Improving the performance of higher education: Quality Standards of Educational Technologies and Their Applications

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Abstract

The importance of higher education in the Middle East has increased significantly with the establishment of numerous universities and colleges offering diverse and in-demand specializations, contributing to a notably competitive job market. However, some universities and colleges encountered challenges and obstacles in attempts to modify and enhance their performance, striving to align with the quality requirements in education at local, regional, and global levels. Recent years have witnessed substantial changes in defining approaches to handle technological quality standards and their applications in education, highlighting the role of educational technologies in this evolution. Mechanisms and criteria have been developed to elevate the performance level of technical skills within these colleges and to improve the nature of higher education, particularly in postgraduate programs, employing superior scientific standards in general higher education, thus bridging the gap among them and endeavoring to completely close it. Consequently, this study was conducted to identify specific requirements necessary to meet the improvement of strategies in addressing technological quality requirements and their implementations in education. This research is entirely based on a questionnaire consisting of

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multiple inquiries to examine overall performance flaws and subsequently propose areas of concentration. It aims to suggest recommendations and strategies to aid colleges in enhancing their performance. Technical training in higher education in the Middle East has become a pivotal requirement for programmatic academic accreditation. The survey results were analyzed using a five-point Likert scale, revealing a clear development in educational management performance within colleges. The analysis indicated the ongoing need to fulfill the employment requirements of educational and scientific technologies in the educational and scientific processes, underlining their role in achieving quality standards. The researcher presented recommendations to contribute to and support university efforts, tailored to the actual needs of faculty and students in these colleges.

Keywords: Educational Performance, Higher Education, Quality of Educational Technologies.

INTRODUCTION

The higher education system in the Middle East is expected to provide opportunities for undergraduate and postgraduate students, contributing to enhancing the quality of scientific, cultural, and educational activities within Middle Eastern societies. This is achieved by promoting and encouraging scientific research, designing academic curricula, fostering national belonging and responsibility, and aligning with the national vision. The Higher Education Council serves as the top scientific and administrative body regulating higher education in the country. Higher education should not merely replicate the formal general education system but rather strive for excellence in curricula, textbooks, and specializations. There might be a need to establish an administrative structure ensuring that state-run institutions remain under state supervision to ensure the advancement of scientific and national interests, in line with the directives of the Ministry of Higher Education regarding these institutions. Based on these directives, it is believed that the state should ensure the provision of material resources for education, particularly concerning buildings, equipment, and supplies [1]. Providing loans and grants disbursed in installments by colleges and including educational institutions under tax exemption principles could be considered. Teachers and staff in higher education institutions could be included along with their counterparts in state-run educational institutions in the privileges and rights they enjoy. If all these aspects are achieved, higher education can play an active role alongside the formal general education system in advancing Middle Eastern society and keeping pace with the world's developments in the twenty-first century.

Related Work

As a result of the increasing number of high school graduates in the Middle East and the limited capacity of government universities to accommodate these graduates, official capacity in these universities has reached (40%) of the total number of graduates. This situation has led to the search for ways to increase the capacity of universities and colleges to accommodate the growing number of these students, necessitating the availability of high-quality standards, particularly in technological quality standards and their applications in education. This scenario might provide opportunities for distance learning aiming to accommodate a larger number of high school graduates and thereby increase the official capacity of universities. This initiative aims to reduce students' travel abroad for education and endeavors to

accommodate graduates from high schools, providing them with the opportunity to study within the country. Additionally, there is a wide diversity among universities and colleges in the Middle East, regulated by the Ministries of Higher Education throughout the academic year [2].

Technical Assessment and Evaluation Standards

Due to the proliferation of higher education institutions, parents find it challenging to select the optimal university or college for their children to pursue higher education. The decision-making process is significantly influenced by personal relationships, promotion, and advertising of these institutions, which is a mistake [3]. There should be an official assessment mechanism for all public education institutions. This aims to determine the quality level of all higher education institutions according to professional, technical, and financial standards in various aspects such as infrastructure, educational curricula, faculty, programs, activities, tuition fees, faculty salaries, and capacity, among other transparent and clear criteria. There should be a positive role for relevant official bodies to support parents in choosing the suitable university or college for their children. Simultaneously, all educational institutions compete to excel in all aspects of quality to attract more students. This approach would address the imbalance among these institutions and continuously enhance their performance to elevate their standards and make them more attractive and distinguished [4]. National education is essential as it contributes to societal growth and fulfills the demands of the job market. However, there is a need for greater efforts by relevant official bodies, especially the Ministry of Education and other concerned departments, to bolster educational management and evaluation. They should swiftly address any discrepancies or imbalances encountered in this remarkable positive experience, all while considering the quality of the educational process and not deviating from the required roles of educational institutions. This should be done in a positive manner that maintains the development of educational institutions. The procedures of these official bodies concerning higher education should be transparent, fair, and accessible to everyone to understand the level and quality of service these institutions offer, according to professional and technical standards, regardless of any other criteria [5].

