

The Constraints to the Application of Self-assessment of the Academic Programmes at Al-Balqa Applied University from the Viewpoint of the Faculty Members

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Abstract

This study aimed at identifying the constraints to the application of self-assessment of the academic programmes at Al-Balqa Applied University (BAU) from the point of view of faculty members. The sample of the study consisted of (75) faculty members, who had experience in quality works and the self-assessment report, and the participants of the quality committees of colleges and academic programmes that were internationally adopted and some locally. To achieve the objectives of the study, a 12- paragraph questionnaire was prepared. The study results showed that the of "the length of time required by the self-assessment report writing process" was ranked first, with the highest mean reached (4.40) with a (high) degree, while the constraint of "the ambiguity of self-Assessment criteria" came in the last rank, with the lowest mean reached (3.13) with a (medium) level. The results also showed that there were no statistically significant differences attributable to the gender variable of the faculty members (male) and (female) from their point of views to identify mean to the application of the self-assessment of academic programmes at the BAU.

Keywords: self-assessment, BAU (Balqaa Applied University), members of quality committees.

1. Introduction

The self-assessment process in institutions of higher education is an important and necessary process when talking about (effective institutional quality, planning, improvement and development.) Self-assessment is defined as a set of actions by the concerned team with a view to identifying strengths and points that need to be developed in the performance of the institution in the light of specific criteria for improving performance. The self-assessment includes a number of criteria, including those relating to the functions, objectives and aspirations of the institution, organization and planning (governance, academic management, planning, communication), institutional scope (academic programmes, scientific research, community and professional service, institutional resources and services (human resources, student services, educational resources, financial resources, institutional development, effective self-assessment mechanisms) (Lemaitre, et al. 2007, 24).

In view of the efforts made in various States to improve the quality of the performance of institutions of higher education, they tend to adopt the concept of self-assessment as an input to the improvement of the education system as a whole, where self-assessment is a key item in quality assurance of higher education institutions, as it indicates that the educational institution has evaluated the relevance of the targeted learning outcomes and the effectiveness of the assessment in the statement and measurement of the achievement of the learning outcomes to the student's learning outcomes as well as the quality of educational opportunities. Self-assessment is also the beginning of the reviewing and auditing process, while the self-assessment document provides information of true nature about the specifications of the institution or programme, the self-assessment document is an intellectual achievement for the activity of the department or college (Altortori and Jweihan, 2006, 95).

The Institution of the Accreditation and Quality Assurance of Jordanian Higher Education Institutions is convinced of the importance of self-assessment in improving the quality of the performance of institutions of higher education, it issued a directory named "Manual for Quality Assurance Procedures and Standards in Higher Education Institutions", which has been prepared to guide the institutions of Jordanian higher education and quality assurance that wish to apply for the quality assurance certificate issued by the Jordanian Higher Education Institutions Accreditation Body. This guide contains the approved criteria of the quality assurance and the instruction issued by the Body in this regard, which helps them to carry out the study of the self-assessment, which is regarded an important part of the procedures of getting the quality assurance certificate (the institution of Accreditation and Quality Assurance of Jordanian institutions of Higher Education, 2015).

The self-assessment study conducted by Jordanian Higher education Institutions serves to identify the most salient strengths and weaknesses of its inputs, processes and outputs, thus, contributing to their assistance in developing plans and designing appropriate strategies to ensure quality, and to avoid problems that stand in the way of achieving its mission and objectives, in addition to serving as a basis for the assessment process by the members of the Committee of Experts used by the Accreditation Body of Higher Education Institutions to make an appropriate decision on the granting of a quality assurance certificate to higher education institutions, postponed or withheld. The self-assessment study includes 12 criteria of quality Assurance: (vision, Mission,

objectives, planning, educational programs and their effectiveness, students and student services, faculty members, dispatching, scientific research and creations, library and information sources, governance and management, financial sources, physical sources, institutional integrity, interaction with the community, quality assurance management). The process of conducting the self-assessment study in the institutions of higher education is through the following steps (the Institution of Accreditation and Quality Assurance of Jordanian Institutions of Higher Education, 2015):

- 1- Obtaining the approval of the accreditation body for higher education institutions to initiate a self-assessment study after the eligibility requirements have been met.
- 2- Designing the study, prepare its draft and adopt it by the accreditation body of the higher education institutions and form a committee of the subsidiary body.
- 3- Implementing the study by the Enterprise, prepare its own report and submit it to the Commission.
- 4- Reviewing the report by a Committee of experts, visit the institution and prepare its final report and recommendations.
- 5- Taking the decision by the Board of Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions on the granting, postponement or withholding of the quality assurance certificate.

