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*Over half of
public univ
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have PhDs*Mohiuddin Alamgir

THE number of PhD degrees among teachers at public universities has come down to 44 per cent in 2014, from 70 per cent of 1997, according to the University Grants Commission data.

Educationists say the sharp drop in the doctor of philosophy degree – the most esteemed qualification among higher education instructors – is indicative of the fall in the standard of education at the tertiary level.

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Over half of public univ teachers

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in the country.*

Senior academics say young teachers have lost interest in higher education qualifications because of politicisation of the appointment and promotion processes, and a lack of funding for research.

'Teachers who do not have higher degrees cannot provide proper lessons in classrooms, which seriously hampers education at the tertiary level,' said Dhaka University professor emeritus Serajul Islam Chowdhury.

True to Serajul's observation, the quality of higher education in the country also appears to be on the decline off late.

The latest University Grants Commission's annual report described the quality of graduates in the country as 'questionable', as only seven to 20 per cent graduates during the last five years passed the screening test to

qualify for the Bangladesh Civil Service examinations – an indication that most graduates are not equipped to handle one of the more elementary tests of their abilities.

Many teachers who go aboard for higher education do not return to Bangladesh, contributing to skewering the figure on post-graduate education of public university teachers, said another DU professor emeritus and immediate past UGC chairman, AK Azad Chowdhury.

The UGC data shows the numbers of teachers with postgraduate education degrees is steadily declining over the last two decades. In 1997, about 70 per cent out of 4,000 university teachers had PhD and other post graduate degrees, and in 2014, about 44 per cent of 12,000 teachers had PhDs.

In 2002, about 68 per cent of 5,450 teachers, in 2011 about 47 of 9,781 teachers had PhDs.

'The quality of higher education in Bangladesh has declined steadily and alarmingly,' said Serajul.

A two-year of Master of Philosophy and three to five-year Doctor of Philosophy are two of the most cherished postgraduate degrees among academics.

Senior university professors said promotions without a PhD have become a lot easier, further contributing to the lack of interest in the qualification among teachers.

'In many cases appointment and promotion of teachers take place on political consideration,' said Serajul.

Serajul and Azad both said that lack of adequate funding for research also contribute to teachers failing to take up postgraduate education.

Many public university teachers do not get research allowance, said Azad.

UGC sources said about

20 universities out of 37 do not provide research allowance to teachers and in the rest, teachers get Tk 1200 to Tk 2000 as research allowance.

UGC chairman Abdul Mannan and education secretary Nazrul Islam Khan said the number of teachers with PhDs in percentage terms had dropped because of the rise in number of universities from 11 in 1997 to 37 in 2014, which necessitated the employment of a number of young teachers.

Scholarship for PhD and others degrees aboard has also decreased recently, which could be a reason for the drop in postgraduate education among teachers, said Mannan.

He said currently the UGC is encouraging research at universities through various projects and urged the government for more budgetary allocation for postgraduate education.