The requirements of perfect quality in education around the world

One of the requirements of the university's perfect international education is quality. Quality in education distinguishes itself by enabling the educational sector to achieve a spectrum of beneficial outcomes aimed at the development of all its components. Quality in education can also be defined as a set of means, strategies, and pre-planned initiatives geared towards enhancing the educational environment and providing all the necessary components to enhance efficiency, effectiveness, and output within educational institutions, schools, and universities [6]. The significance of quality practices stems from the impact that graduates of educational institutions hold on the social environment and other aspects of society. Consequently, education significantly enhances personal productivity, thereby increasing collective output and positively influencing societies through innovation, resulting in a global impact [7-9].

There are several requirements within the quality standards of education observed in most educational systems around the world. Among these are: teaching and learning methodologies, infrastructure and resources, curricula, faculty quality, student-oriented guidance, globalization and diversity, measurement and evaluation, accessibility and inclusivity, transparency and accountability, and continuous development

The enhancement of performance of Quality Assurance Deanship's performance

Education and Training Evaluation Commission (ETEC) in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has implemented a diverse array of mechanisms to ensure the quality of education, contributing to bolstering the levels of educational institutions. One such initiative involves enhancing the monitoring and evaluation of institutional performance, which enhances transparency in public education by highlighting the prominence and quality of education across all facets of these institutions, thereby improving their performance and reflecting a positive impact on the country's educational landscape. Consequently, the National Center for Assessment and Academic Accreditation has recently developed numerous axes and standards to achieve a mechanism of quality in education, relying on various means including:

- Defining specific objectives for the educational environment.

- Encouraging individuals, whether university deans or teachers, to adapt to the concept of comprehensive quality.
- Evaluating the quality of education by measuring achieved outcomes and comparing them with previous results.
- Ensuring proper implementation aimed at achieving quality standards in education.
- Developing indicators aimed at studying success and failure in educational institutions.
- Enhancing the reputation of education by ensuring that academic department managers provide the necessary tools, equipment, and devices.
- Providing sufficient funding for educational projects to support emerging and modern educational institutions capable of implementing ideas within the education environment.
- Leveraging experiences from other sectors, learning from the experiences of educational sectors among countries worldwide, and ensuring access to the benefits achieved using educational quality programs to apply them in local educational institutions.
- Curriculum development, entailing the creation of new and advanced curricula aimed at keeping pace with developments specific to each and their impact on the educational environment.

One of the improvements at the National Center for Assessment and Academic Accreditation involves the procedures followed in developing or introducing a new academic program or college, wherein quality concepts are applied. The following section will elaborate in detail on the development process and the approved mechanisms before accreditation approval.

Introducing colleges or departments in Higher education

Similar to any other system, the educational system operates according to specific methods that take into account the requirements of the system's surrounding environment. This includes shaping the existing cultural environment within it, organizational environment, technological advancements, available material and human resources, as well as the needs, aspirations, and ambitions of the public, students, and stakeholders. Hence, it is concerned with ensuring the alignment of its products with global standards and assuring the product's quality by applying and monitoring quality standards [10-12]. In response to

deficiencies in the general education sector, a mechanism for introducing or developing the university/college was developed in (2016) and subsequently approved. This mechanism encompassed numerous controls, including submitting programmatic accreditation requirements through globally accredited entities. It significantly and positively contributes to the development of higher education through participation in scientific and educational conferences and seminars within the Middle East and beyond. The university/college must possess financial capacity to prepare and allocate spending for the institution's needs as outlined by the Education and Training Evaluation Commission. This commission monitors and assesses the university/college/institute to ensure the achievement of specified objectives and maintain the required level of efficiency in the academic culture through approved methodologies and formulas. The national university/college/institute is committed to presenting lectures at university council meetings, as well as quarterly and annual reports on the success of the scientific and educational process, attendance rates, and attrition rates.

Analysis the result of questionnaire

The researcher distributed 75 questionnaires several colleges in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The sample included department heads, faculty members, students, graduates, and staff. 50 questionnaires were returned, and the data was analyzed using a Likert scale to determine the participants' feedback on sections of the questionnaire listed in Table (1) and Table (2) (1). The analysis results were summarized in Table (2):

