



Directorate of Vocational Reviews Review Report

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

Date Reviewed: 6-8 April 2015

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Introduction

The Directorate 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 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 provider and talk with learners, employers, trainers, management and support staff.

In the previous review, Bahrain society of Engineers Training Centre (BSETC) overall effectiveness was judged as inadequate, as was learners' achievement, teaching and training, support and guidance, and leadership and management. The quality of programmes was judged as satisfactory. Accordingly, the centre was subjected to two monitoring visits where the progress made in addressing the recommendations of the review report was judged as sufficient.

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
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Table of review judgements awarded

Main Question	Judgement
Learners' achievement	Good (2)
Effectiveness of teaching / training and assessment	Good (2)
Quality of programmes	Good (2)
Quality of support and guidance	Good (2)
Effectiveness of 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)

All aspects of provision at BSETC are good. Learners acquire relevant knowledge and skills and the vast majority of them make good progress considering their starting point and prior attainment. The centre provides an effective learning experience facilitated by highly qualified trainers who utilise their professional experience to enrich training and illustrate links between the theory and the practical application. Training is engaging and interactive. A variety of relevant formative and summative assessments are used to check learners' understanding and ensure their achievement of their course objectives. Courses are offered based on the outcomes of a useful annual market survey, discussion with employers and feedback of learners. Most learners and employers interviewed are highly satisfied with the range of courses offered and find it meeting their needs. A fit for purpose mechanism is in place to design, review and update course material. Courses are structured and planned with detailed course outlines which indicate the course objectives, teaching and assessment methods. Course outlines are shared with learners and stakeholders in advance. Learners are well supported and guided throughout their learning experience; they are provided with all course related information, trainers and staffs are approachable and supportive. During sessions, constructive verbal feedback is provided to learners, and both employers and learners kept informed about the progress made during the course. Leadership and management are focused on improving learners' achievement and quality of the provision; action plans are developed based on regular and accurate evaluation of practices. Performance monitoring is effective; achievement data are kept and analysed to inform management of trends, and trainers' performance is regularly monitored to ensure continuous quality improvement. Quality assurance arrangements are effective and consistently applied. However, the available written procedures are not always sufficiently detailed.

Capacity to improve

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

Grade: Good (2)

BSETC's capacity to improve is good. During the last two years, the management of BSETC made significant improvements in addressing the last review recommendations particularly in improving records keeping and arrangements of quality assurance. This was driven by a detailed and focused operational plan which was developed based on a critical gap analysis which identified key areas for improvement. Currently, learners' achievement is effectively measured and relevant data are kept and monitored, and the quality of training and assessment significantly improved. BSETC has future plans which include expanding the current organization structure by recruiting a full-time trainer, marketing staff and an assistant training coordinator. In addition to construction of a separate building for the training centre. Moreover, communications are initiated with Project Management Institute (PMI) and the Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM) to become an approved training centre.

BSETC has appropriate human and physical resources to enable improvement to be carried out; members of the management team are qualified with sufficient relevant experience and the centre has access to a wide pool of highly qualified and professional trainers. Number of enrolments is maintained and repeat business is good over the last three years.

Learners' achievement

How well do learners achieve?

Grade: Good (2)

Learners' achievement at BSETC is good overall. Learners acquire and develop relevant vocational skills, knowledge and competencies in different fields such as management and niche engineering topics that are delivered in a form of short attendance courses. Learners' testimonies via surveys pointed out their satisfaction with the gained skills and knowledge, which they found useful to apply at workplace. Learners' performance and acquisition of skills against the pre-defined course objectives are accurately measured through relevant formative and summative assessments. Assessment tools used include tests, quizzes, case studies and activities, which are properly verified. In addition, relevant pre-course assessment is carried out for gauging learners' prior attainment to establish a starting point from which the impact of learning could be measured. Moreover, learners' profiles are

effectively utilized to incorporate learners' expectations and training needs in the design and delivery of the course.

The Learners' Performance Data (LPD) for the last three years shows high retention and success rates of 97% on average. Achievement rates for all courses indicate that most learners achieve their course objectives in a timely manner. This is reflected in learners' assessment results, participation in activities, and interaction with their trainers and classmates. Considering the starting points of learners on entry to the course, the vast majority of them progress well towards achieving the course objectives.

