

Challenges on Quality and Outcomes of Higher Education Institutions in Bangladesh

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Abstract

The growth and socioeconomic development depend upon new knowledge and technology which are generated in Higher Educational Institutes. Quality of higher education is the main key to generate new knowledge and technology. Quality Assurance in Higher Education Institutes is a mechanism by which quality of higher education can be achieved. The objectives of this article are to find a few elements that extraordinarily influence the quality of higher education in Bangladesh. Some measures have taken to enhance the quality of tertiary education in the country. At first, Bangladesh government has taken HEQEP project with the help of World Bank and after the IQAC project has been taken for three years. Now every qualified university has established IQAC using their won capacity to enhance the quality education. Bangladesh Accreditation Council has been established to manage the quality assurance of higher education. The unemployment rate had been increasing among graduates in the country from 2015 to 2021. Campus violence is an obstacle for quality higher education in the country. Secondary analysis method is used to analyze the secondary data in this article. It is found that job market demand based learning is necessary for the students. In this global era, tertiary education must be of global standard. Academic environment is an important issue in this country which to be solved by the government, teachers, students and all party politicians. Transparency and accountability of HEIs and Government management are must to create academic environment. Government, university teachers, industries, students and their families should work together to improve the quality of higher education. Discipline in financial sector of the country should be maintained to create new jobs.

Keywords

University, Violence, IQAC, BAC, Joblessness, Global Standard

1. Introduction

As we have been living in a globalization age, our human resources should be a global standard. Due to globalization and increased cross border mobility, many ways of opportunities have become open to all countries. Bangladesh has been trying to avail all opportunities to build up a knowledge based society for attaining a sustainable socioeconomic development and middle income status. Updated and global standard quality of education and training are necessary to grow up skilled human resources. Quality Assurance (QA) in higher education can be defined as a set of well-structured process which will guide the higher education institutions to achieve its goals to fulfill its objectives. That is, QA process will determine whether the graduates coming out of the institutions achieved the expected standard in terms of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that expected by the society. Higher education can play a vital role in achieving this goal. Because higher education transforms the society into the knowledge based society where human resources are skilled and global level. It plays as a catalyst for creativity and innovation. So, improving quality in higher education institutions is so important for global context. Increase in a number of universities in Bangladesh has expanded the scope of higher education. But it has many problems and challenges.

There are two types of Quality Assurance process. 1) Internal quality assurance system which can be formed by institutional arrangements within the institution to provide assurance of quality education. This Institutional Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) is responsible to maintain internal quality assurance at the university. All persons working in an HEI are responsible and accountable to develop the quality culture. The responsibility of Director IQAC to check the policy and procedure, review policy and procedure for effectiveness, acquired benchmark quality periodically and enhanced continuous improvement.

2) External Quality Assurance approach is an external agency governed by the state to monitor and assess the institutional quality of higher education of higher educational institutes. This agency is responsible to assess the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance system of every qualified university which has more than 1000 students. This body provides higher educational institutes the necessary documents to verify the academic programs and standards with equivalent national and international updated standards.

1.1. Measures of Quality Assurance in Bangladesh

Government of Bangladesh has taken some measures to enhance and maintain the quality of higher education in Bangladesh. Government has established University Grant Commission, Bangladesh Accreditation Council. and some professional organizations such as Institutes of Engineers Bangladesh, Board of Accreditation for Engineering and Technical Education (BAET), Bangladesh Medical and Dental Council, Pharmacy Council of Bangladesh, Bangladesh Bar Council

etc. to maintain international standard of quality education in each field of education in the country.

