

Original article

Quality Assurance and its Impact on Academic Performance at Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences, University of Tripoli Alahlia

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ABSTRACT

With its establishment in 1999, University of Tripoli Alahlia (UTA) has been incorporating the system of quality assurance and accreditation into its strategic plan and has occupied it as an essential tool to achieve its vision, mission and objectives. UTA has obtained the institutional accreditation of the National Center for Quality Assurance and Accreditation in 2008, and then it also obtained the academic accreditation in 2011. Pharmaceutical Sciences (PSs) Department is one of eight departments included inside the university, PSs Department has obtained the academic accreditation in 2019, and as part of its strategic planning to enhance the quality of education, new commitments and requirements have been imposed to enhance teaching, learning and research quality and productivity. Thus, this study aims at identifying the role of quality assurance in improving the academic performance at the PSs Department under study. The areas are ranged from teaching and learning to research quality and productivity. The paper will outline the level of achievements made, specify the challenges, and provide necessary recommendations. The results demonstrate that the application of the quality assurance process has resulted in an important improvement in the running process of teaching, learning and researching at the PSs Department. The study employs a qualitative content analysis and the results are supported by a survey questionnaire and interviews conducted with the PSs Department teaching staff.

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INTRODUCTION

Quality assurance refers to "an ongoing, continuous process of evaluating the quality of a higher education system, institutions, or programs" [1]. Globally, the higher education quality assurance is gaining an increasing significant attention amongst higher education programs. This attention drives primarily from the willingness of these programs to meet the growing requirements for

education quality. Around the world, universities continuously and competitively attempt to reach their mission and objectives which guarantee satisfaction of community and demands of stakeholders' [2].

In Libya, the growth of higher education institutions was mainly controlled by the government but the private institutions were also donated higher education degrees in different specialties [3]. Most of these private institutions may have an important role in improving the higher education output in the manner of skills and specialties of the graduates [4]. With the rapid development of education since 2006, which demanded the construction of a governmental establishment with the mission of auditing the quality assurance of higher education, the Libyan ministry of higher education has established the National Center for Quality Assurance and Accreditation (NCQAA) [5].

The NCQAA is a self-regulating center which concerned with the quality accreditation and assurance in all field of education. In 2016, NCQAA has updated the quality assurance and accreditation system in Libya. This system has derived from an international experience with the respect of local characteristics [5]. The updated quality assurance system employed by the NCQAA marked a full application since that time, makes an interwoven process that involves the following programmes: teaching quality assurance, continuous academic development, curriculum development and accreditation. Each of these programs was presented to monitor the performance of a specific part of the higher education system treated by specific mechanisms and procedures designed to suit the education environment in Libya [5].

With its establishment in academic year 1999-2000, University of Tripoli Alahia (UTA) has been incorporating the system of quality assurance and accreditation into its strategic plan and has occupied it as an essential tool to achieve its vision, mission and objectives. The process has been under expansion since few years later, and in 2006, with the establishment of the NCQAA, more quality procedures were introduced and developed [6]. UTA has eight scientific departments including; Department of Business Administration, Department of Accounting, Department of Law, Department of English, Department of Architecture and Urban Planning, Department of Information Technology, Department of Medical Laboratories, and Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences (PSs). UTA has obtained the institutional accreditation of the NCQAA in 2008, and then it also obtained the academic accreditation in 2011. In more details, the institutional accreditation has been renewal in 2018, a year later, most of UTA departments have obtained the new academic accreditation including PSs Department [6].

Taking PSs department of UTA as a case study, and in order to find out the level of achievements increased so far, it would be very important to evaluate the assessment process undertaken as part of the quality assurance process. This assessment will be a helpful tool to outline the achievement level and progress made, specify the challenges, make adaptations and changes where necessary, and provide strategic recommendations accordingly. This paper aims to discuss these issues and provide an analytical summary of the whole quality assurance framework as operated at PSs Department of UTA. The study employs a qualitative content analysis and the results are reinforced by a questionnaire conducted with the PSs Department of UTA teaching staff. The results gained from the outputs of survey questionnaire reflect a positive demonstration of the quality assurance process. The quality assurance procedures assist the enhancement process as part of the academic performance of the teaching staff. Furthermore, there is a significant association between academic performance and research of the University. The higher the staff's performance in researching and teaching, the better the University ranking would be. It is the same in quality assurance role which is improving the students' learning outcomes and the learning processes.

