

Develop Training Standards For Undergraduate Students with Major Public Administration at King Abdulaziz University, Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

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Abstract

Recently, public administration' graduates are exposed to new set of challenges because of globalization, virtual world and using modern technology as a base of all today's dealings. It imposes PAD at faculty of economic and administration faculty to prepare its students to confront these changes in organizations in the community. Therefore, the aim of the present study was to develop training standards for students with Major PA at KAU, Jeddah, KSA. The study subjects included two groups named; jury group (n=37) and student group (247). Three tools were used for data collection, namely; Validity form, interview questionnaire sheet and audit form. Descriptive analytical design was used in this study. The study findings indicated that the proposed training standards for undergraduate PA students are valid. It is recommended to apply these standards on students with major PA at KAU-Jeddah.

Keywords: Public Administration, Training Standards, Students' Training, Training excellence.

Abbreviations: PAD (Public Administration Department); PA (Public Administration); KAU (King Abdulaziz University); KSA (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia).

1. Introduction:

Because the public seeks high quality services, organizations in the public sector must be high performing. In order to perform highly, persons working in the public sector should be of the highest level of skill and preparation. Consequently, the institutions that educate and train these persons must be always striving for excellence because, most assuredly, better governance is fundamentally related to the more effective preparation of public administrators (UNDESA, 2008).

Highly performing organizations are commitment to a clearly described vision and mission, focus on quality services for the client, empowerment of the employees, valuing diversity, and communicating effectively (Wooldridge, 2007).

A number of colleges and universities offer PA programs and career training. The focus of these degrees may vary; however, most have similar core curriculum. Students in these programs learn about PA theory, legal issues, ethics, financial management, research, analysis, and organizational behavior. Once the core subjects are covered, students may seek specialized training (Learn.org, 2015).

After Business department at Faculty of Economic and Administration achieved the AACSB accreditation (KSA website, 2015), PAD at KAU needs to struggle to get accreditation through achieving its goals and following clear and accepted rules and able to mobilize resources to get quality graduates who can compete in marketplace. Reforming and innovative training strategies by training students on different governmental services before graduation require more attention from PAD

Training is very vital for closing the gap between theoretical courses and practical work in different workplaces. Through training, students can strength the weakness points in their performance, repetition of activities with improving it give students the feeling of self-confidence to can confront difficult situations in practical life after graduation. In this respect, Art of the Start (2014) determined the important of the training and mentioned: help in addressing trainee weakness; improvement of trainees performance; consistency in duty performance; ensuring trainees satisfaction; increased productivity; improved quality of services and products; reduced costs; reduction in supervision.

Chand (2015) divided training into two types; the first type is on-the-job training at the place of work (tends to be more cost effective and relevant). It includes coaching, mentoring, job rotation, job reduction technology, apprenticeship, and understudy. The second type of training is off-the-job training which occurs away from the distractions of work (is usually carried out by professional trainers with very specific and measurable goals). It involves lectures and conferences, vestibule training, simulation exercises, sensitivity training, and transactional training.

Training development is more about the individual is more efficient at a job or capable of facing different responsibilities and challenges. Development concentrates on the broader skills that are applicable to a wider variety of situations, such as thinking creativity, decision making, and managing people (Business Case Studies,

2015).

PAD training standard assists the students to be committed to a clearly described vision and mission, focus on quality service provided by students in training process, empowerment of students, valuing diversity between students and help students to improve communication skills (UNDESA, 2008).

1.1. Research significant:

Saudi Arabia facing many problems daily, which appear in confronting new diseases (Corona, bird flu, swine flu, and dengue fever), torrents, world economic inflation, expansion of government institutions and specialties, competition with the global market, unprecedented increase of requests for Hajj and Umrah, rapid development of technology, and terrorism. All these problems and others must resolve by public administrators to reach higher ideological charged issues for promoting a society's economic welfare and wellbeing and addressing its problems. In addition, increasing the responsibility of Saudi government to develop new programs for improving the quality of public administration output and promoting its performance. KAU is the first university in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and, Economic and administration faculty especially PAD is the oldest department at the level of Kingdom. PAD provide different programs for PA students to serve after graduation in almost of governmental positions. Minor and inadequate training to cover the need of graduate of various skills where lasts to 60 hours only before students graduation. Also, increasing ferment around the need for accreditation of PA programs pushing the researchers to develop and validate a set of relevant, feasible and reliable standards that need for training undergraduate students with major public administration to fill this gap.

1.2 Research questions:

- 1- What are the standards needed for training undergraduate students with Major PA?
- 2- What are the degree the undergraduate PA students fulfill the adopted training criteria?

