



اتحاد الجامعات العربية

“A holistic approach to achieve quality in Higher Education”

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“Analogies to Business Concepts”

By

Dr Raed Shadfan

10 Years of QA initiatives in the region

- QA in HE has been attempted in the region for a little more than 10 years.
- Early trials had been based on the program review initiative promoted by the British QAA and its 6 aspect model (Egypt, Jordan, etc...)
- Followed by UNDP: program level similar to the QAA concept (13 Arab countries).

10 Years of QA initiatives in the region

- Today, most Arab countries had embarked on national QA initiatives:
- Stemmed from the need to regulate the HE industry.
- Evolved from the traditional accreditation concept of licensure requirements to quality-based accreditation.
- Created national accreditation bodies, each with its set of accreditation criteria (the Standards).

10 Years of QA initiatives in the region

- Examples of quality-based accreditation bodies in the region:
- UAE: Commission for Academic Accreditation (CAA), 2011
- S.A.: National Commission for Assessment and Academic Accreditation (NCAAA), 2009
- Oman Academic Accreditation Authority (OAAA), 2004)

10 Years of QA initiatives in the region

- Bahrain: The Quality Assurance Authority for Education and Training (QAAET), Bahrain, 2009
- Egypt: The National Quality Assurance and Accreditation Committee (NQAAC), Egypt, 2004
- Jordan: Higher Education Accreditation Commission (HEAC), 2009

10 Years of QA initiatives in the region

- Arab accreditation systems are similar in nature:
 - They require the preparation of the SER.
 - They use external audits to judge the institution based on the SER.
 - Core criteria are similar between various countries.
- Quality based accreditation is in full deployment (UAE), or in transitional phase (Oman, Jordan).
- Quality accreditation is mandatory to retain license (UAE), or optional (Jordan), or in between (Bahrain).

Future of Accreditation

- Arab countries, which have not yet developed their accreditation criteria, will probably do so soon.
- Arab countries, which has accreditation criteria but in transition (experimental) or on voluntary basis, will probably make them compulsory.
- **“Higher education institutions are expected to implement their QA projects not only as part of their social responsibility; but because it is (or could be soon) fundamental to their very existence.”**

Current Status

Only few Arab universities can claim that they have built appropriate quality assurance systems that had/could lead to successful attainment of their accreditation

Current Status

- Major gains:
 - Had ignited a good degree of QA awareness within the institution.
 - Had brought more investment to improve on the infrastructure and learning resources.
 - Had emphasized the importance of record creation and retention and had created an ample amount of documents.
 - Had introduced some planning and measuring functions.

Current Status

- A good number of universities in the region who have not yet attempted to deploy QA projects:

They find the criteria difficult to translate into practices.

Current Status

- A good number of universities in the region who had gone through the project:

They find it
difficult to
maintain the
achievements

- See for example (UNDP report, 2006

Symptoms of failures

- Can not understand the “requirements”.
- Can understand the criteria but do not know what to do or where to start.
- Have implemented the QA project, but are not/never ready for the audit.
- Have been audited but can not sustain passing the audit again.
- It will all disappear when people disappear.

Factors of Failure

- Reasons could be related to:
 - Cultural factors
 - Financial factors
 - Lack of serious involvement by the top management
 - Lack of management systems (UNDP, 2006)

Factors of Failure

- Top Management:
 - Difficult to plan: pursuing outcomes in a diverse mixture of perspectives could be perceived as a maze without a clue on how/where to start and how it will end.
 - Difficult to design: Outcome-driven criteria do not provide clues on how to design and implement bespoke systems that will ensure meeting and sustaining the “requirements”.
 - Not strategic and can be delegated: puzzled top management delegates the project to some staff members and assumes a supportive role in the background.

Factors of Failure

- Lack of systems to support sustaining quality goals (UNDP, 2006):
 - Mainly due to the perception that the SER and the Audit are mainly outcome-driven.
 - QA teams took an outcome driven approach in tackling the QA project in their institutions, without much concern about rooted systems they are supposed to build to sustain the outcomes.
 - In reality: In addition to measuring outcomes, most of the accreditation programs stipulate that a number of systems must be deployed. For example, a formal quality management system has always been stipulated.

