



هيئة ضمان جودة التعليم و التدريب
Quality Assurance Authority for Education & Training

Vocational Review Unit Review Report

**Bahrain Society of Engineers Training Centre (BSETC)
Juffair
Kingdom of Bahrain**

Date of Review: 23 -25 April 2012

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The Vocational Review Unit

The Vocational Review Unit (VRU) is part of the Quality Assurance Authority for Education and Training (QAAET), an independent body set up under Royal Decree No.32 of 2008 amended by Royal Decree No. 6 of 2009. Established to raise standards in vocational education and training, the VRU is responsible for monitoring and reporting on the quality of vocational provision, identifying strengths and areas for improvement, establishing success measures, spreading best practice and offering policy advice to key stakeholders, including the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Education.

Reviews are based on the VRU's *Review Framework*, and carried out on providers' premises by teams of carefully selected and highly trained reviewers. All providers are invited to nominate a senior member of their staff to participate in the planning of the review, and to represent them during review team meetings. Reviewers examine a range of evidence before arriving at a series of judgements and awarding grades for the quality of the provision.

Review grades are awarded on a four-point scale:

Grade description	Interpretation
1: Outstanding	This describes provision or outcomes that is/are at least good in all aspects and outstanding in the majority.
2: Good	This describes provision or outcomes that is/are at least satisfactory in all aspects and good in the majority. There may be some particularly successful approaches or outcomes.
3: Satisfactory	This describes a basic level of adequacy. There are no major areas of weakness which substantially affect what learners, or significant groups of learners, achieve. There may be some features which are good.
4: Inadequate	This describes situations where major weaknesses in some areas affect the outcomes for learners and outweigh any strengths in the provision.

Introduction

Description of the provision

Bahrain Society of Engineers Training Centre (BSETC) was established in 2003 by the Bahrain Society of Engineers. The centre is licensed by the Ministry of Labour. It offers a range of short non-accredited courses, mainly in engineering, with a few in management and information technology.

After the first review in December 2010, there have been around 200 learners enrolled on different courses. Learners are mostly sponsored by their employers. BSETC is located at the Bahrain Society of Engineers headquarters in Juffair. The centre is run partly by the General Manager of the Society and a full-time training coordinator. The overall operations of the centre are supervised by a volunteer director, who is an elected member of the board of directors of the Bahrain Society of Engineers. All the trainers are part-timers, mostly from abroad. The centre also has a voluntary training committee of a number of members of the society mainly to work in an advisory role.

Scope of the review

This review was conducted over three days, by a team of three 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 reviewer and talked with staff, learners, employers, trainers and management and support staff.

In the previous review, overall effectiveness was judged as below satisfactory, as was learners' achievement, teaching and training and leadership and management. The quality of programmes and support and guidance were judged as satisfactory.

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

Table of review judgments awarded

Overall Effectiveness	
How effective is the provision in raising learners' achievement and meeting the full range of learners' and stakeholders' needs?	Grade: 4 Inadequate
Learners' Achievement	
How well do learners achieve?	Grade: 4 Inadequate
Quality of Provision	
How effective is teaching and/or training in promoting learning?	Grade: 4 Inadequate
How well do programmes meet the needs and interests of learners and stakeholders?	Grade: 3 Satisfactory
How well are learners supported and guided to achieve better outcomes?	Grade: 4 Inadequate
Leadership and Management	
How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	Grade: 4 Inadequate

Review judgements

Overall effectiveness

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

Grade: 4 Inadequate

The overall effectiveness of the Bahrain Society of Engineers Training Centre (BSETC) is inadequate, as are learners' achievement, the quality of teaching and training, support and guidance and the effectiveness of leadership and management. The quality of programmes in meeting stakeholders' needs is satisfactory overall.

A sizeable proportion of learners make no or insignificant progress on the courses. This was evident from the profiles of learning in the lessons observed, as half of the sessions were judged as inadequate, as well as from discussions with learners. Those who do make some progress develop some useful knowledge and professional skills. Trainers are qualified and experienced, but most of them do not make use of a range of training techniques to motivate and challenge learners. Most of the sessions are monotonous and do not cater sufficiently for the varying needs of learners. In sessions, assessment of learners' progress and attainment is not rigorous, and the centre does not have a verification or moderation process to ensure consistency or quality of assessment.

