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***Assessing Institutional Readiness to
Implement Quality Assurance Activities:
A Case Study of Tertiary Level Colleges in Bangladesh***

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BAC	Bangladesh Accreditation Council
BERA	British Educational Research Association
BNQF	Bangladesh National Qualifications Framework
CEDP	College Education Development Project
DSHE	Department of Secondary and Higher Education
FGD	Focus Group Discussions
HEQEP	Higher Education Quality Enhancement Project
HoD	Head of Department
HSC	Higher Secondary Certificate
IQAC	Institutional Quality Assurance Cells
MoE	Ministry of Education
NU	National University
OBE	Outcome-based education
PLC	Professional learning community
QA	Quality assurance
UGC	University Grants Commission

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The College education sector in Bangladesh supports many tertiary-level students. With 2,260 affiliated colleges, the National University has the largest number of students registered towards its degrees, estimated to be about 70% (2.94 million students) of Bangladesh's total tertiary-level student population. However, the sector in general and the National University-affiliated colleges face myriad challenges. Poor governance and management, poor quality staff and students, a lack of strategic vision and bad execution and weak accountability and monitoring systems are among the major challenges faced by these colleges. The dual reporting system – academic matters to the National University (NU) and operational matters to the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education (DSHE) – further amplifies the challenges faced by these institutions. With close to 66 percent of graduates unemployed, the future of these colleges and their graduates continues to be bleak.

Opportunity

In light of the above, the International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) commissioned a study to assess the institutional readiness of tertiary-level colleges affiliated with the National University to implement quality assurance activities. The study focused on two aspects when reviewing the readiness of these colleges: (1) the impact of the College Education Development Project (CEDP), a World Bank -funded training initiative of the Government of Bangladesh and (2) the impact of the Bangladesh Accreditation Council's quality assurance promotional activities among selected colleges. This mixed-method study shows numerous variables that impact institutional and individual readiness to implement quality assurance activities. Faculty members trained under the CEDP were on average more ready to implement QA activities than non-CEDP participants. Female staff (especially female leaders), experienced teachers, and Heads of Department displayed higher readiness to implement quality assurance than respondents on average. College leadership emerged as the primary factor which impacts institutional and individual readiness in implementing quality assurance activities. Apart from these, two other factors must be urgently addressed to increase the readiness of these colleges; dual authority and dual-level qualifications.

The Way Forward

The study shows a clear desire and overall readiness among faculty members to implement quality assurance activities. College authorities must transform these colleges internally with a clear vision and through a community of practice, building on existing readiness. The building blocks for the effective implementation of quality assurance activities are the resources (including processes and procedures) and opportunities. Finally, the fortitude to implement them consistently enables the desired change to materialise. However, this study shows that fundamental governance and management policies must first be reviewed to ensure sustainable quality assurance activities in these colleges. The Bangladesh Government should also consider external support and benchmarking for the formidable task of moving the college sector to the 21st century, thus ensuring quality and the best student experience.

1. INTRODUCTION

Bangladesh's higher education sector is a legacy of the British colonial education system and consists of universities, affiliated colleges and technical and vocational institutions. These institutions offer a mixture of general, science, technology and engineering, medical, agriculture, religious (madrasahs) and vocational education, mainly in the traditional mode, with a few online distance learning options. As of January 2023, there are 162 universities, of which 47 are public and 105 private. There are also about 3,196 colleges, of which 2,257 are affiliated with the National University (NU) and another 7 with the Dhaka University¹. The number of higher education students in Bangladesh doubled in the last decade, from 1.9 million in 2009 to 3.9 million in 2019, and much of the expansion was absorbed by the colleges (Rahman et al., 2019). In 2019, the NU-affiliated colleges had 2.94 million students or 69.6 percent of Bangladesh's total tertiary level enrolment (BANBEIS, 2019). Maintaining and enhancing the quality of education is challenging under such rapid change.

Spread over the entire country, the affiliated colleges are crucial to the national access agenda. The concept of affiliated colleges is a colonial legacy common in the South Asian higher education system. Unfortunately, the governance and management of these colleges in Bangladesh are largely based on historical blueprints. They have changed very little over time and thus cannot effectively meet the challenges of the 21st century's learners and society. The World Bank (2014) identifies five critical factors for the unsatisfactory state of affairs in the management and governance of these colleges; (1) internal and external management structure; (2) quality and management of academic staff; (3) politicisation of governance and management of NU and the affiliated colleges; (4) weak accountability and monitoring mechanisms; and (5) overall lack of strategic vision and planning.

In terms of the management structure, the sheer number of colleges affiliated with NU is one of the reasons for the dismal quality of education within the sector. In contrast to the 2,257 NU-affiliated colleges in Bangladesh, Nepal's University of Tribhuvan has 1,144 (Ministry of Education Nepal, 2020), while Delhi University in India has about 85 (Delhi University, 2021). The

¹ Personal communication, Registrar of the National University, 19 January 2023.

management and oversight of these affiliated colleges in Bangladesh are complicated, and NU is not adequately equipped to manage and ensure the quality of teaching and learning.

A total quality management system is lacking in the college sector. Quality Assurance (QA) is relatively new in Bangladesh's higher education sector, with the university sector adopting it in 2009. As of January 2023, there are 114 universities (43 public and 71 private) which have established Institutional Quality Assurance Cells (IQAC) as quality champions. These fall under the purview of the Bangladesh Accreditation Council (BAC) and the University Grants Commission (UGC). However, in the college sector, the idea of establishing IQACs was not well received as many felt that institutions had more fundamental challenges that needed to be addressed first. As a result, of the 54 colleges identified and briefed in 2019 for IQACs by BAC, only one has successfully established this unit.

Efforts to incorporate QA and management systems are often met with great resistance and cynicism. Thus, in 2016, the Government established the College Education Development Project² (CEDP) to strengthen the sector by improving the quality of instruction, educational leadership, and policies. This World Bank -funded project targets to train 6,280 college teachers and leaders from all over Bangladesh. However, this is just a drop in the ocean to enable any sustainable change to the quality of teaching and graduate employment. Officials know the need to reinvent the college system and that it has to start immediately.

In brief, the term 'Education in Crisis' is probably a good reflection of Bangladesh's tertiary college sector. A recent study by The Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (2021) indicates that 66 per cent of graduates from NU-affiliated colleges are unemployed. Moreover, this sector is poorly funded, lacks infrastructure, and has poor student and staff quality. The CEDP aims to upskill teachers, leaders, future leaders and policymakers to improve teaching-learning quality. Hence the pertinent question is whether CEDP is aligned with Bangladesh's quest to establish QA in the college sector. This question forms the foundation of this research project, entitled *Assessing Institutional Readiness to Implement Quality Assurance Activities: A Case Study of*

² The CEDP project is a capacity-building programme (the first of its kind for the college sector) administered by the National University of Bangladesh and the Ministry of Education targeting teachers and leaders from the National University Affiliated colleges across the country

Tertiary Level Colleges in Bangladesh. The primary objective of this study is to identify the institutional capacity and readiness of teachers and leaders trained under CEDP in supporting QA activities initiated by the Bangladesh Accreditation Council within tertiary-level colleges in Bangladesh. The study seeks to find the answer using the following research questions:

- To what extent has CEPD training prepared college leaders and teachers to support the implementation of QA activities in their colleges?
- Are there significant variations between teacher and leader participants in their readiness to support QA activities in their colleges?
- What are the present training gaps in QA which the Bangladesh Accreditation Council should remedy?

A quantitative survey of over 400 respondents and Focus Group Discussion interviews of over 40 college teachers and leaders and eight policymakers support this study. The findings indicate that while the training increases teacher readiness for implementing quality assurance activities, leaders' readiness for quality assurance is crucial and needs to be further developed (as a cautionary statement, it must be indicated from the onset that the numbers of leader-respondents were rather low). However, the finding spotlighted some fundamental issues surrounding implementing quality activities in the college sector that go beyond capacity-building training, which is discussed later.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 College Sector in Bangladesh

In Bangladesh, colleges operate under a dual authority system and offer dual-level qualifications. The academic jurisdiction falls under the NU, while the operational aspects, such as staff appointment and infrastructure, fall within the purview of the Department of Secondary and Higher Education (DSHE) and Secondary and Higher Education Division (SHED), Ministry of Education (MoE). The other duality complication lies with the fact that these affiliated colleges offer both higher secondary education and tertiary level qualification, thus further amplifying the current challenges. Furthermore, the offer of secondary education puts these colleges outside the purview of the University Grants Commission, the ultimate authority overseeing higher education

in Bangladesh, thus creating another dual mechanism concerning funding and quality maintenance. This 'dual duality' of the college operations and authority accentuates the concerns surrounding the quality of education provision, management and financing of these institutions and communication between agencies.

This bureaucratic complexity and rigidity are reflected in the extensive challenges faced by colleges that vary from budget constraints and acute lack of quality staffing to outdated curricula and a general lack of infrastructures such as internet connectivity and digital resources (World Bank, 2014; Rahman et al., 2019; Ehsan, 2021). The rapid growth in student numbers worsens the constraints. For example, DSHE centrally controls the recruitment of teachers, centralised recruitment is rigid and long delays in filling positions are common (Rahman et al., 2019). The college sector is estimated to have 70 percent of higher education students in Bangladesh but only 45 percent of teachers. Moreover, recruitment is based on generalised assessments on paper that do not capture critical skills in teaching. College graduates often continue as teachers at the same institution, even without specific pedagogy training (Ehsan, 2021).

Another challenge is that the centralised curricula are not aligned with industry needs (Ehsan, 2021). Teaching and assessment methods are often based on rote learning and memorisation, and there is a general failure in developing critical thinking, communication and soft skills. Professional development opportunities and in-service training are lacking (Rahman et al., 2019), and participation in training varies widely between colleges (Nakata et al., 2019). Training is often implemented with project funding, such as through the CEDP project. Nevertheless, these training efforts are still insufficient, given the vastness of the college sector. The challenges in the college sector are further intensified with an unenthused cadre of leaders who often are seen as political appointees rather than true academic champions.

The many challenges in the college sector are reflected in the unemployment rates of college graduates. In 2020 this was at a staggering 66 per cent (The Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies, 2021), a sharp rise from 46 percent in 2018 (Nakata et al., 2019). Thus, these affiliated colleges in Bangladesh now need to reinvent themselves and gain their position as serious and quality higher education providers to benefit society and the national economy. There are good in-country examples and policies to support the college sector in commencing the QA journey.

In the last decade, MOE and the University Grants Commission (UGC) successfully implemented the Higher Education Quality Enhancement Project (HEQEP) for universities with World Bank's support. The subsequent National Education Policy (2010) advocated for a rigorous application of certification standards for tertiary education, reducing teacher-student ratios and training teachers on pedagogical and subject knowledge. The Five Year Plan (2021-2025) increased the allocation towards improving quality education. The recent Strategic Plan for Higher Education in Bangladesh (2018-2030) called for a national QA and accreditation framework. It emphasised the creation of a quality teaching culture at tertiary education institutions. The establishment of a new accreditation council was to be the spring board for QA in higher education. Most recently, the Bangladesh Government approved in 2021 the Bangladesh National Qualifications Framework, with the purpose to help ensure quality and relevance in education and employability of graduates. The framework provides a harmonised quality assurance system for general education, technical-vocational education and higher education, assisting students to move readily between the different education sub-sectors and into the labour market (BNQF, 2021).

