THE EFFECTIVENESS OF QUALITY ASSURANCE IMPLEMENTATION IN LIBYA - UNIVERSITY OF DERNA CASE STUDY-

فاعلية تطبيق ضمان جودة التعليم العالي في ليبيا

دراسة حالة عن جامعة درنة

Rashad Brydan[1], Amswarah A Alsanousi [2]

1 University of Derna (Libya), r.brydan@uod.edu.ly

2 University of Derna (Libya), a.sanousi.@uodedu.ly

Abstract:

This research aims to address the effectiveness of quality assurance implementation with identifying key components quality assurance framework for secured performance within Libyan higher education institutions. Direct observation was the data collection method using a small group sample from academics and first year management students focusing on 85 students. The study discovered considerable effects of quality assurance implementation on developing Libyan university students' professional skills with using the required teaching and training tools. Moreover, some prominent quality competencies were identified like digital transformation, proactive communication skills and interpersonal skills. Thus, further evaluation for students' feedback brought to light how important the case is to include professional skills in all subjects. The authors also recommend that more studies are necessary to come up with more up to date professional competencies that can be included in our Arab universities' programs.

Keywords: Quality Assurance Implementation, Quality Effectiveness, Quality Skills Transformation, Communication Skills, Quality Principles.

(JEL) Classification: L80, L83

ملخص:

يهدف هذا البحث إلى الوقوف على فاعلية تنفيذ ضمان الجودة مع تحديد المكونات الرئيسية لإطار ضمان الجودة حفاظا على أداء مؤسسات التعليم العالي الليبية. ومن حيث منهجية البحث لقد استعمل اسلوب الملاحظة المباشرة في جمع البيانات باستخدام عينة بحث صغيرة من الأكاديميين وطلاب السنة الأولى في تخصص الإدارة مع التركيز على 85 طالبًا وطالبة. هذا وقد اكشفت الدراسة الدور الكبير لتطبيق ضمان الجودة على تطوير المهارات المهنية لطلاب الجامعات الليبية مع استخدام أدوات التدريس والتدريب المطلوبة. علاوة على ذلك، تم تحديد عدد من الكفاءات ذات الجودة البارزة مثل مهارات الاتصال الفعال، ومواكبة التحول الرقمي، ومهارات التعامل مع الآخرين. وعليه تحصلنا على التغذية الراجعة من الطلاب وتبين لنا مدى أهمية هذه الدراسة في تضمين المهارات المهنية في جميع المواد كما يوصي المؤلفون أيضًا بضرورة إجراء المزيد من الدراسات للتوصل إلى المزيد من الكفاءات التعليمية الحديثة التي يمكن تضمينها في برامج جامعاتنا العربية.

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Corresponding author: Rashad Brydan, e-mail: r.brydan@uod.edu.ly

1. Introduction

Like any other country, quality assurance has always been an important issue according to policy makers and educational advisors. On the other hand, each Libyan University has an obligation to follow the standards and values of the National Quality Advisory Office, otherwise higher education institutions' certificates will not be recognized by the Libyan Ministry of Higher Education (HE) which means them certificates will not be valid for work nor for further post-graduation studies which means there are essential quality values to be applied in both public and private universities. In addition, every Libyan HE institution has to create its own internal quality implementation strategy to meet the essential quality assurance criterions. Yet despite of these new developments, some Libyan higher education institutions did not develop their formal quality assurance system and partly failed to implement the required and essential levels of quality assurance standards in some scientific fields (Alzafari, 2019).

1.1 Quality Assurance and Research Questions

The American Society for Quality has indicated that quality assurance; is the planned activities implemented in a quality system so that quality requirements for a product or service will be properly fulfilled. Therefore, the research questions of this academic study can be summarised as follows:

What are the main factors influencing quality assurance implementation?

Can this study help to design a framework for better quality assurance result?

Previous studies indicated that quality assurance is the collection of activities that a public or private organization performs to make sure that their outputs pass existing standards held by their customers or other important regulating and accrediting institutions, and as per Charles (2007), the origins of quality assurance in higher education institutes can be traced back to a number of higher education milestones in the Western context. Some unions that were formed by students prescribed specific articles that their own educators should follow quality procedures in classes. These quality regulations to ensure that the welfare of the students as learners were not disregarded and educators themselves formed master-guilds which sought to guarantee the quality of lecturing and training.

1.2 The Concept of Higher Education Quality Assurance.

Libya has a National Office for Quality Assurance so national universities could be granted a full institutional accreditation. However, still Libyan public and private higher education institutions are not actively implementing good quality assurance plans and programs so the result is mainly leading to having low quality graduates in various fields because the Quality Requirements were not effectively

met to respond to the technological, social/ economic growth and changes and challenges.