Learners are attentive, show the interest to demonstrate their understanding and present their work. The majority of learners often reflect critically on their learning and extend what they have been taught. This is evident during the observed sessions; through sharing of work-related experiences, the way learners answer probing questions and the explanations they provide. From the observed sessions and scrutiny of learners' work, learners exhibit confidence and ability to work well collaboratively and independently when given the opportunity.

BSETC has clear guidelines on attendance, which is communicated in advance to learners and employers. Attendance and punctuality are promptly recorded for all courses. Furthermore, the centre takes the necessary follow-up actions in case of absenteeism or frequent lateness. Attendance rate on average is high and above 90% in vast majority of the conducted courses. However, from records of attendance and the observed sessions, punctuality is an issue in few cases.

The quality of provision

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

Grade: Good (2)

BSETC trainers are knowledgeable and have command of their vocational specialisms. They provide accurate explanations and knowledgeable responses to learners' questions, and use relevant vocational examples from their work experience. All trainers use detailed and well-structured lessons plans which include clear objectives for each day; derived from the course main objectives. Lesson plans indicate the activities, timing, the role of both the trainer and the learners, training and assessment methods which are linked to the course objectives. Trainers utilised learners' profiles and the outcomes of the pre- courses and the continuous formative assessment to inform and continuously update their lesson plans. They use 'course modification

form' to state the changes and their justifications. Sessions are well managed and focused on specific learning objectives which are always shared with learners. To establish the context to the current lesson's coverage, trainers start with effective recapitulation of what was covered in the previous session where learners are highly encouraged to participate in.

A variety of training methods and activities are used to engage and motivate learners such as group discussions, case studies, questions and answers and sharing their relevant workplace experience with their classmates. This was evident from the observed sessions, discussion with learners, and scrutiny of lesson plans and learners' produced work.

A wide range of relevant formative and summative assessment is used throughout the course to evaluate learners' understanding and measure their achievement of the course objectives. These include verbal questions, group discussion, role play, case studies, quizzes and post course assessment. Although the duration of the courses offered is short and very short, trainers maintain and regularly update records of learners' performance. Learners are kept aware of their progress through the constructive verbal feedback provided during the sessions and the 'achievement report' which is shared with learners upon the course completion. In addition to the attendance and results of the summative and formative assessments, the report includes useful individualized comments and recommendations for further improvement.

BSETC tries to minimize the individual differences between learners within a group; hence, learners' profiles are verified to ensure their eligibility to join the course. As a result, the groups are mostly homogenous with little individual difference especially for niche engineering courses. Trainers customise their delivery appropriately to cater for the different backgrounds and desired goals of the comparable level of learners within the group. Learners are effectively challenged and their higher order thinking is stimulated through further questioning, reflections on classmates' answers, and sharing individual relevant experience. The available resources are effectively utilised to promote learning; these include PowerPoint presentations, flipcharts, white and smart boards, notice boards, videos, as well as some pocket size manuals.

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

Grade: Good (2)

BSETC offers a range of short and very short local attendance courses in engineering, management and soft skills, environment, and health and safety with special focus on the engineering sector. Courses are offered based on the outcomes of a useful annual survey, and meetings which are occasionally held with human resources departments and engineers from relevant ministries and industrial companies. In addition, learners' and employers' suggestions about courses in the post-course evaluation form are also taken into consideration when deciding on the annual training calendar. BSETC also conducts some courses which are customized to meet specific employers' needs. Discussions with learners and stakeholders indicated that the offered courses meet their needs, improved their knowledge and productivity and prepared them well for the external examinations. Nevertheless, a few stakeholders recommended expansion of the offered range of the public courses.

The Centre relies on its highly qualified and experienced trainers to design and update courses. Courses are designed based on clear requirements from the centre which include detailed outlines, and the specified targeted audience. Then course material is verified and approved by the training manager. Although this mechanism is fit-for-purpose, there is no written relevant procedure. The advisory training committee contributes on deciding of the range of the courses to be offered however, it has minimum input in course materials verification. Preparation for external examination courses such as cost engineering, value engineering and PMI courses follow the awarding bodies where original textbooks are used. All courses on offer are up-to-date and effectively resourced reflecting the industrial standards.