Table (1): Likert scale response categories

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

Table (2): the result of analysis

Q_1	Q_2	Q_3	Q_4	Q_5	Q_6	Q_7	Q_8	Q_9	Q_10	Q_11	Q_12	Q_13
2.44	3.34	3.70	3.90	3.54	3.98	3.76	4.00	3.04	4.18	4.00	3.56	2.84
2	4	4	4	4	3	3	4	3	5	5	3	2
1.3	*0.8*	1.0	0.9	1.1	*0.8*	*0.8*	*0.8*	*0.8*	*0.8*	1.0	1.0	1.4
0.2	*0.1*	*0.1*	*0.1*	*0.2*	*0.1*	*0.1*	*0.1*	*0.1*	*0.1*	*0.1*	*0.1*	*0.2*
Q_14	**Q_15**	**Q_16**	**Q_17**	**Q_18**	**Q_19**	**Q_20**	**Q_21**	**Q_22**	**Q_23**	**Q_24**	**Q_25**	
4.22	3.00	3.64	3.00	4.06	3.92	4.06	3.48	2.66	2.56	3.54	3.50	
5	4	4	3	4	4	4	4	3	2	5	5	
0.8	1.0	1.2	*0.8*	*0.8*	*0.8*	*0.8*	1.1	1.0	*1.3*	1.2	1.4	
0.1	*0.1*	*0.2*	*0.1*	*0.1*	*0.1*	*0.1*	*0.1*	*0.1*	*0.2*	*0.2*	*0.2*	

The first section of the questionnaire pertained to the criterion of learning resources, facilities, and equipment. The questions focused on the availability of learning resources and electronic educational tools. The responses to the questions were as follows: [13]

1. **Does the program ensure the adequacy and suitability of electronic learning resources and services provided in line with its needs and the number of students, and are they regularly updated?**

   The highest percentage denies the existence of suitable electronic learning resources and technological services for the needs and numbers of students. This indicates the program's need for additional electronic learning resources and technological services.

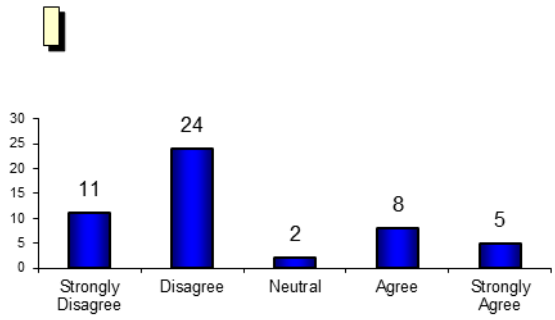

Figure 1: the result of question 1.

2. **Does the faculty, students, and staff in the program have adequate technical support and preparation for the effective use of electronic learning resources and tools?**

A large percentage of respondents agree on the availability of adequate technical support and preparation for the effective use of electronic learning resources and tools, while a small percentage denies this. The main reason for this discrepancy is attributed to the low number of employees in the technical support units.

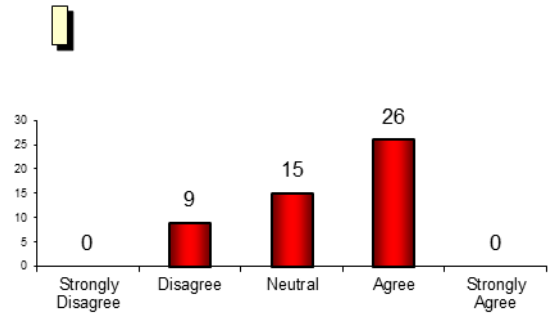

Figure 2: the result of question 2

3. **Does the program have the appropriate technologies, services, and environment for courses offered electronically or remotely, according to their specific standards?**

The percentage of those who agreed on the availability of appropriate technologies, services, and environment for courses offered electronically is higher than the other possibilities. This might be due to the good technological infrastructure that the colleges possess.

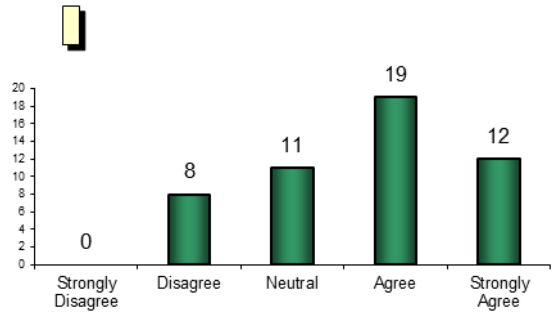

Figure 3: the result of question 3

4. **Does the program evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of electronic learning resources, facilities, and equipment of all types and benefit from this evaluation for improvement purposes?**

A high percentage agreed that there has been an improvement in evaluating the effectiveness and efficiency of electronic learning resources, facilities, and equipment of all kinds. This improvement is attributed to the evolution in handling mechanisms of these resources through departmental enhancements. The percentage of those who did not agree on any improvement is due to a lack of following up with the advancements and updates that have occurred in these learning resources and equipment.

