

Evaluating the Teacher Diploma Program of Educational Preparation According to Academic Accreditation Criteria: A Case Study at King Abdul-Aziz University

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Abstract – A teacher efficiency test conducted in 2013 revealed that 70 percent of those who sat the test failed due to weak preparation. This outcome suggests that a reconsideration of the teacher education programs and the courses such programs offer, is imperative. One of these programs is the Diploma Program in the Postgraduate Programs of Education (DPPPE) offered at King Abdul-Aziz University (KAU). There is evidence that since 2004 KAU has sought to develop its educational systems, research and service to the community, and to reinforce its support for improved quality of education through its academic programs in order to attain local and international academic accreditation. Based on the foregoing, the proposed study aims at evaluating the educational courses in the Educational Diploma Program (EDP) at KAU. The study will be guided by the standards of the National Corporation for Academic Accreditation (NCAAA) in order to identify the strengths and weaknesses in the program's courses. The evaluation process will include the views of students and staff as well as of educational partners in the field such as school principals. The course evaluation process is expected to yield findings and recommendations in support of the visions for the development of the general EDP, the type of improvements that could be introduced to increase the effectiveness of the courses and to ameliorate their weaknesses. Hence, such a process will have a positive impact on improving the quality of degree and diploma teaching programs at KAU and elsewhere.

Keywords: Evaluation, teacher education, educational development, academic accreditation

1. INTRODUCTION

In the last ten years, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia government (KSA, hereafter) commenced reforms of the education system for two main reasons. The first was prompted by domestic and international criticism of the Saudi education system in the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Although there was criticism of the Saudi curriculum prior to 9/11, in its aftermath this increased drastically. Saudi and non-Saudi scholars argued that the curricula contributed to influencing the terrorists and therefore, requires revision (Rugh, 2002; Elyas, 2008, 2010; Elyas & Picard, 2013). The second reason is the urgent need for reforms based on the fact that in science and maths, Saudi students trail their western counterparts. Consequently, the KSA government is funding one of the most ambitious

educational reforms in its history, entitled the 'King Abdullah Project for the Development of Public Education in 2007' (Tatweer,¹ hereafter).

Tatweer's reforms are designed for primary and secondary public schools. However, the reforms have not extended to the pre-service teacher education programs at universities and this has been cited as an impediment to its success. For example, critics claim that, thus far, the reforms have failed to produce the desired outcomes. One reason for this is attributed to the lack of training for teachers to develop their skills to effectively implement the reforms (Allamankhrah & Elyas, in press). There is, therefore, a disconnection between the aims of *Tatweer* and how pre-service teachers are being trained and educated. These are, after all, the teachers who will assume responsibility for implementing *Tatweer's* reforms, yet the outcomes so far suggest that teachers are unprepared for this task.

Although new curricula, tests, methods, and evaluation strategies approved by *Tatweer* have been applied to all Saudi public schools and supported by the Saudi Ministry of Education, "they are meaningless if teachers cannot use them productively. Policies can improve schools only if the people in them are armed with knowledge, skills, and support they need" (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1996 cited in Felman-Nemser, 2001, p.1013). Teachers can only acquire and apply their knowledge and skills if they have been taught and are able to put them into practice during their pre-service teacher training.

The poor quality of teacher education in Saudi Arabia has been the focus of some academic studies and media articles (Al-Essa, 2012; Allamankhrah & Elyas, in press; Al-Shahrani, 2012; Alkart, 2013, Allamankhrah, 2013). These concerns were reflected in the current report issued by the Director of the Vocational Tests Department in the National Centre for Assessment in Higher Education². In an interview with the Saudi daily newspaper *Al-shrq* 2013 Al Meshari states that "only fifty percent of teachers pass the arts and social sciences component of the qualification test"³. This test is taken after graduation in the Diploma of Education and which is a prerequisite for teaching in schools. The need for investigating the effectiveness of Saudi pre-service teacher education programs is urgent as to date, there has been no adequate scholarly or systematic research undertaken to investigate whether the poor outcomes can be attributed to pre-service teacher education programs.

1.1. Aims of the Study

The aim of the study is to evaluate the educational courses in the DEP at KAU based on the perceptions of students about the quality of the programs and what they think needs to be changed in order to adequately prepare them to meet the tasks required of them as teachers. The study will be guided by the standards of the NCAAA in order to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the courses in the program. This requires designing evaluation

¹ Tatweer is Arabic expression that means the "the development of oneself".

² The department is responsible for preparing assessment tests for the purposes of employer selection, vocational licenses, and career promotion.

