Preparing for External Quality Review: Critical Success Factors for Vocational Institutions

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This paper identifies the critical success factors which have led to outstanding review results for vocational institutions in Bahrain. 19 success factors were identified.

11 of these success factors relate to institutional achievements and 6 relate to institution processes. At the core of these latter 6 critical success factors was the effective implementation of a learner-centred approach.
Study Purpose

• To identify the **critical success factors** which have led to outstanding review results for vocational institutions in Bahrain.
This study aims at answering two questions:

- What are the critical success factors which lead to an outstanding grade in relation to vocational institutions reviews by BQA?

- Do the success factors relate to institutions’ processes and results?
BQA Vocational Review Framework

Main Questions

- **Learners' achievement**
  - MQ1: how well do learners achieve?

- **The quality of provision**
  - MQ2: how effective are teaching/training and assessment in promoting learning?
  - MQ3: how well do programmes meet the needs and interests of learners and stakeholders?
  - MQ4: how well are learners supported and guided?

- **Leadership, management and governance**
  - MQ5: how effective are leadership, management and governance in raising achievement and improving the quality of the provision?

Source: Education & Training Quality Authority (2015)
The Development of the Checklist for BQA Review Preparation

- The checklist for BQA review preparation was designed for use by vocational training institutions in Bahrain that are about to undergo BQA reviews.

- It focuses on evidence that the BQA review team seeks during the review process.

- This checklist consists of 22 categories and 115 elements which are mapped to BQA’s five main questions.
There are two places that need to be completed in relation to each element.

The first relates to an institution’s **policy and procedures** that apply to the targeted element.

The second focuses on the **evidence of implementing** the related procedures effectively.
## Checklist for BQA Review Preparation

**MQ2 The quality of provision**

How effective are training and assessment in promoting learning?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Element</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning Strategies</td>
<td>Policy and procedures</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Lesson observation - recommendations and follow-up activities</td>
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<td>Pre-entry assessment</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Examples of effective lesson plans</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Use of pre-entry assessment results to enhance training practice</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Learner-centred approach</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Examples of meeting diverse needs of learners</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The following procedure was used to collect data for this study.

1. Design the checklist for BQA review preparation in 2012. This checklist was developed according to BQA review team enquiries.

2. The checklist for BQA review preparation was used in six vocational institutes as a gap analysis tool. The outcomes were used to develop improvement plans to enhance the institutes’ practice.

3. The checklist for BQA review preparation was used several times to measure progress made by the institutes and ensure that each institute was ready for BQA review.

4. The data gathered for the six institutes was analysed to identify critical success factors that lead to an outstanding grade.
Data Collection

- The project’s duration for the six institutes ranged between 4 months to 2.5 years.

- After implementing the improvement plan, one institute received ‘Outstanding’, three institutes received ‘Good’ and two institutes received ‘Satisfactory’.
This study is limited to:

- The elements that are included in the checklist of BQA review preparation.
- The six vocational institutes that participated in this study.
- The period over which this study was carried out.
Definition of Terms

- Three key terms of this study were defined as follows:

  - **Learner-centred approach**: One in which the focus is on the trainee rather than the trainer, with the intention of facilitating the learning of the trainee and having the trainee actively involved in the training process and appreciation of its outcomes.

  - **Process**: The linked activities with the purpose of producing products and services for intended users and evidence for internal and external stakeholders (including regulatory authorities).

  - **Results**: Outputs and outcomes achieved by an institute.
Study Findings

- As indicated by American Society for Quality, too often organizations ignore successes while they focus on problems that need immediate attention.

- The success and effect diagram was adopted to analyze successful factors for vocational institutions in Bahrain to meet BQA expectations for an outstanding grade.
Figure 1: Success and Effect Diagram for the 19 Critical Success Factors of Vocational Institutions

- MQ 5
  How effective are leadership, management and governance in raising achievement and improving the quality of the provision?
  - KPIs and achievements
  - Impact statement (planning cycles)
  - Distance travelled by institution
  - Processes used to conduct self-review
  - Response to previous BQA review recommendations
  - Examples of improvement practices
  - Action plan for staff professional development

- MQ 4
  How well are learners supported and guided?
  - Examples of learners who improved significantly due to support activities
  - Learning support Activities
  - Examples of learners' progress and achievement

- MQ 3
  How well do programmes meet the needs and interests of learners and stakeholders?
  - Programme evaluation activities
  - Examples of contextualisation of curriculum to Bahrain
  - Examples of talented learners' progress and achievement

- MQ 2
  How effective are training and assessment in promoting learning?
  - Use of pre-entry assessment results to enhance training practice
  - Learner-centred approach
  - Examples of meeting diverse needs of learners
  - Impact of course verification

- MQ 1
  Learners' achievement
  How well do learners achieve?
  - Distance travelled by learners
  - Benchmarking of learners' achievement against international providers

Source: American Society for Quality (2017)
The Top Five Success Factors: Results

- Distance travelled by learners
- Benchmarking of learners’ achievement against international providers
- Examples of meeting diverse needs of learners
- Impact of course verification
- Examples of talented learners’ progress and achievement
- Examples of learners with learning difficulties progress and achievement
- Key performance indicators and achievements
- Impact statement related to planning cycles
- Distance travelled by institution
- Examples of improvement practices
- Response to previous BQA review recommendations
Relations among the 5 Critical Success Factors Diagram

Source: American Society for Quality (2017)
### The 19 Critical Success Factors Categorized as Process and Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main Question</th>
<th>Critical Success Factor</th>
<th>Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MQ1 How well do learners achieve?</td>
<td>Distance travelled by learners</td>
<td>Result</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MQ2 How effective are training and assessment in promoting learning?</td>
<td>Use of pre-entry assessment results to enhance training practice</td>
<td>Process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MQ3 How well do programmes meet the needs and interests of learners and stakeholders?</td>
<td>Programme evaluation activities</td>
<td>Process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MQ4 How well are learners supported and guided?</td>
<td>Examples of learners who improved significantly due to support activities</td>
<td>Result</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MQ5 Leadership, management and governance</td>
<td>Key performance indicators and achievements</td>
<td>Result</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Impact statement related to planning cycles</td>
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<td>Response to previous BQA review recommendations</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Conclusion

Four of the five top success factors in relation to the institutional results are related to the learners. This indicates that BQA strongly focuses on classroom practice and its results.

Five of the six top success factors relate to the institution’s results. This indicates that vocational institutions need to achieve robust results to receive high grades.
To achieve the top six success factors, vocational institutions need ongoing dialogue among internal and external stakeholders and an ability to find pockets of enthusiasm within their organisations 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.

Source: Hasan (2015)
References

Thank you