number of
special needs teachers and increasing class sizes. Third, curriculum standards and "accountability"
are created (Ross & Gibson, 2007, p. 4). Torres (2009) points out that the main agendas of
neoliberalism in education are to privatise and decentralise public education, set narrow
educational standards, develop purely quantitative testing of academic achievement, and call for
accountability on the basis of a narrow range of outcomes. In the following I identify the key
neoliberal concepts in global higher education policies worldwide to help construct the
conceptual framework in this research.

2.2.4.1 The emergence of ‘New Public Management’ as a governance system in
the universities. As explored in Section 2.2.2, the theory of monetarism by Friedman (1962) and
the public choice theory by Buchanan (1993) provided the idea of New Public Management
(NPM). Over the 1980s, the rise of NPM or ‘new managerialism’ is one of the most striking
trends in the public management sector around the world (Hood, 1991; Lorenz, 2012). The
central trend of this change in public management is a shift toward accountability and
administration (Hood, 1995). The major components of NPM doctrine are “‘hands on
professional management” in the public sector, explicit standards and measures of performance,
greater emphasis on the control of output, a shift to disaggregation of units in the public sector, a
shift to greater competition in the public sector, stress on private sector-style management
practices, and stress on greater discipline and parsimony in resource use (Hood, 1991, p. 4 & 5).
The key features of new public management are:
a focus on results in terms of efficiency, effectiveness, quality of service and whether the intended beneficiaries actually gain;

- a decentralised management environment which better matches authority and responsibility so that decisions on resource allocation and service delivery are made closer to the point of delivery, and which provide scope for feedback from clients and other interest groups;

- a greater client focus and provision for client choice through the creation of competitive environments within and between public sector organisations and non-government competitors;

- the flexibility to explore more cost effective alternatives to direct public provision or regulation, including the use of market-type instruments, such as user charging, vouchers and the sale of property rights; and

- accountability for results and for establishing due process rather than compliance with a particular set of rules, and a related change from risk avoidance to risk management. (Keating, 2001, p. 145 & 146)

In NPM strategies include the use of internal cost centres, promotion of competition among the employers, marketisation of public institutions, and the monitoring of efficiency and effectiveness through measurement of outcomes and individual staff performance (Deem, 1998, 2001). The NPM has brought not only strategies for improving the efficiency and effectiveness of how public institutions are actually managed, but also a set of ideological assumptions of how they should be run (Meek, 2003). NPM introduced a number of changes in the public university (Kettle, 2000, cited in Ward, 2012). As Marginson (2008, p. 270) argues:

The specific techniques, not all of which are included in every NPM reform package, include funding-based economic incentives, user-driven production, product formats, the pricing and sale outputs, entrepreneurial production, output monitoring and measurement, competitive ranking of personnel and institutions, performance
management, performance pay, contracts with the incentives to partner with industry and commercialized research motivations and products, and systems of accountability and audit including contracts with the government that implement external controls.

The vertical form of steering the university sector through the NPM has been complemented by the idea of network governance (Bleiklie, Enders, Lepori and Musselin, 2011). Sellar and Lingard (2013) discuss the growing complexity of global governance role in education in which they argue that international global agencies are playing a more significant role in introducing popular ideas in the national context. Ball (2008) argues that this kind of change within the education policy field has fostered new relationships between the education sector and other organisations and interests based on the development of network governance in the policy communities where new policy actors and agencies are brought together and able to influence education policy. By identifying the significance of global factors, Ball rescales the context of policy and emphasises the importance of ‘both international organizations and global edu-business in the education policy cycle and the implications for doing policy analysis’ (Lingard and Sellar, 2013, 265).

Ward (2012) points out four major changes that have been brought into higher education institutions following the adoption of NPM. The first was the introduction of private sector management practices in the public sector with a particular focus on ongoing development in productivity and efficiency. The second involved offering market-style incentives to wipe out the government bureaucracy. The third was developing customer-oriented behaviour where “consumer choice” and “client services” and “customer satisfaction” are established as key principles of the university (Kettl, 2000, cited in Ward, 2012, p. 53). Universities are using many strategies and techniques to advertise certain programs as unique and as the best available. In order to appeal to the customers, universities develop “glossy promotional materials and sophisticated websites filled with air brushed photos of happy students, proud parents and distinguished faculty” (Ward, 2012, p. 54). Fourth, within public institutions, a “user pays” system
(Arshad-Ayaz, 2007) and “responsibility center management” (Zemsky et al., 2008) are introduced (cited in Ward, 2012). Thus, the various departments within a university are required to become self-dependent by paying their own expenditure and costs, and managing their own tasks as defined by the university.

Although the justification for adopting NPM as governance system to restructure and reduce the bureaucratization process of universities, following the NPM reforms in the higher education sector, a heavy bureaucratic system has often become characteristic of the university. Hood and Peters (2004) point out that this paradox and the unintended consequence of NPM. However, Buckland (2009) argues that the way in which the universities are operated contributes to the various inconsistence of NPM.

The NPM reformation agenda promotes high competition between the top officials and entrepreneurial environment throughout the university. It has increased the power of administrators and reduced the authority of faculty (Altbach, 2005). Mathison and Ross (2002) argue that “the university's role as an independent institution is increasingly threatened by the interests of corporations in both subtle and obvious ways” (cited in Hill, 2007, p. 117). Academics have become involved in other activities, consultancy for example, to earn extra money for the universities. Through entrepreneurial practices universities not only develop profit-making activities, but also become business partners (Levidow, 2007). Often universities develop collaborative programs with the industry (Altbach, Reisberg, & Rumbley, 2010). The former self-determining academic freedoms and the activity of intellectuals and institutions have been controlled by market fundamentalism (Marginson, 2008). The performance surveillance is colonising the lives of academics and “producing new subjectivities” (Ranson, 2003, p. 469). Thus, neoliberal practices in higher education suppress university autonomy, academic criticism and free creativity (Giroux, 2002).

In the same way, not only is the academic profession challenged, but also the role of higher education institutes is gradually constrained. The academic profession is now less
attractive and a significant number of PhD holders are working outside the academic profession because of low payment. The full-time professoriate has almost disappeared. In Latin America, with the exception of Brazil, 80 per cent of the professoriate is given appointments as part-time staff, while almost half of newly employed academics in the USA are given on the “tenure track” (Altbach et al., 2010, p. 86). At the top research universities worldwide, the role of elite professors and their salary differ from those of the teachers who are involved in teaching at normal institutions (Altbach, Reisberg, & Pacheco, 2012).

In the above paragraphs I have discussed the idea of NPM in higher education institutes as outlined by different scholars that support the construction of a conceptual framework for this research. However, several neoliberal ideas have also been adopted in higher education that need to be explored to construct a conceptual framework for this research.

2.2.4.2 ‘Cost-sharing’ approach as financing of higher education. Due to neoliberalism in the higher education sector, the institutions are becoming, on the one hand, increasingly significant to economies, individual and society and on the other hand, the cost of public higher education is increasingly rising (Altbach et al., 2010). Therefore, universities around the world have adopted diverse sources of funding strategies to mitigate their financial needs (Amaral, Meek, & Larsen, 2003), that has come often to be labeled cost-sharing (Johnstone & Marcucci, 2010). Cost-sharing refers “to a shift of at least some of the higher educational cost burden from governments, or taxpayers, to parents and students” (Johnstone & Marcucci, 2010, p. 2). In accordance with the cost-sharing approach parents and or students are increasingly responsible to pay tuition and other fees for higher education (Altbach et al., 2010). Johnstone and Marcucci (2010, p. 2) explain the idea of the cost-sharing approach:

Cost-sharing is mostly associated with tuition fees and user charges, the latter fees often applying to what was formerly, in many countries, governmentally or institutionally provided food and lodging (in American parlance, room and board). However, a policy shift in the direction of greater cost-sharing can also take the form of encouraging (and
sometimes even partially subsidizing) a largely tuition-fee-dependent private sector. It can also take the forms of reducing grants or other subsidies, or simply freezing them (especially in inflationary economies), or of raising the effective interest rates on student loans.

Although cost-sharing takes many different forms worldwide, the extent to which cost-sharing could be implemented depends on the particular countries and their economic development, their wealth and level of industrialisation, the historical development of higher education and level of participation, the prevailing political ideology and the size of privatisation of higher education (Johnstone & Marcucci, 2010). Often the governments of middle and low-income countries throughout the world are influenced by the IFIs in adopting a cost-sharing approach in higher education sectors. For example, in 1998, the World Bank proposed ten recommendations for the universities of Mexico to manage their own finance. These were to introduce a large amount of registration fees, to charge full fees for room and board, introduce a mechanism to investigate economic resources for student loans and grants, introduce student loans based on the market interest, introduce private companies to collect student loans, impose graduation fees and implement them, promote philanthropy, ensure entrepreneurial training for improving quality education, offer for sale research project findings and training courses, and increase the number of private institutions with a decrease in public education (Delgado-Ramos & Saxe-Fernández, 2009).

Following the NPM in the higher education sector, the funding modes of the universities are tied to the structure of governance (Amaral et al., 2003; Herbst, 2007). Moreover, the new governance system has changed the relations among university, industry and government (Herbst, 2007). Consequently, the idea of a performance-based funding strategy has been adopted in many universities globally. Within performance-based resource allocation systems the industrial sector has become one of the major funding sources of the universities. In the USA, a ‘target-oriented’ or ‘incentive-based’ form of performance funding has been developed, where
research funding is allocated through federal research funding agencies or through industry based on the educational mission of colleges and universities, and therefore the state has a direct influence on specific institutional aspects. In many European countries, the ‘formula-based’ approach to funding has been developed wherein the funding allocation system is shifted to buffers organisations institutions that act as agencies of the state (Herbst, 2007).

An increasing liberalisation of economies leads many governments to corporatise and privatise public universities, implement NPM and permit university and college development in the private sector in order to respond to the higher education financial challenges (Altbach et al., 2010). In these circumstances, partnerships between universities and industries prioritise corporate interests and universities have adopted corporate characteristics within their systems (Ball, 2012).

**2.2.4.3 Private higher education and growing privatisation of higher education.**

Privatisation of higher education is not a new phenomenon in the world economy as higher education with private provision in many countries can be traced back a few centuries (Tilak, 1991). However, following the proliferation of neoliberalist ideas in the higher education sector, the development of a private sector in higher education has emerged as a policy strategy worldwide (Tilak, 1991). Levine (2001, p. 1) argues that six forces have promoted the spread of privatisation in higher education worldwide; these forces are “the rise of information-based economy, changes in demographics, an increase in public scrutiny, the advent of new technologies, the convergence of knowledge-based organizations, and a decline in public trust in government”. Consequently, private higher education has become one of the most dynamic and fastest growing sectors at the turn of the twenty-first century around the globe (Altbach et al., 2010). The enrolment in private universities is much faster than in public ones and the share of total student enrolment in the private universities is around 30 per cent today (Gürüz, 2008).

Altbach et al. (2010, p. 75) argue that “privatization means many things in the higher education”. The term privatisation refers to a change of ownership from public to private
resulting in a distinct form of finance, governance, and functions (Marginson, 1997). However, private universities do not reflect a consistent model (Altbach et al., 2010). Higher education at public universities is largely supported by taxpayers’ money offering more complex and more broadly based education, whereas private universities are funded by private entrepreneurs with mostly business and technology-oriented education (Marginson, 1997). Sometimes private higher education institutes are partially supported with public money based on being ‘for profit’ or ‘not for profit’ in terms of preference and they may be accountable to the host government or another authority outside the country (Altbach et al., 2010).

Both Tilak (2006) and Altbach et al. (2010) discuss four types of private higher education, but in slightly different way. For Tilak (2006), the first type of private higher education, which is identified as identity institutions by Altbach et al. (2010), was founded mainly by religious bodies in order to support government to serve the public good. The second type of private higher education emerged with the support of the state, but was privately managed. Following the proliferation of neoliberalism, the third type of private higher education does not rely on the state or philanthropy, but on hidden subsidies from the state in various forms. Often this type of institution operates in a ‘for profit’ manner (Tilak, 2006). Altbach et al. (2010) argue that most of the ‘for profit’ institutions could be included in the non-elite sector of higher education institutions because their goal is primarily to earn money through providing higher education, rather than to achieve academic reputation. This type of institution is characterised by a business model in which power and authority are concentrated in a board of trustees and chief executive, and the faculties have less autonomy. The notion of this institution is to deliver a product by receiving money and thus students are treated as the consumers (Naidoo, Shankar, & Veer, 2011; Tilak, 2006). Altbach et al. (2010) point out that the ‘for profit’ higher educational institutions are the faster-growing sector worldwide, a growth that sometime takes place across national boundaries with private local partners. Some universities that may be public in their home countries operate as private universities abroad. The fourth type of private higher education is
known as financial privatisation which involves cost sharing or cost shifting in public institutions (Tilak, 2006).

Apart from the above-mentioned categories, Altbach et al. (2010) discuss two types of private higher education: *elite and semi-elite* and *demand-absorbing institutions*. They identify such elite and semi-elite institutions based on academic ranking of world universities. They argue that a few universities, for example Harvard University, and others mostly from the USA, Europe and Japan, are subsumed into the elite subcategory, but a large number of private universities could be included into the semi-elite subcategory. Those universities included in the semi-elite subcategory could be leading universities in their countries. They might not be in the very top in their country context, but produce a large number of graduates for the markets. Bangladesh, Pakistan, Poland, Thailand, and Turkey are just a few national examples where this type of subcategory can be found (Altbach et al., 2010). The other category – demand-absorbing institutions – is mostly comprised of non-elite institutions that have emerged as students demand access to higher education. Altbach et al. (2010) argue that such types of institution are identified as technical and vocational institutions in many countries, and they operate on the border between for-profit and nonprofit.

However, Mok (2008) points out that despite the different approaches of private universities in Asian countries, their key characteristic is to develop a hybrid-form of private university through a blending of a neoliberal model and the pre-existing state-model of public universities. These hybrid-forms of private universities are a result of the way in which the domestic socio-political and economic factors mediate the global pressure for adopting neoliberal ideas in the local context (Rosser, 2016). Naidoo (2011, p. 47) argues that “while developing countries are influenced by global templates of higher education, at the same time particular aspects of such templates are also transformed, excluded and adapted in line with each country’s own historical trajectories, cultural influences and social political milieus”. For example, Malaysia, as a regional hub of higher education, has imposed more regulatory measures in the private
university system than would be typical of the private system in more developed economies (Mok, 2008). Consequently, while universities in USA and UK are expanding as elite/semi elite or demand absorbing institutions by attracting a large number of revenue generating students, universities in developing countries, such as China and India, have shaped this kind of revenue generating interaction in the private sector by imposing policy and regulation in order to control low quality universities (Naidoo, 2011). In many cases, such distinctive hybrid-forms of the neoliberal model have been transferred between regional countries, for example, instead of adopting a western model, Indonesia has developed a higher education model derived from other East-Asian countries such as China, Singapore, Malaysia and Hong Kong (Rosser, 2016).

Lubeinski (2016) argues that the way in which neoliberal policy reforms have been taken up in higher education reflects the reduction of the distinction between the public and private divide. Privatisation promotes private-like behave and involves competing for resources in the public, which leads to an increase in the efficiency of its functions (Ehrenberg, 2006). The trend towards privatisation also has a meaning in public higher education institutes. Privatisation encourages the public sector to reduce their dependence on public funds, and to adopt ‘entrepreneurial’ and competitive attitudes, and an effective management system (Altbach et al., 2010). The public higher educational institutes have increasingly become private-like institutions as the share of the public investment in their operations has declined over the past decades (Lyall & Sell, 2006). The state has been becoming the ‘minority-partner’ in the public universities resulting in a form, to be ‘privatised’ (Zusman, 2005). Ehrenberg (2006) argues that various factors – increased strain on state tax revenues, rising tuition costs, the discrepancy between public and private institutions in endowment revenues, faculty salaries, and expenditures per student – have contributed to reduce government funding for higher education, particularly in the USA. Many universities have adopted different strategies including higher tuition fees, consulting, licensing, selling intellectual property of various kinds, establish university-industry collaboration, and renting university property as sources of income. Universities have also used ‘flexible’ or part-time workers to reduce the expenditure (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004).
The trend towards privatisation shifted the role of the universities towards the society. Traditionally, the role of higher education was to generate ‘public good’, but such a concept is disappearing and being replaced by the needs of the ‘private good’ (Marginson, 2011). Slaughter and Rhoades (2004) point out that universities have been shifting from the public good knowledge to an ‘academic capitalist knowledge’ regime in which knowledge is constructed as a private good. Because of privatisation the knowledge is not treated as scientific or scholarly practice and teaching is no longer within the faculties. Rather, people who are involved in higher education use different strategies to generate “new circuits of knowledge” for the global economy (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004, p. 1). Consequently, the traditional broad-based knowledge produced from the humanities, arts, and social science disciplines has been ignored (Nussbaum, 2010). The corporate culture has been becoming the model for the perfect life and for individual success.

Giroux (2002, p. 425) argues that “civic discourse has given way to the language of commercialization, privatization, and deregulation and that, within the language and images of corporate culture, citizenship is portrayed as an utterly privatized affair that produces self-interested individuals”. The growing influence of corporate culture on the university life undermines the relationships between higher education and business. The corporation dictates the research they sponsor, and business representatives often sit in the faculty meetings to determine how the research funding is to be spent and allocated. Giroux (2002) contends that the shift towards privatisation colonises the university as public spheres and sites of critical learning. The number of part-time professional academics with a low salary has increased worldwide. Often the faculty staff are encouraged to be involved in extra work to supply their own salary and subsidise the university’s own budget (Altbach et al., 2010).

2.2.4.4 Internationalisation of higher education. Internationalisation of higher education has also been augmented by neoliberal forces. Internationalisation as a specific policy and program has been largely undertaken by governments and academic institutions in the higher
education sector to handle globalisation (Altbach, 2005). Using Knight (2004) terms, “internationalisation at home” consists of strategies and techniques designed to carry an international dimension into the home campus experiences, for example, recruiting international faculty members and international students and incorporating international and contemporary perspectives in the curriculum. In turn, “international abroad” includes sending students to study abroad, establishing a branch of the university overseas or developing collaborative programs (cited in Altbach et al., 2010, p. 24). It contributes to increasing mobility of student and faculty, programs, and institutions; rising collaborative research; introducing curriculum and approaches to teaching and learning (Altbach et al., 2010). In 2007, more than 2.8 million students were taking higher education outside of their country (Altbach et al., 2010).

In turn, the global flow of academics is becoming a great concern for the developing countries because of internationalisation of higher education. The academic talents from developing countries are mostly moving to North America, Western Europe, and Australasia because of better salary and work environment (Altbach et al., 2010). In 2005, more than 20 per cent of staff in UK universities was from other parts of the world (Unterhalter & Carpentier, 2010). This international mobility is not only confined to people, but has also expanded between programs and institutions. In the decade prior to 2010 the numbers of international programs and institutions had also increased. Some universities had set up full-fledged university campuses of their existing universities, for example, New York University established their “sister” university in Abu Dhabi (Altbach et al., 2010, p. 25). Some universities established branch campuses in other places of the world, and some developed collaborative programs between them.

The forces of internationalisation have pushed higher education to be a part of international business to earn foreign revenue for the host countries. Since the late 1980s, for example, Australian higher education has been commercialised, targeting foreign students to generate export revenue (Marginson, 2006a). Higher education in Australia is the second most
internationalised enrolment and third largest services export (Marginson, 2006a). These forces have also transformed higher education from public to private good, and students and families are forced to pay more for education (Harms, 2007). Such is the impact of ‘macro’ forces on the ‘micro’ processes of teaching-learning that students’ experiences are of becoming commodified for the global market, and higher education is being sold as a commodity in the global market (Naidoo & Jamieson, 2005).

Although internationalisation of higher education has been a phenomenon in many Asian countries, the governments of these countries would have different interests in this process and thus, different governments have adopted different kinds of policies and regulatory measurements to control international universities. While the government of Hong Kong has adopted the free market approach for transnational higher education, the rise of transnational education in Malaysia was connected with the financial crisis in Asia in 1997 (Mok, 2008). Before the financial crisis, Malaysian parents, who could afford tuition fees, preferred to send children overseas to pursue higher education. However, the financial crisis affected the Malaysian economy, particularly with the falling of Malaysian currency, and thus, the government of Malaysia identified internationalization of higher education, for example allowing private higher education provision through international universities, as a way of tackling the financial crisis in the higher education system (Mok, 2008).

In the above paragraphs, I have developed an understanding of internationalisation of higher education. As this thesis aims to understand the formation processes of neoliberal ideas in higher education policy in Bangladesh, the understanding of various neoliberal ideas helps to construct a conceptual framework for this research. In the following I discuss some other neoliberal ideas in the higher education sector around the world.

2.2.4.5 Involvement of external agencies in quality in higher education. Quality issues and quality enhancement have been an increasingly growing concern in the higher education sector worldwide in the context of neoliberalism. A range of quality assurance
mechanisms are developed and implemented to assess quality of institutions and quality of programs the universities offer (Altbach et al., 2010; El-Khawas, DePietro-Jurand, & Holm-Nielsen, 1998). However, defining and measuring quality seems to be more difficult as the landscape of higher education has become more complex over the years (Altbach et al., 2010; Van Ginkel & Rodrigues Dias, 2007). Reeves and Bednar (1994) argue that “the search for a universal definition of quality has yielded inconsistent results. Such a global definition does not exist; rather, different definitions of quality are appropriate under different circumstances” (p. 419). Different concepts, for examples ‘quality assessment’, ‘quality evaluation’, and ‘quality assurance’ overlap and are often widely used within the broader processes of managing quality (Vlăsceanu, Grünberg, & Parlea, 2007). In Article 11 (a) of the World Declaration on Higher Education for the Twenty-first Century: Vision and Action – UNESCO (1998) explains that the issue of quality was viewed as a multi-dimensional concept wherein many aspects of higher education are considered to be measured:

Quality in higher education is a multidimensional concept, which should embrace all its functions, and activities: teaching and academic programmes, research and scholarship, staffing, students, buildings, facilities, equipments, services to the community and the academic environment. Internal self-evaluation and external review conducted openly by independent specialists, if possible with international expertise, are vital for enhancing quality. Independent national bodies should be established and comparative standards of quality, recognized at international level, should be defined. Due attention should be paid to specific institutional, national and regional contexts in order to take into account diversity and to avoid uniformity. Stakeholders should be an integral part of the institutional evaluation process. (cited in Van Ginkel & Rodrigues Dias, 2007, p. 39)

Gola (2003) views quality in higher education as a set of ‘worthwhile learning goals’ to be achieved by students. Students’ learning goals are related by the universities “to meet (i) society’s expectations; (ii) students’ aspirations; (iii) the demands of the government, business and industry;
and (iv) the requirements of professional institutions” (Sanyal & Martin, 2007, p. 5). A good course curriculum, an effective teaching/learning strategy, competent teachers and an environment are required to achieve these goals. Consequently, quality in higher education is defined as a process to measure the key elements of higher education (Altbach et al., 2010).

Two types of quality assurance processes – internal and external – have been developed in higher education. Internal quality assurance emphasises developing policies and mechanisms for the institution and programs to meet its own objectives and standards. External quality assurance involves the operations of the institutions and its programs to be assessed by an external body to determine whether it meets the agreed-upon or pre-determined standards (Sanyal & Martin, 2007). Quality assurance mechanisms have been developed in different forms including ‘quality audit’, ‘quality assessment’ and ‘accreditation’. ‘Quality audit’ is treated as the first step in the quality assurance in which audits are performed by individuals not being involved in the subject examined. They examine an institute or one of its sub-units using a system of quality assurance procedures and determine its adequacy. Such a ‘self-study’ process in an institution evaluates the effectiveness of the internal quality system (Altbach et al., 2010). On the other hand, the ‘accreditation’ approach involves external agencies in the quality assurance processes. The accreditation council “evaluates the quality of a higher education institution as a whole, or a specific higher education programme/course, in order to formally recognize it as having met certain predetermined criteria or standards and award a quality label” (Sanyal & Martin, 2007, p. 6). Both the ideas of internal and external quality assurances are developed from the neoliberal idea of NPM. Through introducing quality assurance mechanisms, the public accountability of higher education institutions has been ensured (see for reference, Westerheijden, Stensaker, & Rosa, 2007).

Mechanisms have also been developed for establishing international comparability of the institutions and the degrees. Many universities are looking to accreditation agencies outside the country to validate the quality of degrees and provide international credibility to the degrees.
Consequently, national, regional and global higher education rankings have been enforced in academic institutions and degree programs (Altbach et al., 2010). In order to rank the world’s best universities, the Times Higher Education Ranking (THER) and the Shanghai Jiao Tong University Institute of Higher Education (SJTUIHE) have developed various indicators and weighted them differently. Marginson (2007, p. 81) argues that the global university ranking, which began in 2003, has become a “hegemonic idealized model” which is used as a potential tool to marketise higher education. Both the THER and the SJTUIHE have captured the attention of higher education institutions, governments, media, and public around the globe in which cross-border education is legitimised as suiting a global market. The classifications of national, regional and global ranking are also used by individuals to compare higher education when making choices for entry and by the government in order to make funding decisions for the university (Altbach et al., 2010).

None of the league tables have considered the quality of students’ experiences and have assessed universities in terms of inclusiveness and diversity. Rather, league tables have led to undermining the core values of the universities, as Lynch (2006) argues that the universities are no longer for the quality teaching learning, outreach, inclusion and research that were considered to be the basis of human development. Thus, international university league tables are used as “powerful means of externalizing objectives” (Marginson, 2008, p. 285).

2.2.4.6 Shifting universities roles to construct a ‘knowledge-based economy’. The idea of the knowledge economy was developed from the theory of human development constructed by Schultz (1960) and Becker (1993), as discussed in Section 2.2.2. The significant change with neoliberalism underpinning higher education is “the rise in the importance of knowledge as intellectual capital” (Roberts & Peters, 2008, p. 17). Slaughter and Rhoades (2005, p. 488) argue that neoliberalism works for building a “new economy” that is generally known as a “knowledge or information economy”. In a knowledge-based economy, the roles of knowledge
and information have been placed at the centre of economic growth and development (Peters, 2003).

Both the World Bank and the OECD have promoted the idea of the knowledge-based economy in developing countries. The OECD defines knowledge-based economies as “economies which are directly based on the production, distribution and use of knowledge and information” (OECD, 1996, p. 3). Therefore the term ‘knowledge-based economy’ refers to at least two characteristics: knowledge would be a key factor in terms of both quantitative and qualitative outcomes, and information and communication technology the driving force of the new economy (Godin, 2006). The OECD (1999) argues that a country could claim to be a knowledge-based economy when “the production, diffusion and use of technology and information are key to economic activity and sustainable growth” (cited in George, 2006, p. 590).

To define a knowledge-based economy, the OECD emphasised two other related factors: ‘investment in knowledge’ and ‘knowledge-based industries’ (Godin, 2006). As knowledge is identified as the foremost force of production, more investment in knowledge stimulates an increase in the productive capacity. The OECD (1996, p. 11) argues: “Investments in knowledge can increase the productive capacity of the other factors of production as well as transform them into new products and processes”. Investment in knowledge refers to investing in those areas that generate knowledge, for example, research and development, software, higher education, and basic science (George, 2006). The second factor – knowledge-based industries – is defined as those that have three basic characteristics: “a high level of investment in innovation, intensive use of acquired technology, and a highly educated workforce” (Webb, 2002, 2001, cited in Godin, 2006, p. 21).

The demands of a knowledge economy have focused on specific types of activities, approaches and outcomes (Altbach et al., 2010). Therefore the role of higher education is identified as critical “to the creation of intellectual capacity on which knowledge production and utilization depend and to the promotion of the lifelong-learning practices necessary to update
individual knowledge and skills” (World Bank, 2002, p. xvii). Etzkowitz and Leydesdorff (1997, p. 1) point out:

The development of academic research capacities carries within itself the seeds of future economic and social development in the form of human capital, tacit knowledge and intellectual property. Channeling knowledge flows into new sources of technological innovation has become an academic task, changing the structure and function of the university.

The World Bank (2002) identifies different roles for higher education in knowledge-based economic growth, including: the improvement of institutions by the training of competent and responsible professionals; academic and research activities for national innovational systems; a role as repositories and conduits of information in the information infrastructure; and a role in generating the norms, values, attitudes and ethics of the students. Moreover, in its report the World Bank (2002, p. 24) defines three broad activities of higher education:

Supporting innovation by generating new knowledge, accessing global stores of knowledge, and adapting knowledge to local use; contributing to human capital formation by training a qualified and adaptable labor force, including high-level scientists, professionals, technicians, basic and secondary education teachers, and future government, civil service, and business leaders; and providing the foundation for democracy, nation building, and social cohesion.

As particular versions of knowledge have been promoted by the notion of the knowledge economy, the roles of universities have shifted to those in which the universities have become the direct producers of goods and services for end-users (Sutz, 1997). The knowledge-based economy requires higher-level skills in the workforce and thus new subjects like applied science, ICT skills and online-learning and techno-economic-oriented research are being prioritised by the universities (Kenway, Bullen, Fahey, & Robb, 2006; Mollis, 2006). The universities have also adopted the ‘lifelong learning’ education approach in order to facilitate regular updating of
individual capacities and qualifications. Through a lifelong education model “graduates will be increasingly expected to return periodically to tertiary education institutions to acquire, learn to use, and relearn the knowledge and skills needed throughout their professional lives” (World Bank, 2002, p. 27). In a lifelong learning paradigm working students, mature students, stay-at-home students, travelling students, part-time students, day students, night students and weekend students are targeted to be provided short-term skills for the labour market.

In a knowledge-based economy, there is a rising demand for qualifications that are internationally recognised, particularly in management related fields (World Bank, 2002). The American-style BBA and MBA program has become prominent in universities since the global business trend demands high skilled young-professionals from the business arena (Altbach et al., 2010). The emphasis is also given to measuring learning outcomes. It has also brought radical change into the curriculum (Altbach et al., 2010). The curriculum has been vocationalised in that “curriculum must provide relevant training for a variety of increasingly complex jobs” (Altbach, 2005). New forms of knowledge and methodology have led universities to adopt new forms of classroom pedagogy (Bastedo, 2011). Knowledge is mediated through various electronic devices including high-speed computers, new types of digitized films and CD-ROMs. Consequently, the pedagogical activities are not restricted to the school, blackboard and test-taking. Various external agencies have been involved in producing electronics devices and IT-based teaching and learning instruction (Giroux, 2004). Giroux (2004, p. 497) argues,

Under neo-liberalism, pedagogy has become thoroughly reactionary as it constructs knowledge, values, and identities through a variety of educational sites and forms of pedagogical address that have largely become the handmaiden of corporate power, religious fundamentalism, and neo-conservative ideology.

A remarkable transformation has also been experienced in the formation of the higher education institutions. Various kinds of higher education institutes have been created alongside the traditional universities, for example, short-duration technical institutes and community
colleges, polytechnics, distance education centres, and open universities (World Bank, 2002). Moreover, the emergence of a global knowledge system has facilitated the increased use of English as a medium of instruction in universities. Often fluency in English is treated as an extra qualification to compete in job markets, therefore, it has become a common and dominant language for producing scientific knowledge (Altbach et al., 2010).

Peters (2001a) argues that the way in which the idea of the knowledge economy is defined could be identified knowledge as a new form of capitalism. It has not acknowledged the various definitions of knowledge. In particular, “knowledge has strong cultural and local dimensions as well as global dimensions” and the roles of the universities in that sense of knowledge is to assist nation building, local and regional development and protection of human rights, and development of a global civic community (Peters, 2003, p. 164).

In the above sections, I have discussed the concept of neoliberalism and its philosophical and political understandings, the IFIs activities in promoting neoliberal policy doctrine around the world, and the key neoliberal concepts being adopted in global higher education systems. The whole discussion has helped me in understanding two issues: what is going on in terms of neoliberalism, and what is going on in terms of the movement of neoliberal ideas in higher education across the world.

As this study proposes to look at what form of neoliberalism, and why and how neoliberal policies have been adopted in the higher education policies at the state level in Bangladesh, it is necessary to comprehend the relationships between neoliberalism and ‘policy borrowing’ worldwide. In particular, it is significant to address how policy does move, and what movement is occurring in places like Bangladesh. In the following part I address the relationships between neoliberalism and ‘policy borrowing’. The discussion theorises ‘policy borrowing’ models drawing on works regarding the comparative education paradigm, identifies research gaps, and the implications of these for this study.
2.3 Neoliberalism and theorising “policy borrowing”

2.3.1 Neoliberalism and policy borrowing. This section addresses the relationships between neoliberalism and policy borrowing, and theorises a policy borrowing model for this research. As mentioned in the introductory section, during colonial periods, imperial nations brought policy to their colonial states (Altbach, 2005). For example, the British exported their academic system first to the American colonies and later to the African and Asian regions. The British ruler transferred the British colonial school model, which is often known as ‘adapted education’, in their colonial states in the first half of 19th century with the support of a dense network of people and institutions including missionaries, colonial government, philanthropists and universities (Steiner-Khamsi & Quist, 2000). Sometimes foreign practices have also been ‘introduced through influence’. Foreign students have become trained and experienced during their study outside the country, and often they have introduced their experiences and training in their home country (Ochs & Phillips, 2004).

Lingard (2009) argues that an understanding of colonial histories of a postcolonial space is significant when analysing the education policy effects of globalisation. As discussed in Chapter 1, I acknowledged the importance of the colonial political and historical process of adopting the British Education system in Bangladesh and identified how that process could be influential in shaping the current higher education policies in a different ways for different purposes. Scholars that adopt a postcolonial theoretical strand, discuss the power relations between coloniser and colonised and the influences of these continuing power relationships on current policy affairs of postcolonial space (see for reference, Bhabha, 1994; Spivak, 1990). Bhabha (1994) uses the term ‘ambivalence’ to understand how stereotypes and identities are constructed to reinforce the cultural supremacy between colonised and coloniser. In order to understand how ambivalence works, Bhabha (1994) argues that colonial discourse produces a subordinate subject that reproduces colonial habits, attitudes and values (cited in Andreotti, 2006). The way in which the colonial attitudes, habits, assumptions and values are copied by colonisers are referred to by
Bhabha as ‘mimicry’ (Bhabha, 1994). Similarly, in her critique of imperialism, Spivak (1990) emphasises the importance of understanding the cultural dimension of imperialism and its relation in the creation of ‘Third World’. For Spivak (1999), through cultural imperialism the colonial changes the ‘Subaltern’s’ perception to neutralise and legitimise the cultural supremacy of the ‘First World and reinforce the adoption of western ideas as global ideas into colonised countries (Andreotti, 2006).

These postcolonial theories provide a powerful basis to understand how knowledge is produced, justified, circulated and serves the interest of the Global North which enjoys more power over Global South (Lingard, 2009). It follows from this theorisation that ‘ethnocentrism’, centred on the West, has become a universal psychological process in which people tend to believe in the Western view as the best way to change the world (Dasen & Akkari, 2009). Eurocentric views colonise the indigenous knowledge and belief systems by imposing different policies and systems on indigenous people. The colonial and neo-colonial models characterised the indigenous knowledge system as primitive resulting in the destruction of indigenous people’s self-esteem and self-confidence (Battiste, 2008). Consequently, the postcolonial perspective regards globalisation as a continues process of colonialism (Spivak, 1999) and one that “continues to be used in the interest of global consumerist culture anchored in the West and to interrupt the totalizing effects of a neo-imperial globalization” (Lunga, 2008, p. 198).

However, the “semantics of globalization” leads to de-territorialisation and de-contextualisation of reforms, and challenges different approaches of policy reforms (Steiner-Khamsi, 2004a). The term ‘semantics’ of globalisation refers to understanding how global pressures influence the local setting to compare education systems, and to borrow ideas from each (Schriewer, 2000). The emergence of neoliberalism has reshaped the political and economic contexts in which public policies and practices have been developed, implemented and evaluated. The national policies have increasingly converged towards neoliberal ideas and concepts because of proliferation of the references to globalisation. More importantly, national polices are
influenced by the imperatives of the global economy (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). Consequently, today’s policies are encircled by “well-travelled” reforms, mostly known as quasi-market, neoliberal, or hyperliberal reforms (Steiner-Khamsi & Quist, 2000). The trend of transatlantic policy transfer between the USA and the UK has led to a “global village”, “that trend is policy borrowing” (Halpin & Troyna, 1995, p. 304). However, in such borrowing, if there is a hegemony of ideas from certain parts of the world, the transfer becomes a new form of ‘colonisation’.

The neoliberal policy model, often deemed the Americanisation of policy reforms in the rest of the world, is connected with policy borrowing (Steiner-Khamsi, 2004b). Borrowing does not occur just because some reforms look better, rather it occurs “because the very act of borrowing has a salutary effect on domestic policy conflict” (Steiner-Khamsi, 2006, p. 671). Both political and economic reasons are at work behind policy borrowing. Steiner-Khamsi (2006) argues that because of global diffusion many policy makers believe that a particular reform is very useful and effective for change. Policy within nations has been globalised because of the rescaling of policy and because of the ways in which a country measures and compares its educational performance globally (Lingard & Rawolle, 2011). International and supranational organisations such as the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the World Bank and the European Union (EU) are involved in transferring particular policies across the globe. To understand the relationships between neoliberalism and “policy travelling” across the globe, it is important to examine the politics of policy borrowing (the “why”), the process (the “how”) and the agents of transfer (the “who”) (Steiner-Khamsi, 2004b).

### 2.3.2 Theorising “policy borrowing”

I adopt policy borrowing theories in this research. The theoretical strand of policy borrowing has been developed by a range of scholars in comparative education and policy studies over the past few decades (Steiner-Khamsi, 2012b; Turbin, 2001). Two large research traditions – comparative education and policy studies – are interdisciplinary in orientation and attract a range of scholars in comparative political science and comparative policy sociology to study globalisation and policy transfer (Steiner-Khamsi, 2012b).
The comparative education tradition that focuses on policy borrowing is transnational in orientation. Scholars in this tradition focus their attention on the processes of policy borrowing at the state level (Larsen, 2010). They systematically use a “lens of local policy contexts” that enable them to conceptualise the reasons, the processes and the agents who are adopting a policy at the state level (Steiner-Khamsi, 2012b). Therefore, this theoretical tradition facilitates the understanding of larger transnational or global policy development in local policy contexts.

In contrast, policy studies focus on policy borrowing from a transsectoral perspective (Steiner-Khamsi, 2012b). Scholars in policy studies address the processes of endogenising travelling policies at the national, institutional and individual level (Ozga, 2011). For example, the shift from bureaucratic governance to post-bureaucratic governance of education boosts decentralisation, builds networking and the self-governance of educational institutions (Isaakyan and Ozga, cited in Grek & Ozga, 2010), and promotes the traveling of educational policy by different actors and agencies (Ozga, 2009). In doing so, a range of new policy actors and agencies beyond the state level are involved in the processes of policy formulation and putting policies into practice at different levels. In the policy studies paradigm, the roles of these new policy communities and agencies have been identified as significant to recontextualise policy in local settings (Ball, 2008). Ball and Junemann (2012) argue that the way in which these new kinds of policy communities are becoming involved in the policy network, validate their discourses and are able to influence the policy formation process can be identified as a new form of ‘network governance’. These examples of interest in policy networks show that scholars in policy studies pay more attention to the processes of policy formation and implementation in the policy-practice settings that lie beyond the state level.

Engaging with the concept of policy borrowing, these two different perspectives – comparative education and policy studies – offer two different ways to understand the processes of policy developing from one context to another (Larsen, 2010). However, interaction between the two traditions helps to overcome some conceptual shortcomings of research traditions in each (Steiner-Khamsi, 2012b). Indeed, Steiner-Khamsi (2012b) argues that in order to best
understand how the global policies operate and travel into state level policy via different actors and agents, these two traditions can work together. But she continues to make her prime focus policy borrowing from one context to another context at the state level, not the institutional level. The linkage between comparative education and policy study, what Steiner-Khamsi calls ‘comparative policy study’, provides an interpretative framework and method of inquiry to explain the processes of policy borrowing and lending in a local context, encompassing state level policies, as well as the policies and practices of institutions.

Since my greater interest is to understand the practices of policy actors and interest groups in the processes of developing the neoliberal higher education policies at the state level in Bangladesh, my primary frame is policy borrowing. The literature shows that the scholars from different traditions are increasingly focused on this field. Steiner-Khamsi (2012b) has taken note of the debate in other fields put forward by scholars such as Roger Dale, Stephen Ball, and Jenny Ozga. They have recognised that even at the state level one needs to look at these different ‘micro-processes’. Therefore, I am also taking this ‘micro-processes approach’ to understanding the policy borrowing at the state level in Bangladesh. I use the most important work of David Phillips and Kimberly Ochs (2003, 2004, 2005), which refers to cross national interaction and ‘policy attraction’ and explores the policy borrowing process from a local policy perspective. The work of Gita Steiner-Khamsi (2006, 2008, 2010) contributes to my identification of what to explore when examining the politics and economics of policy borrowing from a global policy perspective. In turn, my reading of the work of Bob Lingard and Shaun Rawolle (2004, 2011) provides a different perspective on policy borrowing. They use the term “cross-field effects” for exploring the emergence of the global education policy field (Lingard & Rawolle, 2004, p. 361).

In the following sections, I discuss key policy borrowing concepts constructed by Phillips and Ochs, Steiner-Khamsi, and Lingard and Rawolle, and build my arguments regarding how these concepts are useful to understand neoliberal policy formation in the higher education policies at the state level in Bangladesh.
2.3.2.1 Ochs and Phillips’ works. Ochs and Phillips (2002) developed a ‘structural typology of cross-national attraction’ for the analysis of stages of policy borrowing. They hypothesise ‘borrowing’ as a cycle of four fundamental stages – cross national attraction, decision making, implementation, and internalisation/indigenisation – that describe the policy borrowing process from home or borrower country perspectives. These stages form a kind of non-stop circular progression: “impulse for change → policy attraction → decision → implementation → internalisation → further impulse for change” (Phillips, 2004, p. 57). The cross-national attraction, which consists of two components – impulses and externalising potential – helps to increase one country’s interest in foreign practices and policies.

The ‘impulses’ act as a catalyst for cross-national attraction and refer to the preconditions for borrowing. Internal dissatisfaction, systematic collapse, negative external evaluation, economic change/competition, political and other imperatives, novel configurations, knowledge/skills innovation in a country might be treated as impulses (Ochs & Phillips, 2002; Phillips & Ochs, 2003). Such impulses encourage the search for foreign models to solve the current or emerging or potential problems.

Impulses lead on to the ‘externalising potential’ of cross-national attraction. The externalising potential comprises six foci of attraction: the guiding philosophy of ideology, ambitions/goals, strategies, enabling structures, process, and techniques. The ‘guiding philosophy or ideology of the policy’ is deemed the core of any policy and underlying belief of a policy. The ‘ambitions or goals of the policy’ refer to outcomes of the policy. In turn, strategies involve whole aspects of governance of a policy. ‘Enabling structures’ refer to organisational reformation. ‘Processes’ include teaching norms and the regulatory system of a policy; and ‘techniques’ refer to ways in which instructions take place (Ochs & Phillips, 2002; Phillips, 2005; Phillips & Ochs, 2003). What Philips and Ochs develop as externalising potentials are located in a field of contextual factors that influence cross-national attraction. A home country may attract via any
focus of attraction in policy or whole policy. Ochs and Phillips point out that the externalising potentials are incorporated in a series of conditions of borrowing:

- The circumstances in the “home” country that create the need to examine experience elsewhere that might be “borrowed”, that is, the preconditions for attraction
- The nature of the inquiries that identify those features in a “target” country that might inform policy in the “home” situation
- The contexts in the “target” country that have created those features of its policies that have attracted attention
- The compatibility of the context in the “target” and “home” countries
- The means by which “external” aspects of policies can be “internalised”
- The efficacy of such “internalised aspects” (Phillips, 2004, p. 57)

The ‘decision’ stage consists of a variety decisions which government and other agencies initiate to begin the process of change (Phillips & Ochs, 2003). The decisions are characterised by essentially four types of rationales for borrowing: theoretical, phoney, realistic/practical or quick fix (Phillips, 2004, p. 58). At the theoretical stage of decision making “government might decide on policies as broad as choice diversity’, for example, and they might retain general ambitions not easily susceptible to demonstrably effective implementation” (Phillips, 2005, p. 31). The second decision is characterised by phoney rationales where the politician’s interest in borrowing a policy arises because of the immediate political circumstances, rather than having a well thought out rationale for the changes. The third descriptor, realistic/practical refers to adopting a policy based on practical measures. The fourth descriptor, quick-fix, is a more dangerous form of decision making in which politicians tend to borrow policy seeking immediate change and are advised by outsiders.

At the implementation stage of policy borrowing, the government searches how far a foreign policy and practice can be implemented in the local context. The government identifies both the prospect of and resistance to adaptation of policies and practices. The implementation
process can be changed or delayed because of shaping borrowed policy into local meanings and understandings. But the success of implementation might depend on the “significant actors” at various positions in the administrative structure. If they have enough power they can move forward the decisions by using different strategies (Phillips, 2004). In turn, during the “internalisation” of policy borrowing, the borrowed policy and practices become a part of the borrower country. Phillips and Ochs say that at this stage, the borrower country might develop an evaluation and monitoring systems to measure the impact of policy. Through these processes a new policy becomes a part of the borrower system. “The result, in Hegelian terms, is a new ‘synthesis’, which might be subject to a future ‘antithesis’ in the form of further ‘impulses’ or ‘catalysts’ for change of the kind described above” (Phillips, 2004, p. 59).

Ochs and Phillips (2004) argue that key actors, organisations, agencies, media publications, and individual institutions are involved in filtering, through which the policy borrowing process becomes transformed. The first stage of filters involves ‘interpretation’ in which various actors perceive education policy as a phenomenon that needs attention. In the ‘transmission’ stage of filters, complex agencies – ministries, local authorities, professional organisations – filter policy based on their own agenda and expectations. Transmission can be influenced by public forms of commentary and analysis, such as media, academic publication and other scholarship and debate. The next filters involve ‘reception’ in which practitioners examine the ‘practice’ to identify shortfalls for successful implementation of new policy/practice. The process of ‘implementation’ of an innovative idea refers to the filtering effects of “what is possible in and acceptable practice to the world of practice” (Ochs & Phillips, 2004, p. 17).

In summary, Phillips and Ochs’s “structural typology of cross-national attraction” deconstructs the notion of policy borrowing from what many scholars identify as “adapted education” [during the colonial period] to policy borrowing through “influence”. This theoretical paradigm addresses why and how one country initiate interests in what. The purpose of this research is to understand why and how the government of Bangladesh began formulating
neoliberal policies in the higher education sector at the state level in Bangladesh. Indeed, the idea of a structural typology of cross-national attraction contributes towards the conceptual framework for the study on understanding of neoliberal policy borrowing processes in the context of Bangladesh.

### 2.3.2.2 Steiner-Khamsi’s works.

Steiner-Khamsi also provides elements of a framework to analyse the political and economic reasons for policy borrowing (Booth, 2006). For a long time, policy-transfer researchers emphasised the politics of policy borrowing because of their keen interest in transatlantic or transpacific transfer (Steiner-Khamsi, 2012b). Steiner-Khamsi argues that because of global diffusion policy makers believe that a global policy reform is very useful and effective to bring about change. It is helpful to examine the policy diffusion involved in policy borrowing and lending processes. For Steiner-Khamsi, both political and economic reasons sit behind policy borrowing. The ‘donor-logic’ promotes policy diffusion from the developed world to developing world. By the term of “donor-logic”, Steiner-Khamsi set out to understand why and how IFIs and bilateral aid agencies influence and promote some selective policies from their own systems as ‘best practices’ in the developing world. Steiner-Khamsi argues that every international organization has its own policy strategy and what it funds reflects its own policy strategy rather than local needs. Steiner-Khamsi (2008, p. 11) points out that “the donor-logic of the Asian Development Bank and the World Bank is finance-driven, the logic of bilateral aid agencies is self-serving in a different way”.

In order to understand how ‘donor-logic’ works in local contexts, Steiner-Khamsi (2010) further argues that the term ‘comparison’ is often used as a policy tool to learn from another policy, or to produce or feel pressure to improve reform. Despite being in a different context and having different policy problems, policy actors often use the idea of comparison among different systems to identify whether one system is effective or not for securing external funding (Steiner-Khamsi, 2010). As a result, as Steiner-Khamsi argues, there are three types of policy reactions because of comparison: scandalization, glorification, and difference. Scandalization refers to
highlighting the weakness of one’s policy as a result of comparison, and the glorification, on the other hand, refers to highlighting the strengths of one’s own policy as a result of comparison. Scandalization leads to importing policy from another policy system, and in turn, glorification promotes policy export from another policy system (Steiner-Khamsi, 2003).

In understanding how to justify importing policy from other systems into the local context, Steiner-Khamsi develops an interpretative framework of ‘externalization’, a sociological concept previously introduced by Bendix in the late 1970s and Schriewer in the early 1990s (Bendix, 1978; Schriewer, 1990). The term ‘externalization’ is used to understand how the local context is used to justify borrowing a policy from abroad by use of the idea of a reference of a “lesson” learned from abroad or an “example abroad” (Steiner-Khamsi, 2002, p. 68).

“Externalized references” explain the local realities of policy borrowing. She also uses Lahmann and Schorr’s notion of three external “authorities” or externalised benchmarks that are frequently used “to justify contested educational practices or reforms: (1) references to general principles of scientific rationality, (2) references to values or “tradition,” and (3) references to organization” (Steiner-Khamsi & Quist, 2000, p. 293 & 294).

Steiner-Khamsi (2010) argues that the idea of ‘externalisation’ made contested policy more acceptable in the local context, and helped to shape a particular transnational policy reform as global policy. To understand how a particular transnational policy could be shaped into a global policy, Steiner-Khamsi developed an “epidemiological model” of global dissemination drawing on the term epidemics used by Watts (2003). Steiner-Khamsi (2010) argues that the epidemiological model of global dissemination helps to explain why a borrowed reform became deterritorialised and decontextualised. In the epidemiological model, she introduced three phases – the slow growth phase, explosive phase, and burnout phase – that are used to address the historical dimension of policy borrowing. During the slow growth phase a few systems were ‘infected’ by a specific reform and adopters used references to lessons learned from another system, for example, transatlantic transfer of the ‘school choice’ educational system between the
USA and the UK in the early 1990s. The contested reform had been made more acceptable through externalisation at the explosive stage. During the explosive growth phase, from the mid-1990s to the millennium, many countries and more systems adopted a reform that helped to hide the transnational underpinnings of the policy that was borrowed. At this phase, policy makers of a country wanted to treat their system as old-fashioned and backward, and thus, adopted systems that had already been introduced by others. At the burnout phase, a particular reform had become epidemic and the late adopters borrowed a specific reform in the name of international reform without considering the origin of the policy (Steiner-Khamsi, 2006).

As indicated in Section 2.3.2, influenced by Kingdom’s multiple streams theory, Steiner-Khamsi (2012b) developed a theoretical lens of comparative policy studies to explore the local policy context and contextual reasons for why global reforms are adopted in the local context. In developing the idea of comparative policy studies (Steiner-Khamsi, 2012b) considered the debate over the role of micro-processes put forward by other scholars in policy studies. The multiple streams theory, (Kingdon, 1984) conceptualises the policy making as a set of processes of problems, policies and politics. Kingdon (1984) argues that the combinations of three streams create the greatest policy changes, which he refers to as the ‘window of opportunity’. Steiner-Khamsi has drawn from the multiple streams theory and argues that different streams of multiple theories are useful to understand the policy borrowing process in the local context. For her, globalisation or ‘international reference’ acts as a source of policy crisis, and also works as the catalyst of policy solutions. Steiner-Khamsi points out that with the influence of the international organisations many developing countries introduce a global reformation agenda as the policy solution to solve the economic and political crises of those countries.

In summarizing the above discussion, I understood that Steiner-Khamsi moves policy borrowing issues beyond what Phillips and Ochs defines as policy attraction between two countries. Despite their theoretical understandings and approaches being different in terms of policy actors, policy discourses, and policy de-contextualisation, both Steiner-Khamsi, and
Phillips and Ochs discuss the policy borrowing in local contexts, and show how the ideas of ‘externalisation’ and ‘externalising potential’ respectively are used by local policy actors as a way of justifying the borrowing of policy from one context to another.

However, the policy borrowing metaphors of Phillips and Ochs, and Steiner-Khamsi are criticised by various scholars. Carney (2009, p. 84) identifies one of the significant shortcomings of earlier comparative education “is its tendency to work with parallel studies, only engaging with comparison across the cases in conclusion”. Both Philips and Ochs, and Steiner-Khamsi have explored and redefined both the concept of context and transfer, but too much emphasis has been placed on the need for understanding the social and historical context which has resulted in a failure to provide useful methodological tools for policy makers (Cowen, 2006). Drawing the example from transnational policy transfer, Cowen (2006, p. 568) argues further that if the World Bank or OECD tends to transfer any policy ideas from their policy discourse into local contexts, it is not clear “which aspects of context are relevant”.

From a policy study perspective, policies are thought to travel from national to institutional to individual levels. However, the way in which the idea of ‘transfer’ is used in comparative education in the policy borrowing model suggests that policy is transferred from the centre to periphery and thus, it fails to understand the growing complexity of new geographies power and knowledge (Beech & Artopoulos, 2016). Although both Phillips and Ochs, and Steiner-Khamsi argue that the borrowed idea and practices are resisted, modified and indigenised in the local context, the question remains unanswered about consequences of policy transfer (Beech, 2006). Moreover, Steiner-Khamsi emphasises the need for understanding why, how and by whom education practices and ideas are transferred from one context to another in order to turn policy borrowing study from normative aspect to analytical aspect, but Beech (2006, p. 10) raises the question about “who are the agents of transfer is fundamental in the redefinition of how we understand foreign influences in education”.

More importantly, in her theoretical framework, Steiner-Khamsi (2006) identifies globalisation as a key phenomenon that helps policy to deterritorialise and decontextualize; however, Steiner-Khamsi is criticised for not identifying the growing complexity and various dimensions of globalisation (Carney, 2009). Appadurai (2000, p. 3) argues that “a series of social forms has emerged to contest, interrogate, and reverse these developments and to create forms of knowledge transfer and social mobilization that proceed independently of the actions of corporate capital and the nation-state system”. Considering local social phenomenon and its relation with the market, this way of thinking about “grassroots globalisation” can be identified as “globalisation from below” (Appadurai, 2000, p. 3). Consequently, Carney (2009) argues that globalisation must be understood as phenomenon (object and process).

However, through engaging with different concepts developed by Steiner-Khamsi, I have understood that the policy transfer issue needs to be addressed from the broader ideas of the power of global forces and global discourses as well as through the micro-processes of the local contexts. In this research I have aimed to understand the processes of incorporation of neoliberal ideas in the higher education policies at the state level in Bangladesh, and thus, the ideas of donor-logic, comparison, externalisation, scandalisation, and the epidemiological model appear to be useful to construct a conceptual framework for this research.

2.3.2.3 Lingard and Rawolle’s work. Lingard and Rawolle also constructed a model of policy borrowing. They used Bourdieu’s theory of ‘social field’ to explain the relationship between national and global policy fields (Lingard & Rawolle, 2004, 2011; Lingard, Rawolle, & Taylor, 2005; Rawolle, 2005, 2010; Rawolle & Lingard, 2008). They developed a ‘cross-field effects’ model that is used “as a way of highlighting the effects (in practice and discourse) that policy developments produce in fields beyond the policy field and vice versa, and between different scales of policy fields, national and global” (Lingard & Rawolle, 2011, p. 494). There are different kinds of cross-field effects: structural, event, systematic, temporal, hierarchical and vertical. The structural effects connect to the links between various policy fields and the degrees of
imposition of the logic of practice from one field on another. Event effects refers to events in particular cases and how their impact flows between fields. Systematic effects refer to broad changes brought about because of a policy reform. In turn, temporal effects relate to those that are limited in duration. “Hierarchical and vertical effects designate those between fields that hold different positions relative to one another” (Lingard & Rawolle, 2004, p. 369). They argue that the emergence of the global field influences national policy and processes through cross-field effects. In order to explain and explore cross field effect, Lingard and Rawolle (2011) introduced the idea of “looping effects, a subclass of cross-field effect. The “looping effects”, drawing on Hacking’s conceptual work (1975, 2003, 2004), are applied within Bourdieu’s theory of fields.

“Looping effects propose a mechanism of cross-field effects, which result from agents in one field (such as journalists or policy makers) diagnosing specific social problems that involve naming groups of agents, categorising their roles and providing an imperative to intervene and change the practices of some named groups” (Lingard & Rawolle, 2011, p. 494).

Lingard and Rawolle (2004) discuss the mediations of policy including media constructions as de facto policy, policy as sound bites, media policy representations as deliberate political misrepresentations, and policy release as media release. In the context of a policy vacuum, if a policy is adopted because of extensive media coverage, what has been created is a de facto policy. Policy as sound bites refers to a policy that is developed based on the logics of practice of the journalistic field and demonstrates the importance of media representations. Media policy representations as deliberate political misrepresentations relates to media releases and media conferences. Often a significant aspect of policy reaches the public through a media release and/or a media conference. Therefore the professional editor edits the actual construction of policy as text rather than publishing it as a full document. Moreover, the government may appoint a journalist to the government ministry to become responsible for providing media announcements on policy and to manage the media involvement in the policy development. With
the media involvement in this way policy becomes a synonym of media release. The media representation of policy may then become a policy text.

In summary, Lingard and Rawolle’s works bring a different perspective to our understanding of the global and national policy fields from different perspectives. As one of the purposes of this thesis is to understand how different policy fields influence the development of neoliberal ideas in higher education policies in Bangladesh, the ideas of ‘cross-field effects’ and ‘looping effects’ can be useful to develop a conceptual framework for this research.

2.3.3 Summary and research space. In the first part of this chapter, I reviewed relevant literature to understand what neoliberalism is and what is going on in terms of the mobility of that idea in global higher education. I understood that the IFIs have played a crucial role in developing neoliberal policies, and have used a range of mechanisms to transfer neoliberal ideas from one place to another. I considered how different neoliberal ideas have been adopted in globalised higher education systems, such as NPM as governance, a cost-sharing approach in the financing of higher education, the knowledge-based economy as vision for higher education, privatisation, internationalisation of higher education, and quality assurance bodies.

In the second part of the chapter, I have traced the relationship between neoliberalism and policy borrowing in which I have argued that the neoliberal policy agenda has become a hegemonic policy doctrine, but one that is closely related with policy borrowing strategies (Steiner-Khamsi, 2004a). The ‘semantics of globalisation’, and global politics and economics have placed enormous pressure on developing countries to adopt neoliberal policy in their education sector (Steiner-Khamsi, 2006; Steiner-Khamsi & Stolpe, 2006). In doing so, other countries, particularly developing countries, are forced to take up neoliberal policy as developed countries adopt it, and consequently adopt a neoliberal policy agenda in their national economic development in order to fulfill the conditions set by the World Bank and IMF for getting loans and aids (Hursh, 2007). The discussion that follows shows how I have used these theories in a
policy borrowing model in which I have addressed how policy moves from one context to another.

