

Educational Audit and Curricular Reforms in the Arabian Context

Authors : Irum Naz

Abstract : In the Arabian higher education context, linguistic proficiency in the English language is considered crucial for the developmental sustainability, economic growth, and stability of communities and societies. Qatar's educational reforms package, through the 2030 vision, identifies the acquisition of English at K-12 as an essential survival communication tool for globalization, believing that Qatari students need better preparation to take on the responsibilities of leadership and to participate effectively in the country's surging economy. The idea of introducing Qatari students to modern curricula benchmarked to high-student-performance curricula in developed countries is one of the components of reformatory design principles of Education for New Era reform project that is mutually consented to and supported by the Office of Shared Services, Communications Office, and Supreme Education Council. In appreciation of the government's vision, the English Language Centre (ELC) at the Community College of Qatar ran an internal educational audit and conducted evaluative research to understand and appraise the value, impact, and practicality of the existing ELC language development program. This study sought to identify the type of change that could identify and improve the quality of Foundation Program courses and the manners in which second language learners could be assisted to transit smoothly between (ELC) levels. Following the interpretivist paradigm and mixed research method, the data was gathered through a bicyclic research model and a triangular design. The analyses of the data suggested that there was a need for improvement in the ELC program as a whole, and particularly in terms of curriculum, student learning outcomes, and the general learning environment in the department. Key findings suggest that the target program would benefit from significant revisions, which would include narrowing the focus of the courses, providing sets of specific learning objectives, and preventing repetition between levels. Another promising finding was about the assessment tools and process. The data suggested that a set of standardized assessments that more closely suited the programs of study should be devised. It was also recommended that students undergo a more comprehensive placement process to ensure that they begin the program at an appropriate level and get the maximum benefit from their learning experience. Although this ties into the idea of curriculum revamp, it was expected that students could leave the ELC having had exposure to courses in English for specific purposes. The idea of a more reliable exit assessment for students was raised frequently so ELC could regulate itself and ensure optimum learning outcomes. Another important recommendation was the provision of a Student Learning Center for students that would help them to receive personalized tuition, differentiated instruction, and self-driven and self-evaluated learning experience. In addition, an extra study level was recommended to be added to the program to accommodate the different levels of English language proficiency represented among ELC students. The evidence collected in the course of conducting the study suggests that significant change is needed in the structure of the ELC program, specifically about curriculum, the program learning outcomes, and the learning environment in general.

Keywords : educational audit, ESL, optimum learning outcomes, Qatar's educational reforms, self-driven and self-evaluated learning experience, Student Learning Center

Conference Title : ICLLL 2022 : International Conference on Languages, Literature and Linguistics

Conference Location : Dubai, United Arab Emirates

Conference Dates : February 15-16, 2022