Faculty Perceptions on the Effectiveness of the Internal Quality Process and its Role on the Teaching and Learning

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Abstract

The paper examines the perspective of academics on the impact of internal quality assurance system in the A'Sharqiyah University (ASU) on the teaching and learning process. This internal system is called the Program Annual Monitoring and Review Process (PAMRP). This study covers the academic staff's awareness of the quality system utilized within the university and their perceptions towards its effectiveness on teaching and students' learning process. The study highlights the key aspects covered by participants to improve the internal quality assurance process.

The study concludes that faculty are almost aware of the quality process and agreed on its positive impact on teaching and learning. They only emphasized the need to provide the part time faculty with enough input like the awareness sessions conducted for the full times.

Keywords: internal quality assurance, quality assurance processes, effectiveness on the teaching and learning, Oman, A'Sharqiyah University

1. Background

Oman's educational institutions have a clear quality system and procedures to follow. The guidance comes from the Ministry of Higher Education, Research, and Innovation throughout following the national regulations and decisions. They also go through several audits and accreditation tasks at different levels. This is the responsibility of the Oman Authority for Academic Accreditation and Quality Assurance of Education (OAAAQA). The Authority (www.oaaaqa.gov.om) oversees regulations of the quality of both school and higher education (colleges and Universities in Oman) in Oman. This ensure maintaining a level of quality process that meets international standards, and to encourage educational institutions to improve their internal quality assurance systems. OAAAQA looks after Institutional Accreditation, Programme Accreditation, General Foundation Programmes and the Oman Qualifications Framework. Based on this, OAAAQA is having a leading role in the audit and the accreditation tasks of all educational institutions in Oman despite they are governmental, private, civil, or military.

Different institutions are now at different stages of these tasks, some are in the process of the General Foundation Programs audit, the institutional Standards Accreditation, and some have already been accredited. On the other hand, both the Oman Qualifications Framework and the Program accreditation have been launched recently.

2. Academics Perceptions on Internal Quality Assurance Systems

Studying the literature related to the topic, it seems that faculty in different institutions do have different opinions towards the internal quality systems/processes in their organizations. For example, Kleijnen, J, et al. investigated in their study the faculty's perceptions of quality management in their departments. The results demonstrated that faculty were neutral about the degree to which sufficient the quality system within their departments, this may stress the idea that the quality management system utilized may not yet be a recognizable activity within their units. In addition, the same study demonstrates that faculty think that quality management results may help in improvement of the system but should not control us and tell them what to do. In addition, Mussawy, & Rossman (2018) stated that the study found that faculty members' felt that current QAA processes is more of submitting paperwork on time, with fewer efforts on improving practice. They also are not aware enough of the quality process. However, they stress the effectiveness of QAA processes at their respective institutions.

On the same line, Lodesso, and Warito (2016) stated that it was found that academic staff perceive internal quality management practice didn't contribute to the improvement of teaching learning process of the universities. The major gaps identified by them were the issues related to programme relevance and curriculum dimensions followed by the governance and management dimension. This has covered both teaching and learning and managing and governing aspects of any institution. This study concluded that to improve the internal quality management practice of universities, there is a need to focus on areas academics are considered important. A need to have a standardized assessment instruments/system to regularly assess the internal quality management system as well as the role of institutions to reconsider the aspects of quality which needs to be assessed.

However, on the other side, Tavares, O. et al. (2016) stated that "Academics …. recognize that internal quality assurance has contributed to an increased awareness of teaching quality issues, but this seems to have only modest expression in actual improvements or innovations in teaching and learning".

As one of the examples of institutions developed and implemented a quality system since the establishment and keep on adapting and modifying it throughout the years, A'Sharqiyah University has built a quality assurance internal process which covers the internal needs covering the day-to-day process as well as getting to meet the national and international standards. This would obtain national and international accreditation and professional bodies related to different colleges if needed.

Academic excellence and quality are at the heart of A'Sharqiyah University's values (ASU website- QAA section). These values are utilized within every single approach of the university. This includes policies, manuals, and procedures within the University.

Based on this, the QAA framework planned within the University ensure three main tasks (A'Sharqiyah University 2022/23) within any practice: This covers:

(1) ASU policies, procedures and regulations

(2) Monitoring, evaluation, feedback and review

(3) Continuous improvement and enhancement (ASU website- QAA section)

The ASU QAA Framework (A'Sharqiyah University 2022/23) covers different elements including developing, revering policies, procedures and regulations, monitoring and providing feedback on them as well as ensuring continuous improvement and enhancement. This would cover all areas within ASU including the academic side which is the focus on this research.

