

QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ACCREDITATION REQUIREMENTS OF THE COLLEGE OF SCIENCE AND ARTS IN YANBU' IN LIGHT OF THE STANDARDS OF THE NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR ACADEMIC ACCREDITATION AND ASSESSMENT

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Abstract:

This research aimed to explore the requirements of implementing quality assurance and accreditation requirements of the College of Science and Arts in Yanbu' in light of the standards of the National Commission for Academic Accreditation and Assessment. The research tool was a questionnaire composed of three aspects:

One: Achieving the quality assurance requirements in line with some fields.

Two: Teachers' awareness of the culture of quality.

Three: Difficulties and requirements of achieving quality.

It also includes individual interviewing of the sample members, where the research tool was applied to the college teachers. Moreover, the researchers used the descriptive methodology to identify the reality of quality and accreditation at the college using the statistic analysis pack to draw conclusions. The findings unveiled that there are some difficulties that obstruct the achievement of quality and academic accreditation in the College of Science and Arts in Yanbu', the most paramount of which is understanding the vision and mission of the college and the need of faculty members for culture in the field of quality and academic accreditation. This is in addition to the tools, devices and learning resources which require to be supported to actualize quality requirements. In light of these findings, the two researchers have given a proposed perception for achieving quality and accreditation in the college in addition to the implementation mechanism that guarantees the success of whatever is given through the proposed perception.

Key Words: Quality, Accreditation Requirements, Academic Accreditation, Assessment

Introduction:

It is globally long-established that university is a community foundation that bears command and leadership responsibility. As it holds knowledge and intellect it has been established by the community to bear this responsibility. Hence, it is demanded to give effective training to the citizen now and in the future.

It is stated that there are several challenges that face educational systems in the present age, compelling many countries of the world to respond to the need to improve the quality of education. Many world conferences have stressed that the major challenge of educational systems in the 21st century is not only confined to providing education for all individuals but that education must be provided with the highest level of quality and that the existence and continuance of any educational institution basically depends on competition and attraction of beneficiaries through the provision of services with comprehensive quality.

The rapid developments going on in the world which have obligated all countries of the world to become involved in competition at local, regional and global levels and called them to operate based on standard, have given rise to comprehensive quality wherein many countries are paying attention to it and working towards implementing it in several fields.

Based on that, many universities of the world have adopted the system of quality and academic accreditation, created quality assurance mechanisms to develop and improve all

perspectives of university education, overcome its problems and achieve the satisfaction of beneficiaries of their services. Furthermore, several international conferences have been conducted on this issue and numerous Arab countries have paid attention to the implementation of quality and accreditation in their universities. This is portrayed clearly in the holding of many symposia and conferences in Arabian universities. The UNESCO regional office, in response to the Doha Declaration in the Conference of Ministers of Education on the quality of education, which was held in Doha in September 2010, has taken the educational initiative encouraging Arab countries on the importance of quality control in education and emphasizing the abject need to assess and review educational outcomes, create an Arabian control commission and a regional research program specialized in the quality of education.

It is noteworthy that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is not negligent of the global attention being paid to quality university education. The Ministry of Higher education has launched a global leadership program in Saudi universities as one of the developmental projects of quality in the institutions of higher learning in the Kingdom. This program, known as the “global leadership program”, is meant to improve performance standard in the institutions of higher learning in the Kingdom. Universities have taken advantage of this program through the establishment of a special unit for leadership and excellence culture dissemination and the propagation of the standards and indicators of global classifications to universities and making effort to analyze the environment using SWOT analysis to determine the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in order to formulate a perception for improvement and development.

Accreditation is considered one of the terms that have emerged recently as a strategy for quality assurance in education. It aims to achieve the recognition of the intellectual level of an educational institution and its outputs. Accreditation materialized in the United States of America based on the concept that it is the community’s right to ensure that its institutions are properly performing the roles for which they were established. Hence, it was defined as “an evaluative process that an external institution does to educational institutions and programs in order to help them achieve quality and recognition”.

