

External Quality Assessment of Higher National Diploma Programmes Offered in Sri Lanka: An Account of Best Practices

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Abstract

Quality assurance activities that are carried out in the Sri Lankan university system since 2002 were introduced to the alternative higher education sector in 2010. External quality assessment reviews of Higher National Diploma (HND) programmes offered in eleven Advanced Technological Institutes (ATIs) located in different regions of the country were carried out to identify the good practices, strengths and weaknesses and make suitable recommendations to improve the quality of those programmes. The aspects reviewed were curriculum design, content and review; teaching, learning and assessment methods; quality of students, their progress and achievements; use of student feedback; peer observation; skills development; and academic guidance and counseling. The objective of the present study was to determine whether there are regional differences among ATIs when the good practices that are in place in different HND programmes are considered. Good practices identified by the reviewers in external quality assessment review reports of HND programmes in Accountancy, Agriculture, Business administration, English, Information Technology and Management conducted in Ampara, Dehiwala, Jaffna, Kandy, Kegalle, Kurunegala, Labuduwa and Trincomalee ATIs were analyzed using Principal Component Analysis to determine whether there are regional differences among ATIs with respect to good practices that are in place in each programme. Results indicated that the good practices identified by reviewers in different HND programmes do not depend on the location of the ATI, ethnicity of the major community and prevalence of deterrent factors such as armed secessionist conflicts in the area. Differences in the resources available and the motivation and dedication of the staff may have contributed to the differences in the good practices that are in place in different ATIs.

Key words: Quality assurance, good practices, Sri Lanka