

# Study on Quality Assurance of Higher Education and Outcome-Based Education in Bangladesh

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## Abstract

Education is a vital tool for the socioeconomic development of a country and higher education institutions need to serve quality education to upgrade student's required skills to increase their professional career. The present world is a global village and our students should have global standard quality education to serve the global society. Outcome-Based Education (OBE) system has attracted significant interest from industries, academicians, governments, accreditation agencies and students due to global initiatives. The success of the Outcome-Based Education process depends upon sustainable quality assurance practices by higher education institutions. Objectives of this article are to find some elements that can influence on quality assurance system and uplift the skills of Bangladeshi graduates. Promoting the quality assurance process of OBE requires careful planning and active collaboration among stakeholders. There was an alarming increase of jobless graduates in Bangladesh. The government has taken strong steps recently to enhance the quality assurance in higher Educational Institutions (HEIs) in Bangladesh. We should introduce work-oriented learning at the tertiary level of education. For this, some prerequisite steps such as modifying the current curriculum, designing and offering work-oriented courses, and making strong connections with potential employers' accreditation agencies. Transparency and accountability required using assess the quality of HEIs. Strong motivation work is required to change the mindset of our youths to come back work work-oriented learning.

## Keywords

Quality Assurance, Sustainable Quality Practices, Higher Education, Quality Assessment, Outcome-Based Education, Accountability

## 1. Introduction

### Necessity of Quality Assurance in Higher Education in Bangladesh

Education is the process by which an individual acquires or imparts basic knowledge to another. This is also where a person develops skills essential to daily life, learns social norms, develops judgment and reasoning and learns to identify right and wrong. Thus the goal of education is to help person to navigate life and contribute to society once they become elder. Education is the main key to develop human resources as good people, patriotic citizen and knowledgeable workers. Education can transform our level of skill, values and knowledge. By education we also learn good behavior, tolerance with others, how to adjust to new environment and many other ethics. Education develops our critical thinking potential. It is vital in teaching a person using when making decisions and interacting with others. So, most of the countries have been giving a lot of emphasis to their higher education. Because they require graduates who have creativity, innovative idea, attitude, values and knowledge. These values and skills are most required to make the economy as well as the country into a high income and developed country. For this reason countries have invested huge amounts of money in their education sector.

#### **Quality Assurance in Higher Education**

Quality Assurance in Higher Education is a process under which service and operations of post secondary educational institutions or programs are evaluated to determine if applicable standards are met. This process or service is given by another organization which is known as Accreditation agency. If the standards are met then accredited status is granted by the agency. In general this function of higher educational accreditation is conducted by a governmental organization such as Ministry of Education. But there are also non-governmental organizations doing this service. Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) of the USA is such an organization. Quality assurance cannot be achieved without team work of all units of a HEIs and assessment by accreditation agencies.

Conventional system of instruction such as lecture-based session developed before textbooks were mass-produced by which quickly delivering information was possible. But there are some difficulties in lecture-session due to some students may be poor participants in the lecture. This type of instruction has allowed students to be passive in the lecture session. Some of the students did not know how to be active participants in the lecture session. They have relied on transcripts, memorizing and repetition for learning.

We have found a great deal from cognitive science research on the nature of teaching-learning. Students create new learning process. They get benefit from working together and they may learn best from teaching each others. This is known as group work system in the learning process. Literature review also suggests that students learn best in context of a compelling problem (Ewell, 1997), they learn through experience. Bouslama, F. et al. (2003) assessed a new academic model using Artificial neural networks. They have stated that how technology can be used to facilitate the learning and assessment process and how assessment is used to learning outcome elements working effectively. It is hybrid learning system composed of Outcome-Based Education and Grade Point Aver-

age system. *W G Spady, (1994)* stated that Outcome-Based Education means starting with a clear picture of what is important for students to be able to do on completion a program.