1.1.1. University Grants Commission

University Grants Commission (UGC) of Bangladesh is an attached Organization of the Ministry of Education of Bangladesh, which is the apex body with objectives are to supervise, maintain, promote and coordinate universities, higher education institutions. Government of Bangladesh (GoB) has realized that the country has been suffering of lack of quality higher education, because its tertiary education system was not adequately prepared to capitalize on the creation and application of knowledge. GoB also realized that their responsibility to update the quality higher education in the country. Due to expanding interest for higher education, GoB established Private University Act. 1992 and then Act. 2010. Still now, the quantity of colleges and their teachers in both public and private sectors has expanded essentially, but the nature of teaching learning and exploration is yet as an unavoidable problem. This problem was identified in the strategic plan for Higher Education 2006-2016 of University Grant Commission and National Education Policy-2010. After then UGC of Bangladesh established Higher Education Enhancement Project (HEQEP) in 2009 with the help of World Bank. The objective of the HEQEP in Bangladesh is to improve the quality and relevance of the teaching and research environment in higher education institutions by encouraging both innovation and accountability within universities and by enhancing the technical and institutional capacity of the higher education sector. HEQEP project arranged seminars, workshops together with teachers and management to update curriculum, teaching-learning process, assessment, evaluation process, academic environment, job environment, transparency in management to enhance the quality of higher education institutes. The College Education Development Project (CEDP) established with the help of World Bank after successful of HEQEP in the country to enhance the quality of teachers, colleges and management. These objectives have three components: (a) improving the strategic capacity of University Grants Commission; (b) strengthening universities' institutional capacity and (c) raising the connectivity capacity of the higher education sector. After the successful tenure of HEQEP Institutional Quality Assurance Cells (IQACs) were formed in every university with the help of UGC and W B for three years. A Quality Assurance Unit (QAU) was set up in the UGC of Bangladesh to provide guidance and technical assistance to the IQACs for their functional operations and to ensure transparency, accountability and credibility as internationally acceptable quality assurance practices. After successful completion of three years of IQACs, now every university has established IQAC using their own capacity. IQAC is responsible for the internal Q A system in individual university; IQAC is established following an IQAC manual set by the UGC. IQAC arranged seminars, workshops together with teachers and management to update curriculum, teaching-learning process, assessment, evaluation process, academic

environment, job environment, transparency in management to enhance the quality of higher education institutes. The Q A system is completely participatory and consultative. The curriculum of various programs will be upgraded in consultation with the higher education community and stakeholders. The Q A system will be reviewed and made responsive and emerging needs continuously. The preferred activity established Bangladesh Research and Education Network (BdREN).

1.1.2. Bangladesh Accreditation Council

Bangladesh Accreditation Council is established in 2017 by the Government of Bangladesh and has been functioning from 2019. Bangladesh Accreditation Council (BAC) is an autonomous government organization responsible to accredit higher education institutes and academic program offering entities for quality assurance for achieving international recognition. Bangladesh Accreditation Council monitor and assess quality assurance of HEIs and issue accreditation certificate or not in according their existing standards of higher education institutions. Facilitate the implementation of quality assurance mechanism and national qualifications framework at the higher education institutions (HEIs) and program levels. Provide standards, guidelines and code of best practice to the higher education institutions (HEIs) for self-assessment and developing internal quality assurance culture. Provide advisory services to the HEIs or program offering entities to prepare them for accreditation; facilitate the adoption of quality assurance standards by the HEIs and program offering entities. Conduct external quality assessment of HEIs and academic programs and provide feedback for further improvement and accreditation. Conduct training, workshop, conference to motivate the higher education community towards accreditation and capacity building. Conduct or commission research on quality assurance and appropriateness of the standards in higher education. Maintain liaison and cooperation with credible international quality assurance networks and accreditation bodies in higher education.

1.1.3. Institutes of Engineers Bangladesh

Institute of Engineers Bangladesh (IEB) is a professional organization of engineers in Bangladesh. Their aim is to enhance and maintain the quality of professional skill of engineers of Bangladesh. Famous and highly qualified engineers of the country are the board members of IEB. According to IEB's constitution, the Board of Accreditation for Engineering and Technical Education (BAETE) conduct the accreditation process and ensure the quality of Engineering programs offered by higher educational institutions in Bangladesh. BAETE organize seminar workshops for university academics and authority to update the information for engineering curriculum.

1.1.4. Bangladesh Medical and Dental Council

Bangladesh Medical and Dental Council (BMDC) is a statutory body with the re-

sponsibility of establishing and maintaining high standard of medical education and also recognition of medical qualification in the country.

1.1.5. Pharmacy Council of Bangladesh

Pharmacy Council of Bangladesh (PCB) is the professional organization established under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare as a regulatory body for Pharmacy education and profession. This council is responsible for maintaining quality education on Pharmaceutical industries and recognition of qualification of Pharmacists.

1.1.6. Bangladesh Bar Council

Bangladesh Bar Council is a statutory Autonomous body of the Government under Law Division of Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary. This body is responsible for promoting legal education in Bangladesh and recognition of qualification of law graduates.

