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The use of quality assurance assessment grading for performance evaluation of public universities in Sri Lanka

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Quality assurance rating systems can help parents and students to make informed choices regarding university selection. The existing evaluation procedure for academic programmes in Sri Lanka is based on peer reviewers' judgments on eight selected aspects and the outcome is revealed based on a three level ordinal scale, as Unsatisfactory (C), Satisfactory (B) and Good (A). However, there is no formal method for calculating an overall programme performance indicator within the quality assurance (QA) process in Sri Lanka. The purpose of this study is to assess the applicability and use of quality assurance grading for performance ranking of public universities in Sri Lanka.

Secondary data for programme grading in ten selected universities were obtained from the Sri Lankan Quality Assurance and Accreditation Council. Data for faculties of science, agriculture, humanities, social science and management were available. Twenty four total credit values were assigned to eight aspects that are currently used in programme evaluation depending on the relevance of the given evaluation aspects in monitoring programme performance. Three values were assigned for the grading and a formula was developed to calculate the final programme score as the Average Program Performance Index (APPI). Descriptive, regression analysis and ANOVA were used to compare and identify the performance score and the deviation across faculties and universities.

Findings revealed that APPI ranges between 2.7 and 3.8. Similar results are observed when considering the specific quality aspects of the programme. This indicates that the performance scores are different within the faculties in the sample selected. However, this GPA difference varied among faculties. While significant deviations in programme performance exist in the faculties of science and management, such deviations are not observed in faculties of agriculture and arts. Results from the regression analysis proved that performance among universities are also different.

The study concluded that the reviewers judgmental grading can be used as identifying the performance differences and the best performer among faculties in the public funded universities using the proposed model for programme performance calculation. Findings of this study can be used to identify the highest performer and that can be used as the baseline to compare the performance between universities.

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