Directorate of Vocational Reviews

Review Report

Bahrain Institute for Entrepreneurship and Technology (BIET)

Manama

Kingdom of Bahrain

Date Reviewed: 21-23 October 2013

VO029-C2-R060

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The Directorate of Vocational Reviews

The Directorate of Vocational Reviews (DVR) is part of the National Authority for Qualifications and Quality Assurance of Education and Training (QQA) that was officially set up in 2008 as an independent body governed and supervised by the Council of Ministers. Established to raise standards in vocational education and training, the DVR 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 DVR'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 Institute of Entrepreneurship and Technology (BIET) was established in 2001 by the Bahrain Development Bank (BDB) and is licensed by the Ministry of Labour (MoL). BIET is an authorised training centre for the Microsoft, the CompTIA and the International Computer Driving License (ICDL). BIET is also an authorised test centre for the Prometric, Pearson VUE, Certiport and ICDL. The institute offers a range of courses in the field of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), in affiliation with global IT vendors. BIET's offerings include externally-accredited, internally-accredited and non-accredited courses which cover desktop applications, operating systems, computer applications, web designing and management, data networking, technician training, and database management. BIET also delivers a range of ICT courses for the Al Ahlia University's students.

Since the last review, 1665 learners have enrolled during 2011, 4437 in 2012 and 2003 in 2013 until the date of the review visit. Most of these learners are sponsored by corporate or government agencies.

BIET operates from one centre located in Manama. It employs a general manager, a head of sales and marketing, a head of administration and finance, a head of training and corporate communication, a senior IT trainer and a network administrator, in addition to two sales executives who report to the head of sales and marketing, two assistance administrators and a quality assurance officer. BIET has four full-time trainers and has a pool of part-time trainers utilised as needed.

Scope of the review

This review was conducted over a three days period, by a team of four reviewers. During the review, reviewers observed sessions, analysed data about the courses, examined learners' written and other work, studied documents and materials provided by the institute and met with staff, learners, employers and trainers.

In the previous review, the overall effectiveness and all other aspects of the provision were judged as satisfactory.

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

Table of review judgements awarded

Overall Effectiveness	
How effective is the provision in raising learners' achievement and meeting the full range of learners' and stakeholders' needs?	**Grade: 3 Satisfactory**
Learners' Achievement	
How well do learners achieve?	Grade: 3 Satisfactory
Quality of Provision	
How effective is teaching and/or training in promoting learning?	Grade: 3 Satisfactory
How well do programmes meet the needs and interests of learners and stakeholders?	Grade: 2 Good
How well are learners supported and guided to achieve better outcomes?	Grade: 3 Satisfactory
Leadership and Management	
How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all students?	Grade: 3 Satisfactory

Review judgements

Overall effectiveness

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

Grade: 3 Satisfactory

BIET's overall effectiveness is satisfactory as are all aspects of its provision except for the quality of programmes, which is graded good. The majority of learners attending BIET courses develop suitable vocational skills and knowledge in the field of ICT that are relevant to their professions, background and their day-to-day duties. The majority of learners are self-motivated, enjoy their learning experience and make sufficient progress from their starting point. However, a few learners are not progressing as expected. BIET trainers have relevant theoretical and practical experience in the field of ICT and most of them are certified to teach the courses assigned to them. In most observed sessions trainers use a range of stimulating training techniques and real life work examples to engage and motivate learners, however lesson plans are not always well informed by the prior attainment of learners. Moreover, in a few cases practical activities introduced in session have taken longer time than expected. This is mainly due to weakness in time management. Whilst most trainers assess learners' understanding and keep sufficient records on learners' progress, feedback provided to learners is mostly verbal with random cases of written feedback being provided. BIET offers a wide range of specialised ICT courses that responds well to the local stakeholders and learners needs. Courses ranges from entry level for basic computer concepts such as the 'Qudarat' set of courses to a highly specialised ICT courses on network administration and Microsoft Office. All courses are well structured and updated based on the instructions of the global IT vendor. Wherever applicable, BIET introduces a range of relevant additional activities to enhance the learning experience. BIET largely relies on the information published by market studies conducted by the MOL and the Labour Fund (Tamkeen), in addition to feedback collected from various government bodies to offer their courses. Most BIET staff and trainers are approachable and provide useful support to learners to help them achieve better outcomes. Trainers provide technical advices to learners to select suitable career track for a specific ICT courses. Whilst BIET maintains individual learners' progress records, learners are not always informed about their progress and what they need to do to perform better. BIET's strategic plan is brief, clear and sufficiently challenging with specific job roles and responsibilities. The management has acted upon previous review recommendations and made a few improvements, but the arrangement to monitor and measure learners' achievements and progress is not systematic yet. The institute premises is fit for purpose and provides a pleasant learning environment with suitably maintained laboratories.