The Program Annual Monitoring and Review Process (PAMRP) consists of Student feedback, Course Evaluation Reports and Program Review and Development Plan. Student feedback is the first part of the review process. This is done by students for each course each semester. They highlight the strengths and areas for improvement of each course covering the content, timing, teaching methods and aids. The Course Evaluation Reports are done by the end of each semester for each course. This is conducted by the course coordinators. This cover covers the students and different instructors of the course. This is expected to help in identifying good practices and suggested action plans to improve planning and achievement of the course. The final stage of this is the Program Review and Development Plans. This is conducted by the head of department for each program. They identify common aspects covered with the related courses and students input too. This help to ensure good teaching, assessment and investigates aspects which might have an impact on the program in general. This ends in actions to be taken for future development of the program.

3. Research Questions

This study intents to answer the following question:

What are the academic staff perceptions about the internal quality management Processes and its effectiveness on the teaching-learning process?

In order to answer this main question, the researcher created the following some sub-questions which help to get into details and to ensure answering them within the built questionnaire:

(1) To what extent do faculty members are aware of ASU QAA processes- Program Annual Monitoring and Review Process (PAMRP)?

(2) How do academic staff perceive the quality management activities conducted in their colleges?

(3) Has PAMRP facilitated improvements in teaching and learning activities and syllabi revision?

(4) Has the quality system utilized helps to improve students' learning?

(5) Does the current internal QAA processes help to prepare ASU for the accreditation task?

(6) Which aspects of quality management activities are considered more important by academic staff?

(7) Does quality management effort in the colleges contribute to effective educational improvement?

(8) What are the perceptions of faculty members about quality assurance processes?

4. Method

The study is a small scale of research which consists of only one tool of data collection to find out the academic perceptions of the internal quality system developed in the last few years and kept on improving it based on their and other stakeholder's input. A questionnaire was developed to ensure answering the following research questions. The questionnaire was shared with all faculty of the university and given adequate time.

4.1 Participants

ASU has five colleges; College of Applied and Health Sciences, College of Arts and Humanities, College of Business Administration, College of Engineering, and College of Law (A'sharqyiah University | (asu.edu.om). The colleges provide different programs which covers students' different needs and interest. In addition, the Centre of Languages and Foundation Studies (CLFS) was also part of the study. All faculty, about 150, in all the colleges, was targeted to get their input of the internal quality process within the university.

The study targeted all the academics in the university to ensure a good participation rate. The study received 41 filled questionnaires from the colleges and CLFS. With responses of 41 academics from different colleges, 8 were from College of Business Administration, 15 from College of Arts and Humanities, 3 from the College of Engineering and 5 each from College of Applied and Health Sciences, Faculty of Law and Centre for Language and Foundation Studies. More than half of them is at the rank of Assistant Professors and only two as full professors. More than 70% of participants have 11 years of experience and more and the same figure again for less than 5 years in ASU.

Table 1. Colleges

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	College of Arts and Humanities	15	36.6	36.6	36.6
	College of Law	5	12.2	12.2	48.8
	College of Applied and Health Sciences (CAHS)	5	12.2	12.2	61.0
	College of Engineering	3	7.3	7.3	68.3
	College of Business Administration (COBA)	8	19.5	19.5	87.8
	Centre for Language and Foundation Studies	5	12.2	12.2	100.0
	Total	41	100.0	100.0	

Participants are from different colleges, about a third of them are from the College of Arts and Humanities, followed by the College of Business Administration with about 20%. Others are from other colleges and the Centre for Language and Foundation Studies.

Table 2. Academic rank

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	lecturer/Senior lecturer	12	29.3	29.3	29.3
	Assistant Professor	23	56.1	56.1	85.4
Valid	Associate professor	5	12.2	12.2	97.6
	Full professor	1	2.4	2.4	100.0
	Total	41	100.0	100.0	

Faculty of varies academic ranks participated in the study with half of them are with an Assistant Professor rank along with only one full professor participated.

Table 3. Years of experience

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	0-5	6	14.6	14.6	14.6
	6-10	5	12.2	12.2	26.8
Valid	11 and more	30	73.2	73.2	100.0
	Total	41	100.0	100.0	

The years of experience raked between new faculty to more than 11 years. 11 and more years seems to be the majority with more than 70% of the number of participants.

Table 4. Experience in ASU

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	0-5	30	73.2	73.2	73.2
Valid	6-10	11	26.8	26.8	100.0
	Total	41	100.0	100.0	

To do with the experience in ASU, participants are more within five years and less in the university, which does reflect the age of the university itself.

5. Findings

Based on the participants input from the survey, and after analyzing the data using SPSS software (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences), below are some of the observations. The finding are presented based on the section of the questionnaire.

