Directorate of Vocational Reviews

Review Report

Aptech Computer Education

Manama

Kingdom of Bahrain

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VO008-C3-R017

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Introduction

The Directorate of Vocational Reviews (DVR), which is a part of the National Authority for Qualifications and Quality Assurance of Education and Training (QQA), conducted this review over three days, by a team of four reviewers. For this review, reviewers observed training sessions and other related activities, analysed data about the courses and qualifications learners achieve, examined learners' written and other work, examined documents and the materials provided by the provider and met with learners, employers, trainers, management and support staff.

In the previous review, all aspects of the provision of the Aptech Computer Education were judged as satisfactory.

This Report summarises reviewers' findings and their recommendations about what the provider should do to improve.

Grading scale:

| Outstanding | 1 | Good | 2 | Satisfactory | 3 | Inadequate | 4 |

Table of review judgements awarded

Main Question	Judgement
Learners' achievement	Good (2)
Quality of teaching / training and assessment	Satisfactory (3)
Quality of programmes	Good (2)
Quality of support and guidance	Good (2)
Leadership, management and governance	Good (2)
Capacity to improve	Good (2)
Overall effectiveness	**Good (2)**

Review judgements

Overall effectiveness

How effective is the provision in raising learners' achievement and meeting the range of learners' and stakeholders' needs?

Grade: Good (2)

The overall effectiveness of Aptech Computer Education is good, as are all aspects of its provision except the quality of teaching/training and assessment in promoting learning, which is satisfactory. A range of externally-accredited and non-accredited courses are offered, mainly in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) with suitable progression levels, that are highly meeting the needs of learners, employers, and other stakeholders. Aptech Computer Education offers courses that are based on effective understanding of the local market needs.

The offered courses are delivered by local and international qualified and knowledgeable trainers with relevant theoretical and practical command of the courses they teach. Trainers use relevant and accurate assessments to evaluate the learners' understanding and measure achievement of objectives. Trainers use varied training methods to engage learners adequately in session. However, in a few cases, the opportunities provided to learners to participate in sessions are minimal. Session plans used by trainers are not sufficiently detailed. Most leaners in the external accredited courses achieve the qualification they aim for in a timely manner and learners in local courses obtain their local completion certificates. However, a minority of leaners in local courses do not achieve course objectives fully. The final scored marks by most learners in International Computer Driving License (ICDL), International Technology Infrastructure Library (ITIL), Microsoft Certified Solutions Expert (MCSE) and (MCSA) Microsoft Certified Solutions are well above the minimum of the international pass marks.

Aptech Computer Education Academic Committee (AC) closely monitors learners' achievement and effective arrangement is recommended to provide individual learners with the required support. The provider has developed vision and mission statements that focus on learners' achievement. Highly effective links are maintained with relevant local and international stakeholders in the field of ICT.

Capacity to improve

How strong is the provider's capacity to improve the quality of learning?

Grade: Good (2)

Aptech Computer Education capacity to improve is good. An effective organization structure with sufficient human and physical resources is in place, which enables the provision to carry out its continuous improvement. The provider's management and staff have developed a focused strategic plan with clear objectives, where day-to-day activities are linked to the strategic and operational plans. Recently, an e-learning system and a quality management system with a number of relevant policies and procedures have been introduced. The provider has continuous self-evaluation process through monthly meetings of its AC. Aptech Computer Education management managed to improve the success rate of learners' achievement on the externally accredited courses especially in the ICDL courses.

The Self-Evaluation Form (SEF) provided for the purpose of the review is sufficiently detailed, and some areas of development are identified accurately. The management has taken steps to address the majority of previous review recommendations. The provider has highly effective links with its local and regional stakeholders and maintains good repeat business with a range of major employers. The provider has broaden the range of their internally and externally accredited courses and added new courses to their offering such as Oracle financial, MSCE Servers 2012 and general English language.

Learners' achievement

How well do learners achieve?

Grade: Good (2)

Learners' achievement at Aptech Computer Education is good overall. The vast majority of learners acquire effective vocational skills and knowledge that meet the industry standards in ICT sector, and relevant to their workplace and day-to-day duties. The Learners' Performance Data (LPD) for the last three years indicates that the overall retention and success rates are high at 100% and 96% respectively. In addition, the LPD shows that 42% of the enrolled learners are in the externally-accredited courses where most of them achieve the qualification they aim for successfully in a timely manner and their final scored marks in these courses are well above the minimum of the international pass marks. On the other hand, most learners in the local completion courses achieve the course objectives and are awarded with a certificate of attendance after going through a number of relevant and comprehensive formative and

summative assessments. However, a minority of learners in the Web Page Design and Microsoft courses have difficulties to complete their tasks, as it is required. The interviewed employers and group of various learners expressed their satisfaction with the learning outcomes, acknowledging that after attending courses at Aptech Computer Education, the learners gained abilities to apply confidently the learnt vocational skills and knowledge at workplace. By considering learners' backgrounds, experience, skills and knowledge in the field of ICT, it is evident that most of Aptech Computer Education learners demonstrate good level of attainment, progress well throughout the course and able to maintain their progression over different levels and modules. Nonetheless, scrutinizing the records of learners' assessment revealed that a minority of leaners do not achieve the set objectives and their gained skills is minimal.