³ This test aims at making sure that at least the minimum set of qualifications are met for those applying for teaching jobs. The test includes general information, science, and basic pedagogy skills.

tools for the main components of the courses such as their goals, study plan, content, teaching strategies and methods, evaluation techniques, patterns of teacher/ student interaction, targeted learning professional outcomes and their positive impact upon students and community. The purpose of the findings is to make recommendations for revisions to the courses in the DEP at KAU University in order to prepare future teachers to teach effectively.

1.2. Scope of the Study

Some limited parameters are placed on the scope of the study which indicates what is included and what is excluded in the study. These defined parameters help to ensure that this study is focused, manageable and covered in-depth. The participants will be the student teachers who have recently finished one term of the one year Graduate Diploma of Education at KAU in Jeddah, with and without teaching experience. They will be selected from several subject areas including mathematics, science, history, language arts and literature. In addition, the study places emphasis only on four courses in term one: curriculum foundation, school management, educational foundation, and the use of information technology in education.

1.3. Research Questions

This study is based on two research questions:

- 1- To what extent do Saudi pre-service teachers at KAU evaluate their secondary pre-service teacher education program's courses in the light of the standards of the NCAAA?
- 2- Is there a statistically significant difference at the (0.05) level of significance in the Saudi pre-service teachers' evaluation of their secondary pre-service teacher education program's courses in the light of the standards of the NCAAA pertinent to job type (teacher or non-teacher)?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Teacher Education Programs Abroad

A sizeable number of research studies have been conducted on teacher education abroad. Lingam's study: "*Beginning Teachers' Perceptions of their Programme,*" was conducted in 2012 to determine how a cohort of beginning teachers perceived the training program they completed at the Vanuatu Institute of Teacher Education to prepare them for the work expected of them in Vanuatu primary schools. All graduates of the program in the study sample were in their first year of teaching and their opinions were surveyed by means of a self-administered questionnaire. The results showed that the beginning teachers were generally positive about their training program, though some did express concerns about some important areas such as the quality of the teacher training program; the roles and

responsibilities expected of teachers in schools; and the quality of education provided to the nation's children.

A similar study was conducted by Hussain and Saeed "*Effectiveness of Pre-service Teacher Education Programme (B.Ed.) in Pakistan: Perceptions of Graduates and their Supervisors*" in Pakistan. This study was conducted at the University of Education (UE), Lahore. The focus was on five content areas: lesson planning, presentation, use of audio-visual aids, teaching methods and assessment skills. The sample consisted of 392 graduates and 150 supervisors. The results revealed that the B.Ed. program was effective in terms of upgrading knowledge and skills in five curriculum areas. The performance of the UE graduates as elementary school teachers was better in the areas of lesson planning, lesson presentation and assessment, but relatively less impact was evident in regard to their performance in the use of audio-visual aids and teaching techniques/methods. The female graduates were relatively more satisfied with the curriculum than males. Recommendations included that the UE constituent and affiliated colleges need to take measures to improve in the areas of "teaching methods" and in the "use of audiovisual aids" such as projectors, multimedia and computer skills of prospective teachers during the B.Ed. program.

A recent study was conducted by Hollins (2011), "*Teacher Preparation For Quality Teaching*" at the University of Missouri-Kansas City, School of Education. In this study the author presents a holistic practice-based approach, consisting of two parts to prepare candidates for quality teaching. The first part describes the essential knowledge, skills and habits of mind for quality teaching. The emphasis is on understanding the learning process as influenced by the cultural and experiential background of particular learners and the philosophical stance through which the purpose of school learning is undertaken. The philosophical stance influences the design of learning experiences, the framing of the curriculum, and the social context in classrooms. The second part describes the design of opportunities for leaning to teach with an emphasis on epistemic practices and program qualities. In this study the practices in teacher preparation are a mirror image of practices for quality teaching in PK-12 schools. The standards of evidence for integrity and trustworthiness are the same in teacher preparation and in PK-12 schools.

2.2. Teacher Education Programs in Saudi Arabia.

Teacher education programs internationally aim to prepare graduate teachers with the "*knowledge, skills and disposition that allow them to succeed*" (Darling-Hammond et al, 2005, 390). The success or otherwise of teachers' training is reflected in students' achievement, as noted by Beutel and Crosswell (2012) who argue that "*teacher education [has] highlighted the importance of quality teachers in improving the outcomes of students*" (96). In Saudi Arabia, as in several countries, teachers can attain their teaching qualifications via two pathways. One is the four-year bachelor degree in the Faculty of Education. The other is through graduate entry into a secondary school pre-service teacher education program after obtaining an undergraduate degree in any subject.

