

Improving Quality of University Education Sri Lanka: An Analysis of Quality Assurance Agency Reviews

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Knowledge economy demands a highly educated citizenry enabled by development of a strong system of education at all levels. It also requires institutions with the ability to discover new knowledge, develop innovative applications of these discoveries, and transfer them into the marketplace through entrepreneurial activities. Knowledge Economy ranking is the simple average of four sub-indexes: economic incentive and institutional regime, innovation and technological adoption, education and training and Information and Communications infrastructure. Out of 145 countries surveyed in 2012, Sri Lanka's ranking was 101, above all the other South Asian countries'. However, according to CISC Ranking Web, the best performing Sri Lankan University, University of Colombo's rank is 2135. Thus it is clear that Sri Lanka's future in the global knowledge economy in the 21st century depends critically on the country's intellectual and human capital, and on the quality of its universities.

Three recent initiatives: the IRQUE (Improving Relevance and Quality of University Education) Project, the QAA (Quality Assurance Agency) initiative under the University Grants Commission and the Distance Education Modernization Project (DEMP) under the Ministry of Higher Education were attempts to address the need to improve relevance and quality.

The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) was established in 2007 to review programmes of study offered by various departments of study (Subject reviews) and the quality of higher education institutions (Institutional Reviews). By 2015, QAA had completed 16 institutional reviews and 318 Subject reviews. The Institutional Reviews were of the 15 universities and the Gampaha Wickramarachchi Ayurveda Institute. All the institutions, except for South-Eastern University, University of Visual & Performing Arts and Eastern University (which received Limited Confidence) others received Confidence in the overall evaluation.

This paper presents an analysis of the institutional and subject reviews carried out by the QAA, University-wise and discipline-wise in order to get an overview of the quality of university education in Sri Lanka at present. This analysis will enable us to understand the strengths and weaknesses of the universities and their Faculties, so that future action can be planned to improve the quality of university education in Sri Lanka.

Keywords: *University education, Quality assurance agency, Quality assurance, Institutional review, Subject review*