1.2. World Perspectives on Quality Assurance

Organizing of quality assurance system in universities is a global necessity. The USA and European countries started this process long ago. In Asia, it is almost a new concept. Universities and HEIs whole over the world have been established institutional quality assurance cells maintaining institutional system and documentation. Then Quality Assurance in universities and HEIs has become an increasing and important trend globally. Authority of HEIs is more careful about the performance of graduates that ability to meet the global requirements. Consequently to create cooperation and develop the quality of education some regional Quality Assurance Networks have been organized. Asia-Pacific Quality Networks (APQN), Q A Network for African Higher Education (Afri Q A N), Arabs Network for Q A in HE (ANQAHE), Caribbean Area Network for Q A in Tertiary Education (CANQATE), European Association for Q A in Higher Education (ENQA) have been organized. International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) was established in 1991 with more than 200 Quality Assurance Agencies. The World Bank and UNESCO organized a Collaboration that started the Global Initiatives for Quality Assurance Capacity (G I Q A C) to improve the evolution of quality assurance in higher education institutions in the developing countries. Bangladesh Accreditation Council is an intermediate member of Asia Pacific Quality Network. Bangladesh has successfully arranged the APQN Conference 2023 at Dhaka by American International University of Bangladesh (a Private University).

1.3. Quality Assurance in Practice

Graduates are the outcomes of the higher educational institutes. Graduates coming out from universities should be equipped with requisite qualifications, atti-

tude and skills that the country and global society need for achieving higher socioeconomic growth and prosperity. Quality Assurance in higher education means the active mechanism to achieve academic standards, i.e. the standard level of academic achievement attained by the graduates coming out from universities. This notion of quality education has been fixed by David Woodhouse, “education includes”. To achieve these qualities the prerequisite qualities should be as follows.

Students should be committed and interested to explore their potentials using learning opportunities. Educational environment should be healthy, safe, protective and gender-sensitive with adequate resources and facilities and teachers-students relationship should be maintained. Learning content should be relevant curricula and materials for the acquisition of basic skills, attitude, patriotism and knowledge suitable for life. Teaching-Learning process should be effective and student oriented and need meaningful assessment or evaluation of learning outcomes. Teacher’s qualification, performance, dedication, evaluation and development. Graduate’s knowledge, skills, attitudes and values are linked to national goals, education and participation in society. The Q A process includes designing academic programs with specific I LO’s strategies, implementation and systematic review of the process to measure the effectiveness and continuous improvement.

2. Literature Review

[Kumaravelu and Suresh \(2019\)](#) found that the quality issue has become one of the most significant factors for success and survival of organizations. [Dill \(2010\)](#), identified quality assurance in higher education as graduate’s learning outcomes having specific levels of knowledge, skills and abilities that graduates achieved. [Suresh and Kumaravelu \(2017\)](#) stated that quality of higher education becomes an important issue for all developing countries for its economic growth due to competitive job market. [Williams & Harvey \(2023\)](#) stated that since the 1980s quality assurance in higher education has grown dramatically, has come to affect every level of the sector and has become an accepted and integral part of academic life. [Islam & Uddin \(2019\)](#) stated that there is a considerable mismatch between demand and supply of lab our in Bangladesh; as a result corporations are hiring expert workers from abroad. More than 2 lac foreign people have been doing job in shortage of skilled workers in the country. [Gulenur, Md. Tota Miah, Md. Ashraful Islam, Md. Nahid Hasan \(2022\)](#) stated that among the jobless youths 46% are university graduates in 2020 and 47% are graduates in 2021 in Bangladesh. [Yudkevich et al. \(2024\)](#) stated that Academic Excellence Initiatives are state-funded initiatives that support organizationally and financially. They also stated that Academic excellence is a fundamental principle for all stakeholders of Higher Education.

[Seyfried, Pohlenz, \(2018\)](#) showed that support by higher education institutions’ higher management and cooperation with other education institutions are

relevant preconditions for larger perceived degrees of quality assurance effectiveness. Ryan (2005) found that quality of educational programs meets local and global standards simultaneously has become a great challenge in many countries, so need emerges for cooperation of Q A agencies and acceptance of quality assurance re-view decisions. Sultana (2019) claimed that absence of quality education in our curriculum does not focus on value-based learning, as a result graduates are in lack of skills to meet the job market. The Daily Star, Dhaka (2019) reported that National University Graduates of Bangladesh lagging behind in Job Market. Welsh and Dey, (2002) stated that the main change of quality assurance in the USA is the accreditation process is centered on student learning outcomes that acceptable level of student performance according to standard and performance measures guided by the accreditation agency of USA.

Present Study

In this present study, we found that campus violence especially in public universities is an obstacle for quality higher education in the country. In this study, it is found that job market demand based learning is a necessity for our students. The teacher's politics in public universities are a problem for quality assurance in higher education. In this global era, tertiary education must be of global standard. Government, Higher Education institutions, Students and their families should work together to improve the quality of education. Student's quality should be checked before admission into undergraduate program.