Over recent years, and not only in Saudi Arabia, the graduate entry to education programs has been criticised for its limitations in developing “*more sophisticated pedagogical skills and knowledge and understanding of contemporary schools context*” (Skilbeck & Connell, 2004 cited in Beutel & Crosswell, 2012, p. 97). Of this situation, the Minister of Education in KSA Prince Faisal bin Abdullah Al-Saud stated in an interview with the Saudi newspaper *Al-shrq* in 2013 that “to be honest and based on my experience in the Ministry of Education, our problem is the teacher”, adding that “*there is no educational development without cooperation between the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Higher Education*” which supervises all Saudi universities and the teachers who graduate from them.

However, there are some dissenting views in relation to the Minister’s views. Al-Shahrani (2012) for instance, has attributed the problem to the lack of teacher training in education programs at all Saudi universities, stating that:

the Saudi teacher education programs –in general- have focused on traditional teaching strategy with more focus on theory rather than practice” and that “another problem we can point to is related to the limited—if any—cooperation between these institutions and schools. (p. 10)

Alkart (2013) expressed agreement in *Al Shrq* newspaper, stating that:

the problem came from the lack of teachers’ training which is attributed to the lack of teacher education programs that are offered by the Saudi universities as when many teachers graduated they could not pass the standardized tests which are part of the teaching requirements” (paragraph, 2).

Alkart (2013) concluded his article by arguing that “*the time is due for both ministers to cooperate to solve this problem*”. (Paragraph, 2). Such claims suggest that Saudi secondary pre-service teacher education programs have not provided adequate training for student teachers and have failed to produce the level of quality required by the new educational environment (Neville, 2010). Al Matrafi’s (2009) study “*The extent of carrying out total quality criteria in the program of science teacher preparation, in teachers’ preparation college, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia,*” aimed at discovering the extent to which total quality criteria were observed in the program of science teacher preparation, and the effect of science qualifications and experience on the subjects’ responses. A random sample of 190 subjects was selected with the findings showing that the extent of observing total quality measures was median.

Generally, however, there has been limited research that investigates whether or not secondary pre-service teacher education programs in KSA are of the necessary quality to equip future teachers to deal with current education reforms in Saudi Arabia. Most data that critics have provided on teachers and their training in KSA were not based on scientific research.

2.3. NCAAA

Hence, there was an imperative to establish accreditation within the Saudi education sector. Accreditation is defined as the formal certification demonstrating that the institution or the program meets required standards (Council for Higher Education Accreditation 2010). The purposes of accreditation in higher education have been described as: fostering quality assurance, facilitating access to state funds, engendering private sector confidence in higher education, and easing transfer of courses and programs among colleges and universities (Eaton 2009). The KSA Minister of Education is, therefore, seeking an effective accreditation system in order to accredit an organization in higher education when it demonstrates policies that meet these objectives. These policies define the institution's mission, vision and objectives; its standards; and demonstrate that the program will continue to accomplish its purpose by ensuring to stay abreast of the latest technologies, innovations and best practices in its field (Baker and Miosi 2010; Nina et al 2008).

The Saudi government recognized the importance of quality assurance along with the accreditation system. For this purpose the NCAAA was established in 2004 to accredit all post-secondary institutions and programs (NCAAA handbook 2009). NCAAA encourages the development of an internal quality system that has to work with tertiary education institutions, governmental authority, as well as stakeholders such as students, faculty and staff members.

NCAAA initiated the self-study process with a focus on students as major stakeholders in the process (Al Mughraby 2009, cited in Abu-Huwaij, 2014). The NCAAA developed 11 standards that need to be met for the accreditation process. Mission and objectives are standards which require to be self-evaluated in the Saudi institutions that are seeking national academic accreditation. It aims to ensure that the institution's mission statement clearly and appropriately defines its principal purposes and priorities and be influential in guiding planning and action within the institution, and is highly supported by the major stakeholders (NCAAA handbook 2010, cited in Abu-Huwaij, 2014).

