

# **QUALITY ASSURANCE FOR ACCREDITATION OF PRIVATE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN THE SULTANATE OF OMAN**

## **SYNOPSIS**

It is a worldwide trend nowadays that corporations, whether public or private, place great importance to quality assurance for the purpose of ensuring high standards in the work process, production of goods and products, and provision of services, and thus striving towards the ultimate goals of competitive advantage, growth and development, and a large consumer market. As corporations, colleges and universities are also embarking on corporate style of governance and management, and hence they, too, are applying various quality management concepts to boost up their efficiency, reputation, and competitive advantage. The institutionalization of quality assurance in higher education serves as the means for accreditation in Oman. The research project for this thesis focuses on the extent and level of implementation of quality assurance (QA) policy by private colleges and universities in the Sultanate of Oman. Quality assurance in higher education encompasses ten aspects, namely Mission, Governance, Effective Management, Academic Program, Teaching Staff, Learning Resources, Students Admission, and Services, Study Programs Evaluation, Physical Facilities, and Financial Resources. From the ten aspects, a QA checklist was developed with 166 items and later distributed to 24 top-level managers selected from eight (8) private higher education institutions. The QA checklist was translated into Arabic by two language professors and it was refined by pilot-testing. An in-depth interview was made with eight college/ university managers to examine the process and problems in QA implementation. In addition, another QA checklist was developed and then distributed to 411 students so as to assess their judgments on the quality of facilities, instruction, and learning in the eight private institutions concerned.

The study found that more than half of the students perceived that the study programs offered at the private colleges in Oman were not rigorous and comprehensive in terms of their content. This result suggests that private colleges in Oman ought to put more rigour in the course contents of various study programmes so that they are relevant for the need of highly trained and knowledgeable workforce for national development of Oman in the future. This pertains to the issue of curriculum relevancy with student development, human resource development, graduates' employability, and social development. The implication here is that various agencies, corporations, and associations should be involved in curriculum design at private higher education institutions to ensure a better learning content of study programmes offered.

The study also found that in order to assure high quality, college managers need to pay serious attention and improve their work processes in course evaluation, analysis of student performance for instructional improvement, and student counselling and advisory. To address this issue, private colleges in Oman should adopt a certain kind of quality assurance system, which later could become their in-built organizational culture. Other quality assurance aspects that needed to be improved by colleges include admission process and procedures, curriculum development of courses, variety of learning resources, and benchmarking academic standard.

The study was limited to respondents from eight private institutions only. The public universities and colleges were not involved in the study.

## **JAMINAN KUALITI UNTUK AKREDITASI INSTITUSI PENGAJIAN TINGGI SWASTA DI KESULTANAN OMAN**

### **SINOPSIS**

Satu trend global pada masa kini ialah badan korporat, sama ada swasta atau awam, meletakkan kepentingan kepada jaminan kualiti bagi memastikan standard tertinggi pada proses kerja, penghasilan barangan dan perkhidmatan, dan justeru ke arah matlamat keberuntungan kompetitif, pembangunan dan pertumbuhan, dan penguasaan pasaran pengguna yang meluas. Sebagai badan korporat, kolej dan universiti turut menyertai trend pengurusan korporat pada governan dan pengurusan dengan cara mengaplikasi beraneka konsep kualiti untuk meningkatkan efisiensi, reputasi, dan keberuntungan kompetitif mereka. Penginstitusian jaminan kualiti dalam pendidikan tinggi merupakan cara pengakreditasi di Oman.

Projek penyelidikan untuk tesis ini berfokus kepada tahap dan jangkauan implementasi polisi jaminan kualiti (JK) oleh kolej dan universiti swasta di kesultanan Oman. Polisi JK ini merangkumi sepuluh aspek, iaitu Misi, Governan, Pengurusan Efektif, Program Akademik, Staf Pengajar, Resos Pembelajaran, Prasarana, dan Resos Kewangan. Berdasarkan sepuluh aspek itu, satu senarai semak JK dengan lima skala Likert dan 166 item telah direka bentuk, dan uji rintis, dan seterusnya diedarkan kepada 24 orang pengurus tertinggi di lapan buah institusi terpilih. Juga, satu siri temubual telah dibuat dengan tiga orang pengurus untuk meneliti proses dan masalah dalam implementasi JK. Di samping itu, satu senarai semak JK untuk pelajar telah dibina dan telah diedarkan kepada 411 orang pelajar institusi swasta untuk menilai kualiti prasarana, pengajaran, dan pembelajaran di institusi swasta terpilih.

Kajian ini mendapati bahawa sebahagian responden pelajar menyatakan bahawa program pengajian di institusi swasta di Oman kurang komprehensif dan mencabar dalam kandungannya. Dapatan ini mencadangkan bahawa institusi swasta di Oman perlu memantapkan kandungan kursus-kursus agar ia relevan dengan keperluan tenaga kerja terlatih untuk pembangunan industri dan ekonomi Oman. Isu juga mengenai relevansi kurikulum, pembangunan pelajar, dan peluang pekerjaan. Implikasinya ialah pelbagai agensi, korporat, dan kesatuan perlu melibatkan diri dalam proses pembangunan kurikulum di institusi swasta.

Kajian ini juga mendapati bahawa untuk mencapai kualiti tinggi, pengurus kolej dan universiti swasta perlu member perhatian serius dan memperbaiki proses kerja mereka seperti penilaian kursus, analisis pencapaian pelajar untuk peningkatan pengajaran, dan penasihat dan kaunseling pelajar. Ia perlu menjadi budaya organisasi. Lain-lain perkara yang perlu dibaiki ialah proses dan prosedur kemasukan pelajar, pembangunan kurikulum kursus-kursus, sumber pelajaran yang pelbagai, dan tandarasan standard akademik.

Kajian ini terhad saiznya kepada responden di lapan institusi swasta di Oman. Universiti dan kolej awam tidak terlibat dalam kajian.