

Resolving the Diploma-B. Sc. contradiction in Bangladesh Insights from student Protests and Educational Policies - Khadi Ja.pdf

by Mr Adnan

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Resolving the Diploma-B.Sc. Contradiction in Bangladesh: Insights from Student Protests and Educational Policies

Name:Khadiza

Institution:Pabna University of Science and Technology

Grade:First year,First semester

Major:Civil Engineering

Country:Bangladesh

Email:khadijamariam321@gmail.com

Date: 30 September,2025

Abstract: Inequity in Bangladesh's higher education system has led to significant student unrest, notably the July Revolution of 2024. There is another student uprising we can see, diploma-B.Sc. contradiction. This research aims to investigate the underlying causes of diploma-B.Sc. contradiction in Bangladesh, focusing on disparities in educational and employment opportunities between Diploma and B.Sc. graduates. This study tries to provide evidence-based insights that could inform better policy and reduce conflicts between these two educational pathways by analyzing student protests and educational policies. A mixed-method approach, including surveys, interviews, and policy analysis, will be employed to gather data. The expected outcome is to provide evidence-based recommendations for policy reforms.

Introduction: In Bangladesh, the educational system offers two primary pathways for engineering students: the Diploma and B.Sc. programs. Diploma programs typically provide early entry into the workforce, emphasizing practical skills and hands-on experience, whereas B.Sc. programs focus on theoretical knowledge and in-depth understanding of engineering principles[1],[2]. While both aim to produce skilled professionals, significant disparities in terms of academic recognition, career prospects, and societal perception[3]. Although diploma holders join the workforce earlier, their salaries are usually much lower. Since employers in Bangladesh can hire engineers at a lower cost, most institutions prefer diploma holders. As a result, the job market for B.Sc. holders become narrower[1],[2]. To improve their career prospects, many diploma holders later pursue a B.Sc. degree from various private universities. Consequently, they often occupy the jobs that were originally expected to be taken by B.Sc. graduates[2],[3]. Despite years of hard work and rigorous study, opportunities for B.Sc. holders thus become limited. This leads to frustration among B.Sc. holders and pushes them towards protest movements such as the July Revolution of 2024 demanding policy reform and greater alignment between diploma and B.Sc. qualification[4]. Moreover, diploma holders often enjoy certain advantages such as government quotas, which give them more security in employment. On the other hand, B.Sc. holders argue that if they are eligible to apply for higher-grade jobs after completing a B.Sc., they should not be restricted from applying for grade-10 jobs[1],[4]. While diploma holders demand easier opportunities to upgrade to B.Sc. programs instead of long and costly enrollment in private universities. This highlights gaps in the current education system. Bangladesh is a developing country, and Student Protests often have a significant impact on its social and political landscape, as seen recently during the July movement. However, limited research has examined the intersection of student protests, perceptions, and educational policies in addressing the Diploma-B.Sc. contradiction, particularly in Bangladesh[2],[4]. Understanding this interplay is crucial for harmonizing practical and theoretical skills to enhance employability and create an equitable engineering education framework. This study aims to investigate diploma-B.Sc. contradiction through student protest and policy analysis, providing insights that can guide policymakers and educational institutions toward resolving systemic contradictions.

Literature review: The structural separation between the diploma and B.Sc. Engineering programs in Bangladesh have created persistent tensions in the engineering education and employment sector. Diploma programs emphasize practical, hands-on skills and allow earlier workforce entry, whereas B.Sc. programs focus on theoretical knowledge and longer academic