In addition, universities achievement is likely to be below standard and the reason behind this big gap between performance and achievement because the quality principles were not taken into serious account in many BS and BA programs. On the other hand, still there are too few case studies, which have been conducted to analyse and evaluate quality assurance practices and measurements in most of Libyan higher education institutions specifically with the utilization of institutional theory lens. Thus, there is an essential need to explore more about quality assurance practices and challenges in the Libyan higher education institutions, which may later on be systematically reviewed to infer the status of quality assurance in the Libyan higher education system. These considerations brings up the problem that is proposed to be undertaken in this academic study. Moreover, the meaning and other related practices of quality assurance have been in existence since the industrial age, in which the mass production of different products and services requires a dynamic system in place for checking that each subject that was designed meets our students and employer's needs (Dill, 2010). However, it was only during the latter half of the 21st century that this concept and its practice found its way to the operation of higher education programs at the University of Derna (Bach, 2014).

1.3 The History of Higher Education Quality Assurance.

According to previous literature the first accrediting institution in the USA was roughly established in the early 1960's, and it was an organization that consisted of different and well-respected, post-secondary institutions that developed a process of peer analyses and evaluation (NAPCIS, 2012) regarding the American Higher Education System's Performance, Quality Assurance and Measurement.

In other western countries such as the Great Britain the quality movement in higher education nearly began in 1992, when Higher Education Quality Councils were established for England, Scotland, and Wales and were given the responsibility to assure quality of higher education institutions within their areas of liability (Brennan et al, 1998) making sure that quality of programs and teaching methods can be implemented, measured and improved in regular bases, and this is what Libya needs to implement nowadays (Catapang, 2009).

Furthermore, the official British Higher Education council was abolished in 1997 and was obviously replaced with the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, including a non-governmental organization that followed a model of quality peer-evaluation. (University of Aberdeen, 2012). On the other hand, in

other countries there are Inspirational Development Groups, also in Africa there is comprised of vocational rehabilitation centres (African Directory of special training, 2005). In addition, in the UAE they have consultancy training services, and Enterprises-based development. For the authors, mainly all these are social skills / interpersonal skills development agencies that are providing training to labour/ higher education organizations and individuals that need to upgrade their skills in order to face the current challenges of today's workplace and meet the global market needs and expectations.

Recent scholars such as Griffin, (2009) conducted a study with about 46 technological and education related organizations working on university students to be equipped by the essential generic competencies and employability skills for work, the researcher obtained that out of 46 organizations 43 responses are having common conception that fresh graduates have to be trained before joining the labour market. However, academics and experts in Vocational Training Providers (VTP) have acknowledged and reported this slip-up; that most VTP training institutions including HE institutes are greatly focusing and emphasizing their instruction on technical skills with little concentration on nontechnical skills (Modell, S. 2003).

In some developed countries, Vocational Training Providers and regular curriculum designers have stipulated into instructional guide document the needs for educators to teach university students the purpose of diversifying the employment potential of their graduates in the labour market. Thus, nontechnical skills including generic and interpersonal skills of workers in the workforce remained an issue of concern to both individual employers and the workplace (Baker & Henson, 2010). Therefore, the authors are determined to discover how quality assurance principles where implemented in Libya with examining its effectiveness in the Libyan context. The quality of higher learning was overseen by the Libyan government, which granted charters and helped institutions such as the University of Derna to develop quality capacity to review their academic programs/ projects, training events and evaluate the effectiveness of the overall academic operations.

As previous authors explained like Barnabas (2007), the early higher education institutions had many different standards of quality formed and managed to maintain some practices focusing on securing such values and quality levels. Nevertheless, quality assurance in Libyan Universities started with the establishment of governmental agencies that tried to develop and examine different dimensions of quality in higher education institutions and provide corresponding accreditation based on the levels of quality found. In the United States, the first accrediting institution was roughly established in the early 1960's,

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In some other modern western countries like the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the quality movement in higher education nearly began in 1992, when Higher Education Quality Councils were established for England, Scotland, and Wales which were given the responsibility to assure quality of higher education institutions within their areas of liability (Brennan et al., 1998) making sure that quality of programs and teaching can be implemented, measured and improved in regular bases, and this is what Libya needs nowadays.

Furthermore, the British Higher Education councils were abolished in 1997 and were obviously replaced with the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, including a non-governmental organization that followed a model of peer-evaluation. (University of Aberdeen, 2012) Reed Learning, Gilwell Park, CIPD Training, Development Process Group (DPG).

2. Research Hypotheses / Problems

This study pays attention the Higher Education Quality Assurance effectiveness to secure the necessary employability skills for Libyan graduates from the University of Derna because Libyan higher education students should be equipped with the required specific and generic competencies before the graduation stage to be ready for joining the workplace. As well as, quality assurance implementation normally refer to strategic planning and policy makers to design the needed quality levels to be included during the teaching and learning process for designing the right framework with the suitable interactions in order to reach the aimed results and this must be the case for all Libyan universities because research and development is one of the most important elements to increase quality in higher education and there are questions in which this academic paper is mainly trying to answer:

What is the concept of quality assurance in higher education?
What are the factors influencing quality assurance effectiveness in Libya?
In addition, the rapid technological development indicate that university students must be subject to lifelong learning and not only just in time learning. Moreover, higher education's knowledge base at the University of Derna is expanding, particularly in scientific and technological disciplines because of the new technology huge growth. These elements put Libyan universities under an increasing pressure to produce high quality graduates, by providing them with the needed training while studying new subjects by combine theory with practice.