Most learners are able to work well independently as seen in the class activities and exercises and are able to work collaboratively when given the opportunities. From the observed sessions, the majority of learners are attentive and have positive attitude towards their learning, in a few cases they reflect on what they need to improve by questioning their trainers. Attendance and punctuality policy is in place and relevant records are regularly kept. It is evident from the records and the observed sessions that most learners attending regularly and on time. However, punctuality is an issue in a few cases.

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching/training and assessment in promoting learning?

Grade: Satisfactory (3)

The effectiveness of training and assessment at Aptech Computer Education is satisfactory overall. Trainers are qualified, knowledgeable and have the relevant ICT professional certificates with theoretical and practical command of the subjects they teach. This is evident from their knowledgeable responses to learners' questions and their abilities to provide related vocational examples. Trainers use schemes of work on a session-by-session basis, which specify time allocation for specific topics to be covered. In some sections of these schemes, trainers specifically highlight topics that needed to be focused on more, based on learners' previous knowledge. However, these session plans are not sufficiently detailed and the teaching methods, range of activities or assessment procedures are not specified. Nevertheless, in the better sessions, training methods such as group work and practical activities are used to engage learners adequately.

The majority of the observed sessions are managed appropriately and session objectives are shared with learners. However, a number of sessions are trainer centered in which learners

merely follow trainer's instructions, and limited opportunities for learner's initiatives are provided. Relevant and effective range of summative and formative assessment methods are used to assess learners' theoretical and practical understanding. Recently, in two courses, trainers used online testing and immediate automated useful feedback was provided. Apart from this, informative written feedback on how to improve is provided across all courses. However, the effectiveness of the formative assessments to check what learners know, understand and can do is inconsistent. Records on learners' performance are regularly maintained, which include the grades of the pre- and post-course assessment, and results of assessments. During the observed sessions, trainers provided learners with adequate verbal feedback and training delivery was occasionally adjusted to address the individual learners' needs. In almost all sessions observed, trainers provided effective support for learners who needed help in practical sessions; this was particularly visible for the slow learners by extending the duration of activities and repeated explanation. However, in a number of sessions, the challenge provided to learners to stimulate self-learning and develop their higher order thinking was not sufficient. Trainers adequately use the available resources such as data show, informative slides, whiteboard, videos, and up to date required ICT software and hardware are also utilised appropriately to promote learning.

How well programmes meet the needs and interests of learners and stakeholders?

Grade: Good (2)

The effectiveness of Aptech Computer Education programmes to meet the needs of stakeholders is good overall. A range of externally-accredited and non-accredited courses mainly in ICT with suitable progression levels are on offer. In addition, the provider offers a few customised courses in the field of business and management. Aptech Computer Education has affiliations with international ICT partners such as Microsoft, ICDL, Oracle and has also become a testing centre of ICDL and Pearson VUE. Learners and employers have expressed their high satisfaction with the range of the offered courses, which are closely match their needs. Courses on offer are based on an effective understanding of the local need and the development in the field of ICT. The provider conducted an effective market survey where the views of major stakeholders were gathered for different sectors such as banking, manufacturing, and oil and gas. Based on that, a number of courses were introduced, some of which were conducted or offered including general English language and Oracle. In addition, the AC monthly meetings outcomes are effectively utilised to shape the course offerings.
Course customisation is carried out based on employers' needs and requests that match learners' level and abilities. Courses are supported with sufficient extra-curricular activities to enrich the learning experience. These include extra CDs for all courses that contains videos, additional exercises and useful references. Also, courses are well- resourced with relevant and fit for purpose equipment.

The provider uses partners' authentic approved course material, which are well-structured, planned, good balanced of theoretical and practical course content, that is linked to the course objectives. Courses are reviewed and updated according to the latest software versions. For the non-accredited courses, the provider relies on the course materials developed from international bodies, such as Velsoft and Aptech Worldwide. The design and updates of assessment is agreed by the AC, and the approval is decided by the management before seeking Ministry of Labour's final approval. However, the design of assessment of few courses does not sufficiently measure the predefined objectives, and there is no formal mechanism to design or approve the courses. In addition to informative brochures, the course outlines specify clearly the target audience and prerequisite requirements for specialised courses. For the ICDL courses, the provider tests the level of learners in the English language and place them either in Arabic or English class.

How well learners are supported and guided?