The Bangladesh Accreditation Council (BAC) evolved from HEQEP and is enforced through the Bangladesh Accreditation Council Act 2017. BAC was established in August 2018, became operational in August 2019, and started communicating with principals in late 2021. BAC has developed a self-assessment manual for individual programmes, which includes ten universal standards and 63 criteria which may be adapted to the needs of individual education institutions (BAC, n.d.). Participating education institutions establish an Institutional Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) to coordinate the introduction and implementation of QA. The HEQEP project brought universities under a general QA umbrella by establishing IQACs. As of 2018, 796 study programmes had been audited by the respective IQACs in the universities.

This QA approach has proven successful for the universities that implemented it, and in 2017 BAC was given the mandate to expand its activities to include the college sector within its remit. However, until the commencement of CEDP, there was no specific focus on uplifting the college sector or implementing QA activities. Thus, QA implementation is slow. Furthermore, college principals feel that there are other fundamental challenges, such as resources and infrastructure, that must be addressed before attention can be given to QA. For these stakeholders, the focus

remains on the lack of infrastructure and overcrowded classrooms (Nakata et al., 2019). As a result, BAC has an uphill task in motivating the colleges to establish IQAC as an enabling framework for QA. As a result, only one college established its IQAC in 2022. However, BAC is hopeful that more are established in 2023.

In brief, many entities and institutions, complex governance structures, and lack of management and leadership capacity, resources and infrastructure make it difficult to establish QA in the college sector. As a result, colleges lack the autonomy to make and implement key decisions regarding academic programmes, teacher recruitment and financial allocations that would improve education quality (Rahman et al., 2019). At the same time, the NU lacks the capabilities to provide academic oversight and technical support to the vast number of affiliated colleges (World Bank, 2014; Nakata et al., 2019). Therefore, urgent actions are required at all levels, from individual teacher training to improving management capacities and coordination between institutions.

2.2 Quality assurance readiness

Generally, it is noted that QA readiness is a readiness for change and is manageable (Holt, 2007a). The sources for readiness for change lie in the individual and their environment (Kotter, 1995; Mento, Jones, & Dirndorfer, 2002). Thus, readiness for change should be seen from the perspective of the process, context, content, individual and environment. Holt et al. (2007b) recognised five factors associated with change readiness, (a) confidence in one's capabilities of making the change (*self-efficacy*); (b) confidence that the change benefits the employee personally (*personal valence*); (c) recognition that the organisation's leadership supports the change (*senior leader support*); (d) confidence that the change leads to long-term benefits for the organisation (*organisational valence*); and (e) recognition of the need for change (*discrepancy*). These were translated into a questionnaire widely used since its publication across sectors. The original paper presenting the questionnaire has been cited over 1,700 times (July 2022).

Self-efficacy significantly affects individuals' readiness to change (Janah, 2021), motivation, and work performance. The CEDP targets building confidence in trainees to implement changes to classroom practice and bring about institutional change in their respective colleges. This aspect of

change readiness varies. For example, a study in Indonesia recorded that individual preparedness can be boosted by almost 60 percent and that readiness to change significantly impacts self-confidence (Emsza et al., 2016). An increase in self-confidence directly impacts employees' valence, thus ensuring the sustainability of the change cycle.

Senior leadership support is also crucial for change, for at the core of leadership are providing direction and exercising influence (Leithwood et al., 2004). Leaders must be transformational and want the change themselves if the organisation is deemed ready for change. Leaders' readiness for change significantly impacts employees' performance and readiness for change (Fullan, 2002, Asbari et al., 2021). Thus, this study included leaders' (senior and middle, Edward-Grooves et al., 2019) opinions on their readiness to change and an understanding of how CEDP training has impacted the leaders in their change agenda.

Organisational valence is another element considered critical in the readiness for change. It reflects the organisation's confidence that the change leads to long-term benefits for the stakeholders. Perhaps the most significant of all these factors is whether there is a recognition of the need for change among the respondents (Higgins et al., 2019). The need for change was raised in the survey and significantly in the subsequent FGDs.

Lastly, individual attributes also influence change readiness. Previous studies indicate that the relationship between readiness for change and demographic variables such as gender, age and general level of education is complex and context-dependent (Oreg et al., 2011). For example, gender, age, salary and education level influence readiness for change among public sector employees in India (Basheer & Sulphay, 2012) and on average, men in higher education in Indonesia perceived change more positively than women (Mardhatillah & Rahman, 2020). On the other hand, no gender-based differences in readiness were found in the higher education sector in Iraq (Al-Abrow & Abrishamkar, 2013). Gender and age did not influence readiness at a public sector organisation in another unnamed developing country (Shah, 2011). These results required an inquiry into the subject matter in Bangladesh, as the society is patriarchal and hierarchical. Thus, gender, age, level of education, job designation and leadership role were included as independent variables in the survey to assess their impact on readiness to implement QA

activities. In brief, the readiness to implement QA is the readiness for change. Change can be top-down, bottom-up or both (Lupton, 1991).

2.3 Change leadership and management

Top-down, sector-level changes that aim at introducing comprehensive, strategic improvements can succeed if they gain support at lower implementing levels (Schermerhorn & Wright, 2007). Given the extensive sector and the challenges in the NU-affiliated colleges, an integrated approach to change and change management may be the best way forward. Integrated change leadership draws from the advantages of top-down and bottom-up change processes to help achieve lasting change. Top-down processes are needed to break up traditional behaviour patterns and implement difficult adjustments, such as those requiring redistribution of financial resources. Bottom-up processes complement these by involving and empowering staff (Kim et al., 2014) in change processes to build capacity for sustainable change and organizational learning (Schermerhorn & Wright, 2007).

Research into change leadership and management has resulted in several models for enacting successful change in organisations (e.g. Kotter, 2012; Price & Lawson, 2003; Schermerhorn & Wright, 2007). Common success factors across the different change leadership models include the need for a *compelling story* to communicate the vision and need for change. It also involves *building alliances and involving the right people* to lead and model the change, having in place *mechanisms* (processes, incentives) that reinforce new desired behaviours, and *empowering people and strengthening their capacities and skills* to implement the changes. We briefly review research on these four success factors in the following.

Compelling visions and stories help build change readiness across several readiness dimensions, from discrepancy to personal and organizational valence and leadership support. Employers and managers are often motivated by different factors. So managers' efforts to establish a sense of urgency or create a common vision may fail to adequately motivate the staff (Aiken & Keller, 2009). For example, if higher education managers attempt to impose QA through sanctions or staff perceive it as yet another administrative burden, efforts to implement QA will likely not be effective (Seyfried & Pohlenz 2018). Factors that most motivate people in their work can be

divided into impacts on society (e.g. building the community), impacts on customers (e.g. providing superior services), impacts on the organisation (e.g. competitiveness, the value created to shareholders), impacts on their team (e.g. creating a supportive work environment), and personal impacts (e.g. personal development and salary) (Zohar 1997). Involving staff in developing the stories and visions of change and ensuring they cover all five motivating factors are more likely to broadly inspire staff for change than top-down visions (Aiken & Keller, 2009). Frequent communication about the need for change (Kotter 2012; Jansen, 2004) and using several external sources that point to the need and urgency for change (e.g. consultancy reports, media stories) can effectively reinforce the messages coming from within the organisation (Armenakis et al. 1993).

The right people to support and drive people are crucial for the change's success. Kotter (2012) suggests that change leadership and management requires coalitions involving people with positions of power so that those left out cannot block change, as well as the right mix of expertise, credibility and leadership skills to move change processes forward. People with leadership positions are more effective in implementing change than those with high expertise but less positional power (Lines 2007, Self et al. 2007; Seyfried & Pohlenz 2018), which underlines the importance of leadership support. However, if positional leaders remain focused on 'command and control', change processes rarely transform organisations (Paper et al. 2001). As Appelbaum et al. (2012) conclude, successful change leadership requires facilitative management and continuous, visible support of the top leadership. Changes in organizational culture happen only when senior management consistently models good practices (Scott, 2005). New partnerships and alliances are likely required as the change processes progress (Sidorko 2008). Experiences from Germany show that collaboration with other higher education institutions effectively supports QA activities (Seyfried & Pohlenz 2018).

Staff require skills training and mentoring to implement the new changes and empowerment to buy into the changes (Buchanan et al. 2005). Staff development was central in Holt et al.'s (2011) leverage points for strategic development in higher education institutions, from preparing incoming staff to instilling compulsory teaching development programmes, offering needs-based professional development and supporting communities of practice. University of Gadjah Mada in Indonesia successfully transitioned from teacher-centred to student-centred learning by

establishing a training centre on education development and providing interactive training workshops to lecturers where they could experience engaging student-centred learning methods (Patria, 2012). It is noteworthy that the university encouraged junior faculty staff to attend the training workshops as they were considered more receptive to new teaching methods. In a UK university that wanted to renew the importance of positive student experiences as its core business, peer review was identified as an important tool to create enthusiasm among staff for the actual teaching process (Brown, 2012). The approach emphasized reflection rather than directing or prescribing specific teaching methods and encouraged informal conversations about what works in different teaching contexts. It became very popular, with an estimated 75 percent faculty participation (Brown, 2012). Giving employees small empowering opportunities can importantly affect their attitudes about change, giving them some control over the change process (Kappelman et al. 1993). The examples show how being involved in refining agreed change projects is a powerful motivator (Scott, 2005).

If change is difficult to initiate, it is usually even harder to make it stick. It is important to ensure that organizational mechanisms and processes are aligned to support change and that incentives exist for staff to help build and maintain momentum. This includes ensuring adequate resources for implementing the change vision over time; even successful changes stall if resource allocation continues to favour traditional approaches over innovations (Buchanan et al., 2005). In Indonesia, the University of Gadjah Mada provided special grants to lectures who implemented principles of student-centred learning in their courses (Patria, 2012). Finding opportunities for early wins is important: they help test the change vision in practice; demonstrate that the new ways are working to justify the costs of investments in time, effort and resources; and adapt processes as needed (Kotter, 2012; Pfeifer et al., 2005). They also create self-confidence among staff by seeing that their efforts are on the right track (Marks, 2007) and thus help build momentum for change (Pietersen, 2002). Effective communication through the change processes has been shown to contribute to employees' positive views about the change and them seeing more personal opportunities for themselves from the change (Nelissen & van Selm 2008).

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research design

This mixed-method research adopts a sequential approach involving an online survey and semi-structured online FGDs. Data collection began with an online survey. The change readiness questionnaire by Holt et al. (2007a) was selected to assess the readiness of teachers and leaders in the college sector to implement QA activities. Gender, age, level of education, job designation and leadership role were included as independent variables in the survey to assess their impact on readiness for change in the study setting.

A key objective of the study is to understand to what extent CEPD training programmes have equipped participants with skills and attitudes for improving the quality of college education. Therefore, the type of CEPD training attended by respondents (if any) was included in the survey, as was a question on establishing an Institutional Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC), reflecting the institutional context for change (Holt et al., 2007a).

The questionnaire was piloted among 20 Bangladeshi college teachers and leaders. They were identified through the professional networks of the two Bangladeshi team members. Attention during piloting was paid to the overall clarity of the questions and whether the questions were comprehensible in English to participants from the college sector in Bangladesh. Pilot respondents consistently found the language clear, so it was decided that the online survey would be administered in English. Furthermore, our initial survey indicated that our target group are college staff with a minimum of a Master's level qualification. This conclusion was affirmed by the data study where 95 per cent were Master's degree holders, and three per cent were doctoral degree holders.

Nonetheless, a Bengali translation of the survey's main elements was provided to ensure the best understanding. The Change Readiness Questionnaire and the translation were accompanied by an invitation cover letter and consent form and sent to all potential respondents. A sample of the invitation cover letter, the Change Readiness Questionnaire and the consent form are included in Appendix 1. Participation in this study was limited to staff members from the affiliated colleges.

These include those who were trained under the CEDP training programmes and those who were not trained.

