

The Quality of Effective University Education From the Viewpoint of Students of Special Education Department

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Received 24 January 2015; accepted 10 March 2015
Published online 26 April 2015

Abstract

This study aims to identify the quality level of effective learning of special education students, and determining the differences at this level of quality according to the variables of gender, specialty and academic year, for 235 of special education students. After applying the quality scale of university effective education, the results showed that special education students have had above average level of effective university education quality. The Results have also shown that there were no differences between students according to the study variables.

Key words: Special education; Education quality; Viewpoint of students

Al-Dhafeeri, N. M., Alamer, S. M., & Al-Dhafeeri, M. D. (2015). The Quality of Effective University Education From the Viewpoint of Students of Special Education Department. *Higher Education of Social Science*, 8(4), 1-7. Available from: URL: <http://www.cscanada.net/index.php/hess/article/view/6792> DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3968/6792>

INTRODUCTION

Since ages, humans have taken several ways and methods to reform and enhance the structure and requirements of their own social and economic reality. Therefore, they always pursue to update and renovate the standards and measurements used to determine the adequacy, efficiency

and effectiveness of these ways, methods and procedures, in addition to their ability to adapt and comply with the process of meeting human requirements, fulfilling their desires and all of their needs. This is what we call nowadays “the concept of quality”; quality of product or element. The quality of product is mainly represented in the process of updating and activating the ways, methods and procedures used in the production process. This is the most common method used by all different productive or service companies and enterprises while adopting the approach of Total Quality Management (TQM).

Since the present era is featured with the emergence and proliferation of quality concept as one of its basic characteristics, we may call it “the era of quality”, due to the broad use of this term in the various aspects of modern life. It is hard to find a productive or service enterprise or a company but pursuing to adopt or utilize this concept. However, the broad use of quality concept has connected the same concept of a state of misuse or uncertainty offering multiple explanations by some individuals. This state may be attributed to the lack or shortage in shaping standards or measurements that define the real meaning of quality at that time (Al-Dhafeeri et al., 2012).

Due to the fact that the quality concept was coupled with recent literature and studies to the beneficiaries’ vision, judgment and expectations of the provided product or service, the definitions of quality concept were mostly associated with the process of measurement or examination of beneficiaries’ evaluative or value estimations about the validity and effectiveness of the provided product or service (Taylor & Hill, 1997). Accordingly, the quality may be defined as: the permanent ability of providing certain product or service that meets the needs of its beneficiaries in regard of safety, durability and usability (McGoldrick, 1994).

Interest in improving the outputs of the educational establishments emanated from considering education as a product – like other products – that must compete and

pursue to satisfy its consumers of students, society and state. Students desire to get the best qualifications in order to get the job opportunities that are getting scarcer with the increased numbers of graduates and the lack of job opportunities. Parents of the students are looking forward to have the best qualification for their children, while state aims at having distinctive educational outcomes that enable it to achieve the objectives of its development plans (Al-Dhafeeri & Bayan, 2014). Therefore, researchers and those interested in education and higher education pursue to study the education quality through determining the levels, problems and other related variables. This paper aims to identify the quality level of effective learning of special education students, and determining the differences at this level of quality according to the variables of gender, specialty and academic year.

1. AN INVESTIGATION OF VARIABLES RELATED TO EDUCATION QUALITY

Al-Dhafeeri study (2015) sought to conduct an integrated analysis for many sectors of higher education (level of educational effort exerted by students in learning, level of students' participation in the educational group activities, level of faculty members' interaction with students, level of educational experts' proficiency, level of academic educational environment), through examining and analyzing the responses of (248) students of Basic Education Faculty in Kuwait. The results showed that the level of the students was lower than average in all sectors except for level of educational experts' proficiency which was higher than average.

Al-Dhafeeri's & Bayan's research (2014), aimed to identify the academic problems that encounter students of education faculties and their relation with some variables from the viewpoint of students. The study was conducted on a sample of (1,000) students of Education Faculty at Al-Ba'ath University in Syrian Arab Republic. The results demonstrated that there were no differences between the academic problems that may be attributed to the variable of the Secondary Certificate specialty, but the results also showed differences between these problems which can be attributed to the variable of the academic year.