Accreditation aims to verify the intellectual and educational level of the institution and persuade it to carry out self-evaluation of its educational programs. It also encourages competition among various educational institutions to ensure that an institution has achieved the least level of the necessary requirements of producing quality graduates and fills the community with confidence about its efficiency. The significance of accreditation is based on the fact that it creates confidence, grants global recognition and curtails the risks of not meeting the community needs and confidence in the educational institution by striving to prove its efficiency according to a set of standards in form of resources, field experience, faculty members, diversification, assessment and actual learning outcomes.

Based on the previously mentioned, under the framework of the attention being paid by the Kingdom to education and the focus on the issue of quality in institutions of higher education, it was natural for the issue of performance evaluation and quality assurance in the institutions of higher learning in the Kingdom, to occupy a very paramount position in the strategies of educational development. Planned efforts to develop higher and common education have been marked out by the National Commission for Academic Accreditation and Assessment in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for the purpose of preparing standards and touchstones for assessment and academic accreditation.

Research problem and significance:

Academic accreditation has become the world trend for revitalizing education. There is a strong trend in the Kingdom towards implementing it in the institutions of higher education in the attempt to develop and promote their outputs. Since the college of Science and Arts in Yanbu’ is one of the university institutions that crave after quality assurance in all elements of the educational process to actualize Taibah university’s slogan which it belongs and which comes in form of speedy achievement and quality performance, a department for quality assurance and development has been established in the College. Hence, it became a necessity to identify the availability of the requirements of quality assurance and academic accreditation in the college and the difficulties that may face its implementation. As a result, the research problem can be characterized in the following queries:

1. What are the requirements of quality assurance and academic accreditation in light of the standards of the National Commission for Academic Accreditation and Assessment in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia?
2. What is the reality of the College of Science and Arts in Yanbu' in light of the standards of the National Commission for Academic Accreditation and Assessment?
3. What are the obstacles that can obstruct the implementation of the system of quality assurance and academic accreditation in the College of Science and Arts in Yanbu'?
4. What is the proposed perception to implement the system of quality assurance and academic accreditation in the college?

Research methodology and steps:

To address the research problem, descriptive approach was used adopting the following steps:

1. Presentation and analysis of a set of previous Arabic and foreign researches to identify the concepts and problems addressed by them and how the present research has taken advantage of them.
2. Displaying the concept, objectives, characteristics and kinds of academic accreditation.
3. Survey and analysis of the requirements of quality assurance and academic accreditation in light of the standards of the National Commission for Academic Accreditation and Assessment in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.
4. Unveiling the reality of the College of Science and Arts in Yanbu' in light of the requirements of quality assurance and academic accreditation and the major envisaged obstacles that may obstruct its implementation in the college.
5. In light of the field research and discussion of its findings, a proposed perception can be devised for the considerations that must be taken into account to implement academic accreditation in the college.

Procedures of the field research:

Research sample:

In light of the research objective that seeks to realize the requirements of quality assurance implementation considering the views of faculty members of the College of Science and Arts in Yanbu', a sample of field research participants has been selected from amongst the faculty members of the college. (The sample included faculty members from various specialties and all subsidiary structures of the college). The two researchers have defined the characteristics of the members of the research sample in the preliminary information as follows: (degree, department, gender, specialty, nationality)⁽²⁶⁴⁾. To ensure better distribution and representation, a random distribution and allotment was done. Out of the one hundred questionnaires distributed to the research sample, fifty one questionnaires were collected and three of them were put aside for not fulfilling all the required clauses. Hence, it is only forty eight questionnaires that were statistically analyzed. The following tables explain the actual distribution of the research sample:

a. Sample distribution according to the "gender" variable:

Table (1) illustrates the distribution of questionnaires to the research sample members from amongst males and females

| S/N | Gender | Quantity | % |
|-------|---------|----------|------|
| 1 | males | 18 | 37.5 |
| 2 | females | 30 | 62.5 |
| Total | | 48 | 100 |

⁽²⁶⁴⁾ This is due to the diversity of the structures under the College of Science and Arts which embrace two buildings for Arts departments and another for Science in addition to a building for half of the students. As a result, the two researchers were keen on ensuring that the research sample comprises faculty members from all buildings in the college and from various specialties.

