

**IN SEARCH OF A PROGRAMME REVIEW FRAMEWORK FOR A
POLYTECHNIC IN BAHRAIN: THE EXPERIENCE OF A BAHRAINI
QUALITY COORDINATOR**

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CERTIFICATION OF DISSERTATION

I certify that the ideas, experimental work, results, analyses, software and conclusions reported in this dissertation are entirely my own effort, except where otherwise acknowledged. I also certify that the work is original and has not been previously submitted for any other award, except where otherwise acknowledged.



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ABSTRACT

Across the Middle East and North Africa region the quality of education has been highlighted as an issue of concern by the World Bank, in particular the less than positive impact on economic development. Also, it has been found that improvement initiatives often fail if they are transferred from the Western world without the consideration of local and cultural aspects. This research reports on a process used to address the non-contextualised improvement models that so often fail to enhance quality outcomes for students.

The focus of this study is on a polytechnic that commenced its operation in Bahrain in 2008. The purpose of this research is to provide a coherent, meaningful and contextually appropriate programme review framework to replace a generalised one that was inherited from overseas at the institution's inception. This study's value lies in its ability to identify principles, standards and a process that have the potential to stimulate change in both the attitudes and behaviour of the people who have an involvement, or should have an involvement, in framework-associated aspects of quality management, assurance and improvement.

A qualitative interpretivist case study method was adopted. The qualitative data included documents, observations, formal interviews, discussion groups, and dialogue with both internal and external quality experts. Analysis and synthesis of the data has been informed by a comprehensive review of relevant literature, thematic coding, and ongoing reflections of the researcher during the developmental process. The dual positions of the writer as researcher and employee of the organisation is acknowledged in the development of the contextualised framework.

A key finding of the research is that the appropriateness of the process of implementation is crucial in bringing about change. The reliance on a hierarchically imposed quality system, with the expectation that commitment will cascade naturally and predictably from the top to the bottom, is problematic and inappropriate to the context of the polytechnic. Rather, there are needs for ongoing dialogue among internal and external stakeholders and to find pockets of enthusiasm within the organisation that are exemplars of quality accountability and improvement and to use this expertise to support the widening and deepening of such pockets. The intention is to have organisational units and individuals own a quality review framework, and a quality system overall, instead of seeing it as something that is imposed, and treated as no more than a matter of begrudging compliance.

The implications are particularly significant in the context of higher education in the Middle East, where most improvement initiatives have been focused on transferring ready-made frameworks from the 'West' rather than a contextually relevant framework to sustain improvement.

DECLARATION OF ORIGINAL AUTHORSHIP

I certify that the content of this dissertation has not been previously submitted for any degree and it is not currently being submitted for any other degree. I also certify that to the best of my knowledge any assistance received in preparing this dissertation and all sources used have been acknowledged accordingly.

Jameel Hasan

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

The following table provides the extended form of various abbreviations and acronyms used throughout the dissertation.

Abbreviation	Extended Form
ANQAHE	Arab Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
APR	Annual Programme Review
AQAC	Academic Quality Assurance Committee
ASQ	American Society for Quality
AUT	Auckland University of Technology
BOT	Board of Trustees
CAC	Curriculum Advisory Committee
CAP	Certificate in Academic Preparation
EDB	Economic Development Board
EFQM	European Foundation for Quality Management
EHEA	European Higher Education Area
ELLI	Effective Lifelong Learning Inventory
FB	Faculty Board
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council (the member states being Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates)
HEC	Higher Education Council
HEI	Higher Education Institution
KHDA	Knowledge and Human Development Authority
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
NCAAA	National Commission for Academic Accreditation and Assessment
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education
PAD	Programme Approval Document
PBL	Problem-based Learning
PC	Programme Committee
QAA	The United Kingdom's Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education
QAAET	Bahrain's Quality Assurance Authority for Education and Training
QMS	Quality Management System
SMT	Senior Management Team
TQM	Total Quality Management
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization

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