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Quantitative Method

This study developed a questionnaire survey to collect data on pre-service teachers' perceptions at the Diploma Program in the Postgraduate Programs of Education at KAU. The main line of inquiry of this data source is to obtain measures of pre-service teachers' perceptions about their program courses' value evaluation. The power of using a questionnaire survey, as Rea and Parker (2005, p. 30) state, is that it permits "*researchers to generalize about a large population by studying only a small portion of that population*" (Rea & Parker, 2005, p.30). In a broader sense, a questionnaire survey is "*a useful technique for gathering information*" (Rea & Parker, 2005, p.73), and "*has become a standard means of collecting comparative data systematically*" (Harkness, Vijver, Mohler, 2003, p.4). Anderson (1990) maintains that if "well-constructed" questionnaire surveys "permit the

collection of reliable and reasonable valid data; relatively simply, cheaply and in a short space of time” (Anderson, 1990, p. 207).

Survey information may be collected by means of any of five general methods of implementation: paper-based, web-based, telephone, in-person interview and intercept (Rea & Parker, 2005, p.36). Considering economic and time constraints associated with the research, this study chose web-based self-administered questionnaire surveys which were creatively conducted on the spot in university leaders’ meetings where the researcher was allowed to attend. The subjects were asked for consent to participate in surveys and those who agreed to participate received copies of the survey questionnaire on their mobile phones.

3.2. Methodology and Procedures of the Study

This section of the research illustrates the methodology of the study, its sample, the procedures of drawing up the questionnaire and application thereof, data entry and statistical analysis thereof.

3.3. Methodology of the Study

The study employed the descriptive approach so as to identify the student teachers’ opinions regarding the extent to which they believed the courses of the General Education Diploma meet the standards of academic and programmatic accreditation. This subsequently helps identify the student teachers’ degree of satisfaction with such courses. This approach is appropriate for the collection of descriptive data so as to provide appropriate solutions to the shortcomings which the students believe are responsible for failure to achieve the standards of academic and programmatic accreditation.

3.4. Study Sample

The study sample covered all the 65 Graduate Diploma in Education (GED) enrolees for the academic year 2013/2014 who study at five different branches.

3.5. Procedures for Preparing Assessment Questionnaire

3.5.1. Objective of the questionnaire

The Questionnaire was designed with the objective of attaining the opinions of the GED student teachers regarding the GED courses in light of NCAAA standards.

3.5.1.1. Sources of the Questionnaire:

The study referred to a number of sources in order to design a questionnaire that identifies the opinions of the GED student teachers regarding how far the GED courses achieve academic accreditation standards. The sources include the following:

- Literatures pertaining to the concept of quality as well as academic and programmatic accreditation.
- The NCAAA's documents.
- Efforts exerted as well as experiences acquired in the area of academic and programmatic accreditation at the Vice Presidency for Development.
- Previous studies conducted in this field as well as working papers published in periodicals, conferences and symposia.
- Interviews conducted with a group of faculty members specialising in quality and academic development at the Faculty of Education and Program of Educational Graduate Studies.

3.5.1.2. Themes and Items of the Questionnaire:

The Questionnaire consisted of the following nine themes:

- 1- Course Objectives
- 2- Course Plan
- 3- Course Content
- 4- Teaching Methods
- 5- Supporting Techniques
- 6- Assessment Methods
- 7- Learning Outcomes
- 8- Interaction with Instructor
- 9- Functional Advantage

The items of the Questionnaire varied in accordance with only three themes: course planning, course content and teaching methods as follows:

S.R	Theme	Number	Percentage %	S.R	Theme	Number	Percentage %
2	Course Plan	6	8.3	7	Learning Outcomes	4	5.5
3	Course Content	24	33.3	8	Interaction with Course Instructor	5	6.9
4	Teaching Methods	12	16.6	9	Functional Advantage	3	4.2

3.5.1.3. Questionnaire in its final shape:

The questionnaire's validity was verified by discussing its themes and items with several experts specializing in teaching methods, educational management and educational

psychology. The study also solicited the opinions of a number of students concerning the items in the questionnaire. Furthermore, the study ensured that the questionnaire would achieve the contemplated objective for which it was prepared. Reliability of the questionnaire was calculated using Cronbach's coefficient alpha. The table below shows the reliability coefficient.

Table 1: Statement of Questionnaire Reliability

Number of Items	Mean	Standard Deviation	Coefficient Alpha
72	295.8214	75.60127	0.966

3.5.2.1. Questionnaire's application procedures and result scoring

The Questionnaire was applied during the fourteenth and fifteenth week of the second semester for the academic year 2013/2014 by holding a number of meetings with the students and through collaboration of some educators. Afterwards, the data were entered into tables.