training[1],[2]. Although this dual track system was designed to meet diverse labour-market needs, it has frequently resulted in uneven career outcomes and professional recognition for graduates[2],[3]. Early studies highlighted the critical role of diploma engineers in the country's technical workforce. Rahman[1] argued that diploma graduates, equipped with technical skills, often join the workforce earlier and become essential to industrial growth. However, their career progression was restricted, leaving them dissatisfied despite their significant contributions. Khan[2] expanded this discussion by examining the contradictions embedded in educational and employment policies. His research revealed that while diploma holders benefited from preferential access to certain government job grades, B.Sc. Engineers faced stricter requirements despite longer training. This imbalance intensified competition between two groups and frequently triggered student protests, underscoring how policy itself became a driver of unrest. Building on this, Haque[3] emphasized the socio-psychological effects of the contradiction. He found that B.Sc. graduates, after years of rigorous study, experienced frustration due to limited job opportunities. Meanwhile, many diploma engineers pursued private university degrees, allowing them to compete for positions otherwise intended for B.Sc. holders. This overlap not only exacerbated competition but also created resentment. Chowdhury[4] provided more recent insights, documenting student movements and their impact on policy debates. He noted that government responses were largely reactive, aimed at quelling protests rather than addressing systemic inequality. This aligns with historical patterns, where Short-term reforms failed to resolve the deeper contradiction. Historically, conflicts over employment opportunities, government job quotas, and professional recognition for diploma versus B.Sc. graduates have led to repeated waves of student activism in Bangladesh. Deputies date back several decades, with significant mobilization in the late 20th century[4]. In the 2000s and 2010s, diploma and B.Sc. graduates alike protested government policies that they perceived as unfair, particularly regarding promotion scales and eligibility for higher-grade positions[4].

Recent events confirm the ongoing relevance of this concern. In 2025, BUET and RUET students staged protests against employment discrimination targeting B.Sc. graduates[5],[6]. At the same time, polytechnic students organized demonstrations in Dhaka, voicing dissatisfaction with proposed reforms and demanding recognition of their qualifications[7]. The government subsequently formed committees to review the conflicting demands, but both groups expressed discontent with the outcomes[8]. These developments suggest that the contradictions identified by earlier scholars remain unresolved and continue to fuel protest movements. Taken together, the existing literature and recent protests highlight a persistent cycle: policy contradictions create grievances, grievances lead to protest, and protests result in temporary reforms without structural resolution. While prior studies have provided valuable insights into either historical policy flaws or the social impacts of the contradiction, little research has systematically analyzed how contemporary student protests interact with educational policies to shape outcomes. This gap underscores the significance of the present study.

Research question: This study aims to examine the diploma-B.Sc. contradiction in Bangladesh by focusing on the following questions:

1.In what ways have existing educational policies addressed or failed to address the tensions between diploma and B.Sc. graduates?

2. How have student protests reflected the effects of this contradiction on graduates' professional and social lives?

3. How do student protests and policy responses together shape the ongoing dynamics of the diploma-B.Sc. contradiction?

4. What policy insights can be drawn to help reduce the contradiction and prevent future student unrest?

It is expected, going through these questions can be helpful to understand how educational policies can unintentionally generate contradictions that directly affect students' career prospects and social recognition and provides practical insights for policymakers.

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Methodology: A mixed-method approach will be used, combining quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews to gather data to explore the diploma-B.Sc. contradiction in Bangladesh. The study aims to examine the structural causes, social impacts, and policy responses associated with this issue, as well as the role of student protests in shaping outcomes. This design is suitable because it allows a comprehensive analysis of the diploma-B.Sc. contradiction through both statistical trends and contextual insights.

Secondary Data:

Educational policies: Analysis of government regulations, quota systems, and policy documents related to diploma and Bsc engineers.

Employment Data: Government and institutional reports on graduate employment rates, salaries, and promotions.

Primary Data:

Interviews: Semi structured interviews with diploma and Bsc graduates, student leaders, and policymakers to capture perception of inequalities and protest motivations. Approximately 30-40 interviews are planned.

Surveys: Distributed to 300 students(150 Diploma and 150 B.Sc.) to assess perceptions and experiences.

Document Analysis: Review of policy documents and protest materials to understand the historical context. At least 15 policy reports and news articles are planned to analyze.

Quantitative data will be analyzed using statistical methods using SPSS software. Qualitative data will be analyzed by thematic analysis.

