



هيئة جودة التعليم والتدريب
Education & Training Quality Authority
Kingdom of Bahrain - مملكة البحرين

Directorate of Vocational Reviews

Review Report

English Language Skills Centre
Tubli
Kingdom of Bahrain

Date Reviewed: 25-27 February 2019

VO026-C4-R002

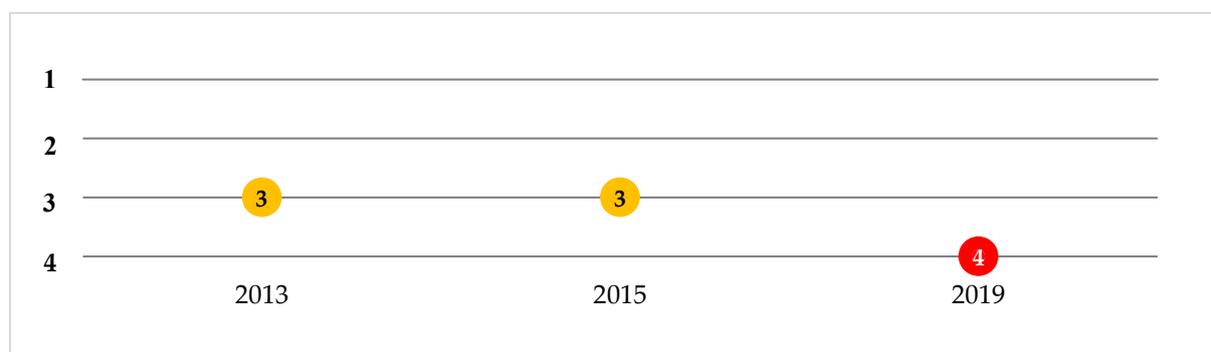
Introduction

The Directorate Vocational Reviews (DVR) of the Education & Training Quality Authority (BQA), conducted this review over three days by a team of four reviewers. For this review, reviewers observed lessons 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 Centre and collected feedback from learners, parents, teachers, management and support staff.

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

Summary of review judgements		
Aspect		Judgement
Outcomes	Learners' achievement	4
Programmes and processes	Effectiveness of teaching/training and assessment	4
	Quality of courses/programmes	4
	Learners' support and guidance	4
Management and governance	Effectiveness of leadership, management and governance	4
Capacity to improve		4
Overall effectiveness		4

Provider's overall effectiveness throughout the last three reviews



Outstanding	1	Good	2	Satisfactory	3	Inadequate	4
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Overall effectiveness 'Inadequate'

Judgement justifications

- The Centre has developed in 2018 a Strategic Plan (SP) with goals and objectives that are based solely on the outcomes of the BQA review conducted in 2015. There is no evidence of the plan being informed by a rigorous self-evaluation or that it is translated into an operational plan and the implementation of these objectives is not followed up.
 - In 2018, the English Language Skills Centre (ELSC) has developed an administrative and policy manual, that includes brief policies covering the main operations of the Centre, including the internal quality assurance processes. However, most of these policies are very brief and not sufficiently detailed to ensure affective implementation. Moreover, there is no evidence of consistent implementation of these policies across the provision.
 - The Centre arrangements to monitor learners' achievement is insufficient, ELSC keeps data on learners' performance and can generate trend analysis; however, these are not utilised to support management and inform decision making. Moreover, the procedures used for moderation and verification of assessment are not effective in ensuring rigor of the assessment tools used.
 - The Centre has suitable system to monitor teachers' performance. Nonetheless, the outcomes are not sufficiently used to decide on professional development provided to teachers.
- The rubric utilised to assess learners' work is not sufficiently detailed to ensure accurate and objective marking, which hinders the ability to correctly assess learners' achievement of course objectives. Hence, although success rates are high, scrutiny of learners assessed work and outcomes of pre- and post-course assessments indicates that a significant minority of learners do not achieve the course objectives.
 - Standard of learner' works and level of interactions with their teachers during lessons observed did not reflect adequate level of achievement; learners make insufficient progress relative to their prior attainment.
 - Teaching strategies used neither engage learners productively, nor motivate them or support their individual needs, and in a significant minority of the lessons observed, session planning did not facilitate a systematic progression of activities and did not allow learners to understand and achieve the objectives.
 - ELSC does not have in place a formal mechanism for designing, approving, updating and periodically reviewing the courses on offer. Courses are inadequately designed and structured to enable a progressive acquisition of knowledge, skills and competences.
 - The Centre lacks a formal support mechanism to identify at-risk learners, support learners to overcome their learning difficulties and achieve better outcomes.