The BAU was one of the leading Jordanian institutions of the higher education to conduct a self-assessment study and getting success in it, where the planning, development and Quality Unit of the university prepared the self-assessment guide for the academic programme through rigorous scientific efforts, in which all the details of the educational process have been taken into account and to benefit from many local and international experiences. The manual contains eight criteria, which can be presented as follows (BAU, 2006):

The first criterion: The message of the program, its objectives, and the learning outcomes.

The Second Criterion: curriculum and assessment.

The third criterion: learning and education.

The fourth criterion: faculty members and supporting cadres.

The fifth criterion: learning resources.

The sixth criterion: the achievement and advancement of students.

The seventh criterion: facilities and support services.

The eighth criterion: foundation support.

The ninth criterion: academic management, the quality and improvement of management.

The tenth criterion: writing and auditing the report.

The eleventh criterion: a review of the report by the Education section.

The twelfth criterion: a review of the report by the planning, Development and Quality committee.

Despite the efforts made by the BAU to conduct a self-assessment study of its academic programmes, it has faced many constraints in doing so, this study was required to identify the main constraints to the application of self-assessment at the BAU from the viewpoint of faculty members.

1.1 Previous studies

Reference was made to previous studies on the subject of self-assessment in the institutions of higher education, with a view to identifying the main findings and general indicators as a result of these studies, the most important of these studies are reviewed in chronological order from the newest to the oldest, as follows:

The study of Islam and Chowdhury, 2015. This study was aimed at discovering self-assessment practices in the Department of Business Administration at Shah University of Science and Technology in Bangladesh. In order to achieve the goal of the study, a 10-area questionnaire was used, namely: curriculum design and content review, learning and education, structure and general facilities of the university, academic and administrative staff, educational facilities and equipment, recruitment, promotion and professional development, institutional support, student support, guidance and mentoring and research. The results of the study showed that self-assessment practices had an important impact and role to play in developing the performance of the Business Management Department at Shah University of Science and Technology in Bangladesh.

Warda Study (2014), the study aims to identify the most important difficulties facing the preparation of the self-study of the educational institution and the academic programme at King Saud University from the viewpoint of faculty members. In order to achieve the objective of the study, a sample of 61 members of the faculty members who had an experience of the quality work has been applied, and (35) males and (26) females from King Saud University have participated in the preparation of the self-study. The study found that there was a set of difficulties encountering the preparation of the self-study, since the constraints faced faculty members in their methodology when conducting the self-study has the most mean, this arrangement showed that the highest (5) paragraphs value of the mean were as follows: 1- The difficulty of obtaining the data needed for the self-study accurately and quickly reached (2.70) 2- Various work stressors within the institution reached (2.60). 3- Lack of a clear plan of action from the self-study operators reached (2.49). 4- Lack of work spirit (2.40). 5- Lack

of conviction in the importance of quality within the educational institutions reached (1.85). The least (5) paragraphs value of the mean were as follows: 1- Lack of initiative to work during self-study reached (1.95) 2- The apprehension of the expected results after the completion of the self-study reached (1.93) 3- The difficulty of converting the theoretical aspect of quality into practical activities reached (1.91) 4- Lack of quality culture and academic accreditation reached (1.86) 5- Lack of conviction in the importance of the quality within educational institutions reached (1.85). The remaining 10 paragraphs between the highest and the lowest mean of the paragraphs ranged from 2.32 to 2.01. The study also found that there were no statistically significant differences attributable to the gender variable of male and female of the faculty members.

Aldagani Study (2011). The aim of the study was to identify the difficulties encountered in the self-assessment process in the universities of Gaza Strip from the viewpoint of the members of the assessment team. The researcher followed the analytical descriptive approach and used the questionnaire as a tool to achieve the research objective, where it was applied to a sample of 60 members who participated in the assessment process. The study found that there were difficulties with the capability of universities to provide documented evidence confirming the authenticity of the responses, difficulties in accepting assessment's findings and the change in the performance level required.

