Chapter 40

Service Quality and Quality Assurance in Higher Education:
A Case of Bangladesh

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ABSTRACT

Quality higher education is considered as one of the major elements that promises sustainable economic and social development of the developing countries of the world. The higher education in Bangladesh has experienced remarkable transformations in the recent years. There are two types of universities in Bangladesh. One is public and other is private university. The present study, by reviewing and analyzing the current structure and situation of quality of the higher educational institutions of the country, attempts to examine the service quality of both public and private universities and further attempts to scrutinize quality assurance questions of higher education. The findings of the study indicate that there is a need for improving service quality in both private and public universities. This study further stresses that effective learning environment, rules and regulations for improving service quality and quality assurance in both private and public universities of the country is very much necessary.

INTRODUCTION

The quality of higher education entails priority concern from researchers, policy-makers, academics, and international agencies worldwide. With the wide spread and unplanned growth of higher educational institutions in the developing countries, the matter of quality of the educational institutions is frequently

raised by the academics and researchers (Ehsan, 2008). The developing countries of the world are grappling with lack of quality and relevance regarding their higher education services (Lim, 1999). Although higher education sector of Bangladesh has experienced noteworthy transformations in the recent years, it is often alleged that the quality of higher education of the country is not up to mark (Ahmed, 2013; Masum, 2008). There exists a dearth of quality in higher education of the country. Despite the efforts given by the Bangladesh government for the development of tertiary education, higher education system is still remaining far behind to come up to the international standards (Alam, 2009).

The term quality has diverse meaning. The term is derived from Latin word "quails" which means "what sort of" (The Latin Dictionary, 2016). The term has been defined from different perspectives and it has different meanings depending on the perception of an individual (Tapiero, 1996). Consequently, the term "quality" is contested (Barnett, 1994). The term quality is sometimes expressed as a "slippery concept" (Pfeffer & Coote, 1991) as the meaning of the term changes according to one's point of view. It may be agreed that quality is by nature dynamic. The concept of quality is reliant on judgments and understanding of the stakeholders. Quality has been defined as "value" (Feigenbaum, 1951), "defect avoidance" (Crosby, 1984) and "meeting and/or exceeding customers expectations" (Parasuramanet al., 1985). Koslowski III (2005) notes that quality may be seen as a process whereby participants of organization value their work as precious, measurable and improvable. Quality may have one or more meanings in case of education. The meanings depend on a particular stakeholder and the intentions and objectives of the educational institutions. Quality education actually means "excellence in education" (Peters and Waterman, 1982). It is also defined from the perspective of meeting customers' expectations of education (Parasuraman et al., 1985).It is further defined as conformance of education output to premeditated goals, necessities and qualifications (Crosby, 1979). Quality of education is also seen as non-defective education system (Crosby, 1979). In fact, quality education is a nature of education which congregates fineness in education (Peters & Waterman, 1982). It is considered as a kind of education which fulfills customer's aspiration and expectation. Actually, the notion of quality education diverges and it brings forth problems in formulating a single, all-inclusive definition.

Higher education has deep connections with employability of the university graduates. The questions of employability are faced by two deep-seated challenges: access to education and its quality standards (Huq & Huque, 2014). The higher education institutions have altered perceptibly over the past decade and these changes have resulted from surfacing of the growth of private markets (Knight, 1999). These transformations have become a focal point of attention for the researchers and policy makers of the developing countries (Hendel & Lewis, 2005).With the widespread and unplanned growth of higher educational institutions in the developing countries, the matter of quality of the higher educational institutions are frequently raised by the academics and researchers (Ehsan, 2008).

Sahney et al. (2002) define total quality management in education as a nature of education which includes its domain in the quality of inputs in the form of student, faculty, support staff and infrastructure. The educational quality fundamentally is a process in the form of learning and teaching activity and the quality of outputs. These outputs are the students who are enlightened with formal education. The competence of faculties, administrative staffs, management and the quality of academic programs, infrastructure are some important factors of the internal competence of the systems of the educational institutions. The higher educational institutions strive for and center on raising the internal efficiency of the educational institutions. The enhancement of educational quality entails improvement of curricula and methods, line of attacks, quality of teachers, institutional governance and so on. It is also pointed out that the concept of quality education varies among cultures and societies (Lynch & Baker, 2005).

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