5.1 Participants' Awareness of the QA Process

Table 5. I aware of the ASU Program Annual Monitoring and Review Process (PAMRP) in the Quality Procedure Handbook p:38

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	No	4	9.8	9.8	9.8
Valid	Yes	37	90.2	90.2	100.0
	Total	41	100.0	100.0	

The participants are aware (90%) of the ASU Program Annual Monitoring and Review Process (PAMRP) in the Quality Procedure Handbook. This seems to be because of the awareness sessions conducted by the Quality Department for every new joiner of the university, both the administrative and academic staff.

5.2 ASU Program Annual Monitoring and Review Process

Table 6. Overall, the current ASU Program Annual Monitoring and Review Process (PAMRP) is effective

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	2	4.9	4.9	4.9
	Agree	28	68.3	68.3	73.2
	Strongly Agree	11	26.8	26.8	100.0
	Total	41	100.0	100.0	

Table 7. The PAMRP within my college are conducted to a sufficient degree

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	1	2.4	2.4	2.4
	Agree	22	53.7	53.7	56.1
	Strongly Agree	18	43.9	43.9	100.0
	Total	41	100.0	100.0	

Table 8. The PAMRP has a positive impact on the work of us as academics

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	2	4.9	4.9	4.9
	Agree	20	48.8	48.8	53.7
	Strongly Agree	19	46.3	46.3	100.0
	Total	41	100.0	100.0	

Participants found that the current ASU Program Annual Monitoring and Review Process (PAMRP) is effective with a percentage of 95.1% agreeing and strongly agreeing with this. This is implemented within their colleges to a sufficient degree (97.6%), and they also find it with a positive impact on the work of them as academics (95.1%).

Table 9. My department/college pays adequate attention to aspects related to the quality of teaching and learning

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	2	4.9	4.9	4.9
	Agree	18	43.9	43.9	48.8
	Strongly Agree	21	51.2	51.2	100.0
	Total	41	100.0	100.0	

Table 10. PAMRP has facilitated improvements in the area of teaching and learning activities

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	1	2.4	2.4	2.4
	Disagree	2	4.9	4.9	7.3
	Agree	15	36.6	36.6	43.9
	Strongly Agree	23	56.1	56.1	100.0
	Total	41	100.0	100.0	

Table 11. PAMRP has facilitated improvements in the area of syllabi revision

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	2	4.9	4.9	4.9
	Agree	19	46.3	46.3	51.2
	Strongly Agree	20	48.8	48.8	100.0
	Total	41	100.0	100.0	

Table 12. PAMRP has improved students' learning

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	3	7.3	7.3	7.3
	Agree	19	46.3	46.3	53.7
	Strongly Agree	19	46.3	46.3	100.0
	Total	41	100.0	100.0	

The participants found that their departments/colleges pay adequate attention to aspects related to the quality of teaching and learning (95.1%). They also agree that PAMRP has facilitated improvements in teaching and learning activities (92.7) and in syllabi revision (95.1%). This as a result as participants indicates that this has improved students' learning (92.6%).

Table 13. I am aware of the purpose of each element of PAMRP at ASU

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	8	19.5	19.5	19.5
	Agree	25	61.0	61.0	80.5
	Strongly Agree	8	19.5	19.5	100.0
	Total	41	100.0	100.0	

Table 14. I am involved in the process of PAMRP at my department, college or university

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	9	22.0	22.0	22.0
	Agree	19	46.3	46.3	68.3
	Strongly Agree	13	31.7	31.7	100.0
	Total	41	100.0	100.0	

Table 15. The current internal QAA processes helped to prepares ASU for the accreditation

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	1	2.4	2.4	2.4
	Agree	26	63.4	63.4	65.9
	Strongly Agree	14	34.1	34.1	100.0
	Total	41	100.0	100.0	

They are aware of the purpose of each element of PAMRP at ASU (80.9%) and are involved in the process of PAMRP at my department, college or university (78%). They found that the current internal QAA processes helped

to prepare ASU for the accreditation (97.6).

5.3 Student Feedback

Table 16. Student feedback once per semester helps to provide a clearer picture of the strengths of a given course

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	7	17.1	17.1	17.1
	Agree	24	58.5	58.5	75.6
	Strongly Agree	10	24.4	24.4	100.0
	Total	41	100.0	100.0	

Table 17. Student feedback once per semester helps to provide areas for improvement of a given course

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	3	7.3	7.3	7.3
	Agree	25	61.0	61.0	68.3
	Strongly Agree	13	31.7	31.7	100.0
	Total	41	100.0	100.0	

Participants found that Students feedback is important as an element in the Quality process. They found that Student feedback once per semester helps to provide a clearer picture of the strengths of a given course (82.9%) and to provide areas for improvement of the assessed course (92.7%).