BIET has satisfactory capacity to improve. During the years 2012 and 2013, BIET expanded its course offerings to meet specific stakeholders and learners requirements such as the ICT security+ and Linux courses. In addition, the institute extended its recognition as a test centre to be recognised as a test centre for Pearson VUE and ICDL. Appropriate plans, resources and management structure are in place to enable the provider to fulfil its mission. Few laboratories have been upgraded with the latest hardware and software, and more laboratories are planned to be completed during 2014. BIET maintains reasonable repeat business with around 29% its major clients and enrolment has increased during 2013. Whilst the institute developed an action plan to address the recommendations of the previous review, the implementation is not progressing well enough. For example, seeking employers' views is still underdeveloped and analysing information about learners' progress and achievements is not fully implemented. The self-evaluation form (SEF) completed for the review although identifies area for improvements, it is not sufficiently critical and grades provided overestimate the provision.

Learners' achievement

How well do learners achieve?

Grade: 3 Satisfactory

Learners' achievement at BIET is satisfactory overall. The majority of learners achieve their qualifications and the expected learning goals. Learners develop suitable vocational ICT knowledge and skills on the majority of courses that are relevant to their professions and the needs of their workplace. The majority of learners are self-motivated, enjoy their learning experience and show an ability to work independently and apply what they have learnt. Examples were cited of learners progressing further at their work after attending a training course in BIET. Employers' testimonials confirm that some learners have improved their productivity and applied what they have learnt in their day-to-day duties. From the sessions that were observed; only a few learners are challenged and are able to reflect appropriately on how well they are progressing.

The retention and attendance rates across all courses are high, ranging from 91% to 100% during the years 2011 to 2013. Most learners make at least satisfactory progress considering their starting point. A part from "Qudarat" course, the success rate of BIET accredited-courses is high at 90%, and 76% on the externally-accredited courses, respectively. A small minority of learners, however, are not progressing as expected. The "Qudarat" course, which represent 89% of BIET learners' enrolment, is a non-accredited course and the

majority of the learners enrolled in this course gain reasonable vocational IT skills and knowledge that matches their aims. The progress of learners on the 'Qudarat' course was verified by the distant travelled by each individual learner and the standard reached by learners during the observed training sessions and judged to be adequate.

Records of attendance and punctuality reveals that learners are attending regularly and punctually. From lessons observed, the vast majority of learners arrive on time to their training sessions. However, a few learners arrive late without being sufficiently challenged.

The quality of provision

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

Grade: 3 Satisfactory

Most of BIET trainers have theoretical background and practical experience in the field of information communication technology (ICT) relevant to the courses they teach. In most observed sessions trainers use a range of training techniques and activities to engage and motivate learners; especially in the practical part of the sessions. Additionally, a variety of relevant vocational examples, group works and exercises are used to simulate real life work environment. Trainers use suitable lesson plans, provided by the ICT vendors such as Microsoft, to deliver their courses. Trainers start the session with effective summary about what has been covered during previous sessions and links these to the new topic. Course objectives are shared with learners, and most sessions end with a useful summary of what has been learnt. However, in some sessions, lesson plans are not well informed by the learners' prior attainment or the outcomes of their continuous assessments. Moreover, due to weak time management, in a few cases practical activities took more time than expected. Generally, the assessment tools used are suitable across all courses and closely linked to the course objectives. Trainers assess learners' understanding during sessions by asking direct questions and instantly reflecting on the learners' responses. Learners are also assessed through pre- and post-courses assessments, and some practical activities and quizzes that match their level. This was obvious from the majority of observed sessions, where learners with mixed abilities are provided with suitable verbal feedback to enable them to progress further and solve problems. However, marking scheme used is not always streamlined as it is left to the trainers' own estimates with no clear criteria or rubric and most trainers do not provide learners with sufficient written feedback about their work. Nonetheless, trainers keep suitable records of the individual learner's progress. Most trainers use the available learning resources such as whiteboard, data show projectors, flipcharts, routers and personal computers, to promote effective learning.

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

Grade: 2 Good

BIET offers a good range of specialised ICT courses. The range includes externally-accredited, internally-accredited, and non-accredited courses. The courses respond well to local stakeholders' and learners' specific career requirements, and enables learners to acquire internationally recognised certifications in the field of ICT. In response to a specific labour market needs, BIET designed an entry level course, 'Qudarat' designed to introduce large groups of learners to basic computer concepts. Generally, courses are sufficiently resourced to meet the needs of stakeholders and learners. Most learners and employers interviewed, find BIET's offerings highly relevant and up-to-date. Whilst the majority of laboratories provides effective ICT learning environment, a few require hardware and/or software upgrades. For courses conducted outside BIET premises, the institute rely on the stakeholders to provide the required ICT resources and BIET provides the stakeholder with a relevant checklist utilised to ensure that PC's used for the training have the latest version of Microsoft Office and operating system. However, in some cases issues with meeting the required level of resources are not always rectified before start of the course.