To date, most of the studies using policy borrowing models in education have focused on the transatlantic policy transfer and inter-European transfer (Steiner-Khamsi, 2006, 2012b). Hall and Soskice (2001, p. 2) argue that ‘varieties of capitalism’ is a feature of world economies, and therefore, the style of democracy and socio-political context varies among countries. There have been few studies in the developing countries showing how global policy is played out there. The way in which the development of local policy is mediated through both global policy discourse and local socio-cultural contexts is called ‘vernacular globalization’ by Appadurai (1996). However, the ‘vernacular’ that is missing in the literature is the sort prevailing in Bangladesh or in similar nations. In particular, there are very few studies that take account of Bangladesh. Nevertheless, there are some studies tracing education policy development that focus on postcolonial history and some that examine the Asian sociocultural context. For example, some studies have been completed in Africa and South-East and Far-East Asia (see for reference, Minh Ngo, Lingard, & Mitchell, 2006; Sae-Lao, 2013; Spreen, 2004; Steiner-Khamsi & Stolpe, 2005, 2006) and show the vernacular, but in fact there has not been much focusing on British postcolonial spaces like Bangladesh. This study thus looks at how the neoliberal ideas have been manifested in the local policy context of Bangladesh.

In short, the literature has not taken into consideration what happens to the neoliberal policy agenda in the higher education sector in Bangladesh. It is important to look at how global policies travel into different contexts where the forms of democracy and varieties of capitalism are different. More explicitly, what neoliberalism looks like in the higher education sector in Bangladesh has not been investigated yet. In the same way, little attention has been paid to explain how and why such a neoliberal policy agenda has been taken up in the higher education sector in Bangladesh. Therefore, discussion on policy borrowing has left unexplained the roles of what Hall and Soskice call ‘varieties of capitalism’ in incorporating neoliberal policy in the higher
education sector in Bangladesh. This paucity of research in a Bangladeshi context supports the need for the present study.

2.3.3.1 Theoretical framework. In this subsection I explain the key assumptions I use in my study and justify the use of a comparative education paradigm on policy borrowing models in my understanding of the development of neoliberal ideas in higher education policies in Bangladesh. The theories and framework I used in this thesis have emerged from Anglophone scholars and are very western-centred. Many might raise questions about the appropriateness of this theoretical framework to apply in a context like Bangladesh where democratic practice is less central to political practice, and where there is a distinct (post)colonial history and religious ideology. However, this analytical framework acknowledges that it is actually a research problem to see how this analytical framework, developed as it is from a very western context, stands up in a non-western context where democratic practice is very different from that in the western world. Some of the ideas underlying this theoretical framework have actually come from scholars who had worked not only in western contexts, but also in other contexts, though not in this particular type of Asian context. Many postcolonial scholars like Spivak (1985) and Bhabah (1994), argue that colonial discourses have continued to manifest themselves in colonised countries and societies, and they thus emphasise the need to look at postcolonial development from below through the interactions among and between colonisers and the colonised (cited in Kapoor, 2008). Consequently, the theoretical framework I adopted in this study draws on the comparative education paradigm on policy borrowing models developed from Phillips and Ochs, Steiner-Khamsi, and Lingard and Rawolle. Comparative education addresses policy borrowing through a critical perspective, and provides a structure for the analysis of policy borrowing both as a normative aspect, and as an analytical aspect (Steiner-Khamsi, 2006). Although this theoretical framework is very much western-centered, it recognises policy borrowing within the global north, and from the global north to the global south.
The theoretical framework recognises policy borrowing as a process involving a non-stop circular progression (Phillips & Ochs, 2003, 2004). Often an internal crisis in the home country helps the search for new policy from a foreign country to solve existing or emerging or potential problems. However, the theoretical framework also provides an understanding of the assumption that policy borrowing occurs because a specific idea of global policy is overvalued and is used as an example of best practice for the improvement of situations existing in another context. Often politicians make the decision advised by outsiders without considering the socio-cultural context of the country. The ‘significant actors’ in administration of a country are involved in implementing the borrowed policy; sometimes borrowed policy might be changed in a particular moment of reform implementation. If the borrowed policy is contested, the implementation of policy might be delayed and policy makers might use different strategies to implement them. Through these processes a borrowed policy becomes part of the policy array of the borrower country. This argument led me to look at the ‘micro-process’ of policy borrowing in the context of Bangladesh.

The theoretical framework identifies globalisation as a key phenomenon that is used to deterritorialise and decontextualise policy ideas. It explores how the notion ‘comparison’ is used to identify a policy as weak and another policy as best, and consequently, policy makers use ‘comparison’ as a way of importing policy from one place to another (Steiner-Khamsi, 2010). It also identifies the ways the ideas of ‘lessons learnt’ or the ‘best practices’ may be used to justify borrowing policy from abroad. Throughout this process global policy is translated and absorbed into the local and given a new local meaning and understanding. And through this translation into local meaning, global policy becomes a part of the local policy.

This theoretical framework recognises, as Steiner-Khamsi (2006) says, that not only political reasons, but also economic reasons are at work behind policy borrowing. The ‘donor logic’ is identified as a key tool to understand the economics of policy borrowing. The donor agencies are accompanied by the lending of reform ideas and funding for the low income
countries once reforms are pursued systematically. This indicates that a particular transnational policy is being presented in the guise of ‘best practice’ or ‘international standard’ at the burn-out stage of policy borrowing.

The relationships between various policy fields and the imposition of the logic of one field in another field are also recognised in this theoretical framework. Using Bourdieu’s (1998) concept of ‘social field’, Lingard and Rawolle (2004, 2011) developed the idea of ‘cross-field effects’, and identified this idea as one of the significant instruments to be used to incorporate a policy from abroad. In this conceptual framework I am acknowledging the contribution of Lingard and Rawolle (2004, 2011) in re-conceptualising the idea of ‘social field’ through developing the idea of ‘cross-field effects’ to understand the influence of global policies on national policy fields. For example, the structure and effectiveness of many policies depend on how the media portray them. Therefore, I will ensure that I consider how the field of journalism has affected the production of a policy text.

From the above discussions in Parts 1 and 2 of this chapter I have developed a conceptual framework for this research, and I explain how I apply these theoretical concepts in this research.

2.3.3.2 Implications of applying the theoretical framework in this study. First of all, I have identified what neoliberalism is, the framework of policy travelling and the need for the research. In identifying key trends in global higher education, the NPM, the cost-sharing approach, privatisation, internationalisation, quality assurance by external agencies, and knowledge-based society are the major concepts in this sector. Various international and supranational organisations, for example the World Bank, OECD, UNESCO, IMF, WTO, have been involved in promoting reformation agendas in the higher education sector in the developing countries (Torres, 2009). Using this theoretical method, my research explores what these neoliberal ideas look like in the higher education policies in Bangladesh, and seeks to understand how these ideas were developed and why the state has taken up such neoliberal concepts in
higher education. To accomplish this, I am interested in what strategies were being used for taking such a neoliberal agenda into higher education policies, how the varieties of policy actors shaped this agenda into higher education policies and who was involved in this process. Thus, the overall framework in the following figure (Figure 1) represents my critical understanding of how to look at processes of incorporating a neoliberal agenda in higher education policies in Bangladesh.

![Figure 1: Conceptual framework of the study](image)

Once Bangladesh restored its democracy in 1990, political leaderships revamped higher education and introduced major policy changes in the higher education sector, for example, the introduction of private sector provision of higher education by enacting the first Private University Act in 1992 and later formulating a 20-year Strategic Plan for Higher Education 2006-
2026 by the University Grants Commission (UGC) in 2006 with technical and financial support from the World Bank. Thus, I perceive the typology of ‘cross-national policy attraction’ by Phillips and Ochs (2002, 2003, 2004, 2005) as having the potential to explore the actual rationale of taking up such neoliberal policies in higher education during the time of major political change in Bangladesh and the processes of justifying these policies used by the political leadership and different policy actors (Phillips, 2005).

The terms ‘international standard’ or the ‘best practice’ have commonly been used as a reference to develop education policy around the world. It is important to determine whether such terms have been used as a reference by the policy actors to incorporate a neoliberal agenda in higher education policies in Bangladesh or not. Therefore, the notions of ‘comparison’ and ‘scandalization’ by Steiner-Khamsi (2003, 2010) are useful concepts to include in exploring how the neoliberal policies have been shaped and developed in Bangladesh. In the same way, the ‘epidemiological model’ helps me to explore what aspects of the neoliberal agenda in higher education policies have been realised and at what phases, slow growth, explosive, and burnout. The concept of ‘donor-logic’ is another contribution of Steiner-Khamsi that is useful in understanding whether the government has incorporated neoliberal ideas in higher education policies because of IFIs’ pressure or not.

Finally, in recent times, the media in Bangladesh have shown interest in the higher education sector through publishing a series of reports on higher education. Therefore, the notion of ‘cross-field effects’ by Lingard and Rawolle (2011) was deemed useful to address the mediations of media constructions of neoliberal ideas in higher education policies in Bangladesh.

2.4 Conclusion

In this chapter I addressed two broad issues: the theoretical paradigm of neoliberalism and its implication for higher education around the world, and the theorising of policy borrowing. I started the discussion by describing the ideological responses of neoliberalism. I traced how the developing world is being forced to adopt neoliberalism as a political and
economic discourse with the support of IFIs and developed countries. Following neoliberalism the higher education sector has experienced various kinds of reforms around the world.

The discussion was extended to address how the spread of neoliberalism is related to the policy borrowing mechanisms. I theorised policy borrowing models drawing on the comparative education paradigm and explored the implications of applying this theoretical model in my study.

In the next chapter I describe the methodological approach and overall procedures of the methods that I used in this study.
Chapter 3

Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This study seeks to broadly understand the micro-processes which include why, how and by whom neoliberal ideas were adopted in the higher education policies at the state level in Bangladesh since the 1990s. In particular, this study identifies the key neoliberal ideas being developed in the higher education policies since the 1990s and explores how these neoliberal ideas and practices have been shaped, re-contextualised and modified in higher education policies in Bangladesh between 1990 and 2010. It also examines the micro-politics of why policy actors formulated neoliberal ideas in the higher education policies at the state level in Bangladesh. The research questions of a study determine what research methodology should be adopted in that research (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). In this chapter I outline the details of the methodological rationale and procedures for this study.

This is a qualitative study using a critical perspective as a philosophical underpinning. In this qualitative research, case study was selected as a strategy of inquiry in which ‘neoliberal higher education policy formation in Bangladesh’ is the case. I intend to understand the micro-politics of policy formation in the conditions of globalising neoliberalism. I provide an account of self-reflexivity within the research, since this is important for the credibility of the research processes. The chapter then outlines the design of the study wherein I employed documents and interviews with policy actors as key sources of data. The outline of the design of the study provides details of the sampling of participants and settings, and explains how I accessed the data settings, the tools of data collection, data analysis, and data presentation. I also explain how I ensured rigour and trustworthiness and addressed the ethical issues of the research. Finally, this chapter reflects on the methodological challenges of this study.
3.2 Philosophical underpinning: A critical perspective

The philosophical underpinnings of research often stay “hidden”, but have a great influence on the design and conduct of the research (Slife & Williams, 1995, cited in Creswell, 2013, p. 4). The philosophical underpinning in this study is one of a critical perspective, applied to understand the processes of neoliberal policy formulation in the higher education sector at the state level in Bangladesh. I aimed in this study to: understand the ‘micro-politics’ of neoliberal policy making in the higher education sector in Bangladesh between 1992 and 2010; see what neoliberal looks like in higher education policies; and identify its nature and how it has been formulated. These were the matters to which a critical approach was identified as the best among different philosophical underpinnings in the literature, because the critical philosophical underpinning was used to inform me about how I learned and what I learned about my inquiry of this issue, in other words I adopted a critical stand point (Creswell, 2013). In this section I define what the critical approach is in terms of philosophical underpinning and how it is related to my study.

The tradition of critical perspectives theory involves critiquing knowledge and is an epistemology which demands a “reflexive and pluralistic understanding of inquiry” (Morrow, 2006, p. xxx). Critical perspectives have been influenced by Marxist thinkers, and the arguments and assumptions that led to these perspectives were derived from a group of intellectuals known as the Frankfurt School. Later, various theoretical perspectives including critical race theory, critical poverty theory, critical feminism and postcolonialism have encompassed the critical theoretical paradigms (Shields, 2012). Largely, by critical perspectives a critical theorist means any research that recognises power relations (Cannella & Lincoln, 2009). When researchers adopt a critical perspective, they use their works as a form of social and cultural criticism (Kincheloe, 2008). This approach acknowledges external realities and tends to empower the oppressed as the basis of its critical paradigm (Willis, 2007). Critical perspectives believe that power relations are deeply rooted in the social value system of capitalist society. Specific assumptions about power relations that are historically and socially constituted are identified as tools of criticism (Cannella
& Lincoln, 2009; Kincheloe, 2008). From the above discussion in the literature I understood that a critical perspective in this research involves an awareness that every act of the policy actors is a continuing part of their politicking, including what they say after a policy text has been formulated. The policy actors might justify and rationalise their actions, their movement from public to private universities, and their whole range of activities in the development of policies, but as a critical researcher I have to be aware of their action of politicking.

My conceptual framework was developed to understand how key global concepts emerging from neoliberal philosophy in global higher education systems and global agencies have influenced the state-level mediating agencies and the policy actors in Bangladesh to shape neoliberal ideas in higher education between 1992 and 2010. I have looked at the context of the emergence of neoliberal philosophy, and have taken this argument from Cannella and Lincoln (2009) that neoliberal philosophy is connected with hidden power structures that are market driven. The critical perspective provided me with an understanding that facts are never isolated (Kincheloe, McLaren, & Steinberg, 2013). The critical approach also helped me to understand that the relationship between 'concept' and 'object' and between 'signifier' and 'signified' are not fixed, but are mediated by social relations of “capitalist production” and “consumption” (Kincheloe, 2008). Therefore I have to take a critical stance to understand how the state-level mediating agencies and the policy actors were influenced by hidden structures resulting from the market philosophy promoted by the IFIs, and how these the IFIs shaped the neoliberal ideas that were adopted in the higher education policies at the state-level in Bangladesh.

The key focus of my research was on the neoliberal policy formation processes in Bangladesh. Steinberg (2012, p. ix) argues such processes are completely enmeshed in the “middle of power and politics”. In other words they cannot be researched without being aware of what Steinberg (2012, p. ix) calls the “web of power, neoliberalism, patriarchy, western linear linking, and elitism”. And so in doing this research I needed to be aware of all the different positions and ways in which different policy actors have influenced the policy formation
processes. Therefore I had to take a critical stance towards what the policy actors said to me, which meant I recognised that they might say something because of their positions rather than representing the positions of others. I also had to be aware that I could be getting contradictory information from them based on the perspectives shaped by their positions as well as their ideals.

I therefore argue that a critical perspective provided me with what Kincheloe (2008) calls a theoretical lens and critical reflection on the processes of neoliberal policies’ development at the state level in Bangladesh. Critical perspectives also provided me ways of critiquing existing ideology, and facilitated the understanding of dominant relationships in the society (Kilgore, 1998, cited in Willis, 2007). Drawing on a critical perspective to view the policy actors who were involved in neoliberal policy formulation processes, I explored who these key policy actors were, and how they shaped and recontextualised neoliberalism as dominant ideas in higher education policies. Consequently, a scholarly critical analysis contributed to making sense of neoliberal policies and helped to understand the ‘micro-politics’ of neoliberal policy formation in the higher education sector at the state level in Bangladesh since the 1990s.

3.3 A qualitative approach

A qualitative methodology was chosen because the critical perspectives focus on political, issue-oriented, or change-oriented practices (Creswell, 2013). In dealing with a specific event qualitative research investigates the rich details of why and how. In this way it aims to unfold the complexity of historical situations and movements that have influenced the event investigated (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). By using interpretive and material practices, qualitative research makes the world visible (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013b). A qualitative study looks at ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions, rather than ‘how many’ questions (Silverman, 2013). As my substantive interest in a specific event was to understand how and why higher education in Bangladesh has been reformed in a neoliberal way, a qualitative approach was useful.

The key characteristic of qualitative research is to use a 'natural setting' as sources of data (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). It involves a series of representations including field notes, interviews,
conversations, photographs, recordings and memos to the self. In using a ‘natural setting’, I looked at a single case of the neoliberal policy formulation process in the higher education sector at the state level in Bangladesh. The data in this study was collected from interviews with policy actors. I focused on understanding the participants’ experiences by asking broader general questions with a view to developing themes from the data (Creswell, 2013).

In collecting data the qualitative researcher also uses a variety of empirical materials, such as case study, personal experiences, introspection, life story, interviews, artefacts, cultural texts and productions, observational notes, historical and visual texts (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013a). Thus I also collected data from policy documents to explore what neoliberalism looks like in the higher education policies at the state level in Bangladesh.

Further, qualitative research aims to understand the meaning of human action and interaction attributed to a social or human problem (Creswell, 2013). This approach is also very useful to understand people’s everyday experiences and views (Silverman, 2011). It concentrates on a small number of individuals to look “deeply at a few things rather than looking at the surface of many things” (Lichtman, 2006, p. 13). Thus, the qualitative approach in this study helped me to provide a ‘deeper’ understanding of how and why these policies have been adopted in the higher education sector. Through this approach I am able to offer a comprehensive critical understanding about the processes of neoliberal policy formation in the higher education sector in Bangladesh.

3.4 Strategy of inquiry: Case study

Qualitative research employs a diverse range of strategies of inquiry including ethnography, phenomenology, narrative, case studies, grounded theory (Creswell, 2013; Hancock & Algozzine, 2006). Of these approaches case study is a common means of doing qualitative research (Stake, 2008; Yin, 2013). When a researcher looks at an event, an activity, a process, a program, or one or more individuals then case study might be the best strategy of inquiry (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 1988). For Yin (2013), case study is perhaps the most appropriate
research design when a researcher poses ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions, when a researcher has little control over the events, or the processes, or the activities, and when the researcher focuses on the current phenomenon within a real life context. Flyvbjerg (2006) argues that in-depth case study research could be useful to understand how power relations shape each other and real life events where we live. In case study research cases need to be “bounded” by time and activity (Stake, 2008, p. 120) so that a researcher can use a variety of data collection tools for gathering detailed information over a certain period of time, location or activity (Creswell, 2013).

I used in-depth case study as a strategy of inquiry in this research because this research looks at a particular process, that of neoliberal policy formation processes, and also at why, how and by whom neoliberalist ideas were shaped in the higher education policies since 1990s. In a qualitative research approach “case study concentrates on the experiential knowledge of the case and close attention to the influence of its social, political and other context” (Stake, 2008, p. 120). Consequently, I paid attention to the influence of the social, political and other contexts operating during the neoliberal policy formation processes between 1990 and 2010. By pursuing scholarly research questions, e.g. asking why, how and by whom these policies were developed, I paid attention to the case of neoliberal policy formation processes in the higher education sector in Bangladesh. I sought to optimise the credibility of my data, as Creswell (2013) calls it, by triangulating the descriptions and interpretations of data, which I discuss in Section 3.7.

3.4.1 Selecting the case. In selecting the case for this research, I have drawn on the ways others have classified the types of cases and their purposes as they fulfil particular research design aims. For example, Stake (2008) considers three types of case studies – intrinsic, instrumental and multiple – whereas Yin (2013) also discusses three case studies in slightly different forms – exploratory, descriptive and explanatory. Consequently, it is important to identify when to use which strategy. An intrinsic case study refers to a study that “is undertaken because, first and last, one wants better understanding of this particular case” (Stake, 2008, p. 121). The intrinsic case study does not represent other cases or illustrate a specific problem;
rather “this case itself is of interest” (Stake, 2008, p. 122). In turn, a case is *instrumental* “if a particular case is examined mainly to provide insight into an issue or to redraw a generalization” (Stake, 2008, p. 123). The instrumental case study “is of secondary of interest” and it plays a supportive role to understand something else (Stake, 2008, p. 123). A *multiple* case study involves a number of cases that can contribute to understanding a phenomenon.

I adopted an instrumental case study in my study since my particular interest was to understand the processes of neoliberal policy formation in the higher education sector in a Bangladeshi context. Neoliberalism is a kind of a policy development that emerged in the western world and later spread throughout different places around the world with the influence of the IFIs. Bangladesh was one of those places where neoliberal policies have been taken up in the higher education sector since 1990s. As noted in the conceptual framework (Chapter 2), in the early 1990s there have been a number of initiatives in the higher education sector in Bangladesh that are signifiers for neoliberalism, for example, the government enacted various private university Acts (hereafter Acts) over the 25 years to establish and regulate the private universities, and in 2006 formulated a 20-year Strategic Plan for Higher Education 2006-2026 (hereafter Strategic Plan) to reform the higher education sector. Thus, I identified the ‘neoliberal higher education policy formation of Bangladesh’ as a case where neoliberal ideas have been taken up since the 1990s (Figure 2). Therefore, the case itself was selected to be an instrumental example of such policy formulation in a developing country. Moreover, as part of my interest was to contribute to the area of comparative policy studies and to policy borrowing models, the use of an instrumental case study facilitated my understanding of neoliberal policy formation processes in higher education from the perspective of a developing country (Stake, 2008).
Within every case a number of different sites could be visited, a range of documents could be analysed, events or programs could be observed, and people might be interviewed (Merriam, 1998). In order to examine this case of ‘neoliberal higher education policy formation in Bangladesh’, my focus was given to particular key policy moments at the state level since the 1990s. My topic and my specific focus was the specific inquiry that led to formation of the private university Acts and the current 20-year Strategic Plan. These were relatively recent neoliberal policy developments in the higher education sector in Bangladesh since the 1990s.

### 3.5 Self-reflexivity within research

In qualitative research, a researcher becomes a key figure “who influences the collection, selection and interpretation of data” (Finlay, 2002, p. 531). As critical research deals with an issue or a process from a critical standpoint, it is important to explain the relationship between researcher and researched (Shields, 2012). Bryman and Cassell (2006) argue that the process of interviewing is never static; rather both the researcher and participants become actively involved in the research process to construct meaning. Consequently, the issue of reflexivity is significant for researchers in the research process (England, 1994; Troyna, 1994). In the following I sketch
my personal accounts and the roles I had in different aspects of the research process. My account relates to the specific relationships I had with individual actors and provides a more nuanced and general discussion of whether my position was from an emic (insider) or etic (outsider) perspective.

I earned my higher education degrees in sociology from the University of Dhaka, the leading university in Bangladesh. I also earned a M.Ed. degree from the College of Education in the University of Canterbury, New Zealand. I have been teaching sociology of education at the Institute of Education and Research (IER) in the University of Dhaka, Bangladesh, since 2006. With an involvement in teaching with the University of Dhaka, I had some prior knowledge about the current trends of the higher education system in Bangladesh and its relations with neoliberal policy agenda. I knew that different governments had formulated the private university Acts and the Strategic Plan for Higher Education. Over the years, I had also witnessed how universities in Bangladesh were trying to cope with the globalising neoliberal trend. Universities have adopted new curricula, and identified knowledge and skills for preparing students for the labour market. Both public and private universities have also been focusing on adopting different funding strategies to mitigate their own financial expenditures. In this perspective I was an insider of this study because I had already experienced the effects of these neoliberal policy shifts in the higher education sector in Bangladesh.

Although, in the traditional approach, the researcher’s ‘neutral position’ within a study is a significant component to justify the research process, critical researchers conceive any social issue as a field of study from the ‘ideological position’ (Kincheloe et al., 2013). However, considering the polarised world, such an ‘ideological position’ is still not very acceptable to all research communities. A critical researcher is also required to explain explicitly how the research problems and purposes, the theoretical lens, the methodology, the analytical procedures, interpretation, and the conclusion have been developed (Shields, 2012). Consequently, I was very careful and explicit about my use of a critical epistemology in all aspects of the research process (Lichtman, 2006). I
provided an information letter to all participants before the interviews in which I described what
the research purpose was and what I wanted to do with them. I adopted two tools – documents
and interviews – to collect the data in this research. By using document analysis of the Acts and
the Strategic Plan, I first explored what the neoliberal features of these documents were and
identified the similarities and dissimilarities between these neoliberal features and western
neoliberal ideas. Second, I conducted interviews with policy actors, who were involved in the
development of the Acts and the Strategic Plan, to understand the process of neoliberal policy
formulation in the higher education sector in Bangladesh.

Walford (2012, p. 111) argues that researchers have developed interest in understanding
the process and politics of changes by studying actors who were involved in these changes; this
research is often known as “elite research”. In agreement with Walford, I identified this research
as elite research. Some of the literature about elite interviewing discusses the issue of how a
researcher gets participants to respond authentically (see for reference, Halpin & Troyna, 1994;
Walford, 1994). Thus, the question about the relationship between participants and myself
deserves further explanation. As noted above, although I had prior knowledge about neoliberal
policy shifts in the higher education sector, I had no idea who could be potential participants for
this research. Based on pre-determined criteria (see Section 3.6.1), I identified the names of policy
actors involved in the development of the Acts and the Strategic Plan from the published policy
documents. I understood that although some biographical aspects of a significant number of
policy actors were known to me, I was unknown to all. Therefore in gaining access to them I had
to build up trust through networking. I found a significant number of participants were either
retirees or involved in other activities after their retirement. When I approached them to be
interviewed, most of them let me in their homes and they did not keep me at a distance, saying
that if I went to their offices the views expressed would be confined to the ‘public views’. Several
participants provided extra documents such as meeting minutes and the drafts of policy
documents, and allowed me to go through their memos to understand what and how they
developed these policies. The participants’ willingness, and their support in supplying different
‘secret’ documents show the extent to which I was trusted by them and therefore was able to collect authentic data to aid in understanding the policy process.

Bryman and Cassell (2006) argue that often the positions researchers hold could be significant for interviewees because the interviewees would understand that the researchers had enough knowledge about the research topic and be more likely to be open and provide full information. Therefore while information given by different participants on a specific issue helped me to crosscheck with each other, and triangulate the findings, at the same time I was aware of the way the policy actors were trying to give me their own story, though this was not necessarily in accord with the account that others might give. Consequently, through using my critical stance, I analysed their perceptions and was able to offer meaningful arguments and perceive future directions or implications of the research. In order to avoid the ‘predetermined ontological bias’ I developed well-designed and appropriate standards of rigour and trustworthiness (Shields, 2012), that I discuss later in this chapter.

Lingard (2009) argues that it is important to recognise the positionality of the national location of the researcher in the education policy analysis that is related to globalisation. For him, positionality of the researcher in this context “refers to the spatial location of the researcher, specifically national location, and the positioning of that nation in respect of global geopolitics, including location within the Global North/GLOBAL South divide” (Lingard, 2009, p. 229). Given the topic of education policy analysis into neoliberalism, my location as a researcher in the Global South who is undertaking research for a PhD in a country located in the South, yet economically and culturally closely aligned with the Global North, could be significant in this thesis.

To overcome the tensions of being both from the Global South and in the Global North, I used a range of strategies that improved the quality of education policy analysis. First, being a researcher from Global South, as noted earlier (chapter 1), I understood the historical and political process of introducing the British education system in Bangladesh and its potential effects on the current higher education policy formation process. My understanding of the
historical and political antecedents helped me to understand the power relations between the Global North and the Global South, and the influence of various interest groups in the development of neoliberal policies in Bangladesh. Therefore, during interviewing, I emphasised the importance of understanding whether policy actors identified globalisation as ‘taken for granted’, or ‘globalisation from below’ (Appadurai, 2000, p. 3). I found that a significant number of policy actors conceptualised neoliberalism as a way understanding of policy problems in the higher education sector, but they also considered the socio-political and economic factors in the neoliberal policy development. For instance, one of the policy actors informed me that although the idea of a ‘cost-sharing’ approach has been used in the financing of universities in many western countries, in Bangladesh it was necessary to adapt this western model of financing system by considering the local socio-political and economic context in which the government needed to reduce its costs.

Second, being a PhD student in a university of the Global North, my position was an outsider from the Bangladeshi society, and this outsider position of doing a PhD in a high-ranked western university like Monash University which is highly valued in the Bangladeshi society, assigned me with important status (see Section 3.6.2), and helped me to access people who had been involved at high levels in the policy making process. As stated in the literature review (chapter 2), what Spivak (1985) and Bhabah (1994) argue, I developed my own critical view through an awareness of the interactions among and between colonizers (the ideas from the Global North) and the colonised (the policy makers in the Global South) that helped me to become aware of the policy actors’ actions of politicking. For instance, during the interview sessions, some policy actors intended to show that there was no influence from the World Bank in the formation of the Strategic Plan since the general perception of the World Bank was relatively negative in the Bangladeshi society. However, the western knowledge I gathered about policy borrowing from one context to another informed me that the World Bank as global policy actor has influenced the national policy formation process through a range of strategies including policy advice, policy reports and analytical sector reviews, academic articles, impact evaluations,
baseline surveys, benchmarks, working papers, seminar proceedings, policy briefs and conferences. Therefore, I when interviewing the policy actors I was careful to explain to them that the findings of the study would not have any direct policy implications on the higher education sector, rather this study was concerned tried to understand how they had formulated neoliberal ideas in the higher education policies at the state level in Bangladesh. My approach helped the policy actors to speak off the record and they made clear what was acceptable to say on the record in a way that indicated that they trusted me. In reflecting on the tensions within these multiple positions, I ensured the veracity and quality of the education policy analysis that I carried out (Lingard, 2009).

Despite the successful attempts to gain participants’ trust, by virtue of the research problem, I was an outsider in this study. First, I had no involvement with the power structure within government or outside the government that I could use to influence the formation of these neoliberal policies in the higher education sector at the state level in Bangladesh. Second, being a teacher in an institution, I had no capacity to influence any decision of the policy actors who were involved in these processes. Both the Acts and the Strategic Plan were formulated by a number of policy actors at the state level in Bangladesh. When the first Private University Act 1992 and latest the Private University Act 2010 were formulated in the early 1990s and the late 2010s respectively, I was a secondary-level student in my locality, and a graduate-level student in a foreign university, respectively. Moreover, prior to my involvement in teaching in the University of Dhaka, the Strategic Plan was produced by the University Grants Commission (UGC) with technical and financial support from the World Bank. Consequently, the formulation processes of these neoliberal policies were far beyond my purview. Rather, as a critical researcher, I emphasised my need to maintain the criticality of the research, which I discuss below. My task was to understand the processes of use of neoliberal ideas in the higher education policies at the state level in Bangladesh. I believed that my prior knowledge helped me to collect and enrich the data, and to construct a critique of what happened from the findings.
3.6 Design of the study

Design, which is often known as the “blueprint” of research (Yin, 2009, p. 26), is a significant part of qualitative research (Richards, 2009). Silverman (2011) argues that in selecting an appropriate research design a researcher needs to consider some significant issues, for example: consider the range of methods of data collection intending to be used, make sure to use appropriate methods, avoid too many data collection tools and make sure not to collect too much data.

As mentioned earlier I adopted a qualitative case study for this research. There are some misconceptions about case study research design. Many believe that a case study should be considered a subset of other strategies (Yin, 2009) and that a single case study is unable to contribute to scientific development (Flyvbjerg, 2006). However, such misconceptions have been altered as Cook and Campbell (1979) argue, “Certainly the case study as normally practised should not be demeaned by identification with one-group post-test-only design” (cited in Yin, 2009, p. 25). Generally, research design refers to the logical sequence within the research that connects the empirical data to the initial research question and to its conclusions (Yin, 2009). Therefore, case study has its own research design (Yin, 2009) in which various data collection tools including interviews with key persons or informants, documents and observation have been employed to collect data (Merriam, 1988; Swanborn, 2010). Among them I used documents and interviews as methods of data collection.

I identified neoliberal higher education policy formation in Bangladesh as a case and within this case I looked at the formation processes of the Acts and the Strategic Plan. From the reviews of the Acts (1992, 1998, 2008 and 2010) and the Strategic Plan I have found that some of these policies were developed almost 25 years ago and some were relatively recent policy processes. For example, the first Private University Act was formulated in 1992 and the government introduced an amendment of this Act in 1998. However, some of these policies – the Private University Ordinance 2008, the latest Act 2010 and the Strategic Plan – were relatively
new neoliberal policies in the higher education sector. A range of ‘elite’ policy actors had involvement in and influenced the formation of all of these neoliberal policies. Consequently, I used the idea, argued by many scholars, of ‘retrospective elite interviewing’ because this seemed to offer a great understanding of past events and processes (see for reference, Selwyn, 2013, p. 343). The ‘retrospective approach’ involves stages of interviews and sampling; conducting interviews; and analysing data (Selwyn, 2013). In the following I provide a detailed account of the research design used in my research.

3.6.1 Sampling the participants. Alongside official documents and archives, such as the minutes of the meetings, the debates of the National Parliament in Bangladesh and report of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Education (Bangladesh National Parliament, 1992, 2010a, 2010b, 2011), the review of these policies – the Acts and the Strategic Plan – provided details of some policy actors who were involved in, and directly and indirectly influenced the formation processes of these policies. For example, the review of the Strategic Plan provided a list of 59 policy actors comprised of academics, policy administrators of the UGC and different ministries, and private sector representatives comprising business leaders, former civil bureaucrats and NGOs activists. Though the Acts did not provide the name of those who were involved in this process, through the reviews of relevant documents to the Acts, I found that, along with policy administrators of various Ministries and the UGC, academics from public and private universities, politicians, and private sector representatives played key roles in the development of the Acts.

In reading my interviews I found a significant number of policy actors represented the institutions they worked for. For example, policy administrators, the academics who had worked in the UGC, and politicians who either served different Ministries or worked as Members of Parliament (MP) of the ruling parties were considered the spokespersons of the government, whereas the private sector representatives were speaking on behalf of the private universities’ sector. However, during the interviews, participants often spoke in a way that showed that
although they might represent their agencies, they would have their own personal views which they were prepared to express. For example, they often said, “My organisation expects people to do these, but between you and me this is what I thought about it” (personal comment during policy actors’ interviews in 2013). In contrast, a few of the participants, who were speaking in a more independent way, wanted to know whether I would treat their comments with anonymity in my thesis or not. The way they spoke with me showed an awareness of the critical processes in research. They understood what I was going to do with the information, and at the same time they were prepared to talk to me as frankly as they could.

I used a combination of ‘generic purposeful’ and ‘snowball’ approaches to select participants in this study. In the generic purposeful approach, I set up some criteria for selecting participants (Bryman, 2012). The criteria involved identifying a range of different groups/categories, diverse working experiences, and participants’ involvement at a particular point in the processes of the formulation of the Acts and the Strategic Plan. From my reading of the policy documents, the participants fitted into five different groupings of people: policy administrators of the UGC and the Ministries, academics from public and private universities, politicians, journalists, and private sector representatives. Beginning with names of people in one of these groupings obtained from these policy documents a snowball approach helped me to find out who had been actively involved in and influenced the formulation processes of the Acts and the Strategic Plan. With the exception of the journalists, all interviewees had involvement in either the Acts, or the Strategic Plan, or both of these, and had provided ideas for these two policies. As indicated in the research question (Chapter 1), I considered how other fields, such as market discourses and the media, might influence the higher education sector to incorporate a neoliberal agenda. My conceptual framework (Chapter 2) led me to consider how ‘cross-field’ construction may have influenced the policy process. For this reason I reviewed the activities of different fields such as print media, electronic media and social media, during the period of the developments of the Acts and the Strategic Plan, and I found the predominant form of media was print media. In the context of Bangladesh other media influences like social media and blogs,
were not involved in these policy formation processes before 2010. In relation to the policy developments the government rarely engaged in public relations campaigns. Through a review of the print media I found a group of journalists who had uncovered the formulation process of the Acts and the Strategic Plan and published reports in national newspapers, and I purposefully selected some of these journalists.

As indicated, I also used ‘snowball’ sampling to select participants. On behalf of the government, two government agencies – the Ministry of Education and the UGC – played the key roles to formulate the Acts and the Strategic Plan. My starting point for the fieldwork was the UGC in Bangladesh because the UGC was a peak body in the higher education sector that did all kind of primary works for the Acts and the Strategic Plan, and retained various documents related to these policies. I asked policy administrators of the UGC to give me an idea about who had been involved in and influenced the formation processes and to supply the contact details of a significant number of participants. From the reviews of documents such as the Strategic Plan, meeting minutes, I also gleaned ideas about who could be potential participants. I started off my first and second interviews with a policy administrator of the UGC and an academic who served as the UGC Chairman during the time of the development of the post 1998 Acts respectively. During the interviews with them, I asked them about other policy actors’ involvement in the formation processes of the Acts and the Strategic Plan. I selected for interview a total of 28 participants from the 5 different groups or categories mentioned above.

The reviews of the Strategic Plan showed that only 4 out of 59 policy actors of the Strategic Plan were women, whereas no women or students were involved in the formation of the Acts. Consequently, I selected only one woman and no student in this research. In the same way, although the Strategic Plan indicated that an International Advisory Group (IAG) team of the World Bank provided the technical support to the formation process of the Strategic Plan, it did not name who these experts from other countries were. Other officials and archives also did not disclose the details of these IAG team members of the World Bank. In the literature review
(Chapter 2), several scholars argue that the World Bank as an international knowledge bank influenced the policy process of the developing countries in the name of technical support (Jones, 2004; Lingard & Rawolle, 2011; Steiner-Khamsi, 2006). Consequently, I had considered it important to select participants from the IAG team to explore how they contributed to and influenced the formation process of the Strategic Plan. Despite this, the limits I encountered during the field works prevented me from conducting any interview with the IAG team. First, I was unable to find details of the IAG team from the official and other archives, and officials of the Ministry of Education and the UGC. Second, the purpose of this study led me to refrain from looking at IAG activities in the formation process of the Strategic Plan. The key focus of this study was to understand the ‘micro-politics’ of neoliberal ideas formation in the state level higher education policies. I concluded that the investigation into the ‘micro-level’, seeing how those in Bangladesh perceived the role of the IAG and acted, could be useful way to understand the interests and influences of the World Bank in the formation process of a context, without engaging in interviews with the IAG team directly.

In order to ensure at least two participants from each group I invited at least four participants from each group based on my ‘pre-determined’ criteria (Bryman, 2012). The following table (Table 1) summarises the participants’ details. The real names of the participants were replaced by pseudonyms as they were in various roles in the circuits of power and they might have different interests in the policy formation processes, Moreover, the underlying principles of protection of participants of this research demanded at least an attempt at anonymity.

Throughout the period of the fieldwork, no participants whom I invited for interview declined to be interviewed, but I found six participants could not find the time to be interviewed. Of them, two participants set up a time for the interview, but became engaged in some other tasks during the scheduled time and had to cancel. However, they supplied some documents about what they did in the formation processes and referred me to talk with some other policy
actors who had contributed in the formation processes. Of the other four participants I failed to conduct interviews with, two had to travel abroad and the other two participants fell sick at the times we had agreed on.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>Names</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Experiences</th>
</tr>
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<td>Nadim</td>
<td>Secretary, UGC</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>Worked as secretary of the UGC in the early 1990s &amp; was involved in the processes of the early Act of 1992 and 1998, &amp; the Strategic Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UGC &amp; Ministries</td>
<td>Nayan</td>
<td>Secretary, UGC</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>Played the role of the secretary of the UGC in the late 2010s, &amp; was involved in the processes of the post 1998 Acts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Azam</td>
<td>Secretary, Ministry</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>Worked as a joint-secretary in the Ministry of Education, &amp; was involved in the formulation of the Strategic Plan &amp; the post 1998 Acts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Poddar</td>
<td>Deputy secretary, Ministry</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>Worked in the Ministry of Education, &amp; was involved in the formulation of the latest Act 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Azgor</td>
<td>Senior Assistant Secretary</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Worked in the Ministry of Education and was part of the latest Act 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dr Asim</td>
<td>Former VC of private university</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>Worked in a public university &amp; later played the role of education advisor to the govt. Involved in establishing a leading private university in the late 1980s at which he took the position of the VC. He was involved in the formulation of the early Act 1992 &amp; the Strategic Plan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prof Alimul</td>
<td>Prof of a public university</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>Played the role of the Chairman of the UGC. Contributed to the Ordinance 2008 &amp; the Act 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prof Khairul</td>
<td>Prof of a public university</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>Played the role of a member of the UGC. Worked in the latest Act 2010.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prof Nasim</td>
<td>Prof of a private university</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>Had moved from a public university to the position of the VC of a private university and also played the role of the secretary of the Association of Private Universities of Bangladesh (APUB) in the post 1998 period. He was involved in establishing a private university in the late 1980s. He was involved in all Acts &amp; the Strategic Plan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prof Soikot</td>
<td>Prof of a public university</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Involved in the formulation of the Strategic Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prof Johirul</td>
<td>VC of a private university</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>He had moved from a public university to the role of the VC of a private university. He was involved in the formulation of the Strategic Plan &amp; the Acts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prof Masum</td>
<td>Prof of a public university</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>Involved in the formulation of the Strategic Plan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prof</td>
<td>Prof of a public</td>
<td>Fema</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>Worked as a Dean of Faculty of Science, &amp; was involved in the Strategic Plan.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Summary of the Participants’ Details
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rikta</th>
<th>University</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prof Ahsan</td>
<td>VC of a private university</td>
<td>Male 65</td>
<td></td>
<td>He had moved from a public university to the role of the VC of a private university. He was involved in the formation of the SPHE.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prof Haque</td>
<td>Prof of a private university</td>
<td>Male 55</td>
<td></td>
<td>He had moved from a public university to a private university. He was involved in the formation of the SPHE.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prof Kowsar</td>
<td>Emeritus Prof of a private university</td>
<td>Male 77</td>
<td></td>
<td>He had moved from a public university to the position of the VC of a private university. He was involved in the formulation of the Strategic Plan &amp; the Acts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politicians</td>
<td>Ahmed</td>
<td>Former Minister &amp; Member Parliament (MP)</td>
<td>Male 70</td>
<td>Played the role of Education Minister and was involved in the formulation of the early Act 1992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Obaidul</td>
<td>MP</td>
<td>Male 50</td>
<td>Member of Parliament of the ruling party &amp; worked as convener of the parliamentary standing committee on education to review the latest Act 2010.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ochedul</td>
<td>Minister &amp; MP</td>
<td>Male 65</td>
<td>Worked as the Education Minister &amp; was involved in the formation of the latest Act 2010.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journalists</td>
<td>Nasir</td>
<td>Senior Reporter</td>
<td>Male 33</td>
<td>Worked for the leading daily English newspaper &amp; produced reports on the latest Act 2010.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Protik</td>
<td>Senior Reporter</td>
<td>Male 34</td>
<td>Worked for the leading daily Bangla newspaper &amp; produced reports on the latest Act 2010.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Plabon</td>
<td>Senior Reporter</td>
<td>Male 39</td>
<td>Worked for the daily English newspaper &amp; produced reports on the post 1998 Acts &amp; the Strategic Plan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rason</td>
<td>Chief reporter</td>
<td>Male 40</td>
<td>Worked for a leading national newspaper &amp; produced reports on the post 1998 Acts &amp; the Strategic Plan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Anzus</td>
<td>Former Vice Chairman, FBCCI</td>
<td>Male 65</td>
<td>Served in the role of Vice President of the Bangladesh Federation of Chamber &amp; Commerce Industry (FBCCI). He also played the role of the vice chairman of APUB, &amp; was involved in the formulation of the Strategic Plan &amp; the post 1998 Acts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Zafor</td>
<td>Former President of APUB</td>
<td>Male 69</td>
<td>Played the role of the President of the Association of Private Universities of Bangladesh (APUB). Contributed to the formulation of the post 1998 Acts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mohosin</td>
<td>Member of APUB</td>
<td>Male 70</td>
<td>Involved in establishing a private university in the mid-1990s in which he played the role of VC &amp; the Chairman of the BoT. Contributed to the formulation of the latest Act 2010.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Alam</td>
<td>Former chairman of FBCCI</td>
<td>Male 72</td>
<td>He was involved in the process of establishing the leading private university in the early 1990s &amp; contributed to the early Act 1992.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Akash</td>
<td>Former Chairman, DCCI</td>
<td>Male 50</td>
<td>Served the role of Chairman of Dhaka Chamber &amp; Commerce Industry (DCCI). Founded a private university &amp; was involved in the formulation of the Strategic Plan.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Private Sector's Representatives</th>
<th>Anzus</th>
<th>Former Vice Chairman, FBCCI</th>
<th>Male 65</th>
<th>Served in the role of Vice President of the Bangladesh Federation of Chamber &amp; Commerce Industry (FBCCI). He also played the role of the vice chairman of APUB, &amp; was involved in the formulation of the Strategic Plan &amp; the post 1998 Acts.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Zafor</td>
<td>Former President of APUB</td>
<td>Male 69</td>
<td>Played the role of the President of the Association of Private Universities of Bangladesh (APUB). Contributed to the formulation of the post 1998 Acts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mohosin</td>
<td>Member of APUB</td>
<td>Male 70</td>
<td>Involved in establishing a private university in the mid-1990s in which he played the role of VC &amp; the Chairman of the BoT. Contributed to the formulation of the latest Act 2010.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alam</td>
<td>Former chairman of FBCCI</td>
<td>Male 72</td>
<td>He was involved in the process of establishing the leading private university in the early 1990s &amp; contributed to the early Act 1992.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Akash</td>
<td>Former Chairman, DCCI</td>
<td>Male 50</td>
<td>Served the role of Chairman of Dhaka Chamber &amp; Commerce Industry (DCCI). Founded a private university &amp; was involved in the formulation of the Strategic Plan.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The policy actors provided “general information about the phenomenon and the social processes in which they are involved” (Swanborn, 2010, p. 74). Therefore, I identified them as the ‘key movers’ of these changes. Subsequently, I identified some key movers who had moved to different positions in the government agencies and private universities (Figure 3) during the period under study 1992-2010. For example, two academics had moved from the employment of the public universities to positions in the UGC, the state funded statutory body in the field of higher education. Six academics had moved from public universities to private universities, of which five academics played the roles of the VC in different private universities.

![Diagram of participant movements into different positions](image)

*Figure 3: Participants’ movements into different positions*

Though I did not select any participant as founders of private universities, subsequently 5 private sector representatives, and an academic, who had moved from a public university to the position of the VC of a private university, also played roles as founders of the private universities. Of these 4 had moved to the position of leader of the Association of Private Universities of
Bangladesh (APUB). I also found three politicians who played different roles in the government, such as Education Minister, and member of the parliamentary standing committee on education. Thus, in the interviews some participants were reflecting on both kinds of experiences in the formulation processes.

3.6.2 Access to data settings. Gaining access to participants is a major concern of any study, in particular researching the powerful (Ball, 1994b; Ozga & Gewirtz, 1994; Selwyn, 2013; Walford, 2012). Some topics and settings are challenging as access to participants is difficult, or the subjects are controversial (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Consequently, the researcher’s role often has a great influence in gaining access to the research site and participants (Creswell, 2013). I used a range of strategies to access the ‘elite’ participants in this study. First of all, I used the ‘cooperative style’ (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007) and built up the ‘trust of networks’ to gain access to them (Selwyn, 2013). I explained to the participants the reasons for conducting this research, why they had been selected for this study, and offered co-operation to each other.

Several scholars point out that ‘retrospective’ elite interviewing could be useful to investigate past events and processes (Gewirtz & Ozga, 1994; Selwyn, 2013). Ozga and Gewirtz (1994) argue that researching the powerful is always difficult; however, people who are no longer in a position are probably interested in talking. A significant number of participants in my study had retired, for example, some policy administrators of the UGC and Ministries, academics, and politicians were in retirement when I conducted interviews with them. I selected them as they had contributed at different points in the development of the Acts and the Strategic Plan. I accessed these participants easily as many of them were no longer in these powerful positions and not potentially active at the time of interviewing. A significant number of participants allowed me to interview them at their home. Some participants even provided some important documents related to this study, and advised me to talk to other participants who had significant roles in the formation of these documents.
Gaining access to participants often relies on the trust and communication skills of the researcher (Janesick, 1994, cited in Savenye & Robinson, 2005). As indicated above, I earned my graduate and postgraduate degrees from a premier university and have been teaching at the same university in Bangladesh. Therefore, my previous and current student status, as I am pursuing this study in a prestigious university in Australia, and my current professional position helped me to build up a network of trust with a significant number of participants in this study. For example, fortunately, I found 20 out of 28 participants in my study came from the same university where I graduated and had been teaching over a period 10 years. As an alumnus of a premium university in Bangladesh I had the opportunity to offer them the chance to be involved in this study as participants. In the same way, 11 participants out of 28 were involved in the same profession as mine. Once I introduced myself, telling them about where I was from and my study background, I found them very enthusiastic about my research, my students and professional life in the university. Some of them also tried to recall when they had paid a visit to the university campus and what they had done during their student lives at the University of Dhaka. When they shared information about their university lives I understood that they might be in different positions, but we had grown up sharing the same academic and institutional environment, and cultural and belief systems. Therefore, this network of trust that I built up with the participants helped me gain access to them. However, when doing interviews with these elite participants I was very much concerned about the relationships between the researched and the researcher. As a researcher one is rarely an insider, but an insider can contribute to the research effectively (Bridges, 2001). Nevertheless, the network of trust enabled me to gather information in depth (Fontana & Frey, 2003).

3.6.3 Tools for data collection. A range of methods – observation, analysing texts and documents, interviews and focus groups and audio, video and other visual recording – are typically used in qualitative research (Silverman, 2011). For a qualitative case study, the evidence can be derived from six sources: documents, archival records, interviews, direct observation, participant-observation, and physical artefacts (Yin, 2009). Often these methods can be
combined, for example, many case studies combine observation with interviewing (Silverman, 2011). I employed documents and open-ended interviews as the main tools for data collection. In the following I provide detail about the data collection procedures.

3.6.3.1 Documents. Documents are considered as ‘social facts’ as they are “produced, shared and used in a socially organized ways” (Atkinson & Coffey, 2011, p. 79). Swanborn (2010, p. 73) argues that an effective strategy of a case study “is to study any relevant documentation”. Consequently, I used documents as the tool of data collection (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Creswell, 2013). I refer to documents as different published public policy documents relevant to the case (Middleton, 2012). As my study was looking for the key moments of neoliberal shifts in the higher education sector in Bangladesh, I selected two major neoliberal policy documents – the Strategic Plan, and the Private University Acts (1992, 1998, 2008 and 2010) – to explore the extent to which neoliberal ideas were the prominent features in these documents. I selected these policy documents because these documents were signifiers for neoliberal ideas. For example, a key moment of neoliberalism was to enact the first Private University Act in 1992. From 1992 to 2010, the whole series of Acts were about enabling and developing private universities in Bangladesh. Along with these Acts, the government formulated the Strategic Plan for higher education in 2006 with the financial and technical support of the World Bank to reform the whole higher education sector in Bangladesh, and this document I chose to analyse as a second important policy.

As my interest was to understand the processes of neoliberal policy formulation in the higher education sector at the state level in Bangladesh, I took these policies as finalised outputs. Documents are considered as stable and beyond the influence of the researcher, but could be biased towards the institutions or persons who formulated them (Swanborn, 2010). However, these were the key neoliberal policies (Table 2) that came out of particular political processes over the 1990-2010 period. In analysing these key neoliberal policies I also looked at other documents that were associated with the developments of these neoliberal policies. For example, I reviewed
the drafts of the latest Acts in 2010, various reports developed by different expert groups for the Strategic Plan, the activities of the National Parliament and the report of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Education about the Acts, meeting minutes of the Ministry of Education about the Strategic Plan, various statements of the Association of Private Universities of Bangladesh, and media reports.

Table 2.

Relationship between Research Methods and ways of responding the Research Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Design</th>
<th>Methods of data collection</th>
<th>Sources of data</th>
<th>Relationship between methods &amp; ways of responding the research questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A qualitative instrumental case study</td>
<td>- Documents</td>
<td>- A 20-year Strategic Plan for Higher Education 2006-2026</td>
<td>- Using qualitative content analysis to analyse policy documents examined the extent to which neoliberalism was a prominent feature in higher education sector in Bangladesh. This analysis answers the research question 1 (see Section 1.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Open-ended interview</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Private University Ordinance 2008</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-05 Policy administrators from UGC &amp; Ministry of Education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-11 Academics</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-3 Politicians</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-4 Journalists</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- 5 Private sector representatives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By analysing the Acts and the Strategic Plan I looked at the features of neoliberalism and tried to understand how those features have established themselves in Bangladesh as evidence of neoliberal ideas in documents.

3.6.3.2 Interview
Interviews with the participants helps not only to gather information in an efficient way, but also gives access to a site and the key personnel (Swanborn, 2010). As specified above, I tried to understand how the neoliberal ideas shifted and changed in the private university Acts and the Strategic Plan, and how a variety of policy actors drew together their arguments in these policies. I took the finished products – the Acts and the Strategic Plan – but that did not tell me how these policies were developed and the reasons they were developed in the higher education sector. In particular, I understood the documents were a construction, and I tried to reveal that construction by talking to policy actors and to trace the processes of developing policy behind the finished products. Consequently, the purpose of the interview in this research was to gather a special type of information from the participants in full detail (Polkinghorne, 2005). As participants were selected with a combination of purposeful and snowball approaches, the policy actors interviewed allowed me to gain substantial insight about the research query (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006). The results of the interviews provided a deeper understanding of a specific policy change (Gill, Stewart, Treasure, & Chadwick, 2008) and allowed me to learn more about the different views, understandings, experiences, beliefs, and motivation of participants in developing these neoliberal policies.

Interviews can be conducted in many forms (Yin, 2009). I used the open-ended interview form in this research to generate rich data about the micro-politics of the policy-making process. I developed different open-ended interview schedules in English for different kinds of participants (see Appendices 1 to 3) based on the participants’ diverse experiences and involvement in the formulation of these policies’. In the interview schedules, I covered some domains related to the research questions. The domains included educational and working experiences, objectives or aims of current higher education, concerns of higher education, and experiences of changes. Under these domains I developed specific questions related to the participants’ involvement in a specific policy formulation process. For example, in most cases, the policy administrators of the UGC and the Ministries were asked about the formulation of both private university Acts and the Strategic Plan. Apart from this group, some other
participants, particularly some academics, were also asked about both of these policies as they were involved in the development processes of both policies. I conducted the interviews, which each lasted between 45 and 90 minutes, with the participants over a five-month period from mid-March to mid-August 2013 in Bangladesh. I conducted 24 interviews in Bangla and 4 interviews in English as the participants preferred to speak in Bangla and English respectively. All interviews were electronically recorded with the permission from the participants (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006).

Data collection generally indicates selection in which the researcher develops different selection decisions and choices in advance (Swanborn, 2010). In doing so, the field procedure of the protocol is given emphasis in the qualitative case study (Yin, 2009). A protocol not only refers to the questioning of participants, but also concerns the entire potential data sources (Swanborn, 2010). Consequently, I developed a protocol in advance in which I sketched out how many participants and exactly whom I would approach to conduct the interviews, and which were the documents that needed to be collected and studied (Swanborn, 2010). In addition, I used a ‘case study note’ to depict the participants’ actual behaviour when conducting the interviews (Yin, 2009). The ‘case study note’ also helped me to learn more about participants’ views and experiences, and suggested what needed to be adjusted in the next interview (Swanborn, 2010).

Often retrospective elite interviewing can be less complex than the contemporary elite interviewing (Selwyn, 2013). As specified above, a significant number of policy actors in this research were retired and I interviewed them in non-elite settings, e.g. at home, or at places suitable to them. I used different references and statements published in electronic and print media as references so that the participant could remember what they said earlier on a particular issue (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Moreover, I looked at what Gewirtz and Ozga (1994) call ‘biographies’ of the policy actors to get an idea about the participants’ ideologies, political belief systems and perceptions. The background study of the policy actors helped me not only to understand participants’ long historical contributions in the society, but also to evaluate what they
were telling about their contributions to a particular point of the policy formation process. During the interview I used probes for understanding participants' perspectives on a specific issue. For instance, "What do you mean?", "I am not sure that I am following you", "Would you explain that?" "Tell me about it or give me an example" (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 96). I cross-checked with others when a particular issue emerged in more than one of the participants interviews.

Undoubtedly, the way in which I conducted the interviews was enjoyed by participants given that they got the opportunities to revisit their contributions to a particular point of the policy formation process. However, I was very much aware of the issues of power, positions, and the context that could be encountered with the participants (Selwyn, 2013). During the interviews I looked at what they claimed about the formation process and how they justified those claims. The way in which they claimed their contributions and the way in which they made justifications about their contributions helped me to understand whether they talked about the surface of the stories or went through the “real” and authentic process. Several interviewees let me go through the memos they had made on a particular point in the formation process, and thus revealed authentically their thoughts and actions at the time.

3.6.4 Analysing the data. Data are the rough materials collected by a researcher from the world on a specific issue, but a particular approach is required for a qualitative case study researcher to analyse data (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006). The process of data analysis refers to “making sense out of the text and image data” (Creswell, 2009, p. 183) and thus, it helps to transform the data into findings (Patton, 2002). Qualitative data analysis involves data organising, breaking them into manageable units, coding, synthesising, and searching for patterns (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). However, qualitative analysis mostly depends on “the analytical intellect and style of the analyst” (Patton, 2002, p. 433). In a qualitative case study, two general strategies – relying on the theoretical propositions and developing a case description – are often used to analyse the case study evidence (Yin, 2009). In most cases, a qualitative case study data analysis process
implies a comprehensive description of the participants or settings followed by the analysis of evidence for themes or issues (Stake, 1995, cited in Creswell, 2009).

I used qualitative content analysis to undertake the documents analysis, and thematic analysis to examine the interview transcripts in this study. As mentioned above, I was interested to understand the processes of the development of the neoliberal policies in the higher education sector in Bangladesh. I wanted to know more about key policy actors’ understandings, and their perspectives on what they said about what they did, what they thought about what they did, and what they say and think about how and why they did what they did. From that perspective the documents were only one of the pieces of data I was working with, they were the end products. Therefore, I needed a more ethnographic way of looking at the way the people talk about what they did and the way they worked on the particular artefacts, documents, or the policies. Working with both ‘qualitative content analysis’ and ‘thematic analysis’ enabled me to look at the processes of policy formation, and therefore these approaches were more suited to arguing my research questions. Whereas focusing on text and on what many scholars say is ‘discourse’ (see for reference, Fairclough, 1993; Van Dijk, 1993) would not show me the process relationships among all of these things. In the following section I provide detailed data analytic approaches for the documents and interview transcripts.

3.6.4.1 Qualitative content analysis in document analysis

Qualitative content analysis “refers to searching text for recurring words or themes” (Patton, 2002, p. 453). Two approaches – document as resources and document as topic – have been used in a qualitative content analysis. The document as resources focuses on what is in the document, whereas document as topic is concerned with “how document content comes into being” (Prior, 2011, p. 95). However, a qualitative content analysis to analyse policy texts provided the “ground of investigation in the context of the problem being investigated” (Merriam, 1998, p. 109). I adopted the first approach – document as resources – in my study to analyse the documents, since I was using interviews to explore how these texts came into being.
Gomm (2008) argues that thematic analysis is a kind of version of content analysis. Thematic content analysis is about documenting what themes/ideas are in texts and how these ideas change within or between texts. Therefore, the data analysis strategy of the documents involved identifying what neoliberal ideas were present in the documents by developing themes from the data (Prior, 2011) in which themes took more often a categorical or topical form (Patton, 2002). Moreover, in order to develop themes from the textual documents I analysed the text using my conceptual framework which already indicated the kind of characteristics of neoliberalism, and I looked to see whether those themes were present in the policy documents text in Bangladesh and how they were similar or different from those themes considered in the research literature on the spread of neoliberalism in higher education. Therefore I developed and modified themes and thus, new themes were derived from my own analysis of the data. Using qualitative content analysis to analyse policy texts helped me to uncover what the neoliberal ideas looked like at the textual level and allowed me to document the neoliberal shift in the text in higher education policies in Bangladesh between 1992 and 2010.