University Grants Commission (UGC) of Bangladesh is the authority that acts as the intermediary between the Government and the universities for regulating the affairs of all the Universities in the country. As a part of strategic plan UGC has implemented Higher Education Enhancement Project (HEQEP) with the help of the World Bank to enhance the quality assurance in HEIs of Bangladesh from 2009. The UGC created Quality Assurance Unit (QAU) as a unit of UGC to help the universities to create IQAC in all universities. At first the HEQEP took initiatives for enhance quality assurance among universities.

The Institutional Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) was established in most of the universities with the help of World Bank for three years. After successful completion of 3 years project period every university established IQAC in their own capacity to develop a mechanism for the review of institutional activities and study programs and to enhance quality of teaching-learning, research, knowledge generation and support service up to standards level. Objectives of HEQEP had three components: 1) improving the strategic capacity of University Grants Commission (UGC); 2) strengthening universities' institutional capacity and 3) raising the connectivity capacity of the higher education sector. This activity established Bangladesh Research and Education Network (BdREN).

University Grants Commission stated that Outcome-Based Education is composed of Program outcomes, Curriculum development, Curriculum delivery and Curriculum assessment with learning outcomes. Objectives of outcome-based education are purpose of the program, learning outcomes of the program, assessment and employability. Learning outcomes means learners must be do-able, observable, measurable and assessable.

#### **Observations in This Study**

The quality of the Higher Educational Institutions must be assessed or supervised in the definite time-intervals by external organizations or accreditation agencies. Student's motivation work is required. Because most of the students are frustrated or less interested with study seriously. Proper motivation can be enhanced their potential. In this study we see that five main components of OBE are Program Outcomes (PO) with course outcomes, Teaching-Learning Outcomes (TLO), Program Assessment (PA), Higher Educational Institutes Assessment (HEIA) and Students Motivation (SM) may be mathematically expressed as follows.

$$OBE = \int (PO, TLO, PA, HEIA, SM)$$

where, OBE = Outcome-Based Education, PO = Program Outcome, TLO = Teaching-Learning Outcome, PA = Program Assessment. HEIA = Higher Educational.

Institutes Assessment and SM = Students Motivation. That means Outcome Based Education is integrated result of these main five components. Beside these more factors can be considered such as introducing financial credit system for

students on needbase, semester fees waiver for financially backward and meritorious students from remote area. Students counselling centre should be formed for motivation work. Some students have been misguided and involved in unethical activities. We should prevent them from unethical activities. This study adds two factors: Higher Educational Institutes Assessment (HEIA) and Students Motivation (SM) as main factors of quality assurance process in Bangladesh.

Government of Bangladesh (GoB) has realized about the situation of higher education and recently established Bangladesh Accreditation Council (BAC) in 2018 that would guarantee quality instruction through certifying the higher instructive establishments and its educational plan exercises, shaping separate accreditation advisory group for each order, deciding the states of the accreditation under sensible ground.

### **Research Objectives**

The primary objective of this research is to explore different factors relating to quality assurance of higher education system including higher education institutions. Then the main objectives is to explore the existing factors relating to quality assurance of higher education system in Bangladesh and try to enhance the Quality Assurance system in Bangladesh as well as quality of Bangladeshi graduates. As a result the employability of the graduates can raise in national and international level. Environment of Higher Educational institutions will be improved.

### **1.1. Quality Education in Practices**

The youth graduates coming out of the higher education institutions must be well equipped with requisite qualifications and skills that the global society wants for achieving higher socioeconomic development. Quality of graduates has been defined as fitness of purposes. Quality education includes the following.

- 1) Quality of learners with commitment and interest to explore their potentials maximizing the learning opportunities;
- 2) Environments of campus should be healthy, safe, protective and gender-sensitive and provide adequate resources and facilities;
- 3) Content of learning that is reflected in relevant curricula and materials for the acquisition of basic skills, attitude, values and knowledge;
- 4) Processes by which effective and students oriented teaching learning and meaningful assessment to facilitate learning process and reduce disparities and;
- 5) Outcomes that includes knowledge, skills, attitudes, values and are linked to national objectives for education and positive participation in global society.
- 6) Teaching Performance and Teacher's Development (TPTD).