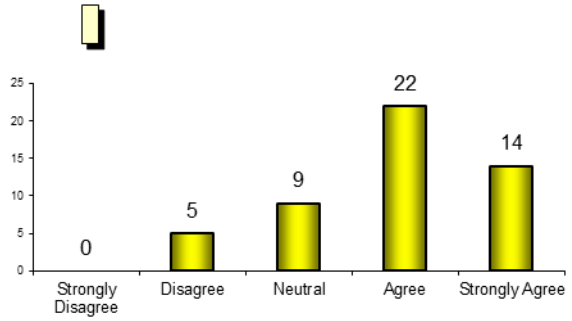

Figure 4: the result of question 4

5. **Does the program have an encouraging environment, financial resources, and the necessary technological and research facilities to carry out research activities?**

In general, college administrations endeavor to provide assistance to professors to the best of their ability, aiming to support researchers with advanced technological resources and facilities to accomplish their research tasks and activities. The most significant response came from professors, while a small percentage of students and researchers denied receiving such assistance, possibly due to limitations regarding the students' and researchers' privileges in utilizing these facilities.

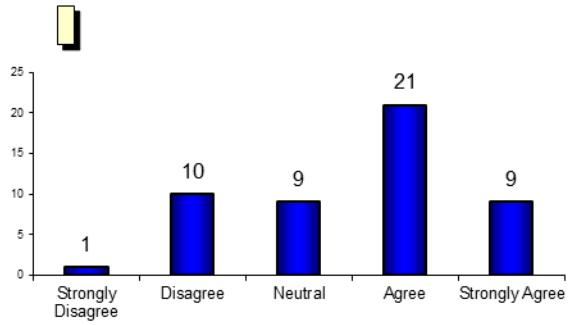

Figure 5: the result of question 5

The second section of the questionnaire pertains to the standards of teaching and learning, students, and faculty. The questions focus on the availability of quality indicators within these standards. The questions are as follows: [13]

6. **Does the curriculum consider achieving the program's objectives and educational outcomes, as well as scientific, technological, and professional advancements in the field of specialization, and is it regularly reviewed accordingly?**

A percentage of professors and students responded affirmatively to the curriculum considering the program's objectives, educational outcomes, as well as scientific, technological, and professional advancements in the field of specialization. A low percentage remained neutral, either due to their lack of familiarity

with the program's objectives or educational outcomes, or the scientific, technological, and professional developments in the field of specialization. The smallest category denied this due to their lack of knowledge regarding the program's objectives and requirements.

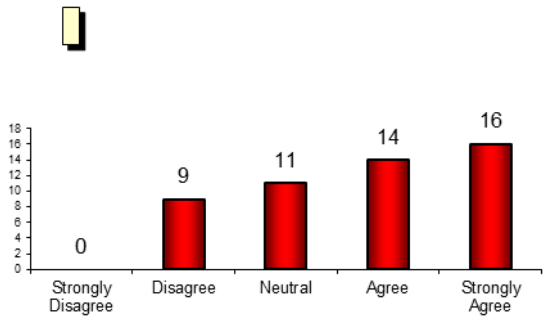

Figure 6: the result of question 6

7. **Does the program ensure the effectiveness of teaching and learning technology strategies and technical assessment methods mentioned in the program's descriptions, and to what extent are the faculty committed to them?**

A small percentage of professors and students among the respondents denied the existence of teaching and learning technology strategies and technical assessment methods due to their lack of familiarity with the nature of these strategies. The larger percentage agreed, attributing this to their sufficient awareness of the concepts related to teaching and learning technologies concerning the educational context.

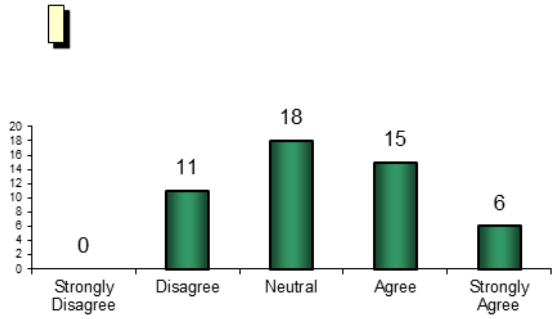

Figure 7: the result of question 7

8. **Does the program ensure the effectiveness of teaching and learning technology strategies and technical assessment methods mentioned in the course descriptions, and to what extent are the faculty committed to them?**

Most responses to this question were affirmative, with a small percentage of denials. As mentioned earlier, the reason for the denials was due to their lack of familiarity with the nature of teaching and learning technology strategies.