As indicated earlier, I was not doing what Fairclough (1993) calls ‘critical discourse’ analysis, which would involve looking at grammar and sentence constructions in this study, but I considered ‘discourse’ analysis and did a form of analytical induction at some points. In looking for themes I was doing what Ball (1994b) refers to as a form of ‘discursive’ work in policy reading. In analysing policy as discursive practice, he focused on the body of the knowledge. As part of my prior analytical framework I read about neoliberalism and from that I had some concepts that the recent literature had identified as characteristic of the globalising ideas that were moving around the world. In doing content analysis into policy documents I looked at the body of knowledge depicted in these texts and how this reflected the globalising neoliberal discourses. Some concepts included NPM, a cost-sharing approach, and the knowledge-based society. For example, I was looking at whether there were any references to shifting the role of the state, and in supporting higher education whether there were references to shifting who pays for higher education. Consequently, using the idea of ‘discursive’ practice in the document analysis helped
me to understand how different neoliberal ideas were produced and analysed as a social practice in the context of Bangladesh.

3.6.4.2 Thematic analysis of the interviews

In a qualitative research framework it is important to make sense of interview data in terms of participants’ statements. The first step of qualitative data analysis is to develop a manageable classification or coding scheme (Patton, 2002). Therefore, I used an interpretive structure for analysing the empirical data in which I grouped the data systematically, summarising the description, and providing a comprehensive framework (Holstein & Gubrium, 2004). In using an interpretative structure, the analyst works back and forth between the data and “his or her own perspective and understandings to make sense of the evidence” (Patton, 2002, p. 477).

Based on the conventional perspective I developed themes from the data. In order to develop various themes from the data I categorised each interview into three areas: general category, intermediate category and specific category (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). Using a general category, I categorised the data under some broad headings. This broad categorising helped to segment the data further into the intermediate category, and it helped to separate the data into different subgroups.

By using an intermediate category, I segmented the data again and narrowed down the information into specific categories. The main purpose of the specific category was to break down the general themes into more detailed and specific codes (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). Furthermore, I paid attention to select specific data and focusing on the single code. This maximised the usefulness of the data. I jotted down the intermediate category and then its specific categories, in which I identified details. For the purpose of grouping the data with the same code, I counted the same code occurrences under a specific code. To develop themes, I contextualised the text and paid further attention to a participant’s views and contents, and observers’ comments. When the coding was completed, I developed meaningful themes that had relation to the original research questions and conceptual framework (see Appendix 4).
3.6.5 Plans for data presentation. One of challenging tasks of report writing is what shall be included or what not to include in the report (Patton, 2002). The findings were presented based on themes that emerged from the data analysis. Each theme reflected the purpose of the research and responded to the question being investigated (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006). In each theme, I demonstrated my argument in a few sentences that helped me to make a critical point on the issue of the themes (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). The arguments were supported by data, and different references cited in various documents and research findings. Patton (2002) argues description and quotation is the base of qualitative report writing and thus, sufficient description and direct quotations should be included in the report in order to allow the reader into the situation and participants’ perspectives. Consequently, the arguments included thick description of the findings and direct quotations from the interviews in order to illustrate typical perspectives and experiences of the participants (Fitterman, 1989, cited in Savenye & Robinson, 2005).

3.7 Rigour and trustworthiness

Rigour and trustworthiness are often critiqued as inadequate in qualitative research (Rolfe, 2006). For many researchers, credibility often does not matter for qualitative research as Silverman (2005) argues. Kirk and Miller (1986) argue that “qualitative researchers can no longer afford to beg the issue of reliability” (cited in Silverman, 2011, p. 361). However, qualitative research embraces multiple standards of quality (Morrow, 2005). Four tests – trustworthiness, credibility, confirmability, and data dependability – have been commonly used to establish the quality of any empirical research including qualitative case study research (Yin, 2009). In this study, rigour and trustworthiness refer to the criteria of believability or reliability, validity, and credibility of the research (Harrison, MacGibbon, & Morton, 2001; Yin, 2009).

Reliability refers to “demonstrating that the operations of a study – such as the data collection procedures can be repeated, with the same results” (Yin, 2009, p. 33). High reliability in qualitative research is associated with low-interference descriptors (Seale, 1999, cited in Silverman, 2011). The textual data are always associated with lower-interference than observation because
the textual data are already available and unfiltered through researcher fieldnotes (Silverman, 2011). In my research I used documents as a tool of data collection. I used qualitative content analysis to analyse these documents to locate evidence in the text of neoliberalism infiltrating the policy of Bangladesh higher education, and to see what form that takes and how it has shifted over time as well. Furthermore, analysis of various documents and media reports related to these neoliberal policy formations further enriched the data.

In the same way, reliability of the interview can be improved by using a case study notes (Yin, 2009). I used a case study protocol and case study notes in my research to outline what type of activities needed to be followed in individual interviews (see Appendix 5). This study emphasised the quality, length, and depth of interview. I used a combination of purposeful and snowball approaches to select the participants, which enabled me to gather significant information and to generate a detailed description of the roles participants played at a particular point of the neoliberal policy formation process. In addition, the diverse backgrounds of participants provided multiple perspectives and I crosschecked their statements with those of others and with what they were telling about their past events. The production of an information-rich case study was facilitated by holding "conversations with a purpose" (Dexter, 1970, cited in Morrow, 2005, p. 225), in which pre-designed semi-structured questions were followed with contextually relevant open-ended questions.

Moreover, in order to ensure the reliability of the data collection, I did face-to-face interviews, used digital recorders for all interviews with the permission of participants, and presented long extracts of data in the research (Silverman, 2011). Furthermore, I adopted an ‘auditing approach’ during different phases of data collection (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I hired six research assistants to transcribe all interview recordings. After the assistants had transcribed all interview recordings I acted as ‘auditor’ to check whether the audiotaped interviews had been transcribed accurately. Consequently, I listened to all the interviews again, and made corrections on the transcripts prepared by the research assistants as a process of ‘tidying up’ (Silverman,
In terms of translation of transcripts from Bangla to English, I again used an ‘auditing approach’. I translated the transcripts into English. After that a postgraduate Bangladeshi student at the Faculty of Education at Monash University acted as ‘auditor’ to ensure the views expressed by participants were not misinterpreted in translation. Consequently, the exact choice of English words was mine, but I endeavoured to stay true to the participants' intentions.

Validation of research is about the internal methodological procedures, and involves strategies such as triangulation, and random allocation; the idea of ‘respondent validation’ could be alternative way to implement such procedures (McKeganey & Bloor, 1981, p. 58). Miller (2008) argues that “validity is often broadly described as being dependent on the degree to which a study actually measures what it purports to measure – whether ‘the truth’ is accurately identified and described” (cited in Butler-Kisber, 2010, p. 14). Validity in a qualitative case study could be constructed by using multiple sources of evidence, establishing a chain of evidence and using key informants to review the case study report (Yin, 2009). Merriam (1998, p. 120) argues that the rigour and trustworthiness in a qualitative case study depend on the “researcher’s presence, the nature of interaction between researcher and participants, the triangulation of data, the interpretation of perceptions, and rich and thick description”. Indeed, I used multiple sources of evidence in my study, which helped me to triangulate the data. Although I did not use the idea of respondent validation, I did use notes of the conversations I had with the participants. I often went through these conversations if I faced any difficulty in understanding the participants’ views on a particular point. The internal methodological procedures such as multiple sources of evidence, notes on conversations with participants, an auditing approach, established qualitative validity or the trustworthiness of the data.

Finally, the engagement of a range of participants in this research and their different roles in the circuits of power could be regarded as critical to the rigour and trustworthiness of this research (Ozga & Gewirtz, 1994; Selwyn, 2013). I used the notion of ‘reciprocity’ and a network of trust that empowered both the researched and researcher, and reduced the hierarchies between
the participants and myself as a researcher. Reciprocity and a network of trust were involved in building rapport, creating a sense of safety, honouring each other’s voices, and developing potential benefit to the participants and the researcher (Harrison et al., 2001). A significant number of participants allowed me to go through their memos about their activities at a particular point in the policy formation process. Further, a large number of participants said they were speaking off the record to enable me to understand what really went on, but they wished to be careful what they put on the record compared with off the record. They rephrased things in a particular way, but that showed that there was a trust in me. It also meant that when I was doing my analysis, I knew that they were aware of what was on the record. Consequently, it was authentically on the record, though that did not mean it was true; rather it was a public construction. The way in which they were speaking with me suggested that I had built up rapport with them and I was getting their authentic voices. Further, I studied the ‘biographies’ of the participants, which helped me to understand the participants’ beliefs, ideologies and perceptions. In that process, I crosschecked the information the participants provided me about a particular policy making process and their known public political position.

Furthermore, my familiarity at the discursive levels of how political verbal lingo is used by people in Bangladesh helped me to understand the participants’ views. Thus, I used the notion of ‘discourses’ to understand and interpret the participants’ ‘voices’ in my study (Ball, 1994a, 1994b). I used the notion of ‘discourses’ “as a way of talking about and conceptualising policy, the discourses which speak policy and speak the actors” (Ball, 1994c, p. 115). This interest in using the notion of discourses was solely to look at participants’ “assertions, judgments, axioms and interpretations” (Ball, 1994c, p. 115) on a specific policy issue. These conditions helped to gather rich and thick data which have been considered as the basis of rigour and trustworthiness in this research. Moreover, I used anonymity between the participants so that they could believe me that I would not tell anyone what they were telling me. This process helped me to provide more information about my queries.
3.8 Ethical issues

In value-free social sciences adopting a code of ethics has become conventional and it is considered as a set of moral principles for professionals and academic associations (Christians, 2013). Silverman (2005, p. 270) points out that when someone studies people, perceptions and behaviours or is “asking them questions, not only the values of the researcher but the researcher’s responsibilities to those studied have to be faced”. Consequently, individual scholarly associations have developed their own codes of conduct for doing research (Christians, 2013). As this study has been pursued through Monash University, I received ethical approval from Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC) (see Appendix 6). Consequently, I worked using the underlying principles and guidelines of MUHREC. In addition, I paid attention to some specific issues during the data collection (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). After securing the ethical approval from MUHREC I started to get verbal consent from different participants over the phone since it empowered the researched (Glesne & Peshkin, 1993). I informed participants about the research purposes, participant rights, dignity, privacy and confidentiality. This helped to avoid unnecessary deception and minimised the risk to all participants. These processes helped us to show respect to each other, fulfilled the obligation to participants, and augmented the benefit of the research (Cassell and Jacobs, 1987, cited in Glesne & Peshkin, 1993).

I followed up with an explanatory statement (see Appendix 7) for participants in which I stated the purpose of the research, why they were chosen as participants, the possible benefits, research involvement, how much time I expected from them, the nature of participation, their right to withdraw from the research, confidentiality, how I would store and use the data, how they could be informed of aggregate research findings, and how they could complain concerning the manner in which this research was being conducted (see also Appendix 9). I also used a consent form for them to indicate their participation agreement. In the consent form (see Appendix 8), the participants were clearly informed that their participation was voluntary and they could freely choose to stop participation at any point (Christians, 2013). I prepared the consent form in English as the participants in this study were highly educated – all had
postgraduate degrees from either Bangladesh or abroad – and had excellent understanding in the English language.

After getting verbal consent, I arranged the interview schedules to suit various participants. I prioritised participants’ desires so that they could talk freely (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). I introduced myself before starting interviews and explained the goals of the research again, and then I provided the explanatory statement and the consent form. At that time I found different participants had different kinds of queries and expressions. For examples, some participants wanted to know more about the research project again, some participants provided relevant documents for the research, and some participants showed a degree of confusion regarding the implication of the research as they had not had a good experience about the implications of any research in Bangladesh. However, that kind of conversation before starting the interview helped me to understand more about participants’ perspectives and to build up strong relationships with the participants. A brief discussion on the research objectives before the interview also helped the participants to understand what the study was looking for. I used pseudonyms for everyone to prevent the participants from any harm (Christians, 2013). During the interview I treated everyone with dignity and respect according to their culture. After conducting the interviews I collected the consent form with each participant’s signature. In order to ensure confidentiality of the raw data, I securely stored the data that were accessible to me. I also informed them that I would destroy data after a 5 year period unless they consented to it being used in future research. I explained to the participants how the data would be used for report writing and publications, while maintaining anonymity.

3.9 Reflections and methodological challenges of the study

Throughout the process of data collection I confronted some challenges that deserve further explanation. I ran into three key challenges in the field during data collection. The first difficulty was associated with researching the state level policies. For the purpose of this study, I collected a range of policy documents, and minutes of meetings to understand how the formation
process was done step by step. For example, in terms of formation of the latest Private University Act 2010, it went through different institutional levels from UGC to the Ministry of Education to Cabinet division to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Education. At every stage there were several rounds of policy outputs and changes on each draft Act. I strove for permission from the relevant authority to gain access to these draft policy documents and the discussions that were held by the Parliamentary Review Committee on the draft Act 2010 with the different policy actors ranging from private university owners, academics and policy administrators of the UGC and the Ministry of Education. The permission to gain access to these ‘confidential’ documents involved a highly bureaucratic process. Although I applied to the relevant authority through the proper channels in advance to access these documents (see Appendix 10), I heard nothing from them for a long time. Having such an experience helped me to express this issue in a different way explained by Migdal and White; they contend that the state of everyday practice could be different and could shape the state of authority (Migdal, 2013; White, 2013). I quickly learnt that using a network of influence could be useful to speed up the bureaucratic process and consequently, I used my professional network to move on the bureaucratic process. Within a few days I got the oral permission from the relevant authority to get access to these documents.

The second challenge involved researching the elite participants in this study. I purposefully interviewed 28 policy actors who had involvement in and influenced the processes of the Acts and the Strategic Plan. All participants in this study were from different professional groups and belonged to what several scholars call ‘elite’ participants in education policy formation processes (Halpin & Troyna, 1994). Although a significant number of participants had retired, some were in current positions in higher education. Nevertheless, all participants were heavily involved in a range of social and other activities. For example, all politicians played the roles of Ministers to different governments alongside their social and political activities. I had prior knowledge about their range of activities and consequently I began to approach them once I had ensured the ethical approval from the MUHREC. However, in some cases, I was unable to
reach some participants directly, but was successful via their personal assistants (PAs). The role of PAs as ‘third actors’ emerged between some participants and me as a new kind of challenge in the data collection process. One of the politicians in this study held the position of Minister to the government at that time of the data collection. I approached the Minister in my own capacity when he paid a visit to the university I worked for, and I explained to him about my research and requested an appointment for interview. I found the Minister very enthusiastic about the research and he provided me with his PA’s cell phone numbers to set up a time for the interview. He also introduced his PA to me and advised him to set up a time for an interview early in the next week. At that moment I found this short meeting with the Minister was very supportive and encouraging and thus I was thinking it could not be a problem to reach the elite participants in this study.

However, the difficulty started when I began to contact the Minister’s PA for a time for an interview with the Minister. I phoned the PA relentlessly, but he did not receive my calls and did not even call back me. Subsequently, I sent text messages where I introduced myself and explained the reason for calling him, but again I received no reply. I understood that it could be indicative of the problem of the ‘patron-client’ relationship that had emerged between politicians and the people of Bangladesh over the years (Kochanek, 1993). Although people had elected their political representatives to represent them in the government, the ruling politicians tended to move away from the people when they became part of the government. There could be many reasons behind the gap that has emerged between ruling politicians and the people, but I encountered the way in which the ruling politicians created a ‘third party’ act as a key barrier between them. In the political culture in Bangladesh, alongside personal secretaries from civil bureaucracy, often ruling politicians have hired their own political activists as PAs to keep day-to-day contact with their own constituencies. The political activists, who have become the PAs of politicians or Ministers, have often treated this process as a means of power. Further, they have started to believe that any communication from grassroots people with Ministers means that politicians will have requests to do something for the people.
In that difficult situation, I altered my strategy to contact the PA of that Minister. Again I searched for my own professional network and found that the PA was a relative of one of my colleagues. I requested my colleague to contact his relative about my appointment with the Minister. That strategy worked and I got the appointment to have an interview with the Minister. I reached the interview location ahead of time, but I waited for almost 5 hours to meet the Minister. Once I got the chance to enter the Minister’s office I realised that the Minister had not been briefed about my appointment. The Minister called his PA to ask why he was not informed about the appointment and my presence at his office for a long time. The PA said, “Sorry sir, I thought, you would be free because no general people are allowed to see today in the Secretariat. But I found you became busy with top officials. I attempted to inform you about his presence, but failed” (personal comment during the policy actors’ interviews in 2013). The Minister felt sorry for keeping me waiting for a long time and provided another appointment. This story shows the importance of developing a network of influence to access the elite.

The third challenge was about interpretation and the policy implications of this research by a number of participants. When I explained the purpose of the research and approached participants for interviews, some academics raised questions about how the knowledge this research produces would be useful in terms of market value. Some of them identified this research in a way that devalued the idea of ‘broader knowledge’. I quickly learnt how neoliberalism has influenced the society to adopt consumer market values and ideologies (Giroux, 2004). I acknowledged their concerns and explained to them why it was also significant to generate broader knowledge in the society in the context of Bangladesh. I understood that the way the policy actors adopted the neoliberal policies in the higher education sector in Bangladesh might need to be critiqued whilst keeping in mind the broader socio-political and economic aspects of Bangladesh.
3.10 Conclusion

In this chapter I have provided details about the methodological approach and procedures that I used in this study. I acknowledge the need for self-reflexivity in the research process. I discussed the tools I used to collect the data. I also described how I analysed the data and how I presented the findings. I explained how ethical issues were considered. Finally I addressed the methodological challenges of this study.

In the next three chapters (Chapters 4, 5 and 6) I analyse the data using the methodological tools I described in this chapter. The first chapter of the findings is based on the qualitative content analysis of documents that explore the features of neoliberalism and the specific form of Bangladeshi neoliberalism in higher education policies. The following two chapters present thematic analysis of policy actors’ interviews. The findings of these chapters explore the process, which includes why, how, and by whom the neoliberal ideas were formulated in the higher education policies at the state level in Bangladesh.
Chapter 4

Neoliberalism infiltrates the higher education policies in Bangladesh

4.1 Introduction

This chapter explores neoliberal features incorporated by different governments in Bangladesh through policy formulation for the higher education sector since the 1990s. This chapter is based on the content analysis of policy documents between 1992 and 2010 including the private university Acts and the Strategic Plan for Higher Education 2006-2026 (henceforth called the Strategic Plan) formulated at the state level since 1990s. The data are presented in two parts: the first considers neoliberal features in the private university Acts and the second, the Strategic Plan. In each part themes are derived from the data informed by the conceptual framework that I developed from the literature review (see Chapter 2) to show what specific form of neoliberalism was developed in these policies. In particular, this chapter explores what evidence there is in the text that neoliberalism has been infiltrating the policies of Bangladesh higher education, and discusses what form of neoliberalism has been developed and how this form has shifted over time.

As indicated in the methodology (see Chapter 3), although I did not engage in discourse analysis per se, I used what Stephen Ball describes as a form of ‘discursive’ work in doing the policy reading. Ball (1994a) argues that policies are developed in complex ways by compromise and negotiation among various individuals and interest groups at various stages. In this process “only certain influences and agendas are recognized as legitimate, only certain voices are heard at any point in time” (Ball, 1994a, p. 16). In analysing policy as discursive practice, he focuses on the body of the knowledge revealed in policy texts and consequently, I have looked at the policy language and have analysed the policy text using the conceptual framework which already indicates the kind of characteristics of neoliberalism. I have looked to see whether these neoliberal ideas derived from the literature are reflected in these policy documents’ texts in Bangladesh and the chapter discusses how they are similar or different from the neoliberal ideas.
developed in my conceptual framework. Consequently I have developed and modified the main themes of neoliberalism, and new themes are derived from my own analysis of these data.

In the analysis, five themes were derived from the first part of the analysis of neoliberal features in the private university Acts. The themes concern: firstly, private university development: demand driven and a new entrepreneurial space; secondly, the governance system: shifting from ‘entrepreneurs’ control to a mixture of deregulated and state controlled; thirdly, shifting the role of top official from ‘manager’ to ‘chief executive and academic officer’; fourthly, quality in private higher education: shifting from control by state bodies to external quality assurance bodies; and fifthly, a cost-sharing approach to the financing of private universities. Another four themes were derived from the Strategic Plan: firstly, shifting to a new vision to create a knowledge-based society for the future higher education in Bangladesh; secondly, managing the governance system of public universities: shifting from control by the universities and the state to control by the state and external forces; thirdly, quality control in higher education: shifting from universities to external bodies; and fourthly, paying for the strategy of public universities: shifting from the state to ‘user pays’.

In terms of relationships between the themes derived from these two neoliberal policy phases, some themes are new and some themes are an extension and continuation of each other. These two neoliberal policy phases differed because they started off differently and dealt with two different sectors. The private university Acts focus on the development and establishment of private higher education, whereas the Strategic Plan covers the entire higher education sector in Bangladesh. In my preliminary coding I found that both the private university Acts and the Strategic Plan have traced some policies from each other. My analysis looked at whether any relationship pertained across the private sector and entire higher education sector. Therefore some themes I have identified are new because in the Strategic Plan I found a shift in the vision of higher education and the quality assurance process in the whole higher education sector. However, some aspects were continuations or developments of established ways of doing things,
for example, the governance and the ‘user pays’ systems. In terms of how to pay for higher education, the Strategic Plan has traced policy from what had already been done in the private sector. In terms of the governance system, both the Strategic Plan and the private university Acts show something has been traced from what was already brought into the Strategic Plan and what was done in the private sector. Consequently, my analysis shows that whilst different aspects of neoliberalism were important in the two policy phases, the difference lies more in the degree of continuity and development is more on continuum rather than different characteristics being completely found phase one and another phase.

4.2 Neoliberal features in the private university Acts

Since the early 1990s the Private University Act 1992 has permitted private universities to operate in Bangladesh. Since 1992 both elected governments and the army-backed non-elected Caretaker Government have promulgated three private university Acts and an Ordinance to develop and establish higher education institutes in the private sector. The government led by the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) enacted the first Private University Act 1992 (henceforth the Act 1992). The government led by the Awami League brought amendments to this Act in 1998 (henceforth the Act 1998). In 2008, the army-backed Caretaker Government promulgated the Private University Ordinance 2008 (henceforth the Ordinance 2008). However, the state, once again under the Awami League government, repealed all previous Acts and enacted a new Private University Act 2010 (henceforth the Act 2010). The purpose of the analysis of these Acts is to explore in what ways they exemplify the neoliberal shifts taking place within the private higher education system.

4.2.1 Private university development: Demand driven and a new ‘entrepreneurial’ space. In order to understand the form neoliberalism has taken in Bangladesh it is helpful to trace the efforts to develop private higher education in Bangladesh. In the early Act 1992 the government identified that the existing public higher education institutes
in Bangladesh had failed to accommodate a large number of students. The early Act 1992 identified three key areas where private universities could contribute:

Whereas it is necessary to set up universities at the private sector to meet the growing demand for higher education in the country and for its wide dissemination, to make available higher education to the general public and to create skilled manpower through it. (Government of Bangladesh, 1992, p. 7581)

The demand driven rationale for private university is indicative of neoliberalism. Under a neoliberal state, the state emphasises the need to shape an individual’s potential as an enterpriser and competitive entrepreneur, and the higher education sector is seen as needing to foster such entrepreneurism (Olssen & Peters, 2005). Therefore, in many countries, providing opportunities for the development of private universities is synonymous with providing opportunities for the higher education sector to be influenced by individual public figures, benevolent philanthropists and sponsor agencies with the permission from the government (Altbach, 1999). In line with the global trend, the government of Bangladesh wanted to create opportunities for local entrepreneurs to be involved in the higher education sector. In the first Act 1992, it is stated that the government was formulating the private university Act because “certain public welfare oriented persons, assemblage of persons, charitable trusts and institutions of the country are desirous of setting up and administering university at the private level” (Government of Bangladesh, 1992, p. 7581).

The early Act 1992 defined private university as “any private university established under this act” by a person or a group of persons (Government of Bangladesh, 1992, p. 7582). Although the early Act 1992 identified a person or a group persons as the recognised body for the purpose of establishing any private university, it did not provide a straightforward definition of private university. However, the Act 1998 recognised foreign universities and their campuses as private universities. As exemplified in the Act 1998 (amended), “Private University means any private university established under this act and any institution conducting graduate and
postgraduate degrees, diploma or certificate courses in Bangladesh under any foreign university in conformity with the provisions of the act” (Government of Bangladesh, 1998, p. 5607).

In the post 1998 Acts, the government had to step in again in order to regulate the foreign universities’ campuses. Consequently, both the Ordinance 2008 and the Act 2010 imposed more restrictions on the operation of foreign universities’ campuses in Bangladesh. As it is stated in the Ordinance 2008, “Without the prior approval from the government no one or no organisation can establish a university or institution in the name of a foreign campus anywhere in Bangladesh nor can they take students in any program or course” (Government of Bangladesh, 1998, p. 17585). The Ordinance 2008 and the Act 2010 also specified that the government will formulate rules and regulations for the operation of foreign universities’ campuses in Bangladesh. In this process the government has formulated the Guiding Rules for Foreign University 2014 under the latest Act 2010 (Ministry of Education, 2014). By formulating the guiding rules for foreign universities under the latest Act 2010, the government defined the type of entrepreneurs who could run a university in the private sector in Bangladesh.

Marginson (2011) discusses the implications of the growth of higher education institutions that could be ‘public’ or ‘private’, and argues that public purposes could also be accomplished in privately owned institutions, as well as in public ones. As shown earlier, the pre-1998 Acts allowed both local and international entrepreneurs to be engaged in the private higher education sector. But these Acts did not delineate a straightforward definition of whether these private universities should be ‘not for profit’ or ‘for-profit’ institutions. The key focuses of the pre-1998 Acts were growth and to create easy access to higher education for all. In the post 1998 period, the concern about excessively profit-led activities of the private universities stepped in. As a result the following was included in the Ordinance, “What it has been in other law, without the government’s prior approval no private university can operate any distance program or course” (Government of Bangladesh, 2008, p. 17585). The government attempted to shape the private university into a form of ‘not for profit’ institution to confine private universities to academic
activities only. As is stated in Subsection Two of Section Three of the Ordinance 2008, “Each private university under this ordinance will be established in a form of ‘not for profit’ organisation” (Government of Bangladesh, 2008, p. 17571).

Although the pre-1998 Acts in Bangladesh allowed local and international entrepreneurs to be involved in the private universities to expand higher education, the government also wanted to shift the higher education costs away from the state. Therefore the pre-1998 Acts show how government pushed the higher education costs onto the institutions, but in the post-1998 period the government did not want to push the institutions so far that they were purely private businesses for profit. Consequently, the government wanted to shape private universities as ‘not for profit’ institutions in the Ordinance 2008. However, in the latest Act 2010, the government changed the provision that private university be ‘not for profit’ and the Act became silent about whether private universities would be ‘not for profit’ or ‘for profit’ institutions.

As discussed in the literature review (Chapter 2), many governments in Global South – for example, Malaysia and Indonesia – have developed a distinctive hybrid-form of private university through blending of a neoliberal model and state-owned public university model. Similar to a hybrid-form of private university, the above analysis shows that Bangladesh government has developed its own-form of private university model. The analysis shows that by the idea of the private university, the government of Bangladesh refers to a type of academic institution that is structured as a charitable trust organisation to provide higher education parallel to the public higher education. A further defining feature of these private universities is that they have not been established by the government, but they have been established by an individual or a group of people or a charity organisation, who are education oriented (Government of Bangladesh, 1992, 2010b). Furthermore, by not defining whether a private university would be a ‘for-profit’ or ‘not-for-profit’ academic institution, the government of Bangladesh has developed their own kind of private university model that could be designed for both purposes. However,
the shifts in the explicit definitions provided in the policy texts indicates an underpinning expectation that the private universities would not be for profit organisations.

4.2.2 Governance system: Shifting from entrepreneurs’ control to a mixture of deregulated and state controlled system. The global trends in the governance systems of universities is broadly concerned with internal mechanisms of the decision making process, the patterns of authority and hierarchy, and the relationship of university as institute to the university’s academics, the government and other external bodies (Marginson & Considine, 2000). In terms of the patterns of authority and hierarchy, in the Act 1992, the founders, who had established the private universities, enjoyed the outright power over the private universities. The founder(s) could make the significant decisions including recommending the top officials to be recruited in the private universities. As is stated in the Act 1992, “The Vice-Chancellor [VC], Rector or Principal of any private university will be appointed by the Chancellor at the recommendation of the founders for a period of four years on such terms as will be fixed by the Chancellor” (Government of Bangladesh, 1992, p. 7584).

The early Act 1992 gave the founder(s) the right to constitute the syndicate, or the board of governors, or the regency council, or the trustee board as an authority to administer the university, and set up an academic management structure to look after the academic side of the university. Although the founders could form the syndicate of the private university, syndicate member should have long experience “in the field of education, culture, industry, science, technology or administration” (Government of Bangladesh, 1992, p. 7585).

The syndicate “with the approval of the Chancellor, could formulate statutes containing provisions relating to the syllabus, curriculum, study schedule, and administrative or other necessary functions of the university” (Government of Bangladesh, 1992, p. 7586). The syndicate also appointed other officials including the registrar, the departmental heads and the controller of examinations. Along with the administrative tasks the syndicate also managed and maintained the finances of the university. As mentioned in the Act 1992, “This fund, with the approval of the
syndicate, the board of governors … as it must be deposited with any nationalised bank … and money may be withdrawn from the fund in the manner prescribed by the rule” (Government of Bangladesh, 1992, p. 7586).

The early Act 1992 included the head of the state as the Chancellor of the private university. It is stated in the Act 1992, “The president of the people’s republic of Bangladesh will remain the Chancellor of all private universities and he or any person authorised by him will preside over the convocation ceremony for awarding academic degrees and honorary degrees” (Government of Bangladesh, 1992, p. 7584). The Chancellor usually did not have any executive power on a day-to-day basis in relation to the staffing budget or the curriculum. The Chancellor was there more as a check and balance, a kind of honorary post to be there only for the role of providing government advice. For example, the Act 1992 stated that in case of receipt of complaints as to fraud or cheating in awarding certificates or failure to maintain the standard of education “the Chancellor may inquire into the complaint by appointing a sitting or retired judge of the Supreme Court and if the charge is sustained in the said inquiry the government may revoke the charter of that university” (Government of Bangladesh, 1992, p. 7586). Therefore the private universities were set up with a titular chancellor, but for all day-to-day decisions the founders could make appointments and control the curriculum and direction of the university.

By 1998, the Ministry of Education and University Grants Commission (UGC) had its powers extended to include some aspects of work of the private universities. It is noted in the Act 1998 that “The government or Grants Commission can arrange to carry out inspections of a private university from time to time by an individual so authorized” (Government of Bangladesh, 1998, p. 5609). Following the inspection the government or the UGC could issue directives to undertake the necessary action within a specified time period. Therefore six years after of the development of market-driven private higher education the government began to exert control. This also seems to have occurred at the same times changes were brought in to restrict foreign private universities. The Bangladeshi government might appear not to have foreseen the
problems of rampant market-driven higher education which would have its own agenda and might not develop in the way the government had hoped. The government had regarded opening up to the market as a way of responding to new student demand and harnessing the entrepreneurial skills of some people, but by 1998 private universities began developing in a direction the government had not foreseen and did not want.

However, the degree to which the government became involved in the private universities through the Act 1998 was not enough to improve the accountability and transparency of private universities’ activities. The government developed the argument in the post 1998 Acts that the previous Act 1992 and the Act 1998 were non-operational to ensure the ‘proper management’ in the private universities, “As the existing Acts seem to be inadequate, it is necessary to repeal the existing acts and formulate a new act to expand standard higher education for establishing the private university and for its proper management” (Government of Bangladesh, 2010b, p. 7423).

In the Ordinance 2008, the government restructured the governing bodies and redefined the roles and functions of these bodies and top officials of the private universities. These changes have altered the founders’ influences and increased the government influence in the running of the private universities. Although the Ordinance 2008 continued to endorse the term ‘founder(s)’, the Ordinance ensured that founders had no authority. In order to establish and run the university the founder had to form a ‘board of trustees’, and the ‘board of trustees’ turned out to be the highest authority of the private university. The role of the founder(s) as defined in the pre-1998 Acts shifted to the ‘board of trustees’. It is stated in the Ordinance 2008, “On the terms as will be fixed by Chancellor [the state’s head], the vice chancellor will be recruited at a recommendation of the ‘board of trustees’ for a four-year period” (Government of Bangladesh, 2008, p. 17576). The other top officials including the Pro-VC and the treasurer would also be appointed by the Chancellor at the recommendation of the ‘board of trustees’. Moreover, all top officials could be stepped-down by the Chancellor based on well-defined and acceptable allegations made by the ‘board of trustees’.
According to the Ordinance, the ‘board of trustees’ members could be in different executive and management bodies including in the syndicate, academic council, finance and teacher recruitment committees. Through the representations in different bodies the ‘board of trustees’ could be involved in the decision making processes. Apart from this, the ‘board of trustees’ could carry out some specific tasks. The tasks included approving the university organisational structure and organogram, approving the university employment policy and sending the university rules to the UGC, reviewing, investigating and reserving the yearly expenditures, approving the university yearly budget and sending it to the Chancellor, organising consultation meetings with the students-guardians, teachers, alumni and other stakeholders at least once a year in order to solve the university related problems and formulating a plan following the consultation meeting and implementing it (Government of Bangladesh, 2008).

In addition, the Ordinance specified the role of syndicate: “The syndicate as an executive authority will supervise and administer the academic and administrative functions and oversee the general management of the university” (Government of Bangladesh, 2008, p. 17582). Furthermore, the syndicate could formulate the university rules and regulations, appoint the teachers and officers, develop the terms and conditions of the teachers and officers, and set the student fee structure. Along with the ‘board of trustees’ and the syndicate, the finance committee became one of the powerful authorities because this committee dealt with financial matters of the private university. The key responsibilities of the finance committee included “to prepare the annual budget of the university and send it to the syndicate for granting approval, and played an advisory role in the financial matters of the university” (Government of Bangladesh, 2008, p. 17583).

Although most of the provisions of the Ordinance 2008 were brought into the latest Act 2010, some significant issues related to the governance had to change. Such changes have ensured more authority for the ‘board of trustees’ over the university. The major changes included increasing the numbers of ‘board of trustees’ members in different bodies, such as the
syndicate, academic council, teacher recruitment committee, and redefining their functions in the private university. Instead of the Treasurer a 'board of trustees' member was also made the chairman of the finance committee. As is pointed out in Subsection Two of Section Twenty five, “The finance committee will be formed by the following members: a. three members selected by the board of trustees from which someone will be chairman” (Government of Bangladesh, 2010b, p. 7435). Along with other activities mentioned in the Ordinance 2008, the ‘board of trustees’ would be monitoring the VC’s activities as well. Similarly, some changes were also brought to the formation of the disciplinary committee in which a member of the board of trustees was made the chairman instead of the VC as mentioned in the Ordinance 2008.

What this analysis of policy over time shows is that while government involvement in the private university governance system was minimal in the first Act in 1992, it became more actively involved in the direct governance of private universities through the Act of 1998. A further step-change took place in the Ordinance of 2008, which is evident of the increasing concern to promote the interests of the public in the private sector. By the latest Private University Act 2010 the state is revealed as heavily involved in both the academic and administrative activities of the private universities and the role of the founder(s) in the day to day activities of the universities has been curtailed. Between 2008 and 2010, the most significant change has been in determining the composition of the syndicate to ensure representation of the views of the government in the private university setting. Both the Ordinance 2008 and the latest Act of 2010 mentioned that an educationalist or a person who has an interest in education and a professor from outside of the UGC will be nominated by the Ministry of Education and the UGC respectively to be a member of the Syndicate to oversee the private university activities (Government of Bangladesh, 2008, 2010b).

Although the Ordinance 2008 and the latest Act 2010 still go along with the idea that a private university is one that can be initiated by a private individual and that the founder or ‘board of trustees’ can always have power over the university, a private university is not considered as one running the same type of activity as any other business. Instead, the changes in
these policy texts indicate that in Bangladesh private universities are regarded as serving what Marginson (2011) describes as both public and private interests or goods, which need to be managed by the state. To understand how these policy shifts towards a mixed economy of private and public higher education have identified a new role for the national state and its administrative organisations, I return to a discussion of ‘new managerialism’.

Arguably, NPM is developed in order to shift responsibility away from direct state control to “arm’s length” bodies and self-regulation (King, 2004, cited in De Boer, Enders, Schimank, 2007, p. 141). The theoretical underpinning for this process stems from Foucault’s (1978) concept of ‘bio-power’ or regulation of the self. The notion of ‘bio-power’ refers to the way citizens are governed by the modern state through “an explosion of numerous and diverse techniques for achieving the subjugations of bodies and control populations” (Foucault, 1978, cited in Baker and Brown, 2007, p. 12). In line with ‘new managerialism’ or NPM approach, the government in Bangladesh has expected the private universities to adopt purposes and standards that align with those of public higher education and to take management responsibility for reporting to government on the practices and outcomes of their activities, as well as to their own ‘boards of trustees’ or even founders and shareholders. Since the early 1990s when policy in Bangladesh first afforded the development of the modern private university, to the present situation, there has been a double strategy at work. On the one hand, government policy has enabled the higher education system to expand under the direction and interests of the private sector, but on the other hand, increasingly government has set in place arm’s length policies to circumscribe the form of this expansion. In the post 1998 periods, the government has legislated that the UGC and the Ministry of Education must be included in the governance structure of all private universities. Through the changes introduced over the past almost two decades, the state has required that government representatives and academics from outside of the private universities must be involved in the day-to-day work in the private universities, to ensure these universities act in the interests of and with the advice of the civil society. Arguably, this mixed governance model means that although private universities in Bangladesh are privately owned,
they are regarded by the state as bodies that provide what Marginson (2011) calls ‘public good’ and therefore need to be under the control of government. Models of NPM that ensure state control through arm’s length government bodies and self-regulation have provided a regulatory framework to reduce the drive of private universities to pursue the private interests and private goods of some of the founders.

4.2.3 Shifting the role of top official from ‘manager’ to ‘chief executive and academic officer’. The change that has taken place in the roles of top officials in the private universities in Bangladesh is also a classic neoliberal move, based on the managerial approach in which the president or the VC of the university is now often called university ‘chief executive officer’ (CEO) (McClenaghan, 1998). Both the previous and the latest private university Acts and the Ordinance have shaped the roles of the top officials in the universities and the corporate culture. In the first Act of 1992 the VC of a private university was recognised as the Chief Executive Officer, as it is stated in the Private University Act 1992, “…he [VC] will be the chief executive of the university” (Government of Bangladesh, 1992, p. 7584).

Arguably, the executive leader has become a “generic rather than localised manager”, who mediates the external relations of the university and develops its overall strategy (Marginson and Considine, 2000, p. 9). However, the early Act 1992 did not define who could be the VC, and the VC was not in a very powerful position to develop university strategy. As explored in the earlier section, the power was with the founder(s) who ran the university how they wished. The VC as a ‘chief executive officer was not included in any executive bodies including the syndicate or trustee board. Although, the academic operation of the private university was managed by academic officials with specific responsibilities, these were more managers rather than academic decision makers. For example, the early Act 1992 stated that the syndicate or trustee board with the approval of the Chancellor would formulate statutes containing provisions “relating to the syllabus, curriculum, study schedule, and for the performance of administrative and other necessary functions of any private university … All the educational certificate, degree and
diploma of any private university shall be signed by the Vice-Chancellor” (Government of Bangladesh, 1992, p. 7586).

Although the universities were private, the government specified the governance structure and the roles and the qualifications of different positions of these institutions in the post-1998 period. The government shaped the role of the VC as the ‘executive and academic officer’ of the private university in the Ordinance 2008. As stated in Subsection One of Section Fifteen, “…Following the prescription the appointed VC will be the Chief Executive and Academic Officer of that university” (Government of Bangladesh, 2008, p. 17576). The Ordinance 2008 also set up the academic qualifications of the VC, “the VC’s must have a first class or equivalent honours and postgraduate or PhD degree and twenty years of teaching or research or administrative experience of which ten years [must be] of advanced research or teaching experience” (Government of Bangladesh, 2008, p. 17576). Whilst the Ordinance 2008 began to shape the role of the VC, the latest Act 2010 advanced the same idea, namely, that the VC should be the “executive and academic officer” of the private university (Government of Bangladesh, 2010b, p. 7438).

In the Ordinance 2008, the government also brought some significant changes to make a division of executive power between the founder(s) and the VC as the chief executive and academic officer of the university. Although the early Act 1992 allowed the founder(s) to form different bodies to run the university, it did not mention whether the VC could be part of these authorities. To empower the role of the VC in different decision making bodies, the Ordinance 2008 included the VC as the chair of syndicate, academic council, teacher committee, teacher and staff recruitment committee and disciplinary committee. The Ordinance also mentioned that “the VC would be a member of the board of trustees by virtue of position” (Government of Bangladesh, 2008, p. 17576).

The Ordinance 2008 also shaped the positions of senior management and their roles in the private university and emphasised the significance of professional expertise of senior
management staff. The Ordinance identified the role of senior management in implementing the academic strategy effectively. As for the VC, the Ordinance 2008 specified the academic credentials and the experience required of the senior management. As stated, “The Pro-VC must have at least a postgraduate degree and at least fifteen years of administrative or teaching experience” (Government of Bangladesh, 2008, p. 17577). However, the latest Act 2010 placed more emphasis on creating a centralised control mechanism to ensure the accountability of all senior management staff to the VC. The latest Act 2010 stated that the VC will appoint and control all deans and the departmental heads. In order to ensure the VC’s role in financial matters the latest Act 2010 also included the VC as a member of the finance committee (Government of Bangladesh, 2010b).

De Boer, Enders, & Schimank (2007) argue that under the NPM approach corporate management structures govern through layers of regulation and audit in which university top and middle management are expected to be responsive to external government by implementing internal goals that fit with external drivers and taking responsibility for the activities and expenditure of the university. Similar to what De Boer, Enders, & Schimank (2007) argue, the analysis of the post 1998 Acts shows the inclusion of the VC in the different executive bodies, for example in the Syndicate, both confirmed the new powers of the VC, but also made clear that their power was constrained by their accountability to others. It is stated, “…s/he will implement the syndicate decision … VC will be responsible for his [sic.] work to the ‘board of trustees’” (Government of Bangladesh, 2008, p. 17576). Similarly, the latest Act has brought change into this provision to make the VC responsible for carrying out decisions made by both the ‘board of trustees’ and the Syndicate. Both the Ordinance and latest Act again included another subsection in which it is stated, “She/he (VC) will be responsible to implement the decision of the Syndicate and the board of trustees” (Government of Bangladesh, 2010b, p. 7438). Consequently, the management structure of the private university was developed in a particular way in which the top officials were empowered to some extent, but they were implementing the decisions of the ‘board of trustees’. However, compared to the position before 2008, in the latest Act 2010 the
VC has been giving a more explicit academic role in the university that will help the VC make
day-to-day academic operational decisions and determine the strategic direction of the academic
work.

4.2.4 ‘Quality’ in private higher education: Shifting from control by state
bodies to external quality assurance bodies. In the neoliberal discourse of quality assurance,
the relations between universities and state have been changed so that the role of the state has
shifted from promoter of intellectual activity to controller of it (Morley, 2003). Although the pre-
1998 Acts did not define how to maintain the quality of private higher education, the state
positioned the UGC as an arm’s length body to monitor the standard of private higher education.
The UGC as the state statutory body had to approve “the plan in regard to educational
programmes, curriculum, syllabus and the standard of the education of any private university”
(Government of Bangladesh, 1992, p. 7585).

In the post 1998 period, the rapid expansion of private universities caused its own
problem of lack of quality. Certainly, in the post 1998 Acts, the concern about the quality stepped
in and so, instead of having a completely free market approach, different governments have come
in with ideas for controlling quality. Although there is no straightforward definition of the nature
of good quality tertiary education, it could be presumed that the issue of quality was related to
market demands because quality plays a critical role in the function of market (Morley, 2003). As
stated in the Ordinance 2008, “The previous Acts were reasoned to be inadequate in improving
higher education’s standard and meeting the fast growth and gradually increasing multiplex
demands of higher education” (Government of Bangladesh, 2008, p. 17569).

Under the neoliberal state, both internal and external quality assurance systems are
developed to ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of the universities (Sing, 2000, cited in Mollis,
2006). In the post 1998 Acts, the private universities were required to submit their academic
achievements to the reviews of internal and external bodies to ensure assurance of quality. The
Ordinance 2008 defined the academic council as the internal body each institution should have to
design and implement the day to day academic activities to improve the quality. As stated in Subsection 1 of Section 31, “academic council … will be responsible for improving and the continuity of the private university’s learning, teaching and examination system, and will have the power to supervise and control these kinds of issues” (Government of Bangladesh, 2008, p. 17582). The Ordinance 2008 also ensured the role of the board of trustees in improving the quality. It stated that the ‘board of trustees’ should formulate a 3-year or a 5-year ‘strategic plan’ to improve quality and the overall development of the university. However, alongside the academic council’s and trustees’ roles, the latest Act 2010 adopted the new concept of the ‘Internal Quality Unit’, which would be established in every private university in order to strengthen the internal quality assurance mechanism. As it is specified, “In order to ensure the quality of education each private university will have an internal quality unit and will have a written account in the concerned University Yearly Report about the activities which are taken up” (Government of Bangladesh, 2010b, p. 7441).

As argued above, under neoliberalism some of the controls over these quality assurance activities in the universities are being given to external agencies. In the post 1998 Acts, the state stepped in with different kinds of quality control mechanisms and did not leave the universities to ensure and monitor quality themselves. The Ordinance 2008 adopted the idea of an ‘accreditation council’, which Morley (2003) refers to as external body to audit the quality of private higher education. It is stated, “In order to evaluate over all academic activities at the universities’ level, to improve quality towards world standards, and to continue that world standard in quality, the government will form an accreditation council” (Government of Bangladesh, 2008, p. 17585). The Ordinance 2008 pointed out that the accreditation council will develop a rigorous monitoring and assessment system to audit the quality. The Ordinance states, “All private universities must have a membership” and an approval on all academic programs from this body that they are offering courses at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels with the permission of the UGC (Government of Bangladesh, 2008, p. 17585). The latest Act 2010
shaped the accreditation council as an independent and autonomous body to enhance quality in private universities.

4.2.5 A cost-sharing approach to financing private universities. Although the early Act 1992 defined how to coordinate the bank account of the private university, it did not explicitly define how the private university could be financed. Boron (2006) argues that under neoliberalism typically the state withdraws from funding some services, and leaves these to the market. Consequently, to raise funds to supplement the reduction in state funding, universities globally are adopting a range of strategies, for example, high tuition and fees, students’ loans and grants, an endowment fund, university-industry partnerships, offering market related short courses and faculty consultancy (Mollis, 2006). However, at the early stage of the establishment of this sector, the founders of private universities adopted a high tuition fee structure as the key strategy to finance this system in Bangladesh (Government of Bangladesh, 1992).

Over the years different private universities used different structures of tuition and fees. The post 1998 Acts came in with some restrictions to make tuition and other fees affordable in the society. As pointed out in the Ordinance 2008, “Each private university will formulate a student fee structure for their students based on the societal context of Bangladesh and will inform the government and the University Grants Commission” (Government of Bangladesh, 2008, p. 17585). Once the Cabinet division approved the draft of the latest Act 2010 in early 2010, it was found that the government had imposed further restrictions, stating that the UGC must approve the tuition and other fees for the universities. As stated in the Cabinet approved Private University Act 2010, “In order to bear necessary expenses each private university will formulate a tuition and fee structure, which needs to be approved by the University Grants Commission, for their students based on the societal context of Bangladesh” (Government of Bangladesh, 2010a, p. 12). However, the government brought change into it and relaxed this provision when the latest Act 2010 was enacted in the National Parliament. It is stated in the latest Act 2010, “In order to bear the expenses each private university will formulate a fee structure for their students
based on the societal context of Bangladesh and will inform the University Grants Commission” (Government of Bangladesh, 2010b, p. 7442).

Nevertheless, the latest Act 2010 adopted diverse funding modes based on a ‘cost-sharing’ approach for the private universities. The latest Act 2010 identified the following strategies to be adopted by the private universities to manage their own finances:

1. Unconditional grants from public welfare-oriented person, assemblage of persons, charitable trusts or institution. 2. Loans from public welfare-oriented persons, assemblage of persons, charitable trusts, institutions or the government. 3. Donations from public welfare-oriented persons, assemblage of persons, charitable trusts or institutions. 4. Student fees. 6. University income from various sectors and 7. Other sources approved by the government or the University Grants Commission. (Government of Bangladesh, 2010, p. 7442)

The latest Act 2010 ensured more authority for the ‘board of trustees’ over the universities funds. The latest Act 2010 states, “The general fund will be managed with a joint signature of a board of trustees’ nominee officer and the treasurer” (Government of Bangladesh, 2010b, p. 7443). However, the government focused on managing the universities’ funds in what Herbst (2007) calls an effort to improve the governance system, which is similar to the accounts in the literature in other universities globally (Amaral et al., 2003). As stated in the latest Act 2010, “by informing the government and the University Grants Commission, money from the general fund could be invested in those sectors decided by the board of trustees” (Government of Bangladesh, 2010b, p. 7443). Alongside this measure, the government imposed restrictions to the use of the general funds of the private universities. The latest Act 2010 stipulates that “the money from the general fund must not be used for any other purposes other than the necessary expenses of the university” (Government of Bangladesh, 2010b, p. 7443). To ensure transparency, the government became more visible in auditing the income of the university as it stated, “Every university must submit the annual expenses of the previous year by the 30th of September of each
financial year to the Commission and the government” (Government of Bangladesh, 2010b, p. 7443). The government also imposed the restriction that the universities could not receive funds from international sources and vice-versa without prior approval from the Chancellor of the universities. By imposing some restrictions on the use and management of funding systems of the private universities in the post 1998 Acts, the government has tried to ensure that the private universities take on some public responsibilities, aligning with what scholars call NPM.

4.3 Neoliberal features in the Strategic Plan for Higher Education 2006-2026

The private universities Acts helped in developing and establishing universities in the private sector. Both the private and public university systems experienced and faced many challenges including quality, governance, and financial issues over the periods. Some problems could be different and some problems could be similar. Unlike private universities, each public university was set up by an individual Act, unlike the one Act that applies to the entire range of public universities. Consequently, all public universities have an independent one-to-one relationship between themselves and the state. At the end of the 1990s, one of the external agencies, the World Bank, conducted a review of entire higher education sector (World Bank, 2000). Based on that review report, the government, with the involvement of that external agency, began to develop a Strategic Plan for the whole sector. In this process, the government formulated a 20-year Strategic Plan in 2006 (University Grants Commission, 2006). Therefore, the Strategic Plan was a different policy document from the Acts which I analysed in the first part of this chapter and which was focused exclusively on the private sector. The Strategic Plan focused on the entire higher education sector, but I will argue that the rationale of the Strategic Plan was more about bringing the public sector into line with the changes that had been taking place in the private university sector.

The purpose of this analysis in part of this chapter is to look at what was being said about various issues in the whole higher education sector, and how some of the ideas were pulled together into the public sector as part of what Holford and McKenzie (2013) call ‘policy tracing’
or ‘policy trail’ from the private sector and vice-versa. By the idea of policy tracing, Holford and McKenzie refer to understanding how certain characteristics of policy in terms of ideas, people and both ideational and material resources, have travelled through over time, “either intentionally or accidentally, as well as its physicality and imaginary potentials” (Milana, 2015, p. 517).

As stated earlier in this chapter, four themes emerged from the analysis of the Strategic Plan. Some of these themes are new and some are in part an extension and continuation of the themes derived from the analysis of the private universities Acts, in other words, the analysis of the Strategic Plan that was aimed at the whole university sector revealed traces of policy developed in the private universities Acts. In the first theme – shifting to a new vision to create a knowledge-based society for future higher education in Bangladesh – I explore how the idea of a knowledge-based economy as a new vision was adopted for the entire higher education sector. In the following theme – managing the governance system of public universities: shifting from control by the universities and the state to control by the state and external forces – explores what the features of the governance system were, particularly, for public universities, and how some ideas came from the private sector. Theme three – quality control in higher education: shifting from university to external bodies – explores how external bodies are to be involved in quality in higher education. In the final theme – paying for the strategy of public universities: shifting from the state to ‘user pays’– explores the issue of the financing of higher education and explores the shadow role of the government in paying the expenses of public universities.

4.3.1 Shifting to a new vision to create a knowledge-based society for future higher education in Bangladesh. As explored above, in the early 90s the policy problem was the need for growth and thus, the pre-1998 private university Acts were about the responding to demand by establishing universities in the private sector. The private university Acts were all about setting up a particular set of institutions, but they were not about what should be taught, how teaching should be done, and what university should be for. Although these questions and issues were not important in the private university Acts, by 2006 when the Strategic Plan was
formulated, the concern arose about what kind of growth and what kind of higher education was desirable for the whole sector:

Unless linkages are established between the fields of teaching at the universities and the real life needs as well as the needs of the industries and business at home and abroad, higher education is unlikely to play its due role in ensuring that its graduates find employment in the job markets. (University Grants Commission, 2006, p. 14)

As noted in the literature review (Chapter 2), the idea of knowledge economy is derived from human capital theory of Theodore Schultz (1961) and Gary Becker (1993). In their theories, they emphasised the importance of the economic value of education and the need for investing money in education to transfer human beings into human capital. In the Strategic Plan, it recognised the need to invest money in transforming higher education into human capital. As it is argued in the Strategic Plan, “There is a need to substantially increase the proportion of GDP allocated to higher education from its abysmally low figure of 0.12 percent to at least 0.30 percent …the allocation of funds for higher education will make a quick jump” (University Grants Commission, 2006, p. 10).

The Strategic Plan argued that the role of the universities is shifting to the economic and social development of a country in the current global world. It drew examples from the global higher education systems where the universities generate human resources for the market and produce new knowledge through research. In his human capital theory, Schultz, 1960 conceptualised human capital as a way of increasing the productivity of the human services that will add value to the economy. In contrast, the public universities in Bangladesh had been involved in generating non-productive degrees for a long time. It is argued in the Strategic Plan, “Historically, public universities have been producing graduates in humanities and pure sciences that have little linkage with the availability of job market or real life situation that have experienced massive changes over the years” (University Grants Commission, 2006, p. 14). By developing questions on the external relevancy of degrees the public universities were offering,
the Strategic Plan adopted the idea of a ‘knowledge-based society’ as a vision for the outcomes of higher education. The argument developed that as a densely populated country in the world, Bangladesh should have higher education that is “planned in ways that can produce human resources which have a high demand in the market both at home and abroad” (University Grants Commission, 2006, p. 13).

Marginson (2006a) points out that in the discourse of the knowledge-based society, the market-driven and technology-related subjects are gaining prominence worldwide. In the Strategic Plan, the knowledge-based society was to be created by introducing market-related subjects in the universities, which is similar to what is found in other parts of the world. The Strategic Plan argued, “Higher education should also conform to the global changes in the field of science and technology” (University Grants Commission, 2006, p. 13). From that point the Strategic Plan also emphasised the importance to open up market-driven subjects when developing new universities.

In setting up new universities, emphasis should be given to the production of skilled human resources in the field of agriculture, bio-technology, livestock, forestry, fisheries, mining, oil and gas exploration and extraction, manufacturing, automobile engineering etc. and the curriculum should be prepared on that line. … Besides, institutions in the professional fields like medicine, nursing, engineering, law, journalism, and other professions should also be given adequate emphasis. (University Grants Commission, 2006, p. 14)

In a knowledge-based economy, information and communication technology (ICT) is identified as key to economic and sustainable development (OECD, 1996). The Strategic Plan argued that the universities in Bangladesh have rarely adopted ICT in the higher education system. Considering the global importance of ICT, the Strategic Plan focused on the ICT-based administration and management in the higher education sector. The Strategic Plan stated, “All higher education institutes must switch over to ICT-based administration and management and a
sound national ICT-network should be developed and minimum standards for providers set up” (University Grants Commission, 2006, p. 45). To ensure wider participation in ICT, the Strategic Plan argued for implementing some strategies and programs in “teaching courses that deal with ICT, improving access to computer resources, developing teachers for basic ICT courses, improving access to ICT courses, certification of ICT skills, sponsoring visiting teachers from abroad” (University Grants Commission, 2006, p. 46).

Ensor (2006) argues that knowledge is generated and regenerated through research, curriculum and pedagogy. Similarly, the Strategic Plan argued that the existing curricula used in the universities in Bangladesh “are not meeting the present day demand” (University Grants Commission, 2006, p. 15). In relation to the global trend, the Strategic Plan focused on the need to change outdated course curricula. It pointed out that, “Depending on the contemporary job market at home and abroad, potential areas of teaching and employment must be investigated and pursued” (University Grants Commission, 2006, p. 15).

In order to link the outputs of the universities with the needs of industries and the markets the Strategic Plan identified the role of research as an integral part of activities for the universities. Under the neoliberal state, the industrial sector is becoming increasingly involved in the research projects of the universities worldwide (Ylijoki, 2003). In line with the global trend, the Strategic Plan also emphasised the need to develop collaborative research between universities and industries, and the focus of that should be placed on the needs of industries and the country’s development. It pointed out that “A closer relationship must be established between industry and the university so that research carried out in the universities is geared to the needs of the industry and the community” (University Grants Commission, 2006, p. 16).

Although the Strategic Plan adopted the idea of the knowledge-based economy based on human capital theories, this idea of a knowledge-based economy was used without any acknowledgement of the implications for the current economy of Bangladesh which is dominated by the agricultural sector. Currently almost half of the total labour force are involved in the
cultivation of agricultural products, rather than knowledge-based work (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2016). Therefore, although the idea of knowledge-based economy is developed in the Strategic Plan to justify changes in higher education, it is an empty signifier of neoliberalism because it does not reflect the current state of the Bangladesh economy.

4.3.2 Managing the governance of the public universities: Shifting from control by the universities and the state to control by the state and external forces. The new economy demands a new role of the universities (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004) and thus, a particular form of governance has emerged in higher education worldwide (Altbach, 2005). This new managerial system, mostly known as NPM, has introduced a number of changes in the public universities including the use of internal cost centres, promotion of competition between the employers, marketisation of public institutions, and the monitoring of efficiency and effectiveness through measurement of outcomes and individual staff performance (Deem, 1998).

In order to introduce a new kind of governance system drawing on NPM, the Strategic Plan identified a problem in the governance system in the whole higher education sector, and specifically raised this as an issue across public universities. The Strategic Plan posited that the governance problem that needed to be overcome was the politicisation of public universities that had resulted in sliding quality in public higher education. It identified two major issues in the public universities that were deemed politicisation of public universities. First, the VC, Pro-VC and Treasurer of all public universities were recruited by the government based on their political affiliation with ruling political parties. Second, according to public universities’ Acts, deans of different faculties, a significant number of senate and syndicate members were directly elected by the teachers. To elect representatives for the senate and syndicate, the teachers of the public universities became divided into two main groups based on their political ideology. It further argued, “Politicization has taken its tolls in terms of quality slide, substandard faculty, distribution of grants and other incentives along party lines and intensification of students' and teachers' politics” (University Grants Commission, 2006, p. 23 & 24).
The Strategic Plan also argued that the public universities’ Acts caused their own problems of political interference in its governance system. It is pointed out in the Strategic Plan, “One reason for such a state of affairs has been the provision of elections to key academic/administrative positions” (University Grants Commission, 2006, p. 24). The Strategic Plan further argued that the current process for the appointment of VC and "other senior executives often makes them vulnerable to undue political pressure and this can be a major stumbling block in good governance" (University Grants Commission, 2006, p. 24).

