

Role of Accreditation Process and Regional Ranking System of Universities in Asia: With Special Reference to Bangladesh

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Abstract

It has been observed by the academicians that accreditation and ranking system at Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) enhance educational quality management system by improving the effectiveness of institutions and ensuring that institutions meet the established benchmark. The paper describes the necessity of accreditation and ranking system in Bangladesh and emphasizes the necessity of regional ranking system in Asia for assuring the quality of higher education in the region. In 2016, Bangladesh Government approved the ‘The Bangladesh Accreditation Council Act, 2016’ with a view to ensuring standards of higher education institutes (HEIs) both public and private in the country. The research paper discusses the positive effect of Bangladesh Accreditation Council Act in a vigorous way. The paper also tries to show, ‘how the university rankings have gained a considerable importance not only among the academia but also amongst students, parents, industry and businesses’. It also stress on establishing Asian University Ranking like QS World University Rankings, Times Higher Education World University Rankings.

Key words: Accreditation, ranking system, higher education institutes, Bangladesh Accreditation Council Act, Asian university ranking

Introduction

Accreditation and ranking system at Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) enhance educational quality management system by improving the effectiveness of institutions and ensuring that institutions meet the established benchmark.

Accreditation enhances educational quality by improving the effectiveness of institutions and ensuring that institutions meet the established standards. It harmonizes the shared values and practices among diverse institutions. Therefore, accreditation relies on integrity, thoughtful judgment, rigorous application of requirements, and trust. It provides an assessment of an institution's effectiveness in the fulfillment of its mission, its compliance with the requirements of its accrediting body, and its continuing efforts to enhance the quality of student learning.

According to the Institutional Quality Assurance Cell Operations Manual (Second Edition), published by HEQEP, UGC Bangladesh, accreditation is the process by which government or private agency evaluates the quality of a higher education institution as a whole or a specific study program in order to formally recognize it as having met certain predetermined minimal criteria or standards along with assessment. Assessment is also necessary in order to validate a formal accreditation decision, but it does not necessarily lead to an accreditation outcome. It also means a technically designed process for evaluating student learning outcomes and for improving student learning and development as well as teaching effectiveness.

University Rankings

University ranking basically focus on determining definitive list of the world's best universities, evaluates across teaching, research, international outlook, reputation and more. In general, data are trusted by governments and universities and are a vital resource for students, helping them choose where to study. Rankings of higher education institutions are judged by various parameters. Different ranking bodies use different parameters to arrive at their result. For example, the Shanghai ranking considers how many noble laureates have a particular university produced. Times Higher Education while compiling their ranking results consider teaching (the learning environment); research (volume, income and reputation); citations (research influence); international outlook (staff, students and research); industry income (knowledge transfer). Institutions interested to be considered for ranking provide the necessary data for use in the ranking.