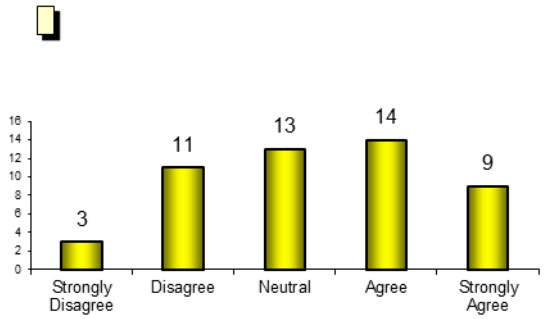

Figure 8: the result of question 8

9. **Are the strategies of teaching and learning technologies, as well as assessment methods, diversified in the program in a manner that suits its nature and level, and aligns with the targeted learning outcomes at the program level?**

The majority of responses to this question were affirmative, with a smaller percentage disagreeing due to their lack of experience

in using technological tools and methods in program-level assessments.

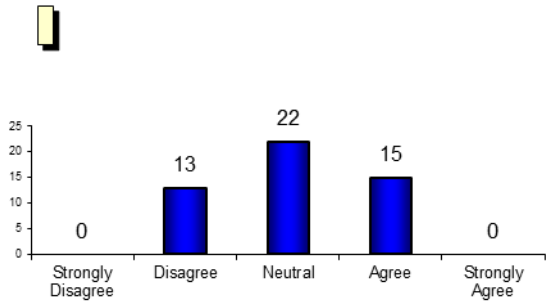

Figure 9: the result of question 9

10. Are the strategies of teaching and learning technologies, as well as assessment methods, diversified in the program to suit its nature and level, aligning with the targeted learning outcomes at the course level?

The percentage of those who agreed is substantial, indicating a significant improvement achieved in using technological tools and methods in course-level assessments.

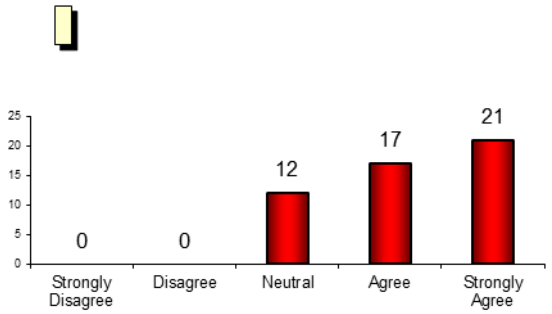

Figure 10: the result of question 10

11. Is the necessary technical training provided to the faculty on the strategies of teaching and learning technologies and the specified

assessment methods outlined in the program and course descriptions?

The highest percentage of responses indicated that colleges and the quality assurance and development deanship conduct training courses for technical training to faculty, aiming to enhance their skills in utilizing teaching and learning technology strategies and specified assessment methods as outlined in the program and course descriptions. However, a lower percentage denied the implementation of such courses in their colleges. This highlights the need for further follow-up by the colleges and the quality assurance and development deanship to ensure the execution of these courses for all faculty members.

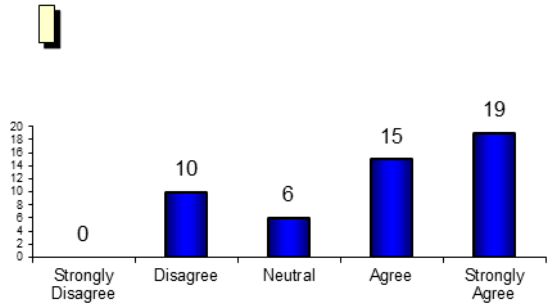

Figure 11: the result of question 11

12. Is modern and advanced educational technology effectively used, and is the faculty's utilization of these technologies monitored?

The largest percentage of responses were neutral, while a smaller percentage denied that. This was due to changes in the monitoring standards for the faculty's use of available technologies.

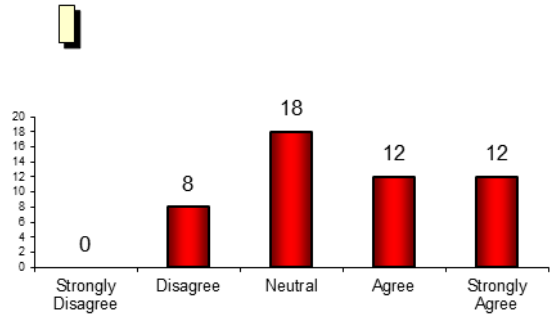

Figure 12: the result of question 12

13. Does the program employ technological mechanisms to support and encourage excellence in teaching, fostering creativity and innovation among the faculty?

The majority of responses indicated the absence of technological mechanisms to support and encourage excellence in teaching. A small percentage acknowledged the presence of such mechanisms. Therefore, this emphasizes the necessity of providing clear technological means to address and rectify the deficiencies in supporting and encouraging excellence in teaching.