3. Study Objectives

The main objective of this study is to examine higher education quality effectiveness in Libya taking example of the university of Derna to point out the most important policies allowing our students to improve their knowledge taking into account the employers expectations likes, and dislikes for an effective quality assurance program. (Berscheid, 1994; Hayes, 2002).

The secondary aim of this study is to develop an up to date Higher Education Quality Assurance Model/ framework, and from this perspective, the standards must consists of a set of academic tasks and duties that students and educators encounter in classrooms where all students should be guided in processing information while lecturing them, in simple words, by the tasks all students at the University of Derna should be able to practice particular type of task or assignment to ensure quality learning improvement (Oliver, C. 1997).

The third primarily objective is to design a practical components of quality standards where every component is essential to improve students learning outcomes/ employability skills to lead students towards Self-Improvement while facing different academic, social, environmental challenges and changes.

4. Study Methodology

For achieving the objectives of this academic study, the authors have carefully applied a theoretical and empirical method (Alexander A. Galochkin, Galina V. Grivusevich) with the usage of a One Sample Sign Nonparametric method as an alternative to parametric test because of the small sample size of the quality assurance stakeholders; students, graduates, and academics. The data was not distributed but utilized internally throughout intensive periodic meetings and brain storming sessions aiming to examine the internal HE quality assurance effectiveness, without ignoring the importance of employability skills, which are necessary for all graduates for joining the labour market.

The focused group made of stakeholders were involved in evaluating the intense quality assurance (QA) effectiveness and how to improve the implementation part of it in the Libyan higher education sector, and this methodology is aiming for developing an important QA framework, side by side with working on enhancing university students self-improvement to be professionally put in practice with good performance after graduation taking into account the Libyan employers' needs and labour market requirements.

This micro study at the University of Derna is trying to address the perception of the essential higher education quality assurance factors affecting current students'

achievement and overall improvement. The small group sample have participated and voluntarily contributed in analysing the positive and negative factors affecting quality assurance implementation. Moreover, for better results and conclusions the authors left the door open for graduates, students and lecturers to think, analyse and describe what they believe are the important factors to be considered as quality success or failure factors at their area of specialization. Furthermore, the authors worked with the targeted small group sample to reasons behind the factors affecting quality development, practices and improvement in the Libyan HE Sector. In addition, it is a necessity for Libyan policy makers and educators to realize the importance of blending in the essential interpersonal skills in all university subjects for better higher education quality assurance. This carefully chosen research methodology is believed to be more beneficial for more accurate data collection and students' knowledge exploration having in mind that ensuring quality in the higher education learning process would improve University students' professional skills (European Commission, 2018).

5. Study Literature Review

Most of industrialized countries recognize that in order to improve their local economies, all university graduates must be will prepared to respond to technological and environmental developments with being qualified and capable of meeting their employers' needs. Moreover, HE knowledge, skills and professional attitude base is constantly expanding nowadays, particularly in scientific and technological disciplines. These critical facts put Libyan universities under an increasing pressure to design for better quality learning outcomes especially in research, active learning and training (Modell, 2003).

According to the American successful experience, the primary funders of higher education, both federal and state governments faced escalating higher education different challenges in terms of quality assurance implementation, designing new teaching methodology, reshaping BA-BS programs for much better learning outcomes to be in priority because officials need to make assurance that quality is achieved and as a result, Libyan higher education stakeholders such as educators, employers and policymakers realized that the quality standard of college education must be at the expected level to secure achieving the right learning outcomes and for gaining the required professional kills. Similarly, higher education lawmakers continue to be concerned with new challenges and changes in most universities different programs and as expected Libyan institutions such as the University of Derna started to control factors affecting quality implementation

to limit barriers and difficulties that might prevent producing quality graduates. Thus, closing the gap between performance and achievement is required in the Libyan public and private universities to respond quickly to these rapid changes in Libyan higher education environment (Huusko, 2010). The question of how the University of Derna can meet the burden of assuring quality is the subject of several factors and in this paper; the authors will provide a review of the elements affecting quality assurance implementation in the Libyan higher education sector and before proceeding, it is important to outline the limits of this literature review. Moreover, the authors did not attempt to review the broader quality assurance literature, as other researchers have addressed the subjects in different articles.

5.1 Definitions of Quality

Most of previous literature on quality assurance assume that individuals or groups of institutions, such as the Libyan Office for Quality Assurance must develop a working definition of quality and few writers have actually articulated definitions of quality suggesting the following characteristics:

1- Technical knowledge or competencies in a major scientific field.

2- Literacy including communication, computational and technological skills.

3- Just-in-time learning ability that enable graduates to learn and apply new knowledge and skills as needed, often referred to as lifelong learning skills.

