University Grants Commission of Bangladesh
Higher Education Quality Enhancement Project
Quality Assurance Unit

Report on Study Visit of QA Unit in Thailand and Philippines

Quality Assurance Unit (QAU) within the UGC's organizational structure was created to achieve excellence in higher education through establishing Quality Assurance Mechanism at national and university levels. It needs to be mentioned that the quality assurance in higher education is a very new concept in Bangladesh. To fulfill the mandate of the QAU, it must have deeper knowledge and technical know how about the QA mechanisms and implementation process. It was very important to arrange a study tour for the members of QAU to visit some selected countries and renowned universities of those countries that have well-functioning QA mechanism and internal QA system. Therefore, a study visit was arranged in Thailand and Philippines.

Major Objectives of the Study Visit

- To understand the strategic roles of the government, apex bodies and agencies responsible to ensure QA in HEI;
- Familiarity with the critical issues and management of those issues on the way to introduce quality assurance system and develop quality culture within the universities;
- Groundwork for developing meaningful exchange program with the higher education commission and QA agencies of Thailand and Philippines.

Members of the Study Visit Team
1. Professor Dr. AbulHashem, Member of UGC (visited Philippines only)
2. Professor Dr. Mesbahuddin Ahmed, Head of QAU, UGC
3. Professor Dr. Sanjoy Kumar Adhikary, QA Specialist, QAU, UGC
4. Professor Dr. S. M. Kabir QA Specialist, QAU, UGC
5. Mr.Jahirul Islam, Deputy Secretary, Ministry of Education

The team visited the office of the Commission on Higher Education, Accreditation Agency and some universities having well-established internal QA system in place. The organizations visited and the areas discussed during the study visit are mentioned below:

Bangkok, Thailand

Date & Time	Organizations Visited	Issues Discussed
March 30, 2015	Siam University	• Internal QA Process on Teaching and Learning • Strategies to Strength Research and Development in University • ICT Application for University Management including Internal QA System
March 31, 2015	Office of the Higher Education Commission (OHEC)	• Role and Responsibilities of OHEC • Strategic Roles of OHEC in ensuring QA in Higher Education
April 1, 2015	Asian Institute of Technology (AIT) Extension	• Attended the presentations of the IQAC Directors and Additional Directors of 13 universities of Bangladesh • Attended certificate awarding ceremony for the IQAC Directors and Additional Directors at the end of their training program
April 2, 2015	Office for National Education Standards and Quality Assessment (ONESQA)	• Role and Responsibility of ONESQA • QA System in Higher Education in Thailand • Introducing QA system and Developing culture within the university

Manila, Philippines

Date & Time	Organizations Visited	Issues Discussed
April 14, 2015	Philippine Commission on Higher Education (CHED) Ateneo de Manila University	Institutional Quality Assurance and Governance History, Issues and Challenges in Internal QA System management
April 15, 2015	Program organized by PAASCU at Hotel Century Park	• Final Presentations of Action Plans by IQAC Directors and Additional Directors of 13 universities of Bangladesh • Closing Ceremonies of the Training program for the IQAC Directors and additional Direcotrs
April 16, 2015	Philippine Accrediting Agency of Schools, Colleges and Universities (PAASCU)	• Overview of PAASCU • Significance of External QA and Internal QA
April 17, 2015	Philippine Accrediting Agency of Schools, Colleges and Universities (PAASCU)	• How to Set-up an Accrediting Agency: Guidelines of Good Practice for EQA • PAASCU Commission on Engineering, Computer Science and Technology

Major Observations and Learning from the Study Visit

1. Encouragement, policy supports and cooperation by the higher levels of government, commission on higher education and university authority played very critical role for establishing QA mechanism, setting standards and guidelines in particular, were clearly evident during the study visit.

2. Introducing Quality Assurance, developing quality culture are time consuming and outcome of continuous efforts. All the documents and mechanism for QA should be developed with reasonable cross examination considering many critical aspects and concerns of major

stakeholders for better implementation. It is not wise to develop and introduce anything for QA overnight. Slow and steady produce good result in QA at the end.

3. Negative attitude, resistance and existence of negative forces are common in implementing the QA mechanism and developing QA culture. But continuous efforts to develop awareness and motivation proved effective in team building ensuring the acceptance of QA practices minimizing the effect of negative forces. In such cases, effective leadership is very critical.

4. Independent and competent External Quality Assessment(EQA) agency is very critical to monitor the progress and state of QA practices at the university levels.

5. QA unit of the UGC should have the panel of experts and appoint the experts for external quality assessment at the universities.

6. Development of internal capacity in cooperation with overseas partners for external quality assessment is important.

7. Regular monitoring and guidance by the external quality assessment agency is very important to help the universities in IQA management and continuous improvement.

8. Regional and international networking is important to have the supports and cooperation for capacity building and recognition of QA practices

Outcomes of the Study Visit

*   Recognized QA experts and high officials of the organizations visited in Thailand and Philippines appreciated the quality assurance mechanism, manuals and guidelines developed by the quality assurance unit of the UGC. Such appreciation enhanced the confidence of the QA Unit to work on the QA in Bangladesh.

*   From the discussion with the high officials of the organizations mentioned, the visiting team members noted many technical aspects of introducing QA mechanism and quality standard at the national and university levels in these countries, which certainly would be very useful to work on QA in Bangladesh.

*   Such study visit developed a good relation with the organizations, particularly, OHEC and ONESQA of Thailand, CHED and PAASCU of Philippines. These organizations assured the visiting team that they will extend their cooperation and share expertise for capacity building of the QA unit of UGC of Bangladesh. Such commitment may lead to develop MoU with these organizations in future.

- It needs to mention that the organizations visited are very active players in developing regional and global QA network like INQAAHE, APQN etc. PAASCU is one of the leading accrediting and QA organizations in the world. Discussion with these organizations on the QA initiative in Bangladesh would communicate the message to the external world that Bangladesh took the quality assurance issue very seriously and working hard to meet the global standard in higher education. It would be very helpful for Bangladesh to have the international recognition of its higher education and QA practices. In addition, relations with these organizationswould help Bangladesh to be in the regional and international QA network in future.