One of the principal trends of governance of the ‘enterprise university’ is to introduce “a new kind of executive power, characterised by a will to manage and, in some respects, a freedom to act greater than was once the case” (Marginson & Considine, 2000, p. 9). Similarly, in order to improve the governance system of the public universities, the Strategic Plan emphasised the importance to ensure the ‘de-politicisation’ of public universities by abolishing the existing system of appointing the VCs and Deans for faculties. It also underlined the need to redefine the accountability and institutional autonomy of the public universities by restructuring the governing bodies – the syndicate or regent board – “under the legislation to the UGC and the MOE [Ministry of Education]” (University Grants Commission, 2006, p. 23).

As explored earlier in the first part of this chapter, in the early 1990s the government began to use a single Act to regulate all private universities as a group. The idea of the single Act facilitated the introduction of a new kind of governance system where external bodies became a part of the governance system of the private universities and all private universities had to have a collective relationship with the state. In contrast, the governance system of the public universities was very different from that of the private universities. All public universities were established by their own Acts. All public universities had a one to one relationship to the state and top officials of these universities enjoyed relatively more academic freedom. By 2006 when the Strategic Plan was developed a lack of cohesion and uniformity among the public universities Acts was identified. Arguably through policy tracing from the policy development for the private sector,
the Strategic Plan developed the idea of a single Act, “the Umbrella Act”, designed to regulate all public universities. It is argued in the Strategic Plan, “As the existing acts for the public universities lack of uniformity and cohesion and are, in many cases, there is an immediate need for rationalizing the different University Laws by developing a single “Umbrella” legislation for all public universities” (University Grants Commission, 2006, p. 21). Through this idea the Strategic Plan brought in a new governance system that introduced a new recruitment policy for top officials and reorganised the existing governing bodies for all public universities.

In terms of recruitment of the VCs for all public universities, the Strategic Plan adopted two alternative ways that would remove political manoeuvring in the public university system. First, the Plan enacted new legislation that empowered the governing body of each public university to appoint their own VCs. Second, the Chancellor was required to “form a national search committee with adequate legal backing in order to recommend the appointment of VC” (University Grants Commission, 2006, p. 25). It also proposed the introduction of changes to the institutional regulations and statutes to empower the deans and departmental chairpersons to take action against academic and administrative staff for violating the rules and for irregularities of conduct. Moreover, the Plan also argued that the “appointment of faculty Deans should be based on academic excellence and leadership qualities instead of election” (University Grants Commission, 2006, p. 24).

In terms of restructuring the governing bodies of public universities, the Strategic Plan proposed that there should be representations from civil society and the UGC in the senate, syndicate and finance committee of every university. Although the Strategic Plan identified that the wrong kind of external influence causes the ‘bad’ governance of the public universities in Bangladesh, it adopted the idea of the value of external influence, which had been introduced into the private higher education sector, to ensure external forces would continue to be involved in all public university settings. Deem (2001) argues that the new discourse of managerial systems of universities derives from the for-profit sector. The idea of involving external forces in the
universities derives from the neoliberal idea that there should be commercial benefits from the academic and non-academic products (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). The Strategic Plan adopted the idea of reducing the teacher representations in the senate and syndicate, and empowered the VC to nominate senate and syndicate members from different categories on a rotation basis rather than through election. As stated in the Strategic Plan, “the teachers’ representation in the university senates needs to be reduced for creating a premise for better governance” (University Grants Commission, 2006, p. 25). In the Strategic Plan, the role of students in universities was also redefined such that the students could be mainly involved in academic matters and socio-cultural issues rather than with the national political parties.

The Strategic Plan showed concern about political manoeuvring by the party in power. It argued that representatives from the ruling parties in different governing bodies “makes the university administration vulnerable to government interference and limits its required autonomy for ensuring academic freedom” (University Grants Commission, 2006, p. 25). However, the Strategic Plan argued for government involvement in the governance of the public universities. In order to strengthen the government and the UGC power over the university settings the Strategic Plan suggested significant amendment into the UGC Act. In principle, the UGC was established to look after the financial matter of the public universities, but it was proposed in the Strategic Plan that the UGC needs more freedom for executing its decisions. The Plan argued that “this regulatory body [the UGC] has not been able to carry out its charter due to lack of adequate authority and resources in enforcing norms and standards for ensuring good governance in the universities” (University Grants Commission, 2006, p. 22). The Strategic Plan solved this problem by upgrading the status of the UGC’s Chairman, asserting it should be equal to a Cabinet Minister, and improving the status of full time members to that of a State Minister. The Plan argued that increasing that legal backup ensured the UGC would act and intervene in the university settings as a strong ‘oversight’ body. As stated in the Strategic Plan, “the UGC might be renamed 'Higher Education Commission' (HEC), with an appropriate set of terms of
reference. This will give the commission a better image and help to signal the strengthening of its authority and roles” (University Grants Commission, 2006, p. 23).

In the same way, the Strategic Plan identified the strategic role for the Ministry of Education (MOE) in the public universities. The MOE should work in three broad areas of the universities: policy development, private participation and endowment support; establishing a specialist planning function to watch the labour market; and monitoring demographic changes and observing international developments in higher education. In addition, “MOE can participant in university affairs through representation in different governing bodies such as the university senates and syndicates and the role it plays in the process of appointing Vice-Chancellors” (University Grants Commission, 2006, p. 21).

Similar to the public universities, the Strategic Plan argued for the same governing system for the private universities. It stated, “Ideally, private universities should have a similar administrative structure to their public counterparts, including Vice-Chancellors and other statutory bodies” (University Grants Commission, 2006, p. 30). As explored above, based on these recommendations, the government brought significant changes into the post 1998 private university Acts.

In analysing the governance systems of the universities in Bangladesh, I argue that the Strategic Plan brought together a similar model of governance system for the two sectors – public and private. Similar to the situation for the private universities, through introducing a single Act for all public universities, the state wanted to have collective relations rather than one-to-one relations with the public universities. The Strategic Plan also introduced the idea of reducing the teaching staff and bringing civil society and government representatives into the various governing bodies of the public universities.

4.3.3 ‘Quality’ control in higher education: Shifting from university to external bodies. The NPM approach has been identified as changing the prevailing meaning of efficiency, accountability, transparency and quality of higher education (Lorenz, 2012). Morley (2003) argues
that under a neoliberal state quality is linked with the knowledge economy because the corporate interests play a significant role in identifying the purposes of higher education. Similarly, analysis of the Strategic Plan reveals the idea of the importance of a focus on the quality of higher education to support the development of a knowledge-based society, but in the Strategic Plan the focus was really given to the public sector. It stated, “The public universities in Bangladesh, over the last two decades, have seen a slide in the quality of both teaching and learning” (University Grants Commission, 2006, p. 33).

Quality assurance systems under neoliberalism usually involve increasing professional development (Morley, 2003), and producing market-related knowledge (Sing, 2001, cited in Mollis, 2006). In this vein, the Strategic Plan addressed two key issues in the quality enhancement process in higher education sector in Bangladesh: “promoting a culture of teaching quality”, and “making courses more relevant and of high quality” (University Grants Commission, 2006, p. 32). The Strategic Plan identified academics as professional bodies and argued that the academics needed to enhance and update their skills and should be committed to improving students’ learning needs. The Strategic Plan stated that the modern teaching-learning methods could help to establish a knowledge-based society.

Alongside the modern teaching-learning process, the market-responsive curriculum has been adopted in universities worldwide (Mollis, 2006). Similarly, the Strategic Plan focused on the market-responsive curriculum to be adopted in the universities in Bangladesh. The Strategic Plan developed two arguments to make academic courses more relevant and of high quality. First, “if a university has to function as a centre of excellence”, the universities need to promote new knowledge that will continuously update the process of learning and fill the gaps in any existing programme (University Grants Commission, 2006, p. 32). Second, “in a globally competitive environment a university needs to teach courses and programmes that are relevant to the needs of the community and the country as well as global society” (University Grants Commission, 2006, p. 32). The course curriculum could be developed through constant updating of existing
syllabi, discussion with the stakeholders and building up partnerships with reputed foreign universities. In the curriculum, English language acquisition was seen as needing to be emphasised. Although it was not clear who were the ‘stakeholders’, it could be presumed that the market might be one of determining factors to set up course curricula. As stated, “a partnership with the “real world” of industry, business and the public services is essential if our higher education institutions are to be nationally and globally competitive” (University Grants Commission, 2006, p. 29).

The Strategic Plan showed concern about the current practice of teachers’ promotion and its relation with poor quality in the public universities. Many universities around the world have adopted ‘output measures’, for example, publications, citations, citation impact measures, research user impact measures, as part of quality measurement in higher education (Marginson, 2008). To improve the quality of the public universities, the Strategic Plan argued that there should be a link between the quality of teachers’ outputs and teachers’ promotions. It emphasised the need to ensure academic excellence, teaching performance, research ability and numbers of publications in the ranked journals as ‘output measures’ for teachers’ promotions. As stated in the Strategic Plan, “the range of publication and research, the quality of research and not mere quantity, and the promise of further scholarship should be the main criteria influencing promotion” (University Grants Commission, 2006, p. 33).

The Strategic Plan adopted the idea of what Marginson (2008) calls as performance-based incentives for the teachers of public universities. It stated: “Teachers who perform well should also be given incentives by way of salary increase, research grants etc.” (University Grants Commission, 2006, p. 32). The Strategic Plan underscored the importance of research by setting up the National Research Council that “will conduct and coordinate research areas where Bangladesh has the most potential” (University Grants Commission, 2006, p. 40). In addition, the Strategic Plan emphasised the need to build up links between universities and research institutes at home and abroad. Similar to India and Pakistan, it emphasised the importance to set up a
Postgraduate University. It is argued in the Strategic Plan, “The proposed university will be an apex research institute for advanced level studies … provide training and high quality academic programmes … exclusive post graduate universities already exist in India, Pakistan and other countries” (University Grants Commission, 2006, p. 42).

Under the neoliberal state, the literature has argued that academics are becoming less trusted (Connell, 2009) and the responsibility of professional autonomy has been reduced as professional controls are shifted to external and internal ‘audits’ or review systems (Lorenz, 2012; Marginson, 2008). The Strategic Plan emphasised the importance of setting up internal and external auditing systems to control quality in public higher education. It stated, “unfortunately the public universities in Bangladesh have no external system … there is no internal auditing processes or review” in this sector to control its quality (University Grants Commission, 2006, p. 34).

The Strategic Plan adopted the idea of an ‘accreditation council’ as an external body to improve the quality in higher education. It argued that the accreditation council would set a level of performance, integrity and quality and would help students to take advantage of structured programs. This external review aimed to promote and enhance quality, to inform students and other stakeholders about programs offered by universities that meet the national expectations, and to identify the deficiencies of quality in higher education and ensure accountability for the use of public funds. The accreditation council would be “undertaking formal accreditation reviews, promoting internal quality enhancement and quality improvement in universities and carrying out external audits of the self-assessment and self-review of quality” (University Grants Commission, 2006, p. 35). The Strategic Plan also argued that the Accreditation process would take into account four aspects of how universities operate: process and goals, organisational structure, resources and support, effective planning mechanisms, high quality programmes, fairness and accessibility in terms of admission and institutional management and outcomes and effectiveness. Significant issues were the council’s involvement in the university’s governance,
management, transparency, accountability, democratic practices and accessibility of admission system.

4.3.4 Paying for the strategy of public universities: Shifting from the state to ‘user pays’. Under neoliberalism the ‘cost-sharing’ approach has emerged as a form of financing to higher education globally since the 1980s (Johnstone & Marcucci, 2010, p. 1). In Bangladesh, higher education was the state’s responsibility until 1990. The first part of this chapter showed that students in private universities paid the entire costs of their higher education. Through policy traces/trails from the private sector the Strategic Plan argued that “the beneficiaries must share a reasonable part of the financial burden of the recurrent expenditure for providing public sector higher education” (University Grants Commission, 2006, p. 60). The Strategic Plan pointed out that most of the developed and developing countries all over the world have reduced public expenditure in the higher education sector by introducing different mechanisms in the higher education sector.

The Strategic Plan came in with three different approaches as policy solutions to be adopted in the public universities to reduce the government’s responsibility to this sector. The first approach was more about the financial management system in the public universities. By adopting the idea of a ‘financial management system’ in the public universities, the government wanted to ensure two things: that higher education in public universities be linked with the demands of the global market and “simultaneously, universities should gradually shift towards the system of zero base budgeting” (University Grants Commission, 2006, p. 28). The Plan argued that the budget allocation to the public universities “should be linked with the numbers of enrolments in each discipline, importance of course offerings in the context of job market, logistics requirements, research requirements and output, compliance of academic norms and standards by the departments” (University Grants Commission, 2006, p. 28). In doing so, the Strategic Plan adopted the idea of “formula-based funding” by the government to link “to categories of students or measurement of performance and competitive funding that reward the
best institutional bids for new programmes or projects” (University Grants Commission, 2006, p. 27).

The second approach was about the ‘cost-sharing’ model “in conformity with its academic programmes, and ensuring a balance between economic rationality and social considerations” (University Grants Commission, 2006, p. 28). Johnstone and Marcucci (2010, p. 2) argue that the ‘cost-sharing’ is mostly associated with the tuition and fees and ‘user charges’.

The Strategic Plan adopted various strategies to be adopted in the public universities. The matter was explained as follows:

Some modalities of cost recovery may include: increase in tuition fees, increase in fees for boarding and meals for the residential students, increased access to student's loans, and participation of private sector business entities and social organizations in supporting higher education through endowments, consultancy projects, establishment of academic chairs and other physical facilities. (University Grants Commission, 2006, p. 28 & 29)

The third approach was the introduction of external involvement in the financing system of the higher education sector in Bangladesh. Boron (2006) argues that the strategy is engendered to create dependence on foreign sources for the financing of higher education. To this apparent end, the Strategic Plan adopted the idea of ‘external’ involvement in the higher education sector. In terms of financing of public universities, the role of state has shifted towards the market worldwide (Marginson & Considine, 2000). Similarly, the Strategic Plan also adopted the idea of ‘industries-universities’ relations as a way of financing the public universities. The Strategic Plan emphasised the need to build up a partnership between the public universities and the business communities to shift some financial burden to the external bodies.

The Strategic Plan brought the idea of projection of self-funding strategies to be implemented by the public universities over a period. It argued that 50% of internal income should be generated through tuition and other activities over a period. The Strategic Plan pointed out, “Whatever growth rate occurs, public universities will need to generate a huge amount of
money through internal sources to keep up with the total expenditure” (University Grants Commission, 2006, p. 62). The projection of self-funding strategies included 10% from leasing out land and buildings; 5% from the cafeteria, cyber cafe, book shops, souvenir and clothing shops, etc.; 15% from offering courses in evening shifts for professionals; 5% from consultancy services; 10% from alumni contributions; 15% from university endowment; 15% from partnership with industries and the private sector; and 25% from graduate taxes (University Grants Commission, 2006). It is also argued in the Strategic Plan that some reformations should be carried out in the financial and management processes of the universities “if universities are to be operated in a commercial and profitable manner” (University Grants Commission, 2006, p. 63). By providing a project promoting self-funding, the Strategic Plan redefined the concept of the state’s role in the higher education sector in Bangladesh.

4.4 Conclusion

In this chapter I analysed the two neoliberal policy phases formulated by different governments at the state level since the 1990s. In the analysis I used neoliberal concepts derived from the literature and traced these concepts in the Acts and the Strategic Plan identifying how they might have changed over time. The analysis of these two neoliberal documents showed that there were four key neoliberal ideas – NPM as a governance, external audits for quality assurance of the sector, a cost-sharing approach to financing universities, and the knowledge economy as a vision for higher education – for both public and private universities. The analysis showed that the neoliberal features have been developed in these two policy phases in slightly different ways over time, just as the literature states about neoliberalism. In particular this chapter explored the Bangladeshi form of neoliberalism. For example, the idea of NPM as the governance system and the cost-sharing approach to financing of higher education were developed in slightly different way from the accounts provided in the literature about these concepts. In analysing NPM as a governance system, the analysis of policy texts showed that a centrality of government control became a prominent feature in both the both documents. As discussed in the literature (Chapter 2), the idea of NPM emerged from a desire to reduce the role of the state yet still ensure
regulation of the education sector. By taking a model of regulation and control that had been used in the management of private sector organisations and applying this to the education sector, NPM models ensured accountability in the public sector without the direct involvement of the state. In the context of Bangladesh, the government developed the idea of NPM to the governance of universities yet retained a strong central control mechanism over both public and private universities. In the same way, in terms of financing of universities, the government formulated the idea of ‘cost-sharing’ approach in a way that ensures the interests of the State are developed in the universities with no financial costs to the State. Finally, the way in which the government employed centrality of government control based on NPM and defined the private university showed that the government developed a Bangladeshi-form of private university. In other words, the concept of private university in Bangladesh refers to the understanding that this is an academic institution that could be set up by a person or a group person that is neither ‘for-profit’ nor ‘not for-profit’, or both.

In the first part of this chapter, I explored what neoliberal ideas have been incorporated in the private sector and in the second part of the chapter I identified what ideas were developed in the Strategic Plan. In the second part I found policy traces from the freeing up of the sector to private enterprise, as the plan was developed in response to global policy shifts in the sector, suggesting some continuity between the policies developed for the private and public sector. The early Act 1992 freed up the higher education system and encouraged entrepreneurs to become involved in this sector. However, concerns emerged about the governance, quality, and excessively market-led activities of the private higher education, and these were evident in the post-1998 Acts. The post-1998 Acts altered the power of founder(s), who had enjoyed outright power in the pre-1998 period.

The post-1998 Acts formed a new kind of governance system where the executive power is shared between the VC and the ‘board of trustees’, a replacement of the founder. Such a governance system is very similar to the NPM approach. The post-1998 Acts defined the role of
the VC as the ‘chief executive and academic officer’ in the private universities. The government also exerted its power to be involved in the governing bodies of private universities – the syndicates – to make the university more accountable to the government. Consequently, the government developed a ‘mixed private-public’ control and governance system in the private universities.

In terms of improving quality in private higher education, the post-1998 Acts brought in new measures of a control system into the internal audit system and an external body – the accreditation council – for the private universities, which is similar to what other universities have been experiencing worldwide over the last three decades. Moreover, the post-1998 Acts adopted a range of strategies in financing the private universities based on a cost-sharing approach. In a word, the textual analysis of the private university Acts has shown that there has always been concern in Bangladesh about treating this private sector in a similar way to the public sector and not wanting it to become an unbridled private sector operating for purely private purposes, which is why this range of controls was introduced in the post-1998 period.

In the second part of this chapter, I again explored the features of neoliberal ideas in the Strategic Plan. The analysis of the Strategic Plan showed that although it covered the whole of higher education, a particular focus was given to the public universities. In analysing this policy, I found that the salient concern was about what kind of growth and what kind of higher education the country needed to have for economic and social development. Therefore, the starting point for the Strategic Plan was to make a link between higher education and the market. From that point higher education, particularly public sector higher education was set to be more market-driven, since private sector higher education had already become attentive to the market. Some of the problems were almost the same in the public sector as the private sector, for example, the quality, governance and how to pay for it. In terms of dealing with governance, quality and how to pay for it, the texts show the idea of policy traces from the earlier Acts in the private sector suggesting the government saw the relevance of extending the neoliberalism developed in the
1990s to the whole of higher education. Therefore, the Strategic Plan brought a new kind of governance system in which the number of academic roles were reduced and brought the idea of civil society roles in the governing bodies of the public universities to ensure more accountability for this sector. In dealing with the quality and financing to the universities, the Strategic Plan brought the idea of external bodies and a ‘cost sharing’ approach into the public universities. In sum, in focusing on the whole of higher education the Strategic Plan showed recognition that private universities are not just for ‘private good’ and public universities are not just for ‘public good’. Rather, the Strategic Plan characterises both sectors of higher education as essential for generating ‘public good’, and sees similar controls over both public and private sectors as relevant.

In the next two chapters, I explore the processes of neoliberal ideas formulation in these policies. The data of these two chapters have been drawn from the interview analysis where I explore how, why and by whom these neoliberal ideas and thinking were incorporated in these policies.
Chapter 5

The process of neoliberal ideas formation in the private university Acts

5.1 Introduction

This is the first chapter in which I draw from the interviews with the policy actors. In the first part of the previous chapter I outlined how adapted neoliberal ideas were introduced in the higher education system through the private university Acts (henceforth called the Acts) in Bangladesh. This chapter explores how these neoliberal ideas were formulated in the Acts. In particular, I explore the processes of construction of neoliberal ideas in the Acts by analysing interviews with the policy actors who were involved in the formulation processes at the state level in Bangladesh.

I used thematic analysis to examine the interview transcripts. As previously stated in the methodology (Chapter 3), interviews were held with a purposively selected sample of 28 people identified as key drivers of changes in the Acts and the Strategic Plan. For the purpose of the discussion of this chapter, I analysed transcripts from 21 out of the 28 interviewees who were identified as the key policy actors of the development of the Acts. The other 7 interviewees were involved in only the Strategic Plan and I present my analysis of their interviews in the next chapter. My readings of several policy documents informed me that participants who had influenced the formation of the Acts, reflected five different groups of people: policy administrators, academics, politicians, journalists, and private sector people. These 21 interviewees comprised 5 policy administrators of the UGC and the Ministry of Education, 5 academics, 3 politicians, 4 journalists, and 4 private sector representatives including 2 business leaders and 2 former bureaucrats. These people were the ‘key movers’ of the changes.

Subsequently, a number of key movers moved to different positions. For example, 2 academics had moved from employment in the public universities to positions in the UGC, the state funded statutory body in the field of higher education. In addition, 3 academics had moved
from the positions of public universities to appointments as VCs in the private universities. Although I did not select any participants as founders, subsequently 4 private sector representatives had moved to the positions of the founders of private universities, and 2 of them took on positions in the Association of Private Universities of Bangladesh, a platform of the owners of the private universities. Moreover, one academic who had founded a university in which he had played the role of the VC, also had a position in the Association of the Private Universities. Thus, some participants were reflecting on both their own experiences and those linked with a range of positions they held in the formulation processes and afterwards.

The participants acted as individuals, but also as groups and they built alliances across groups. These people had moved through different professional roles and they used those professional roles and personal experiences to develop their ideas about the need to form private universities, but they came together and formed networks to influence change in the higher education field. The argument of this chapter is that through networks they shared their thinking and operated as a group. Ball (2008) argues that networks do not simply explain how and why the policy is constructed. Rather, the idea of ‘network governance’, which is emerged as new kind of governing mechanism within the policy formation process, can be useful in understanding how and why new kind of actors validate specific discourses, and are able to influence the enactment of the policy process (Ball & Junemann, 2012). To understand the policy formulation processes my analysis shows how and why different individuals came together and who came together with whom to make this shift in policy and practice. Consequently, through the thematic analysis I identify the commonality in the reasons for which they thought changes were needed.

As stated, I have looked at the processes of formulation which includes why, how and by whom different neoliberal ideas were brought into the Acts. I present my analysis under three broad sections. Under these three broad sections I develop themes using my conceptual framework. As previously stated in the conceptual framework (Chapter 2), scholars of policy borrowing models perceived that certain key concepts – internalised aspects, external references,
comparison and lessons learnt – are often used to justify policy borrowing from one context to another. The key concepts used in the policy borrowing models helped me to shape the themes derived from the policy actors interviewed. Additionally, I developed new themes from my own analysis of interviews with policy actors.

The first section – construction of the policy problems to enact the private university Acts – deals with the construction of policy problems as perceived by different policy actors. In the first section of this analysis, I explore how key drivers – academics from the public universities, politicians, and private sector representatives including former bureaucrats and business leaders – perceived the policy problems in the public higher education sector in the late 1980s. The key movers constructed the concept of ‘private university’ as a policy solution to these policy problems in Bangladesh in 1992. I then explore how the state level policy employees, academics who moved from employment in the public universities to positions in the UGC and the private universities, politicians, as well as a journalist identified concerns with private universities and constructed these as new policy problems. The policy problems as perceived by the policy employees and some academics who worked in the UGC and the private universities led them to consider different neoliberal ideas as policy solutions in the post 1998 Acts.

In the second section – context of constructing the problems to enable the Acts – I explore the processes of formulation of the neoliberal ideas in the Acts. As stated, a range of policy actors were involved in the policy formulation processes, and the analysis identifies how these policy actors knew each other, shared their understandings, found commonalities and differences in their views, drew on each other, and developed strategies to implement their ideas.

In the final section – ideas, positions and practices in the politics of changing the Acts – I explore the reasons given by the policy actors for adopting various neoliberal concepts in the Acts. This section explores the ‘micro-politics’ of different interest groups in the private higher education sector and why they shaped the Acts in the ways they did by adopting different ideas in the Acts.
5.2 Construction of the policy problems to enact the private university Acts

Bowe, Ball, and Gold (1992) developed the notion of a ‘continuous policy cycle’ in which they envisaged three primary policy contexts – the context of influence, the context of text production and the context of practice – to understand the policy making process. In the context of influence, the public policy is initiated and the interested groups struggle to construct the policy discourses. I have adopted the idea of ‘context to influence’ in this section to explore how the policy problems in public higher education sector in 1980s and in private higher education sector in the post 1998 were understood by different groups of policy actors and what the discourses of construction of those problems were, as understood by the policy actors interviewed. This section (5.2) setting out the overall argument, which will be detailed in subsequent sections.

As stated in the literature review (Chapter 2), Phillips and Ochs (2003) in their ‘cross national attraction’ model, argue that the ‘internal crisis’ of a country encourages the search for foreign models to solve the current, emerging or potential problems. Similar to what Phillips and Ochs argue, in the late 1980s, some of the academics of the public universities, some private sector representatives, and some politicians in this research understood that a range of problems existed in the state-run public universities, and they constructed different concepts regarding these problems. The key policy problems in the public universities as perceived by them were: lack of supply, political unrest and sliding quality, and the inability to meet global demands or compete with others in this respect. The policy problems in the public universities at that time were perceived to have affected the socio-economic and cultural aspects of the country as well.

This group of academics, private sector representatives, and politicians saw the policy problem as one that was inside the public university system, yet their solution was not to sort out the public university system. Instead, they looked for solutions outside the system, identifying the ‘private university’ as the solution. They constructed the problems through the solution that was being adopted by other neoliberal governments in other parts of world.
By the late 1990s policy administrators of the UGC and Ministry of Education, some academics who had movement into the UGC and into the private universities, and some of the ruling politicians began to see that the solution the key movers had created had led to further problems. They witnessed how the private universities had become driven by the market and had moved away from the purpose of universities to promote the ‘public good’. The solution of the problems in higher education in the 1980s to develop the private universities had not actually solved the problems in the higher education sector. Moreover, they perceived a deterioration in quality in the private higher education institutions and saw that in some cases the founders, who were not normally academics of these universities, had absolute control to determine the academic direction of the private universities. The journalists were in agreement with these groups of policy actors – the policy administrators at the Ministry of Education and the UGC, some academics in the private system and some of the politicians, and they understood the private universities were operating too free a market in education and had adopted business motives in post 1998, rather than education for the public good.

5.2.1 Not enough supply in public universities. Once Bangladesh became independent in 1971 the country had six public universities. Until 1985 the numbers of public universities had not changed, but five more public universities were added by 1992. The public universities were recognised as key academic institutes which imparted and dominated the higher education sector until the 1990s. Given the social system and people’s perceptions towards the public universities, some of the academics of public universities and private sector representatives, who were involved in the private university movement in the late 1980s, perceived that taking the initiative to create any alternative route in the higher education sector was quite a challenging task at that time. One of the private sector representatives, Mohosin, who had been involved in the establishment of a private university in 1996 and played the role of the VC of that university, admitted, “Even during that time the public sector was very much dominating and it was very tough to start higher education at private sector”.

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Those academics who had moved from the public universities to the UGC and to positions in the private universities, argued that although the demand for the higher education had increased since the country’s inception in 1971, the government’s response to that demand was inadequate. An academic, Prof Alimul, who had moved from the public university to the position of the Chairman in the UGC in 2007, argued, “The numbers of students passing intermediate grew enormously from 1972 to 1992”. He further added that to create more access to higher education the government planned to set up more universities and increased the enrolment capacities of the existing public universities. This group of academics, and the private sector representatives believed that the initiatives the government took about the expansion of public universities’ capacities was not adequate because of the large number of students who expected places in the higher education sector in the late 1980s.

The government agreed with what those academics who had moved to the UGC and the private universities, and private sector representatives argued, but the government was in fact more concerned about the students who had secured good academic qualifications, but would be unable to get access to higher education. The former education minister for the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) government during 1991-1996, Ahmed, explained, “But the difficulty started when too many students passed the HSC [Higher Secondary Certificate] examination. They secured good results, but public universities were not able to absorb them at all”. The politician of the ruling party at that time argued that the government tried to absorb a larger number of students by the expansion of the public universities' capacities, but the supply situation in this sector was slow to respond. Ahmed, continued, “We tried to increase the public universities’ capacities, but a good number of bright students were not able to get admission in the public universities”. The gap between the supply and demand for higher education led thousands of students to pursue higher education abroad.

Those academics who had moved from public to private universities, and the private sector representatives perceived that this problem of the limited resources in public universities
could persist for an uncertain period. Moreover, this group of academics underlined the
government’s inability to continue the support to the public universities. An academic, Prof
Johirul, who had moved from a public university to become the VC of a private university,
commented, “As public universities were funded by the government, the constraint in budget
resulted in the fact that public universities failed to cope with the increasing number of students
who had passed higher secondary and were waiting to enter the university life”. In that milieu
those academics who had involved in the formation of the private universities and private sector
representatives constructed the discourse of ‘sharing the cost’ of expansion through development
of the concept of ‘private university’. One of the private sector representatives, Mohosin, who
had been involved in the establishment of a private university after his retirement from the civil
bureaucracy in 1996, perceived how the cost of higher education could be shared between
different stakeholders: “Our higher education was highly subsidised, almost free … 95% of
public universities’ expenses were met by the tax-payers’ money … Consequently, thinking began
a few decades ago about whether the private sector could share this burden or not”.

5.2.2 Political unrest on public campuses and quality problems in public higher
education. The student movements in the public universities had played significant roles in
many revolutionary and political changes in Bangladesh. For example, in 1952, the student
movement was organised in order to establish Bengali as one of the state languages of what was
then Pakistan. Later, the student movements contributed to the nationalist movements and led to
the downfall of autocratic rulers and their decisions. All academics in this research acknowledged
the roles of student movements in the history of Bangladesh. An academic, Dr Asim, who had
moved from a public university to the role of Education Advisor to the government in the early
1980s and later served as the VC of a private university, stated, “Without the students of Dhaka
University the country would not be independent”.

Although all academics acknowledged the contributions of student movements in the
history of Bangladesh, those academics involved in the formation of the private university in the
late 1980s, perceived student movements in the public universities often resulted in campus violence throughout the 1980s. This group of academics saw the political unrest in the public universities as having gradually spread because of students’ and teachers’ involvement in national politics. Following the political unrest in the public universities, private sector people became concerned about the future of their children’s higher education in the public universities. The private sector people sometimes shared views with one another about how it might be possible to ensure a better academic environment for their children. Through sharing views with one another they recognised that many upper class and upper-middle class families were looking for an alternative route to higher education. One of the private sector representatives, Alam, a business leader who had moved to the position of the founder of a private university in 1992, narrated how parents appreciated the opportunity offered by the initiative to set up a private university. He said, “We often discussed about the violence that had unfolded in the public universities … they wanted us to create an alternative … they wanted us to set up a session jam free and … politics free campus”.

As I have argued, the academics that moved out of the public universities and private sector representatives believed that both students and many teachers of the public universities were actively involved in national politics in the 1980s. Academics who were moved to private universities from public universities also assumed such political activities by both students and teachers ruined the academic activities of the public universities. Of them one academic argued that those teachers who kept their distance from teacher politics often failed to bring about academic changes in higher education. An academic, Prof Nasim, who had moved from a public university to a private university, explained that he could not introduce a Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) programme in the public university because of the resistance from teachers. Another academic argued that the teachers of public universities had spent time in politics rather than in the development of academic learning. As stated by Dr Asim, who was moved to a private university, “Our Universities, particularly the University of Dhaka,
contributed to the formation of our national identity, but it was barely running as a university. The teachers were not involved in teaching; they did not like to go to the classroom”.

The academics that moved out of the public universities also presumed that the political unrest on public campuses caused many parents to send their children abroad for higher education. An academic, Dr Asim, who conducted research on student mobility from home to abroad, argued, “I found 16 out of 20 of those who secured brilliant results in the Dhaka Board in their HSC examination during 1982-83, went abroad for higher education”. However, private sector representatives speculated that study abroad was not easy for girls at that time. The private sector representatives perceived that although boys could manage their life alone in a foreign country, girls could not manage themselves in a different culture without family support. A private sector representative, Alam, a business leader who moved to the position of founder of a private university in 1992, explained, “Parents were concerned about their daughters’ education. They thought that the daughters’ life could be uncertain if they let them go alone. It would be almost impossible for a girl to manage herself in an unknown culture and society”.

Alongside the academics within the key movers group, the government led by the BNP in 1991 also showed concern that the ‘political unrest’ on the public campuses ruined academic activities and reduced the academic quality. The government agencies – the Ministry of Education and the UGC – revealed students had failed to complete degrees on time. A politician, Ahmed, who served as the Education Minister from 1991-1996, said, “Students spent at least seven years for a three-year honours degree … Thus, many students could not attend the competitive public job exams since they did not complete the degrees on time”. The ruling politicians also believed that many students were required to get another degree to aim for a postgraduate or equivalent degree from a foreign university because of the downward sliding quality in the public universities. A politician, Ahmed, continued, “In our times, a student holding a master’s degree from Dhaka University could start a PhD degree straightaway in any university
in the UK … but the situation changed after the country’s independence. The quality of higher education gradually declined”.

The perception that political unrest in the public universities caused the slide in quality helped the key movers to construct the policy discourse of the ‘politics-free-university’ to ensure a high quality education for the next generations. Interviewed academics who were moved to the private universities from the public universities made it clear that they believed teaching in a private university could be more meaningful and rewarding than in a public university. An academic, Prof Kowsar, who had moved from a public university to the role of VC of a leading private university, showed how such political unrest in public universities motivated his other colleagues to be involved in the private university movement.

I shared my views about private university with the VC of the University of Dhaka. He was gravely annoyed by teacher and student politics. One day, he said with a deep frustration, “Let us leave this place and start running a private university. Teaching in a private university would be better than we are doing here.

5.2.3 Public higher education not able to meet demand for global competition. Those academics, who had moved from public to private universities, questioned the effectiveness of the teaching-learning methods the public universities used in the 1980s. They argued that the public universities had not brought modern teaching-learning instruction into the classroom and that teachers used very traditional and outdated curriculum, and teaching-learning methods that required students to memorise rather than to learn something in relation to practical life. For instance, an academic, Dr Asim, who was involved in the development of a private university and played the role of the VC there, argued, “Higher education at that time was too memory-based … our higher education was not linked with the practical life. It failed to interplay between the practical life and philosophical thought”.

All academics within the key movers group in the late 1980s perceived that the higher education sector in Bangladesh dominated by public institutions could not prepare its citizens to
meet market demands. Of them one academic, Dr Asim, conducted a survey on entrepreneurs in the late 1980s about what types of graduates the entrepreneurs expected for their organisations and the research revealed that the business-related degrees were the degrees most in demand in the labour markets. As Dr Asim argued, “I conducted a survey on 360 organisations in Dhaka and Chittagong metropolitans... to know what graduates they are expecting … The survey revealed business graduates are the most in demand in the near future in Bangladesh”.

After publication of these survey results, although public universities were perceived to be sceptical about introducing market-related courses, the academics within the key movers group observed that some public universities had started offering degrees in market-related subjects. Again, Dr Asim, explained, “When I shared the findings with the VC of Dhaka University, who had shelved the Business Programme for the last five years, he became surprised … After this survey he opened the Business Faculty in Dhaka University”. The newly elected government, BNP, in 1991 also found that the capacities of public universities in offering market-related subjects were limited, and this level of capacity triggered many students to move abroad for this type of degree. The education minister at that time, Ahmed, said, “Only a few public universities were offering BBA and Pharmacy degrees at that time. Some bright students started to go abroad because of aiming for market-oriented subjects like Bachelor of Business Administration and Pharmacy”.

The failure of the public universities to compete in the global markets helped those academics, who had moved to private universities, and private sector representatives, to pursue how to relate the higher education system with the global demands. They emphasised that addressing the need to expand higher education through private universities could also help the growth of the economy. As one of the participants, Mohosin, who was involved in establishing a Private University in 1996 after his retirement from civil bureaucracy, argued, “The global world was far ahead, our country needed to be moved faster … needed huge human resources to expand the economy. The public universities were unable to generate a huge number of human resources because of their limited resources”. The problem about the failure of public universities
meeting the global demands helped the key movers to construct the discourse of ‘private university’ to meet the needs of the country’s economy. Another academic, Prof Kowsar, who had moved from a public university to the position of the VC of a private university, argued, “When we realised public universities were unable to meet the increasing demand for market related degrees … this demand needed to be fulfilled by the private sector”.

5.2.4 Brain-drain, ‘currency-drain’, and ‘dis-integration’ of local culture. The policy problems as perceived by the key movers to exist in the public universities in the 1980s were also seen to lead to socio-economic and cultural problems in the society. For example, the academics who had moved to the private universities presumed that the limited capacities in the public universities encouraged students’ mobility to move from home to abroad. They argued that this mobility lead to a ‘brain-drain’ of human resources from the country.

Although the academics, who had moved to the private universities, argued that there were problems of brain-drain, they did not have the exact figure on how many students had moved to other countries for higher education. An academic, Dr Asim, commented, “We did not have the exact figure of these outgoing students”. However, they presumed that more than one hundred-thousand students moved to different countries for higher education at that time. Prof Johirul, another academic who had moved from a public university to become the VC of a private university in 2001, noted, “At a point at that time [during 1987-1991] reports aired that around 100,000 students were studying in India”.

Although all academics within the key movers group found that a large number of students were studying in India at that time, one among them identified that the socioeconomic, geographic and educational factors of students influenced where students would study and who had access to study abroad. He saw this issue of access as an issue of social class division. As an academic, Dr Asim commented, “I …found that many urban middle class students, O-Level and A-Level students, who could afford a western education, went to USA or UK or other western countries, but other lower middle class students went to India for higher education”.
All academics argued that higher education in India was low in quality. They also argued that the Indian government set up many Colleges located in lower line states in India in the late 1980s to attract Bangladeshi students. For example, another academic, Prof Kowsar, stated, “Thousands of Bangladeshi students were studying in India, in lower line states like Jharkhand, Meghalaya, and Orissa. The standard of these colleges was not at world standard”. The argument the academics developed about the problem in low quality education in India was echoed by the ruling politicians at that time. The then education minister, Ahmed, explained, “Degree awarding colleges started in India for conferring the degree on the Bangladeshi students … The degrees they provided were not like world-class. So these degrees were not useful in the competitive market”.

Four academics also perceived that it caused a loss of foreign currency, whether students studied in India or in any other foreign country. They argued that such trends increased pressure on the economy of the country as a foreign degree was expensive. Prof Alimul, who had moved from a public university to the position of the Chairman of the UGC, argued, “Whichever country it was … that would mean to lose a lot of foreign currency”. They also presumed that many families could not continue the financial support to their children for higher education abroad.

As argued above, one academic, Dr Asim, who saw the issue of access as an issue of social class division, argued that Indian higher education was less expensive compared to Bangladeshi higher education at that time. For instance, Dr Asim, who had been involved in the private university movement and later became the VC of a private university in 1993, stated, “The Indian higher education was cheap … the Indian higher education and living costs were less expensive, they [students] needed perhaps tk. 15000. They could not afford higher education in Bangladesh as they came from a lower middle class background”. This academic interviewed perceived that the student mobility to India created socio-cultural problems in Bangladesh when the students returned. He pointed out that these socio-cultural problems were more destructive
than financial problems incurred by study abroad. For him, those students who went to India for higher education lived with Indian families to reduce the expenses. In spending time with an Indian family these students became culturally reoriented. As an academic, Dr Asim, explained:

These thousand students started to learn two things in India: Indian higher education and Indian culture, particularly ‘Hindu’ culture. They started to practice Hindu's culture in their family and in their society, like they practised calling their sister didi [In Bengali Muslim culture a sister is called bon whereas in Hindu culture a sister is called didi] …

Whether Bangladeshi Muslim students were doing worship of Hindu's God, their knowledge about Muslim religion and culture was sliding gradually. They would be remaining a Muslim that was right, some of them might celebrate Muslim festivals too, but they were reoriented culturally.

The key movers – academics who moved from public to private universities and private sector people – noted the following as problems: inadequate supply, inability to meet the demand for global competition, and the political unrest of the public campuses as well as the declining quality in the public universities that played out in socioeconomic and cultural arenas of the country. In justifying the development of the idea of private university, some of the key movers also drew on Islamic religious sentiment in which they portrayed how students, who had pursued higher education in India, had become culturally reoriented away from Islam. In that context these key movers constructed the policy discourse of ‘saving human resources, the economy and cultural integrity of the country’. To solve the problems existing in the public sector they looked outside the public universities and constructed the discourse of ‘private university’. These key movers started to use their ties to influence the government to create an alternative route in higher education to save the country. The ruling politician at that time, Ahmed, who had played the role of the Minister of Education from 1991 to 1996, described how these academics and private sector people comprising business leaders and former bureaucrats influenced the government to allow private universities in Bangladesh, “They [some academics, business leaders
and former civil bureaucrats] told me, “Sir, if we don’t start private universities immediately, our students continue to go abroad resulting in a huge loss of the country’s currency”. The former education minister, Ahmed, also hinted that key movers had warned the government that the failure to improve the quality of higher education in Bangladesh had led these students to go abroad.

5.2.5 Too profit-driven activities of private universities. In 1992, the government allowed private universities to expand higher education. However, between 1992 and 2010, policy administrators of the UGC and the Ministry of Education, four academics who had moved from the public universities to positions in the UGC and the private universities, journalists, and politicians perceived that the private universities were creating further problems. The academics who had moved from the public universities to the UGC pointed to the ‘mushroom growth’ of private universities causing its own problems in the quality and governance system. The politicians and journalists argued that most of the private universities were running with a business motive. For example, a politician, Ahmed, who had served as the Minister of Education from 1991 to 1996, commented, “Wherever you go you will see a private university. Because of the huge number of private universities, it became a money-making machine”. One of the journalists, Protik, commented, “At least 40 private universities were established in Dhaka city”.

The policy administrators of the UGC and the Ministry of Education and the academics, who had moved from the public universities to the UGC, anticipated that many founders of the private universities used the loopholes in the earlier Act of 1992 to run the private university as a business firm. The policy administrators argued that they often received allegations about business activities of some private universities. A policy administrator of the UGC, Nayan, explained, “They [some founders] used the universities for every purpose … after getting government approval the authorities abused the universities… they opened courses without having teachers in these areas”. These interviewees from the UGC and the Ministry of Education also argued that the earlier Act of 1992 allowed anyone to set up university and to be the VC of
the university. The journalists were in agreement with these academics and policy administrators. One of the journalists, Nasir, who had produced reports on the private universities, stated, “Many founders used loopholes of the Act 1992 to run universities through family members”.

Although one academic and private sector representatives, who were involved in the establishment of the private universities, denied the allegations about the business motives of private universities in the post 1998 period, two among private sector representatives, who had become involved in the private universities after their retirement from civil bureaucracy, agreed with the policy administrators. The private sector representatives, who had agreed with policy administrators, spoke off record and rephrased their comments for on the record in a way that admitted these were problems in the private universities, but they argued that it was not the case for all private universities. For example, a private sector representative, Zafor, who became a founder of a private university after his retirement as a civil bureaucrat and went on to become President of the Association of Private Universities of Bangladesh, commented, “I heard about a university that the chairman of the board of trustees has been serving the role of the VC. His wife and son have been playing the roles of Pro-VC and Registrar respectively, but this is not happening everywhere”. However, this group of private sector representatives claimed that the early founders really wanted to expand higher education through this sector, however, as more organisations joined the sector after 1998 unscrupulous people were beginning to use higher education as ‘business tool’. Again Zafor perceived, “Those who were involved in expanding higher education through private sector, really wanted to expand higher education and some of them I don’t wish to let them down, but I must say, were profit motivated”.

Similarly, two academics, who had moved from the employment of the public universities to positons of VCs in the private universities, perceived that the involvement of family members in the private universities had intensified the development of higher education as a business in the post 1998 period. They argued that the education business was limited to a few families across the country until 1998. However, after 1998 many families became involved in this higher
education business. For instance, Prof Johirul, who had become the VC of a private university, described how some families invested in private universities for the business purposes in the post 1998 period. He explained, “… there was a group of universities where family members invested money and expected a return from them. The extent of this business was not significant till 1998”. Other academics, who were involved in the UGC, suggested that the business motives of some founders stimulated others to be involved in the same activities. For instance, an academic, Professor Alimul, commented, “…when some universities were able to attract students, they started to do business. Some other universities noticed that and encouraged adopting it”.

The policy administrators, academics of UGC, and politicians, further argued that the higher fees became the key sources of money for the private universities. The politician, Ohedul, who had played the role of the Education Minister in the post 1998 period, argued, “Students could get higher education from the public universities by spending tk. 12 a month, whereas private universities charged more than tk. five lacs [five hundred thousand] … Some rich people could afford, but others could not”. Some politicians also viewed that many founders withdrew money from the reserve funds without anyone being concerned, and used these funds for their business. As another politician, Ahmed, who also served as the Education Minister, argued, “Most of the founders used universities funds for their business firms”. In contrast, two private sector representatives, who played the roles of the founders of the private universities after their retirement from civil bureaucracy, admitted the criticism about the higher fees, but they justified the collection of these higher fees because many universities used the high income for the development of the universities. However, one among private sector representatives recognised that it might not be socially acceptable to take advantage of parents’ abilities to pay high fees in the Bangladeshi context. As a private sector representative, Zafor, who was served a role as the President of the Association of Private Universities, commented, “Some people have established these universities and have taken full benefit of the ability of guardians to pay, but have not used the money for universities’ development. I would not comment whether this was right or wrong, but it was bad in the social context”.
The analysis in this section suggests four academics, who had moved from the public universities to the UGC and to private universities, the policy administrators, politicians, and journalists interviewed believed that from 1998 onwards the private universities were becoming more involved in business-led activities. They also argued that such business-led activities led to a popular perception among people that most of the private universities were there to make money rather than offer quality education. Again, Prof Alimul said, “Except for four or five private universities, the rest of the private universities were business motivated higher than educational institutions”. Thus, a large number of policy actors emphasised that there was a need to ensure private universities would be run purely for academic purposes. For instance, the policy administrator of the UGC, Nayan, said, “The private universities were established by the private initiators, but after one stage private universities have become the public institutions because of students’ money”. In other words, these advocates of the private system saw that the problems were largely the result of the wrong people leading, and that private universities should address the public good.

5.2.6 Declining quality in private higher education. The private sector representatives, who were involved in the private universities, argued that from the very beginning some leading private universities focused on how to create a good reputation and to attract students. They further argued that some leading private universities adopted a western, in particular an American model, developed collaborative programs with foreign universities, and hired reputed academics from home and abroad. One of the private sector representatives, Mohosin, who was involved in establishing a university in 1996 after his retirement from civil bureaucracy, explained, “Almost all universities adopted the western model … From the beginning, we strictly managed semesters, adopted an English medium curriculum, and ensured a non-political environment in the campus”. However, academics who had moved from the public universities to the UGC believed that the business-led activities contributed to a reduction in the quality of the private universities in the post 1998 period. As such an academic, Prof Khairul,
argued, “As most of the private universities were motivated in doing business, they could not emphasise the quality issue”.

In the interviews, several groups of policy actors identified different interrelated factors that were behind the deterioration of quality in the private universities. For example, the politicians who had served as the Minister of Education argued that most of the private universities could not ensure a proper academic environment for the students over the years. These politicians commented that although private universities were expected to have their own academic and physical infrastructure within five years of their establishment according to the earlier Act 1992, most of the private universities had failed to comply with this condition. As one of these politicians, Ohedul, a Minister of Education in the post 1998 period, argued, “Then 4 to 5 private universities met this condition. Although some universities were established more than 10-15 years ago, they did not meet the conditions of the Private University Act 1992”. The politicians also noted that instead of having their own academic buildings, a significant number of private universities conducted academic activities through rental floors shared with other business firms. The politicians argued that from the beginning private universities relied on part-time teachers to reduce the expenses of the enterprise. Another politician, Ahmed, who had also served as the Minister of Education, said, “One of the main reasons behind this situation was the scarcity of permanent teachers … all private universities hired public universities’ teachers”.

Policy administrators, and academics who had moved from the public universities to the UGC were in agreement with the politicians, but they argued that the UGC and the Ministry of Education often received allegations against some private universities about not holding classes regularly and sometimes students were awarded degrees without appearing in the examinations. For example, Prof Khairul, who was a UGC member, argued, “Some universities did not ensure minimum facilities for students … We even received complaints about some universities where students were not required to attend classes and the examinations”. They also reported that many universities opened ‘branch campuses’ unlawfully across the country. As a policy administrator of
the Ministry of the Education, Podder, explained, “Once I travelled to a remote area in the country, I found a private university offering courses through branch campuses. Students were just needed to come to sign the papers only”.

Although the journalists were in agreement with the policy administrators, academics of the UGC and politicians, they perceived that the lack of qualified administrators, and outer campuses operated by foreign universities across the country also contributed in sliding the quality of the private universities. A journalist, Plabon, argued, “Anyone became the VC of a private university without having higher degrees and teaching experiences”. Another journalist, Rason, who had produced reports on outer campuses operated by foreign universities, stated, “I found that in the name of foreign universities, hundreds of outer campuses were operated across the country illegally without having qualified teachers and proper academic infrastructures”.

In contrast, private sector representatives who had been involved in the private universities from the 1990s, perceived the problem in quality differently. They argued that many private universities could not afford full-time and qualified teachers because of their financial constraints. They agreed that the lack of qualified teachers in the private universities affected the quality. As Mohosin, who became involved in a private university in 1996, commented, “Another problem was the lack of quality faculties”. They also admitted the concern about the branch campus with no qualified teaching staff and academic facilities contributed to the slide in quality of the private universities. Another participant, Zafor, a former President of the Association of Private Universities, commented, “The quality also deteriorated through opening branch campuses here and there”.

Failing to ensure teaching-learning facilities by the private universities in the post 1998 period assisted the policy administrators of the UGC and Ministry of Education and academics who had moved from public universities to the positions of the UGC, to construct the policy discourse of ‘private universities could not be trusted to ensure quality’. At that point they emphasised the need to improve the quality of private higher education. An academic of a public
university, Prof Khairul, who had moved to the UGC, said, “The UGC and Ministry of Education were thinking for a long time how to stop this worsening situation that existed in the private universities”. To improve the quality the policy administrators emphasised the need to bring different ideas, for example, an external quality assurance body, into the private universities.

5.2.7 Governance not by academics, but by founders. The policy administrators of the UGC and the Ministry of Education argued that the earlier Private University Act 1992 was not rigorously formulated. They perceived that the earlier Act 1992 contained some loopholes and inconsistencies that had led to operational limitations. They argued that legal and statutory limits shaped a founder-controlled management system. For instance, the policy administrator of the Ministry of Education, Azgor, identified some operational limitations in the earlier Act 1992: “There was no idea of board of trustees in the previous Act 1992, but only an idea of board of governance where a university could be controlled by an individual”. Two private sector representatives, who became involved in the private universities after their retirements from the civil bureaucracy, also admitted their concern about the absolute power of founders in the private universities. For example, a private sector representative, Mohosin, who was involved in a private university after his retirement from civil bureaucracy in 1996, commented: “The Act 1992 was vague in the sense that the entrepreneur philanthropists were empowered to dominate the university administrative bodies significantly”.

The academics who had moved to the positions of the UGC argued that in a founder controlled governance system, the VC and other senior officials enjoyed no power in the decision making processes of the private universities. The academics at the UGC also believed that the previous Act 1992 did not allow the VC to be the chairman in administrative and executive bodies – the Syndicate – of the universities. An academic Prof Alimul, who had moved from a public university to the position of the Chairman in the UGC, stated that the VC of the private universities enjoyed a low status and had no specific academic and executive roles in the decision making processes. As he explained, “The VC could not take part in any academic or
administrative decision. The sponsors, the owners, the pioneers and the board of governance took all kinds of decisions”.

Three academics who had moved into the positions of the VCs of the private universities also identified the earlier Act 1992 and did not define who could be the VC of the private universities and thus, anyone could be appointed in that position. These two academics perceived that the founders often selected someone as the VC who would carry out the founders’ decisions in the universities without question. They also argued that the founders often insisted the VC and other top officials should carry out unlawful tasks, such as issuing certificates in exchange for money. For example, an academic who had moved from a public university to the position of the VC of a private university, Prof Johirul, gave an example, “One of my students became the VC of a private university … the founders asked him to sign 150 certificates. He did not know to whom these certificates were given…when he refused to sign he was dismissed”.

In contrast, private sector representatives and an academic who became involved in the private universities and also played roles in the Association of Private Universities, identified that the UGC was established by the government in 1973 when there was no idea of the ‘private university’. They understood that the purpose of the UGC was to ensure the grants and development of the public universities. However, the UGC and the Ministry of Education as government agencies were increasingly being expected to handle the governance related problems of the private universities. For example, the former President of the Association of Private Universities, Zafor, argued, “The UGC and the Ministry of Education tried to control private universities. But there was a problem in the UGC charter …they did not have the legal basis to look after the private universities”. Rather, this group of policy actors argued that the earlier Act 1992 was a vehicle to ensure the autonomy of the private universities. An academic, Prof Nasim, who had founded a Private University and been the Secretary of the Association of Private Universities, commented, “The Act 1992 was liberal enough to allow a democratic autonomous university in this country”.
The policy actors, who worked in the UGC and the Ministry of Education, argued that the private universities became involved in unlawful activities because of the lack of monitoring mechanisms. They further pointed out that the Act 1992 did not ensure a legal basis for the Ministry of Education and the UGC to monitor the private universities’ activities. A policy administrator of the UGC, Nayan, explained the problems the UGC faced in monitoring the private universities’ activities: “If we asked them to audit the financial expenditure and send back the report to us, they did not do that. If problems like dismissing staff without proper reasons were there, the UGC had nothing to do with that”. These UGC members viewed that the power the founders enjoyed through the previous Acts helped to create a ‘patron-client’ relationship between the founders and staff of the private universities. To solve this problem, this group of policy actors, mainly comprising members of the UGC, constructed the discourse of ‘sharing power’ between different stakeholders. Again, Nayan explained the reasons behind the incorporation of the idea of ‘sharing power’ between different stakeholders in the private universities: “We were trying to reach a balance in relationships among all parties … the owners funded and thus, they would have power to say about universities’ matters. But we also recognised others’ contributors … and should keep their positions in the universities”. They identified that the VC as executive and academic officer in the universities needs to have enough power to run the universities. Prof Khairul, a member of the UGC, commented: “We found that the VC and other staff need to have more freedom to make academic decisions”. To ensure the VC and other top officials’ roles were recognised in the decision making process, this group of policy actors argued for a change in law to restructure various administrative and executive bodies in the private universities.

The above section has shown that key movers groups such as academics of public universities and private sector representatives in the late 1980s constructed the problems in the public universities and formed the idea of the private university as a policy solution to those problems. Regarding the post-1998 period policy administrators, academics who had moved from public universities to the UGC and to the private universities, and politicians identified
some types of problems in the private universities and constructed several global ideas as policy solutions to these problems. The journalists were in agreement with these groups of policy actors who identified problems with the private sector in the post 1998 period. In the next section I show the context of constructing the problems to enable the Acts.

5.3  **Context of constructing the problems to enable the Acts**

According to Phillips (2004), the policy problems in a country create the conditions to search for successful approaches elsewhere. Many scholars drawing on policy borrowing models have studied the different ways policy is transferred from one context to another (Phillips & Ochs, 2003; Steiner-Khamsi, 2006). As discussed in the literature review (Chapter 2), policy makers often use the ‘external reference’ or the ‘best practices’ or the ‘international standard’ as comparison to justify adopting an idea from one context to another (Steiner-Khamsi, 2006). In this section I trace what Foucault (1984) calls the ‘archaeology’ (see for reference, Gutting, 1989) of how some key movers – academics and private sector representatives – constructed the idea of ‘private university’ as a policy solution to the problems that they perceived in the public higher education sector in the 1980s, and how they influenced the policy administrators of the UGC and the Ministry of Education and politicians to introduce the idea of the private university in Bangladesh. This section also traces how the policy administrators of the UGC and the Ministry of Education and the academics involved in the UGC used ‘lessons learnt’ as a discursive policy strategy to incorporate various neoliberal ideas in the post 1998 Acts to solve the problems that emerged in the private universities.

5.3.1  **Referencing ‘American’ to enact the idea of private university.** As argued in the previous section, academics of the public universities, and private sector representatives comprising former civil bureaucrats and business leaders constructed the idea of ‘private university’ as a policy solution to the problems of supply, political unrest on campuses, slide in quality and external relevancy of the degrees that existed in the public higher education in 1980s. For example, a private sector representative, Mohosin, who moved from the civil bureaucracy to
become involved in a private university in 1996, commented, “… it was realised because we created a felt need. Policy actors outside the government and the government officials felt the urge to develop the private sector to hold quality and increase the capacities of higher education”.

Initially, the idea of ‘private university’ was initiated at the individual rather than at the group or the government level in the late 1980s. Academics of the public universities and former bureaucrats started to work on it separately at the individual level. An academic, Prof Kowsar, who was involved in the development of a private university at that time, noted: “… there were some active people who worked separately … Dr Alimullah Miah, Dr Majeed Khan, Muslehuddin Ahmad worked a lot at the beginning”. These key movers came from different professional groups and had their own reasons to be involved in the private university movement. Some of them were leading academics, and some of them had worked in the government bureaucracy for a long time. As they were from different influential groups, they built a strong social network in and around the ruling political parties and the government. For example, a politician, Ahmed, who had served as the Minister of Education in the early 1990s, described these key movers and their networks that worked in and around the ruling political parties and the government:

A group of people developed this concept … Muslehuddin, who started his career in teaching at the University of Dhaka for a while, but later joined the civil service and had vast experience on how to run an institution … Another person, Dr Syed Ali Ahsan, he graduated from the Cambridge University… I trusted in him. I knew him from my student life. He was a brilliant student of the English Department at the Dhaka University and he secured good results at the Cambridge as well. … Dr Majeed Khan … I knew him from my student life when he went for a PhD in the USA… Prof Patwory at Law Department in the University of Dhaka was also personally known to me. He was friendly and well educated … Prof Alimullah, who was the Director of the IBA [Institute of Business Administration] at Dhaka University. I also knew him personally.
To develop the idea of ‘private university’ in Bangladesh these key movers used what Steiner-Khamisi (2002) describes as ‘external reference’ that they referred to as the ‘American reference’. For example, Prof Nasim, an academic who became involved in the private university movement, described how the concept of private university came into his mind when he travelled to Kansas, USA, in 1989, from a conference in Montreal, Canada. He anticipated that the Kansas State University, one of the leading universities in the USA, had been working for the last one and a half centuries in the country’s development. He perceived the Kansas State University as a source of modern civilisation, but universities in Bangladesh were barely keeping up with national development. He stated:

Then this idea came to me that if the Kansas State University could be useful to the state of Kansas, why would Bangladeshi universities not be useful to the country. I challenged myself, although I went for a rest… I spoke with about 40 academics in Kansas … Then I wrote a concept paper about it … It was an expression of my frustration and a creative expression on how it could be transformed into an idea … I told them that I would like to be a part of the civilisation that you have created in the Kansas over 150 years. Could we be benefitted from it?