Government has the responsibility to keep learners-friendly environment in every educational institute of the country. Government should take necessary measure to solve every inequity in the society tactfully to avoid violence in the campuses. Otherwise antigovernment party and geographically nearby foreign country can get opportunity to make unrest in the society to make the country weak by telecasting wrong or false information (proved by Fake News Scanner) via social media. Teacher's recruitment should be fare and competence. And others' job markets should be competitive and with fair-selection process. Government agencies should monitor and assess the quality of HEIs and Program offering entity properly and take necessary steps to up-to-date the quality. It should be a continuous process. Universities, B A C and UGC should be connected with global network of Quality Assurance Organizations. Academic competition among the universities should be arranged to improve the quality of higher education. Government agencies should monitor the educational environment of the campuses and take necessary steps to keep campuses violence free and secured for all students and teachers.

There should be coordination among the industries and higher educational institutions to keep the necessary update of curriculum of the program offering entity as required by the industries. Seminar, workshops should be organized to share the new idea and knowledge among industries and academia to update the

curriculum of various programs of HEIs. Guest teachers from the industries can be arranged for students for some new courses or practical field work issue. Such as in the University of Asia Pacific there are some external guest teachers to teach students on practical field issues in Bangladesh. Teacher's and other staff service rules should be maintained fairly. As quality assurance is a global issue, it cannot be achieved by individual university or by individual unit of a university. It must be a combined effort of all units related with human resource development.

External Q A competent internal Q A system for improved and better performance. Everybody involved in an institution must be responsible and accountable to develop the quality culture for implementation of internal QA mechanism. Government should introduce elements of Performance agreements in the funding mechanisms for the higher education institutions. To win in competition in globalized economy, the leading countries emphasize increasingly on knowledge, creativity and technical innovation. Individual universities have possessed policies and practices framed to assure the quality of education but higher education institutes have to follow a national policy structure formed by the state to assure the global standard of quality education. Such as Teaching Quality and Performance, Academic Policy, Academic Environment, Students prerequisite Quality, Acceptance of Changes by the Institutions, etc. There should be socio counselor in HEIs to provide counseling to needed students for their mental health. Training, seminar, workshops have to arrange time to time for teachers for their development of teaching capacity. Teachers and students should be encouraged to do research activities at HEIs to create new ideas and knowledge. The past and present status about higher education of this country has been discussed and analyzed in this article. Transparency and accountability of HEIs and Government management are must to create academic environment. Government, university teachers, industries, students and their families should work together to improve the quality of education.

Discipline in financial sector of the country should be maintained to create new jobs in both private and public sectors. We should think that the cause of joblessness is not only for want of quality higher education in the country. One cause also may be creating fewer new jobs in the job market due less investment in the country comparatively financial capacity of the country. One of the causes of July uprising in Bangladesh is joblessness among the graduates due to indiscipline in the financial market. So, government should have good economic policies and implementation to enhance the job markets to develop the country.

3. Method

Secondary analysis research method is used carefully in this article for observations and detailed documentation of a phenomenon of interest. This study is

based on secondary data and information source. Data and information are collected from scholarly published articles and reports of relevant organizations. Such as BBS report on Labour force survey 2016-17, 2020-21, Webometrics ranks 30000 institutions, QS ranking in 2023, Operational Manual of UGC of Bangladesh, Bangladesh Accreditation Act 2017 etc. Results are explained in description process as well as tabular and graphical form. Software M S Excel is used to represent the data into graphical form.

4. Findings

After collection of secondary data and information from various sources, it is found that Government of Bangladesh realized the necessity of quality assurance in higher education and took some steps to enhance the quality of higher education with the help of World Bank. As a result, the HEQEP was established in 2009, QA unit in the UGC and IQACs were established in every university with the help of World Bank and after successful completion of tenure IQAC are established in every university of Bangladesh in their own capacity. The UGC successfully established Bangladesh Research and Education Network (BdREN). Outcome Based Education curriculum has been developed under the guidance of UGC. Bangladesh Accreditation Council is established in 2017. Bangladesh Accreditation Council monitor and assess quality assurance of HEIs and issue accreditation certificate or not in according to their existing standards of higher education in the universities. Now all universities of the country are aware about the standard of quality of education.

Partial statements of Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics Report on Labour force Survey 2016-17 and 2020-21 are given in **Table 1**.