1.3 Aim of the study:

The aim of the present study is to develop and validate a set of relevant, feasible and reliable standards for training undergraduate PA students.

2. Subjects and methods:

2.1 Design:

Descriptive study design was used in the present study.

2.2 Setting:

The study was conducted in KAU in Jeddah at KSA. KAU involves 16 faculties provided theoretical and scientific programs for under and post graduate students. PAD belongs to faculty of Economic and administration in KAU.

2.3 Subjects:

The subjects of the present study include two group, namely jury and administrators' group:

- **Jury group:** this group used to confirm validating of the developed training standards and criteria. It includes 26 members, of which 14 were from academic staff in faculty of economic and administration and 23 from administrators from different administration levels in KAU (table, 1)
- **Students group:** this group served to assess of fulfillment of PAD the training standards for their students. This group includes 76 undergraduate students from different programs (regular, affiliation, and distance learning) in the eighth and final level in PAD. This study sample is the available students who were train in various departments in the KAU at the time of study. Chosen of this 67level based on the student plan, which allow training in the final semester in their curriculum.

2.4 Tools of data collection:

Three tools were used for data collection, namely: a validity form, interview questionnaire sheet, and an audit form.

I. Validity Form:

The researchers develop this tool based on standards that were developed by IASIA (2008); NCAAA (2009); AACSB (2013); Sahraoui, (2014); ICAPAET (2015); and NASPAA (2015). It includes 47 criteria divided into five clusters of standards covering the following:

1. General PAD training standard (12 criteria)
2. Training development and review standard (9 criteria)
3. Training content standard (9 criteria).
4. Training management standard (10 criteria), and
5. Training performance (7 criteria).

For each of the 47 criteria, the jury member has to respond on the face validity (does it look like a standard criterion), and its content validity (it is achievable, relevant to public administration field, observable, measurable, desirable, written in professional context, and its language is understandable). For each criterion, a score was calculated for validity based on summing up the number of agreements on the seven content validity indicators. The sub-items with 60 percent or higher was considered agree upon and valid (Saad, 2010).

II. Interview Questionnaire Sheet:

This questionnaire sheet developed to assess PAD fulfilling with training standards as perceived by undergraduate students. It also consists of the same five clusters of standards with 47 criteria. Each criteria was to be marked as met, partial met and not met.

III. Audit form:

This form was developed to assess the undergraduate students whose trained in different departments in KAU (n=76) fulfilling with training criteria by the researchers. This tool was developed based on the validated training standards. It consists of five clusters of standards with 47 criteria. Each criteria was to be marked as met, partial met and not met. For each of the five standards, the number of sub-items marked “met” were counted and their percentage was calculating by dividing their total by the total number of criteria of the standard. This was also done for the “partially met” items.

2.5 Methods of data collection:

Approval was obtained from the dean and vice dean of economic and administration faculty as well as verbal consent from students for participating in this study after explaining the aim of the study. Data collection forms were developed based on national and international standards of PA training. Jury group members tested the developed training standards and criteria for its face and content validity. The questionnaire sheet was handled to every student. It took about 25 minutes for filling it. Data collection information for the audit form tool were from: auditing of training policy; students training reports (this report required from each student after completing their training period); observation of students during training; interview conducted with training’ supervisors; interview conducted with the students; observation of different training environment (inside the university); observer’s inference and interview conducted with the head of PAD. Total time for data collection for four months, starting January 2015.

2.6 Statistical Analysis:

Data analyzed and summarized using percentages for categorical variables and mean and standard deviation for numerical variables. Data were presented using descriptive statistics in the form of frequencies and percentages for qualitative variables and mean and standard deviation for quantitative variables. Comparison of means was done using t-test for independent samples. For comparative purpose, score are presented as absolute values and as percentages from the maximum score of each topic. This maximum score depends on the number of items of each topic. The threshold of statistical significance was p-value<0.05.

3. Results:

Table (1): Demographic characteristics of the jury group (n=37).

Demographic Characteristics	Jury Group	
	No.	%
Age:		
< 30	3	8.11
30-	11	29.73
40-	18	48.65
50+	5	13.51
Job Position:		
Professor	2	5.41
Associate Professor	3	8.11
Assistant Professor	4	10.81
Lecturer	9	24.32
General Director	4	10.81
Managing Director	8	21.62
Department Director	7	18.92
Years of Experience:		
< 10 years	3	8.11
10-	19	51.35
20-	9	24.32
30+	6	16.22

Table (1): explores demographic characteristics of the jury group. It was appeared that 48.65% ranged age from 40 to less than 50 years old and only 8.11% at age group less than 30 years old. In addition, 24.32% of jury group was lecturer followed by managing director with 21.62%. More than half of jury group (51.35%) had a working experience ranged from 10 to less than 20 years.