4- The ability to make informed judgments and decisions after correctly defining problems, gather and analyse relevant information to develop and implement appropriate solutions.

5- The ability to function in a global community, including knowledge of different cultures and contexts as well as foreign languages skills.

Furthermore, there are few interesting elements to note about these characteristics of quality. First, it is clear that the characteristics of quality found in the quality assurance literature are primarily expressed in the language of external stakeholders, particularly those who employ new university graduates, and this assumes the involvement of key external constituents in the conversations about and design of quality assurance systems. Second, this list of quality characteristics is comprehensive which means any reasonable attempt to fulfil this list would necessarily require the efforts of the entire institution rather than the efforts of just one faculty member or one department. Thus, this notion/ understanding of quality realistically requires total institutional efforts plus the norms of the Libyan Ministry of Higher Education. On the other hand, the previous definitions or characteristics do not just constitute quality itself; they can serve both to stimulate quality improvement with signifying that quality exists. These characteristics include some important critical success factors such as:

Learning outcomes statement that provides clear direction for assessment to decide what outcomes it intends for its university students.

Satisfactory performance in graduate education with relevant licensing and certification examinations.

Results of Libyan students' abilities and skills comparing with institutional goals leading our university students to the wright starting points.

Libyan Students' satisfaction with the contribution made by the institution towards achieving their own goals, relatively to the University quality assurance norms.

In addition, previous studies pointed some definitions of quality assurance in higher education worldwide, one of the most prominent and complete comes from a quality assurance handbook from Hong Kong (Hong Kong Baptist University, 1994), and it explains it as follows:

Quality Assurance is a collective and systematic process in which colleges and universities as academic institutions ensures that the quality of educational process is maintained to the original standards it has set itself. Through its quality assurance arrangements, higher education institutes and university are able to accomplish their designed goals, satisfy their students and other interested external individuals or organizations/ bodies making sure that:

The designed programs meet the appropriate academic and professional standards.

The aims and objectives of the designed courses/ programs are appropriate.

The means chosen and the resources available for delivering those objectives are appropriate, relevant and achievable.

Universities are striving continually to improve the quality of their courses and programs.

The previous review gives deferent key dimensions of quality assurance in higher education. First, quality assurance focuses on process; it seeks to convince both internal and external appraisers that an institution has processes can produce high quality outcomes. Second, quality assurance makes a very clear liability for quality within universities. Third, quality is an obligation for everyone in the organization. Fourth, quality assurance is a continuous and responsive process that includes strong evaluation and periodic feedback (Haapakorpi, 2011).

Actually, academics believe that proactive communication skills are essential for successful quality assurance system. At its core, quality assurance asks the question, "How does a university know that it is achieving the desired results?

Other definitions of quality assurance in higher education by different researchers like; (Loder, 1990) and Higher Education Quality Council, 1994; the Australian Higher Education Council, 1996; (Dill, Massy, Williams and Cook, 1996). The literature on quality assurance underscores that an effective quality assurance system rests on several assumptions must include:

- A university has a well-defined mission, vision and certain goals to be achieved.
- A university's goals are communicated and understood throughout the entire organization.
- An institution has clear definitions of quality values within the context of its mission, vision and final aims and objectives.
- A university has a strong communication network to avoid facing hard time while implementing a successful campus-wide program of quality assurance.

5.2 Quality Assurance Program Components

1- The key elements of a quality assurance program include the following factors:

2- All staff members have responsibility for maintaining quality as any sub-standard outcomes are corrected at the source.

3- All staff members are hold accountable for quality improvement, and their role is that of coordination/ oversight as they are not the only entities responsible for quality.

4- All staff members fully understand and feel ownership of the systems, which are in place for maintaining, and enhancing quality and this is generally achieved by the implementation of quality assurance programs.

5- University administrators are often working with students on regular bases to monitor the effectiveness of the quality assurance system.

6- Equally, the important factor in understanding quality assurance is defining what quality assurance is not because quality assurance should not be confused with any of the following:

7- Quality Control. Such a system checks whether programs inputs and outputs meet a predefined quality values and substandard inputs or outputs are rejected. Quality control here usually relies on inspectors and is not generally regarded as sufficient in light of more developed quality systems.

8- Quality Audit. An external group of auditors to ensure that the quality assurance and quality control plans and processes are appropriate and working effectively.

9- Accreditation. In the USA and Canada, this unique process is used to assure that a university program has clearly defined and appropriate objectives.

10- Peer Review. This academic term generally refers to the involvement of external professionals in making judgments and decisions about proposals for new university program, the continuation of existing programs, the quality of research productivity and the quality of institutions. While any of these may be components of a quality assurance system, they are not synonymous with quality assurance

despite of making an important contribution to improving other students' performance and overall achievement.