3.2 Data collection

The team initially decided to distribute the survey by (1) approaching college principals and asking them to share the survey with their staff and (2) directly approaching Master Trainers who had participated in the CEDP training programmes. Approaching principals was a key strategy, given their ability to broadly motivate staff to participate in the survey. Unfortunately, the lack of principals' cooperation required the team to rely on Master Trainers and other participants from the Teacher Training and Future Leaders cohorts. This development has also impacted the final number of responses to the surveys. Many felt pressured not to respond due to their principals' non-support of the study. This also explains the low responses and difficulty organising FGDs with the principals. After much effort, the final responses to the survey tallied at 443 respondents, 74 per cent of the targeted 600 respondents. Subsequently, the data collection process proceeded with online FGDs with 42 survey respondents (teachers and middle and senior leaders) who had given us their written consent. In addition, semi-structured interviews with eight policymakers in the form of two FGDs took place in the second data collection stage. All ten FGDs involving in total 50 respondents were conducted online due to COVID-19-related restrictions, each for approximately one hour.

3.3 Data analysis

The quantitative survey results were analysed using R Studio (version 2022.07.2). Likert-categories were converted to a numerical scale from 1 to 5, where one corresponds to *fully disagree* and 5 to *fully agree*. Differences in change readiness were analysed with Student's t-test (binary variables of gender, two-tailed; and participation in CEDP trainings, one-tailed), and one-way ANOVA followed by Tukey's HSD for pairwise comparisons (all other variables). *P*-values are reported as *statistically significant* until 0.05 and *marginally significant* until 0.10. Two-way ANOVA was carried out for variables with statistically significant differences at $P < 0.05$ to assess interaction effects on readiness. The data generated from the audio-recorded focus group discussions were transcribed, coded, and placed under the main headings. These were summarised, and themes were derived for analysis. Finally, the analysis was triangulated with the

survey data to ensure the findings' validity and reliability. These are presented and discussed in the proceeding sections. Figure 1 depicts the data collection process and the final number of respondents to the study.

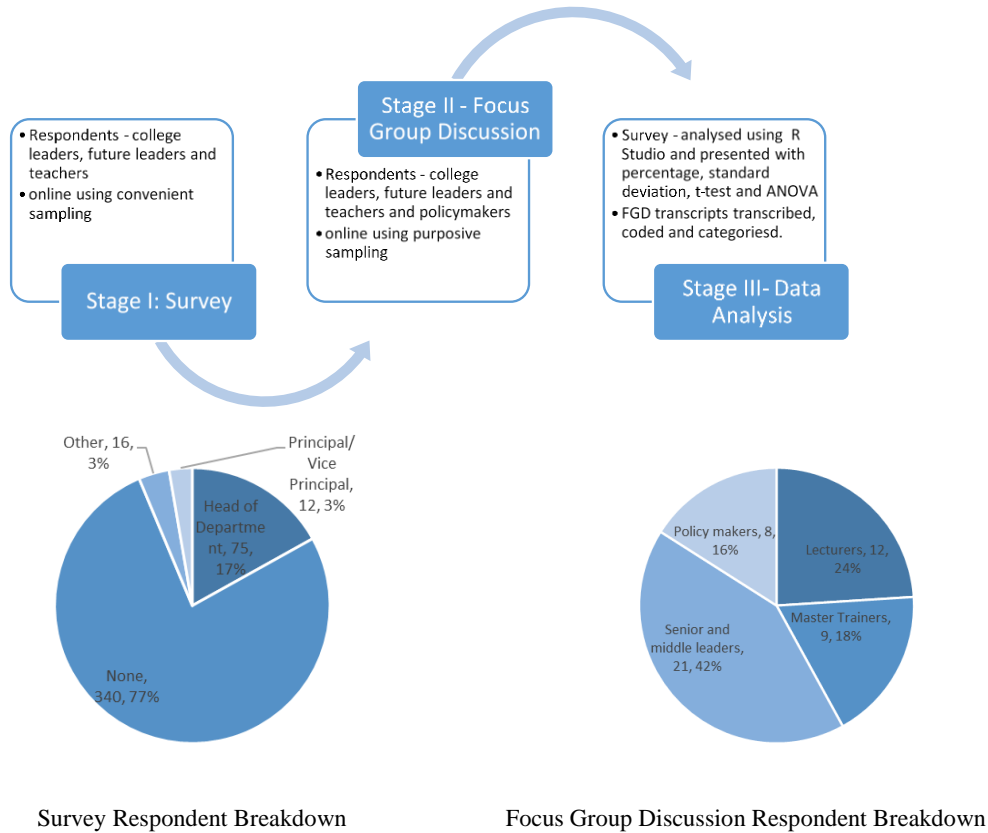


Figure 1: The Sequential Mixed-method Approach & Summary of Respondents by Category

Table 1: Participants to Focus Group Discussions.

Participants' role	CEDP	IQAC	Male	Female	Total
Lecturers	Yes	Any	2	2	4
Lecturers	No	Any	3	1	4
Lecturers	No	Any	4	0	4
Master Trainer Associates	Yes	No	4	1	5
Master Trainer Associates	Yes	Yes	3	1	4
Heads of Department	Yes	No	3	1	4
Principals and Vice principals	Yes	No	3	1	4
Senior and middle leaders	No	Yes	11	2	13
Policy makers (National University)	No	N/A	5	0	5
Policy makers (BAC, UGC)	No	N/A	3	0	3
TOTAL			41	9	50

CEDP = College Education Development Project
IQAC = Institutional Quality Assurance Cell
BAC = Bangladesh Accreditation Council
UGC = University Grants Commission

3.4 Ethics

Data collection and management strictly followed British Educational Research Association (BERA) guidelines and were approved by the University of Nottingham Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (Ref: FASS2022-0004/SoEd/RMFC2347). Respondents to the survey questionnaire provided their consent to participate by ticking a consent column before taking the survey. Interview participants were required to complete and return a consent form before attending the FGDs. Consent was also orally obtained at the FGDs for participation and recording of the proceedings (see Appendix 1). All primary data are stored in a shared folder accessible only by the researchers. None of the reports referenced particular individual respondents (survey and interview), and responses were aggregated, while FGD respondents were labelled with alphabet and numbers, for example, teachers, 'T1, T2', leaders, 'L1, L2' and policymakers, 'P1, P2'.

4. RESULTS

4.1 Change readiness

Out of the 443 responses received to the survey, only 363 were complete and included in the final analysis. Table 2 provides a breakdown of the respondents by category. Across all respondents, change readiness was highest on organisational valence (4.21 ± 0.54) and lowest on leadership support (3.46 ± 0.52). Respondents' age, discipline and degree had no statistically significant impact on change readiness across any readiness categories and were excluded from further analysis.

Table 2: Survey respondents by group (total: 363 complete responses). The mode for each variable is shown in bold.

VARIABLE	% respondents	VARIABLE	% respondents
GENDER			
Female	20		
Male	80		
Prefer not to specify	1		
DEGREE		DISCIPLINE	
Doctorate	3	Arts and Humanities	58
Masters	95	Business Studies	16
Other	2	Sciences	26
AGE		YEARS OF TEACHING	
Below 25	1	5 years or less	16
25-34	35	6-10 years	43
35-44	43	11-15 years	13
45-54	19	16-20 years	16
Above 55	3	More than 20 years	12
DESIGNATION		LEADERSHIP ROLE	
Lecturer	57	Not Selected	76
Assistant Professor	33	Head of Department	17
Associate Professor	8	Principal/Vice	3
Professor	3	Other	4
CEPD TRAINING		IQAC IN COLLEGE	
Not Selected	15	I don't know	12
Teachers Training	64	No	42
Master Trainers	9	No, but the process to establish it has started	22
Future Leaders	20	Yes	23
Leaders	2		

The leadership role had the biggest effect on change readiness across multiple categories (Table 3). Heads of Departments demonstrated significantly higher overall readiness, personal valence and discrepancy than respondents without leadership roles (Table 4). In contrast, the change readiness of principals and vice principals did not differ statistically significantly from other respondents. Respondents who had participated in CEDP trainings displayed significantly higher personal valence and marginally higher overall readiness than others who had not attended the CEDP training. However, respondents who had participated in the Master Trainers programme

experienced significantly lower leadership support than other respondents, including respondents who had not participated in any CEDP trainings (Table 4).

Respondents who reported that their college had an IQAC or was in the process of establishing one showed significantly higher readiness in terms of leadership support than respondents who reported not having an IQAC. In addition, respondents who reported that an IQAC was being established displayed significantly higher overall readiness, self-efficacy and organisational valence than those who reported either not having an IQAC or not knowing about its status at their college (Table 4). There was a significant interaction between the availability of an IQAC and leadership role: when a college had an IQAC or was in the process of establishing it, principals and vice-principals displayed higher organisational valence (organisational benefit from QA) than when an IQAC was lacking, but organisational valence did not vary depending on IQAC availability for the other respondent groups ($F=2.244$, $P = 0.019$).

Women displayed, on average, significantly higher overall readiness scores than men and higher readiness scores in terms of leadership support and discrepancy than men (Table 4). There was also a significant interaction between gender and leadership role: having a leadership role improved female respondents' discrepancy (perceived need for QA) more than it did for male respondents ($F = 3.008$, $P = 0.030$).

Respondents with more than 20 years of teaching experience demonstrated significantly higher readiness in leadership support than respondents with less experience and significantly higher readiness in terms of a discrepancy than junior respondents with up to 10 years of experience (Table 4).

Average leadership support increased with the seniority of the position, with teachers experiencing the lowest and professors the highest leadership support. However, the results of the pairwise comparisons were only marginally significant, possibly due to the small number of professors among the respondents ($n=10$; Table 4). Overall readiness varied marginally significantly by seniority of positions (Table 3).

Table 3: Effect of respondent characteristics on change readiness. The test value is F-value, except for *gender*, where it is T-value (two-tailed) and *CEDP (any)* (one-tailed).

Change readiness / Respondent characteristic	Overall readiness		Self-efficacy		Personal valence		Organisational valence		Leadership support		Discrepancy	
	Test value	P-value	Test value	P-value	Test value	P-value	Test value	P-value	Test value	P-value	Test value	P-value
Gender	2.382	0.019*	0.482	0.631	1.007	0.316	0.707	0.481	2.911	0.004**	2.179	0.031*
Years of teaching	1.934	0.104	0.909	0.459	0.960	0.429	0.311	0.870	5.333	<0.001***	2.782	0.027*
Designation	2.155	0.093(*)	0.721	0.54	1.654	0.176	0.774	0.509	2.979	0.032*	2.245	0.083(*)
Leadership role	4.723	0.003**	1.512	0.211	4.802	0.003**	2.488	0.060(*)	2.317	0.075(*)	6.093	<0.001***
CEDP training (any)	-1.319	0.095(*)	-1.088	0.140	-1.928	0.029*	-1.199	0.117	0.082	0.533	-0.484	0.315
CEDP training (by type)	1.528	0.180	1.913	0.091(*)	0.664	0.651	0.685	0.635	6.623	<0.001***	0.607	0.694
IQAC	4.511	0.004**	4.459	0.004**	2.569	0.054(*)	2.906	0.035*	13.21	<0.001***	2.083	0.102

CEDP = College Education Development Project

IQAC = Institutional Quality Assurance Cell

(*) $P < 0.10$

* $P < 0.05$

** $P < 0.01$

*** $P < 0.001$

Table 4: Change readiness by respondent groups. Values are mean \pm SD. Values followed by different letters are significantly different at $P < 0.05$.