Teachers must be qualified and dedicated; they are the pilots of the education system. Teachers are also acts as fuel of the education system as a machine. Talented graduates are the output of the education system. Thus teaching performance and teacher's development should be subsystems within the greater system of higher education. For this reason, Recruiting and Retaining qualified

teachers, teacher's academic achievement and experience, teacher's compensation and remuneration, teaching technology as a tool, Evaluation of teacher's performance, Job environment, Opportunity for higher education and Research facility are very important to achieve Quality assurance in HEIs.

## **1.2. Quality Assurance (QA) System**

Quality comes from a well structured system. This system indicates institutional arrangements with infrastructure, evidence of good practices and good principles for education. Quality assurance system indicates that graduates achieved the prefixed standard in terms of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that expected by the stakeholders. The quality assurance system consists of designing academic programs, with specific ILOs strategies, implementation, and review of the system to measure the effectiveness and continuous improvement. Quality assurance system is combination of 1) Internal Quality Assurance and 2) External Quality Assurance.

### **Internal Quality Assurance**

Internal quality assurance system is composed of the arrangements within the institution to provide assurance of learning with people's confidence. Internal quality assurance is considered as an in house supervisor of Quality Assurance (QA) in higher education. In this process, everybody working in the HEIs must be responsible and accountable to develop the quality culture. Director IQAC is responsible to verify the policy and procedure, periodic review of policy and procedure for effectiveness, acquired benchmark quality and promoting continuous improvement.

#### **Institutional Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC)**

To perform the internal quality assurance Institutional Quality Assurance Cell is required in HEIs according to QA principles. The numbers of Higher education institution have been increasing rapidly in Bangladesh for two decades both in public and private sector. There is diversity in the programs also occurring due to demand of the globalization era. Some small and new universities may run their programs following their own system. Most of the universities are accepted the QA principles set by UGC and BAC to maintain their quality of education to the benchmark label.

## **1.3. External Quality Assurance**

External Quality Assurance system is an external body of HEIs which is empowered by the government or higher authority to guide and supervise or monitor the HEIs in the country. Bangladesh Accreditation Council (BAC) and UGC of Bangladesh act as an external quality assurance body in Bangladesh. Strength of human resource of these organizations should be increased to operate external quality assurance system in the country. Combined supervisory teams should be formed from both these organizations to operate assessment process for HEIs in the country for better transparency.

External Quality Assurance system supply HEIs the necessary documents to compare their academic programs and standards with equivalent national and international standards and to set benchmarks for further improvement. Quality assurance system works under some principles across the country. The principles are mainly to guide the quality assurance move toward greater accountability, transparency and credibility. QA system of a HEI is primarily responsible for quality assurance in education. QA system should focus on safeguarding the interest of major stakeholders.

#### **Some description of Higher Education in Bangladesh**

From the beginning of Bangladesh the Higher Education system was started. The total number of university was 6 in 1971 the independent year of Bangladesh. The number universities have been increasing rapidly from 2000. The present situation describes the phenomena of quality assurance of higher education in Bangladesh (see **Table 1**).

#### **1.4. Global Perspectives on Quality Assurance in HEIs**

Establishing quality assurance system in HEIs is a global issue. In the western countries this system has a long history but in the Asia Pacific region it started in around 2002 as APQN. And it is new in Bangladesh. Demand for quality assurance mechanism is increasing at national and internationally. The universities and HEIs around the world have been established IQACs with formal institutional approach and documentation. So, the QA in HEIs has become an increasing and important international trend. Management of HEIs become more aware about the performance in terms of quality of graduates that ability to meet the needs of the global society. As it is global concern some QA Networks have been established among the member countries for cooperation among them and develop the quality of education. Such as Asia-Pacific Quality Networks (APQN), QA Network for African Higher Education (AfriQAN), Arabs Network for QA