5.3 Why Higher Education Quality Assurance?

Related studies about higher education quality assurance are premised on the assertion that higher education institutions desperately need a strengthened system of accountability. Many concerned parties, particularly those external to institutions believe that a consistently high level of HE learning outcomes is no longer guaranteed and that institutions must be engaged in assurance processes. Advocates of quality assurance view accountability as necessary not only to satisfy external parties but as a precondition for the higher education improvement, especially in undergraduate education levels. Quality assurance Planners also are concerned that the current systems of accreditation in many countries including Libya do not do a credible job of guaranteeing the required quality, especially given the time and resources devoted to the process. Therefore, several changes have been proposed in accreditation system worldwide to address the system's weakest features and how to respond. In addition, defenders of quality assurance also confirm that an accurate quality assurance system helps both in considering broader questions about the evidence of quality and clarifying an institution's mission and vision. Assuring quality in the Libyan higher education sector is only one part of what is needed to satisfy accountability demands and many higher education advisors believe however that this is the right point to start for the best outcome results. Moreover, the present time is gives us the last chance in Libya to help shaping a workable future framework for quality assurance strategy, accountability, and strategic development (Williams & Cook, 1996)**.**
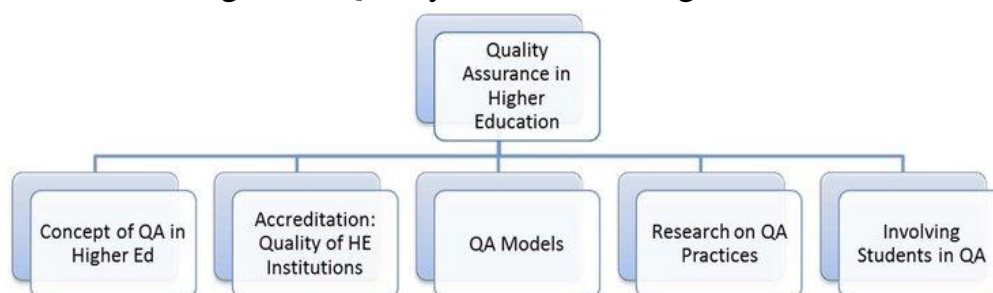
5.4 Quality Assurance in Higher Education

According to previous academic literature, a unique quality assurance system must do more than just assess quality, as it must satisfy demands for accountability and to enable institutions to use the results to affect changes and improvements. Many stakeholders require more information and among them are students, employers, parents, officials, policymakers, governing coordinating boards, researchers, educators and others with whom higher education has partnerships, the media, and the entire Libyan public at large. Although different authors' highlighted different aspects of communication as important, most agreed that, the following list of attributes constitutes an effective communication system to support quality assurance, which are in demand by the higher education sector such as:

- Open process for validating the evidence for quality and public communication of its results.

- Constant, regular, and up-to-date reporting of results and achievements.
- A technique or method of reporting to allow appropriate comparisons to be drawn across institutions.
- A variety of measures that allows for presentation of a balanced profile of institutional performance and the context in which it occurs.
- Wide range of results to interested parties through multiple channels, including social media and new information and communication technology tools.
- Defenders of HE quality assurance have suggested a number of criteria that any quality assurance process in higher education in Libya should meet. These standards can be grouped in three broad categories:
- Category hat concerns about the primary emphasis and focus of quality assurance.
- Category hat concerns about the quality assurance process itself and how it operates.
- Category hat concerns about the information produced, how it is used, and how it is reported and some scholars had explained quality assurance in higher education as shown in figure (1) below:

Figure 1: Quality assurance in higher education.

Figure Source: Dill, D. (2010). Quality Assurance in Higher Education

Questions that are concerned with the primary emphasis and focus of quality assurance including the following:

Is the university's definition of quality centred principally on undergraduate teaching and learning objectives?

Does the university draw its quality conclusions based on student outcomes rather than on faculty inputs?

Are the outcomes based on the needs of key constituents external, internal and stakeholders?

Are the learning outcomes reflecting skills and abilities that are important to students after graduation?

Do the outcomes express the university's undergraduate educational mission, including such things as intellectual and moral development, employability, and students' own objectives?

Do the intended outcomes allow judgments to be made to find if the university's benefit is properly assessed?

Questions that are concerned with quality assurance process itself and how it operates as follows:

Does the process incorporate all key stakeholders in making quality judgments?

Does the process rely on evidence of students' performance after graduation?

Does the process focus on the college/ university improvements?

Is the process continuous and systematic, rather than being infrequent?

Does the process as a whole encourage universities to reach beyond minimums toward increasingly higher levels of performance?

Are the academic institutions encouraged to exceed not simply meet standards?

Does the quality process work effectively as part of a comprehensive system of accountability?

3. Questions about information, which are produced by the quality process, how it is used, and how it is presented, including:

Is the information produced by the quality process useful and worth the cost of producing it?

Does the quality process provide adequate information for stakeholders to make choices or decisions important to them?

Does the quality process allow appropriate comparisons to be made between universities either generally or within specific scientific fields?

Is the information that it generates to a broad array of stakeholders both within and outside the university?

Are both the information produced and the judgments based on that information openly available and publicly reported?