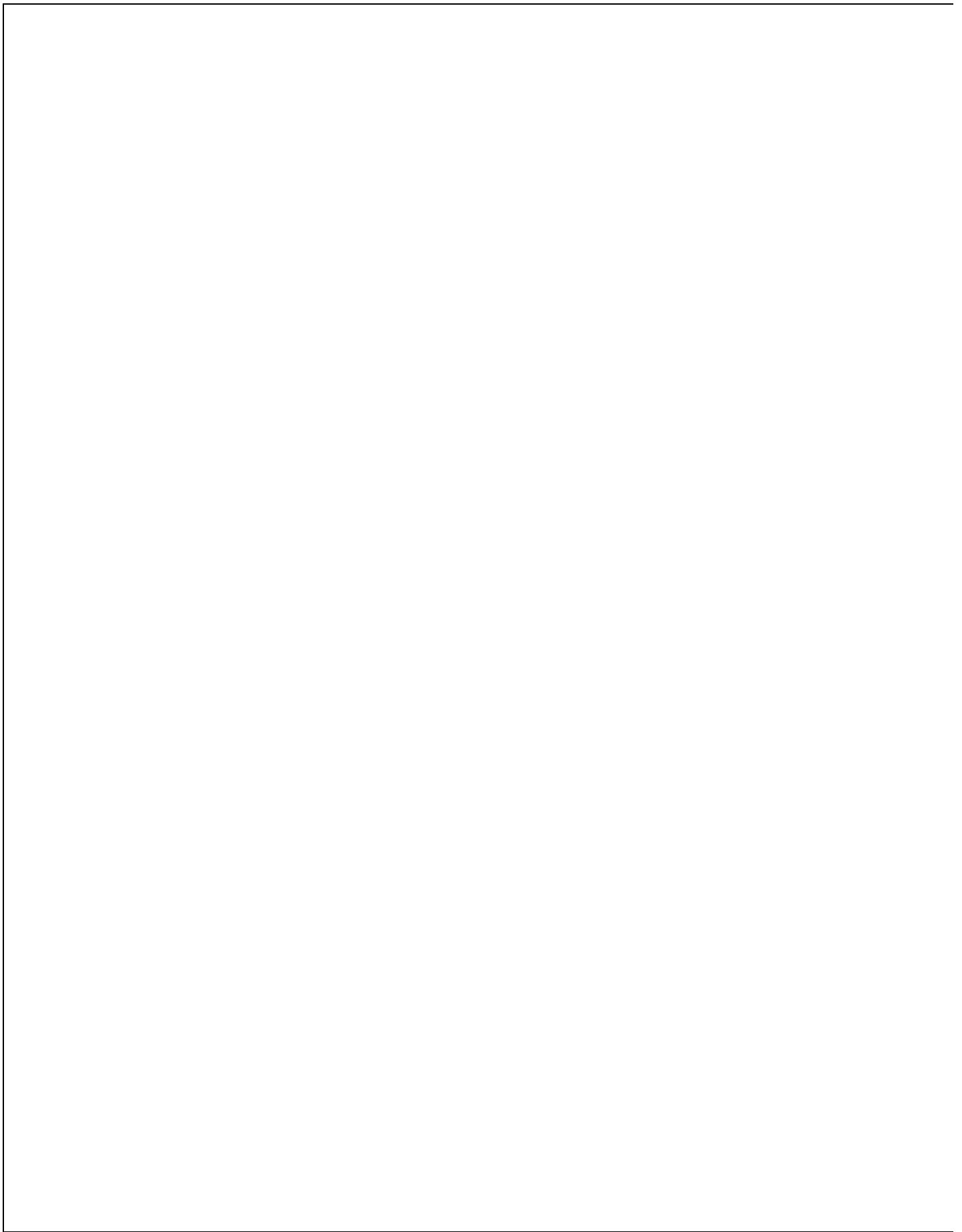
This study will ensure confidentiality and voluntary participation. Informed consent will be obtained from all participants and sensitive information will be anonymized.