Capacity to improve 'Inadequate'

Judgement justifications

- Since the last BQA review conducted in 2015, the performance of the Centre has declined in all the five Aspects of the review. Outcomes of the previous review has just been recently used to develop a strategic plan document and there is no evidence of any progress against these.
 - While the number of enrolled learners has increased since the last review, learners' achievement and quality of teaching and assessment was not maintained. The Centre's arrangements to quality assure the provision is insufficiently implemented; an administrative and policy manual, that includes brief policies covering the main operations of the Centre, including the internal quality assurance processes has been developed in 2018, however the effective implementation of these policies and procedures is yet to be seen.
 - Although the Centre has utilized the outcomes of previous report of BQA's 2015 review to develop the 2018 SP, this is not based on rigor self-evaluation outcomes that clearly identify the current status of the Centre and the challenges it is facing.
- In addition to filling the Self-evaluation Form (SEF) submitted for this review, ELSC has recently developed an internal self-evaluation form that was filled by teachers and staff at the end of 2018. The outcomes of these forms were collated into an internal self-evaluation report that identifies good practices and those need improvement in the different aspects of the provision. However, no evidence was provided in utilising the outcome to inform improvement plans on strategic or operational levels.
 - Although the Centre has enhanced the approach of placement test by automating the test and introducing personal interviews to evaluate learners' speaking skills, the rubric used to place learners on each level is ambiguous.
 - Useful links are maintained with parents. The Centre senses parents and learners needs and has utilised the gathered information to introduce new courses, namely: total beginner learners, basic linguistic skills and speaking English. However, these were not conducted due to low enrolment.

The provider's key strengths

- None.

Recommendations

In order to improve, English Language Skills Centre (ELSC) should:

- ensure that learners develop English language skills and knowledge, make sufficient progress during their study, and achieve course objectives successfully
- ensure that the assessment methods used are critical and rigorous and that rubrics used to assess learners' work are detailed enough to ensure that learners understanding, and achievement of lesson's objectives is properly and consistently assessed
- develop and implement a formal mechanism to design, plan and structure the offered courses and facilitate a progressive acquisition of knowledge, skills and competences
- develop and implement a formal mechanism on learners' support to ensure the learners' needs are identified and that they are well supported and guided to achieve better outcomes
- strengthen the leadership and management by:
 - developing a strategic plan that is based on a rigorous self-evaluation process that properly dissect the current status of the Centre and is translated into an implemented operational plan with clear time-line and monitoring processes
 - ensuring the learners' achievement is closely monitored and that outcomes are utilised to raise the quality of the provision
 - developing and implementing a detailed formal mechanism to quality assure all aspects of the provision.

Learners' achievement 'Inadequate'

Judgement justifications

- While the provided achievement data for the past three years shows high success and retention rates in general; the assessment structure and process, in most of the courses, are insufficiently rigorous to properly measure learners' attainment and achievement of courses objectives.
- Despite the use of formative and summative assessments throughout the course duration, the rubric used - particularly for formative assessment - is generic and not detailed enough to ensure consistent and fair marking. There is no distribution of marks over the main English language skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing). As a result, 80% of the total course grades for children and 60% for senior and young learners is left for the teacher's personal judgement, and the analysis of learners' marks shows unjustified discrepancies between the marks earned by the same learner in the summative versus the formative assessment.
- From the lessons observed and provided samples of learners' assessed work, a significant minority of learners do not develop adequate levels of attainment of English language skills in different courses; particularly writing skills. Hence, learners' achievement rates do not reflect the standards of the gained skills and developed knowledge by learners, as seen during lesson observation and indicated by learners' assessed work.
- While parents and learners expressed their satisfaction with the learning experience at the Centre, scrutiny of learners assessed work and results of pre- and post-course assessments show that almost half of the learners make minimal progress compared to their starting point. In addition, learners' performance across different levels is not maintained.
- Lesson observations, meeting with learners and teachers and learners' attendance records revealed that the majority of learners have positive attitude toward their learning and are willing to learn. Nonetheless, there were only a few cases where senior learners could reflect on their learning and question their teacher, while a minority of the learners were passive during the observed lessons.
- Although learners are provided with opportunity to work independently and collaboratively through class activities, in a significant minority of the observed lessons learners were not confident to complete the given task by themselves and were over dependent on their teachers.

Areas for improvement

- achievement of course objectives
- attainment of English language skills, specifically writing skill
- progress made from learners' starting point.