The leadership and management use their experience and professional profiles appropriately to introduce and deliver an adequate portfolio of courses that serves the engineering disciplines. While delivering the courses however, the centre does not employ robust quality assurance systems to monitor and improve the performance of trainers, to gather, analyse and make use of stakeholders' views or to measure and monitor learners' achievements on courses. Support measures, if any, are left to trainers' self-initiative inside sessions, in which it is possible that the needs of some learners go unmet.

The centre has weak capacity to improve. Despite being judged inadequate in the first review, there was no clear action planning put in place to address the areas for improvement. Further, the three monitoring visits undertaken showed that little progress had been made in addressing the recommendations highlighted from the first review. There have, however, recently been some new practices put in place, such as the observation of trainers, pre- and post-course assessment and the gathering of stakeholders' views. The implementation of these however has not been cohesive, or BSETC have not yet made effective use of the outcomes to improve their overall effectiveness. Furthermore, the centre lacks robust governance arrangements to monitor the quality of provision, implement effective internal quality assurance systems or to plan and implement further improvement measures.

Learners' achievement

How well do learners achieve?

Grade: 4 Inadequate

Learners' achievement at BSETC is inadequate overall. From the lessons observed, meetings with stakeholders and learners and analysis of the available progress records, a significant proportion of learners make practically no or minimal progress and/or gain little benefit from the courses attended. Some interviewed learners indicated that some of the courses were of insignificant value to them. Those learners who do make some progress generally develop some useful skills and knowledge which are appropriate to their fields of work. Although all learners receive certificates upon attending the required number of course hours, the certificates are not based on an assessment of learners' achievement.

The provider keeps records of pre- and post-course assessment of all recent courses. These assessments are simple multiple-choice questions which do not always measure the professional skills that some courses intend to develop. Moreover, the assessments are not subject to any kind of verification and moderation. The sampled assessment sheets showed some anomalies in marking. The difference between post- and pre-course assessments shows that a significant proportion of learners hardly make any significant gains in knowledge. Moreover, the centre does not keep track of the small number of learners who attend external examinations to follow up on their pass rates.

In the successful activities, learners enjoy their learning experience, are self-motivated and are able to work independently or collaboratively. In a few cases they were able to reflect on how well they are progressing. Records of attendance and punctuality are kept; almost all learners attend regularly but many of them arrive late for the beginning of a session or after breaks.

The quality of provision

How effective is teaching and/or training in promoting learning?

Grade: 4 Inadequate

The quality of training is inadequate overall. Although trainers at BSETC are generally qualified and experienced in their field, and they prepare examples and real cases drawn from their own experiences, trainers generally use insufficiently inspiring and challenging training techniques to engage, motivate, and challenge learners. Half of the sessions observed were inadequate, with the remaining half at a satisfactory level only. Mostly,

sessions are trainer-centred where limited teaching styles and methods are utilised. In these sessions, a significant proportion of learners did not make as much progress as they should.

Lesson plans are usually available with learning objectives that are shared with learners at the beginning of a session. Trainers make adequate use of the available learning resources to present their topics. The lesson plans however, are not detailed enough to include a range of activities to make sessions more inspiring, and plans are not effectively linked with the outcomes of initial and continuous assessment of learners' attainment. As a result, sessions are not delivered effectively to cater for the full range of learners' varying needs.

Learners' progress and attainment are not effectively assessed or monitored by trainers. Whilst some trainers check learners' understanding verbally by direct questions during a session, trainers generally do not employ effective formative or summative assessment tools to assess learners' attainment and to monitor their progress. Despite having pre- and post-course assessments, trainers do not review or analyse the results of these assessments to make effective use of them. Sessions usually start on time but in many cases time is not well managed because of prolonged breaks or early finishing.

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

Grade: 3 Satisfactory

The quality of programmes of BSETC is satisfactory overall. The centre offers a suitable range of non-accredited courses, some of which serve niche topics in engineering. The courses however are limited in progression levels. The centre also offers non-accredited courses in management, with a few in information technology. In addition, BSETC offers courses that can prepare learners for external examinations such as the Project Management Programme (PMP), FIDIC and Value Engineering (VE). Learners attend these courses, and have the options to sit for external examinations by respective professional organisations. The centre however does not keep records of the number or the results of the learners in their external examinations. Although BSETC does not use a comprehensive market needs analysis, they rely on their professional experience and network in planning for their offerings. Courses are sufficiently resourced and the materials are updated, but not regularly.