3.5.2.2. Statistical Processing of Data

The study data were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The following statistical methods were used in order to arrive at conclusions:

- a- Cronbach's coefficient alpha to calculate the reliability coefficient of the questionnaire.
- b- Computing relative weights of the study sample responses to assessment domains.
- c- Calculating arithmetic means and the percentages relating to the total score of each theme, standard deviations, and relative weights of the sample responses to the questionnaire in terms of the different domains of assessment and the assessment process as a whole via applying the t-test to two independent samples.
- d- Using One Way ANOVA to calculate the differences between the numerical ratings of the sample responses to the different domains of assessment and the assessment process as a whole.

4. FINDINGS

This part of the study highlights the findings arrived at in accordance with the research questions in addition to providing relevant comments and discussions. The following is a detailed illustration of the above mentioned points.

4.1. Findings of Question One and Commenting Thereon

Question one attempts to identify the assessment opinions of the GED student teachers regarding the GED courses in light of the NCAAA standards. The question asks: “What is the level of the students’ assessment of the GED courses in light of the NCAAA standards? To answer this question the questionnaire was applied to a sample of the GED student teachers. Having calculated repetitions, percentages and the relative weights of assessment items, a set of results were arrived at and presented in light of assessment domains following Table 1 below which indicates the ranges of relative weights with the degree of approval set opposite to each range.

4.1.1. Assessment of course study plan

The table below shows repetitions and percentages relative to responses of members of the sample to the assessment items of the course study plan. The degree of approval is set opposite to each item.

Table 2: Repetitions, Percentages, Relative Weights and Degree of Approval of Members of the Sample on Availability of Assessment Items Pertaining to Course Study Plan

S.R	Assessment Items	Relative to Objectives	Degree of Approval					Relative Weight	Degree of Approval
			Very High	High	Average	Low	Very Low		
1	Course plan was discussed prior to teaching it	Number	116	47	9	7	17	4.21	Very High
		%	59.2	24	4.6	3.6	8.7		
2	Elements of course study plan are clear	Number	122	43	10	7	14	4.29	Very High
		%	62.2	21.9	5.1	3.6	7.1		
3	Subjects contained in the course plan are diverse	Number	118	43	13	12	10	4.26	Very High
		%	60.2	21.9	6.6	6.1	5.1		
4	Subjects are equally distributed to study weeks	Number	106	56	11	10	13	4.18	Very High
		%	54.1	28.6	5.6	5.1	6.6		
5	Study plan specified examination dates	Number	110	41	27	8	10	4.19	Very High
		%	56.1	20.9	13.8	4.1	5.1		
6	Study plan can achieve course objectives	Number	110	48	17	8	13	4.19	Very High
		%	56.1	24.5	8.7	4.1	6.6		

4.1.2. Assessment of course content

Table 2 shows repetitions and percentages relative to responses of members of the sample to the assessment items of course content. The degree of approval is set opposite to each item.

Table 2: Repetitions, Percentages, Relative Weights and Degree of Approval of Members of the Sample on Availability of Assessment Items Pertaining to Course Content

S.R	Assessment Items Relative to Objectives		Degree of Approval					Relative Weight	Degree of Approval
			Very High	High	Average	Low	Very Low		
1	Course content highlights some important societal issues	Number	103	51	21	11	10	4.15	High
		%	52.6	26	10.7	5.6	5.1		
2	Course content reflects objectives clearly	Number	94	55	30	5	12	4.09	High
		%	48	28.1	15.3	2.6	6.1		
3	Course content meets cognitive needs of specialization	Number	103	56	21	4	12	4.19	High
		%	52.6	28.6	10.7	2	6.1		
4	Course content reflects modern knowledge in specialization	Number	98	56	25	7	10	4.15	High
		%	50	28.6	12.8	3.6	5.1		
5	Course content highlights characteristics of the society	Number	99	45	34	8	10	4.10	High
		%	50.5	23	17.3	4.1	5.1		
6	Course content reflects integrative knowledge	Number	95	49	38	2	12	4.09	High
		%	48.5	25	19.4	1	6.1		
7	Course content develops a desire to conduct research	Number	100	44	34	8	10	4.10	High
		%	51	22.4	17.3	4.1	5.1		
8	Course content enhances problem-solving skills	Number	94	55	30	5	12	4.09	High
		%	48	28.1	15.3	2.6	6.1		
9	Course content strikes a balance between practical and theoretical aspects	Number	100	39	38	5	14	4.05	High
		%	51	19.9	19.4	2.6	7.1		
10	Course content deepens balance between practical and theoretical aspects	Number	102	36	39	9	10	4.08	High
		%	52	18.4	19.9	4.6	5.1		
11	Course content deepens balance between ethics and values of scientific research	Number	102	39	38	5	12	4.09	High
		%	52	19.9	19.4	2.6	6.1		
12	Course content enhances critical thinking	Number	100	47	30	10	9	4.12	High
		%	51	24	15.3	5.1	4.6		
13	Course content motivates discovery of abilities and talents	Number	104	42	33	7	10	4.14	High
		%	53.1	21.4	16.8	3.6	5.1		
14	Course subjects give consideration to the needs of the student	Number	101	47	33	6	9	4.15	High
		%	51.5	24	16.8	3.1	4.6		
15	Course content contains interesting subjects	Number	94	47	34	7	13	4.04	High
		%	48	24	17.3	3.6	6.6		
16	Consideration is given to individual differences between learners upon processing course subjects	Number	96	38	36	9	17	3.95	High
		%	49	19.4	18.4	4.6	8.7		
17	Course needs to be updated and renewed	Number	99	55	26	5	11	4.15	High
		%	50.5	28.1	13.3	2.6	5.6		
18	Course contains appropriate illustrative examples	Number	98	41	34	10	13	4.03	High
		%	50	20.9	17.3	5.1	6.6		
19	Course subjects are modern	Number	97	53	30	7	9	4.13	High

