

QUALITY ASSURANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTES (HEIs) OF BANGLADESH

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***Abstract:** The purpose of the article is to make awareness about the importance of Institutional Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) and its activities including the capacity building of the national framework of higher education in Bangladesh. The present government of Bangladesh took the initiative year 2015 to establish IQAC as a pilot project in both private and public universities to ensure quality education in tertiary level. There are 38 private and 31 public universities under this project by the supervision of Quality Assurance Unit (QAU), UGC for three years and after completion of the project IQAC will be an integral part of the university.^[1]*

The number of higher education institutions in Bangladesh has remarkably increased during the last one decade. At present the number of private and public universities in Bangladesh is 95 and 40 respectively. About 3.2 million students are studying now in these universities and approximately 0.7 million graduates come out each year. However, the scope for the employment rate of graduates in Bangladesh is insufficient; many of them would have to fight for employment in local and global job market. In order to get a job in and outside Bangladesh, the graduates must have to prepare themselves in the context of national as well as global requirements; otherwise their opportunities for jobs would be narrow. The quality of the graduates has to be of international standard in terms of their (i) knowledge, attitudes and soft-skills, (ii) updated course curricula to meet the global requirements, (iii) Outcome Based Teaching Learning (OBTL) strategies and (iv) creative, evaluating and analytical assessment procedures to follow Bloom's Taxonomy. The objective of IQAC is to ensure the quality education, develop skilled graduates with high employability in local as well as global context.

1. Literature Review

The British Standard Institution (BSI) defines quality as “the totality of features and characteristics of a product or service that bear on its ability to satisfy stated or implied needs” (BSI, 1991).^{[2],[3]}

There are five approaches in considering quality:

- * Quality as exceptional (highest standards)
- * Quality as confronting (Challenging) to standards
- * Quality as fitness for purpose
- * Quality as effectiveness in achieving institutional goals
- * Quality as meeting customers' stated or implied needs.

The idea of quality is not new, nor that of quality assurance (QA). Neither, for that matter, are concerns on quality. There are different approaches to quality assurance. The

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meaning of quality assurance may vary depending on the field of activity. Different countries have evolved QA models for their higher education systems as necessitated by their unique national contexts. Nevertheless, in all activities related to quality assurance across the world, there lies a common unifying thread that laces together the basic concepts.^[4]

Quality in higher education is a dynamic entity which is the outcome of interaction among many factors including inter alia, leadership, quality of faculty and students, infrastructure facilities, research and learning environment, governance, strategic planning, assessment procedures, and market force. Quality has a few central ideas around which the whole concept revolves: Quality as absolute, Quality as relative, Quality as a process, and Quality as culture. Quality is the means through which an institution can guarantee with confidence and certainty that the standards of its educational provision are being maintained and enhanced (Quality Assurance Agency UK).

2. Establishment of IQAC

For establishing Institutional Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) at Daffodil International University (DIU), the performance contract is entered into June 14, 2015 between University Grants Commission (UGC), Bangladesh. The IQAC is working with different entities/programs of the universities in three different phases: Phase I - Academic Audit, Phase II – Development of Quality Assurance and Phase III - Improvement Plan & Implementation.

To achieve the above mentioned a three phase action approach is planned.^[5]

2.1 Phase I - Academic Audit: An academic audit report need to be prepare to considering five different stakeholders which are current students, alumni, employer, academic staff and non-academic staff. There are nine criteria to develop academic audit report. In respect of current setting following quality assurance areas are considered as the self-assessment criteria:

Criteria 1: Governance	Criteria 4: Physical Facilities	Criteria 7: Staff and Facilities
Criteria 2: Curriculum Content Design & Review (OBTL)	Criteria 5: Teaching - Learning and Assessment	Criteria 8: Research and Extension
Criteria 3: Student Admission, Progress and Achievements	Criteria 6: Student Support Services	Criteria 9: Process Management & Continuous Improvement

This academic audit report is called Self-Assessment Report (SAR) and identifying the strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities of each entity or program.

An institutional audit has to establish current strengths & weakness of the entity or program of individual department. And also find out the areas need to be adjustment & improvement on basis of the recommendation or weaknesses of the academic audit.

2.2 Phase II – Development of Quality Assurance: The development of quality assurance systems and processes to support the University's vision to become a higher education institution with global recognition.