Several courses are supported with a range of relevant extra-curricular activities to enhance and enrich the learning experience. For example, inviting external guest speakers, relevant site visits, external building inspections and selected speakers from the learners with special cases to present and share with their classmates.

Courses are structured and planned with detailed outlines which are linked to the courses objectives, indicating teaching and assessment methods. Course outlines are shared with different stakeholders via brochures, website, and BSETC different social media. The centre has clear minimum requirements for course admission, with special requirements for more advance and niche engineering courses. Course outlines always indicate the targeted audience.

How well learners are supported and guided?

Grade: Good (2)

Considering the short duration of the courses offered, BSETC has effective arrangements in place to guide and support learners to achieve better outcomes throughout their learning experience. Trainers and staff are approachable, cooperative and supportive before and during the courses and whenever approached by potential learners. Learners and employers have an online access to detailed information about the centre and courses on offer through the centre's website and social media accounts. In addition, course outlines and brochures are available in advance to provide better informed decision on course selection. Announcements and reminders of current and prospective courses are electronically circulated to learners and employers. There is always a member of the management or staff available at the venue where a training course is held to provide the needed support and attend to any issues raised by learners or trainers. Likewise, trainers provide guidance to learners on work-related aspects and enrich their knowledge in related matters.

Courses start with a brief and fit-for-purpose induction session which includes information on health and safety instructions, venue facilities, course arrangements and assessment. The 'Course Improvements Form' is effectively utilised to identify and support learners to overcome their learning difficulties and improve their achievement. When required, compensation sessions and opportunity to re-sit the assessments are provided to learners who missed a class with a valid excuse or those needed more support to improve their achievement. Learners are also provided with a copy of the post-test and its answers key at the end of the course for future referencing. Furthermore, current and previous learners are invited to attend technical seminars, conferences and the 'Tuesday forums' organized by Bahrain Society of Engineers (BSE). Additionally, the centre management uses an incentive scheme to recognise learners' achievements by awarding recognition certificates and gifts to two best achievers within the group. Although the above mentioned arrangements of support and guidance are consistently implemented in all courses, the centre lacks a written relevant procedure.

Employers are always kept aware of their employees' performance through the 'Learners' Achievement Reports' sent upon course completion. These reports provide a holistic picture on learners' attendance and performance during the course alongside individualized remarks of learners' strengths, weaknesses and recommendations for further improvement. The centre is responsive and flexible in terms of course structure, venue and timing to accommodate learners' and employers' needs. Training is carried out either at the centre's premises, hospitality venues or at employers' work premises when requested. BSETC learning environment is suitable with sufficient learning resources. The centre's has one big

classroom equipped with a smart board and two dedicated prayer rooms. Learners have access to a small library which include some textbooks relevant to the courses they attend.

Leadership management and governance

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

Grade: Good (2)

BSETC vision and mission statements are focused on meeting the needs of learners and stakeholders. A detailed and well-focused operational plan is developed based on a gap analysis which identified key areas for development. Progress monitoring is done on a regular basis through quarterly meetings with the top management. The current organisation structure is adequate considering number of enrolment and the type of the offered courses being short and very short local attendance courses. In July 2013, the centre recruited a full-time qualified training manager who is in-charge of the training centre including communication with trainers, quality assurance arrangements, marketing and communication with local and regional stakeholders. The centre has a full-time training coordinator who is responsible of all administration support, and helps the training manager in marketing and communication with stakeholders. BSETC has access to a pool of highly qualified and professional trainers. Although the centre has a training committee, its role is limited to advising the centre on the range of courses to offer.

Effective quality assurance arrangements are in place; learners' prior attainment is effectively assessed through learners' profile form and pre-course assessment and the outcomes of both are effectively utilised in placing learners at the suitable course and informing lesson planning to cater for learners' different backgrounds and expectations. Records of learners' attainment and progress are kept. The centre has an appropriate internal verification process which cover course material, lesson plans and assessment. However, the available written procedures are not always sufficiently detailed.