S.R	Assessment Items Relative to Objectives	Degree of Approval					Relative Weight	Degree of Approval	
		Very High	High	Average	Low	Very Low			
		%							
20	Course content meets the needs of its learner	Number	98	48	37	4	9	4.13	High
		%	50	24.5	18.9	2	4.6		
21	Course substance is functional and benefits learners in respect of their future career	Number	103	48	32	4	9	4.18	High
		%	52.6	24.5	16.3	2	4.6		
22	Course content uses logical sequence in presenting information and suggested ideas	Number	102	54	24	7	9	4.19	High
		%	52	27.6	12.2	3.6	4.6		
23	Course subjects are interrelated	Number	100	54	24	5	13	4.14	High
		%	51	27.6	12.2	2.6	6.6		
24	Course subjects are specific and enhance professional development of its learners	Number	103	45	28	5	15	4.10	High
		%	52.6	23	14.3	2.6	7.7		

4.1.3. Assessment of teaching methods

Table 3 below shows repetitions and percentages relative to responses of members of the sample to the assessment items of teaching methods. The degree of approval is set opposite to each item.

Table 3: Repetitions, Percentages, Relative Weights and Degree of Approval of Members of the Sample on Availability of Assessment Items Pertaining to Teaching Methods

S.R	Assessment Items Relative to Objectives	Degree of Approval					Relative Weight	Degree of Approval	
		Very High	High	Average	Low	Very Low			
		%							
1	Teaching methods are compatible with course content	Number	111	43	25	5	12	4.2041	Very High
		%	56.6	21.9	12.8	2.6	6.1		
2	Encourage questions and discussions	Number	120	36	22	4	14	4.2449	Very High
		%	61.2	18.4	11.2	2	7.1		
3	Stimulate student's motivation to learn	Number	109	35	31	9	12	4.1224	High
		%	55.6	17.9	15.8	4.6	6.1		
4	Diversified (critical thinking, in-depth questions, exploratory co-operative education, projects)	Number	104	41	29	8	14	4.0867	High
		%	51	26.5	12.8	3.6	6.1		
5	Help create a link between theory and practice	Number	98	52	26	6	14	4.1276	High
		%	50	26.5	13.3	3.1	7.1		
6	Implemented via application of modern technologies	Number	100	57	21	4	14	4.0918	High
		%	51	29.1	10.7	2	7.1		
7	Take into account the different levels of the	Number	103	50	23	8	12	4.148	High
		%	52.6	25.5	11.7	4.1	6.1		

S.R	Assessment Items Relative to Objectives	Degree of Approval					Relative Weight	Degree of Approval	
		Very High	High	Average	Low	Very Low			
	students								
8	Help strengthen communication between students	Number	92	38	33	20	13	4.1429	High
		%	46.9	19.4	16.8	10.2	6.6		
9	Present the content in an interesting manner	Number	112	42	18	10	14	3.898	High
		%	57.1	21.4	9.2	5.1	7.1		
10	Boost learner's positive role	Number	98	27	39	13	19	4.1633	High
		%	50	13.8	19.9	6.6	9.7		
11	Develop learner's ability to think	Number	95	51	26	11	13	3.8776	High
		%	48.5	26	13.3	5.6	6.6		
12	Most of teaching methods traditional	Number	111	43	25	5	12	4.0408	High
		%	56.6	21.9	12.8	2.6	6.1		

4.1.4. Assessment of assessment methods

Table 4 below shows repetitions and percentages relative to responses of members of the sample to the assessment items of assessment methods. The degree of approval is set opposite to each item.