Table (2): Jury group agreement and validation of proposed training standards for undergraduate students with Major PA (n=37)

Training Standards of Public Administration	Mean Score	Rating	Face Validity
General PAD training (12 criteria)	23.47		82.97
Training development and review (9 criteria)	30.04		72.68
Training content (9 criteria)	26.66		86.42
Training management (10 criteria)	31.29		91.01
Training performance (7 criteria)	17.58		65.24

Content validity index = 81.67

Table (2): shows jury group agreement and validation of proposed training standard for undergraduate students with Major PA. The content validity of all training standards was 81.67. Moreover, face validity of standards ranged between 65.24 and 91.01. More than half of the jury group agreed upon all training standards. The highest agreement upon necessity of training management standard 91.01 followed by determining the content of training standard 86.42.

Table (3): Comparison between academic staff and administrators' agreement of proposed training standards for undergraduate students with Major PA.

Training Standards	Jury Group		t	P*
	Academic Staff	Administrators		
	Mean** \pm SD	Mean** \pm SD		
PAD training	85.327	80.512	1.06	0.09
Training development and review.	71.551	70.908	.32	1.41
Training content.	90.282	82.126	1.18	0.17
Training management.	93.998	87..003	.83	0.13
Training performance.	76.771	55.054	2.46	0.02*
Total	69.317	58.609	1.39	0.04*

*Significant $p < 0.05$

**Mean percentage of maximum score

Table (3) shows statistically significant difference between academic staff and administrators' agreement of proposed training standards for undergraduate students with Major PA ($p < 0.05$). Generally, the overall academic staff agreement upon proposed accreditation standard was 69.317% of maximum score and 58.609% of maximum score for administrators. Training management standards had the highest maximum score (93.998% and 87.003% respectively) as perceived by academic staff and administrators.

Table (4): Assessment of fulfilling proposed training standards in different administrative departments at KAU by the researchers (n=76)

Standards (source of information)	Not met		Partially met		Fully met	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
General PAD training (1,2,5,7,8,9)	51	67.11	21	27.63	4	5.26
Training development and review (1,5,7,8,9)	71	93.42	5	6.58	0	0.00
Training content (2,3,4,5,6,7,8)	53	69.74	15	19.74	8	10.52
Training management (1,2,4,5,7,8,9)	27	35.53	18	23.68	31	40.79
Training performance (2,3,4,5,6,8)	36	47.37	16	21.05	24	31.58

1) Auditing of training policy, 2) Students' reports, 3) Observation of trainees, 4) Interview with training supervisors, 5) Interview with students, 6) Observation of training environment, 7) Review of training plan, 8) Observers' inference, and 9) Interview with the head of PAD.

Table (4) illustrates assessment of fulfilling proposed training standards in different administrative departments at KAU by the researchers. This table shows most of the standards were either not met or partially met. The percentages of fully met standards ranged between 0.00% for training development and review standards and 40.79% for training management standards. Moreover, some standards were observed to be not met by highly percent as training development and review (93.42%), training content (69.74%), and PAD training (67.11). While, it was observed partially met standards ranged between 6.58% for training and development standards and 27.63% for PAD training standards.

Table (5): Comparison between assessing the extent of fulfilling proposed training standards as perceived by students with those observed by the researchers.

Training Standards	Students perceptions	Assessment by researchers	t	p
	Mean**±SD	Mean**±SD		
PAD training	34.122±10.154	27±291±12.685	1.53	0.02*
Training development and review	22.847±14.876	19.911±17.334	.63	1.07
Training content	25.902±11.466	23.007±23.981	.12	1.95
Training management.	29.756±19.839	21.398±13.112	.49	0.02*
Training performance	40.213±22.477	27.504±12.770	2.44	0.00*
Total	30.842±08.511	24.076±07.325	2.09	0.01*

*Significant $p < 0.05$

**Mean percentage from maximum score

Table (5) demonstrates comparison between assessing the extent of fulfilling proposed training standards as perceived by students with those observed by the researchers. In this table, there was a statistically significant differences between proposed accreditation standards as perceived by students with those observed $p < 0.05$. the overall assessed met standards were 24.076% while 30.842% was met as perceived by students. According the table, the highest maximum score was 40.213% for training performance followed by 34.122% for PAD training as perceived by students. As for the assessment by the researchers, most proposed training standards were met in less than the third of the cases.