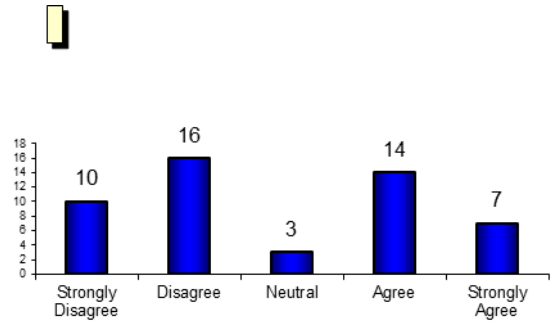

Figure 13: the result of question 13

14. Are students provided with comprehensive information about teaching and learning technological strategies and assessment methods at the beginning of each course?

Most of the responses were in agreement with that.

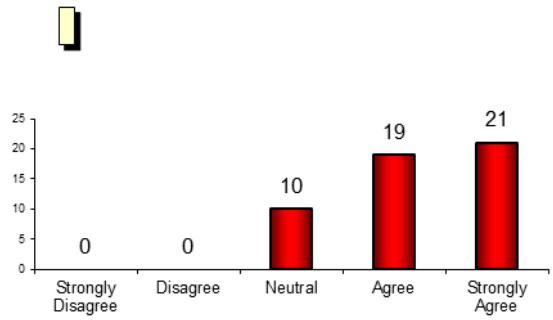

Figure 14: the result of question 14

15. Does the program apply clear and announced procedures to verify the quality of the technological assessment methods and their credibility?

The majority of responses indicate the program's implementation of these procedures, while other answers suggest their absence in some colleges. This might be due to insufficient announcement of procedures in certain colleges. Addressing these weaknesses in communicating the procedures is essential to ensure the quality of assessment using technology.

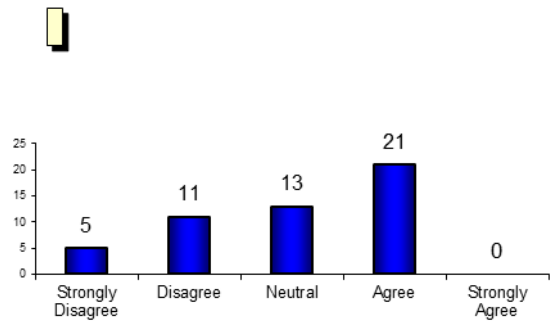

Figure 15: the result of question 15

16. Are effective technological measures used to ensure academic integrity at the program and course levels to verify that the work and assignments submitted by students are their own?

Most respondents agreed that there has been improvement in the development procedures regarding the effective use of technological measures to ensure academic integrity at the program level. A smaller percentage remained neutral about the implementation of academic integrity control measures.

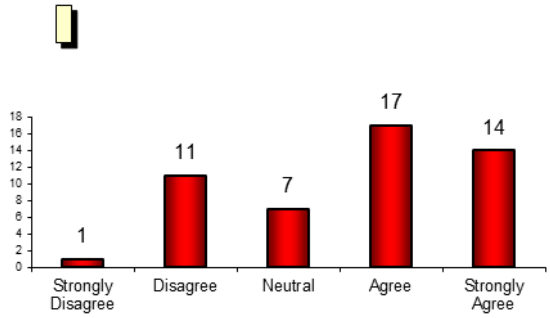

Figure 16: the result of question 16

17. Does the college apply quality standards when developing new scientific departments?

The issue of colleges adhering to development standards often begins initially but may later decline. Therefore, the matter of monitoring colleges in this regard has been the primary response, with colleges agreeing to adhere to quality standards.

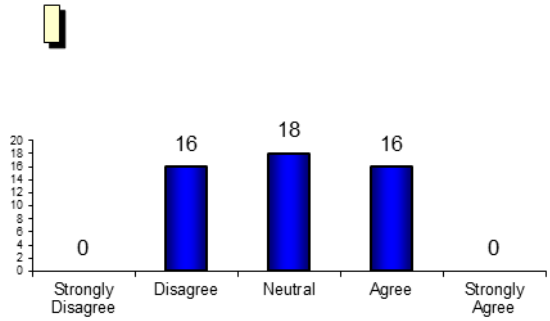

Figure 17: the result of question 17

18. Is there ongoing review by the college's development and quality assurance committees for quality standards and academic credibility?

The majority of responses confirm that there has been continuous improvement in this regard in recent times.

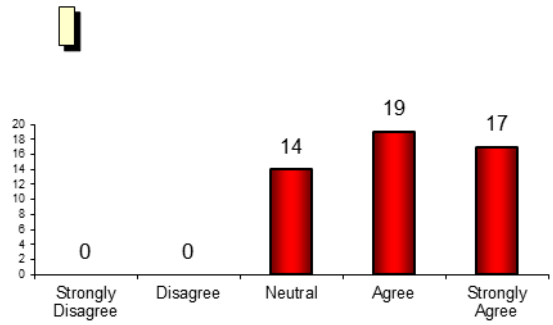

Figure 18: the result of question 18

19. Does the program provide fundamental information to students, such as study requirements and various technological services?