Table 4: Repetitions, Percentages, Relative Weights and Degree of Approval of Members of the Sample on Availability of Assessment Items Pertaining to Assessment Methods

S.R	Assessment Items Relative to Objectives	Degree of Approval					Relative Weight	Degree of Approval	
		Very High	High	Average	Low	Very Low			
1	A variety of methods are used in exam questions (short-answer exam – midterm exam, final exam)	Number	102	43	27	11	13	4.0714	High
		%	52	21.9	13.8	5.6	6.6		
2	Assessment methods remain traditional in terms of evaluation of student's level (memorization and inculcation)	Number	100	51	26	8	11	4.1276	High
		%	51	26	13.3	4.1	5.6		
3	Teaching methods distinguish between student's varied abilities	Number	111	43	22	7	13	4.1837	High
		%	56.6	21.9	11.2	3.6	6.6		
4	Assessment methods measure high-level mental skills (analysis, synthesis, assessment, etc)	Number	99	46	32	6	13	4.0816	High
		%	50.5	23.5	16.3	3.1	6.6		
5	Assessment methods cover all course objectives	Number	103	29	27	23	14	3.9388	High
		%	52.6	14.8	13.8	11.7	7.1		
6	Assessment methods	Number	98	36	26	22	14	3.9286	High

S.R	Assessment Items Relative to Objectives	Degree of Approval					Relative Weight	Degree of Approval	
		Very High	High	Average	Low	Very Low			
	cover all course aspects	%	50	18.4	13.3	11.2	7.1		
7	Assessment methods are characterized by objectivity and absence of favoritism	Number	121	27	24	11	13	4.1837	High
		%	61.7	13.8	12.2	5.6	6.6		
8	There is a contradiction between what the student learns about the concept and methods of assessment and the assessment methods actually in practice	Number	106	23	24	12	31	3.8214	High
		%	54.1	11.7	12.2	6.1	15.8		
9	Assessment methods take into account the creative abilities of the students	Number	109	40	19	8	20	4.0714	High
		%	55.6	20.4	9.7	4.1	10.2		

5. DISCUSSION

5.1. Comments on Findings of Question One

The findings of question one set forth in tables (2) to (4) make it clear that the ratings of the GED students regarding the extent of availability of NCAAA academic accreditation standards are generally high. This applies to their overall ratings relating to the extent of availability of the aforesaid standards in the GED courses, including the nine themes of the questionnaire (Course Objective, Course Plan, Course Content, Teaching Methods, Supporting Techniques, Assessment Methods, Learning Outcomes, Interaction with Course Instructor, and Functional Advantage of Courses). The assessment value of relative weight recorded a very high degree of (4.22) and a high degree of (3.77) with a high total value of (4.5).

The same applies to the assessment scores of the students in relation to each of the nine themes. The findings indicate that the GED students gave high ratings in respect of the assessment elements for each theme. The findings also show a high degree of availability of the aforementioned standards in the detailed themes. The Course Objectives theme recorded a very high degree of (4.20) and a high degree of (4.13). The Course Plan theme recorded a very high degree of (4.24) and a high degree of (4.18). The Course Content theme recorded a high degree ranging between (4.19) and (3.95). The Teaching Methods theme recorded a very high degree of (4.2449) and a high degree of (3.89). The Supporting Techniques theme recorded a high degree ranging between (3.71) and (4.2). The Assessment Methods theme recorded a high degree ranging between (4.17) and (3.82) while the Learning Outcomes theme recorded a very high degree of (4.2) and a high degree of (4.17). The Interaction with Course Instructor theme recorded a very high degree of (4.22) and a high degree of (4.11) while the Functional Advantage theme recorded a high degree ranging between (4.12) and (4.13).

The assessment findings of the GED student teachers revealed the availability of teaching practices that implement academic and programmatic accreditation standards in the programs of Educational Graduate Studies at the Vice Presidency for Development, King Abdul-Aziz University. The students appreciated the usefulness and value of the educational courses given to them as part of the GED programs. They are encouraged to learn such courses because of the advantages they provide, including clarity of course objectives, ability to take cognizance of the course plan, in addition to the fact that course content is linked to the practical aspects of the teacher's profession and his/her teaching performance, and full acquaintance with the teaching methods and importance thereof. The same applies to the remaining standards of academic accreditation.