Business Practices

- Quality assurance had evolved(Sally, 1996). :
 - from self-craftsmanship,
 - to quality control procedures,
 - to quality management procedures,
 - to process oriented quality management systems
 - to TQM models of excellence (outcome-driven).
- Business managers had realized that a balanced approach between processes and outcomes is the best solution to implement the QA project.

Business Practices

- Businesses had benefited from system approach:
 - It governs processes to consistently deliver their results.
 - It helps normalizing cultural differences especially with the current globalization of workforces.
 - It makes it easier to maintain and manage the business knowledge.
- Businesses had also realized that outcome driven initiatives are best managed when they are built on systems. Example:
 - The deployment of continuous enhancement to reach excellence status within the quality management system.

Business Practices

- Modern quality management is system driven - for example (ISO, 2008) - designed to attain quality goals.
- Excellence models – for example Baldrige (USA) and EFQM (Europe) - are outcome driven, but indirectly incorporate the availability of systems to drive and sustain excellence.

Business Practices

- The overlap between the two approaches is common and widely recognized.
- Businesses seeking both quality and excellence had managed to make good use of this overlap.
- The result is an integrated approach towards implementing their quality assurance/model of excellence initiatives (TQM philosophy).

Learning the Lessons

- Higher education institutions need to consider a similar approach:
 - Accreditation criteria are really beyond the quality (fit for the purpose) requirements.
 - They include indicators of excellence similar to those considered in managing best-run businesses.
 - Systems need to be in place to drive universities towards achieving excellences.
 - Which systems?

Analyzing the Criteria

- Need to dissect the various criteria and map them to their analogous business system classification.
- Institution level criteria from different Arab accreditation systems (Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Bahrain, UAE and Jordan) are in their cores formulated on common aspects.

Analyzing the Criteria

- They all touch base with:
 1. Strategic direction and strategic planning & review.
 2. Governance, leadership & integrity.
 3. Quality management and enhancement.
 4. Academic provisions (programs, teaching, learning, assessments, cooperation).

Analyzing the Criteria

5. Research & scholarly activities.
6. Community services and engagements.
7. Student support & services.
8. Institution Resources:
 - Human (academic and admin).
 - Financial.
 - Physical (learning resources, library, facilities, civil infrastructure, ICT...etc).

Strategic direction, planning & review

- Institutions who have not yet specified a strategic direction (vision, mission, and goals) need to follow formal methods widely practiced in the strategic management field.
- Institutions who already have developed their strategic direction not based on such formal methods, may need to re-do the exercise and apply such methods to ensure appropriateness of their strategic direction (criteria do stipulate the appropriateness of the strategic direction).

Strategic direction, planning & review

- Strategic planning is part of the criteria & strategic management avails tools to formulate such strategic plans.
- In addition, the criteria require that the execution of the strategic plan is measured and reviewed:
 - Strategic KPIs should be devised to measure plan implementation.
 - This opens the need to have a performance management system (PMS).

Strategic direction, planning & review

- To assure its continuity, the institution should adopt a process that will govern the making of the strategic plan and its review.
- Can be part of the quality management system (QMS) with possible quality objectives:
 - To systematically perform a formal and cyclical strategic planning and review mechanisms.
 - To appropriately communicate the strategic direction, planning and reviews throughout the institutions to better guide dependent processes.

2-A: Governance & Leadership

- Usually refers to (in the context of the criteria):
 1. Attributes of the governing body, CEO and senior administrators: such as roles, responsibilities, authorities, ethics, experiences, functions, recruitment and appraisal.
 - Can be done through policies & procedures and thus are parts of processes within the QMS.
 - Accountability of the governing body is based on their performance to achieve goals and so it is part of the PMS.

2-A: Governance & Leadership

2. Organizational structure: this follows the structure of the management entities that own processes and so it is part of the QMS.
3. Policies, by-laws & procedures: normally governed, maintained and disseminated by the document control and communication processes within the QMS.

2-A: Governance & Leadership

4. Actions management system: this is to ensure that preventive, corrective and enhancement actions and resolutions are promptly and timely managed. This system is an integral part of any decent QMS.
5. Participation of stakeholders in making decisions: various procedures can be put in place to assure this quality goal as part of the QMS.

