Directorate of Vocational Reviews

Review Report

Bahrain Institute

East Riffa

Kingdom of Bahrain

Date Reviewed: 3-5 March 2014

VO052-C2-R078

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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 (BI) was established in 1970. It is licensed by the Ministry of Education to offer non-accredited short courses in Information Technology (IT) including Microsoft Office and graphics design, management and human resources (HR) as well as a general English programme consisting of 30 levels with each level comprising 15 hours. The institute also offers preparation courses for the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) and the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) examinations, English conversation and French language. The majority (57%) of learners are enrolled in the English language programmes, while 35% are enrolled in the IT courses and 8% in the management courses.

The institute is located in East Riffa where it delivers most of its courses. A few IT courses are conducted at a partner institute or social centres. The institute is managed by a chief executive who leads a full-time management team comprising a finance and administration manager and a head of training and development, who is also a full-time teacher. The institute also employs a team of full-time staff that includes one English language teacher, one IT teacher, two administration staff, a driver and a caretaker. Several other teachers work on part-time basis. Since the last review conducted in 2011, BI has enrolled 4,671 learners; 2,108 in 2012, 2,182 in 2013 and 381 in 2014 up to the date of this review. Most of these are self-sponsored government school learners and very few come from local businesses.

Scope of the review

This review was conducted over three days, by a team of four reviewers. During the review, reviewers attended lessons and other related activities, analysed data about the courses and the qualifications learners achieve, examined learners' written and other work, studied documents and the materials provided by the institute and met with staff, learners, parents and teachers.

In the previous review, the overall effectiveness of the institute was judged satisfactory as were learners' achievement, the quality of training, the quality of the programmes offered, the support and guidance, and leadership and management were all judged satisfactory. The provider's capacity to improve was also judged 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: 3 Satisfactory
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 learners?	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

The overall effectiveness of BI is satisfactory, as are all other aspects of the provision. While parents and learners interviewed found the courses useful the majority of learners make only satisfactory progress in English language and IT courses and significantly less in the management courses. English language and IT courses, which together represent more than 90% of the institute's business, are updated generally, and a current series of books are used for the English language courses. However, course materials and assessments, particularly for the HR and management courses, are not structured well enough and lack clear course objectives and outcomes. Teachers, generally, have relevant theoretical and practical command of their specialisms and those teaching English language, in particular, have effective communications skills and use clear accent and pronunciations. However, the clarity and richness of the information delivered in a few other courses are not sufficient. Nonetheless, the staff and teachers are approachable and supportive. The management keeps constant useful communication with parents and seeks their feedback. Record keeping, which includes attendance and achievement records, has improved recently but still lack effective verification. Furthermore, a useful strategic plan with a number of relevant objectives focusing on improving the provision has been developed by the management and currently being implemented.

The scope of improvements made since last review as well as the relevant action plan developed by the management team indicate that BI has only a satisfactory capacity to improve with the absence of well-developed policies and procedures and more accurate trends analysis. Nonetheless, the institute has maintained its high learners' enrolment and repeat business where parents continue to send their children for many course levels. The range of courses has been expanded to include more courses in management and graphic design. This is also accompanied by the upgrading of the facilities and resources with two suitably equipped IT laboratories and more classrooms currently being built. In addition, the institutes' staff are now sufficient to manage most functions needed. Course files and documentations have been standardised recently and better records are kept and aggregated. However, quality monitoring of course design and assessment marking and decisions have not been given enough attention.

Learners' achievement

How well do learners achieve?

Grade: 3 Satisfactory

Learners' achievement is satisfactory overall. The majority of the learners attending general English and IT courses enjoy their learning, and acquire and develop satisfactory knowledge and skills with a significant group progressing well. The majority of parents and learners interviewed found the attended courses useful and reflect positively on school grades and meet individual needs. Nevertheless, a minority of learners do not make the expected progress or achieve the course objectives sufficiently, especially in the English beginner course which represents 15% of the total enrolment.

Learners show adequate self-motivation and the majority of them are able to work independently and participate in class activities. However, in a few cases learners needed support from teachers almost continuously to complete their work. From the observed lessons and scrutiny of learners' work, learners' achievement vary across levels and different language skills. Generally, learners develop appropriate English language skills with useful grammar skills and sufficiently achieve the course objectives. However, writing skills are less developed and learners repeat same punctuating and spelling mistakes over time. A minority of learners has difficulties in developing the required skills, especially the key English language communication skills.