4. Discussion

The success of any educational program depends on a set of criteria. The quality of training in public administration is a part of PAD performance criteria and quality of its outcomes. Many countries give importance to standards in PA education include Australia, Europe, Malaysia, South Africa, India, New Zealand and USA. Many standards were developed for PA education and training such as European standards for internal quality assurance within higher educational institutions, European standards for external quality assurance of higher education, Australian qualifications guidelines, Dublin descriptors for bachelor and master degree, competences master of administration in South Africa and the African Evaluation Guidelines (Krogt, 2005).

In the present study, validation of the developed training standards was done through a jury group to judge about practicability and applicability of the standards. The jury group approved face and content validity of the developed standards. The results of the present study revealed that there is statistical significant difference between agreement of academic staff group and administrators regarding proposed standards for students with Major PA at faculty of Economic and Administration in KAU. Also, it revealed that there is a statistically significant difference between students perception of fulfilling training standards in the study administrative department with those assessed by auditing form. In the same respect, Mishra (2015) mentioned that it is true that public administration education and training is being made more and more application oriented, one finds the existence of certain gray areas, which need to be filled in so as to enhance the quality and standards of public administration education and training.

According to findings of the present study majority of the jury group members agreed with a higher percentage of face validity that the training management should have a vision, mission, objectives, and plans that must be written and consistent with KAU mission and goals. This is can be explained by struggling of PAD to attain accreditation as a part of KAU accreditation and the closed policies regarding commitment to KAU strategic plan. And, it could be contributed to continuous KAU controlling to ensure that the activities of different faculties and departments in the university are detail this plan. Intuitively, the quality management of training must decrease training costs by making it more arranged and effective. In the same respect, Wooldridge (2007) suggested the characteristics of best education and training which are; commitment to a clearly described vision and mission, Focus on the quality training on providing quality services for the client, empowerment of students, valuing diversity and communicating effectively.

Although the revision and development of training program is vital in any education and training program, the assessment of fulfilling the proposed training standards in the present study demonstrated that the development and review of training program were be not met with the highest percent. This result contributed to the absence of supervision on trainees in different training areas because supervision is not a part from training program and no evaluation on training process outside the faculty. In PAD, the evaluation of students' training concentrated on one report provided by the student after finishing 60 hours only in any governmental firm. So, the department has ambiguity regarding what their students' needs and what are the weakness points in the program. In the same line, Braun et al., (2006) confirmed that the increased salience of assessment to policy naturally leads to demands that it meet higher standards of quality and validity.

General PAD training standards are very important to determine the general policies for training, limitations,

rules, and starting and ending time for training. In addition, the activities must include in training period, number of these activities, and number of departments the students must train in it. In this respect, the present study explores that nearly two thirds of students were not met general PAD training standards and training content standards. It could be explained by the fact that no any boundaries regarding starting and ending time for training which extent to three semester in spite of its limited period (only 60 hours), no any liaison between training areas in different governmental agencies and PAD at faculty of economic administration. Also, no training guideline regarding the activities must perform and its number, no base for training outcomes except the final report provided by students. Yorke (2006) confirmed this result and stated that it is inappropriate to assume that students are highly employable on the basis of curricular provision alone: it may be a good harbinger but it is not an assurance of employability. He pointed out that employability derives from the ways and the time long in which the student learns from his or her experiences.

The present study illustrated there were a statistically significant difference between perception of students and those observed by the researchers regarding fulfilling most of the proposed training standards. It could be contributed to less students' experience of the application of training standards and they have confusing to compare the proposed training standards and their performance in real situation.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations:

The present study explored that the developed training standards are a cornerstone and the most important part in PA education. The face and content validity of the proposed training standards were validated and agreement by jury group. It is concluded that the most of proposed training standards for undergraduate students with major PA were missed for meeting by students in different training areas and there were a statistical significant difference between researchers observations and students perception regarding fulfilling of training standards.

Based on the findings study, the following recommendations were detected:

- 1- Work to apply these standards as soon as possible to contribute to the improvement of practical training for the students of public administration.
- 2- Development of a training manual for the students of public administration by all instructions on the training program.
- 3- Need to focus on the needs of the market by measuring the accelerating of human resources, especially in public administration in various government institutions and identify all that is new in the area of specialization
- 4- Work to increase the quality of practical training for students in government institutions through follow-up to the quality of training and that includes everything in the area where the administration
- 5- Increase the training period to enable the student to apply what has been studied theoretically during the study period in the university.
- 6- Coordination with various training bodies to facilitate the training of students with activating the role of academic supervisors in students follow-up and treatment of any obvious deficiencies or problems during the training process.

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