	Overall readiness	Self-efficacy	Personal valence	Org. valence	Leadership support	Discrepancy
GENDER						
Female	3.88 \pm 0.33b	3.80 \pm 0.37	3.86 \pm 0.45	4.24 \pm 0.42	3.69 \pm 0.42b	3.93 \pm 0.50b
Male	3.79 \pm 0.38a	3.79 \pm 0.47	3.79 \pm 0.49	4.21 \pm 0.57	3.52 \pm 0.53a	3.83 \pm 0.49a
TEACHING						
Less than 5 years	3.82 \pm 0.38	3.83 \pm 0.43	3.84 \pm 0.50	4.22 \pm 0.52	3.56 \pm 0.53a	3.78 \pm 0.52a
6-10 years	3.78 \pm 0.36	3.75 \pm 0.45	3.74 \pm 0.50	4.17 \pm 0.54	3.55 \pm 0.47a	3.79 \pm 0.46a
11-15 years	3.79 \pm 0.33	3.80 \pm 0.36	3.82 \pm 0.45	4.23 \pm 0.45	3.44 \pm 0.48a	3.83 \pm 0.44ab
16-20 years	3.79 \pm 0.40	3.76 \pm 0.57	3.82 \pm 0.45	4.24 \pm 0.57	3.42 \pm 0.60a	3.90 \pm 0.55ab
Over 20 years	3.97 \pm 0.39	3.91 \pm 0.55	3.90 \pm 0.48	4.28 \pm 0.65	3.85 \pm 0.48b	4.03 \pm 0.55b
DESIGNATION						
Lecturer	3.79 \pm 0.36	3.79 \pm 0.44	3.76 \pm 0.48	4.19 \pm 0.49	3.56 \pm 0.49	3.80 \pm 0.47
Assistant Professor	3.79 \pm 0.39	3.76 \pm 0.44	3.81 \pm 0.49	4.22 \pm 0.57	3.48 \pm 0.55	3.86 \pm 0.52
Assoc. Professor	3.96 \pm 0.31	3.89 \pm 0.50	3.97 \pm 0.43	4.34 \pm 0.67	3.74 \pm 0.45	3.98 \pm 0.48
Professor	3.91 \pm 0.54	3.82 \pm 0.52	3.80 \pm 0.59	4.24 \pm 0.67	3.81 \pm 0.65	4.00 \pm 0.54
LEADERSHIP						
None	3.77 \pm 0.35a	3.76 \pm 0.45	3.75 \pm 0.48a	4.18 \pm 0.51	3.52 \pm 0.49a	3.79 \pm 0.46a
Head of Dept	3.93 \pm 0.41b	3.90 \pm 0.46	3.95 \pm 0.45b	4.30 \pm 0.66	3.66 \pm 0.55b	4.01 \pm 0.57b
Principal/Vice	3.91 \pm 0.54ab	3.82 \pm 0.52	3.80 \pm 0.59ab	4.24 \pm 0.67	3.81 \pm 0.65ab	4.00 \pm 0.54ab
Other	3.99 \pm 0.33ab	3.84 \pm 0.40	4.13 \pm 0.47ab	4.51 \pm 0.44	3.61 \pm 0.65ab	4.06 \pm 0.52ab
CEDP TRAINING (any)						
Yes	3.81 \pm 0.38	3.80 \pm 0.46	3.81 \pm 0.49b	4.22 \pm 0.55	3.55 \pm 0.52	3.84 \pm 0.50
No	3.75 \pm 0.34	3.74 \pm 0.37	3.68 \pm 0.45a	4.14 \pm 0.46	3.56 \pm 0.52	3.81 \pm 0.48
CEDP TRAINING (by type)						
None	3.78 \pm 0.33	3.75 \pm 0.36	3.71 \pm 0.46	4.16 \pm 0.47	3.56 \pm 0.47b	3.83 \pm 0.47
Master Trainers	3.69 \pm 0.46	3.74 \pm 0.68	3.80 \pm 0.54	4.24 \pm 0.73	3.10 \pm 0.54a	3.81 \pm 0.62
Teachers' Training	3.82 \pm 0.33	3.80 \pm 0.38	3.81 \pm 0.47	4.20 \pm 0.51	3.58 \pm 0.46b	3.86 \pm 0.46
Future Leaders	3.81 \pm 0.43	3.73 \pm 0.51	3.78 \pm 0.52	4.23 \pm 0.54	3.64 \pm 0.56b	3.76 \pm 0.51
Leaders	3.87 \pm 0.50	4.07 \pm 0.53	3.81 \pm 0.35	4.39 \pm 0.55	3.78 \pm 0.70b	4.00 \pm 0.70
Teachers' and leadership training	3.91 \pm 0.48	3.95 \pm 0.52	3.83 \pm 0.58	4.33 \pm 0.66	3.70 \pm 0.61b	3.90 \pm 0.55
IQAC						
I don't know	3.69 \pm 0.38a	3.56 \pm 0.47a	3.63 \pm 0.45	4.10 \pm 0.49ab	3.53 \pm 0.35ab	3.80 \pm 0.50
No	3.76 \pm 0.37a	3.79 \pm 0.48ab	3.80 \pm 0.50	4.16 \pm 0.57a	3.38 \pm 0.55a	3.86 \pm 0.51
No, but the process has started	3.95 \pm 0.37b	3.91 \pm 0.39b	3.92 \pm 0.46	4.37 \pm 0.51b	3.75 \pm 0.49b	3.96 \pm 0.48
Yes	3.82 \pm 0.35ab	3.80 \pm 0.40ab	3.76 \pm 0.49	4.22 \pm 0.51ab	3.70 \pm 0.45b	3.72 \pm 0.47

4.2 Constraints to implementing quality assurance

The survey data also highlighted some issues and support needs that survey respondents reported facing when implementing QA activities. These were categorised according to the BAC Standards for Accreditation of Academic Programs (BAC, n.d.) (See Appendix 3). Most commonly, respondents reported issues related to *Leadership, responsibility and authority* (Standard 2); *Teaching-learning and assessment* (Standard 5); *Faculty and professional staff* (Standard 7); and *Facilities and resources* (Standard 8). The issues and needs are briefly summarised in Table 5.

Table 5: Issues in implementing quality assurance according to survey respondents, categorised by BAC Academic standards (BAC, n.d.)

<p><i>Standard 1. Governance</i></p> <p>Issues: Lack of goals and objectives around quality assurance, lack of communication</p> <p>Support needs: Improving stakeholder participation</p> <p><i>Standard 2. Leadership, responsibility and autonomy</i></p> <p>Issues: Inadequate institutional support, lack of commitment from leadership, leadership has other priorities, lack of equal opportunities for staff, resistance to change, the difficulty of getting permission for activities, criticism from colleagues, lack of stakeholder participation (e.g. student unions), lack of financial resources</p> <p>Support needs: Involving college management committee, training for principals</p> <p><i>Standard 3. Integrity and transparency</i></p> <p>Issues: Lack of transparency and accountability, student absenteeism, political interference</p> <p>Support needs: Behavioural training for students, improved class attendance</p> <p><i>Standard 4. Curriculum</i></p> <p>Issues: Lengthy syllabus, inadequate time to finish the syllabus, focus mostly on standardised tests</p> <p>Support needs: Update curriculum, reduce the number of exams</p> <p><i>Standard 5. Teaching-learning and assessment</i></p> <p>Issues: Limited class time, the difficulty of planning lessons and materials for diverse students' needs, the difficulty of implementing lesson plans, lack of student engagement in class, class management, unsuitable assessment methods, the concern of student response to quality assurance activities, mental health issues</p> <p>Support needs: Tools and training on quality assurance, access to technology, improved assessment methods</p> <p><i>Standard 6. Student admission and support services</i></p> <p>Issues: Inadequate student selection</p>
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Standard 7. Faculty and professional staff

Issues: Teachers lack training, high student-teacher ratio, workload, lack of interest among colleagues, lack of incentives (e.g. salary, promotions)

Support needs: Training on quality assurance, training all teachers to bring everyone to the same page, competitive remuneration, reducing other duties of teachers

Standard 8. Facilities and resources

Issues: Lack of classrooms, lack of technology, lack of basic equipment and materials (e.g. projectors, reference books), lack of work space for staff, students' lack of devices

Standard 9. Research and scholarly activities

Issues: Few research opportunities

Standard 10. Monitoring, evaluation and continual improvement

Issues: Lack of monitoring and evaluation, inadequate financial management

Support needs: Clarify requirements, performance evaluation, manual on QA

4.3 Data from Focus Group Discussions

A large amount of data was generated from the ten FGDs with 50 respondents. Table 1 provides the breakdown of these respondents by categories, and Appendix 2 provides the FGD protocols used. The FGD findings were able to (1) corroborate the survey findings and (2) provide some fundamental challenges to the readiness of the college sector to implement QA. These are discussed in the next section, and Appendix 4 provides a more detailed analysis of the FGD interview findings.

Data gathered from FGDs with the participating college teachers and leaders revealed that the different types of training provided by CEDP had helped participants improve their readiness by improving their self-efficacy and personal valence. In addition, although the QA component was not explicitly discussed in the offered training programmes, participants claimed that the training had raised awareness of the college sector's importance in responding to the current 21st-century and QA needs.

In terms of helping participants improve their self-efficacy, some participating teachers claimed that the training they attended had introduced them to many new concepts that subsequently helped them improve the quality of their teaching and learning. According to these participants, one of the most important concepts learned from the training is outcome-based education (OBE),

which is a key element of QA practices. This introduction to OBE helped teachers gain knowledge and skills related to programme planning, curriculum development and lesson planning, enabling them to design more relevant and interactive lessons and select appropriate assessment tools for the students. The following comments from the FGD sessions with teachers who had undertaken at least one CEDP training provide further illustrations of how their confidence in implementing OBE as part of QA practices in the college:

“In terms of OBE, after engaging myself in CEDP training with University of Nottingham Malaysia, I am confident enough that I have the capacity to implement OBE in the classroom and I implemented it and got (positive) responses from my students.” (T9)

“(I’m) 100% ready to implement the outcome based education in my classroom because of what I have learnt from Nottingham University. I’ve also been working as a master trainer, so I think I’m fully prepared to achieve this goal.” (T1)

“OBE was not a familiar term... but after participating in CEDP training, which has been very effective for me, I now understand the meaning of OBE.” (T2)

It should also be noted that although many teachers expressed their readiness or confidence in infusing OBE as part of the QA practices in their colleges, the FGD data show that teachers were also cautious about this. In their comments, teachers highlighted the need for more training on OBE and stronger support from their college leadership to implement the concept more effectively in their classrooms. In addition, some teachers also mentioned existing challenges such as high teacher-student ratio, student motivation and infrastructure barriers as potential barriers that might hinder teachers from successfully implementing QA practices. This sentiment is reflected in the following comments made by some of the FGD participants:

“...I am ready to some extent because I’ve got some training, especially from Nottingham University. Although I am not properly ready, I can share some ideas with students regarding the OBE system.” (T7)

“... I would say that as a teacher, I am prepared. But at the same time, the authorities should be prepared, too; the department heads should take some initiatives to implement outcome-based education. Because as a subordinate teacher, I have no authority to implement any decision in my department.” (T8)

“... but (we should also consider) the environment and students, ... and the infrastructure and facilities- if we cannot improve (these factors), we cannot implement (OBE) in reality.” (T3)

Another important finding worth highlighting here is the impact of CEDP trainings on strengthening collaboration amongst the participating college teachers. Comments given by some teachers in the FGDs suggest that the in-college projects they had conducted as one of the key requirements of their training programmes led to a stronger professional learning community (PLC) culture in their colleges. This, in turn, also positively influenced their professional development.