Similarly, private sector representatives, for example, former government bureaucrats, also used the ‘American reference’ to develop their own form of ‘private university’. A private sector representative, Alam, who was a business leader and became involved in this movement through the influence of a former bureaucrat, described how that former bureaucrat constructed the ‘private university’ idea based on the ‘American reference’. He explained that the former bureaucrat often looked at the American system and consulted with some charters of American universities to develop his own idea of the ‘private university’ with a home country perspective. As Alam commented, “Once we became involved in this movement inspired by Musleuddin Ahmad [former bureaucrat] we wanted to look at some charters of foreign universities, in particular, how the private universities in the USA were operated”. The former bureaucrat
communicated with some universities in the USA, including Harvard University, and requested them to share their charters to get ideas on how these renowned universities were developed and how these ideas could be used to develop the rules for the ‘board of trustees’, corporations and president’s office of a private university in the home country context.

Higher education as private provision was not a new idea in Bangladesh as many philanthropists set up Colleges offering higher education during the Medieval and British periods (1757-1947) (Kabir, 2013; Kabir & Webb, 2016). Once Bangladesh became independent in 1971, the government nationalised private colleges because of their leading roles in higher education. In addition, the government contributed in terms of finance to many private colleges. As I have argued, key movers perceived the danger that the adaptation of the ‘private university’ idea in the public dominated system in Bangladesh in 1980s could be contested. Consequently, the key movers used what Steiner-Khamsi (2002) calls an ‘international reference’ to legitimise the introduction of the private university in Bangladesh.

Influenced by the academics of the public universities and private sector representatives, the policy administrators of the UGC at that time also used the ‘American reference’ as authority to legitimise introducing the ‘private university’ idea from the home country perspective. For example, in 1991, when the policy administrators of the UGC approached the government to allow the idea of private university in Bangladesh they also drew on the ‘American reference’. The policy administrator of the UGC identified the USA as the pioneer of the state university, but also as having introduced the private university to meet the demands of the society. The policy administrator of the UGC, Nadim, explained how they used the ‘American reference’ to justify adopting the concept of private university in Bangladesh:

Once upon a time the USA had only an idea of state university … later, private universities have been functioning over there … these private universities have been functioning to meet the demands of the society. So, our higher education also needs to be
kept abreast of times … We had that kind of justification to introduce the private university in Bangladesh.

The key movers developed the idea of ‘private university’ in the late 1980s, but by 1992 the government had adopted the new policy. In developing the new policy, the politicians and the policy administrators of the Ministry of Education drew on the ‘American reference’. They understood the USA as the pioneer of this concept. They also found that these private universities could meet the demands of the markets. They developed the argument that Bangladesh as a developing country should have at least some private universities for the development of the country. The politician, Ahmed, who served as Minister of Education from 1991 to 1996, explained how the government justified adopting the private university based on the ‘American reference’: “America is a hundred times larger than us and had more than thousands private universities. If they could have, why can’t we have? … If they kept quality, we will also be able to keep the quality of private universities”.

5.3.2 Building networks locally and internationally. As argued above, Ball and Junemann (2012) conceptualise the term ‘network’ as a form of governance in understanding how and why policy networks bring new kinds of actors in and influence the policy formation process. Lingard and Sellar (2013, p. 273) argue that “Ball and Junemann focus particularly on the relationships between, and the new influence of, individuals and organizations that span the boundaries between government, philanthropy and business (especially financial capital)”.

Similarly here, there was evidence of policy networks that brought together the academics and private sector representatives groups, who had been involved in the private university movement in the late 1980s. Together these different policy actors built up networks within and outside the country to develop the idea of the private university, to influence influential people in the society to be engaged in their movement, and to influence the government and the ruling parties to allow them to start private universities in Bangladesh.
Several key movers built up ‘international networks’ through using their personal and professional links. They used these networks to develop the idea of private university and to influence the government to allow private universities in Bangladesh. For example, Prof Nasim, who worked as the Director of a leading business institute in a public university in 1989, used his professional and personal links to build up an international network. He shared his views about the private university with some academics of the Kansas State University when he visited the USA on a World Bank sponsored program. He took support from his host professor of the Kansas State University to set up a link with that University. He also used his personal link as a Rotarian to develop the collaborative program with the Kansas State University to start a private university in Bangladesh. As Prof Nasim explained:

I was a Rotarian. I went to the Kansas Rotary Club to meet the district government of the Kansas Rotary Club. I shared my views about the private university under collaboration with the Kansas State University. I knew the Dean of Kansas was also a Rotarian … The next day the Dean came to my room and gave the ‘formal consent letter’. In the letter it was said ‘the Kansas State University would be happy to take part in this idea’.

As I have argued, private sector people including former bureaucrats and businessmen also developed the idea of ‘private university’. As a private sector representative, Alam, who became involved in the private university movement influenced by a former bureaucrat in 1990, said: “He [a former bureaucrat] influenced us to be involved in the private university movement … he also organised other international communities to be involved in this movement”. Private sector people also used personal and family links to build up international networks. As this business leader, Alam continued, “One of his [former bureaucrat] sons who studied at Harvard University had an American friend whose father was one of the Deans of the Kansas State University in the USA. He [former bureaucrat] often shared his views about private university with that family friend”. Through the family link that former bureaucrat contacted the Kansas State University and signed a ‘memorandum of understanding and cooperation’
agreement to help their future joint efforts in setting up a private university in Bangladesh. Further, that former bureaucrat travelled to the USA and met all contacts that had been set up by his son through Harvard with other leading universities to develop a private university charter and design the curricula.

Analysis of the transcripts of the interviews suggests that those academics and private sector representatives, who were involved in the private university movement, worked separately to set up their own ‘private university’ through ‘international networks’. Initially, most of these key movers believed that they could run their own form of university if they could have a ‘memorandum of understanding and agreements’ with other foreign universities. These key movers noted that initially they wanted to run private universities in Bangladesh as branch campuses of foreign universities. Thus, most of them worked on how to set up ‘joint venture’ proposals with some foreign universities. However, at one stage they realised the degrees they offered by their own form of private universities located in Bangladesh needed to be recognised by the government of Bangladesh to allow their graduates to enter job markets. An academic, Prof Kowsar, explained the reason behind seeking the government support: “When we started on this issue seriously, we felt the lack of authority to make a proper beginning … Without legislative support and recognition from the government, we were unable to approach”.

As previously argued, most of the key movers developed the idea of private university separately drawing on the ‘American reference’. Some of them involved ‘international networks’ in the development of the idea. However, one academic among them shared his own form of idea with other private sector people who were involved in this movement, but such interactions did not continue for a long time. For example, an academic, Dr Asim sometimes shared his idea with a former bureaucrat. He said, “Another person was with me … He was an ex-civil servant … Often we talked about the idea of private university. Once I developed he also started to develop it”.
Although most of the key movers developed their own form of private university, within these key mover groups some academics and private sector people sought to build the ‘internal social networks’ to attract other influential people to be involved in their movement to influence the government. An academic, Prof Alimul, who had moved from a public university to the position of the Chairman of UGC, commented: “They [some leading academics and private sector people] had their own idea. They invited others to be involved in their own ideas”. To build up the ‘internal social networks’, private sector people invited other professionals to social events where they discussed how they could be engaged in their idea. A private sector representative, Alam, described, “I was invited in a tea party where our other colleagues discussed how we could be involved in the private university initiated by a former bureaucrat”. The internal social networks also helped to shape their own form of ideas about what courses they could offer, how to generate funds, and how to influence the government to allow their own university in Bangladesh.

To influence the government both those academics and private sector people, who were involved in the formation of the private universities, used their internal and international networks. For example, an academic, Prof Nasim, described how he used his network with the American Ambassador to Bangladesh to influence the Military Government in 1989 to allow his own form of private university in Bangladesh:

I knew the American Ambassador through my Rotarian work. So, I requested him for a meeting … I told him, “I want you to create the social influence on the President of Bangladesh to challenge all chaos we are having in the higher education field. We need an alternative service delivery mechanism to bring long-term reform”.

Prof Nasim presumed that a powerful country like the USA would have an enormous influence on Bangladesh. He perceived that the American Ambassador to Bangladesh influenced the government when the Military Government admitted the demand for private universities in 1990. As Prof Nasim continued:
The result was perceptible within a month. In 1990, the President, Hossain Muhammad Ershad, declared in a meeting with the UGC that the private university could be established in Bangladesh. He directed the UGC to frame the law. So this was the real crack. The USA Ambassador was the most catalytic person.

The academics and private sector people also used their personal, professional and political links to influence the ruling politicians, the UGC and the Ministry of Education to allow their own private university. For example, Dr Asim, an academic of a public university who served as an education advisor to the successive government, explained, “I influenced the government on my personal level. I met the Prime Minister and the Education Minister to explain the higher education scenario, and requested them to allow private universities to save our generation”. Private sector representatives also used their professional links and approached the government to allow private universities. A private sector representative, Alam, who was involved in the movement through the influence of a former bureaucrat, stated, “We continuously met the Education minister, and education secretary to convince them to allow the private university. We also communicated with other people who had some influence on the government”.

In influencing the policy administrators of the government, one academic used ‘regional’ links from where they originated. As Prof Nasim stated, “I went to the education secretary, who was the son of our professor in Victoria College … I advised him to constitute a small task force. I am willing to volunteer to frame a draft”. Despite using different networks these key movers often faced difficulties in influencing the policy administrators of the Ministry of Education. Several key movers commented that the policy administrators in the government were sceptical about the idea of private university. Therefore the successive governments took a long time to adopt the idea of private university. Prof Nasim, described what the education minister had told when he approached him, “Whatever you are telling me, when I go to the secretariat, the secretary will tell me different. He will convince me “no, this is not right sir””. 
Through the networks these key academics and private sector representatives brought different influential positions together, forming their own networks and bringing their own ideas of private universities to the government. The networks some academics and private sector representatives built up were individual-centred, which enabled them to promote their own ideas. The interview data revealed that most of these key movers wanted to demonstrate that they were the pioneer of the idea of the private university in Bangladesh. For example, one of the academics, Dr Asim, claimed that one of his colleagues started to work on a private university after him, but that colleague claimed to be the pioneer who first developed the idea of private university in Bangladesh. He said, “My private university started academic activities in 1987. But the government framed the law later in 1992”. Another academic, Prof Nasim, also claimed that he developed the idea of the private university first and influenced the government to allow private universities. As Prof Nasim described:

The file of my university was started in 1989. The title of the file was ‘with the support of the Kansas State University, a new university is given approval in Bangladesh’. This is the reason I can tell you ours is the first proposal because I asked Mr. Hedayat [the education secretary] whether anybody else has put in a proposal yet. He said, “None up to this, many people talk about this, but your one is the first proposal, formalised and now on the file”.

To promote their own idea of the private university, the academics and private sector representatives who were involved in the private university movement used their own networks to influence the government and often arranged meetings with the Ministry of Education and the UGC. However, these key movers could not organise themselves into an alliance as a pressure group to influence the government at that time. Nevertheless, they carried out a whole range of activities at the same time and they had ‘informal learnings’ from these activities. Their whole range of activities influenced the government and the government also became active in building links with these people and networks. As Prof Nasim said:
Eventually, Mr. Mustafizur [education secretary] called a meeting where the UGC was also invited. Among others Dr Majeed Khan, Mr Muslehuddin Ahmad, Prof Syaed Ali Ashraf, Prof Nurul Islam and I were there. These were the people who were there and tried to open private universities… The beauty of the meeting was important. It lasted for four hours because every time the education minister tried to resolve every argument. Finally, we framed a draft act.

Once the government understood that the idea of the private university would be useful to expand higher education and would help to reduce the government’s financial burden, the government moved to introduce the private university Act. In this context the government considered using these networks of people. In 1992, the government invited the key movers and their own networks of people to frame a draft Private University Act to allow private universities in Bangladesh.

5.3.3 Appropriating global policies into ‘lessons learnt’ by state level policy administrators from abroad. Once the private universities were well established, many people with different backgrounds – academics, former bureaucrats, politicians, NGO activists, and businessmen – became interested and some saw a business opportunity in being involved in private universities. In the post 1998 period, the founders of the private universities began to organise themselves into the Association of Private Universities of Bangladesh (APUB) as a pressure group. The founders under APUB took a stand against the policy actors of UGC and the Ministry of Education who wanted to make changes in the post 1998 Acts. The founders under the APUB organised several roundtable discussions and press conferences to raise their arguments against the government initiatives. Most of the founders argued that bringing different regulatory ideas into the post 1998 Acts would deter rather than promote the growth of higher education. These founders of the private universities considered the introduction of quality assurance and governance issues as global ideas that served the interests of ‘multinational organisations’. For instance, Prof Nasim, an academic who founded a Private University in which
he played the role of the VC and who was the Secretary of the APUB, commented, “I started to worry, this home grown reform agenda was going to be ruined by the multinational concepts because these concepts were different from us”.

Although founders became organised into the APUB, some founders within the APUB worked individually and had a different understanding of the spread of global ideas. For example, two founders who had moved from the civil bureaucracy to the private universities considered quality to be one of the key concerns and saw the Accreditation Council as a much needed strategy in the global higher education policy. These two founders believed the purpose of the private universities was to generate human resources for the society. To attain this purpose, the private universities needed to adopt some global ideas to improve the quality and establish links with global markets. However, these two founders emphasised that the Acts needed to be more rational and to be balanced for all stakeholders. According to a participant, Mohosin, who founded a private university of which he became the VC, and who later served as the Chairman of the board of trustees, “We just wanted to ensure the rules would be updated and rational. Our motivation was to generate human resources for the society”.

The founders who led the Association of Private Universities of Bangladesh still influenced the government in the post 1998 Acts. However, they compromised their ideas in the face of policy administrators’ determination to take up some neoliberal ideas, such as the system of quality assurance, in the Ordinance 2008 and the latest Act of 2010. For example, the former President of the Association of Private Universities, Zafor, who took on the role of a founder of a private university after his retirement from the civil bureaucracy, commented, “I compromised because there was no way to ignore that negative activities had occurred in a few private universities over the years”. The founders under the Association of Private Universities compromised in agreeing to some state control and external interference in their practice, so as to achieve a higher quality standard. Again, Zafor, stated, “We suggested setting up an accreditation council to improve the higher education quality”.

Acting as a pressure group the founders also knew they had to give way on some things to keep the influence they wanted to keep. The policy administrators of the UGC and the Ministry of Education recognised the concerns of the founders because the founders provided all sorts of facilities to set up the universities. As a policy administrator of the UGC, Nayan, said, “If you have too controlling attitudes the founders could lose their interest in this sector”. The policy administrators emphasised the need to streamline the governance system and to improve the quality. They perceived that the UGC and the Ministry of Education, as buffer organisations, should oversee the private universities’ activities to improve the quality and the governance system. The policy administrators recognised that other external bodies, such as the Accreditation Council, could have played a supporting role to improve the quality. Again, Nayan, explained, “Their [the UGC and the Ministry of Education] responsibility is not doing accreditation … the Accreditation Council could work independently to support private universities to improve quality”.

Further, the policy administrators argued that the UGC and the Ministry of Education as state apparatuses preserved the right to assess the needs and to develop plans for the higher education sector. As the policy administrator of the UGC, Nadim, commented, “The UGC can advise the government to set up a new university in the private and public sectors. The UGC can evaluate the university development plan in teaching and can examine all development plans”. In acknowledging the roles of the UGC and the Ministry of Education in the private universities, the policy administrators of these two agencies became one of the key drivers in the formation of the post 1998 Acts. The policy administrators of these two state agencies played key roles in constructing some of the neoliberal ideas – external measurement bodies for quality assurance, new public management and a cost sharing approach – as policy solutions to the problems in the private universities. Through such neoliberal ideas in the post 1998 Acts the policy administrators wanted to have more government influence over the private universities, and to improve the quality.
To develop several neoliberal ideas in the post 1998 Acts, the state level policy administrators used to what Steiner-Khamisi (2010) calls ‘lessons learned from abroad’ through ‘study tours’ and various networking activities. The study teams comprised both seniors and upper midlevel policy administrators of different ministries and the UGC. As a policy administrator of the UGC, Nayan, reported, “Our team comprised the Education Secretary, Additional Education Secretary and one representative from the Ministry of Planning”. The Multilateral International Financial and Education Institutes often organised and funded these study tours. One of the policy administrators of the UGC, Nadim, noted, “The British Council, Bangladesh organised some study tours. The World Bank often funded some tours too”. The purpose of study tours organised and funded by the British Council was to learn about the British education system. Several policy administrators perceived that the British legacy in the higher education system encouraged the policy administrators to work according to the experience of the British Universities. Again, Nadim, commented, “As our higher education was deeply influenced by the British education system, most of the tours organised by the British Council were to happen in looking at the British system”.

As I have argued, the policy administrators played a significant role in the formation of processes of the post 1998 Acts, but they had different understandings of several global ideas. For example, the policy administrator of the UGC, Nayan, who was actively involved in the post 1998 Acts, explained that he faced problems raised by the Education Ministry when he tried to bring some global ideas into the post 1998 Acts. As Nayan said, “I faced a lot questions raised by the Ministry about the accreditation council”. The policy administrators of the UGC recognised that the ‘study tours’ helped them not only to learn about some global ideas, but also to reduce the gap of understanding about these global ideas. For example, the policy administrator of the UGC and officials of various ministries visited some universities in the USA and the UK to learn about the accreditation council. During these visits they learnt how the accreditation council worked as external body to improve the quality. Again Nayan, explained, “During these visits, we learnt how each university accredits their academic programs. Each state in the USA has a Higher
Learning Commission that has the right to stop the students’ enrolment if any university is unable to do accreditation”.

The policy administrators of the UGC believed that these ‘study tours’ helped the policy administrators of the Ministry of Education to understand how the accreditation council worked and why they needed to adopt the accreditation council in the private universities to ensure their quality. Again Nayan commented, “After that visit I again told them the reasons behind the incorporation of the accreditation council in the Act and they recognised my concern”. Following the ‘study tours’ they formulated both group and individual reports based on their experiences from the study tours where they underlined what they had learnt and how these learnings could be useful in the Bangladesh context. Again the policy administrator of the UGC, Nayan, explained, “In these reports we indicated the need of setting up an accreditation council and quality assurance cell for all universities … I used these experiences in framing the Private University Act of 2010”.

To learn about different global ideas in higher education, the policy administrators attended various training sessions, workshops, seminars and short courses. The policy administrators of the UGC perceived that the extensive and comprehensive range of activities helped them to gather first-hand knowledge about recent global trends in higher education. An academic of the public university, Prof Alimul, who had moved to the position of the Chairman of the UGC, commented, “… that gave them first-hand knowledge”. In addition to these sessions, the state level policy agencies, particularly the UGC, encouraged its policy administrators to build up global networks to learn about the global higher education systems. A policy administrator of the UGC, Nayan, who was involved in the post 1998 Acts, commented, “Once I was posted in private university division of the UGC, the Chairman selected me with another two staff members for online training. It was an online discussion forum – the International Institute of Educational Planning hosted by the UNESCO”. Through the involvement in global policy networks the policy administrators would have a chance to share
their own education with global participants and to learn how global higher education is working. To solve the problems they perceived in the private universities in Bangladesh they often consulted with these global forums.

5.3.4 ‘Lessons learnt’ from ‘personal’, and ‘cross-sectoral and professional’ experiences. As I have argued, the policy administrators of the UGC and the Ministry of Education learnt about several neoliberal concepts through ‘study tours’ and networking in the post 1998 period. However, policy administrators, academics of the UGC, some politicians and some private sector representatives also developed neoliberal ideas through ‘lessons learned’ from ‘personal’, and ‘cross-sectoral’ and professional experiences. Two private sector representatives, who became involved in the private universities after their retirement from civil bureaucracy and led the Association of Private Universities, believed that travelling globally through their personal and professional lives helped them to learn about several neoliberal ideas in higher education. For example, Zafor, the former President of the Association of Private universities, learnt about the ‘cost-sharing approach’ from his son who studied in the USA. He learnt that the financial ability of a student became one of the key indicators in access to higher education in the USA:

Now let me speak about an American citizen because my children are living in the USA. A USA citizen is not a beneficiary of a large amount of financial value. If someone could not afford the costs of the Harvard University, they would go to New York State University.

One politician who could not travel to any foreign university learnt through their relatives, who had studied in universities around the world. For example, a politician, Obaidul, who was involved in a subcommittee formed by the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Education (PSCE) to review the Cabinet Approved Private University Act 2010, commented: “My family members studied in several international universities. I heard the degrees they achieved were recognised worldwide … Academics in those universities’ became extensively involved in
research and conducted examinations regularly … Our universities became reluctant to do that”.

The experiences this politician learnt about from his family members helped to understand what the policy employees wanted to bring in the latest Act of 2010. For example, the policy administrator of the UGC, Nayan, explained how he influenced the Parliamentary Standing Committee to adapt the Accreditation Council in the latest Act of 2010, “I told them about this concept and how this could work to improve the quality … We were finally able to convince the parliamentary committee to incorporate the concept of the accreditation council in the Act of 2010”.

The academics who had moved from the public universities to positions in the UGC had brought what they had learnt from public universities into the changes they advocated to the post 1998 Acts. For example, the government deployed their representatives in various executive bodies, such as the Syndicate in the public universities to facilitate and oversee the activities. Similarly, this group of academics recognised that the government influence needs to improve the governance system of the private universities. According to Prof Khairul, an academic who had moved from a public university to the position of a member in the UGC, explained, “The idea about the government representatives in the private university was not a new one because all public universities had this concept”. They also perceived that the learnings through professional development helped to understand the recent global trends in higher education. Another academic, Prof Alimul, who moved from the employment of a public university to the position of Chairman in the UGC, noted, “I was lecturing at home and abroad … I was trained and educated at the University of Western Ontario in Canada… my professional knowledge was useful to develop the idea of accreditation council”.

As previously argued, the policy administrators and the founders under the Association of Private Universities had held different opinions about some global policy ideas and how these ideas could be developed in the private universities. However, their local and global learnings through personal, cross-sectoral, and professional experiences helped them to understand various
global ideas. Two private sector representatives, who became involved in the private universities after their retirement from civil bureaucracy, recognised private higher education as a public good. The notion of higher education as public good that some founders under the Association of Private Universities promoted assisted the policy administrators of the UGC and the Ministry of Education to bring some neoliberal ideas into the post 1998 Acts.

5.3.5 Modifying neoliberal ideas through ‘semi-peripheral’ references in the post 1998 Acts. As I have argued, academics and private sector representatives, who were involved in the private university movement in the late 1980s, used the “American reference” to legitimise the introduction of the private university in Bangladesh. In the post 1998 period, the policy administrators of the UGC and the Ministry of Education travelled to many western universities in the name of ‘study tours’ organised and financed by multilateral organisations. However, the remarkable move in the post 1998 period was travel to several Asian universities by the policy administrators of the UGC and the Ministry of Education, and the academics of the UGC. In addition, these key players contributed in forming ‘regional associations’, and became involved in many of these associations and networks. For example, the former UGC Chairman in the post 1998 period initiated the formation of the University Grants Commissions in the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation to share ideas about the higher education systems in the Indian Subcontinent with each other. Under the Association they visited several universities to learn about the higher education systems in the Indian subcontinent. Prof Alimul, an academic who had been the UGC Chairman and contributed to the formation of the University Grants Commissions in the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, stated, “I took a team comprising UGC members and directors to visit universities in this region. We learnt about their activities and how they worked”. Several policy administrators of the UGC also took up membership in several forums, networks and associations in the Asia-Pacific regions. A policy administrator of the UGC, Nayan, explained, “I have a membership in Quality Assurance in the Asia-Pacific region. I worked with an accreditation team of the Philippines”.

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Traveling to the universities in the ‘semi-peripheral’ countries in the South Asia and East Asia helped the policy actors of the UGC to learn how the universities in these regions were working. Again a policy administrator of the UGC, Nayan, explained, “I found most of the countries [South Asia and East Asia] have the concept of the accreditation council to ensure assurance of quality … in India, the private universities should have their own internal quality cell”. When they visited universities in ‘semi-peripheral’ countries they often spoken with the different bodies to learn how these bodies were operated and contributed to improve the quality. As Prof Alimul, the former Chairman of the UGC who took a team to some universities in East Asia, stated, “When we visited universities in Thailand we sat with the university higher education commission to learn how they were ran and provided support to the universities to improve the quality”.

The policy actors of the UGC indicated that the most significant goal of the regional travelling was to understand how private universities in these countries had been operating successfully for a long time. Again Prof Alimul explained,

Private universities in the Philippines, Malaysia and Thailand were successful… We learnt that nobody in these countries could start a university before having their own campus, own building, own teaching staff … After having all of these they got the government approval.

The experiences these policy actors gathered through ‘lessons learned’ from ‘semi-peripheral’ countries benefitted them to understand what could be the policy solutions to the problems in the private universities in Bangladesh.

The policy administrators found that many countries in Asia would have foreign universities offering higher education in the private sector. Eventually, in the latest Act 2010, they promoted changes to formulate the rules and regulations to streamline the foreign university campuses that were already operating in Bangladesh. The purpose was to encourage foreign universities to operate campuses in Bangladesh. The policy administrators believed that the
foreign universities would be able to ensure the quality and that could intensify the competition in the higher education sector. They argued such competition ultimately could help the private universities to improve their quality to compete in the markets. For example, a policy administrator of the Ministry of Education, Azgor, explained, “If a foreign university can run academic activities in Bangladesh, students will have access to world standard education from Bangladesh … They [private universities] need to address the competition”.

However, the founders under the Association of Private Universities argued that allowing foreign universities to compete could jeopardise the growth of private universities in Bangladesh. The founders argued that the multilateral organisations influenced the governments to introduce the idea of ‘cross-border’ education in Bangladesh. Prof Nasim, who had moved from a public to a private university and had been the Secretary of the Association of Private Universities, stated, “Now they [policy administrators] are coming in with the idea of ‘cross-border’ education influenced by the overseas agencies”. But the policy actors of the UGC and the Ministry of Education contended that in the market economy no one would be able to stop the mobility of higher education from one context to another. A policy administrator of the Ministry of Education, Azgor, argued:

Can you stop the boundary of education in this global world? … The whole world is dominated by the private economy and you cannot do anything by avoiding private entrepreneurs in this global world. In that perspective it was rationalised to provide approval for private universities … it was also rationalised to bring the idea of foreign campus.

The literature review (Chapter 2) has shown that the Western countries developed neoliberal ideas in the higher education sector in the early 1980s. In the late 1980s, many ‘semi-peripheral’ countries around the world started to adopt such ideas in their own higher education systems successfully. As I have argued above, in the post 1998 period, the founders of the private universities in Bangladesh took a stand against any initiative to reformulate the original Act 1992.
In the formation of the post 1998 Acts, the founders tried to influence the government not to take on any new idea – such as the accreditation council – that that could go against their interest. The founders even developed the argument that if there were any external body like the accreditation council, it should be for both public and private universities. In that context, the policy actors who worked in the UGC and the Ministry of Education used many success stories from the ‘semi-peripheral’ region as ‘references’ to justify the introduction of some neoliberal ideas in the post 1998 Acts. For instance, a policy administrator of the UGC, Nayan, who used ‘semi-peripheral’ reference to justify the introduction of the ‘accreditation council’ in Bangladesh, commented, “With an exception in Bangladesh, all countries in the Asian region had adopted the quality assurance body to work on improving the quality … I found this body to be effective to improve the quality in private universities in Bangladesh”.

The policy administrators and the academics of the UGC often argued that the countries in South Asia and Southeast Asia were much closer in terms of socio-political and economic context and therefore provided relevant solutions. According to Prof Alimul, an academic who had moved from a public university and had been Chairman of the UGC in 2007-2011, “So we got some of the ideas from the neighbouring countries. Because they were similar to us, we don’t need to go to America that’s different from our context”. For them, the people in the Indian subcontinent shared almost the same cultural and social values. Consequently, they believed that lessons could be learnt from the private universities in ‘semi-peripheral’ countries to understand the problems that existed in the private universities in Bangladesh.

5.4 Ideas, positions, and practices in the politics of changing the Acts

In the policy making process different interest groups influence the content of policy texts and thus, the policy texts are the result of different individuals and agencies making compromises (Bowe et al., 1992). Steiner-Khamsi (2010) points out that both ‘political and economic’ reasons work behind the process of policy borrowing. As previously stated, different policy actors from different positions became involved in the formation of the private university
Acts. Often they became motivated in the formulation processes through both personal and group interests. Consequently, these individuals and groups tried to shape the Acts in a way that would serve their interests. In this section, I explore the ‘micro-politics’ of different policy actors in shaping different neoliberal ideas in the private university Acts since 1992, and I identify whose voices were more powerful and made a difference to the Acts.

5.4.1 Ruling party-founders’ nexus: Private universities as socio-political and personal gain. As argued above, academics, private sector representatives, and politicians influenced the development of the private universities from different perspectives in the 1990. In the post 1998 period, the owners of the private universities began to organise themselves into the Association of Private Universities of Bangladesh, and started to identify themselves as ‘founders’ rather than the ‘owners’ of the private universities. The owners of the private universities saw the term ‘founder’ as a more neutral word because it sounded more generous and philanthropic. As a former President of the Association of Private Universities, Zafor, argued, “Some people would say, ‘the owners of private universities’. They were not like owners. They [the owners] provided the facilities and established infrastructure. Some of them are still contributing to the foundation of the universities”.

The analysis of the interview transcripts has shown that in the post 1998 period, the formation of the Association of Private Universities helped the founders of the private universities to act as a pressure group. The founders under the Association of Private Universities influenced successive governments not to modify or develop any new Acts in this sector. To influence the government, the founders selected someone who had kept a good relations with the ruling parties as the leader of the Association of Private Universities. As stated by Anzus, a private sector representative who had been the Vice-President of the Association of Private Universities, “We used tactics to select someone as the President of our association who secured a good connection with the ruling parties. Otherwise, the government felt uncomfortable to discuss about any confidential issue”. 
In 2004, the government took the initiative to repeal the earlier Act 1992, but stopped the process because of the pressure of founders under the Association of Private Universities. At that time the ruling party affiliated people led the Association. A policy administrator of the Ministry of Education, Azam, who was involved in that formation process, admitted the founders’ influence on the then government:

The BNP [Bangladesh Nationalist Party] government (2002-2006) started to enact a new Act. The government almost finalised the draft of the Act, but got back from this process because the national election was due in 2007. The ruling party presumed that the introduction of a new Act could infuriate some influential people [founders]. They could withdraw their support from the ruling party in the national election.

The journalists were generally in agreement with the policy administrators of the Ministry of Education. They argued that the Ministry of Education drafted the new Act in 2005, but the Ministry had failed to convince the Prime Minister to finalise it. As one of the journalists, Rason, stated, “The then Education Minister and the UGC chairman wanted to introduce new private university Act, but they failed because of the influence of the owners on the government”. The journalists perceived that the Prime Minister had asked the Education Minister not to proceed further with the new Act until the national election, which was to be held in 2007. Several journalists in this research also argued that the founders under the Association of the Private Universities forced the Education Minister not to include some points in that new Act, but the Minister showed his disagreement on these points. As stated by Plabon, a journalist who claimed that he had witnessed the conversation between the Education Minister and some influential founders under the Association of Private Universities in 2005:

One day some owners – some influential businessmen and former bureaucrats met the Education Minister … They handed over a list to the Minister and asked the Minister not to include these points into the new Act. Once the Minister showed his disagreement, they shouted at the Minister”.
The founders’ influence on the government in 2005 was admitted by the then Education Minister, who served the World Bank, in another study conducted in 2011 (See for details, Kabir, 2011). In that study, the Education Minister conceded that he had faced pressure from the Association of Private Universities when he took the initiative to introduce a new Act in this sector. As he said, "Unfortunately, I allowed pressure groups to stop the initiative. That is why we could not do more in the higher education sector ... These are realities like pressure groups; these are big industrialists, businessmen who are investing in private universities" (Kabir, 2011, p. 90).

To stop the formulation of a new Act in 2005, the founders under the Association of Private Universities ran a strong lobby with the ruling party. For instance, a private sector representative, Anzus, who led the Association of Private Universities at that time, explained, “We brought Hashem Shaheb [an influential businessman who was a ruling party MP and the Chairman of the Board of Trustees of North South University at that time] to the Ministry… We tried to convince the Education Minister not to frame that law, but failed”. When the founders were unable to convince the Education Minister, they met the Prime Minister to stop the initiative the Education Minister took. Again, Anzus, continued, “We went to the Prime Minister. Finally, we convinced her not to formulate a new Act”.

Although the founders under the Association of Private Universities influenced the BNP government (2002-2007) not to introduce a new law in 2005, despite the countless efforts they failed to influence the Army-backed Caretaker Government (2007-2008) not to promulgate the Ordinance 2008. Prof Nasim, an academic who played the role of the Secretary of the Association of Private Universities at that time, said, “We met the then law and education advisor, Ayub Kadri, to tell him not to do that. Then Hossain Zillur Rahman, who became the Education Advisor, to convince not to initiate to formulate the Ordinance”. When the founders failed to influence the Caretaker Government, they met the President of the Country to persuade him not to sign the Ordinance 2008. Prof Nasim, continued, “… we even appealed to the Chancellor [the
President of the country] not to sign the Ordinance 2008”.

At the end of their tenure in 2008, the Army-backed Caretaker Government promulgated the Ordinance 2008. However, when the Bangladesh Awami League formed the government in 2009, the founders under the Association of Private Universities began to influence the ruling party not to pass the Ordinance 2008 in the National Parliament. A private sector representative, Anzus, noted, “When the Awami League came to power in early 2009 we met the Law Minister and requested not to ratify the Ordinance 2008 in the Parliament … They accepted our proposal, we stopped it again”.

Although the Association of Private Universities succeeded in persuading the Ministry of Education and the UGC to abandon the initiative to introduce a new Act during 2002-2007, a group of journalists continued to report on the illegal activities of the private universities across the country. The analysis of interview of journalists has shown that the media did not take a stand against the growth of private university, rather, they presented a line of argument similar to the government, because their concern was to limit the marketization of private university. For example, one of the journalists, Rason, contended, “From the very beginning some private universities were involved in education business and they were failed to provide higher education in a true sense. One of my goals was to highlight this aspect of universities to aware the people and the government”. The analysis of both policy administrators and the journalists has shown that there was no conflict of interests between the government and the media in terms of introducing a new Act to ensure the public accountability of the private universities. Rather, the analysis has shown that the government encouraged the media to publish reports on the unscrupulous activities of the private universities to create pressure on the Association of Private Universities and sway public opinion in favour of the government’s position. Another journalist, Plabon, “The then UGC chairman encouraged us to reports on private universities’ irregularities. He explained these reports as media trial”. Some of the journalists also claimed that because of the stance they took in their publications against the education business of the private universities
they were threatened by the powerful business elite who were leading members of the Association of Private Universities. Again, Plabon, continued:

Meanwhile the owners conveyed meeting in Hotel Sonargaon to discuss about the news published in the daily newspapers. In a meeting of Association some of the owners made allegation against the UGC Chairman over provoking journalists to publish baseless news against private universities. They decided to file a defaming case against the UGC chairman and some journalists including me to destroy their good will in the society through publishing the baseless news in the newspapers. One owner, who was happened like a source of mine, from the meeting, informed me about that decision through a text message. Soon I informed the UGC chairman about their decision and he advised me not to be worried about it.

Following this political pressure from the group backing the private university owners, the counter resistance from the alliance of the media and the UGC enabled the government led by the Awami League to formulate a new Act in 2009, instead of ratifying the Ordinance 2008 promulgated by the Army-backed Caretaker Government in 2008. To finalise the draft the policy administrators of the Ministry of Education and the UGC organised several meetings with different groups, such as academics and leaders of the Private University Association. The Association of Private Universities tried to influence the UGC and the Ministry of Education to shape the Act, but they failed what they wanted. As a private sector representative, Anzus, who played the role of the Vice President of the Association of Private Universities at that time, stated:

We fought, but we failed to bring changes in the draft Act 2009 framed by the UGC and the Ministry of Education. The basic things that we identified in the Ordinance 2008 as obstacles to help this sector flourish were kept in the draft.

Consequently, the founders under the Association of Private Universities started to use their ties with the ruling party, the Awami League, to shape the Cabinet Approved Act 2010 to ensure the founder interests in the private universities. They met with the Parliamentary Standing
Committee on Education where the Cabinet Approved Act 2010 was sent for review. The founders identified that some members of the Standing Committee on Education might be interested in the private universities. For example, again Anzus continued, “We found some of them were interested in setting up private universities in future. We communicated with them and let them knew they could also be affected if they let the Act be approved without bringing changes into it”.

Through the influence of the founders under the Association of Private Universities, the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Education organised discussion meetings with different stakeholders in the higher education sector. At the discussion meetings the Association of Private Universities emphasised the need to ensure founders had power over the universities to enable the sector to flourish. They argued that the founders were committed to the universities because they created them. For example, a private sector representative, Zafor, who had been President of the Association of Private Universities, explained, “They [founders] created all facilities … They were committed to helping this sector flourish. A paid employer [the VC] would not have the same commitment … The board of trustees needs to play an important role in financial management”. The founders brought some changes into the Cabinet Approved Act of 2010 by influencing the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Education. Again Zafor said, “So, instead of VC, we made a board of trustee member the chairman of the finance committee … We were less successful to make a consensus at the Ministerial meetings, but we became successful at the parliamentary level meetings”.

As I have argued, the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Education reviewed the Cabinet Approved Act 2010 and brought significant changes into it. As a policy administrator of the UGC, Nayan, noted, “We included the VC as the chairman of the finance committee, but the Parliamentary Committee changed it … They also increased the numbers of the board of trustees in the finance committee”. Three academics who had moved from public to private universities, argued that the changes the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Education brought into the
Cabinet Approved Act 2010 would help the founders not only to control the finance, but also to influence the entire administration of the private universities. For example, Prof Kowsar, an academic who had moved from a public university into the position of the VC of a private university in 2002, said, “Why did founders pressure the government to make board of trustees’ member to be the chairman of the finance committee? Because the notion was if you control financial matters you can control whole decision making processes of the universities”.

Although the founders under the Private University Association influenced the ruling politicians in bringing changes into the different Acts to serve their own personal and community interests between 1992 and 2010, the ruling politicians often intended to protect their own socio-political and personal gains from these changes. Several journalists argued that the approval of any private university often relied on political persuasion. For example, a journalist, Rason, said, “Although there were some conditions to be fulfilled to get the permission … the ultimate decision came from the top of the ruling parties … The political affiliation of the applicants were considered as key criteria to get permission”.

The politicians of the ruling party, who were involved in the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Education to review the Cabinet Approved Act 2010, argued that the previous government led by the BNP had approved most of the private universities. They also identified that the most of the founders of these universities were linked with the BNP. Consequently, in reviewing the Cabinet Approved Act 2010, the ruling politicians recognised the Act 2010 as a political instrument to serve individuals’ own political agenda. The ruling politicians, who were involved in the Parliamentary Committee, brought the changes into the Cabinet Approved Act of 2010 so as to ensure political and personal gain in the private universities. A politician admitted at interview the veracity in the argument of several journalists. This politician, Obaidul, who was a MP of a ruling party and who had worked as a member of Parliamentary Standing Committee on Education, described why they were relaxed in the Cabinet Approved Act 2010, “About fifty-four universities were established until 2010 and most of the founders of these universities
inclined to BNP and Jamat [political parties] politics … I brought some changes into the Cabinet approved Act, so that new initiators would be encouraged to invest in this sector”.

As noted earlier in the Introduction (Chapter 1), an understanding of historical and political process of adopting British colonial education system in Bangladesh could be useful to understand the socio-political interests of policy actors in the recent policy development. In this earlier discussion of the history of education in Bangladesh and the discussion of the political constructions of Pakistan and then Bangladesh, both British education values and religion, particularly Islam, have been important in influencing the characteristics of the education system. In analysing the interviews, it showed that often some policy actors drew on specific political and cultural features of Bangladesh in the justifications and accounts they provided of the development of the Acts. For example, as explored in 5.2.4, some key movers used the idea that higher education should be a locus for sustaining Islamic religious sentiment, which was considered important for the cultural integrity of the society, as an authority for justifying adopting the idea of private university in Bangladesh in the late 1980s. However, in the latest Act 2010, the ruling politicians identified a connection between the growth of private universities and the radicalisation of the private universities, which was perceived to undermine the cultural integrity of Bangladesh. As one of the politicians, Obaidul, a MP of ruling party, argued, “The existing private universities were used to train the religious fundamentalists. Most of owners, teachers, students and staffs in the existing private universities were alleged to maintain a good relation to the religious fundamentalist groups”. The claim of this politician about radicalisation of private universities was supported by a journalist. As Plabon, a journalist of a newspaper, perceived, “The BNP-Jamat coalition government provide the approval for a dozen of people, who were allied with right-wing ideology”. The way in which key movers used the Islamic religious sentiment in the name of cultural integrity of Muslim society in the development of the idea of private university in the late 1980s, was similar to the way, the current ruling politicians used the idea of de-radicalisation of private universities in name of secularising Bengali culture as an authority in bringing changes in the Cabinet Approved Act 2010. Again Obaidul contended,
“We included a clause in the latest Act 2010 that the government can cancel the approval of any private university on the basis of allegation on radical activities”.

The changes the ruling party politicians brought into the Acts also helped the politicians to serve their own ‘personal interest’ from this process. For example, a politician of the ruling party, Obaidul, described what he wanted to ensure through the changes in the Cabinet Approved Act 2010, “I became involved in national politics since 1980s. I had already set up some academic institutions in my locality. I had a plan to establish a medical college and a private university in my locality”. Consequently, this ruling politician showed interest to look at the Cabinet Approved Private University Act 2010. When he went through that Cabinet Approved Act, he found no power for owners. He said, “So I tried to empower the owners in the private universities”.

5.4.2 Government representatives in the private universities: Strengthening the bureaucratic process. As I have argued, the founders under the Association of Private Universities acted as a pressure group to shape the Acts to serve their own personal and community interests. However, the policy administrators of the UGC and the Ministry of Education and the academics of the UGC also operated as a strong group with the conscious views about global trends in higher education. This group of policy actors recognised that the incorporation of various neoliberal ideas in the Acts could improve the governance and the quality in the private education. To promote good governance they emphasised the need to redefine the governing bodies and the roles of these bodes in the private universities. This group of policy actors also argued that the government should take part in the governing bodies to ensure the ‘good governance’ of the private universities. For example, Prof Khairul, who had moved from a public university to the UGC, explained why he emphasised the idea of having government representatives in the Syndicate of the private universities in the latest Act 2010, “I wanted to see Syndicate as a powerful executive body which will run the universities. My idea was to nominate civil society members in this body who can play a role like watchdog in the Syndicate”.
To improve the quality, the policy administrators and academics of the UGC focused on the ‘internal and external bodies’ in the latest Act of 2010. For example, a policy administrator of the UGC, Nayan, described, “I inserted a clause that every university should have its own internal quality division … under this clause I also added another point that every university will indicate in their yearly report about what they have done for quality control”. In terms of roles of the accreditation council the policy administrators of the Ministry of Education identified the ‘accreditation council’ as a monitoring and supervising agency to improve quality. However, the policy actors of the UGC argued that the accreditation council as an external body should play a voluntary role to improve the quality. A policy administrator of the UGC, Nasim, stated, “We [the UGC] wanted the accreditation council as a voluntary organisation to help improve the quality. But the ministry officials saw this council as a controlling agency for quality … Finally, our idea was accepted”.

During the fieldwork, private sector representatives and an academic who had moved from a public university and founded a private university, argued that there was always a tension between the founders and policy administrators of the UGC and the Ministry of Education. Academic among them also argued that from the very beginning of the private university movement in the late 1980s the policy administrators played unsupportive roles in the formation process of the first Act 1992. One academic also assumed that the policy administrators never supported the idea of private university in Bangladesh. Prof Nasim, who was involved in the private university movement and founded a private university, described what he experienced when he along with other key movers attended the Ministerial meeting convened by the Education Minister to develop the first Private University Act 1992, “We sat together … the UGC had a draft, but that was small and non-functional because they never believed in this idea … So they tried to bring all rules into the Act to operate private universities following the public model”.
In the post 1998 period, the founders under the Association of Private Universities perceived that the aim of formulating a new Act was to ensure government control over the private universities. The founders had the belief that the policy administrators focussed on administrative rather than social matters in their attempts to solve the problems of private universities. For example, the President of the Association of Private Universities, Zafor, explained:

During the formulation process of the latest Act 2010, I noticed that the government’s minister and bureaucrats intended to expand higher education through controlling manner … our Education Minister and his policy administrators treated the problems in the private universities as an administrative issue rather than a social issue.

The founders identified the incorporation of the government representatives in the Syndicate and external body –the accreditation council – in the private universities as policy solutions that were intended as mechanisms to control the private universities. The founders also argued that the controlling attitudes of the policy administrators would reinforce the bureaucratisation of private universities. A private sector representative, Anzus, who had founded a private university and become a leader of the APUB, shared his recent experience to understand how the bureaucratisation process had been working in the private universities.

We had a bureaucrat as Ministry representative in our Syndicate, but he did not attend the Syndicate meetings at all…We invited him to the Syndicate meeting. We sent our VC to convince him to attend the meeting, but he showed his anger at the idea that we could organise meetings without him … One year after his appointment, he came to our campus to attend the Syndicate meeting, but soon he left the meeting because he had a disagreement with other members when they spoke with each other at the VC’s office…. So he left the VC’s office without attending the meeting. Till now we have been inviting him to the Syndicate meetings, but we have not heard anything from him yet.
The founders under the Association of Private Universities argued that the government of Bangladesh developed a top-down bureaucratic system over the years. This top-down approach in the bureaucracy system contributed to developing a typically bureaucratic setup. Again Anzus explained from his experiences: “He was a joint secretary to the Ministry of Education and a few years after he could be the Secretary to the Government. Therefore this kind of person wants to have the upper hand. They don’t like to hear from others”. The founders also argued that the representation of bureaucrats in the Syndicate of the private universities could shape a hierarchical administration in the private universities.

5.4.3 Private universities are site of political struggle over whether ‘not for profit’ or ‘for profit’. As I have argued, many private universities became involved in making a profit through unlawful activities in the period after 1998. Several journalists from the national newspapers published a series of reports about the business-led activities of the private universities. For example, a journalist of a national daily newspaper, Plabon, stated, “After getting approval some founders became involved in selling certificate business … So I tried to produce reports as much as I could about their business-led activities”.

The reports published in the national newspapers revealed that some owners had become involved in corruption and had even transferred ownership on the exchange of money. For instance, Prof Alimul, an academic who had been Chairman of the UGC, said, “There was widespread news in the media about high irregularities, corruption and cheating with the students … Some universities were ‘flown’ [exposed]”. The extensive newspaper reports constructed what Lingard and Rawolle (2004) call ‘mediatisation’ of the discourses of assumption in the private universities and that pressurised the government in the post-1998 period to rethink the roles the private universities should play in the society. Again, Prof Alimul explained how such reports pushed successive governments in taking the initiative to formulate a new Act in the post 1998 period: “The market-led activities of the private universities concerned the society. We
saw the writings in the newspapers, and here and there. So the government became concerned about the unlawful activities of these universities”.

As previously stated (Chapter 4), the previous Act 1992 did not define whether private universities could be operated on the basis of a profit venture or not. Following the reports about the massive market-led activities in the post 1998 period, various people in the society debated whether the private universities should be classified based on the idea of ‘for-profit’ or ‘not for profit’. In the Ordinance 2008, the Army-backed Caretaker government defined the private universities as ‘not for profit’ organisations. When interviewed, most of the participants claimed that the government should specify the private universities as ‘not for profit’ organisations in the latest Act 2010. Some of the private sector representatives, who had involvement in the Association of Private Universities, talked off the record and rephrased their comments for the record stating that though many of their colleagues believed private universities should be ‘for-profit’ institutes, they personally believed that private universities should be there for the public good. For example, the former President of the Association of Private Universities, Zafar, stated, “I agreed to some extent that higher education should not be used as a commodity in the Bangladeshi social context”.

All journalists presumed that the government became silent about whether the private universities should be ‘for profit’ or ‘not for profit’ because of the influence of some founders. As one of the journalists, Nasir, argued, “These people [the founders] are richer and powerful … so they have got strong connection with the government. They influenced the government through their connection, and through their money to relax the Act 2010”. However, some founders under the Association of Private Universities argued that the private universities could be run as both ‘for profit’ and ‘not for profit’ institutes. For example, a private sector representative, Anzus, who established a private university and played a leading role in the Association of Private universities, “We advised the government to have both options – ‘for profit’ and ‘not for profit’ – so that universities would have a choice”. Other founders, who were
involved in private universities after their retirement, wanted to run universities based on the idea of ‘not for profit’. For example, the former President of the Association of Private Universities, Zafar, commented how some of other founders under the Association disagreed with his view: “Some of us showed their disagreement … I had a strong feeling in this … I wanted to see the word, ‘private university as non-profit organisation’, in the beginning of the latest Act 2010 … but that did not happen”.

Although perceptions differed among founders under the Association of Private Universities about whether private university should be operated as a ‘not-for-profit’ institution, all founders believed that the government became silent about the idea of ‘not for profit’ because it was using this sector to make revenue. They argued that the government proposed to impose a tax on the private universities’ income for the financial year of 2009-2010. In the fiscal year 2010-11, the government also imposed a value added tax (VAT) on fees in the private universities for collecting revenue. They further argued that according to the government regulation of 1988 the income from the universities had been exempted from income tax. All founders under the Association of Private Universities argued that if the Act 2010 defined the private universities as ‘not for profit’ the government would not be able to impose taxes on the income of private universities according to the Income Tax Act of 1988. They also believed that the government struggled to finance the public universities. Thus, the government intended to use this private sector as an alternative source of income to mitigate the financial burden of higher education. For example, according to Mohosin, a private sector representative who played the role of the Chairman of the ‘board of trustees’ of a private university, “The private universities earned a huge amount of money from fees … However, the government struggled to finance the public universities. The government wanted to subsidise the public universities by earning money through imposing tax on the private universities”.

As the government became silent about the idea of private universities being ‘not for profit’ organisations, two founders showed their doubt of the government’s intention to see
higher education as a ‘public good’. Rather, they argued that the government shaped the private universities as ‘for profit’ organisations by adding some provisions in the latest Act 2010. As Zafor continued, “Some rules, for example, imposing tax on private university’s income, ensured private universities’ status as ‘for-profit’ organisations”. They viewed the incorporation of these rules as an act of duplicity of the policy makers.

However, the academics, who had moved from the public universities into the position of the VC of the private universities, indicated that the government wanted to shape private higher education as a ‘public good’. But they felt imposing tax on the income of this sector could encourage many founders to use universities for profit. As stated by Prof Kowsar, an academic who had moved in 2002 from the public university into the position of the VC of a private university, “What we have been experiencing, nobody calls it a ‘social service’ but a student-exploitive, profit-making venture”. Other private sector representatives, who became involved in the private universities after their retirement, echoed the concern expressed by some academics. Zafar, a private sector representative, continued, “By not declaring private universities as a ‘non-profit’ organisations, you are giving an opportunity to a person to abuse the facilities to make it a profitable organisation”.

5.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I have analysed the processes of neoliberal ideas formulation in the private university Acts in Bangladesh. I have traced the policy formulation processes which include why, how and by whom the concept of private university emerged in the late 1980s and the processes of neoliberal ideas formulation in the post 1998 Acts at the state level in Bangladesh.

As previously stated (Chapter 2), scholars of policy borrowing models often argue that the local problems in the home country help the search for the potential solutions. Similarly, in this analysis I have argued that academics of public universities and private sector representatives comprised of former bureaucrats and business leaders perceived a range of policy problems in the public universities in the late 1980s and constructed the discourse of the ‘private university’ as
a policy solution to those problems. However, in the post 1998 period, the policy administrators of the UGC and the Ministry of Education became the key drivers of the policy formulation process. The policy administrators of these two state agencies and academics of the UGC perceived various problems in the private universities, and constructed neoliberal ideas, incorporating them into the post 1998 Acts to solve these problems. This analysis also shows how the idea that Lingard and Rawolle (2011) call the ‘logic of journalistic practice’ influenced the post 1998 Acts. Although the journalists were not involved in the formation process directly, through reporting they identified different policy problems, influenced the state level policy actors in the construction of the discourses, and the micro-politics of changing the post 1998 Acts. The mediatisation of media construction was evolved within the broader idea of public accountability of private universities. The way in which the media played the role in identifying private universities’ illegal activities in the post 1998 period complemented the government efforts in this sector.

Scholars of policy borrowing models point out that policy makers use a range of strategies in justifying the contested policies in the home country. The scholars also argue that the policy actors often use ‘external references’, such as ‘international standard’, ‘lessons learned’ and ‘best practice’ as the authority to justify the contested policies. In this study, I have argued that key movers used ‘external references’ which they referred to as the ‘American reference’ as a prominent form of authority to justify the introduction of the private university in Bangladesh in the late 1980s. In this study, I also found that how the idea that Ball and Junemann (2012) call the ‘networks governance’ works in the development of ideas in the formation process.

In the post 1998 Acts, the state level policy administrators became the key drivers. In the name of ‘study tour’ the policy administrators of the UGC and the Ministry of Education travelled to western countries to learn about the global higher education systems. Apart from this, the policy administrators of these agencies and the academics of the UGC used ‘semi-peripheral references’ as an authority to justify the adaptation of neoliberal ideas in the post 1998 Acts. The
shifting from the ‘American reference’ to ‘semi-peripheral’ references was useful for the policy actors to justify adopting neoliberal ideas in the post 1998 Acts. The use of ‘semi-peripheral’ references by the policy actors of the UGC and the Ministry of Education in the post 1998 Acts tells us something new in the shift of policy travelling, which is not west to east. This is also showing the way in which policy traveling is taking many circuitous routes. It might be west to east, but within the east policy is developing its own dynamic. Therefore, something is going back and forth within that and then perhaps back out again into the West.

Although this analysis has not so much told us a new story about how policy is done and how policy is made, it has told us something about the policy making process in the setting of Bangladesh. We cannot presume that neoliberalism has touched down in the same way everywhere just to expand higher education and respond to market demand. Rather, what neoliberalism has become as a practice in the context of higher education in Bangladesh is much newer, and more complex, and perhaps there have been different players involved. Some of those players would be seen to be operating from a ‘public good’ perspective and some of them to be operating from a ‘private good’ perspective with private and personal interests.

Also, in the policy borrowing model Ball and Steiner-Khamsi argue that it is important to understand the actual ‘micro-politics’ of the policy networks in a particular context. They point out that the borrowing process is going to be different in different contexts. In the context of Bangladesh, how the formal political process is mediated and modified by the relationships these politicians have with the whole range of other networks. I have shown how the ‘micro-politics’ of policy actors in Bangladesh in this field was working and who was influential and how they used their influence. I have also shown the political and cultural specificities featured around the formulation process. In particular, the way in which policy actors used cultural and religious sentiment in the formation process reflects the ideological positions of the policy actors. Traditionally, Bengali culture is secular in terms of accommodating different cultural elements from both Hindu and Muslim community (see for reference, Inden and Nicholas, 2005). After
the country’s independence, secularism became one of the four pillars of the Constitution. However, this secularism was threatened after the political turmoil in 1975 when the military run political leadership started to instil Islamic religious sentiment in the national politics as well as in the education system (Riaz, 2011). In justifying different ideas in the Acts, the policy actors were themselves positioned differently in relation to these ideas of secularism and religious sentiment and sometimes used the dichotomy of Islamic culture and secular culture to justify their opposing views in the formation process.

In the next chapter, I will continue to analyse the interviews of policy actors, who were involved in the formation of the Strategic Plan for Education 2006-2026 at the state level in Bangladesh, to analyse the processes of incorporation of the neoliberal ideas in the Strategic Plan.
Chapter 6

The process of neoliberal ideas formation in the Strategic Plan for Higher Education

6.1 Introduction

This chapter continues the analysis of the interviews with the policy actors who were involved in the formation of the Strategic Plan for Higher Education 2006-2026. As I stated in the methodology (Chapter 3), I examined the processes of neoliberal ideas formulation in the higher education sector at the state level in Bangladesh by looking at two neoliberal policy phases – the private university Acts (1992, 1998, 2008, and 2010) (henceforth called Acts) and the Strategic Plan (2006). These two neoliberal policy phases were different in terms of their areas of focus and the formulation processes. As argued in the previous chapter, academics of public universities and private sector people comprising former civil bureaucrats and businessmen developed the idea of the ‘private university’ in the late 1980s. With the influence of these key individuals the government enacted the first Private University Act 1992 to develop and establish private universities in Bangladesh. In contrast, the University Grants Commission (UGC) formulated the Strategic Plan with the financial and technical support of the World Bank in order to reform the entire higher education system in Bangladesh. In the second part of the content analysis (Chapter 4), I examined the policy shift in the texts towards neoliberalist ideas in the Strategic Plan. This chapter turns to exploring the processes of the development of these neoliberalist ideas in the Strategic Plan by interviewing policy actors who were involved in this policy formulation process.

As stated in the methodology (Chapter 3), I purposively selected a sample of 28 people who were identified as the key drivers of changes in the Acts and the Strategic Plan, and used thematic analysis to examine the interview transcripts. The discussion of this chapter is based on the analysis of transcripts from 14 out of the 28 interviewees who were identified as the key
policy actors of the formation of the Strategic Plan. These 14 key policy actors were from four
groups consisting of 2 policy administrators of the UGC and the Ministry of Education, 9
academics from public and private universities, 1 journalist and 2 private sector representatives. I
identified these interviewees through the Strategic Plan and other documents which named the
individuals who had contributed to the policy’s development. With an exception of the journalist,
all interviewees were involved as members of either the Strategic Planning Committee (SPC) or
the expert groups that provided ideas for the Strategic Plan. My conceptual framework led me to
consider how media constructions may have articulated with the policy process. For this reason I
reviewed the activities of the press during the development of the Strategic Plan. I found a group
of journalists who had uncovered the formulation process of Strategic Plan through publishing
reports in the national newspapers, and selected purposively one of these journalists, who had
published reports on the formulation process of the Strategic Plan.

In order to understand the neoliberal ideas formation processes in the Strategic Plan, I
explore these policy actors’ reflections on their experiences, positions, and how they shared their
ideas with each other in key areas of the Strategic Plan. In particular, my analysis shows how
these different policy actors dealt with different state agencies and the World Bank, how their
positions and ideas affected the arguments and how their expertise contributed in different key
areas to develop the Strategic Plan.

Similar to the previous chapter, this chapter discusses the findings in three broad sections.
The first section – construction of the policy problems drawing on the World Bank’s views –
explains the relationships between the World Bank’s construction and the construction of the
policy actors in the Strategic Plan. In particular, it explores how policy actors perceived the policy
problems in the higher education system in line with the World Bank’s identification of similar
problems in their report – Bangladesh Sector Review – in 2000. The analysis also shows how the
participants perceived the policy problems in the whole of the higher education sector, but they
paid particular attention to constructing the policy problems in the public higher education system.

The second section – the context of constructing the problems to enable the Strategic Plan – focuses on the contexts in which these policy actors put their ideas into effect, and the relationships between different policy actors. As I have stated above, the state level agencies – the Ministry of Education and the UGC – and the World Bank as the money lending institute imposed certain terms and conditions on the policy actors. I explore how the policy actors worked under the terms and conditions of the World Bank, and developed their own search strategies for policy solutions, for example, using ‘semi-peripheral’ references as a source of authority to justify the neoliberal ideas in the Strategic Plan.

The final section – ideas, positions and practices in the politics of formulating the Strategic Plan – explores the ideas, positions and the practices of these policy actors in more depth to understand the ‘micro-politics’ of making policy texts. In particular, the analysis of this section shows the relationships between different participants, the agencies they had worked in, their positions, and the ideas they put forward in generating the new Strategic Plan.