METHODS

Data collection

A suitable data collection form (Questionnaire), was designed to collect and document the data based on the study's research aims and objectives. The questionnaire was distributed to all PSs Department teaching staff in February 2021. The anonymous survey questionnaire included ten questions, responses to which were based on a five-item Likert scale (strongly agree = 1, somewhat agree = 2, neither agree nor disagree = 3, somewhat disagree = 4 and strongly disagree = 5) [8]. The ten questions are focused on measuring the role of quality assurance in; helping develop teachers' professional performance, enabling continuous learning for teachers, helping improve teaching strategies and methods, helping develop curriculums and courses syllabuses and contents, supports learning process and outcomes, increasing workload on teachers, motivating teachers to publish scientific papers, motivating teachers to be actively involved in the Department activities, improving the needs of the labor market, and improving teacher's skills in E-learning.

Study participants

A total of 25 (out of 28) respondents were collected, two of which were excluded due to their inaccuracy. As such, the response rate represents about 96% of the academic staff.

Data analysis

The data were then transferred and analysed through the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22 (SPSS, Inc., Chicago, IL, USA). SPSS is proven to be a very effective software used in qualitative researches to manage data and execute statistical analyses that can generate and support the research results [8]. The data were summarized as percentages and frequencies.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the results reached as a part of the questionnaire after being analyzed through SPSS. As mentioned above, this study is aimed to study the impact of quality assurance on the academic performance at Department of PSs, UTA. The areas are focused on: the processes of teaching and learning, in addition to, the researching process, and the need of labor market. The results obtained out of the survey have shown a helpful impact of the quality assurance procedures in the improvement process of PSs Department in the most of these areas.

The SPSS analyses of the results of the survey questionnaire reveal the followings; as it has shown in Table 1; the participants strongly agree that quality assurance helps develop teachers' professional performance scoring 40%. Hence it enables continuous learning for teachers with 44% somewhat agree, which is the highest score, followed by 28% strongly agree. Most clearly, more than 70% of teaching staff agree that the quality assurance helps improve teaching strategies and methods (36% somewhat agree, 28% strongly agree, and 20% neither agree nor disagree), and helps develop curriculums and courses syllabuses and contents with 32% somewhat agree and 28% strongly agree. All of the previous scores support the learning processes and outcomes with approximately 65%. Thus, above 60% of the teachers agree that quality assurance increases the workload on teachers making a total of 86% agree (52% strongly agree, 24% somewhat agree, and 20% neither agree nor disagree).

Moreover, a total of 84% of teaching staff agree with the quality assurance improves teacher's ability in E-learning and 78% also agree that it improves the needs of the labor market. However, 58% of teachers disagree with the quality assurance motivates teachers to publish scientific papers (28% somewhat disagree, 20% strongly disagree, and 20% neither agree nor disagree), and 64% also disagree with the quality assurance motivates teachers to be actively involved in the Department activities (32% somewhat disagree, 20% strongly disagree, and 24% neither agree nor disagree).

Table 1. demonstrates the respondents' number and percentage of each question

Items	Strongly agree		Somewhat agree		Neither agree nor disagree		Somewhat disagree		Strongly disagree	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Helps develop teachers' professional performance	10	40	8	32	4	16	2	8	1	4
Enables continuous learning for teachers	7	28	11	44	4	16	2	8	1	4
Helps improve teaching strategies and methods	7	28	9	36	5	20	3	12	1	4
Helps develop curriculums and courses syllabuses & contents	7	28	8	32	7	28	2	8	1	4
Supports learning process & outcomes	7	28	9	36	6	24	2	8	1	4
Increases workload on teachers	13	52	6	24	5	20	1	4	0	0
Motivates teachers to publish scientific papers	4	16	4	16	5	20	7	28	5	20
Motivates teachers to be actively involved in the Department activities	3	12	3	12	6	24	8	32	5	20
Improves the needs of the labor market	8	32	8	32	7	28	0	0	2	8
Improves teacher's ability in E-learning	16	64	4	16	2	8	3	8	0	0