Despite these indications of positive change, some teachers claimed they were not fully supported by their college leadership. A teacher said:

“I also try to share my experience and knowledge with them (leadership). But... we are facing some challenges in terms of our students and also our leadership. Our leadership should have this focus. Actually, they should also be trained in these areas so that the people who are managing the whole system should have this (common) goal.”(T8)

The FGD data suggest a lack of awareness or familiarity with the QA concept among many teachers and leaders in this study. In this context, this lack of familiarity could also be linked to the lack of QA focus in the offered training programmes. As a whole, CEDP-trained teachers and leaders appeared to be more aware of QA activities compared to non-CEDP-trained participants. However, as noted earlier, some teachers claimed that even their college leadership/authorities were still unfamiliar with QA practices. Here, it is worth noting that in the training programmes attended by teachers, more direct emphasis is given to activities, skills and knowledge that could help teachers

improve the quality of their teaching practice. In contrast, programmes for leaders focus more on general project management skills and do not explicitly include QA as one of the key focus areas. Therefore, as recommended by many FGD participants, a more comprehensive QA training programme should be introduced to teachers and leaders in the college sector.

In addition, teachers who participated in the FGDs also urged for a transparent and inclusive decision-making process at the policy level, particularly regarding the establishment of IQAC and student selection. For example, some teachers questioned the current practices of selecting committee members who may not suit the roles or understand the context fully, while some capable teachers were missing out on the opportunities to implement QA activities in their classrooms. Calling for more inclusivity and empowerment of teacher leaders, the sentiments are reflected in the following comments made by one of the teachers:

“Who will be the members of Institutional Quality Assurance Cell?...This committee must be informed by experts...members who are actually concerned about the development of our education system, who are experienced in education... those who have practical experience in the field or taught the students. Who have knowledge and experience on educational environment in colleges or universities.” (T6)

“The college committee, national committee or the ministry should sit with the teachers who are directly implementing a class physically. For example, when I am trying to implement active learning in my class, I know what I lack like a round table and a moving chair. So, if the decision maker doesn’t sit with the teachers who are dealing with the situation and students, I think the problem will not be fixed.”(T7)

The fact that leadership support had the lowest average readiness scores in this study was raised at the leaders' FGDs. One principal felt that the orders from NU and DSHE bind college principals. Thus, they have little autonomy in ensuring QA practices are implemented. Another principal felt that there are no financial incentives for principals to carry out QA activities even though they are aware of its importance. Leaders and teachers in the FGDs urged for the student selection process to be revised at the policy level. They believed that a more stringent selection process should be applied in all colleges to ensure student quality, which they believed would influence

the quality of a particular college. For example, some leaders suggested that:

“The National University is our affiliating authority. They arrange their admission without (consulting us). As a result, we cannot select eligible candidates to come to a particular department.” (L1)

“Admission test should be introduced.” (L2)

“We should focus on quality and not quantity.” (L4)

Finally, the two FGDs with policymakers provided significant insights into the challenges and college readiness to implement QA activities. The policymakers generally agree to the issues raised regarding poor governance and leadership, funding and infrastructure, and the quality of students and staff. However, they added saying the main obstacle is the dual dilemmas – of authority and award level.

“Many of these colleges, they have higher secondary level education at the same time...It's creating another complexity in the environment because faculty members are more on with this higher secondary level education (HSC) and you know they have the same campus...it's their identity crisis whether they're at tertiary level... or just higher secondary level. So, I think government should give them a choice... if any college want to be with the HSC level education, let them go with that. If they want to come with the higher education, they must decline the enrollment of HSC level students.” (P6)

They saw the National University and the University Grants Commission playing a key role in enforcing existing quality standards:

“I think University Grants Commission, (and) even BAC (Bangladesh Accreditation Council) jointly, if government allows, (can) conduct an inspection to identify the facilities they (colleges) have and the number of students they have currently, so no college should be allowed to enroll students beyond their capacity.” (P6)

“National University has the power to decide whether a college is eligible to offer a program or not, and what will be the number of students to be enrolled.... (National) University can take the quick decision on these issues. Nobody can challenge them – they might have some problem initially, but if they wish, they can implement this. That will also ensure some sorts of quality” (P8)

“I'm not sure whether there is any pressure from the government or ministry to open new departments, new programs...but to my understanding, it's up to the National University who they will allow to recruit students or run the (academic) program. In that sense, if National University is not concerned with the quality requirements and not committed to ensure the quality, very difficult for BAC to work with (the colleges).” (P6)

5. DISCUSSION

The findings suggest that college staff are relatively ready for QA since the overall readiness scores for almost all readiness categories and respondent groups exceeded 3.5 (on average, ‘agree’ on the readiness statements). Furthermore, respondents see clear benefits to their organisations from implementing QA activities. These findings correspond with Higgins et al. (2019) findings that a higher organisational valence score can be achieved if respondents appreciate the benefit of the change. Across all categories of respondents, there is great awareness of the present situation in the college sector. Those who had participated in the survey and FGDs seem ready to change as they share a sense of urgency, as proposed in Aiken & Keller (2009).

The results of both the survey and the FGDs indicate that improving leadership support for QA would likely improve overall readiness for implementing QA (Asbari et al., 2021; Edward-Grooves et al., 2019). Leadership, training, and policy play important roles in determining the readiness to implement QA in the college sector in Bangladesh. The results also indicate that gender and length of teaching experience influence change readiness among faculty members for implementing QA in the Bangladesh college sector. These are discussed in brief below.

5.1 Factors affecting change readiness

(1) Leadership

The data shows that Heads of Departments have a high potential for being agents of change to implement QA due to their high readiness (Fullan, 2002; Lines, 2007, Self et al., 2007; Kotter, 2012; Seyfried & Pohlenz 2018; Asbari et al., 2021). They are motivated to implement QA for both organisational (discrepancy) and personal (personal valence) benefits, which can help sustain motivation. However, the survey findings show a lack of principal support and unexpectedly low readiness that did not differ from regular teachers' readiness. The low survey uptake among leaders also demonstrates the current on-the-ground attitude of these respondents to QA and change. In Bangladesh, principals and vice-principals are in a very comfortable position at the end of their tenure (close to retirement). Often they feel that 'they have no fight left to implement that required change' (L12). This view was supported by an FGD principal participant who felt that his colleagues "are no longer willing to go the extra mile, this late in their career. Many are looking forward to a comfortable retirement and not causing 'trouble'." (L17). Leadership is also seen as lacking at higher levels: one Master Trainer (M2) felt that there is no pressure from the authorities, especially NU, for colleges to implement QA activities and outcome-based education. Whatever the motivation, it is clear that the leadership's lack of readiness and valence is seen as one of the biggest challenges to QA readiness and change within the college sector.

(2) Training

CEDP successfully improved training participants' readiness for implementing QA, especially perceived personal benefits (personal valence) from QA, which likely helped sustain motivation for change (Buchanan et al., 2005; Holt et al., 2011). The CEDP training is premised on quality improvement in both theory and practice. The training programme included a mandatory intervention project on improving the quality of teaching and learning or campus experience. Thus, participants can experience first-hand the value of incorporating QA activities in their environment. These findings support Janah (2021), which states that self-efficacy affects an individual's readiness to change. Similarly, experiential learning and personal projects were successfully used to motivate and capacitate faculty members at an Indonesian University to transition from teacher- to student-centric learning methods (Patria, 2012). The heightened

personal valence of the CEDP participants has created a sense of urgency to implement QA activities and, simultaneously, grave concerns.

The CEDP training created a cadre of motivated teachers, future leaders and leaders, and thus they are now eager to bring about change. However, it is crucial to simultaneously improve institutional improvement with the right leadership support (Asbari et al., 2021). However, the findings in this study clearly show that irrespective of how prepared/trained the teachers think they are, they are still unable to implement any changes since they have no authority (See FGD respondent T8 above). A further question on leadership arose when respondent T7 asked who would lead this change. The concern that leadership often falls on political appointees who cannot champion QA can be seen from his statement.

Leaders must provide direction and influence (Leithwood et al., 2004; Kappelman et al., 1993). Without the right leadership support, any personal valence evaporates with time, as demonstrated by the strikingly low readiness of Master Trainers in terms of leadership support compared to all other survey respondent groups. It was clear that most Master Trainers who had undergone an intensive, award-bearing capacity development programme did not have the necessary support from their principals and authorities to implement QA and improvement in their classrooms and colleges. The survey results indicate that Master Trainers felt demotivated by the lack of leadership support after they had personally invested significant time and effort in improving quality education. Master Trainers are relatively junior, and societal norms around hierarchy and seniority may affect the leadership support they receive. This conclusion is corroborated by evidence from the qualitative survey responses and FGDs, where participants reported backlash when trying to advocate for QA in their organisations.

One reason for the lack of support could be the Principals' unhappiness over the disparity in the location and length of training. Master Trainers had the opportunity to travel twice (each time for three weeks) to a foreign country for training, while the Principals under the leadership training only travelled once for two weeks. Thus, making the principals feel that they are less important to the college authorities. Another Master Trainer felt that leaders lack the same exposure and training as the Master Trainer and thus felt unsure of how to deal with this younger group of Master Trainers who are now enthused to bring about change.

(3) Policy decision

Policy decisions are often seen as a catalyst for change. In this regard, the Bangladesh Accreditation Council's (BAC) decision to introduce IQACs in the college sector has generated some interest among the stakeholders. The survey data shows that establishing IQAC or setting up the process improves readiness, especially in terms of organisational valence and leadership support, compared to colleges with neither. However, the results on the role of IQAC need to be interpreted with caution, as follow-up discussions with respondents during FGDs suggested that IQAC processes did not always exist in colleges despite respondents indicating so in the survey. Still, since reported IQAC status had statistically significant impacts on change readiness across multiple categories, the results likely measured some important aspects of readiness. For example, respondents interested in QA could be more attuned to or more familiar with even incipient QA activities.

Readiness for QA seemed to spike when IQAC processes were initiated – potentially due to perceived new opportunities or resources. However, the results indicate that it is important to look into how the momentum for QA can be sustained beyond initial enthusiasm and that staff receive adequate support and resources for QA instead of being burdened by additional responsibilities. It also shows the importance of leadership in bringing about organisational change (Fullan, 2002; Asbari et al., 2021), as the readiness of leaders to change significantly impacts employees' performance and readiness to change.

The results on the effect of IQAC on readiness highlight the importance of getting college leaders on the QA track. Both top and middle leaders must have the buy-in before the organisation can be seen ready for change. The results indicate that principals and vice principals were unlikely to invest in IQAC unless they saw its organisational benefits. In other words, motivating principals and vice-principals to support QA through demonstrating its benefits to the organisation appears key for setting institutional mechanisms required to support QA in motion. Without it, middle leaders' motivation for QA does not suffice.

(4) Gender

The data shows that female staff, especially female leaders, are more ready for and perceive that they receive more support for QA than male staff. This information emerged strongly in the survey, with statistically significant differences in readiness between male and female respondents. Female teachers, especially female leaders, are potentially good agents of change (Hobbins et al., 2022), and they could be tapped into to advocate for, lead and support QA processes. Kotter (2012) states that having the right person to support and drive people is crucial for success. Unfortunately, female leaders are still rare in the college sector in Bangladesh. Knowledge and skills in QA can bring female staff an added value that can improve their employment and career progression opportunities in the higher education sector and thus contribute to closing the gender gap.

(5) Experience

Data again points to the fact that respondents with more than 20 years of teaching experience demonstrated significantly higher readiness in terms of leadership support than respondents with less experience and significantly higher readiness in terms of a discrepancy than junior respondents with up to 10 years of experience. This finding shows that leadership practices should be reviewed, and leaders should be encouraged to reflect on their practices to ensure that more junior staff have better access to leadership support for QA, similar to the most senior faculty members. It's noteworthy that when an Indonesian University decided to introduce student-centric learning, they emphasised training junior faculty members as they were seen as more open to change than their seniors and so highly potential agents for change. The strategy was to get as many teachers as possible to adopt the new learning methods, independent of seniority or role, to create healthy peer pressure for late adopters to follow suit (Patria 2012). This conclusion would be important for scaling QA more rapidly and ensuring QA's sustainability when most senior faculty members move to other positions or retire.