6.2 Construction of the policy problems drawing on the World Bank’s views

Following the construction of the ‘knowledge bank’ by the World Bank in the late 1990s the ‘policy crisis’ became a useful strategy to justify why international donor agencies should be involved in the education sector (Steiner-Khamsi, 2007). In 1999, the World Bank produced the Education Sector Strategy where the World Bank developed a ‘client focus’ strategy to learn about local problems and solve those local problems by identifying what could be learnt from the clients and the World Bank’s expert knowledge. As the report points out:

First, we have to listen closely to our clients: what goals have they set for themselves? How have they analyzed their own situation? What variations exist across different constituencies? Second, we have to bring our knowledge to bear on the particular issues each of our clients face; what kind of interventions have worked well, and in what
settings? … And fourth, in light of both our clients’ aspirations and our own knowledge, we must undertake our own analyses – pedagogical, organizational, financial, economic, cultural and political – and determine what role the Bank can best play to achieve shared goals. (World Bank, 1999, p. iii)

In 2000, the World Bank identified a number of policy crises in the higher education system in Bangladesh through the formulation of the Bangladesh Education Sector Review (World Bank, 2000). One of the policy administrators of the UGC, Nadim, admitted that some international experts of the World Bank were involved in that report in which they addressed the pros and cons of higher education in Bangladesh. The World Bank report covered the whole of higher education, but the key focus of the report was to understand the policy problems in the public universities. The key policy problems in higher education as perceived by the World Bank included: the lack of external relevancy of higher education; the inequitable distribution of higher education; the indifferent quality; an ineffective governance and administrative system and excessive politicisation of the public universities; a highly subsidised public higher education system; and student unrest and violence on public campuses. To solve these problems, the World Bank emphasised the need to formulate a long-term Strategic Framework for higher education. The World Bank report pointed out:

This vision should build on the plan and proposed Policy as well as take into account likely developments in the global economy and technology… The product should be a written shared strategy and action plan for what higher education should be like in Bangladesh by the year 2020. (World Bank, 2000, p. 73)

As explored in the previous chapter, the policy actors who were involved in developing the idea of the ‘private university’ identified similar problems in the public universities as far back as the 1980s; however, they looked for solutions outside the public universities to solve these problems. Six years after the World Bank review report, the UGC formulated a 20-year Strategic Plan in 2006 with the technical and financial support of the World Bank. As indicated above, I
interviewed those policy actors who were given the tasks of developing the Strategic Plan for Higher Education. In relation to this part of the process there were only four groups who were involved directly: policy administrators of the UGC and different ministries, academics of public and private universities, and private sector representatives. In analysing the transcripts of the interviews I found a close match in terms of the themes the participants identified as justification for the Strategic Plan and the themes in the World Bank’s report in 2000. An academic of a leading public university, Prof Masum, who had involvement in an expert group of the Strategic Plan, stated: “We addressed four to five key problems and we were thinking that it would be better if we can improve in these areas”.

In terms of the construction of the problems and the way the policy actors reiterated the constructions that the World Bank had put on the problems, there were very few differences between these policy actors. Regardless of whether the policy actors were in the Ministry of Education or academics from the private or public sectors, or whether they were private sector people, all policy actors identified almost the same kinds of policy problems. The policy actors leading the Strategic Plan perceived the key challenges that the higher education system had faced over the past decades were the lack of external relevance of its degrees, and its indifferent quality. Further, the policy actors of the Strategic Plan identified that the state-run public universities were characterised by an over politicised governance and administrative system, and student politics.

In this section I explore how the local policy experts constructed the policy problems drawing on the World Bank’s views (2000) as they recounted their contributions to the development of the Strategic Plan in 2006. Similar to previous chapter, this section (6.2) setting out the overall argument, which will be detailed in subsequent sections.

6.2.1 Lack of market relevance of the degrees and inequity in the higher education system. In the sector review report in 2000, the World Bank pointed out: “Higher Education facilitates the development and transfer of technology essential for economic growth
and development … ‘External efficiency’ is the criterion by which the outputs of the system are compared broadly with these needs and expectations” (World Bank, 2000, p. 63). The World Bank report revealed that more than 80% of students were enrolled in general universities for general degrees. It argued that under-enrolment in technical-related subjects indicated that the higher education policy in Bangladesh had no clear direction for creating a potential workforce in a planned manner. The report argued that unemployment among the general graduates had been a long-standing problem, but the graduates in Engineering also faced short-term unemployment because of outdated and obsolete course content of teaching programs.

Similar to what the World Bank perceived about the lack of relevance of the degrees generated by the universities over the years, academics and policy administrators of UGC presumed that the knowledge the universities in Bangladesh generated had little linkage with the labour markets. They identified that although private universities focused on business-related knowledge from the very beginning of their inception in 1990s, a significant number of students in public universities and colleges studied liberal arts and humanities related subjects. However, they argued that the key problem was that neither public nor private universities offered degrees in emerging market-related fields such as Applied and Industrial Science, Information Technology, Trade and Commerce, Medicine and Nursing. A policy administrator of the UGC, Nadim, commented that he perceived the policy problem to be one of the relevance of the degrees produced by the universities over the years: “Higher education is to meet the market demands, but our higher education could not address that. Our students often secured certificates by just appearing in the examinations. The degrees produced by the universities hardly met the market demands”.

The World Bank commented on the distribution and socioeconomic composition of student participation in higher education, arguing that student intake in the universities was largely based on the students’ socio-economic background and gender, which led to inequity in access to higher education. The report pointed out that the upper and upper-middle classes were
exclusively overrepresented in the higher education institutions, whilst children belonging to poorer segments of society and women were found to be underrepresented in higher education because of financial constraints. Similar to this argument of the World Bank, the academics argued that the poor and women in the society were underrepresented in the whole higher education system. For example, an academic of a public university, Prof Masum, argued, “Often I noticed that students of high income groups were increased in the higher education institutes … Many students were escorted by their fathers’ personal secretaries (PS) and used posh cars to attend the classes”. Although academics identified the social class as encountering problems in accessing higher education, the policy administrator of the Ministry of Education spoke of the problem of ‘gender inequity’ in the higher education system. A former policy administrator of the Ministry of the Education, Azam, argued, “Achieving gender equity in education was identified as one of the goals of the MDGs. We identified gender inequity as a key issue in the higher education affecting development adversely”. The policy administrators made no references though to inequalities in participation by social class.

The academics and the policy administrators formulating the Strategic Plan understood that the lack of market relevance of the degrees and the unequal distribution of student participation in higher education slowed down the sustainable development of the country. To solve these problems, they constructed a ‘vision of higher education’ based on a neoliberal policy agenda. They perceived that higher education in Bangladesh should be linked more closely to current employment demands. For instance, the policy administrator of the UGC, Nadim, argued, “We incorporated the ‘vision of higher education’ based on current trends of higher education worldwide”. The academics and the policy administrators emphasised the need to generate more graduates in the market-related subjects to meet the market demands. One of the academics, Prof Kowsar, who had moved from a public to a private university, identified three specific areas of higher education that were significant to meet the national mission and vision, “We should have produced more graduates in market-related subjects and in some new subjects like agro-based
and production-based subjects … We should have estimated market requirements, and have consulted with educationists before establishing any new university”.

### 6.2.2 Indifferent quality

The World Bank argued that although some universities focused on achieving quality, quality was a major concern in many higher education institutions in Bangladesh. The World Bank report identified a number of interrelated education factors that affected learning and resulted in indifferent quality in some institutes. The interrelated education factors included the appointment of less qualified teachers, lack of academic supervision, reduced attention to research, and the lack of the use of modern teaching-learning methods and technology (World Bank, 2000).

Drawing on the argument of the World Bank, the policy actors identified the problem of the variation in quality from institute to institute. The academics argued that although all types of higher education institutions faced quality-related problems, the quality of colleges under the National University scheme was sliding even lower. For instance, one of the academics, Prof Ahsan, who had moved from a public university to being the VC of a private university, argued, “We got a few public and private universities that were performing exceptionally well, but overall quality in both universities and colleges was low. The graduates of these institutes could hardly compete in the global labour markets”.

The academics perceived that this downward slide in quality depended on six interrelated education factors. These included the lack of research activities, the lack of highly qualified academics, inadequate knowledge of the English language, lack of infrastructure of higher education, the absence of standards admission criteria, and lack of quality control mechanisms. For example, one of the academics, Prof Ahsan, argued, “Higher education institutions in Bangladesh stood in an inferior position due to lack of research initiatives, competent faculties, and quality control mechanisms”.

In constructing the policy problem as quality, some academics drew examples from what they faced in their own teaching programs. For example, academics who had worked in science
education identified that in most cases, science students were not sufficiently proficient in English language. These academics argued that the poor knowledge of the English language affected the quality of the learning. One of the academics, Prof Rikta, who had been the dean of the science faculty in a public university, explained what she believed about the relationships between the use of English language and standards of science students, “The science-related courses were conducted in English, but our students were not able to understand the class lectures. Students were struggling to do good performance because all books were written in English”. In contrast, academics, who had worked in the ICT group of the Strategic Plan, believed that higher education institutions often did not have the infrastructure for higher education learning; for example there was no use of the internet and modern teaching-learning instruction. An academic, Prof Johirul, who had moved from a public to a private university and had worked in the ICT group of the Strategic Plan, argued, “Our group conducted a survey to assess the use of ICT in universities and colleges. The result revealed that many higher education institutions did not use computers”. A private sector representative, Akash, who worked in the ICT group of the Strategic Plan believed, “The poor use of IT and infrastructure contributed to the slide in quality of the higher education institutions”.

However, all academics who had worked in the public universities and the policy administrators identified that the teachers’ recruitment policies in the public universities was one of the key factors in the decline of quality. These two groups of policy actors argued that often the public universities recruited teachers in line with political loyalty to the ruling parties rather than their academic excellence. For example, an academic of a public university, Prof Masum, argued, “Without a political link with ruling party nobody could get an appointment in the public universities”. The policy administrators had an agreement with this group of academics, as one of the former policy administrators of the Ministry of Education, Azam, noted: “The public universities did not use a fair selection process to appoint teachers… recruited faculties based on political line”. Other academics who had moved from the public to the private universities, also spoke about the politicisation of recruitment policies, but they focused more on the unintended
consequences that was the slide in quality because of this process. They spoke about the relationship between qualified teachers and quality students. They argued that highly qualified teachers not only could produce quality degrees, but could also attract quality students. They argued that because of having less qualified teachers, on the one hand, universities had failed to generate skilled people for the global market and on the other, quality students had moved abroad for quality degrees. Prof Ahsan, an academic who had moved from a public university to the position of the VC of a private university, argued, “A few good institutes could attract quality students. Universities generated many graduates, but few of them could compete in the global market … many students moved abroad”.

The academics who had moved from public to private universities also presumed that quality improvement relied mostly on the assessment systems for academic programs. They argued that no universities in Bangladesh had adopted quality assurance bodies to assess academic programs, and students’ and teachers’ performances. For example, one of the academics, Prof Ahsan, stated, “External agency monitors the universities’ programs … We did not have that kind of body in the higher education sector”. The academics, who worked in the public universities, had an agreement with this academic, but they focused more on the failure of the public universities’ teachers to publish research articles in the ranked journals. They argued that the teachers’ promotion policies of the public universities were politicised, and thus, teachers were promoted based on how many years they had been involved in teaching and their political affiliations rather than the research outputs they produced. For example, another academic of a public university, Prof Masum, who had been involved in the quality group of the Strategic Plan, commented, “Our academics hardly published research articles in peer reviewed journals … they got promotions automatically and sometimes on political blessings. So, we wanted to try to get out from this paradigm”.

The policy problem as perceived by academics and policy administrators about the reduction of quality led them to construct a policy problem in quality. They argued that quality
could not be improved until quality enhancement programs and promotion of a culture of teaching were introduced in the higher education sector. For example, the former policy administrator of the UGC, Nadim, commented, “We focused on how to bring back the academic atmosphere in the higher education institutes … we emphasised [the need] to create a quality enhancement program across the higher education institutes”. Both academics and policy administrators emphasised the importance of adopting different assessment mechanisms within and outside of the universities and colleges as a policy solution to improve the quality. They contended that bringing ‘internal and external bodies’ to the higher education institutes would be helpful to enhance the provision of quality education. Further, the academics – as opposed to the policy administrators – perceived that the higher education institutes needed to update the course and curricula in relation to the markets.

6.2.3 An over-politicised governance and administrative system in public universities. The World Bank in its report reviewed the entire higher education sector, but they paid particular attention to constructing the policy problems in public higher education. It perceived that by having different Acts for different public universities, the regulatory system allowed different kinds of governance and administrative systems to develop in the public universities. The report pointed out that these Acts allowed public universities to elect their own chief executives, such as the Vice Chancellor (VC), the Deans, and members of Senate, Syndicate, Academic Council and Finance Committee, to run the universities, but that process led public universities to be engaged in non-academic activities. The World Bank considered that because the Senate and Syndicate, as the highest decision making bodies, were comprised of only teachers and other representatives of the government, and did not contain any outside representation from the wider community, these bodies failed to ensure the accountability of the institutions. The World Bank report believed the use of an ‘election’ process for the appointment of VC and Deans of Faculties shaped a politicised governance and administrative structure in the public universities. The top executives of universities had few resources to supervise the teaching and other staff. The report indicated that the UGC as a statutory apex body in the higher education
sector had failed to enforce power to improve standards and ensure the institutions were accountable because of the lack of uniformity among the higher education institutions at the operational level (World Bank, 2000).

Similar to these concerns about the governance system in the public universities identified by the World Bank, the academics who had worked in the governance group of the Strategic Plan and the policy administrators perceived that the public universities had developed a politicised governance system over the years. The academics also perceived that although each public university was run on its own Act, some loopholes and practices of these Acts facilitated the politicisation of the public universities. The academics identified a range of problems, such as the recruitment policies of the top executives, lack of representation from civil society in the governing bodies, and absence of monitoring agencies, all of which contributed to a politically manoeuvred governance system in the public universities. The concerns the academics articulated about the politicisation of the public university’s governance system was echoed by the policy administrators. For example, the former policy administrators of UGC, Nadim, commented, “We found the authorities ran the public universities politically”.

The academics who had worked in the governance group of the Strategic Plan argued that although four public universities used the ‘election’ process to appoint their VCs, the government could intervene in the election and the appointments processes. For example, one of the academics, Prof Ahsan, who had moved from a public to a private university reported, “We addressed the problems in the governance of the public universities … We identified [that] either the government or the Senate appoints the decision makers of the public universities”. The academics described how this election process in four major universities was influenced by the government. They explained that according to the Acts of these four universities, the role of the respective Senate of each of these public universities was to elect a panel of three members for the post of the VC and the role of the government was to select someone from this panel as the VC. They argued that the government politicised the Senates of these four universities. The
Senate of these universities consisted of the government’s representatives, the registered graduates, and the teachers of each of these universities. According to the Acts of these universities the roles of teachers and the registered graduates were to elect their representatives in the Senates respectively. The academics argued that at the Senate election, both teachers and registered graduates became divided into two groups largely based on the political ideologies of the two major political parties – Bangladesh Awami League and BNP. Moreover, the ruling parties appointed their own people as government representatives in the Senates of these universities. Through this process the ruling parties’ supporters became the majority and dominated the Senates of these universities.

Apart from these four public universities, those academics who had worked in the public universities, also pointed out that according to the Acts of other public universities the role of the government was to appoint all top officials of other public universities. They argued that the government selected as VC, Pro-VC and Treasurer of the public universities those academics who were linked with the ruling parties. One of academics, Prof Masum, stated, “The process by which the top officials – VC, Pro-VC and Treasurer – of the public universities were recruited promoted the political persuasion in the universities”. They also argued that the public universities’ teachers became divided into different groups and lobbied with the ruling parties to be appointed in the top positions of the universities. The policy administrators echoed the argument of the academics about the politicisation of the recruitment process of the top positions of the public universities. One of the former policy administrators of the Ministry of Education, Azam, commented:

We experienced whenever a new government came to power they appointed their own like-minded academics to the roles of VCs, Pro-VCs and Treasurers. The government considered them based on how much they were politically committed to the ruling parties rather than how much they were committed to improve higher education system.
The academics who had worked in the public universities also spoke about the politicisation of the executive bodies of the public universities. They argued that either the Syndicate or ‘Regent Board’ worked as executive bodies comprising government and teacher representatives. The academics pointed out that the process of nomination of the members in the Syndicates or the Regent Board was politically manoeuvred by the parties in power. They perceived that the absence of other stakeholders – students, civil society members – in the executive bodies did not ensure the ‘good governance’ of the public universities.

Apart from the government influence over the public universities, the academics who had worked in the public universities also identified that the ineffective roles of the UGC had contributed to such a poor governance system in the public universities. They argued that although the government were heavily involved in the public universities, the UGC as a statutory body in the higher education sector did not have enough regulatory power to control the public universities. For example, Prof Masum, an academic from a public university, argued: “With an exception of allocation of funds, the UGC could do nothing with the public universities”.

The problem of the governance in the public universities as perceived by the policy actors helped them to construct the policy discourse of ‘de-politicisation of the public universities’ as a policy solution to those problems. For example, Prof Ahsan perceived that “the political persuasion did not allow the right person in the right place. We must discontinue this practice in the public universities”. The academics emphasised the need to review the existing governance system. Prof Masum reiterated the notion that Prof Ahsan had forwarded regarding the problem about the politicisation of the public universities. He also emphasised the need to “step away from this paradigm”.

To solve the problem in the governance system, this group of academics developed the idea of an ‘Umbrella Act’ for all universities. Like the private universities, they developed the idea that a single Act could help develop the same governance system for all public universities. In the idea of ‘Umbrella Act’ they described how to reform the executive bodies and recruitment
process of the top officials of the public universities. In terms of reformation of the executive bodies, Prof Masum perceived, “the reduction of the government and teacher representatives by the inclusion of the civil society members in the governing bodies can ensure the public accountability of the public universities”. In terms of replacing the current practice of the appointment of the VC, the academics developed the idea of forming a ‘National Search Committee’ comprising retired Supreme Court Judge/former Vice Chancellors and other eminent academics. Again Prof Masum perceived, “the search committee can then prepare a panel of three persons with detailed justifications of the nominations for the top posts of the public universities”. The academics perceived that such a process could help select the right person for the right place. For example, an academic, Prof Ahsan, explained the role of the ‘search committee’ thus: “the objective of the search committee was to find out the right persons who will be free from political subjectivity and influence. Our proposal was that someone with a good academic record can be appointed as the VC”.

Along with the above changes, the academics emphasised the need to increase the power of the UGC to monitor the universities. They pressed the notion that the UGC should be an autonomous body with adequate legal backup. Therefore, they argued for the rectification of the UGC Act of 1973. As another academic, Prof Masum, commented, “The UGC should be a constitutionally independent body”. The academics developed the idea that the present system of the UGC should be replaced with the Higher Education Commission. They also shaped the roles and status of the chairman and the members of the UGC in order to move the role out of the influence of the Ministry of Education.

6.2.4 A highly subsidised public higher education system. The World Bank in its sector review report found that although the government subsidised the public higher education, the resources allocation was insufficient and sometimes the budget distribution relied on political influence. The World Bank showed that the public universities spent money in three major areas: salaries and allowances, educational contingencies and non-educational contingencies.
Consequently, the research activities in the public universities became less of a focus because of financial constraints (World Bank, 2000).

Similarly, all academics perceived that the public universities became heavily reliant on state-funding. An academic of a public university, Prof Masum, noted, “We addressed the problem of the financing system of the public universities. All public universities were relying on the government funding”. The academics, who worked in the ‘future funding group’ of the Strategic Plan, argued that although the government contributed to the finance of the public universities, that fund was not enough to run universities. They perceived that the public universities spent most of the money on salaries and other allowances. For example, according to Prof Haque, an academic who had moved from a public to a private university and worked in the ‘future funding group’ of the Strategic Plan: “We found almost 80% of the government allocations of the public universities were spent for the wages and other allowances. There was no fund left over for research and other activities”.

All academics argued that although the public universities went through financial crisis, the universities had failed in adopting fund generation strategies. The academics, who had worked in the public universities, presumed that self-generation of the financing system would be very difficult to implement in the public universities. This group of academics argued that although universities across the world have used tuition fees effectively to generate funds, on several occasions students of the public universities in Bangladesh took a stand against the initiative to increase tuition fees. Again Prof Masum said, “It was almost impossible to increase tuition fees in the public universities because of students’ movements”. However, some other academics, who had moved from the public to the private universities, emphasised the need for the students to share a significant amount of the costs of higher education because other sources of funding generation, for example, the endowment fund, would be more difficult than increasing tuition fees. They also perceived that the government would be unable to finance the universities
at all because the numbers of public universities had increased over the years. An academic, Prof Ahsan, commented, “It was a fact that the government was unable to finance all universities”.

To solve the problem of the financing of the public universities, the academics who were involved in the future funding group constructed the policy discourse of a ‘cost sharing’ approach in the public universities. They identified several fund generation strategies, such as increasing tuition and fees, generating endowment funds and alumni contributions, and introducing students’ loans and industry-university partnerships, which they felt should be introduced in the public universities to develop these into self-sustainable institutions. For example, one of the academics, Prof Haque, who had worked in the ‘future funding group’ of the Strategic Plan, commented: “We adopted the view that the tuition fees of the public universities should be increased. The introduction of students’ loans might improve the financing situation of the universities. … So, we discussed all”. Though some academics who worked in the public universities, acknowledged that the idea of increasing tuition fees would be contested, they were in agreement that it would be the most viable strategy to solve the financial crisis in the public universities.

6.2.5 Student politics in the public universities. The World Bank identified that students’ politics caused wide-spread violence and led to strikes and closure of the public universities. They contended that the student fronts and their armed-wings controlled students’ dormitories. The student organisations were linked with national political parties and used students’ dormitories as political mobilisation and “a license for rent-seeking activities” (World Bank, 2000, p. 71). The World Bank argued that the political unrest leading to the shutdown of campuses had caused the loss of instructional time, so that a student needed 1.5 to 2 years longer than planned to complete a degree (World Bank, 2000).

Drawing on the World Bank’s argument, all policy actors perceived that student politics were a common phenomenon in the public universities, and these activities operated on behalf of national political parties rather than working for students’ own interests. The student
organisations function was to pursue national political parties’ agendas in the public universities. The academics perceived that the agitating programs organised by student organisations ruined the regular academic programs of the public universities. One of the academics, Prof Masum, who had been involved in a leading public university, argued, “Student’s politics were there for the interests of the national political parties, but not for their own interests”.

All academics presumed that the students’ dormitories were the centre of the student politics. They argued that when a new government was formed by a political party, the affiliated student fronts of the ruling party began to control the students’ dormitories with the support of the state mechanisms, such as law enforcement agencies and the university administrations to use these dormitories for their own political purposes. An academic, Prof Ahsan, observed, “These residential halls have not had a good environment for study … These dormitories were highly disturbed by the campus politics. Student wings of the ruling parties occupied these dormitories to operate politics”.

Some academics spoke off the record and presented their ideas differently when on record, which indicated they were aware they had to be careful what they said because the authorities of the public universities and the student bodies were linked to the ruling parties and developed a mutual relationship working for each other. As student dormitories became the centres of the politics, the university administration allowed the student bodies backed by the ruling parties to oversee the student activities of the dormitories. In exchange, the student bodies backed by the ruling parties assisted the authorities of the public universities to run the universities smoothly. Prof Ahsan, explained how the political mechanism worked in the public universities, “With the support of administrations the ruling student fronts occupied student dormitories. The authorities were reluctant to take action against miscreant activities by the ruling student fronts because authorities got support from ruling student wings if they did any misdeed”.

The academics who had worked in the public universities commented that the student politics often turned violent and more often relied on muscle power because the authorities of
the public universities had failed to hold the election of the student associations regularly since 1990. This group of academics argued that if the authorities had been able to hold the student elections regularly, students would have been able to elect their representatives in the universities. However, the failure to hold elections of student representatives by the students promoted the dependence on musclemen by student leaders. Prof Masum, who had been involved in a public university, commented: “The student leaders were always roaming around accompanied with musclemen. If the DUCSU [Dhaka University Central Students Union] had functioned, the students could elect their representatives in the Senate and Syndicate from DUCSU… Such a mechanism would not allow non-students in the student politics”.

The problem of the student politics in the public universities as perceived by the academics helped them to construct the policy discourse of ‘student politics should not be based on partisanship’. The academics argued that the student bodies should not have any relationship with national political parties and they should have worked for the interests of students. Again Prof Masum pointed out that “student politics can be there, but that politics should not be for parties’ interests … should be for students’ interests”.

This first section of this chapter has shown how the policy actors of the Strategic Plan shared the same concerns of the World Bank report published in 2000. In most of the cases there was an agreement across these three groups. Among academics there were variations between public universities’ academics and the academics who had moved from public to private universities about the tuition fees’ hike in the public universities as a strategy of financing public universities. In summary, this section explored how the policy actors reconstructed the policy concerns of the World Bank as part of the development of the Strategic Plan. In the next section I move onto how the local policy actors turned these policy concerns into the plan. In particular, I show how the Strategic Plan developed, and in that process what roles the World Bank and the policy actors played.
6.3 Context of constructing the problems to enable the Strategic Plan

Since the late 1990s, the World Bank has changed its role in financing and has focused on the lending of ideas (Steiner-Khamsi, 2012a). Eventually, the World Bank as global policy actor has influenced national policy “through the power of its ideas” (Jones, 2004, p. 190). It has circulated its ideas through policy advice, policy reports and analytical sector reviews, academic articles, impact evaluations, baseline surveys, benchmarks, working papers, seminar proceedings, policy briefs and conferences (Molla, 2014; Steiner-Khamsi, 2012a; Verger, Edwards Jr, & Altinyelken, 2014).

As indicated in the previous section, the World Bank formulated the Bangladesh Education Sector Review Report in 2000 in which the World Bank identified some problems about the higher education system in Bangladesh. The policy actors reinforced the same policy concerns of the World Bank in the development of the Strategic Plan. Similar to the previous chapter, this section traces what Foucault (1984) calls the ‘archaeology’ (see for reference, Gutting, 1989) of how local experts – academics, policy administrators and private sector people – constructed the Strategic Plan and what roles the World Bank played in this. As argued above, the World Bank as global policy actor governs the knowledge production system through steering and funding (Ozga, 2008). In analysing the key policy actors interviewed, I show how the policy actors ‘translated’ the World Bank’s ideas into the Strategic Plan (Ozga, 2011).

6.3.1 The idea of Strategic Plan: ‘Elite networking’ among the World Bank, the Education Minister, and the UGC chairman. Research about policy development has focussed extensively on the policy convergence process, which involves the notion of policy communities networking extensively within the national level, but has also shown that ‘elite networking’ on the transnational level has become a common phenomenon around the world (Bennett, 1991). As previously argued (Chapter 5), Ball (2008, p. 761) identifies ‘network governance’ as a form of governmentality, where “the community members enact, embody and disseminate narratives of enterprise and enterprising solutions to social and educational
problems”. The analysis of the policy actors interviewed shows that the Strategic Plan was a result of ‘elite networking’ on the transnational and national levels, where the Education Minister, the UGC Chairman and the World Bank formed a policy network that embraced enterprise and enterprising solutions in developing the Strategic Plan to solve perceived social and educational problems in the university sector.

In discussing the context to enable the Strategic Plan, one of the academics spoke about the shifting the focus of the World Bank from primary education to higher education across the world since the 1990s. He presumed that the World Bank’s *Bangladesh Education Sector Review* on higher education in 2000 indicated the shifting of the World Bank’s focus from primary education to higher education in Bangladesh. According to Prof Johirul, an academic who had attended workshops organised by the World Bank to develop the sectoral review plan on Bangladesh higher education in 2000 and later in 2005 and who had become involved in the formation of the Strategic Plan:

The background was that the World Bank focused on primary education in developing countries for decades, but they started to consider the tertiary education in the late 1990s. They carried out a study before the Strategic Plan. … That was the beginning of the World Bank showing interest to be involved in the higher education of Bangladesh.

This academic identified the *Bangladesh Education Sector Review* on higher education as a background study by the World Bank that was a precursor for it to be involved in the higher education of Bangladesh. Other academics who had moved from public universities to private universities echoed this academic’s perception, but they believed that a transnational elite network promoted and influenced both the World Bank and the government of Bangladesh on how to work together based on the *Bangladesh Education Sector Review*. In discussing the transnational elite network, they pointed out that such a transnational elite network emerged when the BNP regained state power in 2001 and appointed a World Bank-trained former employee as the Education Minister for the government. They believed that the appointment of a
former employee of the World Bank to the post of the Education Minister helped to build up a transnational network and influenced the World Bank to be involved in the higher education sector. This group of academics noted that the Education Minister used his ties and networks with the World Bank to formulate the Strategic Plan. For example, one of the academics, Dr Asim, who had been involved in an expert group working on the vision, size and shape of the Strategic Plan, praised the Education Minister’s role in building up the transnational network with the World Bank to develop the Strategic Plan:

All credit goes to Education Minister, Dr Osman Farruk … who convinced the World Bank to look at our higher education sector. As he was in the World Bank, he was able to convince them [World Bank] to pay attention to the problems of higher education.

The perception this group of academics expressed in their interviews was also supported by another study in 2011. In that study, the then Education Minister acknowledged how he had used his ties and network to influence the World Bank to be involved in the higher education sector in Bangladesh (see Kabir, 2011, p. 55 for details).

...therefore I initiated measures to formulate a long term policy in the higher education sector. The Strategic Plan for Higher Education 2006 2026 was my brainchild ... At this point I contacted with the World Bank in my own capacity. The World Bank would not like to be involved in higher education except to offer technical expertise. I had some connections with them. I used my own ties and told them to prepare a strategic plan for me about the future direction of our higher education. I thought that if I could get some support from World Bank then I can prepare a long term plan. I told them to at least prepare a strategic study ... So it was sponsored by World Bank. We did a twenty-year strategic plan.

Although all academics and policy administrators had an agreement about the role of the Education Minister to develop the idea of the Strategic Plan, those academics who had worked in the public universities believed that the negotiation process between the World Bank and the
Ministry of Education was rolled out when Prof Asaduzzaman became the Chairman of the UGC in 2002. The academics of the public universities presumed that the momentum increased after the World Bank report, when the UGC chairman started to hold informal discussions with the Ministry of Education about how to influence the World Bank to finance the development of higher education. An academic from a public university, Prof Soikot, who was also a colleague of the UGC chairman and was involved in the formation of the Strategic Plan, explained how the UGC chairman used his network with the policy administrators of the Ministry of Education to influence the government to develop a project in the higher education sector using the finance of the World Bank:

That was a time when Professor Asaduzzaman became the chairman of the UGC in 2002. He got a few senior civil servants in the Ministry of Education who were his former students. He influenced them to bring the World Bank into the higher education sector. Later, they all started informal discussion with the World Bank to be involved in the higher education sector.

The academics who had worked with the then UGC chairman and identified his significant role in the development of the Strategic Plan believed that the UGC Chairman brought together his own network to form the policy communities at the national level as he was an elected Dean of the Social Science Faculty and had been a member of different administrative bodies – Senate and Syndicate – in the University of Dhaka over the years. They perceived that working with the premier university in Bangladesh helped the UGC chairman to build up such network with different professional groups at the national level. Another academic, Prof Masum, said, “Prof Asaduzzaman requested me to work in the Strategic Plan”. They also noted that the UGC chairman had an ideological affiliation to the ruling party, BNP, and had a strong connection with the Prime Minister of the government. They presumed that these connections gave the UGC chairman many advantages to influence the government in intensifying the negotiation process with the World Bank. Prof Soikot, commented, “They [the UGC chairman
and a group of civil servants of the Ministry of Education] knocked [at the door of] the World Bank and the World Bank showed some interest to start with. … As a matter [of fact] they did not have a policy on higher education at that time, they started to develop a policy plan”. These accounts show that with the political blessing from the Prime Minister and Education Minister and other personal peers within the Ministry of Education, the UGC chairman was able to initiate the long term Strategic Plan with the technical and financial support from the World Bank.

6.3.2 Lesson drawing from experts: an export of the World Bank. In March 2005, to formulate the Strategic Plan, the Ministry of Education formed a Strategic Planning Committee (SPC) to develop the overall vision, and strategic direction and intervention in the package. Six expert groups were to formulate ideas about six areas of higher education, and an editor group was to prepare a consolidated report. At that time, the World Bank also formed an International Advisory Group (IAG) to review the ideas the six expert groups formulated in the development of the Strategic Plan. In analysing the Strategic Plan (Chapter 4), I found that it did not mention who were in the IAG, where they came from, and in what ways they worked with the SPC and six expert groups. When international organisations such as the World Bank, became involved in policy transfer they often prescribed hiring a particular consultant in that process (de Moura Castro, 2002; Dolowitz & Marsh, 2000). The interviews with the policy administrators pointed out that the experts of the IAG team were from different countries. For example, one of the former policy administrators of the UGC, Nadim, who had been the Member Secretary of the SPC, commented, “The World Bank formed an international advisory group comprising of several international experts … One expert came from Britain and another came from Chile”. This policy administrator also noted that the World Bank provided a list of international experts to the UGC each time it needed to select experts based on the UGC’s needs.

Several scholars argue that the World Bank has used the consultation meeting as a policy instrument to reproduce the World Bank’s predominant ideas in the education field (see for reference, Verger et al., 2014). Indeed, the analysis of the interview transcripts has shown that the
international experts of the IAG influenced the policy actors of the Strategic Plan who drew on the World Bank’s ideas in the Strategic Plan. The SPC as the key strategic group organised consultation meetings between the IAG experts and policy actors of the expert groups of the Strategic Plan. In the consultation meetings the experts of the IAG shared their views about global trends in higher education, and what they had learnt from these global ideas. The former policy administrator of the UGC, Nadim, noted: “They shared their vast experiences and knowledge about global higher education systems with our expert groups”. The IAG experts also attended the consultation and sharing meetings organised by the UGC in six divisional headquarters in Bangladesh. In these consultation and sharing meetings in the regional levels, the IAG also discussed about what they had learnt from the global higher education systems, addressed several problems in Bangladesh higher education systems, and suggested potential solutions to these problems. Nadim, who had attended the regional meetings, pointed out:

In the consultation and sharing meetings, they [the IAG] discussed about global higher education systems, and addressed what problems existed in our higher education system as well. Based on their learnings they provided various ideas to the directions of future higher education system in Bangladesh.

The policy administrators of the UGC and the Ministry of Education perceived that the key objectives of the IAG experts were to share the global trends in higher education and to suggest how to bring the Bangladesh Higher Education system to the world standards. The policy administrators believed that the IAG experts intended to bring what Steiner-Khamsi (2012a) calls the ‘best practices’ into our higher education system. For instance, the former policy administrator of the UGC, Nadim, noted: “They talked about the ‘world best practices’ in the higher education system. We needed to adopt these ‘best practices’ into our higher education system”.

In dealing with the concerns of the IAG experts, both the policy administrators of the UGC and Ministry of Education said that they had to carefully consider what the Bangladeshi
people’s perceptions of the World Bank’s activities in Bangladesh would be, which they felt would not be very favourable. Consequently, the policy administrators advised the World Bank not to provide too many prescriptions and interventions in the development of the Strategic Plan. Nadim explained, “They did not intervene into our works so much because during the project negotiation we told them that we would like taking least suggestions from them. We informed them about their bad reputation in our society”. However, the former policy administrator of the Ministry of Education, Azam, said: “During the project agreement the World Bank provided their prescriptions about the issues that needed to be addressed in the Strategic Plan, and in what way the Strategic Plan could be formulated”. The policy administrators noted that the IAG experts monitored the progress of the Strategic Plan. Again the former policy administrator of the Ministry of Education, Azam, commented:

The World Bank employed their international evaluation team from time to time to monitor our works [to see] whether we were working according to the project agreement. … They went through each expert group report, and they focused on how our higher education system could be improved.

Those academics, who had worked in public universities, described the roles the IAG played in the meetings in a different way. They perceived that the consultation meetings with IAG helped the policy actors to understand the local problems from a home country perspective. They admitted that the IAG teams began the discussion with different ideas of the World Bank, but policy actors contextualised these ideas in the context of Bangladesh. For example, an academic of a leading public university, Prof Masum, who was involved in the quality group of the Strategic Plan, described how their group worked with the experts of the IAG team:

There was an expert on the quality enhancement issue from the World Bank. Before every meeting of our expert group we had a meeting with that expert of the World Bank. … In the meeting he discussed about the quality enhancement issue in the World Bank perspective. That discussion helped us to contextualise the quality problem in our
higher education system. After the discussion with that expert of the World Bank our
group discussed how to enhance the quality in higher education system in the
Bangladeshi context.

The academics, who worked in public universities, also commented on the roles the IAG
played as facilitators in the formulation process in the Strategic Plan. They argued that the World
Bank as ‘donor’ agency could have a broad guideline about global higher education systems that
was developed based on western models. However, they as academics could identify the
differences between these western models, and what could be a better model for Bangladesh. For
example, some academics pointed out that the universities in the USA introduced high tuition
and fees, whereas higher education in the European countries was almost free. Their learnings
about different western models helped them to contextualise their own problems in the higher
education systems and search for potential solutions to such problems in different places. In
considering the local context, this group of academics perceived that ‘a mixed kind of western
model of financing system’ could be useful for the Bangladeshi universities to be self-sustained
institutes. Prof Masum, one of the academics of a public university who had worked in one of the
expert groups of the Strategic Plan, elaborated:

They [IAG experts] gave us a broad guideline … it was a western guideline, and such
guideline has been followed by the American, British, Swedish and other western
universities … So, we conceptualised some concepts from that guideline which could be
useful for our universities to be self-sustained. I knew that the government would not like
to provide funds to the universities. I also understood that our universities could increase
the tuition fees, but that could be a difficult task for the universities. Therefore, we also
developed some other ideas, e.g. building up relationships between universities and the
industrial sector.

Other academics who had moved from public to private universities pointed out that the
experts of the IAG emphasised the importance of having adequate justifications for the ideas that
would be set out in the Strategic Plan. For example, Prof Johirul, who had worked in the ICT group of the Strategic Plan, conducted research in which they revealed that most of higher education institutions rarely used the facilities of the ICT. The expert group came in with the idea of setting up global networks. They argued that such global networks could create opportunities for the higher education institutes of Bangladesh to be linked with other international universities, and help to improve quality. As Prof Johirul said, “All universities in Europe were connected with each other to share their knowledge. We wanted our Universities and Colleges to be connected with their networks”.

A group of academics working on the Strategic Plan argued that they were not influenced by the IAG team; rather the consultation meetings with IAG team helped them to re-contextualise the problems in the higher education system in Bangladesh. However, one academic who was also from public university perceived that the policy making process in Bangladesh was an alien concept, and therefore, the presence of the experts of IAG influenced the policy actors in shaping their ideas in line with the World Bank’s prescriptions. An academic, Prof Soikot, who worked in the editing group, stated, “We tried our best to shape the Strategic Plan more focused in line with the World Bank prescriptions”. He argued that the experts of several groups often emphasised the importance of understanding the discussions of the experts of IAG team.

6.3.3 Discursive coordination by the state level agencies. As mentioned in the previous section, the Ministry of Education formed different committees, namely, the Strategic Planning Committee (SPC), six expert groups and an editing group to formulate ideas for the Strategic Plan. The policy administrator of the UGC indicated that the Education Minister played the key role in the formation of these committees. A former policy administrator of the UGC, Nadim, who had played the role of Member Secretary of the SPC, commented, “With the direct supervision of the Education Minister the SPC was headed by the UGC Chairman. He also selected the experts for expert groups to formulate the Strategic Plan”. The analysis of the
formation of these committees showed that a significant number of state level policy administrators were included in different committees. For example, apart from the UGC Chairman, 4 policy administrators of different ministries and the UGC were included in the SPC, whilst 6 policy administrators of different ministries and 3 UGC professors were also included in the six expert and editing groups. Although the SPC as a key policy strategic group looked at the ideas the expert groups developed in their group reports and provided policy direction to the Strategic Plan, the Education Minister as head of the Ministry of Education became the centre point of the entire planning process of the Strategic Plan.

To formulate the ideas in a particular theme, each expert group organised several group meetings and workshops to share their own views with each other. Dr Asim, an academic who had played the role of convenor of an expert group, explained how their group worked to develop their own group report: “We organised meetings where all members of our group shared ours views with each other. We discussed on our ideas with each other, and finally drew a particular idea from the discussions for our group report”. Apart from the group meetings and workshops, some expert groups organised a number of consultation meetings with some national experts on the higher education systems to learn their ideas about the improvement of the universities. For example, Prof Masum, who had been involved in the quality expert group, said, “Our group members consulted with some renowned educationists in the country to develop our ideas … we wanted to know about …their ideas to improve the quality of higher education”.

The UGC and Ministry of Education organised regional consultation meetings in six divisional headquarters to get the opinions of grassroots people about the development of the higher education systems. Many scholars have argued that the World Bank has introduced the voices of external actors by including the civil society members into the policy formulation process to legitimate the World Bank’s involvement in the national policy reformation and to influence the national government (see for reference, Jones, 2004; Verger et al., 2014). The policy actors of the Strategic plan indicated that the idea of organising regional consultation meetings
came from the World Bank to learn about what grassroots people across the country understood about the problems of the higher education systems, and how this could be improved. One of the academics, Prof Soikot, who attended some regional consultation meetings, commented:

The Bank advised the UGC to have regional consultations … We had consultation sessions in Rajshahi and Chittagong and other places. We invited local journalists, civil society members, NGO activists and academics in those meetings to know about their perceptions of the problems, and what the solutions could be to those problems.

The IAG team members were found to be very active in the regional meetings compared to the policy actors of different expert groups. Although the policy administrators and the World Bank emphasised the importance to understand the grassroots voices about the development of higher education, many academics and private sector people did not attend any of the regional meetings. One of the private sector representatives, Akash, a business leader who founded a private university, admitted, “I was unable to attend any of the regional meetings”. The policy administrators of the UGC and the Ministry of Education believed that the regional consultation meetings expedited the ideas of the expert groups. For example, the former policy administrator of the UGC, Nadim, explained how they generated ideas from the regional meetings:

Both experts and local people believed that the political interference ruined the universities. They suggested that teachers should not be involved in national politics under any circumstances. So, we emphasised the need for creating apolitical campuses to improve universities’ atmosphere.

However, some academics who had attended some regional consultation meetings found these meetings were more formalistic rather than focused on identifying ideas from local people. An academic, Prof Soikot, who attended some regional meetings, said, “When they [local people] saw eminent educationists and university professors had developed the policy, they thought what could they do, what could they can to it”.

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The policy administrators of the UGC and Ministries played active roles in all kinds of meetings and workshops, and looked at the ideas both local people and policy experts formulated. For example, the former policy administrators of the UGC, Nadim, said, “Whenever each expert committee met together to discuss about their report I participated in their discussions”. In the meetings and workshops, the policy administrators emphasised that the groups discussions should be more focused, and the participants should work based on the terms of reference (TOR) set up by the World Bank. A former policy administrator of the Ministry of Education, Azam, who had worked in the SPC of the Strategic Plan, said, “The expert groups worked on their own, but we pressed them to develop ideas based on the project agreement between the World Bank and the Ministry of Education”.

As indicated above, the Education Minister was the centre of the whole formulation process of the Strategic Plan. Some academics, who had played the role of convenors of the expert groups, mentioned that the Education Minister regularly invited all convenors of the six expert groups to the ministerial meetings to review the progress of the expert groups. All convenors of the expert groups attended the ministerial meetings with their progress reports to share with each other. At the ministerial meetings, the Education Minister outlined the progress reports and shared his own views on the reports the expert groups produced. Apart from the ministerial meetings, the policy administrators stated that the SPC as the key policy strategic group also invited all experts to the SPC meetings where they shared their ideas and group reports with each other, and learnt about what the SPC really intended to address in the Strategic Plan. For example, the former policy administrator of the Ministry of Education, Azam, who was one of the members of the SPC, said, “We invited all experts of the groups to our SPC meetings. They took ideas from our discussions. They shared their views and presented their reports, and adopted ideas from us if we had”.

In the SPC meetings, the policy administrator of the Ministry of Education pursued particular ideas to be adopted in the Strategic Plan. He indicated that whatever ideas they pushed
into the SPC meetings were ultimately from the Education Minister. Azam, the former policy administrator of the Ministry of Education who had involved in the SPC, said, “Prior to the meeting I sat with my Minister to decide what I should have to say in the SPC meeting … The Minister directed me to talk some ideas at the SPC meetings”.

Evidently, the Education Minister and the SPC became the key drivers of the coordination process of the Strategic Plan. Such discursive coordination shaped the activities and ideas of the expert groups. The policy administrators of the UGC and Ministry of Education reviewed the activities of the expert groups. One of the academics, who had moved from a public university to the position of the VC of a private university and had worked in the SPC, spoke about how ‘other voices’ were silenced in the name of consensus agreement in the development of the Strategic Plan. This academic, Prof Nasim, believed that the UGC and the Ministry of Education worked together and controlled the activities of the SPC and the expert groups. He pointed out that the representatives of the UGC and the Ministry of Education focused on some popular concepts, such as the quality assurance body to be adopted in the higher education system. He also mentioned that the policy administrators of the UGC and the Ministry of Education constructed the discourses – a single law for all public universities – and justified popular discourses in the name of the consensus agreement. I draw an example of this dissenting voice from Prof Nasim, who explained how the UGC chairman became silent about the ‘other voices’ in the name of the consensus agreement:

In many cases, the project was very hypothetical … they [The UGC and the Ministry of Education] set up a target for how many public and private universities need to be set up by the next 20 years. … They calculated the costs of public universities, but said nothing about the government contribution to the establishment of the private universities. I tried to brush them up a little bit … I added that the government will also contribute to the establishment of the private universities. In the next meetings I found difference on that.
I objected, but Professor Asaduzzaman [UGC Chairman and Convenor of the SPC] said, “You know everybody agrees, but you don’t”.

Once the expert groups finalised their group reports, the Consultants for report editing and integration group edited and compiled the whole report. Some academics who worked in the editing and integration group identified some overlapping and repetition among the group reports. Prof Soikot, one of the academics involved in the editing and integration group, spoke off the record and paraphrased that on the record in a way that indicated the poor quality of some reports. He reworded his statement on the records, “I would say that all of the reports were not equally balanced. Some were really good. However, some were sort of descriptive, some were narrative without having any strategy, and some were not focused enough”. The editing and integration group noted that sometimes some group reports did not respond to the terms of reference set up by the World Bank for the expert groups. The editing and integration group focused on whether the reports were developed based on the project agreement between the World Bank and the Ministry of Education. For example, Prof Soikot, in his reworded statement on record explained how they consolidated the group reports:

What we actually did, took the gist of each of the report because we wanted to have a focused strategy based on the World Bank agreement. So, we kept the views and outlined the reports that we developed in view of the original project document.

The academics who worked in the editing and integration group indicated that they sometimes discussed with some members of some expert groups to understand if there was anything wrong in the group reports. However, the editing and integration group often consulted with the Chairman of the UGC regarding what the UGC and the World Bank really wanted to address in the Strategic Plan. Prof Soikot, illustrated this process: “We often talked to the UGC chairman to consult what they really wanted to and how to put all those ideas into the final report”. They admitted that during the editing phase they emphasised the need to shape the report in line with the World Bank direction.
Lessons learnt from professional development from abroad and home. As stated earlier, although the expert groups comprised different professionals, all expert groups were headed by the academics of the UGC and the public and private universities, and the policy administrators of the state level agencies. Policy actors engaging in policy transfer often draw lessons from within and outside the country (Dolowitz & Marsh, 1996). Similarly, the academics who worked in the expert groups of the Strategic Plan noted that they often travelled around the world because of their professional development. According to one of the academics, Prof Ahsan, who had moved from a public university to the position of VC of a private university, “We stayed abroad for studies and teachings”. In formulating policy ideas for the Strategic Plan, the academics used their professional learnings and experiences from abroad. Prof Ahsan commented that “whilst we faced any specific problem here, we looked at how other foreign universities dealt with the same kind of problem. We used our foreign experiences in the Strategic Plan, but we kept a local perspective in our mind”.

The interviews with the academics noted that they often drew examples from the regions where they used to stay for their teaching and studies. For example, an academic, Prof Masum, who was trained in North America, drew some lessons learnt from his professional experiences in North America as policy solutions to the problems of quality, student politics, and governance of the higher education system in Bangladesh. As he said, “We did not have the idea of the ‘tenure track’ system. The USA universities used this system … The tenure system adds value to the career. So we drew on the idea of ‘tenure track’ in our system to enhance quality”. Similarly, some other academics who were trained in Europe and other countries drew on what they learnt from their studies and professional experiences. They argued that although the people in Bangladesh believed higher education was a right, they found that many European countries did not believe that. Rather this group of academics, who were trained in Europe, experienced that many Colleges in Europe offered a range of vocational degrees to train people for lifelong skills. By using their knowledge and experiences, they emphasised the need for the availability of vocational and technical education. They believed that increasing the access to vocational and
technical education would help students to learn hands-on skills in different practical areas, and could help the government to reduce the financial burden of higher education. As Prof Soikot, who was trained in Europe and later in North America, said, “A large portion of high school graduates in the European countries went for technical education … These were not universities, but students achieved lifelong skills from them … So, I drew on my experiences to develop that idea”.

Alongside the professional learnings and experiences from abroad, some academics also drew on cross and intra-sectoral experiences to solve the problems of the financing and governance systems in the universities. Prof Haque, who had moved from a public to a private university, commented, “We also wanted to know how to use academics as resources for funding generation. … The BUET [Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology] was doing that job nicely, but the University of Dhaka had no plan of it”. However, some academics admitted that the idea of generating funding by academics was one of the external learnings; they perceived that the intra-sectoral references could be useful to justify the introduction of that concept in other universities. One of the academics, Prof Ahsan, who had been involved in the future funding committee of the Strategic Plan, explained what he learnt from universities in UK and Bangladesh, and how that could be useful for other universities to generate funds:

What I learnt from the UK was that the faculties contributed to generating funding, but we rarely used that strategy. Some of the teachers of the BUET were doing that job to some extent. Once upon a time Dhaka University had a provision of endowment fund. Many universities around the world used that strategy too. We wanted to reintroduce these strategies to generate funds.

The interviews with the policy administrators of the Ministry of Education and the UGC acknowledged that they did not have the kind of vast knowledge that the academics had learnt about the global higher education systems through their teaching and studies abroad. They said that the Education Ministry sent them away to learn about global higher education systems.
These experiences helped the policy administrators to fill up the gap between academics and the policy administrators about the experiences of the global higher education systems. The World Bank organised ‘study tours’ in some universities in the UK, Hong Kong, and Australia for the policy administrators of the UGC and different Ministries. As the former policy administrator of the Ministry of Education, Azam, said, “Under the Strategic Plan there were some funds to visit other countries to learn about the global higher education systems. A group of people headed by the UGC chairman went to the UK, Hong Kong and Australia in October 2005”. The policy administrators perceived that travelling to these universities helped them to develop some ideas in the Strategic Plan. In particular, they learnt about how the accreditation council operated in these countries and that idea could be adopted in the universities in Bangladesh.

6.3.5 Lesson learnt from ‘semi-peripheral’ references. As argued previously (Chapter 5), policy administrators and academics of the UGC, who had worked in the development of the private university Acts, used ‘semi-peripheral’ references to justify some contested ideas in the post 1998 Acts. By the concept of ‘semi-peripheral’ references, I mean that in order to justify some contested ideas to enable these to be adopted, key policy actors rather than accepting the ideas of the developed world, because these would be seen as western views, would draw on experiences from other parts of the world. The policy actors drew examples from places that would be seen to be more or less similar in their socioeconomic and political structure to the context of Bangladesh, which would in turn be completely different from those of neoliberal governments of the west.

Similar to the post 1998 Acts, in analysing the interview transcripts I found that the ‘semi-peripheral’ references became one of the useful policy tools to justify some contested ideas and get them adopted in the Strategic Plan. Many academics argued that some issues had become predominant practices in the higher education sector over the years. They drew examples from the student politics, the low salaries of the public universities’ teachers, and the bureaucratic influences over the academics and the UGC. They argued that often power relations operated to
perpetuate these predominant practices in the higher education sector, and they therefore presumed that it would be a difficult task to excise these practices from the higher education sector.

In that context, the academics identified the usefulness of the ‘semi-peripheral’ references to justify bringing changes into these predominant practices in the higher education system. They contended that the examples from the same sort of socio-cultural, economic and political spaces might be helpful to understand the need for change. For example, Prof Masum, who had been involved in a public university, noted, “We knew that we were not American or even Singaporean. But we could think about how some countries that had the same sort of socio-cultural, economic and political structure brought changes into their higher education systems”. Another academic, Prof Ahsan, who had moved from a public university to the position of the VC of a private university, believed that drawing on the same sort of socioeconomic and political space could create pressure on the political actors to bring changes into the predominant practices in the higher education system. As he explained:

Universities of China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand made tremendous progress in their higher education systems. India was also an example in that case...

Pakistani universities were much more advanced than Bangladesh. IBA [Institute of Business Institute] of Pakistan was better than ours in terms of quality, infrastructure and ranking … if the prevailing situations are continuing; the universities of Bangladesh will be behind Nepal soon.

As argued above, many academics interviewed believed that though student politics had a significant role in the country’s independence, students’ political activities adversely affected the academic activities of the public universities since 1980s. The academics believed that the roles the student organisations played in the creation of Bangladesh in 1971 were completely different from the roles the student organisations had been playing since the 1980s. The academics argued that often student leaders led the student organisations to serve their own political interests, and
their violent activities hampered the academic activities of the universities. The academics who had worked in the public universities for years also understood that the roles the student bodies in Bangladesh played in the universities was different from the roles the student bodies played in the universities around the world. For example, one of the academics, Prof Masum, who was trained in North America, perceived that there were student activists in the USA who were linked with two major political parties – the democrats and the republicans, but they never brought the national debates onto the campuses. As he said, “If they had a national agenda they went outside the universities to debate in the national forum. We saw that in young democrats or young republicans in the universities in the USA”. However, this academic perceived that rather than drawing on the American references, the ‘semi-peripheral’ references could be more useful to justify the reason why student politics should be taken out of the campuses. According to Prof Masum, who drew examples from the neighbouring country to justify taking the students’ politics out of the campuses, “Student politics was everywhere in the world. Even we saw student politics in Indian universities, but they were not involved in agitating on the campuses because they understood that the universities should be left for excellence in education”.

The policy actors used ‘semi-peripheral’ references to justify some other contested ideas in the Strategic Plan. As I have argued, both some academics and policy administrators professed the view that the idea of using external bodies in the higher education system could be useful to improve the quality. However, they noted that both public and private universities’ teachers treated that kind of external body – the accreditation council – as a controlling agency. As the former policy administrator of the UGC, Nadim, believed, “The teachers showed negative views towards the accreditation council. Some teachers of the Dhaka University even said that the UGC might evaluate their programs and students’ performance through an accreditation council. They misled other teachers and students in different public universities”. Thus, some academics, who were involved in the quality group of the Strategic Plan, used ‘semi-peripheral’ references in justifying the idea of accreditation council in the Strategic Plan. They carried out a comparative analysis between the universities in India and the universities in Thailand to show how these
universities were doing quality enhancement in their higher education systems. As one of the academics, Prof Masum, who had involved in the quality expert group of the Strategic Plan, said, “We collected information about the quality enhancement program of Chulalongkorn University in Thailand and some universities in Bangalore, India. We got ideas about how they ensured transparency, and appointed the VC and teaching staff for the universities”. Based on the ideas from neighbouring countries, the academics argued that the accreditation council could be useful to improve the quality in the higher education system in Bangladesh. Again Prof Masum continued, “We provided a reformation agenda into our universities based on this analysis”.

The low salaries of the public universities’ teachers was one of the key concerns of some academics, who had worked in the public universities. They argued that the low salaries demotivated qualified and skilled people not to be involved in teaching. This group of academics interviewed also noted that often low salaries encouraged teachers to be involved in part-time employments. The teachers’ involvement in the part-time jobs affected the quality adversely because these teachers spent time on the other job. This group of academics believed that a standard salary for the teachers could be helpful to motivate skilled people to be involved in teaching. However, the academics perceived that bureaucratic domination by the government would not countenance the idea of increasing teachers’ salary. For example, Prof Ahsan commented, “We established an accepted paradigm that the bureaucrats should be ahead of the universities’ teachers. Both political and military governments cherished this practice over the years”. In analysing the interview transcript of the policy administrators of the Ministry of Education, I found that many policy administrators believed in bureaucratic domination in the universities. For example, the former policy administrator of the Education Ministry, Azam, argued, “Though it was not happened yet, I believed that a bureaucrat also had a vast knowledge about the administrative procedures and they could able to run public university smoothly”. In such a bureaucratically dominated system, some academics who had worked in the public universities, drew examples from South Asia to justify introducing a higher salary structure for teachers. As an academic, Prof Masum, said, “A professor of Quaid-I-Azam University in
Pakistan got salary tk.1 lac and seventy thousands”. The academics, who had worked in the public universities, developed the argument that high wages could encourage public universities’ teachers to be involved in the academic activities. For example, again Prof Masum said, “If we could ensure such a high wage with other facilities for our teachers, they would stay in the universities for the whole day long”.

As pointed out, a number of academics perceived that the UGC as a quasi-autonomous body had failed to work independently because of the influence of the Ministry of Education. The academics who had been involved in the Strategic Plan identified that a tacit war between the Ministry of Education and the UGC led to the creation of an unhealthy environment in the higher education sector. To solve that problem, some academics interviewed looked at how a body like the UGC functioned in the neighbouring countries. The academics argued that the UGCs in India and Pakistan enjoyed enormous freedom to make their own decisions in the higher education system. Talking about this issue, one of the academics, Prof Soikot, said, “We found that Pakistan had the Higher Education Commission with more authority”. The academics presumed that the empowerment of the UGC as a statutory body could help the UGC to play a meaningful role in the higher education sector. Drawing on the ‘semi-peripheral’ references, the academics who had been involved in the Strategic Plan came in with the idea of Higher Education Commission to transform the UGC into a key authority in the higher education sector. Similar to the situation in the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan, the academics emphasised the need to change the status of the UGC chairman and other members. As another academic, Prof Ahsan, who was involved in the governance and management group of the Strategic Plan, commented, “The status of the Chairman and the members of the UGC would be equivalent to the Cabinet Minister and State Minister respectively… so that they could work freely to improve the higher education quality”.

The above analysis in this section has shown the actual process of turning the constructions of the problems into a solution. It has spelt out the process the policy actors used
for different things at different stages. At the transnational level the World Bank was being brought in through the international experts. At the national level, the Education Minister, who came from the World Bank, played the key role in the development of the Strategic Plan. The Education Minister and the UGC Chairman constructed a process of having expert groups come together and present their ideas to the Education Minister and its policy administrators. The policy actors were drawing on international experts, but the analysis has shown that policy actors set up their own search for strategies to re-contextualise the western ideas in the home country perspectives. In dealing with contested ideas, some policy actors developed their own policy strategies, such as using ‘semi-peripheral’ references as authority to justify these ideas to be adopted in the Strategic Plan. In the next section, I explore the ‘micro-politics’ of local policy actors bringing neoliberal ideas into the Strategic Plan.

6.4 Ideas, positions, and practices in the politics of formulating the Strategic Plan

The previous section has analysed the ways the different policy actors operated in the construction of Strategic Plan. In this section, I explore the ‘micro-politics’ of adopting various neoliberal ideas into the Strategic Plan. This section shows that the different policy actors influenced the whole formulation process depending on their positions and the networks they held, and the ideas in which they believed. In particular, this section traces the micro-politics by looking at how the ideas fitted with people, their positions, and their perceptions of oppositional ideas. In this vein, my argument shows why the micro-politics needs to be understood in order to understand the logic of adopting the Strategic Plan and which ideas became the dominant ideas in the Strategic Plan.