**Table 1.** Growth of number of universities by teachers and students.

Year	No. of universities			Total number of Teachers	Total number of Students	Teacher-Student Ratio
	Public	Private	Total			
1970	6	--	6	1434	26,390	1:18.40
1975	6	--	6	2147	27,553	1:12.83
1980	6	--	6	2386	36,530	1:15.31
1985	6	--	6	2705	41,780	1:15.40
1990	7	--	7	2887	51,780	1:17.94
1995	11	16	27	4501	72,872	1:16.19
2000	13	19	32	6315	110,656	1:17.52
2005	21	53	74	10,339	207,577	1:20.08
2020	46	105	151	31,594	1,169,590	1:37.02

Source: Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics; BANBEIS.

in HE (ANQAHE), Caribbean Area Network for QA in Tertiary Education (CANQATE), European Association for QA in Higher Education (ENQA), European Quality Assurance Registrar (EQAR). The International Network for QA Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) was established in 1991 with more than 200 QA Agencies as members. India, Pakistan, Srilanka, Maldives, Nepal and Bhutan are full members of the INQAAHE. World Bank and UNESCO created a Partnership that launched the Global Initiatives for Quality Assurance Capacity (GIQAC) to enhance the evolution of quality assurance in higher education in the developing countries. Bangladesh Accreditation Council has become intermediate member of Asia Pacific Quality Network (APQN) in 2020 [<http://www.bac.gov.bd/>]. American International University Bangladesh (AIUB) is a full member HEI of APQN. APQN has been arranging annual academic conference and AGM every year to exchange the views and ideas among the researchers of member countries. American International University Bangladesh (AIUB) was the host of APQN academic conference 2023 Dhaka.

## 2. Literature Review

Dill, D. D. and Van Vught, F A (2010) studies found that innovation of skills; techniques have now become the vital means of economic growth & productivity. D. D. Dill (2010) identified quality assurance in higher education as graduate's learning outcomes having specific levels of knowledge, skills and abilities that graduates achieved. D.D. Dill (2018) reviewed new forms of external quality assurance in national policy of higher and integral part of academic life. The of principles of Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) International Quality Group are consistent with existing international standards and guidelines such as the 2005 UNESCO-OECD Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-Border Higher Education, the 2007 INQAAHE Guidelines of Good Practice for Quality Assurance. The Chiba (2008) Principles: Higher Education Quality Assurance for the Asia Pacific Region developed by APQN, 2015, Revised European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance. Bhuiyan, et al. (2009) stated that major factors that determine the quality of higher education include teaching performance and teachers' development, academic policy environment, students' development and evaluation processes and adjustability of the institutions with changes. Andaleeb, S. (2003) found that the important areas such as teaching method, content, peer quality, direct & indirect facilities and political environment are required to improve. He also stated that QAHE depends upon Teaching performance and Teacher's Developments, Academic Policy environment, Student Development Process and Adjustability of the institution with changes.

Linda Darling-Hammond (2000) studied an analysis on education policy and their result suggests that policies adopted by states regarding teacher education, licensing, hiring, and professional development may make an important difference in the qualifications and capacities that teachers bring to their work.



### 3. Research Methodology

Descriptive survey method (Wallace, 1996) is applied in this research work. For this purpose secondary data and information are collected and used to compile the study. Secondary data have been collected from manuals, scholarly research papers, books, reports, news papers etc. The author is acknowledged to researchers and writers of those documents I have searched for. Results are explained in description process and tabular form.

### 4. Recommendation and Conclusion

We are in globalization era and our students should have global standard quality education to serve the global society. The success of Outcome-Based Education process depends upon sustainable quality assurance practices by higher education institutions. Teacher recruitment should be fare and competence. Government agencies should monitor and assess the quality of HEIs and Program offering entity properly in time-interval. Academic competition among the universities can improve the quality of education. Curricular activities of students are required to enhance their potential. Outcome-Based Education system has attracted significant interest from industries, academicians, governments, accreditation agencies and students due to global initiatives. Financial credit for financially poor students to support their career building activities. We should introduce work oriented learning at higher level of education. Strong motivation work are required to change the mindset of our youths to come back to effective and work oriented learning.

### Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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