It is also crucial to review how QA is handled in current teacher training programmes and integrate it better into these programmes. Current programmes do not seem successful in communicating and instigating the importance of QA since junior staff see less need for QA than their most senior colleagues. It suggests that the sense of the need for QA is gained primarily through work experience rather than teacher training. There is another way to interpret this finding. Senior

teachers who are not leaders are comfortable pushing for the necessary change. Perhaps they are in a better position to demand such change than their junior colleagues as they are more confident (Marks, 2007). They are keen to be part of the change vehicle. One FGD participant who has been a teacher for almost 25 years says there is a lack of consultation from the college leadership, NU, and DSHE authorities. He felt that if they asked teachers to help implement QA activities, many would be happy to support them.

(6) Seniority and Leadership Support to Change

The data shows that senior teachers feel they have more support to change compared to their junior colleagues and the overall readiness varied marginally by seniority. These findings affirm the importance of leadership support to personal valence and confidence concerning readiness to change. However, the study could not attract many respondents from professors and principals, and the results on their readiness are thus, at best, indicative. A larger pool of respondents among these groups could have uncovered additional differences in readiness between respondent groups, as several differences were marginally significant ($0.05 \leq P < 0.10$). Future studies should focus on assessing the factors affecting the readiness of these most senior faculty staff and leaders, given their gatekeeper position in enabling QA in their organisations.

5.2 Structural problems in the college sector

Apart from the above-discussed internal factors, which could be addressed with time, effort and strategy, more fundamental aspects of the college sector came to light after the commencement of the study. Two of the more grieved concerns can be labelled as the dual dilemma for the college sector and are briefly described below and can be the focus of the next study. These findings were also confirmed during the FGDs, particularly that of the policymakers' FGDs. Removing these barriers to readiness requires honesty and political will. The internal factors identified above can only superficially address the concerns of stakeholders surrounding the college sector's readiness to implement QA activities if the following are not resolved urgently.

(1) Dual Level of Qualifications

The affiliated colleges provide higher secondary education (preparing students for the Higher Secondary Certificate) and tertiary level qualifications (Bachelor's and Master's qualifications).

These create multiple constraints on the college's resources, staff and leadership. 'Teachers are confused...are they teaching at secondary or tertiary level?' (P4). The requirements for tertiary and secondary levels can significantly vary. As a result of this combination, research activities are limited. This combination also increases the number of students, thus, increasing the workload for these teachers. Research is a crucial component of knowledge development.

The seminal work of Professor Shulman (1986) does not in any way undermine the value of research but rather concludes by saying the "those who can, do, those who understand, teach", rejecting the time-tested infamous aphorism of George Bernard Shaw "He who can, does. He who cannot, teaches." Indeed, research creates better understanding through inquiry and reflection and thus makes the academic a better teacher. The lack of research activities in these colleges due to workload, large student numbers and lack of motivation should be addressed by segregating higher secondary from tertiary education. Data from the Survey points to this. Only a few survey respondents highlighted concerns about limited opportunities for *Research and scholarly activities* (BAC standard no. 9), suggesting that faculty is too overwhelmed with teaching duties to think of research activities.

(2) Duality in the Chain of Command

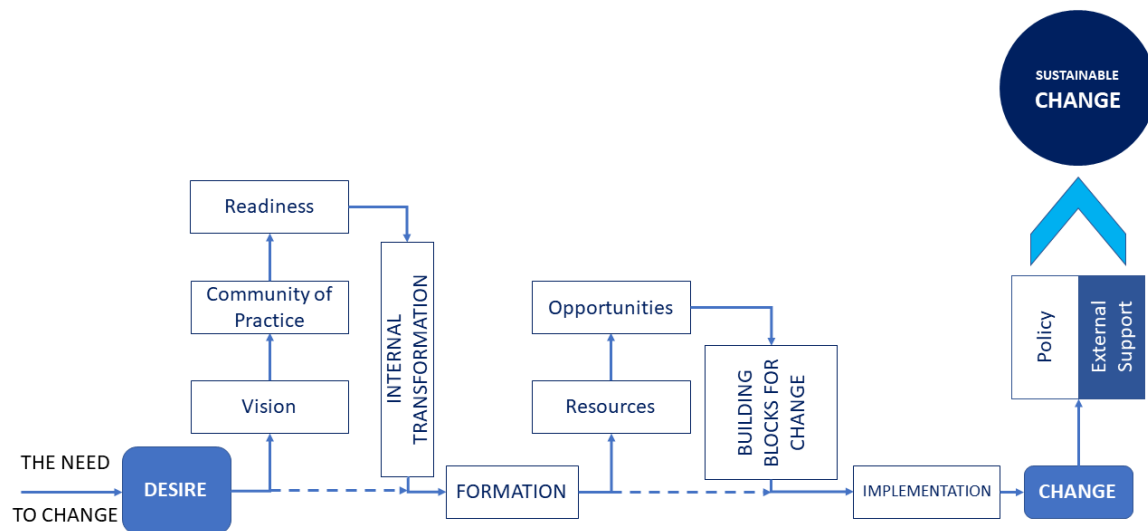
The college sector falls under two distinct and often un-synced authorities. Operational matters, such as infrastructure and staff allocation, fall under DSHE, while academic matters are within the purview of NU. This distinction is not helpful as there are significant overlaps between resources and quality education. To complicate further, the University Grants Commission, which oversees higher education in Bangladesh (funding and academic control), does not have authority over the colleges. However, it has some degree of authority over the NU through the funding mechanism. In addition, the Bangladesh Accreditation Council, a statutory body established in 2017, can work with any tertiary education offering institution. The problem related to NU-affiliated colleges is that they have no autonomy. Colleges cannot design their curricula or issue awards. Therefore, BAC has to work with NU to reach these colleges and ensure quality.

Policymakers and other FGD respondents unanimously agree that there should be an urgent review of the current policy. According to one policymaker (P6), duality in the chain of command is tied to the remit of these colleges – the offer of secondary and tertiary level education. Thus,

removing the higher secondary from the remit of the colleges may be the first step to resolving the dilemma of the second duality. This is a good start for the next study.

5.3 Change Model for the Bangladesh College Sector

There are five pillars for change sustainability: leadership commitment, clear vision and mission, staff engagement, process improvement and data-driven decision-making (Abbas, 2022). Currently, in Bangladesh, clarity of vision and mission are merely on paper (P7). Implementation is weak due to poor leadership commitment (P7), lack of staff engagement, and bureaucracy (P8) that hinders the improvement process despite the strong evidence indicating the urgent need to change. Thus irrespective of the perception of senior academics, colleges cannot be ready for change without the direction from and influence of the principals, NU and DSHE. College principals and middle leaders should find opportunities to promote change through early wins and adapt processes as needed (Pfeifer et al., 2005; Kotter, 2012). From the literature and data gathered for this study and our conversations with various stakeholders throughout the project, the project team developed a framework that could be utilised to implement QA activities in the college sector in Bangladesh.



The narrative moving forward can be illustrated as such. First, there is a need to change in relation to the readiness to implement QA in the college sector. This study affirms that there is a desire to

make that change happen. To move from DESIRE to CHANGE, the colleges need internal transformation and valuable building blocks along the way. Internal transformation happens with a clear vision and the presence of a community of practice who are ready to implement these changes. The study tells us that when these three elements are present, like in the case of the one college with an IQAC, change occurs, and stakeholders are more ready to implement QA activities. However, implementing QA is slow in this college as there are insufficient resources and opportunities for building the change and readiness momentum. Insufficient teachers (poor staff-to-student ratio), ill-equipped classrooms, lack of labs, and poor internet and library facilities are among the challenges the college faces. Thus, for change to happen, sufficient building blocks must be implemented, which is a challenge to policymakers.

The government should also review current policies in the governance and the operation of the college system. The duality of practice should be reviewed to better provide for a 21st-century learning sector. Policymakers should communicate frequently and with openness. Fundamentally, what matters is the quality of the qualifications provided by these institutions. Bangladesh should also refer to other successful affiliated college models and how the governance and management have changed over the decades. Reviewing the procedure for promoting principals may be a very good place to start.

6. CONCLUSION

This was a fascinating study. However, unfortunately, what started as a study to inquire into the readiness of the college sector to implement QA activities, brought us to a bigger policy dilemma. However, while addressing that the latter is beyond the scope of this study, it is crucial to note that the readiness of the college sector seems to be underscored by the numerous policy challenges identified. These policy challenges are fundamental. From the lack of proper infrastructure to poor internal and external management structure and quality and management of academic staff, the politicisation of governance and management of the NU and the affiliated colleges, the weak accountability and monitoring mechanism, and overall lack of strategic vision and planning are merely some of the more crucial challenges that impact sector readiness to implement QA activities.

The data from this study shows that CEDP training can prepare college leaders and teachers to support the implementation of QA activities in the colleges. They are confident and enthusiastic in channelling what they have learnt to improve the quality of teaching, learning, and overall student experience. However, they face challenges from principals and leaders who are not ready to implement such activities. Participants from the CEDP training had overwhelmingly indicated that it adequately prepared them with the necessary technical skills, but leadership support was lacking. Another survey on the impact of teacher training on colleges shows that principals generally agree that there is a vast improvement in the quality of teachers post-training. However, this study shows a general unwillingness to change or implement QA on the part of these principals. The prevailing data shows that this is largely due to the current poor governance of the college sector.

However, the study data does show some significant variation between teacher and leader participants in their readiness to support QA activities in their colleges. Teachers are seen as more ready to support QA activities in their colleges than leaders. The contributory factor to this, as we learn from the study, is the experience and gender of the leaders. The current leadership are largely men close to retirement, thus unwilling to bring about new changes or 'rock the boat' (P8). Women who break traditional gender norms by pursuing higher education and leadership roles are likely particularly driven and determined and, thus, potentially good leaders and change agents. Therefore, there is a need for the higher authorities, both NU and DSHE, to promote younger leaders and women as principals of the colleges if they want to improve the quality of education within this sector.

Finally, any effort by the BAC has little impact if the fundamental challenges of infrastructure, governance, leadership, quality of teachers, students, and teaching and learning are not addressed. Lack of national and college-level leadership is critical for success. Thus without major policy interventions, QA training by BAC has minimal impact. This was evidenced by the poor uptake by colleges to implement the IQAC. Only one out of the 54 briefed established an IQAC, and the middle leaders interviewed pointed out the significant role of the principal of the college in making this happen. Nonetheless, BAC must continue these awareness training campaigns by focusing more on teachers and classroom pedagogical change. In conducting this training, BAC

should be able to spotlight the various infrastructure, leadership and quality challenges to the NU, DSHE and the Ministry of Education.

Drawing on the above discussion, four main recommendations can be put forward to ensure a more successful implementation of QA activities in Bangladeshi colleges. The first two focus on the classroom and are the easiest to implement, building on the highly successful CEDP training. Firstly, there is a need for BAC to continue to conduct QA awareness training to help college teachers and leaders understand how they could implement QA activities in their classroom context. Secondly, NU needs to empower teachers and give them autonomy. When teachers are more confident to initiate relevant change within their teaching practice, QA happens. Teacher leaders could be empowered by encouraging college leaders to be more proactive in their instructional leadership practices and thus improve the quality of teaching, learning, and student experience.