A relevant gap analysis was conducted to evaluate the overall provision and to identify key areas for improvement. BSETC management hired a local consultancy firm to support them in quality improvement. In July 2013, a mock review was conducted; it identified the key areas for improvement in each of the five main questions. Accordingly, a detailed and focused operational plan was developed. In March 2014, another follow-up mock review was conducted to evaluate the progress made in addressing the identified key areas for improvement.

Highly qualified and experienced trainers are recruited, sufficiently inducted and effectively deployed. The centre uses a 'Trainer's Approval Form' to ensure that the trainer is eligible to conduct the course. All trainers are provided with very useful guidelines to keep them fully aware of what is expected of them, and the requirements of the centre related to quality of training and records keeping. Moreover, the training manager maintains continuous communication with trainers on training relevant aspects.

Achievement data are kept, aggregated and analysed to inform management with trends. Nonetheless, the analysis is not always effectively utilised to trigger more improvement.

Trainers' performance is regularly monitored through internal lesson observations which are conducted by the training manager. The completed lesson observations are reasonable and relevant and useful comments are raised, the outcomes are always shared with the trainers to ensure continuous improvement. The centre also aggregate learners' feedback and evaluation about trainers and utilise this analysis to inform decision making. There was one case where the centre stop dealing with one trainer as his evaluation by learners was lower than the minimum percentage accepted by the centre. BSETC has clear job descriptions and staff performance appraisal is in place; staff are provided with training opportunities relevant to their job responsibilities.

Learners' feedback about the provision is regularly sought, aggregated and analysed; where applicable, they are used to improve the provision. Appropriate links are maintained with employers; all employers are sent a form to gather their evaluation and suggestions upon completion of a course however, only few of them respond and send their evaluation and suggestions. BSETC maintains effective links with local and regional training providers to exchange experience and improve the provision.

BSETC premises are free of any obvious hazards, and essential health and safety measures are in place. Learners are always provided with relevant guidance.

The current governance arrangement is suitable to hold the leadership accountable and provide the needed support. During the last annual general meeting of BSE board, a recommendation of establishing a separate board of directors for the training centre was approved.

The provider's key strengths

- Learners gain effective skills, knowledge and competencies relevant to their learning and the vast majority of them progress well considering their prior attainment
- Different training methods are used to engage learners and promote learning through sharing their relevant work experience
- A range of relevant assessment methods is used to measure the learners' achievement of course objectives
- Courses are structured and planned with detailed course outlines which indicate teaching and assessment methods and shared with different stakeholders
- effective arrangements are in place to support learners to achieve better outcomes
- A detailed operational plan is developed based on gap analysis which focused on the identified key areas for development.

Recommendations

In order to improve, BSETC should:

- Develop a comprehensive quality assurance manual which include all relevant procedures and policies to control all processes
- Ensure that the analysis of learners' achievement is further utilised to inform decision making and trigger further improvement.

Appendix

Description of the provision

Bahrain Society of Engineers Training Centre (BSETC) was established on 5 April 2003 by the Bahrain Society of Engineers (BSE). The centre is licensed by the Ministry of Labour (MoL). BSETC offers a range of short and very short local attendance courses in engineering, management and soft skill, environmental and health and safety. Engineering courses include preparation for external examination such as Project Management Institute certificates (PMI), value engineering and cost engineering. Number of training hours for BSETC courses varies from eight to 40 hours.

Since the last review, BSETC enrolled 487 learners where 132 learners in 2012, 195 learners in 2013, and 138 learners in 2014. In 2015, 22 learners were enrolled up to the date of the review. The vast majority of learners are sponsored by their employers. Engineering courses make 43.53% of the total enrolment, environment and health and safety courses make 26.89%, management and soft skills courses make 21.33%, Technical report writing and presentation skills make 5.133%, and business courses make 3.08%.

The centre is managed by a volunteer director who is an elected member of the board of directors of the BSE, and a full-time training manager who supervises the training centre. BSETC employs a full-time training coordinator who is responsible of all administration and support work; in addition to helping the training manager in the marketing. The centre has a pool of local and international trainers who work on a part-time basis as and when needed. BSETC also has a voluntary training committee consists of a number of members of BSE mainly work as an advisory role.