Grade: Good (2)

Learners at Aptech Computer Education are provided with good support and guidance that enable them to achieve better outcomes. An effective arrangements to support learners are in place executed by approachable trainers and cooperative staff. Before the start of the course, learners and stakeholders have access to well-informed advice on Aptech Computer Education programmes, and receive informative course outlines in advance. They have suitable access and information about the course selection through informative brochures and sufficiently detailed website. In the first day of the course, learners are provided with authentic course materials and inducted into the course details, policies, procedures, assessment methods and health and safety precautions, as well as providing them with contact details of the provider's staff. Trainers are highly responsive and provide learners with the necessary assistance, such as extra support sessions for the low achievers, extensive practical revision sessions, regularly follow–up on absenteeism and mock examination. Also trainers repeat sessions for learners who could not complete the proposed modules.

A reward policy is implemented to encourage higher attendance and punctuality and motivate learners to improve their academic performance. Arrangement for delivery of programmes are highly flexible and the provider negotiates with stakeholders on choice of venue, date, timings, change of examination dates and the language of trainers. Although Aptech Computer Education has no written policy to deal with special educational needs, it provides special care and sensitive support to cater to the needs of such learners who are enrolled. An effective communication with employers is maintained in informing them about learners' achievement through fit for purpose performance report. This report consists of

learner's attendance, class performance, grades, and in the minority of courses, it contains effective comments and recommendations for individual learner.

Aptech Computer Education environment is fit for purpose and well equipped with relevant learning resources and hygienic facilities. ICT laboratories and classrooms are appropriately equipped to support the current courses.

Leadership, management and governance

How effective are leadership, management and governance in raising achievement and improving the quality of the provision?

Grade: Good (2)

The effectiveness of leadership and management is good overall. The provider has clear vision and mission statements that focus on providing a quality training and development of human resources. Based on SWOT analysis, the provider management and staff have developed a focus strategic plan with clear objectives. The day-to-day activities are linked to the strategic and operational plans. Recently the provider has introduced a quality management system with a number of relevant policies and procedures. Aptech Computer Education AC plays an effective role in raising learners' achievement and improve the quality of the provision. Based on regular monthly meetings of the AC, a yearly comprehensive report is produced and shared with the provider's management.

Qualified staff with the required vocational experience are recruited and well deployed within the structure. Fit for purpose organisation structure that meets the provision aims and objectives is in place. Clear and detailed job descriptions are shared with all staff. A semiannually appraisal system is in place and it is clearly linked with the Key Result Area (KRA) of trainers performance during the training course. Monitoring of trainers' performance is carried out through periodic session observations using suitable form and feedback is shared with them. However, this observation is not always detailed. Trainers are provided with required training opportunities to upgrade their professional certification.

The provider closely monitors learners' achievement through the AC, who provides actions and recommendations for each individual learner and stating the required support. Regular effective monthly meetings are held, issues related to learners and provision performance are discussed, and continuous follow-up on the responsibilities assigned. Learners' and employers' views are continuously collected, aggregated and actions are driven based on the analysis of these comments. Effective links are maintained with external accrediting bodies such as Microsoft, Oracle, ICDL and local stakeholders. The provider premises is fit for

purpose and free from hazard with suitable learning environment and essential health and safety aspects are in place. The SEF provided by the Aptech Computer Education for the purpose of the review is sufficiently detailed, and some areas of development are identified accurately, however, the grades are overestimated.

The provider's key strengths

- The development of effective vocational skills and knowledge in the fields of ICT and the high success rate on the externally-accredited courses especially on the ICDL courses

- The relevant and accurate assessments methods used by trainers to evaluate learners' understanding and measure the achievement of objectives

- The highly effective support provided to learners to help them achieve better outcomes

- The closely monitoring of learners' achievement by the provider AC

- The highly effective links maintained with local stakeholders and international awarding bodies.

Recommendations

In order to improve, Aptech Computer Education should:

- ensure that learners achieve better outcomes on local courses

- improve the quality of teaching/training by varying the methods to engage and motivate learners

- further enhance the internal session observation system.

Appendix

Description of the provision

Aptech Computer Education was licensed by Ministry of Labour (MoL) in 1993. The provider is a franchise of Aptech Worldwide Indian IT training cooperation, which has 1,300 centres in 40 countries. Aptech Computer Education mainly offers a range of externally-accredited and local completion courses in the field of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and a few number of management courses. The externally-accredited programmes are of long duration while the completion certificate courses are of short and very short duration. Aptech Computer Education offers external accredited courses in ICDL, ITIL, MCSE and MCSA. The completion courses are mainly in MS office, web design, and programming such as Oracle, ASP.net and Java. Aptech Computer Education is an approved Microsoft training centre, an ICDL approved training and test centre and an approved Pearson VUE test centre.

Since the last review conducted in September 2012 and up to the date of this review, the provider has enrolled 3,698 learners; 96 in 2012, 1,189 in 2013, 1,559 in 2014 and 854 in 2015 up to the date of this review. Learners are adults, employed by private and government organisations, and most of them are sponsored by their employers. Aptech Computer Education is managed by a managing director, who is the owner of the provision, and operated by a general manager. The provider employs an academic head, a customer relation, an administration and accounting staff, a driver and a caretaker . The provider has two full-time trainers and a pool of local and regional part-time trainers who are utilised as needed. Aptech Computer Education operates from one location in Manama.