All courses are well planned and structured to fulfil the specific needs of learners and stakeholders; an original approved and detailed courses documentations and books are provided to learners, these have clear figures and supported with ample activities. Courses customisation is carried out based on client's needs and analysis, such as the set of courses the institute designed and delivered for the students of Ahlia University. For this type of IT courses, BIET, where applicable, uses relevant extra-curricular activities to support and enhance courses and to enrich learning experience.

The arrangement to review and update courses is based mostly on the instructions received from the ICT vendor. Moreover, BIET has recently carried out updates for MS materials based on employers' requirements. For example, the Microsoft Office 2013 material was updated in line with the 'Logical Operations' courseware.

BIET uses information from labour market studies conducted by the MOL and Tamkeen, in addition to feedback obtained from various government bodies and learners and their employers to decide on future course offerings, this arrangement is sufficient to BIET's requirement.

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

Grade: 3 Satisfactory

BIET provides useful support to learners, which helps them achieving better. The institute provides a suitable and a clear learners' guidance to all learners during the induction session at the beginning of each course. The guidance describes the general rules, regulations and provides information about courses' road maps. BIET website provides a useful bilingual information about courses on offer. Learners and employers have access to well-designed courses brochure.

For some courses additional revision classes are offered and supported with translated presentations to help learners with the course contents. All trainers and staff are approachable and supportive and some trainers provide technical advices to learners having IT difficulties at their workplace outside the sessions and through emails. Most trainers provide suitable career advice to learners when approached. Learners with special needs are supported well. For example, BIET arranged a training course for a group of learners with sight difficulties and provided them with training material that suits their needs.

Prior to start of a course, BIET shares the details of the proposed course and its outlines with the targeted employers. At the end of a course, an informative performance report is sent to employers upon their request. The report includes learners' attendance and the results of the pre- and post-course assessments. Whilst, BIET keeps a record about individual's progress during a course, learners are not always informed about their progress or what they need to do to improve further.

The provider's learning environment is safe and fit for purpose; it consists of six computer laboratories, two classrooms well equipped with the necessary ICT learning resources that contain up-to-date software and hardware to meet course specific requirements. The institute has a useful library, workshop laboratory for practical sessions and a suitable reception area. BIET offers free internet access throughout the building. BIET's arrangement for course delivery is highly flexible to suit the needs of all stakeholders and learners.

Leadership and management

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

Grade: 3 Satisfactory

The institute's vision and mission statements are clear and focused sufficiently on learners' professional development of competent ICT skills that are relevant for the local market needs. BIET's strategic plan is brief and sufficiently challenging with useful information such as key objectives and deadlines. The plan is cascaded amongst staff. The plan, however, does not emphasise on monitoring learners' achievements and progress in a systematic manner. The institute deploys sufficient resources that meet the aims and objectives of the institute. There are clear rules and responsibilities for each staff member, meetings are held with trainers and management team on a regular basis and there is a proper follow-up procedure for the agreed actions. BIET has acted upon the outcome of previous review and made some appropriate improvements, however some aspects are yet to be tackled sufficiently. Although the institute keeps records on learners' achievement and progress, this is not sufficiently systematic. BIET maintains a useful trainers recruitment's procedure. Trainers with appropriate IT qualifications and experience are deployed effectively within their specialisation. Their performance is monitored through periodic visits by the senior trainer and a useful checklist is completed after each visit; trainers are informed on how to improve further and some actions, but not all, are followed up by the centre management. Most trainers are provided with sufficient in-house training opportunities or through the IT venders, to develop further within specific field.

Learners' skills and knowledge is evaluated utilising pre-course assessments in most courses and as a result, most learners are placed on a level that suits their prior learning and background. Learners' feedback is sought systematically and some actions are initiated based on learners' critical views. Whilst employers are provided with a brief report about learners' progress after the end of each course, the institute does not ascertain employers' views about the provision in a formal way. The institute maintains a useful links with relevant stakeholder and within the ICT industrial community in general; such as their relation with the eGov project and Ahlia University.

The institute premises is fit for purpose and provides suitable learning environment, the well-being of staff and learners are well maintained. BIET has a clear non-smoking policy

and all laboratories have clear guidelines. The premises have no obvious hazards. The institute self-evaluation form (SEF) is useful It provides sufficient evidence on most aspects but, grades provided overestimate the institute.

The provider's key strengths

- The majority of learners develop suitable ICT knowledge and skills and progress appropriately given their starting point

- Effective courses customisation to meet clients specific needs

- The good range of ICT specialized courses on offer that highly meet learners' and stakeholders' needs.

Recommendations

In order to improve, BIET should:

- ensure that lesson plans are informed to learners prior attainments and are used effectively

- ensure that all learners on all courses make the progress expected of them and receive informative feedback on their progress and how to improve further

- develop a more systematic and consistent approach for assessing learners' prior learning, and monitor the achievements and progress they make and act upon these outcomes.