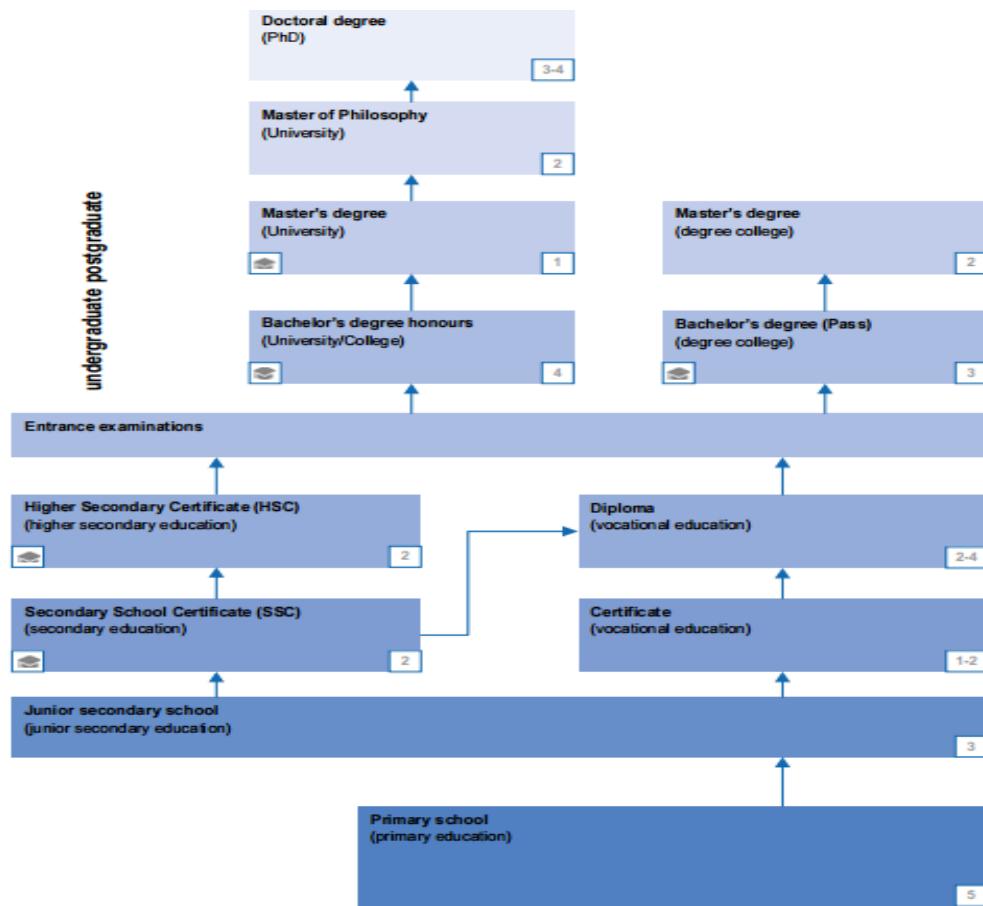
During recent years, university rankings have gained a considerable importance not only among the academia but also amongst students, parents, industry and businesses. Common stakeholders, the students and their parents, may not be aware of the intricacies of ranking processes and elements / criteria of rankings but they are definitely keen to know the position of the University of their Interest in the ranking lists.

Some ranking system of the universities

- QS (Quacquarelli Symondds) World University Ranking
- Times Higher Education World University Ranking
- Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU – often referred to as the “Shanghai Jiao Tong”)

- Economist's ranking of MBA programmes
- CWTS Leiden Ranking
- US News and World Views
- Eduvirsal
- G-Factor
- Leiden Ranking
- World Reports
- Reuters
- Round University Ranking (Moscow)
- Webometrics Ranking
- UniRank

Education system in Bangladesh



Source: Education system Bangladesh | EP-Nuffic | 1st edition October 2012 | version 1, January 2012

Essence of Accreditation in HEIs

Basically, Accreditation is a process that gives the HEIs or a program recognition certificate to indicate that an institution does possess specific criteria of quality education. So, accreditation in

HEIs or at program level is the recognition that a particular HEI has reached a definite required standard (Hamdatu, *et al*, 2013).

Attending an accredited institution of higher learning ensures that the educational programs and outcomes offered by the institution meet the highest standards. Institutions seek accreditation as a means to validate the quality of the programs and services they provide. The higher education system of United States of America is unique because of its confidence on accreditation to make sure quality. Accredited universities maintain a high level of transparency in their operations and offer learners or students a diverse range of student services that protect student rights, facilitate in advancement of student success, and result in well educated and qualified graduates.

There are two major functions of accreditation are: 1) assisting prospective students in identifying acceptable institutions and 2) assisting institutions in determining the acceptability of transfer credits.

Regional Accreditation of HEIs in South Asian Countries

Bhutan

Bhutan Accreditation Council (BAC) is the national accrediting agency, which shall accredit institutions of higher learning in Bhutan.