Al-Dhafeeri, Bayan and Al-Kurdi (2012) attempted to determine the effectiveness of higher education in the faculties of education under the principles of university effective education from the point of view of senior students in the departments of Class Teacher at Al-Ba'ath University in Syria, and Special Education in the Basic Education Faculty of the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training in Kuwait. The sample included (482) students from the academic year 2010/2011. The results showed that the total weighted averages of all subsidiary items that form the scale were ranged between (3.31) and (4.82). However, the weighted average of

the scale as a whole was (4.19) this means that the effectiveness of university education in both countries' faculties didn't exceed the specific normative average of (4.50). Results also showed that there were no statistically significant differences between students' responses on the scale of effective education. Thus, there is no effect for country variable on these results. According to the result, no significant differences in terms of learning effort were noticed in favor of research sample of Education Faculty at Al-Ba'ath University in Syrian Arab Republic.

Abdul-Hafez & AL-Buhairy (2006) studied the level of satisfaction of Education Faculty Students in Al-Azhar University with the educational service and its different aspects, including their priorities and how unanimous or controversial this satisfaction is. This study also sought for recognizing the educational service aspects that need to be supported and developed in order to enhance its quality and increase the level of students' satisfaction, and to determine the needed requirements to achieve that as a first step towards applying Total Quality Management. The study resulted in recognizing some certain aspects of educational service where the students' satisfaction reaches higher level, on one hand (student activities and services, relations with colleagues, relations with Faculty members, academic management). On the other hand, there were other aspects where this satisfaction is getting lower (evaluation and examination methods, relations with the administrative apparatus, resources and potentials). The results showed no statistically significance differences between averages of sample members' grades that can be attributed to the academic specialty variable related to satisfaction with the whole educational service. The results also showed statistically significant differences between averages of sample members' grades that can be attributed to the academic specialty variable regarding the satisfaction with relations with Faculty members and evaluation and examination methods, as well.

Al-Hajjar (2004) study tackled the evaluation of university performance from the standpoint of faculty members in Al-Aqsa University under the TQM concepts. Results revealed that these members consider the university performance unacceptable in general. However, this performance is educationally acceptable in the fields of operations and students managements and labor market. On the contrary, this level is unacceptable in other fields such as strategic leadership and planning, information, human resources and work outcomes. The study came up with a set of recommendations, and the most important of which are: the necessity of determining a clear vision of the essence of university education.

In another effort, AL-Hawaly (2004) conducted a study aimed at identifying the reality of Palestinian university education, understanding the education quality and suggesting an ideation to improve the quality of Palestinian university education. The study also suggested a vision to improve the quality of higher education by

establishing a quality unit in each Palestinian university and a national center for the development of university education, encouraging the scientific research in Palestinian universities, creating a common authority for cooperation and coordination between labor market and higher education, achieving the concept of Modernity in education and functionality in the offered programs, raising the admissions rates in Palestinian universities up to 65%, and finally establishing a psychological and social counseling center in each university.

Baldwin study (2002) emphasized that numerous universities and faculties have pursued since 1990's to adopt the approach of TQM for the sake of development. However, the results of applying this approach indicated achieving some success and failure in this regard. Therefore, this study examined the hypothesis of failure cases attributed to the variation of perceptions of internal and external stakeholders of higher education. To examine this hypothesis, a questionnaire was designed and applied on two samples; the first included domestic society members and officials in public education companies and schools; the other included administrators, academics and students of some higher education establishments. The study found that the hypothesis is valid, which confirms the presence of some defects in applying TQM on higher education.

Hurst's study (2002) sought to determine how faculty members are applying TQM in classrooms? And what are the operations included in this application of TQM? This study used the qualitative research approach collecting its material from personal interviews, analysis of classrooms' records and observations of educational situations in three faculties of North Western University. The results indicate the desire of faculty members to improve their own performances by utilizing TQM in some activities within the classroom, especially in the situation of using teamwork method in practical exercises, groups' projects and feedback. The study also indicates a lack of coordinating, participation and support for faculty members to adopt these concepts. The study recommends conducting further researches about how the TQM concepts are realized by academics and administrators to find out the extent of variation between them.

Randall study (2001) discussed how quality systems can provide a mutual recognition of academic certifications by evaluating the outputs. The study raises justifications to the importance of accrediting higher education qualifications, and the necessity of accrediting standards which are based on indicators derived from the actual needs of the beneficiaries of those graduates. Considering that accreditation exchange between countries is a necessity as well. Thus, it facilitates the guaranteed preparation of graduates to be fit with working in a global market.