Learners attending management courses represent 8% of the total enrolment. Learners receive a completion certificate at the end of the course. Whilst the submitted Learners' Performance Data (LPD) and available records indicate that learners achieve high pass rates on these courses, scrutiny of learners' work reveals that only a minority of learners gain adequate knowledge while most learners are not achieving as expected due to inappropriate course design including ambiguity of course objectives, outcomes and assessments.

From the lessons observed, only a few learners reflect critically on their learning by questioning their teachers for further understanding and on what they need to do to improve. According to lessons observed and the records available, most learners attend regularly with good attendance rate of 94% for the last two years. The institute has a clear punctuality policy and keeps useful follow up log of calls to parents on the few lateness cases.

The quality of provision

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

Grade: 3 Satisfactory

BI's teachers, generally, have relevant theoretical and practical command of their specialisms. The English language teachers, in particular, have effective communication skills while teaching, such as the use of appropriate body language, clear pronunciation, good explanations, and when needed they provide learners with extra information and real life examples. However, in a few cases, Arabic language is used by the learners during English language lessons. On other courses, such as IT and management, teachers' explanation is not always sufficient and succinct to help learners fully understand new concepts. Generally, teachers use an adequate range of teaching methods such as direct and general questioning, individual work, pair work and repetition that normally engage and motivate the majority of learners. Moreover, English teachers often adopt suitable learning with play techniques, specifically for young children to keep them engaged and motivated. In a minority of lessons, teachers challenge learners to a satisfactory level by posing follow-up questions and challenging learners to come up with better answers. However, class management is not always effective in promoting organized learning, especially with some little kids who move around excessively.

Although teachers have resources for differentiated activities for the less able and more able learners, these are not always effectively utilised during lessons. In the majority of cases, learners different learning abilities are not sufficiently met. Nonetheless, in a few cases, teachers were able to accommodate learners learning needs sufficiently by providing extra worksheets to those who completed their tasks ahead of their peers and by repeating and customizing the delivery of information to suit some less able learners. Teachers have written plans that guide their lessons to a satisfactory level. However, these lesson plans are not well informed by prior attainment and continuous assessments of learners to accommodate their different learning needs effectively. Generally, teachers deliver sessions which are timely managed and start and end on time with sharing of lesson objectives at the beginning of the lesson.

An appropriate range of formative assessment for English language and management courses and suitable practical activities for IT courses are normally used. However, the outcomes of the summative assessments do not always reflect accurately the attainment levels of learners due to the marking not being rigorous enough. Furthermore, the final summative assessments for the management courses do not cover all course objectives. Teachers provide adequate verbal feedback on activities during sessions. However, written critical feedback is not always provided and there is no clear marking scheme. Progress

records are maintained by the institute and recently have become more consistent. Teachers use useful learning resources and material to support the learning process such as data show projectors, laptops with audio-visual contents and educational games.

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

Grade: 3 Satisfactory

BI offers a range of internally designed very short courses in English language with multiple progression levels, basic IT, HR, secretarial practice and management that generally suit the needs of learners and relevant stakeholders. Although the institute grants the brand name of Cambridge Training College Britain to their certificates, the documents and evidence provided by the institute fail to substantiate this as an external awarding body. The marketing team at the institute utilises questionnaires and analysis of telephone inquiries to sense adequately the needs of the local stakeholders for certain courses. BI utilises sufficiently the social media and local magazines to advertise about their courses. Generally, the offered courses are resourced with suitable activities in English language and IT, and relevant case studies in HR and Management. However, there is insufficient additional activities for all courses on offer.

The institute has two IT laboratories that have adequate computers and application systems appropriate for the IT courses on offer. Recently, the institute has started to use the Ministry of Education's first stage English language books to deliver basic English for learners with simple English language skills. In addition, the English language book series 'New Headway' is used for the subsequent levels. However, course delivery overemphasise grammar skills at the expense of other language skills. Course materials and assessments, particularly for the HR and management courses, are not structured well enough. The material allocated for these courses are not consistent in structure as it varies in format and depth of content between PowerPoint presentations, printed summaries from the internet and other lengthy photocopied materials. There is no clear linkage and smooth logical transition between topics. In addition, the assessment methods and course outcomes are not defined well for these courses. Summative assessments for many courses do not always cover course outlines fully. Although courses are generally updated for the IT offerings and fairly current series of books are used for English, BI has no explicit procedure for updating courses and some of the HR course content, for instance, are out-dated.