Figure 1 shows the unemployment rate had been increasing during 2015-2021 in the country.

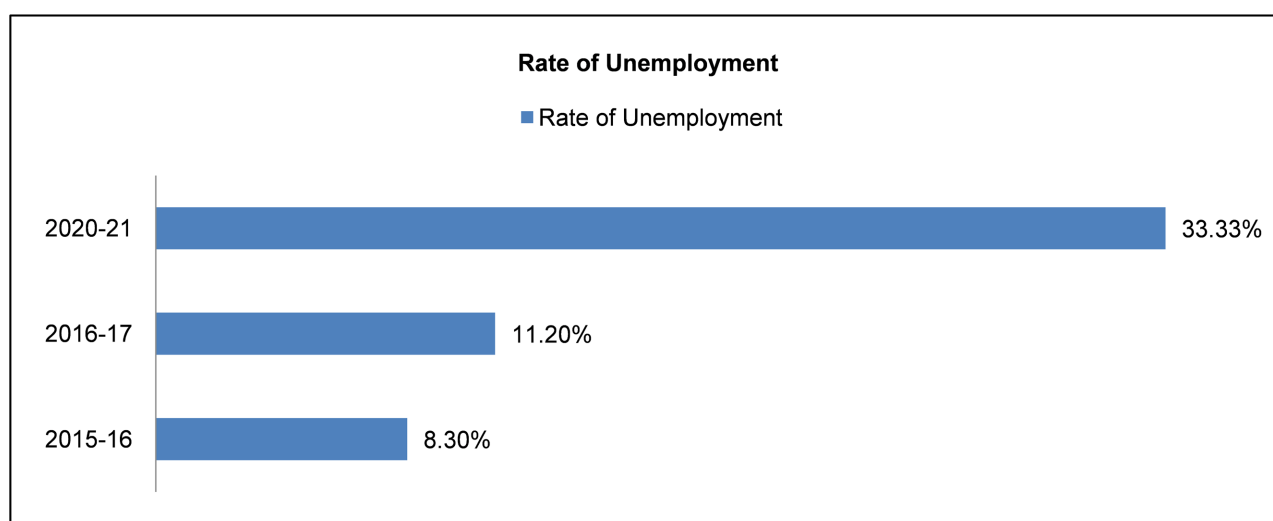


Figure 1. Graphical representation of unemployment rate of graduates of Bangladesh.

Table 1. The percentage of unemployment of graduates in Bangladesh.

Year	Rate of unemployment of graduates
2015-16	8.30%
2016-17	11.20%
2020-21	33.33%

Source: BBS report on Labour force Survey 2016-17 and 2020-21.

5. Result and Discussion

The results of **Table 1** show that the unemployment rate had been increasing among graduate youths in this country from 2015 to 2021. The main reasons for unemployment explored as the lack of motivation among graduates, their confidence level is very low, poor skill development initiatives from government, irrelevant degrees, attraction towards BCS/government sector job with colonial mindset, the gap between industry and universities, lack of quality education, unrest in campuses, and less investment in private sector comparison to the capacity. I.e. private job market etc. **Table 2** shows that only seven universities of Bangladesh can include in top 100 universities in the South Asia while there are 166 universities in Bangladesh. Here the quantity is more than enough but the quality is very poor. Only University of Dhaka can ranked at 1773 among 2000 universities in world ranking of 2023. The international rankings of Bangladeshi universities are in decreasing trend during 2022-2023.

Table 2. Bangladeshi Universities in the Ranking of 100 universities of South Asia in 2022.

Sl. no.	South Asian Rank	World Rank	Name of University	Excellence Rank
1	34	1468	University of Dhaka, Dhaka	1287
2	36	1476	Shahjalal University of Science & Technology Sylhet	2147
3	38	1483	Bangladesh University of Engineering & Technology Dhaka	1556
4	45	1593	Rajshahi University Rajshahi	1920
5	57	1750	North South University Dhaka	2210
6	91	2146	Jahangirnagar University Savar Dhaka	1597
7	98	2218	BRAC University Dhaka	2454

Source: South Asia Ranking web of Universities: Webometrics ranks 30,000 institutions.

Table 3 shows that only 25 universities of Bangladesh ranked within 3835 universities of the world in 2022 where as there are 166 universities in the country.

Table 4 shows that only 24 universities of Bangladesh could take place in QS Ranking in 2023 in Asia among 850 universities of Asia.

Table 3. Bangladeshi Universities in the Ranking in 2022.