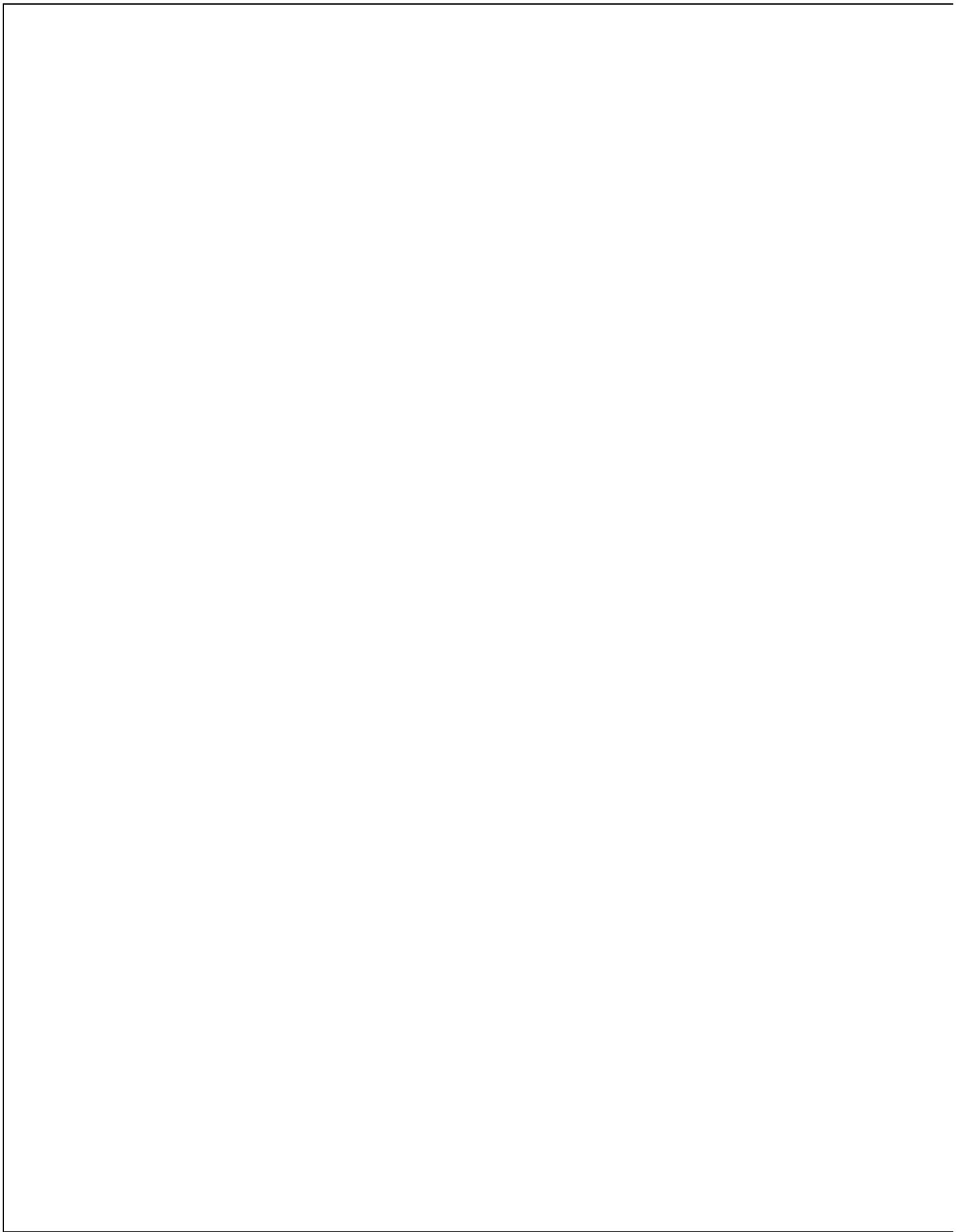
This methodology will enable the study to identify structural gaps, policy shortcomings, and social consequences of the diploma-B.Sc. contradiction, ultimately providing evidence-based recommendations for educational reform and mitigating future student protests.

Conclusion: The diploma-B.Sc. contradiction in Bangladesh reflects deep structural imbalance in both the education and employment systems. Recent protests at BUET, RUET and polytechnic institutions further demonstrate that these tensions are not only persistent but also intensifying[5]-[7]. This proposed study aims to investigate the diploma-Bsc contradiction in Bangladesh through an analysis of student protests and educational policies. By examining both the causes and effects of this contradiction, the research expects to provide insights into how disparities in education and employment contribute to social unrest and how student protests act as a response to inequality and as a catalyst for policy adjustments. The outcome of this study offers evidence-based insights and possible pathways-such as clearer job grading, transparent recruitments practices, and equitable academic progression-that could help mitigate conflicts and guide future policy decisions.

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