For this question, almost agree on the program providing fundamental information to students at the college.

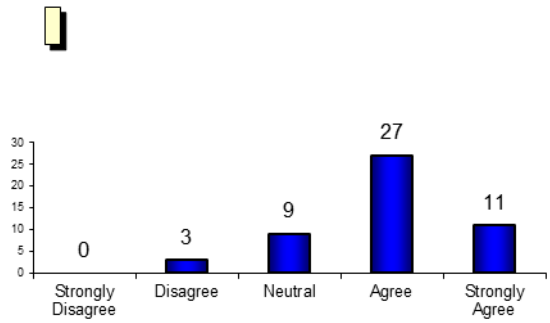

Figure 19: the result of question 19

20. Do students in the program have access to efficient technological tools that offer academic, professional, psychological, and social counseling services?

Most responses indicated agreement with this, indicating that colleges adhere to quality standards in providing academic counseling services to students.

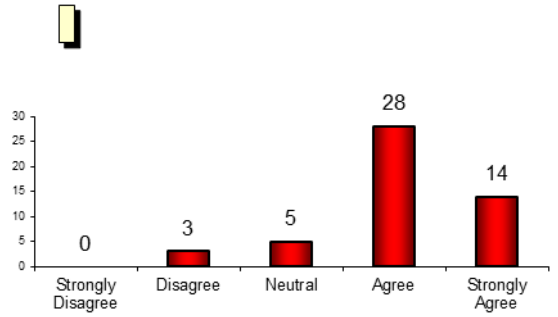

Figure 20: the result of question 20

21. Does the program employ effective technological mechanisms to communicate with students and engage them in its events and activities?

The majority of responses agreed with this, while a small percentage denied it, primarily due to inadequate activation of communication technologies with students.

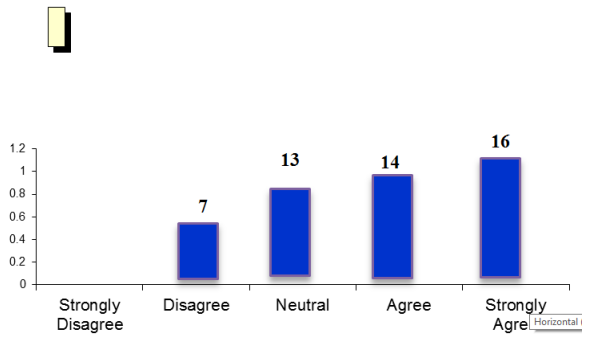

Figure 21: the result of question 21

22. Does the program implement effective technological methods to survey student opinions and utilize feedback in evaluating courses, utilizing the outcomes for improvement?

The majority of responses to this question agreed, attributing it to the continued guidance from colleges regarding the follow-up on student feedback in course evaluations.

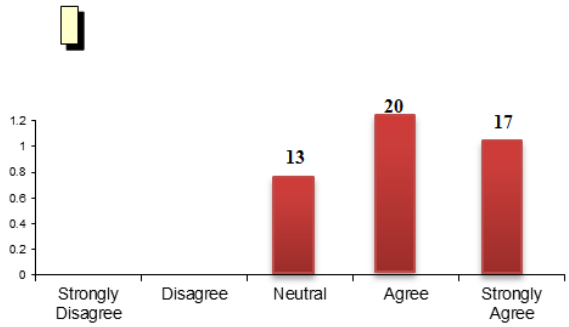

Figure 22: the result of question 22

23. Does the program implement effective technological mechanisms to communicate with and engage its graduates in its events and activities?

The majority of responses to this question agreed, while there was a percentage that disagreed. The reason for disagreement was the inability to effectively follow up with graduates due to the loss of electronic communication means after their graduation.

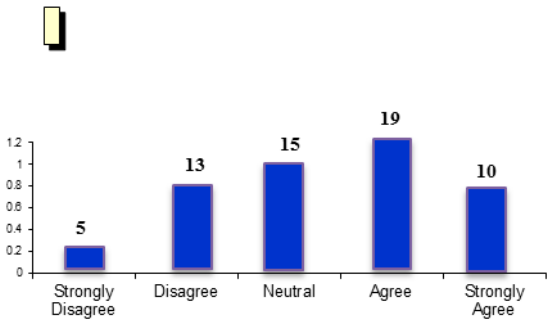

Figure 23: the result of question 23

24. Does the program implement effective mechanisms to evaluate the sufficiency and quality of the technological services provided

to students, measure their satisfaction, and leverage the results for improvement?

A large percentage of responses agreed that the college implements effective mechanisms to evaluate the sufficiency and quality of technological services provided to students and measure their satisfaction. A smaller percentage denied the implementation of these mechanisms by the college. In both cases, colleges should regularly and consistently follow up on these matters.