2–B: Integrity

- Usually refers to (in the context of the criteria):
 - Proper codes of conduct.
 - Reviewing all policies, procedures and communication materials against them.
- Codes of conduct can be established as part of the strategic direction.
- Many universities have the element of Values in their mission statement that would reflect the codes of conduct that governs their activities.

2–B: Integrity

- Some of the codes of conduct mentioned in the criteria are related to:
 - Honest communication with stakeholders.
 - Resolving conflict of interest.
 - Fairness to grievances and appeals.
 - Academic freedom to acquire knowledge.
 - Dealing with academic misconducts.
- Reviewing all policies, procedures and communication can be made via a process governed within the QMS (e.g. D.C. process).

3- Quality Management & Enhancement

Several aspects are mentioned in the criteria:

1. Quality planning: Institutions need to identify objectives of the QMS and write a document named quality policy, manual, strategy or plan.
 - Normally, this is the first step in creating the QMS of any organization.
 - Not to be mistaken with strategic planning.
 - Quality objectives are usually derived from the references of the QMS (e.g. strategic direction & accreditation criteria).

3- Quality Management & Enhancement

- Some of the quality goals deduced from the criteria are as follows:
 - The system should be processes oriented.
 - Processes are in line with strategic direction.
 - The system scope should be comprehensive and cover all parts and activities.

3- Quality Management & Enhancement

- The system is designed to influence (and be influenced by) the strategic planning.
- Effective communication of the system.
- Commitment by the managing board.
- Involvement of staff and other stakeholders.
- Rewarding and communication of good practices.

3- Quality Management & Enhancement

2. Quality assurance unit and organization: Most criteria stipulate the establishment of an independent QA unit with clear structure, organization and goals. This is a normal course for any organization implementing a QMS (e.g. MR in ISO9000)
3. Document structure, creation, control, change, retention and communication: These activities are cited in different locations within the criteria for different purposes:
 - Back bone of any decent QMS.
 - Organized in a distinct centralized process managed by the QA unit.

3- Quality Management & Enhancement

4. Internal audit and review: Criteria look for audits and review against quality/operation goals, strategic goals and benchmarking.
 - QMS by default has an internal audit & review processes to measure adherence to policies and procedures and achievement of quality goals.
 - PMS measures performance indicators related to both strategic goals & process operational performances and feed them back into strategic planning reviews (part of the SMS) and QM reviews (part of the QMS).
 - PMS would also have reviews on the effectiveness of the chosen PIs.

3- Quality Management & Enhancement

5. Continuous quality enhancement: Within the QMS context, this refers to the identification and management of enhancement actions.
 - Reviews trigger preventive/corrective /enhancement actions.
 - QMS has a process to manage & timely resolve these actions.
 - Reviews are cyclical, the iteration of action management process will induce the hoped continuous enhancement.
 - Raising the bar of quality ought to be a strategic decision: redefining strategic goals to trigger the changes to quality objectives and onward to the processes themselves.
 - Raising the bar of quality arises from low performance measurements, e.g. poor benchmarking, (part of PMS).

3- Quality Management & Enhancement

7. Performance measuring /reporting: Stipulated activities:
- Performance planning which includes:
 - Identification of KPIs and their measuring procedures,
 - Approval of KPIs,
 - Performance evaluation process,
 - Internal validation and external verification of results.
 - Measuring and benchmarking,
 - Reporting
 - Keeping performance records and databases on relevant statistics.
 - Performance unit structure and organization

3- Quality Management & Enhancement

7. Performance measuring /reporting (contd.): Suggestions:
- Make the process of performance measuring carried out by an independent unit (institutional research unit) with the main goal to drive the PMS, with tasks:
 - ✓ plan for the performance management process
 - ✓ build the KPIs structure (to include operational, quality, strategic, and accreditation KPIs),
 - ✓ Select appropriate performance model.
 - ✓ perform internal and external evaluation & benchmarking
 - ✓ use the performance model to appropriately report on the performance at all levels and to external parties.

3- Quality Management & Enhancement

8. Risk Management: Formally reported only in the UAE criteria (section 2.3 under the quality assurance aspect), it requires:
 - ❖ Identifying risks and a plan to resolve them.
 - ❖ The identified risks should be approved and managed by a dedicated management structure.
- This can be made as a separate process (part of the QMS).
- However, risk management is best practiced when it is embedded in other systems.
- In countries where criteria do not stipulate risk management:
 - ❑ Use insurance where possible (i.e. infrastructure, natural disasters).
 - ❑ Consider risk management when the system is mature beyond basics.