The next two recommendations from this study are to address the existing challenges related to the infrastructure barriers, student quality and teacher-student ratio. First, there is a need for DSHE to sit and have open discussions internally and with NU. This discussion should start with the remit of the colleges and how infrastructure barriers can be reduced. Open communication between policymakers is vital for a successful college sector. Finally, community support can be critical in ensuring the aims of the college sector are met and improving college readiness to implement QA activities. Some participants have underscored the importance of parents' and communities' support in every initiative taken by college authorities, including the introduction and implementation of QA activities in these colleges. Given the huge number of colleges across Bangladesh, societal support is crucial. Industries, for example, can help prepare graduates for employment and create more employment opportunities. Parents can ensure that the right environment and support are provided to their children, including ensuring that they attend their classes regularly. While the recommendation may not fully solve the challenges faced by the college sector and make it more ready to implement QA activities, this study shows that putting some of these in place helps alleviate the fundamental challenges faced by the sector.

Moving forward, it is important to study in detail the roles of NU and DSHE in the management of the affiliated colleges to improve college readiness to implement QA activities. Policies affecting

these must be revised to enable greater autonomy for colleges to implement QA activities, and appointment and promotion regulations should also be reviewed to ensure capable and supportive leadership. Perhaps it is time to consider a moratorium on new colleges. The sector has grown too rapidly, and many subpar colleges produce poorly qualified students in mass and do not serve the interest of their students or the nation. In addition, the sheer number of affiliated colleges makes it difficult for NU to oversee teaching/curricula and stretches the already limited resources for teaching faculty and infrastructure to the minimum. Putting a stop to further expansion of the college network and strengthening existing colleges instead through better resourcing and support would be the *sine qua non* for improving the overall quality of college education. Further, some existing colleges could potentially be merged to help pool resources.

7. PROJECT MANAGEMENT

The project's original work plan is shown in Table 6. All activities were successfully completed, although data collection had to be stretched from the original plan due to lower than expected response from targeted participants. The survey was kept open until December 2022, and the FGDs (interviews) were carried out between September and November for college staff, and December and the first week of January for Policy makers. Travel to Bangladesh to interview policy makers could not be carried out as foreseen, due to difficulty of obtaining relevant permissions in time. Entry requirements for foreigners remain strict in Bangladesh after Covid-19. Nonetheless, the policy-makers' FGDs were moved online and successfully completed with many deep insights.

Table 6. Activity Gantt Chart, February to December 2022

No.	Activity	Jan-22	Feb-22	Mar-22	Apr-22	May-22	Jun-22	Jul-22	Aug-22	Sep-22	Oct-22	Nov-22	Dec-22
1	Desk Research												
2	Piloting of Questionnaire												
3	Administration of Survey												
4	Interviews - Participants												
5	Interviews - Policy Makers												
6	Mid-term Report												
7	Final Report Preparation												
8	Final Report												

The project team had the following members:

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- Prof. Sanjoy Adhikary, Member, Bangladesh Accreditation Council
- Dr. Renee Chew Shiun Yee, Centre for Academic Partnerships and Engagement (CAPE), University of Nottingham Malaysia
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- Dr Riina Jalonen, Project Coordinator, School of Education, University of Nottingham Malaysia
- Mr A.K.M. Ifthekharul Alam Chowdhury, Graduate Research Assistant, Master Teacher graduate of the CEDP project and Assistant Professor at a college in Bangladesh

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Appendix 1. Cover letter of the survey

24 May 2022

Invitation to participate in a Survey to Assess Institutional Readiness to Implement Quality Assurance Activities in the College Sector in Bangladesh

Dear Colleagues,

The University of Nottingham Malaysia, in collaboration with Bangladesh Accreditation Council (BAC), is carrying out a study, 'Assessing Institutional Readiness to Implement Quality Assurance Activities'. The study focuses on institutional readiness of tertiary level colleges in Bangladesh identified by BAC as the first phase colleges (the colleges) in implementing quality assurance activities. These include using Outcome-Based Education (OBE) and incorporating appropriate techniques and resources to support teaching and learning activities in these colleges. The study shall also identify the readiness of teachers and leaders trained under the College Education Development Programme (CEDP) to support quality assurance activities initiated by the BAC within the tertiary level colleges. This study is funded by the International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE).

This questionnaire is to gauge the readiness of the colleges, leaders, and teachers to implement quality assurance. We seek your generous participation in the survey. Your responses will help us plan for further training and support for teachers and leaders to build their confidence in quality assurance so as to support the growth of the college sector in Bangladesh.

The survey questionnaire will take about 20 minutes. Your participation in this research study is voluntary, and you may choose to withdraw consent to participate freely and at any time. Should you choose to participate, your responses will be managed in the strictest confidence. Furthermore, this survey does not collect any identifying information such as your name, email address or IP address. No individual response will be identified in the final report.

In the questionnaire, you will be asked about your perception on the implementation of quality assurance practices and standards provided in the Self-Assessment Manual. This manual was published by the Quality Assurance Unit, Universities Grants Commission, Ministry of Education, Bangladesh in 2016. The ten standards for quality assurance are provided here: www.iiuc.ac.bd/home/show-pdf/files4dZfTMdaau8PzjIz8h9RAccreditation-Standards-CriteriaT4CIV47CEU5qOj2ShAtD. If you are not familiar with the standards, please review them before responding. A Bengali translation of the consent letter and the main sections of the survey are provided in the attachment, in case helpful.

The survey will be followed up with focus group discussions. In the survey you will be asked about your interest to participate in these follow-up discussions. Invitations to the focus groups will be sent once the survey stage is completed.

To start the survey, please click the following link: www.surveymonkey.com/r/N8FYT5V.

Kindly respond to the survey before **21 July 2022**.

Yours Sincerely,

Associate Professor Dr Rozilini Fernandez-Chung (Lead Investigator)

Executive Director

Centre for Academic Partnerships and Engagement (CAPE)

University of Nottingham Malaysia

CC:

1. Prof Dr Sanjoy Kumar Adhikary, Member, Bangladesh Accreditation Council
2. Dr Riina Jalonen – Project Coordinator, School of Education, University of Nottingham Malaysia
3. Mr A K M Ifthekharul Alam Chowdhury, Project Officer and Nottingham Master Trainer Associate, University of Nottingham Malaysia

Appendixes:

1. Participant information sheet (Bengali translation) and consent sheet
2. Institutional readiness questions in the survey (Bengali translation)

Appendix 2. Interview Schedules for the Focus Group Discussions

Note:

- (a) We will attach a brief introduction on QA activities in Bangladesh and Standards for the nine QA Dimensions BD with this interview schedule.
- (b) The survey findings will inform some of the initial questions to be asked in the interview. To these, we will add the following:

Appendix 2(a): Interview Schedule for Teachers

1. What are some examples of QA activities that you have implemented in your classrooms?
2. How can senior leaders support the implementation of quality assurance activities at your college?
3. Centralised curriculum and examination are major quality concerns among teachers. What are some of the short, mid, and long-term actions that can be taken to ensure some of the quality standards indicated in the Self-Assessment Manual can be met?
4. The teacher-student ratio in the college sector is another fundamental concern. What measures are implemented to reduce this ratio? How successful are these in ensuring benchmark standards are met?
5. Bangladesh QA implements an outcome-based education (OBE) system. How ready are you after the CEDP training to implement OBE in your classroom? What other training is required to prepare you better to implement quality assurance activities in your classrooms?
6. With a large student population, the largely outdated physical resource are stretched. What actions are required to ensure that these are updated and increased to meet quality standards?

Appendix 2(b); Interview Schedule for Future Leaders

1. How can the National University and Ministry of Education support the implementation of quality assurance activities at your college?
2. Centralised curriculum and examination are major quality concerns among teachers. What are some of the short, mid, and long-term actions that you can take to meet/achieve some of the quality standards indicated in the Self-Assessment Manual?
3. The teacher-student ratio in the college sector is another fundamental concern. What measures are implemented to reduce this ratio? How successful are these in ensuring benchmark standards are met?
4. Bangladesh QA implements an outcome-based education system. How ready are you and your teachers to implement OBE in your classroom? What other training is required to prepare you better to implement quality assurance activities in your classrooms?
5. With a large student population, the largely outdated physical resource are stretched. What actions are required of the National University and Ministry of Education to ensure that these are updated and increased to meet quality standards?

Appendix 2(c): Interview Schedule for Policymakers

As part of the research project ‘Assessing Institutional Readiness to Implement Quality Assurance Activities’, we conducted surveys and focus group discussions on challenges and opportunities to strengthen quality assurance in the Bangladesh college sector, with nearly 500 participants. The results indicate that fundamental problems in the college sector, such as lack of human and financial resources and infrastructure prevent college teachers and leaders from effectively implementing Outcome-Based Education and other quality assurance activities. Efforts to train teachers and leaders on Outcome-Based Education are important for generating awareness of and demand for quality assurance within colleges but are insufficient to bring about widespread change unless the issues with the enabling environment are simultaneously resolved. Thus, the question for the research team is how the change towards improving the quality of college education can be best effected through a shared vision, strategies, broad participation, and leadership of relevant stakeholders. College sector readiness to implement quality assurance can only be enhanced through a concerted effort by all stakeholders, and this focus group discussion would like to hear from policymakers.

- 1) Participants in this study have highlighted numerous challenges with the quality of college education, such as very high staff-student ratios, poor college infrastructure and student attendance. If not addressed, these concerns will significantly impact college staff, students and fresh graduates, and society.
 - What strategies are in place to ensure a better staff-student ratio, improved infrastructure and overall quality of students (thru’ entrance exams, for example)?
- 2) The Bangladesh Accreditation Council (BAC) and its initiative to establish Institutional Quality Assurance Cells (IQAC) is seen as a way to increase institutional awareness and readiness to implement quality assurance activities at colleges. However, the uptake has been very slow.
 - What can college/university/ministry-level leadership do to reverse this trend?
 - Are any other strategies identified/implemented to improve the uptake of quality assurance activities in the college?
- 3) All QA sectors require champions. Who are they in the colleges, NU, DSHE, and UGC? What role do they have, and how are these manifested? Are there any examples where successes were recorded? What role does CEDP play in enhancing quality?
- 4) What are the low-hanging fruits of implementing QA in the college sector? What are some of the improvements that could be made relatively quickly and easily with existing resources to initiate/strengthen QA?
- 5) Regulatory bodies play a crucial role in ensuring sustainable quality assurance and promotion. What are some of the immediate activities identified by the policymakers to achieve sustainable quality assurance promotion and practice? How are they communicated to the colleges? What is the current level of uptake?

Appendix 3. Needs and Challenges in College QA Readiness: Survey responses from Open-ended questions

(Question: What issues do you face with QA in (a) your classroom, (b) department/college, (c) any other areas? What support do you need to implement QA?)

Responses are organised according to Bangladesh Accreditation Council Standards (BAC (n.d))

1. Governance

Issues:

- Lack of goals and objectives around QA
 - *(i)n other areas' challenges such as the institution's notion of quality; the quality management goals, objectives and expected outcomes; a framework for the quality management*
- Lack of communication
- Very large class sizes
 - *It is very difficult to implement quality assurance activity in classroom because the no. of student is huge*
 - *More and more students*

Support needed:

- Participation of concern stakeholders actively.