Effectiveness of teaching/training and assessment 'Inadequate'

Judgement justifications

- Teachers utilize a standard format to plan their lessons. However, in a significant minority of the observed lessons, the planning did not allow learners to understand the lesson's objectives and did not support a systematic progression of activities. Time management was an issue in some of the observed lessons; these included lessons not starting on time, and time allocated to specific tasks being inadequate for the range of differently-abled learners.
 - Teachers at ELSC utilise a range of teaching methods and employ the available learning resources such as text book and smart board. However, in a significant number of the lessons observed neither the teaching strategies nor the resources used were effective in actively engaging learners and motivating and supporting them to participate in the different activities.
 - In a significant minority of the lessons observed, teachers insufficiently promoted learners' life-long learning and critical thinking skills and did not empower them to become independent learners.
- Assessment methods utilized by teachers to evaluate learners' understanding and measure the achievement of lesson and/or course objectives are neither rigorous nor critical. In more than half of the observed lessons, the assessment methods and teaching strategies were not suitably adjusted to include the needs of individual learners.
 - The rubrics used to evaluate the learners' progressive attainment of skills and lesson objectives are not sufficiently detailed. The criteria utilized for assessing the different skills (reading, writing, listening, speaking) are ambiguous and do not ensure accuracy or consistency in formative evaluation.
 - Generally, teachers maintain learners' performance records and provide useful verbal feedback during the lessons. Written feedback is periodically provided to learners; however, is not always focused on specific areas of language learning to help them improve.

Areas for improvement

- the rigor of assessment methods used and the adjustment of teaching strategies to meet the individual learners' needs
- the planning of lessons to ensure a systematic progression of activities and allow learners to understand and achieve the objectives.

Quality of course/programmes 'Inadequate'

Judgement justifications

- A range of General English courses are offered to learners of different age groups. Learners aged between 6 to 12 are offered courses of six different levels, with three sub-levels within each level. Similarly, learners aged between 13 and 18, are offered different courses that progress from Starter level to Level 5 and include three sub-levels.
 - The administrative and policy manual includes a one-page policy on designing, approving, updating and periodically reviewing the courses on offer. However, this is not translated into a formal mechanism. For the courses on offer. Currently, the structure of each course level depends directly on the assigned text book, by dividing its units over the three sub-levels of the course. Hence, the course planning and structuring process is very basic and does not effectively facilitate for progressive acquisition of knowledge, skills and competencies among learners with different learning abilities and skills.
 - End of unit exercises and tests included in the text book are also used for summative assessment. As there are no defined course objectives, these assessments are not thought of by the teachers delivering the course in relation to the level content and/or course objectives.
 - Course outlines are insufficiently detailed and do not clearly inform the course objectives, the pre-requisites for learners and the assessment structure.
- Lately the Centre has reduced the course hours, which may impact on the covering of the all course content negatively. Nevertheless, the delivery of course content is reinforced with suitable learning resources such as flashcards, games, videos and worksheets from reliable websites.
- During registration, learners are given a placement test which includes grammar, writing and speaking components. However, the rubric used to place learners into a specific level is ambiguous. In addition, the Centre does not systematically implement the age criteria for placing learners in the different courses.
 - The Centre has sufficient practices to gather, analyse and understand parents and learners' needs. Parents and learners' feedback is obtained through different means such as: registration forms at the time of enrolment and questionnaires that should be filled at the end of each course, as well and when deemed necessary, especially when the Centre plans to offer a new course.
 - Recently, the Centre offered a customized course for beginners in order to introduce basic linguistic skills to learners who lack these skills, the Centre also suggested for speaking courses for kindergarten and senior learners; however, these courses were not implemented due to insufficient number of learners' registering.

Areas for improvement

- courses planning and structuring to facilitate progressive acquisition of knowledge, skills and competencies
- formal mechanism to design, approve, update and periodically review courses on offer
- implementation of entry level tests and utilization of their outcomes.