Does the University of Derna for instance have adequate quality assurance mechanisms as shown in figure (2) below:

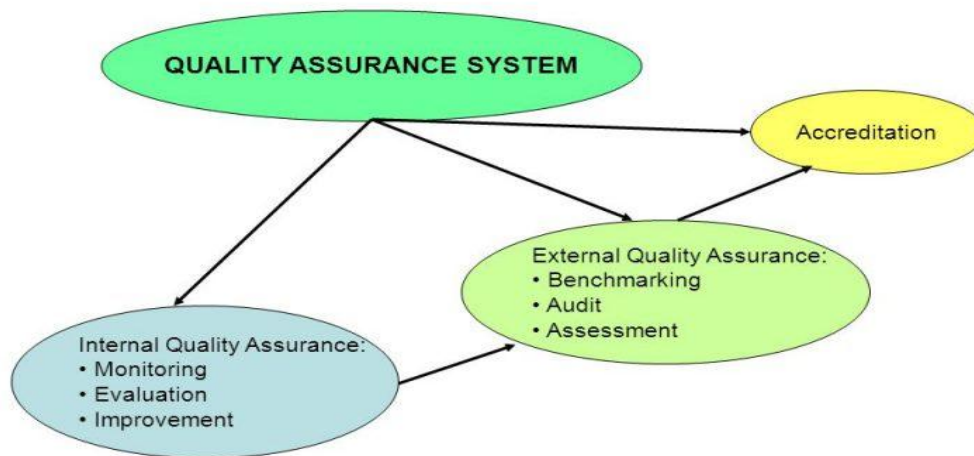Figure 2: An adequate quality assurance mechanisms model

Figure source: Zgaga, P. (2012). Reconsidering EHEA Principles.

Lastly, it is important to note that the above standards and critical values are very broad and must be applied to a quality assurance system, but individual campuses will need to have other criteria based upon their unique circumstances and areas of specialization.

5.5 Building an Effective Quality Assurance Program

Libyan universities are in special need of a comprehensive system of quality assurance and accountability program that may consist of a number of different entities and processes acting together including institutional programs, voluntary accreditation under the state and university policy. Nevertheless, in Libya majority of the literature on quality assurance in higher education focuses on state policy not on institutional programs.

Many authors agreed that quality assurance is an area in which the academy itself with full participation from its various stakeholders are best equipped to lead. But universities should be willing to take the initiative or they risk intervention by others with a stake in the enterprise. Most authors agree that an honest, open dialogue across affected higher education institutions is a key starting point in developing an effective quality assurance program.

Most scholars also agreed that higher education quality assurance is best guaranteed when the responsibility for it is located closely to the processes of teaching and learning. Quality and its assurance should be seen primarily as an

academic professional issue, not a management function. Ultimately, quality is not maintained and enhanced through systems or controls only but through professional commitment. Institutions need to provide an environment within which quality is everyone's responsibility and within which a self-critical commitment to its maintenance and enhancement is part of all faculty stakeholders' duties. Establishing such a "culture of quality" where attention to quality permeates every aspect of the organization is a high priority for proactive and effective quality assurance implementation (Bach, 2014).

5.6 Practicing Higher Education Quality Assurance

Many authors pointed out in their articles about quality assurance that higher education institutions certainly need to the focus more on the descriptions and reviews of actual BS and BA programs. Furthermore, the United Kingdom of Great Britain, Hong Kong, Australia, and Sweden all required national colleges and universities to have some types of formal quality assurance programs. However, there are key characteristics of actual quality assurance programs for implementation such as: Quality assurance is framed as a genuine opportunity for colleges and universities to base their programs on the premise that quality assurance is implemented effectively for better achievement while teaching their educational programs. In practice, there is an extensive list of certain parties interested in the quality of HE including all stakeholders simply because quality assurance provides universities with the opportunity to demonstrate that issues of quality are being systematically and consciously addressed and developed. The substantial variety of missions, sizes, and resources, which characterizes higher education institutions are reflected in an equal variety of responses to quality assurance. There is no dominant or specific model of institutional response, for example in Australia and Great Britain, there is a sense that the older and more established universities responded to the quality assurance mandate in similar ways but in developing countries, the same could be said of the newer institutions. In general, the older universities like the University of Benghazi in Libya seek to consolidate, formalize, and make more explicit informal quality assurance policies and systems, while newer universities such as the University of Derna seek to simplify and streamline existing procedures. As well as, many older institutions are shifting to centralize responsibility for higher education quality assurance, while many younger institutions are working to devolve responsibility. Furthermore, these generalizations must not be overemphasized, as variety of institutional response is more evident than similarity of response. Although the quality assurance systems are far from complete as some universities are seeking a reasonable balance between delegating responsibility for quality assurance to the