It is clear from the previous table that distribution of the sample according to the gender variable came in favour of the females with a frequency of 30 and a percentage of 62.5% whereas the males came second with a frequency of 18 and a percentage of 37.5%⁽²⁶⁵⁾.

b. Sample distribution according to the “specialty” variable:

Table (2) illustrates the distribution of questionnaires to the research sample members according to specialty.

| S/N | Specialty | Quantity | % |
|-------|-----------|----------|-------|
| 1 | Science | 27 | 56.25 |
| 2 | Arts | 21 | 43.75 |
| Total | | 48 | 100 |

It is clear from table (2) above that distribution of the sample according to the specialty variable came in favour of the science students with a frequency of 27 and a percentage of 56.25% whereas that of arts came the second position with a frequency of 21 and a percentage of 43.75%.

Research tools:

To achieve the research objectives the following tools have been used:

- 1- Personal interview: which aims to check the views of some faculty members with regards to the necessary requirements of quality implementation and the difficulties that face them during that.
- 2- Questionnaire: as one of the most commonly used research tools. It is also one of the academic research tools that is used to get information and data from the research sample. The questionnaire was designed to identify the requirements of implementing quality and academic accreditation in the College of Science and Arts in Yanbu', and the difficulties obstructing the achievement of quality.

The questionnaire was structured according to the following procedures:

- 1- Reviewing published literature about the research subject.
- 2- Taking advantage of the reports of the National Commission for Academic Accreditation and Assessment and findings of previous studies strongly related to the subject of research which contribute to shedding light on aspects of the research problem and designating and formulating the aspects covered by the questionnaire.
- 3- Verification of the validity and stability of both research tools.

Under each aspect a number of clauses was designated. Each clause of the questionnaire was apportioned a weight listed according to the Likert quintet scale and thus the questionnaire was composed of two parts:

One: Preliminary information about the respondent.

Two: Clauses of the questionnaire that correspond to the research queries and objectives and were composed of three major topics as follows:

- One: Actualizing quality requirements according to some fields.
- Two: Culture and awareness of the faculty members of the culture of quality.
- Three: difficulties and requirements of achieving quality, which includes:
 - Statistical processing techniques:

To analyze the research data, information was inputted and analyzed using the SPSS program⁽²⁶⁶⁾.

⁽²⁶⁵⁾ Variation in the number of the research sample members between males and females is ascribed to the existence of such variation in the original community where the number of females in the college exceeds that of males.

⁽²⁶⁶⁾ Su'ud bin Dhahyan, 'Ezzat Abdul-Hamid Muhammad Hasan, Mu'alajatul-bayaanaat Bistikhdam barnamaj (SPSS 10), vol. 2. Riyadh, King Fahd National Library, 2002, pp. 642.

Field research findings:

Findings related to the first topic: Actualizing quality requirements according to some reliable fields:

- Faculty members agreed with the statements of the first standard that relates with the mission, ends and objectives as a requirement for achieving quality and academic accreditation at a degree ranging between high and very high.
- The findings revealed that the second standard relating to administrative authorities has been achieved at a high grade with a proportion of eleven statements against ten at an average level. The least grade was attained by statements about the department of quality management in the college with respect to its functions and operation mechanism, the role played by faculty members in spreading the culture of quality and the procedures it takes to assess reports and programs.
- Faculty members agreed with the statements of the third standard relating to learning and teaching with a grade between high and average. The least grade was attained by statements about the procedures of periodic review, outputs of the teaching process that do not correspond with the outputs of the teaching program and objectives, giving students the basic skills of engaging in professions, tests, learning environment and the suitability of classrooms meant to habilitate program students in order to win their satisfaction.
- Most of the statements of the fourth standard that addressed learning resources got responses at poor and very poor degrees while only one statement relating to the availability of enough and modern references in the library was affirmatively responded to at an average degree.
- The degrees of teachers agreement with the statements of the fifth standard dealing with (facilities and equipment) ranged between average and poor wherein faculty members did not agree with the statements relating to building space, safety and security devices, laboratories and their equipment and areas allocated for students activities which are the aspects the research findings revealed not to have been achieved at an acceptable level.
- The findings unveiled that faculty members are highly cultured about the requirements of quality and academic accreditation.
- The findings also disclosed that there are genuine difficulties that obstruct the achievement of quality and that most difficulties are in form of obscurity of concepts, insufficient material and human potentials, procedures require efforts and time, lack of incentives, the difficulty of identifying the real training requirement of programs and difficulty in identifying performance standard.
- There are no variations with statistic significance at a level of (0.05) between the averages of the responses of members of the research sample depending on the gender variable (males - females).
- There are no variations with statistic significance at a level of (0.05) between the averages of the responses of members of the research sample depending on the specialty variable (Science - Arts).

Proposed perception:

Based on the findings of the current study with its dual aspects: theoretical and practical which stressed the existence of a set of problems relating to the reality of quality assurance in the College of Science and Arts in Yanbu' that obstruct the achievement of quality assurance and academic accreditation, a proposed perception of the requirements and mechanisms of attaining quality and accreditation requirements in the college has been made.

The aim underlying the proposed perception:

The proposed perception aims to attempt achieving quality and accreditation requirements in the College of Science and Arts in Yanbu' in light of the standards of the National Commission for Academic Accreditation and Assessment through the following:

- Devising a set of requirements to attempt achieving quality and accreditation in the College of Science and Arts in Yanbu'.
- Proposing a set of mechanisms to implement these requirements.

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Cooperative learning as a powerful approach in teaching English

Nowadays the English language plays an important role not only in the world, also in our country, too. It is also connected with the realization of the cultural project "Tri-unity of languages" in Kazakhstan, because the most important requirement for us, as instructors of a foreign language, is qualitative providing of services in the field of education throughout the country according to the international standards.

The most important aspect of our research is that we have to investigate the role of the cooperative learning as one of the contemporary approaches which can play a crucial role in teaching English as a foreign language.

Teaching English as a second language is not an easy task. There are basic principles common to all good language teaching. As English is borrowed from German languages, teaching English for Kazakh people requires a lot of power, because Kazakh language is rather different from English language as it is one of the types of Turkish languages. For instance, in comparing Kazakh and English, the English sounds [ð], [θ] do not have equivalents in Kazakh that a Kazakh speaker can sound the words father and thick as [fa'zr] and [sik]. Grammatical interference takes place when word order in sentences, consequence of tenses and etc. in English deviate as the result of L1 influence. In an English learner's speech of Kazakh people grammatical interference is mostly revealed in word order of positive sentences, as in Kazakh positive sentence the verb is put at the very end of a sentence. Second field where grammatical interference occurs is the usage of prepositions in English as in Kazakh prepositions are given through endings.

But there are many differences not only in grammar or pronunciation, but in the whole structure. On the other hand, teachers who want to develop successful lessons faces different kinds of problems: lack of material, lack of technologies etc. Another challenge is a student who does not have any motivation for lessons. According to Hammer, uncooperative and unmotivated students are a serious problem and can easily disrupt the instructional process²⁶⁷.

That is why, in teaching English we try to give everything in clear way and also we must try not to make them get bored at English lessons.

The usage of modern technologies are becoming more and more actual in teaching foreign languages. In native and foreign publications the most effective ways of teaching foreign languages are considered as one of the most important factors of educational process. Cooperative learning as one of the effective ways of teaching foreign languages can increase the motivation of students to learn a foreign language.