Learners' support and guidance 'Inadequate'

Judgement justifications

- While teachers and staff are approachable and supportive, the Centre lacks a formal mechanism to support and guide learners to reach their potential. Furthermore, ELSC does not have a formal mechanism to identify and support at-risk students and in a number of the lessons observed, learners were not well supported and their individual learning needs were not met.
 - While the Centre has developed an 'Individual Support Form', the utilisation of the form is not effective to identify the areas where learners' need to improve further and provide them with the effective support.
 - The Centre encourages learners by awarding high achievers with a certificate of excellence. Teachers provide low achievers with extra worksheets to enhance their abilities and skills; however, the follow-up process is not sufficient to ensure a positive outcome. Moreover, very limited opportunities are provided to learners that enable them to enhance their learning experience and life skills.
- The Centre is flexible in terms of scheduling the courses to suit learners and parents' needs. ELSC follows up on learners' absenteeism and lateness with parents through phone calls. Moreover, parents are regularly updated with their children's performance, through progress reports. However, these reports do not clearly state what learners need to do to improve further.
 - Learners and parents are kept informed of the Centre's latest news and important vacations' dates through phone calls, WhatsApp groups and the provider's Instagram account or directly by the teachers and reception staff.
 - There are proper physical arrangements such as placing ramp where needed and providing dedicated rest room for learners with physical disabilities. Currently there is a learner with medical issues whose educational special needs are met by the Centre.

Areas for improvement

- a formal mechanism to support and guide learners to achieve better outcomes and identifying at-risk learners
- opportunities available to enhance learners' personal abilities and life-long skills.

Effectiveness of leadership, management and governance ‘Inadequate’

Judgement justifications

- A SWOT analysis has been conducted based on the outcomes of the BQA review conducted in 2015. This has been utilised to shape the Centre’s Strategic Plan (SP), which has been drafted in 2018 with the support of an external consultant. However, there is no evidence of any self-evaluation being performed to evaluate the states of the Centre at the time the SP was developed. Moreover, no evidence was provided on any SP being developed for the period 2015 – 2017.
- The SP, has a set of general goals that are translated into specific objectives with Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that are relevant to teaching and learning. The span of the SP is not identified with the submitted SP document stating the KPI base line in 2018 and the target in 2019 only. The document also does not state the starting date, by who, and status of action. Moreover, the document does not appear to be approved yet and the implementation of these objectives is not followed up systematically and linkage between the key components of the strategic and operational plans is ambiguous.
- Arrangements used to quality assure the overall effectiveness of the provision are insufficient. While the Centre has developed administration and policy manual in 2018, these are yet to be implemented consistently across the provision. Recently, an annual self-evaluation form has been developed; however, the implementation of this form is yet to be seen. Moreover, although the Self-evaluation Form (SEF) provided for the purpose of this review includes sufficient information, grades stated overestimates all aspects of the provision.
- Whilst data on learners’ achievement and performance are kept and the Centre can generate trends analysis over years, these analyses are not utilised to enable the management to adopt strategic initiatives that inform programme development and raise learners’ achievement.
- The Centre does not have a formal policy on moderation and verification of assessment tools; however, there are practices of internal moderation and verifications in most courses, although implementation is not rigorous.
- The Centre has sufficient arrangements to monitor teachers’ performance; teachers are monitored through walk-in and announced lesson observations completed by internal and external observers. A number of lesson observations highlighted critical points relevant to the effectiveness of teaching and learning; however, professional development provided in this regard is minimal.
- Organisational structure is fit-for-purpose and the Centre is supported with sufficient number of staff. ELSC

employs a Director, two full-time teachers, in addition to a pool of part-time teachers, a full-time administration staff and a part-time quality and teachers support.

- Proper induction procedure is in place for newly appointed teachers. The induction programme is delivered by the quality and teachers support responsible person and clear roles and responsibilities are shared with staff prior to the start of their duties.
- ELSC's learning environment is pleasant, safe and free from obvious hazard and risk assessment is carried

out in regular bases. A certified first aider is always available during teaching hours.

- The Centre maintains a good relationship with learners and their parents. There is evidence of actions, such as introducing English language speaking course, being implemented based on parents' feedback. ELSC collects learners' feedback on regular bases. Nonetheless, aggregation for the feedbacks is not completed. In addition, form used for this purpose is not effective in term of the quality of the questions asked.

Area for improvement

- monitoring learners' achievement and utilisation of outcomes to inform decision making and improvement actions
- regular self-evaluation that is utilised to inform continuous improvement of the provision
- implementation of the internal quality assurance processes across all aspects of the provision.

Appendix (1): Provider information

Name of the provider (English)	English Language Skills Centre (ELSC)					
Name of the provider (Arabic)	مركز مهارات اللغة الانجليزية					
Licensing body	Ministry of Labour and Social Development					
Year of establishment	1996					
Age range of learners	6-18 years					
Number of learners	Male	1,460	Female	1,202	Total	2,662
Learning areas	Local achievement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> General English courses 				
	Externally accredited	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not offered 				
	Local attendance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not offered 				
Institution's listing status	Not yet listed on the National Qualification Framework (NQF)					