Study of 'ENāyaā (2010). The aim of this study was to define the role of self-assessment of academic programmes in Palestinian universities in Gaza in improving the academic performance of faculty members. In order to achieve the objective of the study, a questionnaire of a sample of 138 faculty member was applied at both the Islamic University and Al-Azhar University. The study found that the role of self-assessment of academic programmes in Palestinian universities in Gaza was to improve academic performance, in general, was within the average. The results also showed that there were no statistically significant differences attributable to the gender variable (males and females).

The Study of (Mok and others 2007). This study aims to define the use of self-assessment in higher education in teachers' training programmes. This study consisted of five- case studies in five teachers training programmes at the Hong Kong Institute of Education. In each programme, the teachers are evaluated at the beginning, in the middle and at the end of learning. The results of the analysis showed that teachers became more aware of the learning and thinking processes at the end of the study, as well as it showed that some of the teachers have showed the progress in some needs.

The study of (Tari, 2008). This study aims to identify the difficulties encountered in applying self-assessment processes at the University of Alicante Spanish University and Pikolinos Private Company. The study followed the qualitative and quantitative approach. In order to achieve the objective of the study, interviews, surveys, observation, document and record analysis and resolution were used. The study sample was from 15 members of the Self-Assessment Committee at the Spanish Public University of Alicante and Pikolinos private company. The results of the study showed that there were similar difficulties in applying self-assessment processes at the Spanish public University of Alicante and the Pikolinos Private Company, such as the inadequacy of the time required, as well as the lack of commitment by staff to the application of self-assessments.

1.2 Study problem and its questions

The problem of the study is to try to answer the following questions:

- 1- What are the most important constraints facing the application of the self-assessment of academic programmes at the BAU from the viewpoint of faculty members?.
- 2- Are there any statistically significant differences at the level of significance ($\alpha = 0.05$) attributed to the gender variable of the faculty members (male) and (female) in their viewpoints to identify the constraints to the application of the self-assessment of academic programmes at the BAU?

1.3 Objectives of the study

The aim of this study is to identify the most important constraints facing the application of the self-assessment of the academic programmes at the BAU from the viewpoint of faculty members, in addition to showing the significance of statistical differences attributed to the sex of faculty members (male) and (female) in identifying these constraints.

2 Methodology

2.1 Study Approach

The study has followed the analytical descriptive approach; that it is relevant to the nature and objectives of the present study.

2.2 The Study Sample

The current sample study was identified from the faculty members at the BAU, who had experience in quality work and the self-assessment report, and participants in colleges quality committees and academic programmes, some of which were internationally adopted and some locally, male and female, with a total sample of 75 faculty

members, 65 males and 10 females.

2.3 Study Tool

To achieve the objectives of the study, the researcher has prepared a questionnaire of (12) paragraphs. The internal consistency of the questionnaire was verified through the Cronbach-alpha equation, where the value of the internal consistency coefficient reached (0.97), reflecting the validity of the questionnaire for the objectives of the study.

3. Study Results and Discussion

3.1 The results of the first question and discussion: "What are the most important constraints facing the application of the self-assessment of the academic programmes at the BAU from the viewpoint of faculty members? To answer this question, means and standard deviations of the responses of the faculty members have been calculated on the questionnaire's paragraphs and the tool as a whole. Table 1 shows this.

Table 1. The means and standard deviations of the responses of faculty members to the questionnaire's paragraphs and the tool as a whole in descending order

The Paragraph	Arithmetic Mean	Standard Deviation	The Degree of Constraint
The length of time required by the self-assessment report writing process.	4.40	0.49	High
The large numbers of the self-assessment standards.	4.33	0.47	High
Various work stressors within the university.	4.20	0.40	High
The absence of the culture of quality assurance and academic accreditation.	4.13	0.34	High
Lack of teamwork.	4.11	0.31	High
The plethora of tools used (questionnaires, observation, interviews).	4.00	0.00	High
Faculty members are not convinced of the importance of self-assessment in quality assurance and academic accreditation.	3.91	0.29	High
University leaderships are not convinced of the importance of quality assurance and academic accreditation.	3.80	0.40	High
Fear of self-assessment results.	3.47	0.50	Medium
The paucity of evidence to substantiate the results of self-assessment.	3.33	0.47	Medium
Lack of knowledge of the mechanisms for the preparation of the self-assessment report.	3.20	0.40	Medium
The ambiguity of self-assessment criteria.	3.13	0.34	Medium
High	3.83	0.18	Total arithmetic mean