5.4 Course Evaluation Reports

Table 18. Course Evaluation Reports consolidate student reviews

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	23	56.1	56.1	56.1
	Strongly Agree	18	43.9	43.9	100.0
	Total	41	100.0	100.0	

Table 19. Course Evaluation Reports consolidate instructor reviews

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	1	2.4	2.4	2.4
	Agree	22	53.7	53.7	56.1
	Strongly Agree	18	43.9	43.9	100.0
	Total	41	100.0	100.0	

Table 20. Course Evaluation Reports are the formal mechanism for capturing good practice to continually improve delivery, performance and achievement of the course

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	4	9.8	9.8	9.8
	Agree	23	56.1	56.1	65.9
	Strongly Agree	14	34.1	34.1	100.0
	Total	41	100.0	100.0	

Table 21. Course Evaluation Reports are the formal mechanism for developing suitable action plans to continually improve delivery, performance and achievement of the course

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	4	9.8	9.8	9.8
	Agree	24	58.5	58.5	68.3
	Strongly Agree	13	31.7	31.7	100.0
	Total	41	100.0	100.0	

Participants agreed that Course Evaluation Reports consolidate student reviews (100%) and the instructor reviews (97.6%). Course Evaluation Reports are the formal mechanism for capturing good practice to continually improve delivery, performance, and achievement of the course (90.2%) and for developing suitable action plans to continually improve delivery, performance, and achievement of the course (90.2%).

5.5 Program Review and Development Plan

Table 22. Program Review and Development Plan helps to ensure learning teaching are fair and consistent and in turn, contribute to the overall enhancement of the student experience

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	2	4.9	4.9	4.9
	Agree	22	53.7	53.7	58.5
	Strongly Agree	17	41.5	41.5	100.0
	Total	41	100.0	100.0	

Table 23. Program Review and Development Plan helps to assessment are fair and consistent and in turn, contribute to the overall enhancement of the student experience

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	1	2.4	2.4	2.4
	Agree	21	51.2	51.2	53.7
	Strongly Agree	19	46.3	46.3	100.0
	Total	41	100.0	100.0	

Participants found out that Program Review and Development Plan helps to ensure that learning and teaching are fair and consistent and in turn, contribute to the overall enhancement of the student experience (95.1%) and helps to ensure that assessment are fair and consistent and in turn, contribute to the overall enhancement of the student experience (97.6%).

5.6 Details Comments

Participants highlighted few details comment with the survey. The key one is related to the part-timers. The need to give more focus to the part-time faculty to help and guide them into the quality process.

6. Limitations

Although the survey was shared with all faculty and enough time was provided which intend to cover all the university's colleges and centers only a total of 41 faculty participants (about 27%) out of about 150 of the totals of faculty working in the University. More effort is needed to attract more faculty to participate in any coming study.

7. Discussion and Conclusion

The study answered the main question and the sub-questions. The study finds out that participants are aware of the ASU Program Annual Monitoring and Review Process (PAMRP), and that the current ASU Program Annual Monitoring and Review Process (PAMRP) is effective and is conducted within their units to a sufficient degree. They also stressed that it has a positive impact on the work of academics, and colleges pay adequate attention to aspects

related to the quality of teaching and learning.

In addition, this study also agreed that PAMRP has facilitated improvements in teaching and learning activities, improvements in syllabi revision and has improved students' learning. Faculty are also aware of the purpose of each element of PAMRP and are involved in the process of each within their units. Participants also find that Student feedback helps to provide a clearer picture of the process and areas for improvement of each given courses.

Course Evaluation Reports consolidate student and instructor reviews and are the formal mechanism for capturing good practice and developing suitable action plans to continually improve delivery, performance and achievement of the course. In addition, participants also found that Program Review and Development Plan does help to ensure both learning teaching and assessment are fair and consistent and in turn, contribute to the overall enhancement of the student experience.

The study in general studied A'Sharqiyah University only as one of the fast-growing universities in Oman which seems to be only applicable for this specific institution, however, this study can be a useful source of the target topic and helps to encourage others to study their institution and to make a comparison study too. It was a good chance to get in depth with this topic which have not been studies as far as the researcher is aware of in Oman. Studying the impact of an internal quality process on teaching and learning seems to be a good start for other researchers in the future to find out the importance of having a clear and a supportive quality process with the aim of supporting an effective teaching and learning process. This would, for sure, add to the educational Omani context and other nearby countries to reflect on each practice and to utilize these internal quality process within each county and region.

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