Learners and employers are generally satisfied with the courses offered, but some of them expressed the need for more specialised and advanced courses. Most of the courses are offered for open enrolments with practically no customisation or opportunities for additional extracurricular activities to enrich the courses.

Resources are generally sufficient to meet the needs of learners and stakeholders; however, on a few of the observed sessions, there was a shortage of laptops to cater for the number of learners, and the projector was not clear enough. Course material is fit for purpose with useful and detailed information that suits the level of the courses conducted. The courses are mainly updated by individual trainers' efforts; the updating, however, is not always regular or systematic enough.

How well are learners supported and guided to achieve better outcomes?

Grade: 4 Inadequate

Support and guidance is inadequate overall. Although trainers and administrative staff are approachable and responsive to learners' and stakeholders' enquiries, BSETC have no system to ensure that learners have easy access to support and guidance when needed. Support is left to individual trainers' initiative inside classrooms, but from the meetings with learners and from the observed lessons, learners are not always given sufficient support, especially the less able ones. Moreover, learners are not always aware of their individual progress and the communication with their employers is not sufficient to keep them informed about learners' achievement.

Although BSETC prepare a yearly schedule of courses in advance, with detailed course outlines and clear objectives, and make these available via various media, courses are not always conducted as planned. The premises are adequately equipped and offer a fit-for-purpose learning environment, although some learners complained about poor control of the air conditioning, an issue that was also observed by the review team.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?

Grade: 4 Inadequate

BSE recently devised appropriate vision and mission statements that focus on meeting stakeholders' needs and improving the quality of training. The statements however, have not yet translated into any specific action or strategic plans that are geared towards improving the overall provision. Stakeholders' views are gathered and trainers are observed, but the outcomes of these practices are not effectively analysed or used to make improvements to BSE's provision. The Self Evaluation Form (SEF), that was completed prior to the review, shows low capacity of the centre to self-diagnose the strengths and areas for

development and hence devise meaningful improvement plans. Moreover, the governance arrangements, including accountability and reporting lines, are blurred and not sufficiently supportive to monitor the overall effectiveness of the centre or to drive further improvement. Only one member of the management staff, the one training coordinator, is fully devoted to the training centre activities; most of them work on a voluntary basis only.

The centre does not consistently observe each trainer in every course. The form used, however, focuses on the quality of training, but not sufficiently on learning. In most cases the observations made using this form have not been sufficiently helpful or critical. The trainers receive no feedback except in exceptional or extreme cases.

Learners' views are gathered via post-course evaluation sheets. The views are analysed, though not thoroughly when it comes to the qualitative comments. Recently a newly devised form was used to gather employers' views. These forms have not been analysed or used yet.

Although all courses have pre- and post-course assessments, the results are not aggregated, analysed or monitored by the senior management. The assessments are left to individual trainers; furthermore, the centre does not deploy any verification or moderation process to ensure that all learners are assessed reliably and consistently. The basic health and safety measures are in place, such as detectors and extinguishers, but there is no clear evacuation plan and practically no first aid measures in place.

The provider's key strengths

- In the successfully implemented activities, learners enjoy their learning experience and are self-motivated
- Courses are adequately selected, resourced and supported with detailed outlines
- Trainers are generally qualified and experienced in their professional fields.

Recommendations

In order to improve, Bahrain Society of Engineers Training Centre (BSETC) should:

- improve learners' progress and attainment by:
 - implementing rigorous initial and continuous assessments
 - introducing an effective verification and moderation process to ensure reliability and consistency of assessments
 - ensuring that all learners' needs are strictly met and they are challenged to reach their full potential
 - supplementing courses with additional activities to enrich learning experience of learners
 - ensuring that learners receive effective support and guidance when needed; and informing them and their employers about their progress.

- improve the quality of training and learning by:
 - ensuring that trainers deploy an effective range of teaching techniques to motivate and engage all learners
 - improving lesson planning to cater for all learners' needs by utilising the outcomes of initial and continuous assessment
 - better time management of training sessions.

- improve the effectiveness of leadership and management in monitoring and enhancing the quality of provision by:
 - devising effective strategic plans
 - consistent gathering and analysing of stakeholders' views, and effectively using the outcomes
 - improving governance arrangements and reconsidering staffing levels and responsibilities
 - implementing effective and critical performance management for all trainers and staff.