2.3 Phase III - Improvement Plan & Implementation: An improvement plan has to be designed for each entity/program on basis of recommendations of Self-Assessment Report (SAR). This improvement plan has to be implemented with a certain period of time. It is also important to monitor the implementation plan for the progress of the entity.

Three phase action of assessment process has to be completed within 5 year cycle for 4 year bachelor program. This is continuous improvement cycle within every 5 years.

3. Case Study of Daffodil International University (DIU)

Currently, Daffodil International University (DIU) has been working with IQAC. At the first stage, 8 entities were included under Self-Assessment (SA) Activities of IQAC and 4 were included at second stage to carry on SA process activities. As per criteria and compliance of Quality Assurance Unit (QAU), UGC Bangladesh, total 12 entities have been started SA Process activities of DIU.

In first stage, the following eight entity/program of the department to developed SAR through Self-Assessment Committee (SAC) of IQAC, DIU.

1. Department of Computer Science & Engineering
2. Department of Business Administration
3. Department of Electronics and Telecommunication Engineering
4. Department of Journalism & Mass Communication
5. Department of English
6. Department of Law
7. Department of Nutrition and Food Engineering
8. Department of Software Engineering

The above departments have successfully completed their Self-Assessment Report (SAR), External Peer Review (EPR) and Improvement Plan. Currently, those eight departments are associated with implementation process.

In second stage, the following four entity/program of the department to developed SAR through Self-Assessment Committee (SAC) of IQAC, DIU.

1. Department of Textile Engineering
2. Department of Electrical and Electronic Engineering
3. Department of Real Estate
4. Department of Pharmacy

The above departments have successfully completed their Self-Assessment Report (SAR), External Peer Review (EPR). Now those four departments are working for to develop improvement plan & implementation process.

It has been worthy to mention that IQAC, DIU has successfully initiated to conduct External Peer Reviewing (EPR) Process of its twelve (12) SA Departments within stipulated time and that SA-Process are now in implementation tier. Eight SA Departments have successfully started their implementation process under the guidelines of improvement plan, accordingly. We believe, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) of Bangladesh under IQAC get benefit from the project which would ensure quality teaching-learning, research, knowledge generation and support services standards at an acceptable level.

4. Establishment of National Accreditation Council (NAC) of Bangladesh

In 2016, Bangladesh government has approved a new law to form an accreditation council to ensure standards of higher education in Bangladesh. The 13-member council will consist of a chairman, four full-time members and eight part time members. The higher education institutions will be evaluated and certified in the light of the council statutes. Government clears law to form National Accreditation Council (NAC) for Bangladesh universities. All universities will come under NAC.

5. National Quality Framework of Bangladesh (NQFB)

Government of Bangladesh also considers establishing a National Quality Framework of Bangladesh (NQFB) in tertiary level education which will be an instrument for the development, classification and recognition of skills, knowledge and competencies at agreed benchmarked levels for the higher education sector in Bangladesh.^[6]

Many countries have evolved Quality Assurance (QA) models for their higher education systems as necessitated by their individual unique national contexts to ensure the skill of the graduates of the employment both national and international context. Nevertheless, in all activities related to quality assurance across the world, there lies a common unifying thread that laces together the basic concepts. Quality assurance system leads to performance excellence and total quality management in each component. In fact, assuring quality is a continuous teamwork in which standards, benchmarks, and quality audit play a significant integrated role. Continuous improvement should be the focal area of quality assurance in Higher Education Institutes (HEIs).

6. Conclusion

The aim of IQAC is to establish a National Qualification Framework of Bangladesh (NQFB) in tertiary level education in Bangladesh to ensure sustainable education, skilled graduate with high employability in local as well as global context.

Quality Assurance (QA) is continuous improvement process for HEIs. It is about improvement not punishment, or provocation. QA must take into consideration international benchmarks and global good.^[7]

International human mobility has a meaningful connection with the quality education all over the world. A graduate with a particular educational background moves to foreign country, they need to retain the same level of educational quality and skills of that country. The graduates from Bangladesh can find out the better opportunities in abroad if their skill is compatible with foreign skills. IQAC is trying to establish and ensuring the quality of higher education be standardized at a national as well as global level to help the graduates better opportunity in home and abroad.

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