2. Leadership, responsibility and autonomy

Issues:

- Inadequate institutional support, lack of commitment from leadership
 - *Indifference of the head of the department to take better initiatives*
 - *Mind-set, administrative complexity, lack of efficiency of officials are some big challenges.*
 - *Indifferent of authority, delay in decision making. Logistic and mental support is not given in time.*
 - *Little emphasis from the leaders to change situations. Rather, they have been used to cope well with the inefficient education system.*
 - *Leadership is yet to build*
- Other priorities by leadership
 - *College leaders might not support the QA activities due to being overburdened with administrative and other non-academic activities.*
 - *Main problems is that lack of consciousness among higher authority. Sometimes they stop a innovation work for insufficient money.*
- Internal politics; all staff are not treated equally
 - *Not giving equal opportunity to all teachers in the department. Too much sympathy for someone or one eye policy towards someone, which is an obstacle to work.*
- Difficult to get permission for activities
 - *HOD single decision maker and dominator*

- *Making boss transforming to leaders*
- Resistance to change, not pro-active; especially senior staff
 - *Doubt on outcome in some cases, rush in management & exam of national university.*
 - *Senior teachers are not want to involve in implementing QA activities.*
 - *In my department the other senior teachers taking no actions for ensuring the regularity of the students*
- Criticism, mocking, jealousy among staff
 - *Lack of congenial atmosphere in this Covid-19 pandemic situation*
 - *Some negative feedback and criticism from other colleagues*
- Lack of collaboration and assistance from different stakeholders.
 - *It will be very difficult to (make them) understand them the effectiveness of QAA.*
 - *Student Politics are not active for Positive Development such as this area QA*
- Lack of financial resources

Support needed:

- *Managing committee can play a significant role to implement it.*
- *Administrative and financial support from the head of the Institute.*
- *The college administration and management are to come forward. They want improvements in practices, performances but are not ready to allow teachers to go for training or other improvement efforts. They just want teachers to be present in the classroom on time but are interested to know what a teacher is doing in the class.*
- *Principals proper training*
- *Create harmony among teachers*

3. Integrity and transparency

Issues:

- Lack of transparency and accountability
 - *Unequal distribution of duties, responsibilities, absence or accountability are some of the big issue*
- Political interference
 - *In College we have many barriers in the way of implementing QA activities i.e. local political pressure, outsiders invasion in open campus, teachers connection with political group etc.*
 - *unreached seminar, political threat*
- Students' absenteeism
 - *Students do not come in classes regularly and they run after certificate*
 - *remote area students always face struggle for attend in clas*
- Other student behaviour
 - *Students are not engaged, they are not ready, they have some other interests.*
 - *Lack of student awareness about their study*
 - *Negative attitude*
 - *Many students are unwilling to attend in the internal examinations.*
 - *students are not willing to study for the system of national university*
 - *Many students are more interested in checking their text messages than in paying attention and they lack respect for authority motivation.*
 - *Student politics is the root of most of the problems.*

Support needed:

- *Stopping political interference*
- *In college campus every students need to follow rules of an educational institution. We should teach them mannerism which should include in our curriculum.*
- *Behaviour & mannerism should be introduced as a part of curriculum*
- *To ensure the present of maximum students is much more essential for QA.*
- *For successful QA activities implementation, students need to be present in the class.*

4. Curriculum

Issues:

- Lengthy syllabus, inadequate time
 - *A lot of topics in one subject*
 - *Number of class we get is not enough to finish the syllabus*
 - *We are affiliated by National university which isn't capable of giving the students enough time to complete the syllabus provided.*
- Focus on mostly standardized test
 - *Centralized curriculum, high stake public examination, pressure of completing syllabus and preparing learners only for coming examination*

Support needed:

- *down top (bottom-up?) syllabus and curriculum*
- *Nu exam should be decreased*
- *Curriculum should be updated*

5. Teaching-learning and assessment

Issues:

- Limited class time
- Teachers' difficulties in designing activity/material.
 - *In my college lack of time for planning, balancing diverse learning needs, tight deadlines etc.*
 - *Different types of students, lack of effective communication, time management.*
 - *not all students are equal and everyone can not answer all kinds of question*
- Implementation of lesson plan
- Student engagement
 - *May not get proper feedback from student.*
 - *Students are not interested for q/a....*
 - *Students shyness*
- Class management
 - *Disciplining students.*
 - *High noise level*
 - *the number of students is so high that it becomes difficult to control them*
- Classroom assessment
 - *Our assessment system does not ensure quality*
 - *Inadequate Experience with Test Automation*
- Concerns of student response to the introduction of QA
 - *The class may be out of control if they are suddenly introduced with new ideas*

- *This is a new idea to the students and they might show reluctance.*
- *Students' mental readiness to cope up with the new addition*
- Mental health issues
 - being encouraging and motivating under challenging time,

Support needed:

- I need a QA activities tools and as well as proper guidance to learners
- The college leaders should give active support, inspiration, and motivation—workshop or training on implementing QA activities in the classroom or college.
- Lesson should be more attractive.
- I need up-to-date technology that can help me manage the large number of students' presents and monitor their activity.
- I need resources related the course, change of current assessment system,
- Formative assessment
- (Students) should be bounded to attend in class regularly by giving more marks in attendance.
- I think , students are accept it, if they know QA properly
- i have applied my training experience in my class and i am getting better performance.

6. Student admission and support services

Issues:

- Student material and selection
 - *Low level of Students selection for Higher education.*
 - *Poor communication skills, monolingual*
 - *Students of poor abilities*
 - *Students are not class oriented.*

7. Faculty and professional staff

Issues:

- Teachers lack skills, professional development opportunities
 - *Nobody in my department is known about QA activities*
 - *Lacking of teachers' training*
 - *Not every teacher enough skilled to implement*
 - *Most of the teachers in the department are not well trained.*
- Students -teacher ratio.
 - *Few Teachers so work pressure*
 - *There are too few colleagues to perform the job well.*
 - *Only three teachers are working whereas it should be 12 teachers. No post creation since the birth of the college though the number of students has increased manifold.*
- Workload
 - *Some of the potential challenges that I might face when implementing quality assurance activities that's like.... Disciplining students, endless paperwork and extended working hours.*
 - *All teachers might not like implementing QA activities because they need more expertise, effort and involvement along with their regular duties.*
 - *We have taken many classes in our College, so we have no extra time for QA*

- *Internal duties and responsibilities, including exam duties*
- Attitudes
 - *Not all colleges are in same mind, not willing to adopt it*
 - *not being open to new methods, averse to change from traditional method*
 - *Some teachers are very traditional. and resistance to change*
 - *Privet practice of teachers will be an obstacle for QA activities.*
- Incentives
 - *Poor job environment, security concern in workplaces*
 - *Promotion system in not satisfactory.*
 - *Salary structure of teachers and stuffs should be upgraded for QA activities.*

Support needed:

- *Competitive remuneration packages.*
- *Empowerment of teacher.*
- *Training along with follow-up of given training; Training or workshop after a certain time to check back the skill level*
- *Frequent training and follow up if the training is fruitful or not and also follow up if the teachers are implementing their training. The leaders should keep eye on their class if they are capable of giving the feedback of their training and leaders should count their response.*
- *Other duty may reduced*
- *Need proper guidelines.*
- *When all teachers are trained up then that is easier for us.*

8. Facilities and resources

Issues:

- Lack of classrooms
 - *Our class room is not modernize. It is small and crowded.*
 - *Shortage of classroom. Lack of modern classroom.*
 - *Many students participate the class and class size is small*
 - *Communication is hard.*
- Lack of technology
 - *Large number of students are admitted but shortage of digital classrooms.*
 - *Lack of ICT tools like multimedia classroom*
 - *Not furnished to ensure blended learning.*
 - *Internet, network problem*
 - *The classroom is not well decorated like Multimedia with a laptop, no air-conditioning, no strong broadband Wi-Fi connection.*
 - *We have shortage of PC, digital monitor etc. in our classroom*
- Lack of basic equipment
 - *There is no projector in class. All students do not have mobile phones. There is no round table for group work.*
 - *Reference Books are not available and there is no scope to research*
- Students' own resources
 - *some students don't have modern devices to keep pace with the class*

- Maximum students are below standard life style. So they cannot afford electric device needed for this method.
- *Facilities for faculty*
 - The authority / NU should ensure personal laptop and wifi for the dept.
 - No individual room for the teacher to study.
 - *Well-decorated room for teachers that they study there*

9. Research and scholarly activities

Issues:

- *Less opportunities about research*
- *Co-curricular and Research sector*

10. Monitoring, Evaluation and Continual improvement

Issues:

- Lack of M&E
 - *Lack of funding, lack of material resources for the operation of the programme, lack of structural framework for monitoring and evaluating the outcomes of the implementation of the strategic plan.*
 - *Having proper guidelines and planning from the respective authority to implement QA activities could be a potential challenge. Because generally initiatives could be taken but implementation through a well-structured plan or adequate monitoring of the QA activities could be missing.*
 - *Lack of clear goals and success criteria. ... Budgeting issues. ...*
 - In any other areas not enough implication (implementation?) and communication, not enough motivation, too much documentation etc.
- Financial management
 - *Tender, Budget management, audit & inspection*

Support needed:

- Set up the right environment for QA, be clear on requirements etc.
- Close and effective monitoring and support from higher authority
- Performance Evaluation properly
- A well-structured plan or manual on how QA activities should be implemented where goals and objectives will be mentioned depending on the deadlines.
- I need a QA activities tools and explain the outcomes

11. Others

Issues:

- Lack of parent involvement
 - *Guardians are not conscious*
 - *Parent's lack of interest to educate their children is also an obstacle to QA*
- Societal values
 - *the honour of a teacher decreasing day by day*
 - *No honour in social system.*
- Government roles

- *Need government rules and regulations supporting.*
- *government support to ensure security in workplaces lastly*
- Scale of the issues
 - *Many colleges in Bangladesh faces this problem.*

Appendix 4. Teachers and Leaders Focus Group Discussion Notes

Codes	Category	Themes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proper lesson plans • Focus on outcome-based education • Marking following rubrics • Continual feedback • Use active learning strategy • Integrate, collaborate, communicate to increase interaction, there are many opportunities to engage the students and to enhance their learning activities, their participation 	Lessons Learnt from Trainings CEDP	Training impact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality is the continuous process • Establishing IQAC will be very helpful to promote quality assurance 	Current status of QA implementation	Current practice
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student engagement in class • Quality of students • Liability of student's liability of teachers • Students lagged behind from their study • Staff student ration is very high • There's a gap between the college authority and the teachers and students • No defined goals of outcome-based education • Teachers going into class without proper lesson plans • No follow-up instruction • Syllabus, evaluation system is not aligned with OBE • Authorities don't know what OBE is • Evaluation system is not proper • Withdrawal of admission test led to quality drop of students • Leadership problem • Fresh grads not fulfilling the 21st century skills • English language proficiency is very poor of our National University students and they are very poor in ICT background • Students are not engaged in presentation, presentation activities, debate activities 	Barriers to implementation	Barriers and gaps
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transforming to the ICT knowledge and ICT based knowledge • Focus on outcome-based education • Guardian meeting like the teacher and guardian should meet once a month • Continual feedback • Motivate students/ counselling them • Marking following rubrics 	Steps to be taken	Recommendations

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage the teachers to work in the rural area, giving more incentives • Identify students need by talking to students • Implementation of flipped classroom/ blended learning • Teachers need more training • Introduce digital ICT based education • Provide an organized multimedia classroom and AC classroom • Teachers should be involved more in decision-making • National University should upgrade the syllabus and curriculum to incorporate OBE in their process • Time management training is very important • Recruit more teachers • Resources should be distributed properly • Teachers' engagement is important • Engage students in educational activities • Government or ministry of education or CEDP should be established regular internet connection or electricity • National university should have proper planning • For orienting OBE to the leaders that is the head of the departments the principals and the other teachers they can be trained in in-house training programme or online training • Increase the quality of the college education - quality teachers, good students, environment and their access to technology • Positive attitude certainly is important to facilitate positive change but the nature of work has to be determined • Teaching HSC and teaching degree or postgraduate will be different skills and the teachers must be, must be trained adequately in teaching these different groups of students here • Instructional leaders need empowerment 		
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