National Rank	World Rank	Name of University
1	1468	University of Dhaka, Dhaka
2	1476	Shahjalal University of Science & Technology Sylhet
3	1483	Bangladesh University of Engineering & Technology Dhaka
4	1593	Rajshahi University Rajshahi
5	1750	North South University Dhaka
6	2146	Jahangirnagar University Savar
7	2218	BRAC University Dhaka
8	2319	Bangladesh Agricultural University
9	2481	University of Chittagong
10	2481	Daffodil International University
11	2760	Noakhali University of Science and Technology
12	2865	Khulna University
13	2952	Khulna University of Engineering & Technology
14	3095	Independent University Bangladesh
15	3101	Rajshahi University of Engineering and Technology
16	3261	Chittagong University of Engineering and Technology
17	3282	East West University Bangladesh
18	3399	Jagannath University Dhaka
19	3448	Mawlana Bhasani Science & Technology University
20	3474	Jessore University of Science & Technology
21	3537	Ahsanullah University of Science & Technology
22	3541	American International University Bangladesh
23	3603	Int. Islamic University Chittagong
24	3773	BSMR Agricultural University
25	3835	Dhaka University of Engineering and Technology

Source: Ranking web of Universities: Webometrics ranks 30,000 institutions.

Table 4. Bangladeshi Universities in the QS Ranking in 2023 in Asia.

National Rank	Asian Rank	Name of University
1	140	University of Dhaka, Dhaka
2	187	Bangladesh University of Engineering & Technology Dhaka
3	191	North South University Dhaka
4	281	BRAC University Dhaka
5	351	Dhaka University of Engineering and Technology
6	353	Jahangirnagar University Dhaka
7	404	Daffodil International University Savar Dhaka
8	412	Shahjalal University of Science & Technology Sylhet
9	451	CUET Chittagong
10	453	East West University Dhaka
11	455	Islamic University of Technology Gazipur Bangladesh
12	458	Rajshahi University Rajshahi
13	501	Khulna University of Engineering and Technology Khulna
14	503	RUET Rajshahi
15	551	Ahsanullah University of Science & Technology
16	555	Independent University Bangladesh
17	558	IUBAT Dhaka Bangladesh
18	559	Jeshore University of Science & Technology Bangladesh
19	567	Stamford University Dhaka
20	603	Khulna University Khulna
21	610	United International University Dhaka
22	772	American International University Bangladesh Dhaka
23	783	University of Asia and Pacific Dhaka
24	850	ULAB Dhaka

Source: QS ranking web of Universities/institutions-2023.

In this study, it is found that job market demand based learning is necessary for our students. In this global era, tertiary education must be of global standard. Government, Higher Education institutions, Industries, Students and their families should work together to improve the quality of higher education in the country. Industries can provide opportunities of internship for students and experienced entrepreneurs can share their new idea of course materials needed for in-

dustries. Seminars and workshops can be organized together with industries and academia to share new technology. All of us must be unite to enhance the quality of education up to global standard continuously. Every individual unit is helpful if they execute their duties and responsibilities properly. It is hopeful to us that GoB has realized and taken strong steps to enhance the quality of higher education up to global standard. But still now there are many problems and challenges. Campus violence in the Public Universities becomes harmful for peaceful educational environment. Students and teachers cannot do study without fear in the campus. Government of Bangladesh (GoB) can remove these problems only by 1) Developing a quality culture and ensuring good practice in Higher Education Institutions, 2) Establishment of quality assurance system in higher education considering global concern and 3) A well-functioning quality assurance system can upgrade the quality of higher education in Bangladesh with ambitions and people's confidence at national and global level. The IQAC is responsible to assess the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance system of every qualified university.

Teachers-students politics in the campuses is a barrier on quality of higher education in Bangladesh. Academic environment is an important issue here which to be solved by the government, teachers, students and all party politicians all together.

There are scopes to do research in this field to enhance the quality higher education continuously.

6. Conclusion

Government management should be impartial and transparence to create teaching-learning-friendly environment in Higher Education Institutions. Students should be committed and interested to explore their potentials using learning opportunities. Higher education must be a global standard in this global era. Government agencies have to monitor and assess the quality of education in HEIs. Transparency and accountability of HEIs and Government's governance create academic friendly environment and create new jobs in the country. Seminar and workshops should be organized to share the new idea and knowledge among industries and academia to update the curriculum of various programs of HEIs. Guest teachers from the industries can be arranged for students for some new courses. Government should have good economic policies and implementation to enhance the job markets to develop the country.

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Conflicts of Interest

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