

Chapter 16

Student Participation in Quality Assurance Processes of HEIs the Omani Context

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ABSTRACT

Quality assurance and accreditation are the most pronounced words in the education sector. Quality culture involves all stakeholders in the process. Students who are the major stakeholders play a vital role in the QA process of an institution. The role of students in QA process in Oman context has been covered by conducting interviews from both students and staff members. The current study has been conducted on all the 13 branches of University of Technology and Applied Sciences. An online interview schedule was arranged with five students and two staff members from each branch. The list of students and staff was collected from the quality assurance department of UTAS branches. The results of the study showed that students are actively participating in various programs. The main hindrances to student involvement are low awareness about QA processes, time constraints, and low student representation towards QA processes. The implication of this research is important for HEIs, OAAA, academic researchers, and higher education stakeholders.

INTRODUCTION

“Quality education system emphasizes the importance of focusing on the five important elements including: quality learners, quality learning environment, quality content, quality processes and quality outcomes.” (Nafukho and Muyia, 2021)

Quality in education focuses on outcomes by having an impact on strategies adopted to ensure that the stakeholders achieve their fullest potential. The quality of output given holds pride and reputation for any institution. A quality system cannot be created and kept rigid wherein the stakeholders get adjusted to the system. Instead, modification in the system is to be made according to the changes in the mindset of the stakeholders, technical and environmental changes to bring out excellent results. The experience gained by the students will support them in reaching their ambition. The role of the institution’s administration and the quality assurance department in designing the quality assurance process must ensure clearly defined outcomes, timeline and steps to achieve it. Once the outcomes are decided, the role of quality assurance department will be to provide adequate training to all the stakeholders involved in the process. The training should be planned in such a way that complex institutional targets are broken down into step by step process with a completion deadline. The training session must be clearly understandable so that the targets are achieved without any delay. Principles that link the goals of the institution to quality assurance can be prepared to assure the implementation of the planned processes. Achievement of the set goals are possible with a positive and forward-looking leadership, identifying and fulfilling the needs of the learners, encouraging and empowering the staff, identifying and finalising the process of achieving the set targets, adopting continuous improvement strategies from lessons learnt from the past, improvement plans adopted based on evidences and effective involvement of all stakeholders in the quality assurance processes. These principles not inclusive of, provides a framework for ensuring continuous improvement in the quality assurance processes that aims to get the end result i.e. institution with potential for excellence.

The role of quality assurance department to support the quest for excellence of an institution can be linked to principles mentioned earlier. The institution’s administration and quality assurance department must work in line to achieve the targets. Working effectively on what works out well for the stakeholders, involving and providing an effective role to every stakeholder encourages them to take part in quality assurance processes, clearly defining the vision, mission and goals of the institution to the stakeholders, adequate training on various quality assurance processes that support to achieve the targets, collaborative learning process and encouraging outstanding practices, data and information processing for future planning and ensuring that a continuous learning is happening for continual improvement. All of these are continuous processes that ensures quality assurance in an institution.

THE ROLE OF STUDENTS IN QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCESS

Role of Leaders

This section of the chapter highlights the role of Head of the institutions along with department administrators and QA department to inculcate quality culture in the institution. Achieving quality objectives of an institution is easily possible when the head of the institution clearly understands the target and brings unity in the work by given right directions aiming to reach the goal. Clear definitions of vision,

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