appropriate model or unit level and retaining institutional control and direction. Institutions also are seeking a similar balance between individual responsibilities for achieving high quality educational outcomes to a greater degree of collective responsibility. Almost, responsibility for quality assurance is clearly identified by the institution, although patterns of responsibility differ. At the University of Derna, a central office or major committee has oversight of the quality assurance system, while in other academic institutions a senior administrator forms deals with quality assurance matters accordingly. In addition, Universities need to improve coordination between various levels of the quality assurance system, both vertically and horizontally. Thus, previous literature offers many examples of institutions in which the various components of quality assurance exist in a piecemeal fashion that is primarily a communication issue. The revised mission statements that universities designed as part of the quality assurance program generally feature teaching and learning prominently. This is true even of the more research-oriented institutions. Clearly, colleges and universities were responding to external criticism of the lack of focus on undergraduate teaching and learning inputs and outputs. High-ranking universities have effectively linked quality assurance and strategic planning. On the other hand, links between quality assurances, strategic planning, and the budget are often weak. In different parts of the world, many universities have designed effective reviews of their quality assurance programs, including a systematic investigation of the strengths and weaknesses of the various procedures in place. The good example for Libya is U.K.'s quality audit program as it offers the best QA Practice.

5.7 Quality Managers' Self-Perception

The main objective of quality managers' self-perception is the effectiveness of their actions and overall performance within their universities, and in this case the effects of quality assurance approach are not exclusively attributed to the higher education quality managers own competence or performance as a quality assurance professional; rather, they are attributed to the external conditions under which quality assurance can be proactively implemented at the University of Derna and other Libyan higher education institutions. The specific features of the institution (university type, size, disciplinary culture, orientation) can influence the practices of quality assurance according to the management decisions that are not usually taken independently by the quality managers themselves but by top-level management representatives and policy makers. In addition, choosing a more centralized approach with a central quality assurance centre being in charge of university-wide procedures produces different effects, for example on the teaching staff's willingness or unwillingness to engage in Quality Assurance

Implementation may decentralize responsibility and locate it at a departmental level. However, with a distanced view to their own day-to-day actions, and that's why it is better for Libyan Universities to be interested in the quality managers' perception of both, their own and their university's management approach and the effectiveness with its impact on higher education quality assurance implementation (Darandari, 2009).

To achieve the above quality managers have to be effective in terms of their own quality assurance plans to positively empower the impact on the mechanism of proactive teaching and learning practice, and to clarify the right features and outcomes of quality assurance which are helpful in innovating teaching and learning cultures. Therefore, higher education quality managers in Libya should best play significant roles as consultants to the university quality management units and centres.

5.8 University of Derna Staff and Students Support

The authors believe that the quality assurance office at the University of Derna is supporting both academic staff and students during the process of implementing quality assurance activities and daily contribution. Furthermore, a number of staff had participated in quality assurance meetings and were involved in collecting evidence as well as spreading information related to quality assurance effective implementation through creative plans and methods to other colleagues at the same university. In addition, some lecturers (including the first author) has volunteered to train other academics for better teaching performance with evaluating their improvement by students and direct observation. Moreover, the same author encouraged first year management students to contribute to quality assurance activities. They can do it by providing information and evidence related to their work to help prepare self-evaluation reports, they have answered survey questionnaires about student support, lecturers overall performance and daily responsibilities. With the outstanding support of the institutional academic staff and students, each Libyan University can effectively complete the self-evaluation report to be delivered to the head of the quality assurance unit, the feedback from the internal report of quality assurance staff members was highly responsible and enthusiastic about quality assurance activities, and several comments reflected great results. In third world countries, almost of all higher education institutions including public and private universities, most of them have established centres and units specializing in quality assurance implementation and evaluation. These staff members are responsible for quality training, programs, accreditation criteria, setting quality norms and standards for effective teaching and learning process inputs and outputs for lecturers and other staff quality targets of their university,

as well as, they are also involved in preparing the self-evaluation report (Csizmadia, 2008).

6- Study Experimental Part

In this part of the study, the authors made a good use of a small group sample of academics and 85 students from the department of management and the same backgrounds. As well as, this small size sample group proactively participated in periodic and intensive brain storming meetings, sessions and discussions, workshops, and round tables for analysing and completing quality assurance questionnaires throughout to filter a broad range of critical internal and external factors affecting higher education quality assurance implementation at the University of Derna. The selected internal and external factors represent those identified by previous studies investigating Economics graduates as well. The result of this experimental part showed that the University of Derna Quality Assurance Office is in more need continually to develop new strategic plans to stand against internal and external negative factors causing quality assurance incorrect implementation and students with other stakeholders are responsible for achieving this strategic mission and that quality assurance plans and methodologies must be well designed and practiced initially by training, workshops, projects and taught courses using competency-based learning model comparing to traditional learning model as shown in figure (3) with taking into account the University of Derna organizational culture, behaviour, vision and mission. More significantly, the authors concluded that competency-based learning model strengthens Libyan higher education quality and make it systematically improvement for more effective quality assurance especially in the teaching and learning process.