Quality assurance is taken as a successful instrument to help developing the teaching staff professional career since it provides different chances that enhance continuous learning and development [9]. Also, quality assurance helps improve the learning process and outcomes. However, there are a few aspects where the procedures of quality assurance, although proving very essential, impose challenging demands and burdens. For instance, a huge number of teaching staff agree that the quality assurance increases the workload due to the documentation issue required for evidence purposes [10]. Besides a lack of an appropriate awareness and knowledge of the quality assurance concept and significance, a few teaching staff find it difficult to know the role of quality assurance in the entire process of education.

On this basis, and for improvement purposes of the learning process, there is some procedures are recommended including; organizing more training courses and seminars to expand the values and principles of the quality assurance process among the department teaching staff, and creating an E-system to run all the quality assurance programmes which can be very helpful in the documentation management and thus reducing the workload. Furthermore, securing more teaching staff to decrease the teaching workload and provide more adequate time for other academic activities. Besides offering more necessary facilities to involve the teaching staff in the Department activities and to motivate them in publication purposes.

CONCLUSION

This study exhibited the quality assurance impact on the whole academic performance at Department of PSs, UTA. A suitable questionnaire has been used to measure the level of impact the quality assurance procedures is making at the PSs Department. The areas included teaching, learning, and research productivity. Remarkably, the results presented in this paper have shown a development in the education system of the PSs Department. In conclusion, the quality assurance has improved the running process of Libyan higher education private universities, UTA as a case study, moves it from classical methods of teaching and learning to further modern effective strategies.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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ضمان الجودة وأثره على الأداء الأكاديمي بقسم العلوم الصيدلانية، جامعة طرابلس الأهلية

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المستخلص

منذ إنشائها عام 1999، قامت جامعة طرابلس الأهلية بدمج نظام ضمان الجودة والاعتماد في خطتها الاستراتيجية واتخذته أداة أساسية لتحقيق رؤيتها ورسالتها وأهدافها. حصلت جامعة طرابلس الأهلية على الاعتماد المؤسسي من المركز الوطني لضمان الجودة والاعتماد عام 2008، ثم حصلت أيضاً على الاعتماد الأكاديمي عام 2011. قسم العلوم الصيدلانية هو أحد الأقسام الثمانية المتضمنة داخل الجامعة، وقد حصل قسم العلوم الصيدلانية على الاعتماد الأكاديمي عام 2019، وكجزء من تخطيطه الاستراتيجي لتعزيز جودة التعليم، تم فرض التزامات ومتطلبات جديدة لتعزيز جودة وإنتاجية التدريس والتعلم والبحث. وبالتالي، تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تحديد دور ضمان الجودة في تحسين الأداء الأكاديمي في قسم العلوم الصيدلانية قيد الدراسة. وتتراوح المجالات من التدريس والتعلم إلى جودة وإنتاجية البحث. وستوضح الورقة مستوى الإنجازات التي تحققت، وتحدد التحديات، وتقدم التوصيات اللازمة. وتوضح النتائج أن تطبيق عملية ضمان الجودة أدى إلى تحسن مهم في سير عملية التدريس والتعلم والبحث في قسم العلوم الاجتماعية. وتستخدم الدراسة تحليلاً نوعياً للمحتوى وتدعم النتائج استبيان مسح ومقابلات أجريت مع أعضاء هيئة التدريس في قسم العلوم الاجتماعية. الكلمات المفتاحية: طرابلس، ضمان الجودة، الأداء الأكاديمي، جامعة طرابلس الأهلية، العلوم الصيدلانية.