4-7 University Provisions

- Academic provisions (e.g. programs, teaching, learning, assessments, and cooperation) can be channeled within a program management process with objectives to meet the relevant criteria and strategic direction of the institution.
- The process would be part of the QMS as one of its operational processes.
- Same is applied to research & scholarly activities, community services and engagements, student support & services.

4-7 University Provisions

- University provisions can be looked at as operational processes rooted inside the QMS alongside other management and supporting processes.
- All these processes can be designed to meet the criteria and the strategic goals of the institutions (both are process references).
- Operational processes will have their (operational and quality) objectives measured by the performance management system.
- The results, together with internal audit findings, will be fed back into the review of these processes.

4-7 University Provisions

- A university services process would check if these services are adequate or whether additional/different services need to be added in order to conform to the requirements.
- Then it checks if every single service follows a plan-do-check/study-act cycle (the Deming Cycle, 1993).
- In this fashion, institutions can control the adequacy and efficiency of each and service.

8- Institution Resources

- Managing human, financial and physical resources are supporting processes within the scope of the QMS.
- Similar to operational processes, they will be designed, implemented, audited and reviewed under the QMS.
- Human and financial resources management systems are already practiced in most universities in the region. However, they may not be linked to the quality assurance of the institution.
- Make the link by converting them into processes within the QMS so they can contribute to the quality objectives and strategic goals.

8- Institution Resources

- The concept of management of physical resources may be novel or recent to many institutions, but it is widely practiced in businesses.
- The process has two elements:
 - Gather all resources available in one register and see if they are adequate to deliver quality goals.
 - Check if each of these resources is efficiently and safely run according to a plan to deliver its objective (each is managed in a sub-process).

Required Management Systems

- The quality assurance manifested by the criteria in most of their parts is a mixture of quality, performance and strategic management elements.
- The analysis shows that the criteria are more than just a reflection of a QMS.
- To comply, SMS & PMS are also required.

Required Management Systems

- Other business systems are also referenced such as:
 - Risk management: can either be a process within the QMS or a quality goal that need to be considered in every process (embedded).
 - Managing finances: can also be made as a process within the quality system. If this is not desirable, then at least financial planning, purchasing and auditing must be included in order to conform.
 - Human resource management: covers recruiting, induction, appraisal, training, development, retention, promotion, and succession planning can be made in a process with objectives to meet the requirements.

Analogy to Business Practices

- To systematically meet the Operational/Supporting requirements. This is analogous to building QMS in the business world applied to Operational/Supporting processes.
- To systematically meet the strategic planning and monitoring. This is analogous to applying concepts of SM and PM.
- To systematically build evidences that requirements are met. This is analogous of building business system records and the use of appropriate document control and archiving processes (usually a central part of any decent QMS).

Analogy to Business Practices

- To draft evidence-based SER. This is analogous to building a PMS that would fairly self-evaluate the performance of the organization.
- To continually improve the provisions. This is analogous to using a QMS that is process oriented with processes being systematically evaluated and reviewed.
- To continually improve the outputs. This is analogous to using outputs of PM to review both strategic and quality goals.

Analogy to Business Practices

- To continually improve the outcomes and reach excellence. This is analogous to using outputs of PM to review performance against benchmark standards.
- To eventually fulfill institution vision and mission. This is analogous to iteratively using outputs of PM to align business processes to its strategic direction.
- All are essentials in the TQM philosophy.

Conclusion

- Higher education institutions in the region had found that sustaining quality assurance initiative based on outcome approach alone was difficult.
- Reasons are related to the outcome-driven nature of the accreditation audit and the culture and involvement of top management and staff.
- BUT failure in sustaining outcomes could also be due to lack of deploying systems that could bring a degree of discipline and positive culture within the institution.
- Analyzing the regional accreditation criteria had shown that they are not entirely outcome driven.

Conclusion

- The analysis shows that the accreditation requirements can be met using three components, namely:
 - Quality Management Systems (QMS),
 - Strategic Management Systems (SMS), and
 - Performance Management Systems (PMS),
 - and the interlink between them.



Thank You