6.4.1 To serve the ‘master’. As argued above, the policy actors on the whole demonstrated that the World Bank had emphasised the importance of reformation of primary and secondary education until 2000. In 2000, the World Bank produced the Bangladesh Education Sector Review in which the World Bank talked about the ‘policy crises’ in the higher education
sector and came in with ‘vision for 2020’ as policy solution to these crises. The formation of the *Bangladesh Sector Review* on higher education indicated that the World Bank had already developed the interest to be involved in the higher education sector in Bangladesh. The academics, who had worked in the SPC of the Strategic Plan, indicated that once the experts of the World Bank revealed that lending money to the higher education sector in Bangladesh would be profitable, the Bank showed interest to be involved in this sector. For example, one of the academics, Prof Kowsar, who was involved in the SPC of the Strategic Plan, alluded to the interest of the World Bank to be involved in the higher education sector in Bangladesh: “The International Advisory Committee of the World Bank calculated some input-return relationship in higher education based on the household survey, and revealed that the return on the investment in the higher education was higher than that of other sectors”.

The views of those academics, who had worked in the SPC of the Strategic Plan, about the World Bank’s interest to be involved in the higher education sector echoed other research in comparative education on policy borrowing. Steiner-Khamsi (2006) points to the politics and economics of policy borrowing from one context to another. For her, shifting the role of the World Bank from the lending of credit for economic reforms to the lending of ideas had driven the World Bank to become the ‘international knowledge bank’. In addition, the analysis of interview transcripts of some policy actors also showed that in early 2002, once the BNP formed the government, an ‘elite network’ emerged among the World Bank, the Education Minister and the UGC Chairman to work together in the higher education sector in Bangladesh (see 6.3.1). In analysing the context to enable the Strategic Plan the policy actors described the roles of the elite network of the World Bank, Education Minister and the UGC Chairman in the development of the Strategic Plan. This elite network set up the Strategic Planning Committee (SPC), and employed particular experts to take charge of the key expert groups to formulate the Strategic Plan for higher education in Bangladesh.
Although some policy actors pointed to the interest of the World Bank in the Strategic Plan and noted how they developed the ideas in the Strategic Plan in line with the World Bank ideology, other academics and the journalist described the ‘micro-politics’ of formulating the Strategic Plan in the higher education sector in Bangladesh in 2006. In understanding the ‘micro-politics’, some policy actors critically examined the roles the Education Minister and the UGC Chairman played as part of the elite network with the World Bank in the formation of the Strategic Plan.

The interview with the journalist, Plabon, revealed his belief that the initial plan of the World Bank and the Education Minister was to develop a project with the finance of the World Bank in the higher education sector based on the World Bank’s *Bangladesh Sector Review* on higher education. He believed that both the World Bank and the Education Minister reversed their decision when some national newspapers critiqued the World Bank’s involvement in the higher education sector. Plabon explained, “I published a report about the World Bank interest in higher education. Other left-leaning national newspapers followed me and published reports on it”. In these reports, the journalists became critical of the idea of the World Bank’s *Bangladesh Sector Review* on higher education. The journalist argued that although the World Bank report was not formulated by conducting substantial research work, the Education Minister initiated a project with the finance of the World Bank based on that review report. Plabon, continued, “I found that in the sector review report the World Bank identified five to six problems and policy solutions to these problems but they did not conduct any substantial research on the higher education sector in Bangladesh to address these problems and policy solutions to these problems”. This journalist believed that the media critics led the World Bank and the Education Minister to be cautious in how to justify the World Bank’s involvement in the higher education sector in Bangladesh. Therefore, they planned to formulate the Strategic Plan through the involvement of different policy actors, which referred to what Steiner-Khamsi (2012a, p. 8) calls the ‘quasi-scientific stamp of certification’ of the World Bank activities in the higher education sector in Bangladesh. The journalist, Plabon, noted, “Because of our reports the World Bank and the Education Minister
deferred their project, and decided to formulate a Strategic Plan with the involvement of the UGC and different national policy experts in the field of higher education in Bangladesh”.

The view the journalist expressed was echoed by other two academics, who had worked in the expert groups of the Strategic Plan. These two academics perceived that both the World Bank and the Education Minister had stressed the importance of formation of a policy document as an authority to justify developing a project in the higher education sector with the finance of the World Bank. For example, one participant, Prof Haque, who had moved from a public to private university, commented, “And they (World Bank) had a plan to loan to the higher education sector. … They decided to do a study and exercise this”.

Some academics also argued that the Education Minister was the policy champion of the Strategic Plan. As one of the academics, Prof Soikot, who had stayed in the public university, said, “You need always a champion and in that case, I would rather ratify minister as the policy champion”.

Although these two academics might have been critical, they were not excessively so because they saw the need for a policy champion and they hastened to ratify the Minister as policy champion. However other academic who had moved from public university to role in private university and had worked in the SPC of the Strategic Plan, identified the role the Education Minister played in the process as political. This academic perceived that through the formulation of the Strategic Plan the Education Minister actually proved his long commitment in promoting the World Bank reformation agenda in the higher education sector in Bangladesh. As Prof Nasim, who had been involved in the SPC of the Strategic Plan, said, “The ball started with a bureaucrat who had served the World Bank for a long time. Later, he became a politician … But he knew how to serve the master”.

The perception this academic expressed about the role of the Education Minister in promoting the World Bank’s ideas in the higher education sector in Bangladesh was echoed by the policy administrator of the Ministry of Education. The policy administrator of the Ministry of Education noted that the Education Minister was concerned, in particular, about how to improve
the quality and de-regularise the financing system of the public universities. The former policy administrator of Ministry of Education, Azam, stated, “My Minister directed me to include some issues, adopting the accreditation council for quality enhancement, and self-financing strategies of the public universities. The Strategic Plan incorporated all of these issues”.

The ways some academics and the journalist were talking about the role of the Education Minister in the formation process revealed that in order to deal with a politicised public sector the Education Minister needed to construct the process of the development of a Strategic Plan by having expert groups. Because of the suspicion of having the World Bank’s ideas in the higher education system, the Education Minister decided on such expert groups, but he developed the mechanisms to control the formation process to ensure the World Bank’s involvement in the higher education sector in Bangladesh.

Many scholars argue that donors have captured different professional groups in Bangladesh (White, 1999) by providing foreign aid in different development projects (Kamruzzaman, 2013). The interview with Plabon, the journalist, recognised the role the UGC Chairman played in the Strategic Plant from the financial perspective. He argued that the UGC Chairman treated the Strategic Plan as a means of creating economic opportunity from the process. Indeed, Plabon, who published a series of reports about the Strategic Plan, justified his claim by pointing out that when the UGC Chairman was in the University of Dhaka, apart from his teaching, he was involved in part-time jobs – consultancy – to earn extra money. As Plabon said, “You know, many teachers were involved in part time employment, e.g. teaching in private universities and consultancy because the salary of the teachers of universities was not as much as high to lead the daily life”. This journalist perceived that when he joined the UGC the consultancy work became limited and thus, the UGC Chairman considered developing a development project with the finance of the World Bank that could not only ensure money in the higher education sector, but also create opportunities for consultancies. Again Plabon,
commented, “So, he was also looking for how to develop a project with the finance of the World Bank that could also help him to continue consultancy activities”.

The analysis of some interview transcripts has shown that some academics acknowledged that they were involved in the Strategic Plan to gain economic benefits from the process. As one of the academics, Prof Nasim, who worked in the SPC of the Strategic Plan, commented, “All policy actors of the Strategic Plan received some ‘seed’ money for doing their jobs”. The view this academic of the SPC expressed was supported by another academic, Prof Soikot, who pointed out, “I knew a project will be introduced based on this work, but I could not maintain contact with the World Bank and the UGC. I advised the World Bank to wait until a new government is formed”.

Since the concern was to develop a project financed by the World Bank in the higher education sector, by the end of 2009, both the UGC and the Ministry of Education along with the World Bank launched a five-year project with a loan from the World Bank based on the Strategic Plan. On this matter, an academic, Prof Soikot, commented, “So they started further thinking about it … they wanted to draw project design”. In 2009, the World Bank and the Ministry of Education undertook a five-year, $81 million Higher Education Quality Enhancement Project (HEQEP) with the view to bring about the qualitative changes in the higher education sector. However, some private sector representatives who were involved in the private universities found that most of the funds of this project were being used for public universities. One of the private sector representatives, Anzus, who founded a private university, commented, “A few number of private universities received the funds from this project”. They argued that the UGC and the Ministry of Education provided financial support exclusively for the improvement of the public higher education system in Bangladesh.

6.4.2 An apolitical project in public universities. As previously argued, although the Strategic Plan covered the entire higher education sector, the key focus was reforming the state-run public universities. Several participants interviewed perceived that the problem was
more generally about the politicisation of the public universities. Within that broader problem some of the academics specifically talked about the VC and teacher recruitment to the public universities. They argued that all kinds of appointments – from the VC to a lower level officer – were recruited based on political affiliation to the ruling party rather than on academic achievements and research output. A good number of academics also identified that four universities used the ‘election’ system to appoint the VC, Deans of the Faculties, and executive representatives from the academics in the Senate, Syndicate, Academic Council and Finance Committee. However, the academics explained how the government shaped the ‘election’ system as a political tool to appoint people like-minded to their political ideology to be employed in the university administration. Moreover, some academics argued that the extensive use of recruitment via ‘election’ assisted academics not only to be divided into two rival groups largely based on the two major political parties, but also to encourage them to be less involved in the academic activities. To solve the problem, a large number of policy actors adopted the idea of ‘de-politicisation’ of the public universities. To shape public universities as ‘de-politicised institutes’, the academics adopted the idea of the ‘Umbrella’ Act for all public universities. To reduce the government influence, the Umbrella Act included the idea of forming ‘a national search committee’ comprised of academics and members of the judiciary to search top executives for the public universities. They perceived that the ‘national search committee’ should recommend a panel of five members to the Chancellor to appoint someone from the panel as VC of a public university.

Although some of the academics of the public universities adopted the idea of the ‘Umbrella Act’ for all universities in order to de-politicise the public universities, among the academics who had moved from public to private universities a question was raised as to why a single Act had been suggested to run all public universities. One of the academics, Nasim, who had moved from a public university to the position of the VC of a private university, argued that the development histories of all public universities were not the same. He opined that all universities under a single Act could create different problems. As he said, “Potuakhali University
[a regional University] was not similar to the Dhaka University. The development histories of different public universities were different, but why the requirements under this law that they should have standard legislation”.

This group of academics who had moved from the public universities to private universities argued that with the influence of the World Bank some academics of the public universities developed the ideas of the Umbrella Act and the Search Committee in the Strategic Plan. One of the academics, Prof Nasim, commented, “The idea of Umbrella Act for all public universities came from the World Bank”. The views some academics expressed about the influence of the World Bank in developing the idea of ‘Umbrella Act’ for all universities was acknowledged by the policy administrator of the UGC and the Ministry of Education. For example, the former policy administrators of the UGC, Nadim, who worked as Member Secretary of the SPC, said, “The World Bank warned us about political intervention in the universities. They prescribed us to ban all type of political activities in all universities”.

In the interview, one academic, Prof Nasim, who worked in the SPC, traced the ‘micro-politics’ of adopting the idea of the de-politicisation project of public universities in the Strategic Plan. This academic argued that academics of the public universities and the UGC conceptualised the political crisis of the public universities in a simplistic way, and therefore they developed the idea of a single Act for all public universities. He argued that the idea of a single Act for all public universities echoed the World Bank’s approach of ‘one size fits all’. As Prof Nasim continued, “The World Bank saw everything as ‘homogenous’. They could not understand the ‘heterogeneity’ and the diverse ways of achieving goals. They ignored unity and diversity”.

By developing the idea of ‘de-politicisation’ of the public universities, some policy actors argued that the World Bank wanted to shape public universities as apolitical entities. They believed that an apolitical character of the public universities could help to implement the World Bank reformation agenda in the higher education sector in Bangladesh. Prof Nasim continued, “What [was it that] the World Bank wanted in the higher education … to increase tuition fees? If
students and teachers were politically conscious, it would not be possible for the government to carry out the World Bank’s agenda in the public universities”. In the same way, this group of academics, who had moved from the public universities to positions in private universities during 1990s, perceived that the idea of a ‘national search committee’ would not be useful in challenging the influence of the ruling party over the public universities until change had been brought to the appointment of the Chancellor of the universities. They mentioned that although some policy actors of the Strategic Plan brought the ideas of a single Act for all public universities and the National Search Committee to appoint the executives of the public universities, they still adopted the idea of the President of the Country as the Chancellor of all universities and agreed with having government representatives in the governing bodies of the public universities.

The concern as expressed by a few academics of the SPC of the Strategic Plan about the government influence over the Search Committee at the time of developing the Strategic Plan was acknowledged later by the academics who were involved in developing the idea of depoliticisation of the public universities. For example, Prof Masum, who was involved in a premier public university and promoted the idea of a ‘search committee’ to appoint the VC based on academic excellence, commented, “But from the very beginning I had a reservation about exercising futility. Bangladesh is too much advanced to move their foot”. The concern as expressed by the academics about misuse of the idea of the ‘national search committee’ came true when the government formed the National Search Committee in 2009. In that year, the Army-backed Caretaker Government formed a ‘national search committee’ headed by the Education Secretary to appoint the VCs of the public universities. The comment below by Prof Masum, who was included as a member of that ‘National Search Committee’ formed by the Army-backed Caretaker government in 2009, illustrates this point. He said, “Alas! What I saw a ‘search committee’ was formed headed by the education secretary, but our idea was not like that”. Prof Masum perceived that often the government wanted to implement suggestions to serve their own interests.
6.4.3 Public universities, but following private model. Returning to the issue of funding generation for the public universities, several policy actors interviewed alluded to the idea that the ‘cost-sharing’ approach be adopted in the public universities. The policy actors, who had been involved in the future funding group and constructed the idea of ‘cost-sharing’ approaches in the Strategic Plan, noted that the future funding group was guided to focus on how to reform the financing system of the public universities. One of the academics, Prof Haque, who was involved in the future funding group of the Strategic Plan, commented: “Considering the given situation the original hypothesis was that it would not be possible for the government to finance this higher education anymore to such a big demand”. In talking about where the idea of ‘cost-sharing’ approach came from, the academics who were involved in the future funding group of the Strategic Plan noted that the World Bank emphasised the need to bring different financing approaches to the Strategic Plan. The policy administrators of the UGC admitted that the World Bank prescribed that the UGC adopt the ‘cost-sharing’ approach in the Strategic Plan to manage public universities’ finances. A former policy administrator of the UGC, Nadim, explained how the World Bank exerted the idea of ‘cost-sharing’ in the Strategic Plan. He said, “They [the World Bank] prescribed the UGC that the government should have a condition to the government funding of public universities. If any public university was unable to increase internal income at 20% by a certain period [it] would be disqualified to get the government fund”.

Although with the influence of the World Bank the idea of cost-sharing approach was adopted in the Strategic Plan, the administrators of the UGC were concerned about implementing the cost-sharing approaches in the public universities. In particular, the UGC was concerned about two issues: the public universities were not in a position to use diverse ways of generating funds; and student movements could erupt at the introduction of the high tuition fees structure. Again the former policy administrator of the UGC, Nadim, commented, “We informed the World Bank that student movements could unfold if universities could introduce high tuition fees at this moment. The successive governments were scared to deal with the student movements in the public universities”. However, the UGC assured the World Bank that the
UGC promoted the gradual introduction of diverse fund generating approaches in the public universities. As the former policy administrators of the UGC, Nadim, commented, “In replying to the World Bank prescription, we said that it would be made sure gradually … Our UGC chairman committed to increase tuition and fees in the Dhaka University”.

As stated above, the World Bank influenced the government to reform the government funding system of the public universities by adopting the ‘cost-sharing’ approaches. The policy administrators of the Ministry of Education indicated that the government led by the BNP could not introduce high tuition and fees in the public universities at that time because the government came to an end in 2006. However, the then Education Minister believed that he could deregulate the financing system of the public universities if they came to power in the upcoming national election scheduled in 2007. One of the former policy administrators of the Ministry of Education, Azam, who had worked in the SPC of the Strategic Plan, described the plan of the Education Minister:

The Education Minister told me, “If our party [BNP] will re-elect in the next national election we will kill the ‘cat’ on the first night. On the first day of forming the government, we will impose high tuition and fees in all public universities. If we can do that on the first day, no one can organise movement against it.

Some policy actors noted that the World Bank pressurised the government to bring reformation in some key areas of higher education, such as financing, governance and quality. One of the academics, Prof Haque, noted, “They [World Bank] had a plan to bring changes in the entire higher education sector”. Some academics who worked in the SPC of the Strategic Plan argued that though the World Bank emphasised the need for reformation of the entire higher education system, the government and the Education Minister focused on some popular concepts such as quality improvement and the cost-sharing approach. They argued that the government plan concerned how to continue the government influence over the universities, but without sharing the costs of higher education. For example, Prof Nasim, who had been involved
in the SPC, commented, “The good concept of public higher education system was changed by the ‘popular concept’ of the World Bank and the Education Minister. In that popular concept the government did not have any financial contribution but could run the universities”. Several academics interviewed argued that the government actually developed a new idea of ‘public university’ following the private model in the Strategic Plan. The key character of that new idea of public university was to remain financially viable, but to remain under government control.

In the interviews, academics who had moved from the public universities to employment in the private universities, noted that during the formation of the Strategic Plan between 2005 and 2006 the government initiated the establishment of some public universities to which the Education Minister brought the idea of a new form of public university. This group of academics argued that the government established at least three general public universities – Jagannath University, Comilla University and Kabi Nazrul Islam University – between 2005 and 2006 based on the idea of a public university following the private model adopted in the Strategic Plan. In the Acts of these universities, the government adopted the government controlled governance system. Similar to other public universities, the Acts of these universities stated that the President of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh was to be Chancellor of these Universities and had the power to appoint the top executives of these universities. The government placed government representatives in the governing bodies of these universities. However, it stated that the government would not allocate any grants to these universities five to ten years after their establishment. As one of the academics, Prof Johirul, said, “The idea was that the government would pay for the students for the first 5 years, then the university will manage its own finances by tuition and fees. So, it was more like a private University, but under government control”. The views some academics expressed about the government’s idea about newly established public universities was echoed by policy administrators of the Ministry of Education and the UGC. One of the former policy administrators of the Ministry of Education, Azam, who had worked in the SPC, explained the idea the government had towards the future general public universities: “The idea was that newly established general public universities would be encouraged to be self-
financed, but would be under government control”. He admitted that the government set up these three general universities where the Education Minister brought the idea of government allocation being gradually reduced to be zero 5 to 10 years after the establishment.

6.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I continued to analyse the policy actors interviewed who were involved in the process of the formation of the Strategic Plan at the state level in Bangladesh.

It is demonstrated in the works undertaken by many scholars that the World Bank increasingly became the ‘international knowledge bank’ by producing and disseminating different policy documents to influence national reforms. The World Bank uses the strategy to talk about ‘crises’ of a particular education system, and justify introducing some particular policy ideas, which Steiner-Khamsi (2012a) calls ‘best practices’. The analysis shows that the World Bank produced the Bangladesh Sector Review Report in 2000 in which the World Bank spoke about the ‘policy crises’ in the higher education sector, and stressed the importance of bringing in global ideas to solve those problems. Six years after the Bangladesh Sector Review Report, the government of Bangladesh formulated a twenty-year Strategic Plan in 2006 with technical and financial assistance from the World Bank.

This chapter examined how the idea of the Strategic Plan developed through what Ball and Junemann (2012) call the ‘network governance’ operating between the World Bank and the Education Minister who had long standing ties with the World Bank as a former employee. The UGC chairman, as he was appointed by the government based on his political affiliation to the ruling party, enjoyed a strong relationship with the head of the government, and he also played a significant role in rolling out the entire negotiation process. The World Bank provided a loan and technical assistance in the Strategic Plan under a bilateral agreement between the government of Bangladesh and the World Bank, which Steiner-Khamsi (2008) refers to as ‘donor logic’. In analysing the formation process of the Strategic Plan, I found that the notions of ‘power’ and ‘expert knowledge’ became much more profound phenomena. The notion of ‘tri-power’ – the
World Bank, Education Minister and the UGC chairman – emerged and they defined in the Strategic Plan what and how things should be done and by whom. In the name of ‘technical assistance’, the World Bank deployed a range of ‘World Bank experts’ in the formation process of the Strategic Plan. The ‘World Bank experts’ drew on the World Bank ideas and shared certain ‘global ideas’ with the policy actors of the Strategic Plan to justify taking up some contested ideas as ‘best practices’ to accelerate the changes in the higher education.

As argued, the World Bank has focused on the ‘client focus strategy’, aiming to become the ‘international knowledge bank’ since the late 1990s. In the case of the Strategic Plan, the state level agencies – Ministry of Education and the UGC – recruited policy experts and these policy experts led different groups but under carefully managed terms and conditions. The Ministry of Education and the UGC also held consultation meetings with people at the regional level in Bangladesh. The initiative the Ministry of Education and the UGC took to include different voices in the formation process of the Strategic Plan helped to shape the Strategic Plan into what Steiner-Khamsi (2012a) calls an ‘everyone strategy’. The consultation and sharing meetings between the policy experts and the IAG helped the policy experts to learn about the World Bank’s ideas in the higher education system. Through the consultation and sharing meetings the IAG team could be able to influence the policy experts to play the roles that Ozga (2011) calls a ‘translators’ of the World Bank ideas in the Strategic Plan. Consequently, in the chapter, I have argued that the formation of the Strategic Plan was a result of what Bennett (1991) describes as ‘penetration’ by the World Bank and its interests.

It was not unusual for the World Bank to influence the government and the policy actors of the Strategic Plan to reproduce their ideas in the Strategic Plan. However, the question emerged as to how and why the policy actors of the Strategic Plan searched out their own policy strategies to shape the neoliberal ideas in the Strategic Plan. In analysing the transcripts of interviews I have found that some academics who worked in the expert groups of the Strategic Plan argued that rather than being influenced by the World Banks, they needed to re-
contextualise the global ideas for the local context. In order to get the contested neoliberal ideas to be adopted in the Strategic Plan, some academics used ‘semi-peripheral references’ as a policy strategy. Reflecting on how the examples of the ‘semi-peripheral’ references were used by the policy actors of the Strategic Plan tells us two new things. First, it has shown that not only the IFIs have adopted a range of policy tools in bringing global ideas from one place to another, but also policy actors of the developing countries have developed their own search for policy instruments, for example the use of ‘semi-peripheral’ references, as authority in bringing global ideas from the similar socio-economic and political structures and relationships. Second, by drawing on the ‘semi-peripheral’ references as a policy strategy, the policy actors of the developing countries not only comply with the IFIs’ interest in the developing countries, but are also able to hide the involvement in the formation process of IFIs like the World Bank. In the case of the Strategic Plan, it has shown that the policy actors were well aware of what the World Bank intended to do in the Strategic Plan, but they used strategies to neutralise the whole formulation process to ensure widespread acceptance of contested ideas. Apart from the ‘semi-peripheral’ references the policy administrators also used ‘discursive coordination’ as an effective policy tool to provide a view that the Strategic Plan was done with the involvement of the policy actors, but this mechanism also ensured drawing on the World Bank ideas in the Strategic Plan.

In addition, the analysis has also shown the critical roles of the media in understanding the formation process. Similar to the analysis of their role in the development of the Private University Acts, the media performed a significant role in making public the understanding of who worked with whom, their networks, and financial and political interests in the process of developing the Strategic Plan. Although, in terms of formation of the post 1998’ Acts, the role of media supplemented the government efforts, in the context of formation of the Strategic Plan, the media exposed the interests of the government and the various network governance in the policy formation process. As a consequence of the media reports exposing the tri-power of the World Bank, the Education Minister and the Chairman of the UGC in 2004, there was a shift in the strategies used by the Education Minister and the UGC Chairman from policy problems
identified by the World Bank to reconstruct the same policy problems with the local policy actors’ involvement after 2004 to justify the development of the Strategic Plan. In other words, the cross-field media effects pressurised the state agencies – the Ministry of Education and the UGC – to suspend a government driven higher education project based on the review report of the World Bank, and initiate a more inclusive policy development process to formulate a 20-year Strategic Plan with the involvement of the national policy experts in the field of higher education in Bangladesh. The overall analysis of the formulation process of the Strategic Plan provides an insightful understanding about why the micro-politics of policy actors need to be understood to understand neoliberal policy formations in the higher education sector in Bangladesh.

Based on the analysis of findings in Chapters 4, 5 and 6, in the next chapter I will summarise and discuss the results in relation to my conceptual framework which draws broadly on the policy borrowing models in comparative education. The chapter also outlines the contributions this research makes to knowledge.
Chapter 7

Summary and discussion

7.1 Introduction

The purposes of this chapter are to summarise the findings, provide a critical discussion of the findings in the light of theoretical framework, and outline the contributions to knowledge. Several scholars in comparative education on policy borrowing emphasise the importance of understanding how the local policy context and the recontextualisation of transnational reforms that surface worldwide affect how policies are borrowed (see for reference, Steiner-Khamsi & Waldow, 2012). Primarily, this thesis developed a theoretical framework from the works of comparative education on policy borrowing to help understand the processes of neoliberal ideas formulation in the higher education policies at the state level in Bangladesh since 1990s.

The key arguments of this thesis concern the ways in which the neoliberal ideas were shaped in the higher education policies in Bangladesh and how the resulting ideas can be defined as a Bangladeshi form of neoliberalism. I have found that policies are not entirely borrowed. In the process of being adopted the policies are modified to fit the local context. Similar to what several scholars (see for reference, Ochs & Phillips, 2004; Steiner-Khamsi, 2004b) in comparative education on policy borrowing have argued, this study argues that the construction of ‘policy problems’ sparked off the attraction of neoliberal ideas through a process of ‘externalisation’ to solve the policy problems in the higher education sector in Bangladesh. In particular, it supports the argument of several scholars in the policy borrowing models that the globalisation of neoliberal ideas has become the key source of solutions to a country’s policy problems, and the availability of the external ideas has worked as a catalyst to solve internal problems. In Bangladesh, during the policy formation processes the references to ‘lessons learnt’ or references to the ‘best practices’ from other countries became the policy tools policy makers used in justifying the adaptation of neoliberal ideas in the higher education policies at the state level in Bangladesh.
By demonstrating that this process works in a setting like Bangladesh, this thesis contributes to knowledge in ‘comparative policy studies’ and policy borrowing models about the contexts to which these models apply. This thesis argues that the ‘micro-politics’ of a context need to be studied to understand the reasons why neoliberal ideas were promoted in the developing countries like Bangladesh. The argument about the importance of studying the ‘micro-politics’ of policy development contributes further to knowledge about the process of policy borrowing in ‘comparative policy studies’. In addition, this research argues that the extensive use of the concept of ‘semi-peripheral references’ by policy makers to provide locally acceptable external references was in fact a form of externalisation strategy in Bangladesh. In shifting away from references to the ‘best practices’ or ‘international standards’ to references to the practices in ‘semi-peripheral’ countries, policy actors in Bangladesh were able to justify the adaptation of contested neoliberal ideas in the higher education policies by drawing on experiences from the countries that have similar socio-economic and political structures and relationships. The argument regarding the use of ‘semi-peripheral’ references in the externalisation process provides an insightful contribution to policy borrowing models in the context of developing countries.

This chapter consists of three sections. The first section reintroduces the research focus and offers a brief reminder about the research aims. The second summarises the statements of findings of the preceding Chapters. Finally, it outlines the contributions this research makes to knowledge of ‘comparative policy studies’, and policy borrowing models.

7.2 Reintroducing the research focus

This research was designed to broadly understand the processes which include why, how and by whom the neoliberal ideas and thinking were formulated in the higher education policies at the state level in Bangladesh since the 1990s.

As I outlined in the introduction (Chapter 1), the higher education sector in Bangladesh has experienced significant changes since the 1990s. The government of Bangladesh initiated a
number of neoliberal policy reforms – the private university Acts and Ordinance (hereafter Acts) and a 20-year Strategic Plan for Higher Education 2006-2026 (hereafter Strategic Plan) with financial and technical assistance from the World Bank. To understand the processes of neoliberal ideas formulation I investigated these two key neoliberal policy phases – the Acts and the Strategic Plan, examining the texts and the accounts of their development as given by policy actors.

Returning to the key focus of this research – why, how and by whom the neoliberal ideas were formulated in these two neoliberal higher education policy phases in Bangladesh, I first examined to what extent neoliberalism was the prominent feature in these policies in Bangladesh. In particular, I looked at what the features of neoliberalism were, and how those features were manifested in these two major neoliberal policy phases – the Acts and the Strategic Plan – at the state level in Bangladesh since the 1990s (see Chapter 4). Second, I interviewed the policy actors who were part of the development of these policies. In interviewing the policy actors I sought to understand the reasons for which neoliberal ideas were developed, how these texts were formulated, and who was involved in the formulation processes (see Chapters 5 and 6).

Consequently, I posed some other questions in my research to understand the processes of formulation of these neoliberal policies. For example, the second question was posed to understand why the policy actors adopted several neoliberal ideas in these policies. This question led me to explore why the ‘micro-politics’ need to be understood to understand the policy formation processes in Bangladesh. I then posed a third question about what strategies were used by the policy actors to formulate neoliberal ideas in these policies. This question inquired about how the policy actors used a number of strategies in the policy formulation process. Consequently, in pursuit of this matter, I developed some sub-questions, for example, how policy actors justified the neoliberal ideas they developed in these policies. How did they shape and recontextualise neoliberal ideas in the local context? How did other policy fields influence the formulation of neoliberal ideas? In addition, in order to understand by whom neoliberal ideas
were formulated, I posed the final question regarding who had been involved in the development of these two policies.

### 7.3 Statement of results

To address the research aim that I posed in the Introduction (Chapter 1) I summarise and discuss the salient findings of the preceding chapters. In this discussion of the key findings I reiterate what is already known, and outline what ideas the thesis addresses and show how this thesis contributes to the literature.

The literature review (Chapter 2) in this thesis provided: 1) identification of the root of the neoliberal theoretical paradigm and its impact on global higher education systems, 2) an account of the relationship between neoliberalism and policy borrowing, and 3) a theoretical framework largely based on comparative education on policy borrowing models. In the first part of the literature review, I conceptualised the notion of neoliberalism and established the theoretical root of neoliberalism with the theories of Hayek, Milton Friedman’s theories of monetarism, James Buchanan’s public choice theory, agency theory, and cost-transaction economics. I also established that the international financial institutions (IFIs) have promoted neoliberal reformations in various sectors worldwide since the early 1970s. I identified the key neoliberal ideas, for example, new public management (NPM) as governance, external auditing systems as quality, cost-sharing approach as a financing system, and the knowledge economy as a vision of higher education. The broader literatures informed me that the idea of NPM or ‘new managerialism’ has been adopted in many state-run universities to ensure accountability, and to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the public sector (Hood, 1991). External bodies have become involved in auditing the quality of degrees the universities offer (Altbach et al., 2010; El-Khawas et al., 1998). The ‘cost-sharing’ approach has shifted the substantial costs of higher education from the state to students and guardians (Johnstone & Marcucci, 2010). Further, the neoliberal changes have shifted the roles of the universities from the 1980s onward to generating people and products for a knowledge-based economy and society. I identified that analysing how
these neoliberal concepts have been promulgated in policy in Bangladesh will be important to understand how ideas are globalised and travel from one context to another.

In the second part of Chapter 2, I developed a theoretical framework for this research by identifying the relationships between neoliberalism and the works of the ‘policy borrowing’ models. In tracing how ideas have been moving around the world, I considered the debates over policy borrowing put forward by a range of scholars in comparative education and policy studies. I learnt that most of the studies of policy borrowing models in education were involved in transatlantic and inter-European policy transfer (Steiner-Khamsi, 2006). The gap I identified in the policy borrowing models is that there have been few studies in non-western countries; existing studies were underdeveloped in showing how global policy is played out in non-western countries. In addition, although there were some studies in some non-western countries, no one had done any study like this in Bangladesh. Consequently, I proposed that Bangladesh could be an example of a non-western country that could show how neoliberal policy has penetrated these kinds of spaces.

I identified that methodologically, any cross-national study is comparative (Steiner-Khamsi, 2012b). As my greater interest was to understand the use of neoliberal ideas in the policy formation processes in higher education policies at the state level in Bangladesh, I designed my research framework based on the comparative education policy borrowing models. I based my conceptual framework primarily on the works from Phillips and Ochs, Steiner-Khamsi, and Lingard and Rawolle. I used the concepts of ‘cross-national policy attraction’ by Phillips and Ochs, (2002, 2003, 2004, 2005), the notion of ‘reference society and comparison’, ‘scandalization’ and ‘donor-logic’ by Steiner-Khamsi, (2003, 2006, 2010, 2012a) and ‘cross-field effects’ by Lingard and Rawolle (2004, 2008, 2011) to understand the formulation processes of neoliberal ideas in the higher education policies at the state level in Bangladesh.

However, I identified that several scholars in policy studies argue that the movement of global ideas is not identical everywhere (Dale, 1999; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). Rather, they point
out that the national characteristics often determine to what degree and how the global ideas would be mediated in local contexts (Ball, 1998; Rizvi & Lingard, 2000). Ozga and Lingard (2007) point to the ‘vernacular’ form of globalisation in which global ideas are mediated by the local and national history and politics. They underline the importance of looking at the local context in order to understand the “framing of education policy and politics” (Ozga & Lingard, 2007, p. 79).

Consequently, I considered the idea proposed by Steiner-Khamsi (2012b) that ‘comparative policy studies’ constitute a useful tool in this research to look at the roles different policy actors played at a particular points in the formation processes of neoliberal ideas in the higher education policies at the state level in Bangladesh.

Chapter 3 outlined the methodological approach I used in this research to address the overarching research questions. I identified the qualitative case study as the most appropriate methodological approach in this thesis. I selected neoliberal higher education policy formation of Bangladesh as a case (Merriam, 1998). As indicated, my interest in this research was to broadly understand the formulation of neoliberal ideas in the higher education policies at the state level in Bangladesh since 1990s. My conceptual framework informed me that there were some policy initiatives – the private university Acts and a 20-year Strategic Plan with the financial and technical support of the World Bank – in the higher education sector at the state level in Bangladesh between 1990 and 2010 that were signifiers for neoliberalism. Within this case of neoliberal higher education policy formation in Bangladesh, I analysed key neoliberal policies – the Acts and the Strategic Plan, and interviewed some key policy actors involved in the formation of these neoliberal policies. I used thematic content analysis to analyse these neoliberal higher education policy documents to outline what neoliberalism looks like in the higher education policies in Bangladesh. The thematic analysis of the transcripts of the policy actors interviewed helped me to understand the processes of neoliberal ideas formulation. In this chapter, I also outlined the data analysis and presentation procedures, and demonstrated the reliability and validity of the data collection and interpretation.
Chapters 4, 5 and 6 presented the data analysis, and interpretation of the findings of research. In the following two subsections I summarise and discuss the significance of the key findings of the research.

7.3.1 A Bangladeshi form of neoliberalism in the higher education policies.

Chapter 4 outlined the discursive policy shifts in the text towards neoliberal ideas in the private universities Acts over a period of nearly 25 years and in the Strategic Plan. Having carried out the content analysis of the Acts and the Strategic Plan (Chapter 4), I found that these were shaped by four key neoliberal discourses – knowledge economy as a vision of higher education, NPM as governance, external auditing systems as quality, and cost-sharing approaches to finance higher education in Bangladesh. Table 3 (a few pages hence) outlines the summary of the findings of key neoliberal ideas in the higher education policies in Bangladesh.

As argued in the literature review (Chapter 2), under the neoliberal state, knowledge and information are recognised as the key factors of economic growth and development. The roles of the universities are shifted to channelling the knowledge flow into new sources of information (OECD, 1996). The findings of the first Private University Act 1992 suggest that the private universities should be developed in Bangladesh mainly to respond to the demands of higher education.

However, a closer look at the Strategic Plan reveals that one of the key concerns of the Strategic Plan was the kind of knowledge that needs to be generated by the universities in Bangladesh. The results of the Strategic Plan show that the roles of higher education institutes needed to shift to generate human resources for labour markets. In a knowledge-based economy, the role of universities is emphasised as important in responding to the market demands for qualifications (World Bank, 2002). Similar to how International Organisations such as the World Bank and the OECD define the universities’ roles in supplying the knowledge-based economy and society, the Strategic Plan emphasised the need for applied science, technology, and business-
related knowledge to be produced by the universities to build up a knowledge-based society and economy in Bangladesh.

Referring to global trends in the governance system of the universities, scholars point out that a private business-style management system, which is often known as NPM, has emerged in universities since the 1980s (Altbach, 2005), in contrast to collegiate governance by peers. The central tenet of this change in public management and the voluntary organisation sector is a shift towards corporate accountability and administration rather than professional or occupational accountability (Hood, 1995; Ranson, 2003). In contrast, in this study, the findings of the earlier Private University Act 1992 show that a ‘founder-controlled’ or ‘entrepreneurial-controlled’ governance system was adopted in the private universities in which the founders enjoyed the outright authority in the decision making process of the private universities. The earlier Act 1992 also allowed either the founder(s) or anyone else to be the VC of the private universities.

However, the findings show that by 1998, the UGC as a state-funded statutory body exerted power to be involved in the private universities to oversee some aspects of the universities, for example, to control quality. The post 1998 Acts focused on incorporating new managerial values in the private universities through the involvement of the state in the governing bodies of the private universities. In the post 1998 period, the state has introduced government representatives and academics from outside the private universities who could reflect the interests of parts of the civil society to provide advice on the day to day work of these universities. In the post 1998 Acts, the findings reveal that the founders became only the figureheads of the private universities, and they enjoyed no authority in the decision making process. Instead, the board of trustees (BoT) became the highest authority of the private universities. The post 1998 Acts also shaped the roles of the VCs ensuring they became the chief executive and academic officer of the private universities. In the latest Act 2010, the VC was given a more explicitly academic role in the university that might help the VC to make day-to-day academic operational decisions and control the strategic direction of the academic work. This shows the modification of some
aspects of neoliberalism – the move to the market and founder control – by the cross-field effects of quality assurance and expansion of the role of VC.

The idea about the governance system the government introduced in the post 1998 Acts could be defined as a ‘mix private-public’ controlled governance system. The shifting to change from the ‘entrepreneurial controlled’ to a ‘mix private-public’ controlled governance system indicates that the private universities could be owned privately; however, the Ministry of Education and the UGC as the state agencies in the higher education sector could play the roles of what King (2004) calls ‘arm’s-length’ bodies to ensure the accountability of private universities (cited in de Boer et al., 2007). In line with ‘new managerialism’ or NPM approach, the government in Bangladesh has expected the private universities to adopt purposes and standards that align with those of public higher education, and to take management responsibility for reporting to government on the practices and outcomes of their activities, as well as to their own ‘boards of trustees’ or even founders and shareholders.

The findings from analysing the Strategic Plan show that the government developed a new kind of governance system for the public universities in the Strategic Plan. The key focus of the Strategic Plan was that the existing governance system of the public universities needed to be de-politicised by the involvement of civil society members in the governing bodies of the public universities. To frame a ‘de-political governance’ system the Strategic Plan emphasised the importance of restructuring the governing bodies and redefining the roles of academics and the government in the public universities. Similar to the idea the government brought to the private universities, the findings regarding the Strategic Plan show that the government ensured new roles for the Ministry of Education and the UGC in the governing bodies to oversee the day to day operation of the public universities. To ensure the social accountability of universities, rather than control by political followers, the government brought the public or civil society members into the governing bodies of the public universities. The government also reduced the roles of the teachers and registered graduate representatives in the governing bodies of the public
universities. In the Strategic Plan, similar to the Private University Act, the government also adopted the idea of a single Act that is termed the Umbrella Act for all public universities, and the idea of a ‘Search Committee’ to remove the political factors from the process of appointing the VCs of the public universities. To shape an apolitical image of the VC and to promote the entrepreneurial practices in the public universities, the Strategic Plan shaped the role of the VC as chief executive officer (CEO) by increasing the power of the VC in the decision making process.

In looking at similarities and dissimilarities of the governance systems of the public and private universities, the findings show that between 1992 and 2010 the government developed a similar kind of governance system for both public and private higher education systems based on NPM. In both the systems, although the ultimate power resided in the government – for example, the President of the State continued to be the Chancellor of all universities – the government increasingly relied on a more indirect role to control the universities. The government deployed the Ministry of Education and the UGC as arm’s length bodies to oversee the day to day activities of the public and private universities. In both models, it ensured new roles for the civil society body and limited the roles of academics in the governing bodies. In addition, the Acts and Strategic Plan shaped the roles of the VCs as the chief executive and academic of the universities in both systems to run the universities based on a private managerial approach. However, the findings show that the only difference between these two systems was who set up these two different kinds of universities. Consequently, the role of board of trustees was still significant in the private universities.
Table 3: Summary of the findings of the neoliberal features in the higher education policies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key global trends</th>
<th>Pre 1998 Private University Acts</th>
<th>Post 1998 Private University Acts</th>
<th>Strategic Plan for Higher Education 2006 (Covers for whole HE, but key focus was to reformation of the public universities)</th>
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<td></td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>1998 (amendment)</td>
<td>2008 (Ordinance)</td>
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<td>Knowledge based economy &amp; society</td>
<td>Emphasised the expansion of higher education and to generate human resources</td>
<td>Brought the same vision for private universities</td>
<td>Emphasised the fast and multifaceted expansion and generate human resources</td>
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<tr>
<td>NPM</td>
<td>Founder-controlled system</td>
<td></td>
<td>Restructuring the governing bodies</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- The founders constituted a syndicate or similar kind of body to administer the university, and set up academic management structure to look at the academic side of the university.</td>
<td>Govt. exerted its power - UGC could carry out any inspection in the private universities and could issue directives to undertake necessary actions</td>
<td>- Founders became figureheads but were honorary - Board of Trustees became the governing body - Syndicate became the executive body - Government &amp; UGC representatives in the Syndicate - VC as chief executive and academics officer of the universities included in various committees</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- The VC acted as operational manager</td>
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<td>Restructuring the governing bodies</td>
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<td>Restructuring the governing bodies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quality</td>
<td>The UGC as the state controlling body to approve the programs and curricula</td>
<td>Brought the same role for the UGC</td>
<td>- UGC played the same role in approving the programs and learning outcomes, but academic council worked in improving quality with the direction of the UGC</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>- Adopted the accreditation council as external auditing body to be involved in controlling quality</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Adopted the accreditation council as external auditing body to be involved in controlling quality</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| Cost-sharing approaches | - Did not explicitly explain how would be financed  
- Students’ tuition and fees became the key strategy to manage finance | Continued the same idea of tuition & fees as the main source of the income | - Explicitly adopted ‘cost sharing’ approaches, e.g. tuition and fees, loans & donations from various sources | - Removed the idea of govt. and founders’ financial contributions, but kept the ‘cost sharing’ approaches as the key strategy | - Introduced ‘cost-sharing’ approaches in the public universities |
|         |                                                                          |                                  | - Adopted the government and founders financial contributions to the private universities  
- Adopted the idea of private universities as ‘not for-profit’ institutes | - Became silent about whether private universities were ‘not for-profit’ or ‘for-profit’ institutes | - Government grants would be reduced gradually and would become zero in the public universities |
As discussed in the literature review (Chapter 2), under the neoliberalist movement, different mechanisms – *internal quality assurance* and *external quality assurance* – were developed within and outside the universities to ensure assurance of quality of higher education. The findings (see Chapter 4) of earlier Acts of 1992 and 1998 indicate that the UGC as the state funded statutory body in the higher education sector became involved in the private universities and was given a new role in approving the educational programs, curriculum and course content, and quality standards of private higher education. The role the UGC played in the private universities ensured that the quality issue in this sector became part of the ‘state evaluation’ (Neave, 1998, p. 265). By 2008, the government made the private universities subject to institutional performance evaluation through *internal and external quality assurance* bodies. The academic council, as an internal academic decision-making body of the private universities, played a role in improving the programs and learning outcomes under the direction of the UGC. However, the university would need to have an ‘internal quality unit’ to provide progress reports about the quality to the ‘accreditation council’. The government identified that the accreditation council as an external auditing governance body would use benchmarks to assess the institutional performance of quality. The findings of the latest private university Acts (2008 & 2010) suggest that the government developed the idea of the accreditation council to ensure the ‘external accountability’ of the private universities (Vukasovic, 2014, p. 46). Consequently, these policy texts prescribe the roles the UGC and the accreditation council should play in the private universities in auditing the quality, so that they not only transform the private universities to contribute to the knowledge economy, but also affect the governance system.

Unsurprisingly, the Strategic Plan developed the argument that the public universities were also required to show the institutional performance of quality. Traditionally, the quality issues of the public universities were solely the responsibility of the faculties and the universities themselves. However, these policy texts reveal that public higher education institutes had come under government and public pressure to respond to the markets. The formation of the accreditation council in the Strategic Plan echoes the characteristics that are already identified in
scholarly literature (see for reference, Sanyal & Martin, 2007) where the quality assurance process is shifted from the institution to an external body. In addition, the strategic plan adopted the idea of internal and external evaluation processes in which the student and staff outcomes and publications would be evaluated by various participants and standards: for example, students’ assessments, number of publications in the ranked journals.

The wider literature identifies a ‘cost-sharing’ approach as the typical neoliberal way of financing the system of universities (see for reference, Johnstone & Marcucci, 2010). The ‘cost-sharing’ approach refers to shifting the costs of higher education from the state to the students and other social actors. The analysis of the earlier Acts (1992 & 1998) suggests that the government did not explicitly define the financing system of private universities. But in the post 1998 Acts the government introduced what scholars call the ‘cost-sharing’ approach as the financing system of the private universities. The evidence of the latest Act of 2010 suggest that the students and their parents would be solely responsible for paying the costs of private higher education.

As argued in the literature review (see Chapter 2), the ‘cost-sharing approaches’ could take many forms, depending on the particular countries and the institutes. Similarly, the findings of Strategic Plan indicate that the state would only play a ‘shadow role’ in terms of financing the state-run universities. The Strategic Plan outlined how the state-run universities could be self-sustained by adopting a ‘cost-sharing’ approach in the universities. The Strategic Plan developed the idea that the government would allocate grants based on what Herbst (2007, p. x) calls ‘performance-based indicators’ of the public universities until the public universities become self-sustaining institutions. Although in the wider literature (see for reference, Altbach et al., 2010) the state does still take some financial responsibilities for higher education around the world, the findings of both private university Acts and the Strategic Plan reveal that the government of Bangladesh wished to be involved in governance systems in both private and public universities but has not wanted to participate in any of the costs of higher education and expansion.
To summarise this section, from the way in which some key neoliberal ideas were developed and shaped in the higher education policies at the state level in Bangladesh, I recognise them as a Bangladeshi form of neoliberalism. In the following I explain the idea of a Bangladeshi form of neoliberalism by discussing key characteristics of some of these ideas.

As I argued in Chapter 4, both the private university Acts and the Strategic Plan adopted four key neoliberal ideas in order to deal with two different sectors – private and public universities. In analysing these key neoliberal features, I found that some neoliberal features of these two key neoliberal policies have been playing out in slightly different ways from the wider literature. For example, both these two key neoliberal policies developed the idea of NPM as the governance systems of the public and private universities. In line with the NPM approach, in both governance systems, I found that the government developed the mechanisms to influence the public and private universities through ‘arm’s-length’ agencies – the Ministry of Education and the UGC, and the academics were given less power in the decision-making processes of the universities. However, I found that the ultimate power resided in the government, for example the President of the country would be the Chancellor of all universities, and would appoint the VC of all universities from a panel suggested either by the ‘Search Committee’ for the public universities, or the board of trustees for the private universities. This strong centralised government influence over the universities, alongside the arm’s length control of both the private and public sectors, is somewhat different from the wider literature (see for reference, Keating, 2001) regarding the idea of NPM. The development of a central government control of NPM system can be understood by conceptualising the political and historical process of adopting western higher education in Bangladesh. As indicated in Chapter 1, I conceptualised that political processes and historical ascendance of British rule influenced the cultures and values of the contemporary society. The western-based higher education in Bangladesh began as a political project by the British to develop an elite class to do the bidding of colonisers. Consequently, the post-independence government of Bangladesh still wanted power for the state and used the
colonial organisational context to do their politicking to develop such a centralised idea of NPM to lead the country.

Similarly, both the Acts and the Strategic Plan adopted the idea of a ‘cost-sharing’ approach in terms of the financing of the public and private universities. In the wider literature about the cost-sharing approach, although the students and other social actors share the costs of higher education, the state still contributes to financing it (Altbach et al., 2010). However, in the context of Bangladesh, the policy analysis shows that the universities would be expected to adopt different fund generation strategies based on the user pays ‘cost-sharing’ approach, and the state contribution would be reduced gradually to zero.

Two major neoliberal ideas remained relatively unmodified in their application in Bangladesh. Similar to the ideas discussed in the literature review (see for reference, Roberts & Peters, 2008) about the neoliberal influence on the vision of higher education and its quality control, both the Acts and the Strategic Plan developed the idea of the knowledge economy as the vision of higher education, and internal and external evaluations of the faculties and universities to control quality. Both the Acts and the Strategic Plan also adopted the idea of an accreditation council as the external agency for both private and public universities in line with what the literature suggests are the common features of neoliberal systems worldwide (Sanyal & Martin, 2007).

The overall findings of the policy documents analysis reveal that the Bangladeshi form of neoliberal ideas in the higher education policies at the state level in Bangladesh could be regarded as what many scholars call ‘hybrid’ (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010) or ‘vernacular’ (Appadurai, 1996) forms of neoliberal ideas. Although the overall features of these Bangladeshi forms of neoliberal ideas still embrace ‘Americanisation’ or ‘Westernisation’, these neoliberal ideas were developed in slightly different ways by considering the socio-economic and political context of Bangladesh. There were the ideas of NPM, ‘cost-sharing’ approach, arm’s length body in the Acts and the Strategic Plan, but actually they were all held really tightly under the central control.
The key feature of the NPM approach in Bangladesh is retention of the centrality of government control and the application of this control in both public and private universities. Although NPM as governance system emerged from private management model and has been applied to public sector in order to ensure the public accountability of state-run universities in many western countries (give reference), arguably in Bangladesh, a localised form of NPM has developed. The state involvement in the governance system of the private universities increased in the late 1990s and extended significantly in the noughties, so that to date private universities in Bangladesh are significantly different organisations from their original manifestation. In the same way, in terms of financing of universities, the government has developed a ‘cost-sharing’ approach in a way that ensures government has no financial responsibility for both private and public universities. In the case of financing of public universities, the government contribution is planned to be gradually reduced to zero. In terms of quality assurance, the idea of external audits was introduced in line with global trends; however, the government’s involvement was also ensured in the quality assurance process through the arms-length body – the UGC. Finally, by employing different central controlling mechanisms based on NPM approaches into the private universities and by not defining whether the private university would be run in a form of ‘for-profit’ or ‘not for-profit’ institution, the government developed a Bangladeshi-form of private university model. In other words, the concept of private university in Bangladesh refers to the understanding that an academic institution could be set up by a person or a group people in a way that is neither ‘for-profit’ nor ‘not for-profit’, or both, but the government still controls its existence through the regulations and power of the quality assurance body, the UGC.

Consequently, I refer to these key neoliberal ideas as a Bangladeshi form of neoliberalism. An explanation for why the Bangladesh form of neoliberal ideas were different from the western neoliberal ideas might lie in Hall and Soskice (2001) theory of ‘varieties of capitalism’. Hall and Soskice (2001) refer to understanding differences within western capitalism, arguing that ‘varieties of capitalism’ constitute a feature of world economies. From the very beginning of the country’s inception in 1971, the government of Bangladesh has been fluctuating between democratically
elected governments and being a centrally controlled dictatorship by the army. Strong central control has been a feature of Bangladesh politics. Therefore, the form of capitalism, the style of democracy and the socio-political and economic contexts of Bangladesh were not similar to the Anglo-west and the social-democratic European-west, albeit, these western models also differ between market-led and social democratic, strong state models.

In the following section I summarise and discuss the findings of Chapters 5 and 6 in the light of the conceptual framework (Chapter 2) I developed from the works of policy borrowing models.

7.3.2 The micro-processes of neoliberal policies’ formulation. Chapters 5 and 6 examined the processes which include why, how and by whom the neoliberal ideas were formulated in the Acts and the Strategic Plan at the state level in Bangladesh since 1990s. As indicated in Chapter 2, scholars in the policy borrowing models have used different tools that enabled them to conceptualise how policy travels from one context to another. In the ‘cross-national policy attraction’ model, Phillips and Ochs (2003, 2004) identify some kinds of catalysts or stimuli in a home country which initiate the search for foreign practice as a policy solution to problems. In this case, analysis of both policy documents – the private university Acts and the Strategic Plan – show that there was a discourse of ‘policy problems’ and these were identified as the catalyst that were used in the texts to justify the adaptation of different neoliberal ideas, what Phillips and Ochs (2003) call the externalizing potential to solve problems in the higher education system in Bangladesh.

Phillips and Ochs (2003) point out that the impulses could originate in various phenomena including a new political direction as a result of a change of government. Similarly, the findings of the policy actors interviewed in this research (see Chapters 5 and 6) suggest that these changes in policies were happening at times when there were changes of government. For example, Bangladesh restored its democracy in 1990 from a long military dictatorship from 1975 to 1990. Once a new government was formed by the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) in 1991, the
government formulated the first Private University Act 1992. Since then, each successive
government has formulated at least one neoliberal policy – either the Private University Act or
the Strategic Plan. For example, once the Bangladesh Awami League formed the government in
1996 and again in 2009, they formulated two private university Acts – the Private University Act
1998 (amendment) and the Private University Act 2010 – in 1998 and 2010 respectively. In the
same way, when the BNP and Army-backed Caretaker Government came into power in 2002
and 2007 respectively, they produced another two policy documents – a 20-year Strategic Plan
and the Private University Ordinance – in 2006 and 2008 respectively.

Phillips and Ochs (2003) point out that the decision to engage in a process of change could
be characterised into four categories – theoretical, phoney, realistic/practical or quick fix. The findings
of the interview analysis show that the decision processes of different policies’ formations by
different governments between 1992 and 2010 in Bangladesh could be characterised by what
Phillips and Ochs (2003) describe as ‘quick-fix’. The ‘quick-fix’ model of policy formation
promotes contested ideas in home countries, and often foreign actors play significant roles in the
development process according to Phillips and Ochs (2003). This point is particularly relevant in
the case of post 1998 policies – the post 1998 Acts and the Strategic Plan – where several policy
actors justified the introduction of contested neoliberal ideas in the private universities Acts and
in the Strategic Plan in Bangladesh. For example, the policy actors interviewed about the Strategic
Plan (Chapter 6) indicate that they were influenced by the World Bank, and they perceived that
the government had formulated the Strategic Plan as a ‘quick-fix’ solution in the higher education
sector in which the policy actors justified the introduction of contested neoliberal ideas, such as
an accreditation council as ‘best practice’ in this sector.

The comparative education on policy borrowing model identifies the importance of
policy actors, historical legacies and timing as significant factors which influence the policy
borrowing process (Steiner-Khamsi, 2004b). Dolowitz and Marsh (2000) argue that the degree to
which the policy transfer occurs and to what extent a country is involved in the policy borrowing
process, depends on those who are involved in the formation process. Scholars in the policy borrowing models identify different policy actors both at national and international levels (Dolowitz & Marsh, 2000; Phillips & Ochs, 2003; Stone, 2003). In the case of the Acts in Bangladesh (Chapter 5), the policy actors encompassed 5 groupings which included the policy administrators of government, the academics of public and private universities, private sector representatives, journalists, and politicians of the ruling parties who all played key roles in the formulation process. However, in the case of the Strategic Plan (Chapter 6), the World Bank, as an international knowledge bank, played a significant role in the formation process. My interview analysis shows that four groups still played a role. These included the government policy administrators, academics from public and private universities, private sector representatives, and journalists who became involved in the formation of the Strategic Plan.

In analysing retrospectively the perceptions of policy actors, I found that their involvement in the process was dynamic. The findings of Chapters 5 and 6 reveal that policy actors came from different categories and moved to different positions during the period being considered and this affected the policy process. For example, in the case of the Acts (Chapter 5), some academics of the public universities had moved to the positions of the VCs of the private universities, while private sector representatives consisting of some business leaders and former civil bureaucrats had moved to the positions of the founders of the private universities. Similarly, in the case of the Strategic Plan, (Chapter 6), some academics of the public universities had moved to the UGC and the private universities. This movement of people and positions also helped in the circulation of ideas within the sector and between the public and private sector. Moving into different positions empowered the policy actors to influence the development processes of the Acts and the Strategic Plan. The policy actors often reflected on their experiences and what they contributed to the policy process of the Acts and different key areas of the Strategic Plan.
Ball (1998) emphasises the need to understand the actual micro-politics of policy networks and the way in which the policy text is translated in a particular context. Given that Ball and Junemann (2012) develop the idea of ‘network governance’ as a form of governmentality to understand how and why new kinds of policy communities have become involved in the policy formation process, and understand how they justify their discourses and are able to influence the formation process. The analysis of interviews with policy actors (Chapters 5 and 6) shows that in the context of Bangladesh, different policy actors and different ‘networks’ mediated and modified the neoliberal ideas throughout the policy formulation of the Acts and the Strategic Plan. For example, the findings of the interview analysis (Chapter 5) show that the government revamped the higher education sector in the early 1990s and introduced the first Private University Act 1992 with the influence of a range of individuals from academia, and private sector people. The key movers and their networks worked what Bowe et al. (1992) refer to as in and around the ruling political party, and the legislative process of government. In the post 1998 Acts, some policy actors, those who owned and run the private universities, formed their own network into the Association of Private Universities of Bangladesh. This group of policy actors shaped the practices of the government in the latest Act 2010 through their relationships with the ruling politicians and their networks. For example, in 2010 the government increased the membership of the board of trustees in many committees of the private universities to empower the owners in the decision making process of the universities. In addition, instead of the VC, one of the members of the board of trustees became the chairman of the finance committee of the private universities. Similarly, in the case of the formation of the Strategic Plan, an elite network emerged between the World Bank, the Education Minister and the UGC Chairman and this elite network influenced the activities and report writing of the expert groups and thereby shaped the neoliberal ideas that were outlined in the Strategic Plan.

In understanding the economics of policy borrowing, Steiner-Khamsi (2006) identifies the ‘donor logic’ as the key policy tool in which the donor agencies are accompanied by the lending of reforms and funds for the low income countries. Similar to what Steiner-Khamsi
argues, the findings of policy actors interviewed about the Strategic Plan (Chapter 6) show how the ‘donor logic’ shaped the ideas in the Strategic Plan. The finding shows that the Education Minister and the UGC Chairman lobbied and used their networks to influence the government to formulate a long-term Strategic Plan with the financial and technical support of the World Bank. The Ministry of Education and the UGC organised several knowledge sharing and consultation meetings between the World Bank’s experts and policy experts of the Strategic Plan to learn about the global trends in higher education. The policy experts, who were involved in the Strategic Plan, drew on the Work Bank’s ideas as ‘best practices’. In addition, the use of discursive coordination by the state level agencies – Ministry of Education and the UGC – helped to mediate and modify the neoliberal ideas in line with the World Bank reformation package. A coordination mechanism was developed between the policy actors and the state level agencies where the Education Minister as head of the Ministry of Education became the centre point of the entire planning process of the Strategic Plan. To formulate ideas for the Strategic Plan, the state level agencies organised several meetings and workshops where the state level agencies provided the policy strategies, controlled the formation process, and shaped the ideas that the policy actors developed in their group reports. Eventually, in 2009 the government developed a 5-year project in the higher education sector based on the Strategic Plan with a loan from the World Bank.