McPherson & Nunes (2001) addressed the issue of describing evaluation processes related to remote education programs at the postgraduate phase in the field

of Information Technology Management, emphasizing on formative and final evaluation, and its effect on quality improvement of all elements in this program.

Abbas (2001) discussed the importance of outsourced evaluation to handle certain deficiencies in internal self-assessment of higher education establishments. It emphasized on the necessity of transparency and interaction of those working in these establishments in order to achieve an accurate assessment. The study addressed Iran's experience in self-assessment, confirming the importance of availability of standards through which accreditation can be exchanged between the states of Middle East.

In the light of the above efforts, the current study may contribute into the field another perception regarding the quality level of effective learning of special education in Kuwait State. To the best knowledge of the authors, this study is the first study conducted in the Department of Special Education in Kuwait. This study is evident through an essential fact represented in the importance of availability of effective education quality for university students. The results of this study can be utilized while participating in making important decisions to develop the university educational level, by handling the weak points and enhancing the strong ones. The importance of the study complies with the efforts exerted by Basic Education Faculty in obtaining academic recognition.

To attain the aim of the study which is identifying the quality level of effective education for special education students, the current study attempted to answer certain questions related to the quality of effective university education for students of Basic Education Faculty in Kuwait. The research problem was identified in the following questions:

First Question: What is the quality level of effective education for students of special education?

Second Question: Are there any differences between students of special education regarding the effective education according to the gender variable?

Third Question: Are there any differences between students of special education regarding the effective education related to the specialty variable?

Fourth Question: Are there any differences between students of special education regarding the effective education related to the academic year variable?

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The current study followed the comparative descriptive approach to its appropriateness for the study nature and procedures.

3. RESEARCH SAMPLE

The final study sample included 235 of special education students (126 males, 109 females) from three

specialties (giftedness and creativity, mental retardation, learning disabilities) representing different academic years.

4. INSTRUMENTATIONS

The Quality Scale of University Effective Education.

To establish the statements and dimensions of this scale, the present study depended on Al-Dhafeeri study (2015) which in turn, also relied on the scale of U.S. National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education. The scale of this study aims at measuring the quality of university effective education, using 25 thesis statements distributed in 5 fields (level of educational effort exerted by students in learning, level of students' participation in the common educational activities, level of faculty members' interaction with students, level of educational experts' proficiency and level of academic educational environment). Students' responses are divided into five levels (always – mostly –occasionally – rarely – never) with numeric scale (5 – 4 – 3 – 2 – 1) where the highest score is 125, and the lowest is 25. The total score indicates the student level. The mean and standard deviations were used to determine the levels; scoring

Table 2
Reliability Coefficients

Field	Alpha	Split-half
Level of educational effort exerted in learning	0.52	0.47
Level of participation in the educational activities	0.51	0.47
Level of faculty members' interaction	0.53	0.46
Level of educational experts' proficiency	0.49	0.54
Level of academic educational environment	0.48	0.51

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

First Question: What is the quality level of effective education for students with special education?

To answer this question, means and standard deviation were used to determine the students' levels for each

Table 3
Student Level According to Study Variables

Variable	Mean	Level
Gender	Male	Above average
	Female	Above average
Specialty	Learning disabilities	Above average
	Mental retardation	Above average
	Giftedness and creativity	Above average
Academic year	First year	Above average
	Second year	Above average
	Third year	Above average
	Fourth year	Above average

112 or higher indicates high level, from 104 to less than 112 indicates above average, from 96 to less than 104 indicates below average, 96 or lower indicates low level. To prove the validity and reliability of coefficients in this study scale, this scale was applied to 64 special education students. Results of the structural honesty showed accepted correlation coefficients between the scores of each dimension and the total score on the scale. Table 1 below demonstrates the results of these coefficients. As for reliability coefficients, Alpha reliability coefficient and Gateman reliability coefficient for split-half were found.

Table 1
Structural Honesty Correlation Coefficients

Field	Correlation coefficient
Level of educational effort exerted in learning	0.42
Level of participation in the educational activities	0.44
Level of faculty members' interaction	0.41
Level of educational experts' proficiency	0.51
Level of academic educational environment	0.48

The results demonstrated an accepted degree of reliability, as shown in Table 2.

individual variable. The result showed that special education students have above average level in terms of effective university education quality, regarding all study variables (gender, specialty and academic year), as illustrated in Table 3.