Figure 3: competency based learning model v traditional learning model
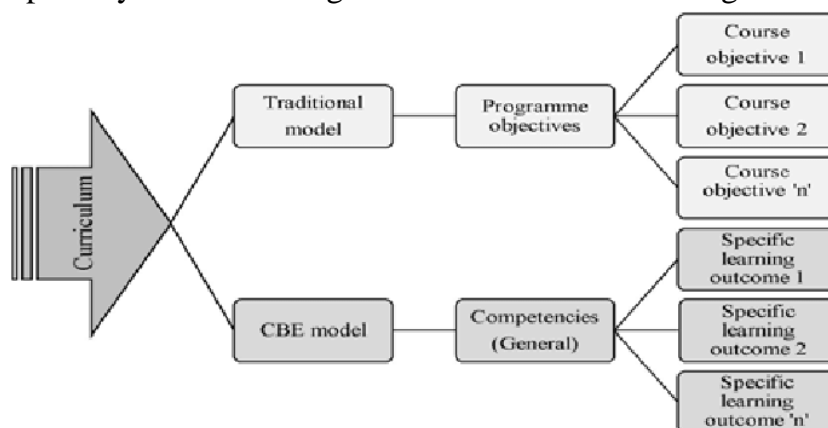

Figure source: Csizmadia, T., Enders, J., & Westerheijden, D. (2008).

Another negative external element is in serious need of proactive two-way communication process between policy makers and Libyan Universities,

researchers, lecturers and students. Furthermore, all participants in this academic work have insisted that for better quality assurance implementation teachers need to merge the necessary interpersonal competencies and employability skill in all academic subjects and they must be independently well consulted by internal and external professionals to be well designed and taught to students in order to be equipped with the required employable specific, generic and interpersonal skills to build the main required professional skills. Dealing with higher education quality implementation barriers at the University of Derna is very essential for equipping all students and graduates with best quality learning outcomes for a better career progression so they should be supported with new technological methods enabling students to be communicators that are more confident, good team players, real problem solvers, and excellent decision makers (Holmes, 2001). Eventually, it must be said again that this study is focusing mainly on dealing with factors affecting HE quality assurance effectiveness and implementation in Libya for satisfying both employers' needs and other stakeholders' expectations.

7. Study Conclusion

Libyan Universities have recognized the necessity of quality assurance effectiveness for strategic development (Nguyen, Ta, & Nguyen, 2017). Specifically, most higher education institutions in Libya like the University of Derna have established a quality assurance Office that serves as the focal point for all quality assurance and accreditation programmes in the institutions (Nguyen, Evers, & Marshall, 2017). And over the years since it was established in 1993 the University of Derna institutional leaders have gradually allocated more materials for quality assurance activities and implementation. Moreover, the significant number of regular quality assurance workshops, events, trainings programmes and projects undertaken by the university have also increased with collaboration of Erasmus+, Horizon Europe and UNIMED projects and other global partners, enabling the authors to select HEQA implementation framework taking into consideration students/ people, place/ universities and programme's effectiveness as shown in figure (4) below:

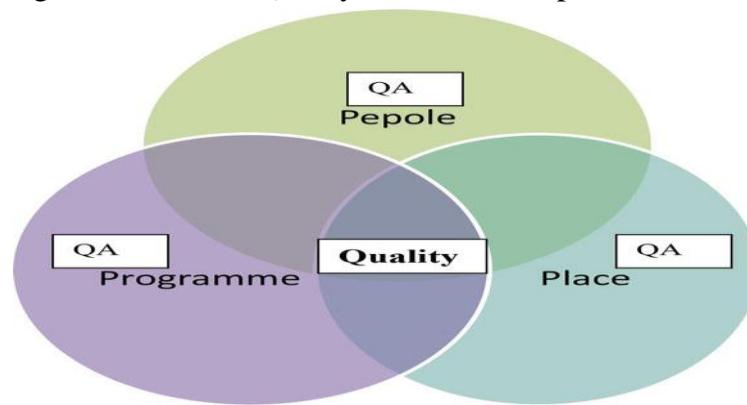Figure 4: Higher Education Quality Assurance Implementation Framework

Figure source: Alzafari, (2019). Implementation of quality assurance standards

8. Study Recommendations

1- The authors believe that Libya is in need of an independent higher education professional body to analyse and evaluate quality assurance effectiveness and implementation in public and private HE institutions to secure the required strategic development and because quality assurance is a holistic approach covering the entire educational process in Libya to serve students, graduates, educators, employers and all stakeholders in expected quality standard.

2- The authors believe that the success of a Libyan Quality Assurance System depends on the support of strategic management (SM). Hence, quality assurance alongside with SM and measuring-monitoring system will interact with each other to enabling Libyan universities to improve and achieve their higher education objectives with consulting all related stakeholders.

3- This academic work also draws the line up for Libyan Higher Education Policy Makers to recognize that in order to sustain and develop the local economy, an ever-increasing pool of skilful staff, university graduates and professional people are highly required.

The writers sincerely advice that Libyan universities are considered to be the best providers for quality employees who are capable of performing as required using their professional specific and generic skills.

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