The innovative techniques according to me are those which can be fun for students as well as teacher such as group work, project making activities and questioning. By using such activities students become more motivated and encouraged to learn, especially when materials and activities are interesting for students the learning process turn into spontaneous adoption of language. Among all these the most important and effective in learning English language is a group work, which helps students to overcome the barriers of being shy to share and speak in front of the others, here student have chance to learn from each other as well as improve their performance. In country like Kazakhstan we have the problem of TTT (Teacher talking time) many teachers teach standing at the front of the class and students sitting in row and listening. Teachers explain a new theme or a topic and after some explanation the students do some practice exercise or translation of the text and they are assessed whether they have understood what they have been explain by teacher. Teacher does most of the talking throughout the lesson and only teacher is the most active person. This is against the language teaching. The more the teacher talk, the less the opportunity is there for students to learn. Some teacher are afraid of silence in their class so they prefer to speak and some teacher think that it is more useful for students to listen to teacher to learn language. Which is not at all true, this problem can be solved by group work.

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Hammer J. The practice of English language teaching. 3rd ed. Harlow, England: Longman. 2005. p.35.

The most important advantage of group work is that, the teacher can teach all four skills listening, (to each other and to the instructions of teacher) speaking (with each other under the supervision of teacher) reading(their notes and list of adjective) and writing. And group work increases students talking time (STT) opportunities to use the target language to communicate with each other and develop the sense of co-operation , sense of progress and achievement from group work activities. Group work is a good teaching technique because:

- Gives all students lots of practice time to use the language.
- Allows the quieter students to speak to group members, instead of speaking in front of whole class.
- Teaches students to help each other with their learning.
- Can improve motivation and students ' use of English'
- Allows students to talk about their own ideas, opinion and real life facts, so that they can develop real communication skills.
- Helps them to become more accurate and fluent in English.
- Varieties of groupings give students a change of working styles and learning experience.

Cooperative learning methods provide teachers with effective ways to respond to diverse students by promoting academic achievement and cross-cultural understanding.

The trend in modern education is moving toward lessons that are highly student-centric, interactive, peer-supported, and group-based. Studies have shown that students learn better in a peer-based group environment as opposed to one in which they work individually, and listen to their teacher lecture. Cooperative learning may serve to improve students' problem solving and creative thinking skills, as well as interpersonal and communication skills, all of which help them to become team players and all of which is highly sought after by employers.

We can also state that, cooperative methods are flexible and can be adapted for students with special needs. In diverse language settings, differences in students' English language proficiencies make it necessary for teachers to modify the methods to ensure that English learners can participate fully with fellow team members. For example, teachers may ask one member of each team to be a bilingual facilitator who helps students work together. In addition, activities that focus on social skill development and teambuilding should be used frequently to facilitate cross-cultural communication and understanding among team members.

In each class, one third of the students are less efficient students. The students are generally reserved and reluctant to use English. Many of them also become embarrassed if they make a mistake when speaking in front of other students. So teachers must find some ways to boost the students' self-confidence, to motivate and encourage them and thereby improve their fluency. So teachers need to be able to manage their interaction with the class in a way that allows all students equal opportunities to participate; learners also need to learn how they are expected to interact in the classroom.

Group work and pair work have become increasingly popular in language teaching since they are seen to have many advantages. Group work is a cooperative activity: four students, perhaps with a topic, are doing a role-play or solving a problem. In groups, students tend to participate more equally, and they are also more able to experiment and use the language than they are in a whole-class arrangement.