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

Grade: 3 Satisfactory

Learners receive sufficient support that help them achieve better. A general brief awareness induction is provided at the beginning of a course to inform learners about attendance and punctuality policies, behaviour regulations and other rules through the 'learner agreement'. The outcomes of English language placement test and a brief information on the recommended course level are shared with parents in advance. However, detailed course outline per level for the English language programme is not shared with parents. Course outline of courses other than English language, are not always clear and available in advance to stakeholders and some of them do not have clear objectives. Stakeholders have access to general information about the institute's offerings through the available course brochures and the institute's bilingual website and social media.

BI offers learners extra hours when needed and allows absent learners with valid reasons to get compensation hours for missed lessons. Occasionally, good achieving learners are celebrated to encourage other learners to follow. The institute is sufficiently flexible in delivering its courses that suit the needs of stakeholders. Teaching staff are approachable and supportive, and a number of them provide their emails to learners to submit their homework and answer their inquiries. Learners are updated on their progress through sharing their formative assessments' papers with them and their parents. However, the details of reporting and feedback is decided by the individual teacher. The provider keeps suitable communication with parents and responds to their inquiries. Announcements and reminders are sent to parents through SMS messages where they are updated on their children's attendance regularly with useful follow-ups on punctuality issues. Separate meetings are conducted between time to time with small groups of parents and learners to collect their overall feedback. Very recently, useful individual performance reporting document has been produced.

The provider's learning environment is adequate and equipped with the necessary resources including a laptop, a data show and a whiteboard in each classroom. In addition, there are two computer laboratories equipped with up-to-date PCs and the needed software. However, the size of classrooms available is not sufficient for larger groups where classrooms become congested. This is confirmed by learners' feedback.

Leadership and management

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

Grade: 3 Satisfactory

BI has a relevant strategic plan for 2014-2015 with a number of objectives focusing suitably on improving the provision. An appropriate action plan is in place to monitor the implementation of the set targets. The management structure, with clear job descriptions and full-time staff, is sufficient for the size of the provision. However, the institute's policies and procedures are not well developed, particularly on course design, assessment and marking to ensure consistent practices amongst all its offerings. Periodic meetings are held with staff and teachers to share operational updates and perform occasional follow-ups. Teachers are recruited using a clear and suitable recruitment procedure, and are provided with suitable induction through a peer mentoring scheme. Teachers' performance is monitored sufficiently through periodic classroom observations. However, the feedback generated from these visits is brief and not specific enough and sometimes, only verbal feedback is shared with the teacher. A number of relevant internal development opportunities have been recently provided to staff and a few teachers.

Recently, records of learners' achievement are maintained systematically. These are aggregated and analysed sufficiently and made available to the management team, who in certain cases follows identified issues. However, these records and assessment marking are not critically verified. A suitable placement test is conducted for learners enrolling on the English language programme only and those who are discovered incorrectly placed are moved after the first day where a pre-course test is conducted. However, a minority of learners remain at higher or lower levels than their ability. Learners and parents feedback are collected, aggregated and sufficiently analysed on regular basis. The management is generally responsive to parents' feedback, such as adjusting the amount of homework and class timings close to school examination periods. Links are maintained suitably with parents through regular contacts over the phone and during the start and end of classes when they drop and pick up their children. Many parents update the institute with their children's school progress report. BI also maintains a working relationship with a few training providers and local organisations.

Parents feel that their children are safe at the institute. The premises are free from obvious hazards and essential health and safety measures are in place. Basic health and safety instructions are available and rudimentary periodic checks are conducted. However, the institute does not perform emergency evacuation drills nor carry out proper risk assessment on regular basis. The provider conducted a useful SWOT analysis once in 2013 and has

continued to use a basic form to allow the staff to self-assess some aspects of the provision from time to time. The SEF submitted by the institute was completed collaboratively. It identifies a number of relevant areas for development and provides references to a range of relevant evidence. However, the grades are highly overestimated.

The provider's key strengths

- Staff and teachers are approachable and supportive

- Learners' and parents' feedback are regularly collected, aggregated and sufficiently analysed and, generally, issues identified are followed up and actions are taken.

Recommendations

In order to improve, Bahrain Institute should:

- ensure that learners on the English language beginner course make the progress expected of them

- systematically update learners and stakeholders on learners' progress

- improve placement tests and assessment of prior attainment and use their outcomes effectively

- improve course structure by ensuring that the outcomes of each course are well defined and more effectively assessed, particularly for the management, HR and secretarial courses

- develop and consistently implement more effective quality policies and procedures particularly on course design and assessment setting, marking and verification

- devise an effective system to monitor learners' achievement and trends and use the outcomes to improve the provision

- ensure that the self-evaluation process is more critical and use its outcomes to inform the strategic planning.