Table 1 shows that the arithmetic means of the responses of faculty members about the constraints to the application of the self-assessment of the academic programmes at the BAU have in descending order ranged between (4.400-3.13) and standard deviations have in descending order ranged between (0.49 – 0.34). Eight constraints have been found to have been high in order to obtain higher means than (3.66), which have been in the following order: 1- The length of time required by the process of writing the self-assessment report with mean reached (4.40). 2- a large number of the self-assessment criteria with a mean reached (4.33). 3- Various work stressors within the university with mean reached (4.20). 4- The absence of the culture of quality assurance and the academic accreditation with a mean of 4.13. 5- Lack of teamwork with a mean reached (4.11). 6- The plethora of tools used, such as (questionnaires, observation, interviews) with a mean reached (4.00). 7- Faculty members are not convinced of the importance of self-assessment in quality assurance and academic accreditation with a mean reached (3.91). 8- University leaderships are not convinced of the importance of quality assurance and academic accreditation with a mean of (3.80). The table also shows that there were four constraints came on a moderate level and in the following order: 1- Fear of self-assessment results with a mean of (3.47). 2- Lack of evidence attesting the authenticity of the results of the self-study with a mean of (3.33). 3- Lack of knowledge of the mechanisms in order to prepare the self-assessment report and a mean of (3.20). 4- Ambiguity of self-assessment criteria with a mean of (3.13). The total mean of the tool was about (3.83) with a standard deviation of (0.18), which corresponds to a (high) degree. This result may be due to the preoccupation of faculty members with many teaching and research tasks, the preparation of tests, the supervision and discussion of the university theses, and then they are assigned to perform the quality works. In addition to the lack of an integrated database provided by the university administration or the academic program, lack of financial and technical support, and often a certain group conducts quality activities at the University or the academic programme. Sometimes there is a situation of dependency among members within the university and the lack of teamwork. Noting that the requirement to work in the quality activities is that the work should be team-oriented to be fully accomplished. This result is consistent with previous studies such as Wardeh Study (2014); Aldejani Study (2011) and (Tari,

2008). The results of which confirmed that there was a range of difficulties faced by university faculty members during the application of the self-assessment process.

3.2. Conclusions and discussion on the second question: "Are there any statistically significant differences at the level of significance ($\alpha = 0.05$) attributed to the gender variable of the faculty member (male) and (female) in their viewpoints to identify the constraints to the application of the self-assessment of the academic programmes at the BAU?". To answer this question, the test of (independent samples t-test) was applied. Table 2 shows its results.

Table 2. Results of the application of the test (independent samples t-test) and its statistical significance for the differences between the averages of the responses of the faculty members (male and female) to the study tool

Gender	Arithmetic mean	Standard deviation	T	Statistical significance
Male	3.83	0.18	0.77	0.44
Female	3.88	0.18		

Table 2 shows that there are no statistically significant variances at the level of the significance ($\alpha = 0.05$) of responses mean attributed to the gender variable of the faculty members (males) and (females) in their views to identify the most important constraints facing the application of the self-assessment of academic programmes at the BAU. The value of (T) reached (0.77), which is not statistically significant. This result may be due to the fact that faculty members (male and female) perform the same functions in quality work although the categories of male or female are characterised by some of differences or activities, which is not affecting the nature and the working mechanisms. Hence, it is clear that the constraints are the same for the male and female faculty members. This may also be attributed to the low number of females in the sample size. This result is consistent with the study of a Warda (2014) and the Study of 'Enayat (2010). The results of which have shown that there are no statistically significant differences attributable to the gender variable of Faculty members (male and female).

4. Recommendations

In the light of the results of the study, the following are recommended:

1. Holding training courses and workshops on self-assessment criteria and mechanisms for its implementation.
2. Creating a database of the university or the academic programmes to be a source of information when needed.
3. Reducing the teaching load for the faculty members participating in the quality committees of the university or the academic programmes.
4. Developing a plan defining the mechanisms for applying the self-assessment of the university or the academic programmes; the time period that it takes, the role of each faculty member participating in the self-assessment and the work entrusted to it.
5. The faculty members participating in the quality and self-assessment committees were urged to teamwork.
6. Providing financial and moral incentives to faculty members participating in the quality and self-assessment committees at the university.

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