Many scholars proposed their own but actually rather similar definitions. According to Olsen & Kagan (1992), cooperative learning is defined as a group learning activities organized so that learning is dependent on the socially structured exchange of information between learners in groups and in which each learner is held accountable for his or her own learning and is motivated to increase the learning of others. Paul J. Vermette (1998) defined cooperative learning in this way such as a cooperative classroom team is a relatively permanent, heterogeneously mixed, small group of students who have been assembled to complete an activity, produce a series of projects or products and/or who has been asked to individually master a body of knowledge. The spirit within the team has to be one of positive interdependence, that is, a feeling that success for any one is tied directly to the success of others. To put it more concretely, cooperative learning approach defines the class as heterogeneous groups, the class is organized in groups of four or six students in order to fulfill a learning task

cooperatively. The learning task is based on interaction and reciprocal interdependence among the members of group and requires mutual help. In this educational approach, students and teachers are in a state of dynamic cooperation and together build up an intimate learning and social atmosphere in the classroom. The textbooks and the teacher are no longer the only source of information, but are replaced by a variety of other people.

But what precisely are the mechanisms that make a structure cooperative? There are four principles that ought to be observed in every structure, no matter its aim. These are:

1) Simultaneous interaction: Most students possible ought to be 'on' at the same time. The optimal form is pair work, which is very frequently included as a stage in the various structures. The classic example of the opposite is the teacher-controlled class conversation, where the individual student, to slightly oversimplify, 'waits in line' for 44 minutes so as to be 'on' for one minute. Simultaneous interaction can easily increase the student's speaking time tenfold or twentyfold.

2) Equal participation: As a rule, the structures are constructed so that everyone can contribute equally, with no one being forgotten or opting out. Once again, class teaching can illustrate the opposite: here the students volunteer and those who most need to practice speaking are usually those who say least - often nothing at all. In ordinary group work, ensuring equal participation is a well-known problem.

3) Positive interdependence: The structures are built up in such a way that the students in a team need each other's output if they are to solve the task they have been given. The contribution of each student is a piece of the total work. This means that everyone has an interest not only in explaining their knowledge to the others but in extracting knowledge from the others until they have understood each other. This push-pull mechanism is an effective 'engine' in the interaction that is lacking in class conversation.

4) Individual accountability: The structures give each student an important role in the interactional pattern. No one can opt out without this having consequences for the others. Individual accountability is one of the most important motivating factors in cooperative learning. Everyone likes to feel that they know something others can use, and everyone gets the chance of showing this precisely via the structures. Individual accountability is also implemented when students are being individually assessed in various assignments or tests.²⁶⁸

Descriptions of Some Commonly Used Techniques

Simple structures

Think-Pair-Share

This is a four-step discussion strategy that incorporates wait time and aspects of cooperative learning. Students (and teachers) learn to listen while a question is posed, think (without raising hands) of a response, PAIR with a neighbor to discuss responses, and share their responses with the whole class. Time limits and transition cues help discussion move smoothly. Students are able to rehearse responses mentally and verbally, and all students have an opportunity to talk. Both students and teachers have increased opportunities to think and become involved in group discussion.

Roundtable

Roundtable can be used for brainstorming, reviewing, or practicing while also serving as a team builder. Sequential form: Students sit in teams of 3 or more, with one piece of paper and one pencil. The teacher asks a question which has multiple answers. Students take turns writing one answer on the paper, then passing the paper and pencil clockwise to the next person. When time is called, teams with the most correct answers are recognized. Teams reflect on their strategies and consider ways they could improve. Simultaneous form: Each student starts a piece of paper, writes one answer, and passes it, so several papers are moving at once.²⁶⁹

Therefore, summarizing the above mentioned information, it should be mentioned that contemporary approaches in the teaching English language play an important role in the development

²⁶⁸ John Harris. *Effective Language Teaching: A Synthesis of Research*. - School of Linguistic, Speech and Communication Sciences, Trinity College Dublin. 2011. p. 69.

²⁶⁹ Kagan Structures: Research and Rationale. Kagan Online Magazine. 2001.

of definite competences. Taking into account analyzing approaches, we note that cooperative learning is one of the powerful educational approaches for helping all students attain content standards and develop the interpersonal skills needed for succeeding in a multicultural world. In order to teach the young generation the new aspects of any subject, we have to change the approaches by which we are going to provide information.

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