Lingard and Rawolle (2004, 2011) argue that the global policy fields affect the national policy and policy process through ‘cross-field’ effects. They refer to ‘cross-field effects’ as a way in which national policies are generated by policy makers “beyond the policy field and vice versa and between different scales of policy fields, national and global” (Lingard & Rawolle, 2011, p. 494). Similar to what Lingard and Rawolle argue, the ‘logic of journalistic fields’ affected the post 1998 policies in higher education in Bangladesh. The findings of policy actors interviewed show that several journalists of the national newspapers played a critical role in the formation processes of the Acts and the Strategic Plan. They produced a range of reports about the private universities and the Strategic Plan to create pressure on the government and the policy actors to
shape the ideas in the Acts and the Strategic Plan in particular ways. In some cases the reports of the journalists helped the policy actors to identify the policy problems of the higher education system, for example identifying the problems of excessively profit-driven activities of the private universities, and their articles influenced the policy actors to search for potential solutions to these problems.

However, in some cases, the journalists’ reports also created pressure to limit the changes. For example, in the post 1998 Acts (Chapter 5), several journalists produced a series of reports about the crisis in the private universities. During the formation of the latest Act 2010, some policy actors, for example, politicians and founders, brought significant changes, such as increasing the power of the board of trustees in the private university setting, into the draft Act of 2010. The evidence of changes in policy as a consequence of the journalists’ reports show the importance of exploring the ‘micro-politics’ of how and why changes occur in the policy formation processes. In the case of the Strategic Plan (Chapter 6), the journalists’ reports explored the interests of the World Bank and different policy actors in the Strategic Plan. The analysis shows that the journalists became critical of the idea of developing the higher education project based on the World Bank’s Bangladesh Sector Review on higher education. The media critics led the World Bank and the Education Minister to be cautious in how to justify the World Bank’s involvement in the higher education sector in Bangladesh.

In the policy borrowing models, scholars understand borrowing as a process of externalisation. As indicated in the literature review (Chapter 2), influenced by Schriewer’s ‘externalisation’ theory, Steiner-Khamsi (2002, 2003, 2006, and 2010) conceptualises how the globalisation process influences the local context. In externalisation theory, ‘lessons from elsewhere’ is used extensively as a policy strategy to justify contested policy borrowing from one context to another. Similarly, this research reveals that the policy actors of the Acts and the Strategic Plan used ‘external references’ as a discursive policy strategy to justify adopting neoliberal ideas in higher education policies in Bangladesh. In the earlier Act 1992, for example,
the policy actors used the ‘American reference’, which Steiner-Khamsi refers to as an ‘external reference’, as the authority to justify having private universities in Bangladesh. However, in the post 1998 period, different groups used different references as authority to justify the adaptation of neoliberal ideas in the post-1998 Acts and the Strategic Plan. They often referred to various neoliberal ideas as ‘best practices’ to be adopted in these neoliberal policies.

What was surprising is that some policy actors modified the neoliberal ideas in the post 1998 policies by using ‘semi-peripheral’ references rather than American references. For example, in the post 1998 Acts, state-level policy administrators and the academics, who had moved from the public universities to the UGC, drew examples from neighbouring countries to justify the accreditation council in the Private University Act 2010. In the same way, in the case of the Strategic Plan, academics and policy administrators drew examples from those countries with similar kinds of socio-economic and political structures and relationships, for example, India or Thailand, to justify some of the ideas they wanted to be adopted in the Strategic Plan. The discursive shift from the ‘American reference’ or ‘Western reference’ to ‘semi-peripheral’ references indicates that the externalisation process as a policy borrowing tool was modified with new search strategies to justify the adaptation of an external idea from the non-western countries. At this point, I argue that their own search strategy – ‘semi-peripheral’ references – helps policy actors not only to legitimise the contested neoliberal reformations in the local context, but also to hide the origin of these neoliberal reformations. The argument I have developed about the use of ‘semi-peripheral’ references in the developing countries is discussed in the following section.

In the ‘epidemiological model’, Steiner-Khamsi (2006) introduces three phases – slow growth, explosive growth and burnout – to spell out the trajectory of global policy diffusion. During the slow growth period from 1980 to 1990 only a few countries, such as the USA and the UK, adopted different neoliberal ideas in the higher education policies. In the explosive growth phase between 1990 and 2000 the policy actors of borrower countries defined their own systems as old-fashioned and backward resulting in the need to adopt popular reformation into their own system.
The global policy borrowing became epidemic at the burnout phase. The burnout phase refers to policy diffusion in the name of an ‘international standard’ (Steiner-Khamsi, 2006). However, the interview analysis in this research shows that the policy actors in Bangladesh began to adopt neoliberal ideas in higher education policies at what Steiner-Khamsi calls the explosive phase through introducing the first Private University Act in 1992 (Chapter 5). In the post 1998 period the policy actors in Bangladesh entrenched the key neoliberal ideas – knowledge-based economy as the vision for higher education, NPM as governance system, cost-sharing approach, and external auditing system in quality – in the post 1998 Acts and the Strategic Plan. Both the Strategic Plan and the post 1998 Acts referred to these key neoliberal ideas as key tools towards convergence of higher education towards an ‘international standard’ (Chapters 5 and 6).

The overall findings from policy actors’ interviews regarding the Acts and the Strategic Plan (Chapters 5 and 6) indicate that the processes of neoliberal ideas formation in the higher education policies at the state level in Bangladesh are typically aligned with the policy borrowing models theorised by the works from ‘cross-national’ attractions (Phillips and Ochs, 2003), politics and economics of policy borrowing (Steiner-Khamsi, 2004, 2006) and ‘cross-field effects’ (Lingard and Rawolle, 2004). It shows that the construction of policy problems ‘sparks’ off the interest in neoliberal ideas as policy solutions to the higher education sector in Bangladesh. It echoes the arguments that ‘scandalisation’ and ‘externalisation’ are the ways to justify the neoliberal ideas formation in higher education policies in Bangladesh. In the post 1998 policies, particularly in the case of the Strategic Plan, the ‘donor-logic’ worked behind the neoliberal reformation in the higher education sector. The decisions to take these policies and implement them in higher education were characterised by the concept of the ‘quick-fix’ using the development of these neoliberal ideas.

However, the processes in which the neoliberal ideas were developed in these neoliberal policies in the higher education sector at the state level in Bangladesh have informed the development of two interrelated arguments. The first argument is that the ‘micro-politics’ of the
processes need to be understood to understand the policy borrowing in the countries like Bangladesh that have different kinds of socioeconomic structures from the developed countries. By the term ‘micro-politics’ I refer to the need to understand the ideas, the positions and practices of the policy actors that influence the formation process. The second argument is that policy actors often search for their own policy strategies by identifying ‘semi-peripheral references’ to provide a locally acceptable external reference that is a form of externalisation strategy in Bangladesh. By the term ‘semi-peripheral references’ I refer to justifying neoliberal policy borrowing between countries that have similar kinds of socioeconomic and political structures rather than just borrowing from a process in developed countries. In the following section, I explain these ideas of ‘micro-politics’ and ‘semi-peripheral references’ and discuss how these arguments contribute to knowledge in the fields of comparative policy studies and policy borrowing models.

7.4 Contributions to knowledge

In this section, I outline how this research contributes to knowledge in two major areas of policy transfer. It first outlines the contribution to advance the field that Steiner-Khamsi (2012b) terms comparative policy studies. In particular, this research elaborates on the argument about the understating of ‘micro-politics’, and the reasons of why neoliberal policy reforms were shaped in slightly different ways in the countries that have different socioeconomic and political structures from the developed countries. It then outlines the contribution to the literature of what can be called third generation policy borrowing models in comparative education.

7.4.1 Comparative policy studies: Construction of policy problems, neoliberalism as policy solutions, and ‘micro-politics’. As indicated in the literature review (Chapter 2), Steiner-Khamsi (2012b) calls for building up a linkage between comparative education and policy studies to overcome some conceptual shortcomings of the research traditions in each. She coins the term comparative policy studies in which she provides an interpretative framework and method of inquiry to understand the policy borrowing process in
the local context. In the idea of comparative policy studies Steiner-Khamsi considers the debate over the micro-processes by other scholars in policy studies. Several scholars, for example, Ball (1998), have emphasised the importance of understanding how micro-processes are associated with the recontextualisation of ideas in the local settings. Influenced by Kingdom’s multiple streams theory, Steiner-Khamsi (2012b) developed the theoretical lens of comparative policy studies to explore the local policy context and contextual reasons for why global reforms are adopted in local contexts.

In the multiple streams theory, Kingdon (1984) conceptualised policy making as a process comprising problems, policies and politics. He conceived each stream as independent from each other, and contended that “each stream develops according to its own dynamics and rules” (p.20). He argued that the combinations of three streams create the greatest policy changes, which he referred to as the ‘window of opportunity’. Steiner-Khamsi (2010) has drawn from the multiple streams theory to develop a theoretical lens of comparative policy studies. For her, different streams of multiple theory are useful to understand the policy borrowing process in the local context. Steiner-Khamsi (2012b) argues that globalisation or ‘international reference’ acts as a source of policy crisis, and also works as the catalyst of policy solution. In this study the analysis of the transcripts of the interviews (Chapters 5 and 6) revealed that different policy actors perceived what Steiner-Khamsi (2012b) describes as globalisation as the source of problems, and neoliberalism as the policy solution to the problems.

In terms of contextual reasons for why a reform resonates in the local policy context at a particular moment, Steiner-Khamsi (2012b) refers to the need to understand the politics and economics of policy transfer. The political dimension of policy borrowing refers to the idea of policy development by coalition builders. This concept helps different oppositional groups to reach a particular point, and shows how they borrow an idea from elsewhere that appears neutral, for example, by using the term ‘international standard’, and shows how this standard becomes a common point of reference. The economic dimension of policy borrowing refers to
understanding how ‘donor logic’ contributes to the adaptation of global ideas in the developing countries. The existence of an economic dimension depends on external funding. In the cases of the Acts and the Strategic Plan (Chapters 5 and 6), both what Steiner-Khamsi (2012b) calls the politics and economic dimensions could be identified as dominant, because the policy actors drew on neoliberal globalisation, which emerged in the western world, to construct the policy problems and to find the policy solution to these problems.

However, when I examined what the features of these neoliberal ideas were in these policy documents (Chapter 4), I found that these neoliberal ideas were developed in slightly different ways from those outlined in the literature, which many scholars refer to as ‘hybridisation’ or ‘vernacularisation’ of neoliberalist ideas (Appadurai, 1996; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). In Section 7.31, I identified several neoliberal ideas as a Bangladeshi form of neoliberalism. I argued that although the overall features of these Bangladeshi forms of neoliberal ideas still embrace ‘Americanisation’ or ‘Westernisation’, these ideas were developed in slightly different ways by considering the socio-economic and political context of Bangladesh. For example, there were the ideas of NPM, a ‘cost-sharing’ approach, and an arm’s length body in the Acts and the Strategic Plan, but actually they were all really tightly under central control. Although private universities in Bangladesh were privately owned, adopting of NPM ensures state control through arm’s length government bodies and self-regulation have provided a regulatory framework to control the private universities. In looking at the policy formation processes (Chapters 5 and 6) I also found that policy actors often shaped and re-contextualised the neoliberalist ideas in the Acts and the Strategic Plan.

Consequently, I have developed the argument that the policy actors often formulated a ‘vernacular’ form of neoliberalist ideas in the higher education policies not only in the sense that Steiner-Khamsi (2006) refers to as the political and economic reasons, but also to protect their own socio-political and economic interests in the formation process. In other words, I argue that often various vested interests of different policy actors shaped the process of the construction of problems, and the development of different neoliberal ideas as policy solutions to those problems.
In the formation processes the policy actors pursued their own agendas. For example, several policy actors in the post 1998 Acts wanted to be the owners of a private university, or many academics intended to create the opportunities for consultancies from the process of development of the Strategic Plan. At this point I place emphasis on the significance of the ‘micro-politics’ that are at work in understanding how the neoliberal ideas policy formation occurred in developing countries like Bangladesh.

The term ‘micro-politics’, as I conceive of it, refers to understanding who produced these policies, what the relationships were between the policy actors, what resources they employing, and why some policy actors became more powerful and some particular voices were listened to more than other voices. In understanding the ‘micro-politics’ in the policy formation processes, I first critically looked at who the key policy actors were and how the roles they played in the formation processes protected their own interests, and I then look at which ideas became the dominant ideas in the formation processes.

In identifying the key policy actors and the roles they played in the formation processes to protect own interests, I argue that the policy changes could only be possible when different interests of different policy actors were protected in the formation processes in Bangladesh. In other words, often the construction of a particular problem and the development of a particular policy solution to that problem was political. The example is drawn from the formation of the private university in Bangladesh (Chapter 5). As explored previously, the idea of the private university was developed by a number of key individuals, who were from different positions outside the government, such as academics of public universities and private sector people including former civil bureaucrats and business leaders. The key individuals constructed policy problems in the public university system in the late 1980s, but they looked outside the public higher education system to find a solution. The policy problems were embedded in the public university system. However, as the policy solution of having the private universities they
proposed did nothing to solve those problems in the public system, this indicates that ‘micro-politics’ affected the formation of the idea of the ‘private university’ in Bangladesh.

In looking back at the interests of these key individuals’ – academics of the public universities and private sector people – and their networks in the formation process of the private university in the late 1980s, I found that most of them had their own idea of private university. Some of them had already started to run their own form of private university without the government’s approval. They began to influence the government when they realised that the degrees their universities produced needed to be recognised by the government for the labour markets. Consequently, rather than attempting to solve the problems they had constructed in the public university system, they influenced the government to adopt their ‘pet’ idea of setting up a private university system in the government policy frame.

I now move one step further to understand the ‘micro-politics’ in the post 1998 Acts. Although a number of key individuals justified adopting the idea of setting up a private university system by constructing policy problems in the public university system, in the post 1998 period, similar kinds of problems about the private system were constructed by a number of policy actors, in particular, the policy administrators and some academics who had moved from the public universities to the UGC. However, different interest groups, in particular the founders of the private universities, had become more organised to protect their own interests in the formation process.

The Association of Private Universities and its leaders affected the formation processes of the post 1998 Acts. They created a considerable pressure on the successive governments not to formulate any Act to regulate private universities in 2005. With the influence of the Association of Private Universities, the government did not ratify the Private University Ordinance 2008 promulgated by the Army-backed Caretaker Government. In the case of the latest Private University Act 2010, the results revealed that the Act was a result of a process of compromise between the ruling party and the founders of private universities. The leaders of the
APUB became one of the key ‘disseminators of ideas’, and shaped different neoliberal ideas in the latest Act 2010 to protect their own interests. Similarly, the ruling politicians also intended to protect their own socio-political interests, such as to be the owner of the private university, from these changes to the original draft of Private University Act 2010.

In the same vein, Chapter 6 also provides an insightful description about the ‘micro-politics’ in the case of formation of Strategic Plan. The contributions of different policy actors – academics, private sectors people and journalists – were evident in the formation process of the Strategic Plan, but I found that the circuits of the ‘tri-power’ of the World Bank, the Education Minister and the UGC chairman emerged in the formation process. The circuits of ‘tri-power’ defined what was to be done and by whom in the Strategic Plan. The entire formation process shows that a wide range of different policy actors was involved in the development of the Strategic Plan, but the ‘tri-power’ carefully selected which of these policy actors would be included in the formation process.

In identifying the interests of ‘tri-power’ – the World Bank, Education Minister and the Charmain of the UGC – in the formation process of the Strategic Plan, the study shows that different policy actors were involved in that process from different perspectives. The World Bank as the international knowledge bank became involved in the formation process from the interest that Steiner-Khamsi (2006) calls ‘donor logic’. However, by formulating the Strategic Plan, the Education Minister not only created the opportunity for the World Bank to be involved in the higher education sector in Bangladesh, he also proved his long political and ideological ties with the World Bank. On the other hand, other key actors, for example, the UGC chairman, became involved in the Strategic Plan not only to ensure the World Bank loan in the higher education sector, but also to create opportunities for consultancies from the process.

In terms of identifying whose and which ideas became the dominant ideas, I argue that it often depended on who pursued which ideas with which capacities for what interests. Consequently, in shaping different neoliberal ideas as policy solutions, often ‘political persuasion’
acted as catalyst in the formation process. For example, the state under the army backed
government between 2007 and 2008 undervalued ‘political consultation’ as a policy tool to
develop the Ordinance 2008. The policy administrators believed in the idea of private universities
as ‘not-for-profit institutes’. They influenced the army-backed government to adopt the idea of
private universities as ‘not-for-profit’ organisations in the Ordinance 2008. However, in the latest
Act 2010, with the influence of some leaders of the APUB, the political government became
silent about the idea of private universities as ‘not-for-profit’ organisations.

Similarly, in the case of the Strategic Plan, the findings indicated many policy actors
perceived the government intervention into the public universities had created a politically
manoeuvred governance system in this sector. Student politics backed by the national political
parties had become the centre of campus life severely affecting the academic activities of
universities. Influenced by the World Bank the policy actors in the development of the Strategic
Plan emphasised the ‘de-politicisation’ of public universities by redefining the roles of
government, academics and student bodies in the public universities. However, I found that the
government shaped the governance system of public universities in a way that ensured strong
government involvement in the public universities’ affairs continued. Such government influence
over the public universities can ensure two interrelated political interests in the public universities:
1) to suppress the alternative/democratic forces in the public universities; and 2) the suppression
of democratic forces reduces the risk of anti-government movements in the public universities
that can help the introduction of a ‘cost-sharing’ approach in the public universities.

The above discussion shows how a combination of a policy borrowing model and
comparative policy studies could be useful to understand the policy borrowing process from one
context to one another. However, this research further emphasises the need to understand the
‘micro-politics’ to understand the reasons why different policy actors shaped and re-
contextualised neoliberal ideas in the policy formation processes in a developing country like
Bangladesh.
7.4.2 Policy borrowing and lending: ‘Semi-peripheral’ references as a policy tool. Steiner-Khamsi (2012b, p. 8) argues that there were three generations of scholars “who helped to boost, sustain, interest in policy-transfer research”. The first generation of scholars [from the early 1980s to the early 2000s] developed the key concepts of the policy borrowing model, such as policy borrowing and lending (Brian Holmes, 1981), externalisation (Bernd Zymek and Jürgen Schriewer, 1990) or cross-national policy attraction (David Phillips and Kimberly Ochs, 2003). This generation focused on policy borrowing between two specific countries or regions, particularly transatlantic policy transfer between the USA and the UK or policy borrowing within Europe. The second generation of scholars [from the late 2000s to the early 2010s] introduced several concepts – governance by numbers (Jenny Ozga, 2009), the politics and economics of policy borrowing (Gita Steiner-Khamsi, 2006), travelling pedagogies (Terri Seddon, 2005), or policy tourism (Whitty, 2012). The second generations expanded their geographical radius from transatlantic or trans-European to developing countries and explored the agency, reasons and impact of policy transfer from one context to another. The third generation of scholars is expected to set up the new research agenda in Comparative Policy Studies. Steiner-Khamsi (2012b) outlines four new key research areas that interest the third generation of scholars in the field of policy borrowing and lending models in future. The four new key research areas include “the shift from bilateral to international reference frames; understanding the logic of systems and cases; methodological repercussions of ‘policyscapes’; and deciphering projections in cross-national policy attraction” (Steiner-Khamsi, 2012b, p. 9).

This research on the micro-politics of neoliberal policy formation in the higher education sector in Bangladesh fits this third generation of policy transfer research model, and contributes to the research strand of shifting from a bilateral to an international reference frame by identifying ‘semi-peripheral references’ as a policy tool in policy transfer. As discussed previously, scholars in policy borrowing models argue that the strategy of identifying ‘international references’ as externalisation became the dominant policy strategy tool in the case of policy transfer from one place to another. The use of ‘international references’ replaces the bilateral transfer and
displaces the origin of a specific policy. However, my concern is that although the ‘international reference’ frame explains how policy borrowing moves from one nation state to another nation state, it still provides a sense that the idea is transferred from the centre [western world] to the local [developing countries], and often serves the interest of the centre.

As argued above, in this thesis I have identified the importance of the ‘micro-politics’ influencing the formation processes and noted that policy actors mediate and shape neoliberal ideas as a policy solution to serve their own interests in the policy formation processes. Consequently, I argue that policy actors could conceptualise the idea that Steiner-Khamsi calls ‘international references’ in a different way. In other words, I argue that the ‘micro-politics’ often leads policy actors to search for their own policy strategies and solutions by identifying ‘semi-peripheral references’. The concept of ‘semi-peripheral’ references, as I conceive of it, refers to the idea that policy actors draw examples from the places that would be seen to be similar socioeconomic and political spaces in order to justify the contested ideas in the formation processes.

The ‘semi-peripheral’ references as a policy tool in policy borrowing could be used from different perspectives. First, different interest groups might use ‘semi-peripheral’ references as a policy tool to justify contested neoliberal ideas between the countries that have similar kinds of socioeconomic and political spaces. For example, a closer look at the case of Bangladesh reveals that the neoliberalist idea touched down in the higher education sector in Bangladesh once the government introduced the first Private University Act in 1992 to allow private people to set up private universities. At that time key policy actors who were involved in the development of the private university in the late 1980s widely used the ‘American reference’ as externalisation to justify adopting the idea of ‘private university’ in Bangladesh. However, in the post 1998 period, a large number of policy actors who worked in the UGC and public universities used the idea of ‘semi-peripheral’ references as the key policy strategy to justify reshaping some neoliberalist ideas,
such as transforming the UGC into the Higher Education Commission, in the formation processes (Chapters 5 and 6).

Second, the ‘semi-peripheral’ references could also be used to create pressure in many countries bringing ideas from the same sort of political space, rather than from the west. For example, many ‘semi-peripheral countries in Asia successfully introduced neoliberal policy frames in the higher education sector (see for reference, Altbach, 2004; Mok, 2003). A large number of the Bangladesh policy actors perceived these success stories of ‘semi-peripheral’ countries as a useful form of pressure to move their own higher education system towards a ‘regional standard’. Needless to say, such a discourse of ‘regional standard’ is tightly linked with the politics of ‘international standards’. The policy actors drew on the success stories of neighbouring countries to show how these countries were moving their higher education systems towards ‘international standards’. The success stories of similar kinds of socioeconomic and political spaces served as useful examples for some policy actors to justify introducing neoliberal ideas in the post 1998 Acts and the Strategic Plan.

Whatever the reasons the policy actors had for using ‘semi-peripheral’ references as a policy tool, rather than western references, these localised references became an acceptable authority in justifying the contested neoliberal ideas in the policy formulation processes, and hid the primary sources of the neoliberal ideas. Most importantly, the way in which the ‘semi-peripheral’ references were used helped the policy actors to neutralise the involvement of international organisations, in this case, the World Bank, in the formation process. Peet (2003, p. 25) points out that the World Bank came under criticism for its ‘carelessness’ in reformation programs in the developing countries until the late 1970s. Since then the World Bank had promoted a superficial form of local ‘participation’ in the formation process to provide a sense that the policy a nation state has formulated is their own (Kamruzzaman, 2009; Peet, 2003). In the case of the Strategic Plan, the ‘semi-peripheral’ references made some contested ideas from the World Bank seem more acceptable by substituting one for the other in the local political
discourse. For example, a range of policy actors who were involved in the development of the Strategic Plan drew examples from the ‘semi-peripheral’ references in justifying the ideas of a ‘higher education commission’ and the ‘accreditation council’ to ensure the external accountability of the universities.

This discussion of the post-1998 Acts and Strategic Plan has argued that this research provides insightful empirical and theoretical contributions to neoliberal policy formulation processes in Bangladesh. Empirically, this case has revealed much about the educational policy processes in the setting of Bangladesh. In the same way, theoretically, this case of Bangladesh used policy borrowing models and considered the debate over policy study regarding the need to use the ‘micro-process’ to look at the state level policies. The entire research has provided a significant insight to understand why the process of ‘micro-politics’ needs to be understood to understand policy borrowing in the countries that have different socioeconomic and political structures from the West. The case of Bangladesh also provides an example to show how the ‘semi-peripheral’ reference frames became a policy strategy in Bangladesh. The policy actors used their own search for ‘semi-peripheral’ references as a policy tool in justifying contested neoliberal ideas from the countries that have similar socioeconomic and political structure, rather than from the West.

### 7.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I critically discussed the findings of the research in the light of the theoretical framework that I developed from the works of comparative education on policy borrowing. I also attempted to outline how this research provides an insightful contribution to the wider literature of comparative policy studies and policy borrowing models.

From the overall discussion, I have argued that a ‘Bangladeshi’ form of neoliberalism was developed in the higher education policies at the state level in Bangladesh since the 1990s. The Bangladeshi form of neoliberalism involves the notion of central control running through the western neoliberal ideas. Different neoliberal ideas, for example, NPM, the cost-sharing approach,
and arm’s length bodies, were developed in the state level’s higher education policies, but were still ultimately to be under government control. Consequently, the Bangladeshi form of neoliberalism in higher education comprises a mix of both a deregulated system and a centrally controlled system.

The thesis has shown that ways in which such neoliberal ideas were formulated in Bangladesh was similar to the concepts and ideas developed in policy borrowing models. The ‘externalised references’ became the dominant point of references to justify the contested neoliberal ideas in the policies. However, this research has argued that the notion of ‘semi-peripheral’ references provides a new understanding about the justification of policy borrowing between the countries that have similar socioeconomic and political spaces. Regarding the contribution to knowledge of policy borrowing models, it is argued that although the ‘international reference’ frames replaced the bilateral policy transfer, the use of ‘semi-peripheral’ references as a form of externalisation spurred the policy diffusion from the same socioeconomic and political spaces.

This thesis further argued that the three streams – policy problems, policy solutions and ‘micro-politics’ were becoming the key concepts by which one can understand why and how the policy actors in Bangladesh formulated various neoliberal ideas in higher education policies at the state level in Bangladesh. Such discussion has also contributed to newly develop the theoretical paradigm – comparative policy studies – by blending comparative education and policy studies.

In the following chapter I outline the implications of the study. I also identify the limitations of the study and the scope of further research in the field of higher education policies in Bangladesh.
Chapter 8

Conclusion

This concluding chapter outlines the overarching implications for understanding the state level policy formation process in Bangladesh in the future, and the policy implications of the findings of this study. It then identifies the limitations of the study and scope for further research in the field of education policies in Bangladesh.

The key empirical and insightful contribution of this thesis has been to provide a detailed analysis of the recontextualisation of globalising neoliberal policy, and an account of the formation process of politics in the higher education sector at the state level in Bangladesh since the 1990s. Firstly, this thesis argues that a ‘Bangladeshi’ form of globalising neoliberal ideas was formulated in the state level higher education policies over the last 25 years. The Bangladeshi form of globalising neoliberal ideas still reflects Americanisation or westernisation, but the ideas were shaped and recontextualised in the context of the particular kind of society, economy and political structure of Bangladesh. The Bangladeshi form of neoliberalism involves embracing the centrality of government control along with the western neoliberal ideas of opening up to the market services such as higher education traditionally provided by the state for public service reasons. For example, NPM, the cost-sharing approach, and arm’s length bodies, were developed in the state level’s higher education policies, but still ultimately ensured that these new policies were under government control. The way in which the idea of NPM was shaped in the latest Act 2010 and the Strategic Plan ensured both more public accountability and government influence in the universities. In the same way, the idea of the ‘cost-sharing’ approach was developed to ensure government will not to contribute financially to the universities. Consequently, the Bangladeshi form of neoliberalism in higher education comprises a mix of both a deregulated system and a centrally controlled system.
Secondly, the processes of neoliberal policy formation identified align with the ideas of the scholars of comparative education on policy borrowing models and illustrates the idea that the construction of policy problems ‘sparks’ off the interest in neoliberal ideas as policy solutions, in this case in the higher education sector in Bangladesh. Thirdly, this thesis emphasises the significance of ‘micro-politics’ in understanding the process of incorporating neoliberal ideas in the policy formation of countries like Bangladesh, which have a different kind of society, economy and political space from western countries. The ‘micro-politics’ means that neoliberal ideas were actually enacted and developed slightly differently in the context of Bangladesh because some policy actors, who were controlling the neoliberal discourses, excluded the voices of minorities. Consequently, the ‘micro-politics’ refers to the process that shows how the ideas, power and positions of policy actors influence the policy formation processes to shape neoliberal ideas into a ‘Bangladeshi’ form. Finally, this thesis underscores the importance of the transfer of neoliberal ideas between the countries that have similar kinds of socio-economic and political spaces in order to justify some particularly contested neoliberal ideas and ensure they are adopted in the local Bangladeshi context. The policy actors in this study pursued the acceptance of western neoliberal by drawing examples from ‘semi-peripheral’ countries, rather than from neoliberal governments of the West.

In looking back at these key findings there are a number of implications from this account of the education policy formation at the state level in Bangladesh. The key overarching implication in state level policy formation derives from the fact that the state shared its policy sovereignty in the state-level policy formation process. The implications for policy and practices suggests the importance of ensuring a critical policy making process at the ‘micro-level’ from institutional levels to individual levels.

The last part of this chapter identifies the limitations in this study from broad perspectives: the theoretical, and methodological and practical limitations. In identifying some
areas of further research, for example how different neoliberal ideas are put into the practice, could be useful to overcome these shortcomings of this study.

8.1 Overarching implication: Sharing the policy sovereignty by the state

The Constitution of Bangladesh outlines the fundamental principles underpinning state level policies and government strategies, which are that the public interests should be the core value of the state-level policies (Aminuzzaman, 2013). In my analysis I found traces of these principles in the way the government developed its own bureaucratic mechanisms to formulate state-level policies in order to serve the public interests. Many scholars argue that although the state level policy formation process in Bangladesh is not linear, the policy formulation processes could be conceived as highly bureaucratic (see for reference, Jamil, Aminuzzaman, & Haque, 2015; Kabir, 2011). This research examined a variety of perspectives from different policy actors, for example, policy administrators, academics, private sector people, politicians, and journalists, which showed that although they drew on globalising neoliberal ideas, and their influence on the state shaped and recontextualised these neoliberal ideas, it did so in ways that still gave precedence to the centrality of the state’s responsibility to look at the public interests (see Chapters 5 and 6). The influence of this variety of interests in the formation process meant not only were the state level policies no longer exclusively for serving the public interests, but also that the state shared what Lingard and Rawolle (2011, p. 489) call ‘policy sovereignty’ in the state-level formation process in Bangladesh with other organisations, albeit ones that have to report to and be accountable to the state.

This research also showed that since 1990, with the influence of academics of public universities and private sector people, the state moved to share its responsibility with a ‘user pays’ model that provided new dynamics and practices in the state level higher education policy formation process (see Chapter 5). In the post 1998 period, along with several policy entrepreneurs, global forces, such as the World Bank, became part of the state level policy formation process (see Chapter 6). The policy shift from state responsibility to ‘user pays’
indicates that the Bangladesh higher education policy formation processes connected with global-market forces, and thus, took the state level higher education policy formulation processes away from the state mechanisms. Indeed, the global-market phenomena acted as a catalyst in this rethinking about the state-level policies in Bangladesh. Consequently, new policy development networks – global-market forces outside of the state interests – evolved within the state level policy formation processes. In such circumstances, there is the potential for public interests to be undermined. Therefore the implications of this finding are that the state needs to take into account the issue of how to develop and strengthen its policy development mechanisms to interplay with global policy networks, non-state level policy actors, and their various policy discourses, and how to develop various global discourses in the state level policies in a way that can serve the public interests.

8.2 The implications for policy and practices at the institutional and individual levels

At the micro-level this study suggests there is a need to consider how to ensure a critical policy making process from the institutional to individual levels. First, it revealed that the University Grants Commission (UGC) as the apex and statutory body in the higher education sector and the Ministry of Education played significant roles in the policy formation processes. Previously, the role of the UGC had been to deal with the Ministry of Education on behalf the universities of Bangladesh to ensure grants for public universities and keep the autonomous character of the universities (University Grants Commission, 2009a). However, this study showed that the role of the UGC expanded from that of a granting agency to that of coordinating the whole higher education sector. The analysis of the Acts and the Strategic Plan showed the UGC and the Ministry of Education became involved in governing bodies of the private and public universities to oversee the day to day activities of the universities. The Strategic Plan also adopted the idea of the Higher Education Commission as a replacement of the UGC to grant this state-run buffer agency power over the activities of the entire university system (see Chapters 5 and 6).
However, on the one hand, many policy actors provided their concerns about the state level agencies' involvement in the universities as controlling agencies, and on the other hand, in many cases the UGC itself was influenced by the Ministry of Education and the World Bank to shape higher education policies in a particular direction. In this circumstance, on the one hand, the government needs to rethink how to ensure the autonomy of the UGC to work on their own, and on the other hand, the UGC needs to adopt a critical policy making process within its organisational setting that can help it to handle global policy ideas from a critical view.

Second, the study revealed that the ‘entrepreneurs’ developed the idea of ‘private university’ in the late 1990s and influenced the state to adopt this policy idea in the government policy frame. In the post 1998 Acts entrepreneurs organised themselves into the Association of Private Universities and played a significant role in the formation process (see Chapter 5). However, the study showed that the state ignored what Clark (1986) calls voices of the academics of the private universities in the formation of the post 1998 policies. Evidently, the academics who moved from the public to the private universities, contributed to the post 1998 Acts, but none of them had originated from the private universities (see Chapter 5). In the case of the Strategic Plan, although the academics of the public and private universities were involved in the formation processes, they did not represent their own institutions (see Chapter 6). In another sense, universities themselves as higher education institutions played no role in the policy formation processes. Therefore, one implication for the government and the state-level agencies, such as the UGC and Ministry of Education, concerned how to develop the policy making mechanism to ensure the representations of higher education institutions in the policy formation processes, so that the policy formation process can ensure the inclusion of the critical views of different organisations regarding how to deal with global ideas in the organisational context of Bangladesh.

Finally, the findings showed how the micro-politics influenced the formation process. The policy formation processes did not show how the voices of minorities and other critical
voices could be included, and how to build up the professional workforces and resources in the formation processes. Some particular policy actors were able to use the policy gap, and developed arguments from other places and advocated various ideas as solutions to those problems. It could have been a different solution, but some influential policy actors pushed for a particular solution, and that solution led to other kinds of problems in this sector. For example, some key movers developed the idea of ‘private university’ as a policy solution to the problems that existed in the public universities in the late 1980s, but in the post 1998 period the same kinds of problems were construed to prevail in the private universities by the state level policy administrators and the academics who had moved from the public universities to the positions of UGC and to the positions of the private universities (see Chapter 5). In the same way, in terms of the formation of the Strategic Plan, sometimes the government attempted to include greater participation in the policy formation process, but that process was more a kind of managed consultation. For example, by involving some ‘local experts’ in the Strategic Plan the state intended to show that policy was developed with a ‘participatory approach’, and to legitimise the Strategic Plan as a ‘home-grown’ policy. In a word, the way some policy actors developed the ideas showed they were silencing the discourses and the solutions that were being developed in the policies. The way the policy actors talked to me they gave a rational account of having these discourses. Certainly, the overall findings established that a critical piece of the policy making process – genuine, broad participation – was absent in the whole formation process. Therefore, the policy makers need to rethink how to ensure what several scholars call ‘democratic’ practices (see for reference, Giroux, 2010; Marginson, 2006b) in the formation process. The idea of democratic practice can ensure several critical voices in the policy formation processes and that can help the state to develop global ideas by considering the greater socio-economic and political interests of the country.

8.3 Limitations of the study

Given the discussions and arguments I have made in this study, I identify limitations of this study in two broad perspectives: theoretical, and methodological and practical limitations. As
argued above, many scholars from different fields have emphasised the importance of working together to overcome conceptual shortcomings in researching the policy transfer issues from one context to another (see for reference, Steiner-Khamsi & Waldow, 2012). Similarly, the findings of this study established the advantage of blending the theoretical paradigms of comparative education and policy studies. Although this study used the idea of ‘micro-process’ put forward by a range of scholars in the field of policy studies, its primary frame drew on work from policy borrowing models in comparative education. Nevertheless, the reliance of the theoretical framework on only policy borrowing in comparative education indicates that this study was designed with some conceptual shortcomings

In terms of the methodological and practical aspects of the study, there were no prior research and hypotheses on this issue within a Bangladeshi context that I could use as a guide for this research. Therefore, I developed my own theoretical assumptions based on my reading of international literature, but I was unaware how far the empirical data I collected from the fields could support the theoretical assumptions. Further, many scholars were concerned about researching ‘elite’ participants (see for references, Halpin & Troyna, 1994; Selwyn, 2013; Walford, 2012, 1994), arguing that the unequal power relations between researcher and researched could be a factor affecting data collection as well as the nature of the data. Ball (1994b) emphasises the need to understand the interpretational and theoretical difficulties involved in researching with ‘elite’ interviewees. However, it was a qualitative case study and within this case study I used a combination of purposeful and snowball approaches to select potential participants. Documents were purposefully selected for their influence in the period studied. The interviewees themselves attempted to provide what they saw as truthful retrospective accounts. Nevertheless, in analysing the data I also used the idea that Ball (1994a) refers to as ‘discursive practice’, which places what is said within a socio-political context that takes account of relations of interest and power. I believe the methodological process I used in my research helped me to collect rich, dependable data and generate a detailed description.
Finally, this modest attempt has helped me to understand the neoliberal policy formulation processes in the higher education sector from a Bangladeshi perspective. As it was a small project the findings cannot be generalised to policy development processes in Bangladesh more broadly. However, this small study has formed a firm basis from which to conduct further studies on this issue.

8.4 Recommendations for further research

In looking back at the findings, some of the implications actually highlighted a number of troubling issues, some of which need to be looked at in detail to overcome the limitations of this study. The textual analysis of this research showed that a ‘Bangladeshi’ form of neoliberal ideas was formulated in the higher education policies at the state level. Bowe et al. (1992) argue that the policy making process needs to be understood as a set of contexts: the context of influence, context of text production and context of practice. Although this research interplays with Bowe et al. (1992) ideas regarding the context of influence and the context of text production, it did not investigate how these Bangladeshi forms of neoliberalism have played out in practice in the higher education institutions. Scholarly critical analysis can contribute to making sense of these policy documents by exploring how different neoliberal ideas are put into practice in different higher education institutions. The policy implementation process in Bangladesh is relatively more complex than the policy formation process (Aminuzzaman, 2013). Similar to this research, one can adopt an ‘instrumental case study’ to examine how neoliberal ideas that have infiltrated the higher education policies at the state level in Bangladesh have been put to practice. One possible research study could purposefully select two universities from public and private sectors as cases. Within these cases a researcher could deploy document analysis and interviews with people who are involved in these institutions to explore how they are putting these Bangladeshi forms of neoliberal ideas into practice.

Further research could also examine practices in other education sectors, such as the secondary and primary sectors to understand the process of global ideas formation at the state
level in Bangladesh. As argued, this research has emphasised the importance of understanding the ‘micro-politics’ in understanding the policy borrowing process in developing countries.

Methodologically speaking, investigating the secondary and primary education policies at the state level in Bangladesh is needed to provide a fuller understanding. Similar to this research, such a study could examine the development of national education policies and the politics of these policies formulated for the secondary and primary levels at the state level in Bangladesh since the 1990s.

The analysis of this research has addressed the issue of neoliberal policy formation processes in the higher education sector at the state level in Bangladesh, drawing the theoretical framework from the works on policy borrowing in comparative education. Although this research showed that the idea of what Ball and Junemann (2012) calls ‘network governance’ has been worked in the higher education policy formation process, theoretically speaking, it needs to trace how the flow of policy networks’ and their international and national players across the state, institutions and individuals levels is involved in the process of policy formulation in Bangladesh. In this developing country, numerous organisations including international financial institutes (IFIs), international non-governmental organisations (INGOs), national non-governmental organisations (NGOs), civil society and pressure groups are involved in the education sector. One could design a study to investigate how the policy networks and their international and national allies influence the policy formation process in education. Such an investigation would compensate for the conceptual shortcomings in both comparative education and policy studies.

Finally, the analysis of this research also established that ‘semi-peripheral’ references were used as authority in order to justify the adaptation of some contested neoliberal ideas in the higher education policies in Bangladesh. Certainly, more research would be needed in similar kinds of country contexts to explore whether my claims about the use of ‘semi-peripheral’ references hold up as a more general trend. As indicated in the Introduction (Chapter 1), until
1947 Bangladesh was ruled by British rule and then by Pakistan until 1971; thus, the policy actors of Pakistan could have the same kinds of attitudes that the policy actors of Bangladesh developed through British rule to deal with state level policy. One could design a study to investigate how the current higher education policy in Pakistan has been developed to explore the use of ‘semi-peripheral’ references as a tool in justifying the adaptation of neoliberal ideas in the state level policy.

8.5 Concluding remarks

This thesis has attempted to broadly understand the processes of change including why, how and by whom neoliberal ideas were formulated in the higher education policies at the state level in Bangladesh since 1990s. Having carried out this study I have established that a Bangladeshi form of neoliberalism was formulated in the higher education policies at the state level in Bangladesh since 1990s. It has argued that the socio-economic and political contexts of the country influenced the formation process to develop a Bangladeshi form of neoliberal ideas for higher education policies. Many policy actors have searched for their own strategies to shape the neoliberal ideas as a Bangladeshi form of idea in higher education policies.

The arguments that I developed from this study contribute to the knowledge of comparative policy studies and policy borrowing models in comparative education. The theoretical lens of comparative policy studies as a new field of policy borrowing studies has been developed with the blend through blending comparative education and policy studies. This study supplemented the argument of comparative policy studies, but emphasises the importance of studying the ‘micro-politics’ of a context to understand the reasons why neoliberal ideas move from one context to another. In a similar way, the study improved the argument of comparative education on policy borrowing by developing the idea of ‘semi-peripheral’ references as a policy strategy and showing how these are used as an authority in justifying bringing ideas from countries that have similar kinds of socioeconomic and political structures. This analysis has expanded the idea of non-western transfer in post-colonial space.
In a nutshell, this study provides an example of recontextualisation of globalising neoliberal ideas and their formation processes in higher education in the context of Bangladesh. However, the arguments this study developed need to be supplemented by further research on this topic. Other research will undoubtedly develop ideas to work on this area to advance the theoretical and practical discussions in the area of comparative policy studies.
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Appendices

Appendix 1: Interview checklist for policy administrators of the UGC and ministries, academics, and private sector people

Name:

Contact details:

Age: Sex:

Educational background and working experiences

Could you please tell me about your educational background and working experiences within Bangladesh or elsewhere?

Objectives/aims of the higher education in Bangladesh

What are the aims of current higher education in Bangladesh now?

What are/were you trying to achieve by involving in higher education?

What type of higher education you want/wanted to ensure for the graduates?

Concern for higher education in Bangladesh

What is/was your main concern about current higher education system in Bangladesh?

Do you think that current higher education system is useful for the graduates and for the country? Why?

Often the state emphasises the market and technical oriented education - why?

Experiences of changes

On the Strategic Plan for Higher Education

Could you please tell me about the introduction of the Strategic Plan for Higher Education 2006-2026 (SPHE) in higher education sector in Bangladesh?

Could you tell me about the rationale of incorporating this policy?

What was your specific role in developing the SPHE?

What were those changes of the SPHE?

Where did the ideas for the changes come from?
Why was it important to introduce the changes/reformation in the SPHE?

Who were involved in this change?

How did you work with other in developing this policy?

**On the Private University Act(s)**

Could you tell me the background of the Private University Act 1992 in the higher education sector in Bangladesh?

Why was it important to incorporate the Private University Act 1992 in the higher education sector for the first time in Bangladesh?

What were the main features of the Private University Act 1992?

What did you do with this change in the Private University Act 1992?

Where these ideas came from?

How did you incorporate your ideas in the Private University Act 1992?

Who were involved in developing the Private University Act 1992?

In your opinion, why the government brought amended into the Act of 1998?

Recently, the government has repealed the Private University Act 1992 and has promulgated a new Private University Act 2010. Can you, please, explain the reasons work behind it?

What were the issues you addressed in the new Private University Act 2010?

Where did this idea come from?

How did you incorporate your ideas in the Private University Act 2010?

[Thanks for your cooperation]
Appendix 2: Interview Checklist for Politicians

Name:
Address:
Age:       Sex:

**Education and working experiences:**
Could you please tell me about your educational background and working experiences within Bangladesh or elsewhere?

**Objectives/aims of the higher education**
What is the aim of the higher education in Bangladesh?
What are/were you trying to achieve by higher education in Bangladesh?
What type of higher education do/did you want to ensure for the graduates?

**Concern for higher education in Bangladesh**
What is/was your main concern for the current higher education system in Bangladesh?
Do you think that the current higher education system is useful for the graduates and for the country? Why?

Often the state emphasises the market and technical oriented education - why?

**Experiences of changes**
Since 1990s, some changes have been experienced in the higher education sector during your party holds the office. Could you tell me what were those changes?

Why was it important to incorporate Strategic Plan for Higher Education (SPHE)/the Private University Acts 1992, 1998, 2008 & 2010 in the higher education sector in Bangladesh?
What did you do for this change?
What did the idea for the change come from?
Who were the others involved in developing Strategic Plan for Higher Education (SPHE)/the Private University Acts 1992, 1998, 2008 & 2010 in the higher education sector in Bangladesh?
How were they involved in developing these policies in the higher education sector in Bangladesh?

Do you think these policies were necessary for the higher education sector? Why?

[Thank you for cooperation]
Appendix 3: Interview Checklist for Journalists

Name:
Address:
Age: Sex:

Education and working experiences:
Could you please tell me about your educational background and working experiences within Bangladesh or elsewhere?

Objectives/aims of the higher education
What is the aim of the higher education in Bangladesh?
What are/were you trying to achieve by reporting on higher education?
What type of higher education do/did you want to ensure for the graduates?

Concern for higher education in Bangladesh
What is/was your main concern for the current higher education system in Bangladesh?
Do you think that the current higher education system is useful for the graduates and for the country? Why?

Often the state emphasises the market and technical oriented education - why?

Experiences of changes
In your opinion, why did the state incorporate two major policies: Strategic Plan for Higher Education (SPHE) and the Private University Act in the higher education since the 1990s?
What were those changes?
Why was that important to bring this change/reformation?
Where did the idea for the change come from?
What did you do to influence the state to bring this change?
What were the mechanisms you used for shaping these ideas?
In your opinion, who are the others involved in these processes?
How were they involved in developing these policies in the higher education sector in Bangladesh?

[Thank you for cooperation]
Appendix 4: One master list coding & theme from an interview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview extract</th>
<th>Coding</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I knew the <em>American Ambassador</em> through my <em>Rotarian work</em>. So I requested him for a meeting because I was getting frustrated. I went to the American Embassy and we were having coffee. I gave him this paper, a <em>memorandum of the Kansas State University</em>. He looked at it and he got interested and he said, “What you want?” “I want to make sure that the concept of private university is clear” I said, “I am not a dying, I am not here for any money”. Then he said, “why you are here?” then I told, “I want you to create social influence on the President of Bangladesh to challenge all chaos we are having in higher education field. We need an alternative service delivery mechanism to bring long term reform”.</td>
<td>American Ambassador, Rotarian work, Memorandum Kansas State University, Concept of private university, Create social influence, President of Bangladesh, Chaos in higher education, Alternative route, Result perceptible, Declared private university, Private University law</td>
<td>Building networks locally and internationally, Private university</td>
<td>This interview was conducted with an academic who was involved in the formation of the idea of private university in Bangladesh. In the interview he provided a detailed on how he developed the idea of private university. He used a range of national and international</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>But the result was perceptible within a month. Hossain Muhammad Ershad [President of the Country] declared in 1990 in a meeting with the UGC that private university can be established in Bangladesh and directed to the UGC to formulate the law. So this was the real crack.</td>
<td>Collecting a memorandum from the USA, Using personal link with the US, Using professional link to influence the state agencies</td>
<td>Building networks locally and internationally, Private university</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>So the USA Ambassador was the most catalytic person. Anyway, so he left, but you see, UGC did not do anything about</td>
<td></td>
<td>Building networks locally and internationally, Private university</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
this because they didn’t believe in it. So I went back to the Ministry of Education to try to convince the then Secretary. He was from Sylhet. When he was the director general of the IRDP I used to be a consultant of the World Bank for a study on IRDP and that is how we knew each other. I said, “this is the mechanism” because in the meantime, the President after three months or so, I cannot exactly remember, got fed-up because nothing was formulated. So in another meeting he asked the Ministry of Education to formulate a draft of the law. Shifted it from the UGC to the Ministry of Education. So I went to the Secretary of the Education Minister. He gave me nice snacks and tea, but did not do nothing. I said, “look, if you cannot do it, why do not you constitute a small taskforce. I am willing to volunteer to formulate a draft of the law”. “Oh, no, there are a lot of difficulties because” … again he was not convinced that this could be done. This is the problem. So in the meantime the whole scenario was changed. Country went through a civil revolution; Hossain Muhammad Ershad was in jail. American ambassador went back home, I was in limbo, right.
Appendix 5: A sample of case study protocol
Appendix 6: Ethical approval of the study from the Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC)

Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC)

Research Office

Human Ethics Certificate of Approval

Date: 8 March 2013

Project Number: CF13/435 – 2013000187

Project Title: Micropolitics of neoliberal policy formulation in the higher education sector in Bangladesh

Chief Investigator: Prof Susan Webb

Approved: From: 8 March 2013 To: 8 March 2018

Terms of approval

1. The Chief investigator is responsible for ensuring that permission letters are obtained, if relevant, and a copy forwarded to MUHREC before any data collection can occur at the specified organisation. Failure to provide permission letters to MUHREC before data collection commences is in breach of the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research and the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research.
2. Approval is only valid whilst you hold a position at Monash University.
3. It is the responsibility of the Chief Investigator to ensure that all investigators are aware of the terms of approval and to ensure the project is conducted as approved by MUHREC.
4. You should notify MUHREC immediately of any serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants or unforeseen events affecting the ethical acceptability of the project.
5. The Explanatory Statement must be on Monash University letterhead and the Monash University complaints clause must contain your project number.
6. Amendments to the approved project (including changes in personnel): Requires the submission of a Request for Amendment form to MUHREC and must not begin without written approval from MUHREC. Substantial variations may require a new application.
7. Future correspondence: Please quote the project number and project title above in any further correspondence.
8. Annual reports: Continued approval of this project is dependent on the submission of an Annual Report. This is determined by the date of your letter of approval.
9. Final report: A Final Report should be provided at the conclusion of the project. MUHREC should be notified if the project is discontinued before the expected date of completion.
10. Monitoring: Projects may be subject to an audit or any other form of monitoring by MUHREC at any time.
11. Retention and storage of data: The Chief Investigator is responsible for the storage and retention of original data pertaining to a project for a minimum period of five years.

Profesor Ben Canny
Chair,

MUHREC

cc: Mr Md. Ariful Haq Kabir

Postal – Monash University, Vic 3800, Australia
Building 3E, Room 111, Clayton Campus, Wellington

Road, Clayton Telephone Facsimile +61 3
9905 3831

www.monash.edu/research/ethics/human/index/html ABN 12 377 614
012 CRICOS Provider #00008C
Appendix 7: Explanatory statement for the participants

Explanatory Statement

March 8, 2013
Explanatory Statement – For policy administrators of different ministries and the UGC, academics, members of the Association of Private Universities, businessmen, politicians, and journalists

Title: Micropolitics of neoliberal policy formulation in the higher education sector in Bangladesh

This information sheet is for you to keep.

Student research project

My name is Md Ariful Haq Kabir and I am conducting a research project with Dr. Susan Webb, a Professor in the Faculty of Education, towards a PhD at Monash University. This means that I will be writing a thesis which is the equivalent of a 300 page book. I have funding from Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, Government of Australia for Endeavour Postgraduate Award 2012 (PhD) to undertake this research.

Why were you chosen for this research?

I would like to conduct in-depth interviews with 25 policy actors, who had involved in the policy formation processes in the higher education sector since the 1990s. I obtained a list of UGC members and academics, private sector people, officials of Education Ministry, politicians, and journalists, from the University Grants Commission, Bangladesh, Bangladesh Awami League and Bangladesh Nationalist Parties’ websites, and Directory of Bangladeshi Media’s website respectively. My study is to look at processes in developing the Strategic Plan for Higher Education 2006-2026 and the Private University Acts between 1992 and 2010 in higher education sector in Bangladesh. I choose you as potential participant for your involvement in these policy formulation processes.

The aim/purpose of the research

The aim of this study is to broadly understand the processes which include why, how and who is involved in adopting the neoliberal ideas and thinking in the higher education policies at the state level in Bangladesh.

I will respond to this broader objective by looking at the following sub-questions:
1. To what extent is neoliberalism a prominent feature of the higher education policies in Bangladesh?
2. Why have neoliberal ideas and thinking been incorporated in the higher education policies in Bangladesh?
3. What strategies are being used by policy actors to incorporate a neoliberal agenda into the higher education policies in Bangladesh?
   - How do policy makers justify the neoliberal ideas and thinking in the higher education policies?
   - How are neoliberal ideas and thinking being shaped and recontextualised in the higher education policies?
   - How do other policy fields influence the higher education sector to incorporate a neoliberal policy agenda?
   - How do international financial institutions (IFIs) influence the policy makers to adopt neoliberal ideas in higher education policies?
4. How are the varieties of interest groups contributing to the formation of the neoliberal agenda in higher education policies?
5. Who is involved in the processes in developing the higher education policies in a relation with neoliberal ideas and thinking?

Possible benefits

The proposed research aims to give an opportunity for the participants to share their experiences in formulating Strategic Plan for Higher Education 2006-2026 and the Private University Acts between 1992 and 2010 in the higher education sector in Bangladesh. This research explicitly intends to understand how the varieties of interest groups are involved in developing state level policies in the higher education sector in Bangladesh. Such investigation will contribute to understand how policy makers and varieties of interest groups in Bangladesh have taken ideas from the international audience and reshaped those ideas at local context. This investigation will not bring any direct benefits for the participants; however, their contribution to this research will help the higher education sector.

What does the research involve?

This study involves in-depth interviews with diverse participants from the higher education sector. Moreover this study uses audio recording for the interview. The fieldwork for this study is located in capital city, Dhaka, Bangladesh.

How much time will the research take?

The in-depth interview requires up to 1 hour.

Inconvenience/discomfort
I do not anticipate any level of inconvenience and/or discomfort to the participants. The participants can avoid answering questions in the interview which are felt too personal, sensitive or uncomfortable to them.

**Payment**

The participation in this study is voluntary. No sort of payment or reward will be offered for participating in this study.

**You can withdraw from the research.**

If you do consent to participate, you may withdraw from further participation at any stage but you will only be able to withdraw data up until than November 2014 prior to publication of a report of the project.

Being in this study is voluntary and you are under no obligation to participate. You do not need to answer all the interview questions, but once you have responded to the interview questions you cannot withdraw your answers later than November 2014.

**Confidentiality**

The data from the participants will not be shared to anyone else. Participants’ identity will not be disclosed in writing a thesis or a book or a journal article. Pseudonyms or codes will be used in such reporting.

**Storage of data**

Data collected will be stored in accordance with Monash University regulations, kept on University premises, in a locked filing cabinet for 5 years. A report of the study may be submitted for publication, but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report.

**Use of data for other purposes**

The data will not be used for any other purposes.

**Results**

If you would like to be informed of the aggregate research finding, please contact Md Ariful Haq Kabir on The findings are accessible for one year after submitting the thesis in March 2016.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If you would like to contact the researchers about any aspect of this study, please contact the Chief Investigator:</th>
<th>If you have a complaint concerning the manner in which this research is being conducted, please contact:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Susan Webb</td>
<td>Dr. Abdul Maleque</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professor</td>
<td>Professor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty of Education</td>
<td>Institute of Education and Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building 6</td>
<td>University of Dhaka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monash University</td>
<td>Room 305 A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Thank you

Md. Ariful Haq Kabir
Appendix 8: Consent form

Consent Form - For policy administrators of the Ministry of Education and the UGC, academics, private sector people, politicians, and journalists

Title: Micro-politics of neoliberal policy formulation in the higher education sector in Bangladesh

NOTE: This consent form will remain with the Monash University researcher for their records.

I understand I have been asked to take part in the Monash University research project specified above. I have had the project explained to me, and I have read the Explanatory Statement, which I keep for my records.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I understand that:</th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- I will be asked to be interviewed by the researcher</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- unless I otherwise inform the researcher before the interview I agree to allow the interview to be audio-taped</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- I agree to make myself available for a further interview if required</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

and

I understand that my participation is voluntary, that I can choose not to participate in part or all of the project, and that I can withdraw at any stage of the project without being penalised or disadvantaged in any way.

and

I understand that any data that the researcher extracts from the interview for use in reports or published findings will not, under any circumstances, contain names or identifying characteristics without my signed consent below.

and/or

I understand that I will be given a transcript of data concerning me for my approval before it is included in the write up of the research.

and/or

I understand that I may ask up until than November 2014 prior to publication for my data to be withdrawn from the project.
and/or

I understand that no information I have provided that could lead to the identification of any other individual will be disclosed in any reports on the project, or to any other party

and

I understand that data from the interview will be kept in secure storage and accessible to the research team. I also understand that the data will be destroyed after a 5 year period unless I consent to it being used in future research.

and

I do give permission to be identified by a pseudonym and understand I will remain anonymous at all times in any reports or publications from the project.

Participant's name: _____________________________

Signature: _____________________________ Date: _____________________________
Appendix 9: Assenting letter from the local contact person

February 10, 2013

Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC)
Room 111, Building 3e, Monash Clayton Campus
VIC 3800
Australia

Subject: Assenting to take a role as local contact person

Dear MUHREC,

I am pleased to inform you that I would be happy to take a role as local contact person of Md Ariful Haq Kabir’s PhD project. I am well informed that Mr. Kabir is conducting his PhD research on *Micropolitics of Neoliberal Policy Formulation in the Higher Education Sector in Bangladesh*. As part of his PhD research he will conduct fieldwork in Dhaka, the capital city of Bangladesh, in this year. The participants in this research can contact me if any complaint concerning the manner in which this research is being conducted.

Thanking you

Sincerely Yours

Dr Abdul Maleque
Professor
Institute of Education and Research
University of Dhaka
Room 305 A
Appendix 10: Application for accessing parliamentary debates on the Private University Acts

July 29, 2013

Secretary
Bangladesh Parliament Secretariat
Sher-e-Bangla Nagar
Dhaka

Through: Director
Institute of Education and Research
University of Dhaka.

Subject: Application for accessing parliamentary debates on the Private University Act 1992 and the Private University Act 2010

Dear Sir

With due respect I have been doing a four-year PhD degree at Faculty of Education in Monash University, Australia through Endeavour Postgraduate Award (PhD) offered by the Australian Government. My particular focus is to look at the formulation of higher education policy in the higher education sector in Bangladesh. As part of this I am looking into how the Private University Act 1992 and the Private University Act 2010 were being enacted by the honourable parliament members. Therefore I am keen to accessing the debates made by the honourable parliament members on the days of enacting the Private University Act 1992 and the Private University Act 2010. It is mentioned that I will be leaving for Australia on August 20, 2013.

Therefore I would be grateful if you allow me to access the debate on above mentioned before my departure.

Kind regards

(Md Ariful Haq Kabir)
Associate Professor
Institute of Education and Research
University of Dhaka

And

PhD student
Monash University, Australia
Email ariful.kabir@monash.edu
Phone 017111192220
Attachment: Ethical approval from Monash University