India

A set of professional councils established by statute and other autonomous coordinative or regulatory bodies established or recognized by the University Grants Commission of India. “The National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) is an autonomous body established by the University Grants Commission (UGC) of India to assess and accredit institutions of higher education in the country. It is an outcome of the recommendations of the National Policy in Education (1986) that laid special emphasis on upholding the quality of higher education in India.

Nepal

The University Grants Commission (UGC) has launched the Quality Assurance and Accreditation (QAA) program as an important aspect of reform in higher education in Nepal. Accordingly, a Quality Assurance and Accreditation Committee (QAAC) has been formed for the development and implementation of QAA activities in higher education in Nepal in 2007.

Sri Lanka

The University Grants Commission of Sri Lanka empowered by Section 4(2) of the Universities Act No. 16 of 1978, as and when required appoints Standing Committees for specific purposes,. As such Sri Lanka formed Standing Committee on Quality Assurance and Accreditation which functions as the advisory body to UGC - QAAC and vigorously pursue/promote QA programmes according to universities.

Initiative of Bangladesh

The Ministry of Education of Bangladesh and University Grants Commission of Bangladesh have perceived the essence of accreditation both institutional and program level of higher education institutions of Bangladesh and took laudable initiatives till to date. Accreditation Council is considered to be essential to ensure the quality improvement of our university graduates to make them capable of competing with others in global arena.

As per provision 38 of the Private University Act 2010, the government is going to enact the ‘Accreditation Council Law, 2016’ to ensure the standard of higher education in both public and private institutions. This law will help establish an independent and autonomous accreditation council to allow or disallow universities to get accredited with higher educational institutions after scrutinizing their performance. The accreditation council would be responsible for ensuring educational quality, giving accreditation to institutions of higher education, vetting their curriculum and activities, forming separate accreditation committees for each discipline, and cancelling the accreditation if the need arises. The council would be accountable to the government for its activities. The University Grants Commission (UGC) would formulate and the government would approve the Bangladesh National Qualification Framework to ensure academic quality.

The 13-member council will consist of a chairman, four full-time members as well as eight part time members. The standard of any university will depend on the certification of the council and no university can offer certificates of higher education without the approval of the council. The accreditation of the educational institution will be scrapped if it misinforms or conceals information from the council.

Proposed Asian University Ranking

The expanding diversity in rating methodologies of each parameter in the diversified fields of education domain gives the urgency of introducing regional ranking body. In view to launch university ranking in Asian region, an initiative can be taken to monitor and review the status of all Asian universities to ensure the quality in HEIs.

Conclusions

The most important factor is the continuous improvement of quality of research, teaching and learning in our universities which should be given top priority by the government as well as the university authorities. There are many good researchers in both public and private universities of Bangladesh and those researchers should be tagged with industry to facilitate the advancement of industry-academia alliances. We need to improve the culture of sharing of the research activities of the researchers with other researchers, experts and their colleagues as well. University Grants Commission of Bangladesh should put more emphasis on this issue. Some people in the higher education sector need to be in the role of ‘movers and shakers’ the global visibility is bound to come. Universities should not compete only with the world top raked universities but also should

compete within themselves for better performance and better people oriented results. University Grants Commission along with all relevant stakeholders should work vigorously. For ensuring quality higher education in Asian region, we may now opt for taking initiative in establishing Asian Higher Education Ranking System.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ARWU	Academic Ranking of World Universities
BAC	Bangladesh Accreditation Council
BAC	Bhutan Accreditation Council
CWTS	Centrum voor Wetenschap en Technologische Studies
HEI	Higher Education Institutes
HEQEP	Higher Education Quality Enhancement Project
NAAC	National Assessment and Accreditation Council
QAA	Quality Assurance and Accreditation
QAAC	Quality Assurance and Accreditation Committee
QS	Quacquarelli Symondss
UGC	University Grants Commission