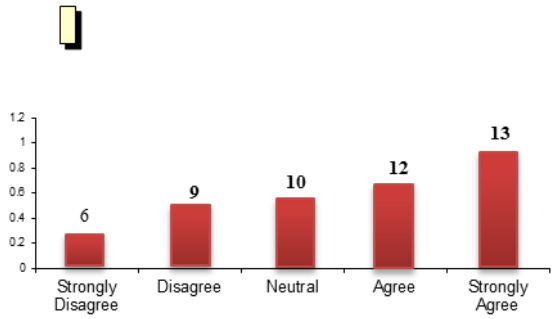

Figure 24: the result of question 24

25. **Does the program have a stimulating environment, sufficient financial resources, and the necessary technological and research facilities to conduct research activities?**

A significant percentage of responses confirm that the college provides a stimulating environment and technological and research facilities necessary for conducting research activities within the program. However, a small percentage denied having such resources available in their colleges.

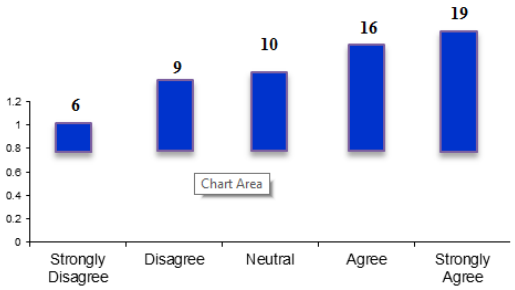

Figure 25: the result of question 25

V. Recommendations

This study presented several recommendations aimed at enhancing the utilization and integration of educational technologies to achieve educational quality standards. The recommendations emerged after conducting a comprehensive study on the quality of education in postgraduate programs, particularly across various universities. The acquisition and development of technological skills within the teaching and learning process were identified as pivotal in meeting quality standards. Enhancing the efficiency of educational tasks for both students and faculty members was highlighted as a primary role. Such measures enable universities to address challenges in achieving educational quality. Consequently, this contributes to achieving higher academic rankings for the university, both locally, regionally, and globally. The quality of higher education is often measured by a university's position in accredited global rankings, such as the QS World University Rankings, the Shanghai Rankings, and other less impactful rankings. These rankings assess a university's educational quality on a worldwide scale.

To enhance the technological quality in higher education postgraduate programs, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Appointment of statisticians specialized in educational technologies to ensure adequate technical support.
2. Faculty members require workshops clarifying educational laws, their rights, and responsibilities within the academic environment.
3. Conduct a comprehensive and transparent performance evaluation of all higher education institutions in their current state. This evaluation should cover financial, administrative, and technological aspects to identify shortcomings and issues that require detailed addressing and resolution. Inform these institutions of observations and monitor the management of the Education and Training Quality Assurance Authority.
4. Curriculum and educational programs need revision by creating courses primarily targeting the development of various technical skills for students, emphasizing quality importance.
5. All higher education institutions should be given a specific timeframe to address any deficiencies.

6. Evaluate the extent of technical quality assurance procedures provided by higher education institutions.
7. Develop an evaluation list for all higher education institutions to determine each institution's level based on its responsiveness and commitment to necessary procedures.
    - list 1: Includes colleges that have implemented all necessary procedures in their programs and comply with the standards of educational technology quality.
    - List 2: Includes colleges that have implemented most necessary procedures but haven't addressed some deficiencies yet.
    - List 3: Includes colleges that have not implemented some procedures and retained some deficiencies.
    - List 4: Encompasses colleges that have not implemented most necessary procedures.
8. Periodic evaluations are conducted for all colleges, and based on these assessments, the lists are modified.

VI. Conclusion

This study has highlighted several needs that still require development, among the most important of which are the methods used to deal with educational technology tools. It emphasizes the necessity of formulating a structure that clarifies the most important technological services and capabilities that can be offered to faculty members in government universities working in colleges. The questionnaire was developed based on posing numerous questions that played a significant role in identifying current deficiencies and needs that need to be highlighted, in addition to presenting suggestions and mechanisms that could contribute to the development of the performance of the Development and Quality Deanship in government universities in the Middle East.

In conclusion, we hope that the positive experience of developing technological quality and employing educational technologies to achieve it will continue. Transparent measures should be taken to address any malfunction or imbalance, considering that education is

one of the most important pillars of societal development. Higher education plays a complementary and positive role to other official educational institutions in meeting the increasing demand. It is the responsibility of the education and training evaluation body to take swift and urgent actions to assess the performance of all educational institutions according to quality standards, especially the technical ones, to detect weaknesses and swiftly begin addressing them to enhance their scientific role with quality and effectiveness. All this information should be disseminated to university staff to identify and rectify weaknesses as a driving force for the development of higher education, stressing the importance of evaluation and remediation.

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