Not all education courses and programs have favourable findings, however (Levine 2006; Ismail 2012; Goza, Kalleloye & Mounkalia 2008). There are a number of reasons for this deficit in quality in teacher education programs and courses. For instance, Levine (2006) attributes the adverse findings in relation to education programs and courses in US institutions to factors such as disparities in institutional quality, insufficient quality control, disconnected faculty and low admission standards. Levine found that "in general, state standards are incapable of assuring quality in the teacher education programs the state approves" (64). Goza et al (2008) found that teachers were being trained by trainers whose qualifications were not aligned with the subjects they were teaching. For instance, pre-service teachers were taught French by a trainer with a Baccalaureate degree in Sociology while biology was taught by trainers whose specialization is psychology. The trainers, therefore were found to lack the subject expertise to "align the theoretical discourse that builds their frames of reference with the concrete situations imposed on them" (Lamy 2003 cited in Goza et al 2008).

The findings in this study largely correspond with those studies (Beutel & Crosswell 2012; Almatrafi 2009 ; Hussain and Saeed 2009; Lingam 2012) that demonstrate that the efforts to achieve academic and programmatic accreditation yield positive results in terms of course content and its implementation to prepare prospective teachers to teach effectively.

5.2. Second: Findings of Question Two

These findings pertain to the impact of job variable (in-service teacher – per-service teacher) on the assessment of courses and are connected to question two which asks: "Do students' occupations (in-service teacher, pre-service teacher) affect their assessment of the GED courses in light of the NCAAA standards?" To answer this question, the difference between averages of numerical ratings was calculated in terms of the responses of the study sample to the different areas of assessment as well as the assessment process as a whole. This was done by applying the t-test to two independent samples.

5.2.1. Comments on findings of question two

The findings in question two show that there are no differences of statistical significance between the average degrees given by the GED students regarding their assessment of the GED courses in respect of availability of academic accreditation standards in job variables

(learner–non-learner) whether in terms of assessment of each theme or the overall assessment degree. This may be explained by the fact that students hold different jobs while enrolled in the GED program with the aim of developing their professional skills to qualify them to work as teachers. Others already work as teachers at public or private schools and desire to improve their professional positions by earning a general diploma in education. This enabled them to make appropriate judgements while assessing the GED courses in accordance with the elements and standards of academic accreditation of NCAAA. Moreover, the student teachers are interested in attending the GED teaching classes and deriving as much benefit as possible from them in such a manner as would allow some of them the opportunity to join the Program of Educational Graduate Studies.

One last point to discuss here relates to the atmosphere in which the students undertake the GED courses. This atmosphere is characterized by the students' keen interest to disseminate the culture of quality and academic accreditation through organizing events which take place in liaison with the PEGS students. These events include holding familiarization meetings and acquainting the attendees with the assessment models of the GED courses. It is likely that such events will raise the students' awareness regarding their assessment of the GED courses. These findings correspond somewhat with those of other studies that demonstrate the importance of acquainting pre-service teachers with assessment models to improve their analytical and assessment skills as teachers (Goos & Moni 2001; Santagatta, Zannoni & Stigler 2007; Gatlin & Jacob 2002).

6. CONCLUSION

In light of the findings presented above which clarify the GED student teachers' assessments of the educational courses, the following recommendations can be made:

- 1- It is important to revise the course components of the GED program, including course objectives, course plan, course content, teaching methods, supporting techniques, assessment methods and learning outcomes. Such revision will provide important feedback that facilitates the highest degree of effectiveness, development and enhancement of the GED courses.
- 2- It is important to hold joint meetings and workshops between male and female students who study at the Program of Educational Studies with a view to consolidating the teaching efforts, whether in terms of the course plan or revision of course objectives and content and teaching methods so as to achieve a common degree of the functional advantage of the GED courses.
- 3- It is important to improve the methods of university teaching in respect of the EGS courses. This can be made possible by exploiting the advantages of the Deanship of Distance Education and e-Learning so as to achieve the professional applications of blended learning which the Deanship of Graduate Studies is committed to applying to the programs in graduate studies.

Implementing some, or all, of the recommendations made in this paper will hopefully contribute to strengthening the courses in the EDP at KAU. Moreover, such steps to revise

teacher education programs provide a framework for similar evaluation processes at other universities throughout KSA. This will hopefully contribute to ongoing education reforms throughout KSA to improve students' outcomes in subjects such as science and mathematics; will better equip teachers with the necessary skills and attributes to meet the requirements of students in an increasingly complex society, and contribute to the professionalization of teaching and teachers.

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