Thus, level of educational effort exerted by special education students in learning is above the average. This can be clearly shown through executing projects that require exerting great efforts, memorizing facts and information and retrieving them in the same memorizing way, analyzing basic features of certain information, idea or theory, collecting information and experiences included in the academic courses and reshaping them in a new way as well as assessing and judging the information included in the courses and utilizing these courses' information in daily life situations. Those students enjoy spending more time in studying, using this time in reading books, completing researches and preparing for courses.

Moreover, the result demonstrates the positive effective participation of above average students during the sessions, by making suggestions, executing projects in cooperation with the colleagues, assisting colleagues in other academic years in studying their courses and discussing the topic of lecture with friends or family members.

Furthermore, it turns out that these students interact properly with faculty members through discussing the results of theoretical tests, discussing future career goals, discussing new information outside sessions, taking the academic opinion of faculty members into consideration, participating with the faculty members in non-related-courses activities and participating in voluntary activities.

Also, those students obtained an above average level of educational experts' proficiency. They use various modern communication and learning means to execute practical activities. They conduct in-depth and meaningful discussions, communicate with different categories of students within their faculty and department. They are continuously connected with educational field to view and know the latest updates.

In addition, those students are above average in the academic educational environment. They are encouraged by the faculty members to spend more time in studying. They are supported in solving their own problems. The faculty provides all what they need to be successfully integrated with society, by the continued presence of the faculty members and staff within the college.

Second Question: Are there any differences between students of special education regarding the effective education according to the gender variable?

To answer this question, t-test was relied on. Table 4 shows the result of this test, where there were no statistically significant differences in terms of gender between special education students in effective university education quality. Male students do not differ from female students in regard to the level of educational effort exerted in learning, level of participation in the educational activities, level of faculty members' interaction, level of educational experts' proficiency and level of academic educational environment.

Table 4
t-test to Indicate Differences Between Males and Females in Education Quality

	Males (n=126)		Females (n=109)		Value of (t)	Sig
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Education quality	104.45	7.25	105.01	7.33	0.349	0.729

Third Question: Are there any differences between students of special education regarding the effective education related to the specialty variable?

To answer this question, One-Way Anova test was relied on. Table 5 shows the result of this test, where there were no statistically significant differences in terms of specialty (giftedness and creativity, mental retardation,

learning disabilities) between special education students in effective university education quality. Students with different specialties do not differ in regard to the level of educational effort exerted in learning, level of participation in the educational activities, level of faculty members' interaction, level of educational experts' proficiency and level of academic educational environment.

Table 5
One-Way Anova of Differences in the Education Quality According to Specialty

	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig
Between groups	654.757	2	130.951		
Within groups	65346.312	232	240.244	0.545	0.742
Total	66001.068	234			

Fourth Question: Are there any differences between the students of special education regarding the effective education related to the academic year variable?

To answer this question, One-Way Anova test was relied on. Table 6 shows the result of this test, where there were no statistically significant differences in terms of academic year (first, second, third or fourth year) between

special education students in effective university education quality. Students in different academic years do not differ in regard to the level of educational effort exerted in learning, level of participation in the educational

activities, level of faculty members' interaction, level of educational experts' proficiency and level of academic educational environment.

Table 6
One-Way Anova of Differences in the Education Quality According to Academic Year

	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig
Between groups	1486.337	3	495.446		
Within groups	64514.731	231	235.455	2.104	0.100
Total	66001.068	234			

The authors concluded, according to the current study results, that there is a set of factors contributed to the emergence of these results: geographic, economic and social factor in Kuwait. The geographical factor is represented by the small area of the country which facilitates the mobility and transition between faculty and house. The economic factor and availability of the material resources provide many requirements needed to improve the education quality, including but not limited to buildings, means, tools, human resources and others. The contribution of social factor can be clearly seen in relation with the two aforementioned factors. Mobility, availability of transportation means, availability of modern communication means and social media tools, which are available for the majority of people in the country, all of these may lead to these results. Such factors can take part in making no differences between above average students, and the same was concluded by this study.

The findings of the current study stress the trend of previous efforts that have been done in the field of special education though these studies are not consistent with Al-Dhafeeri (2015) and Al-Dhafeeri et al., (2012). This discrepancy may be attributed to the differences between scientific departments within each college. However, regarding the role of the Ministry of Higher Education in Kuwait and whether it provides the departments of special education with all needs, the current study admitted this role and found it consistent with other recommendations found in the literature (i.e., Baldwin, 2002). In addition, the current study showed that the Ministry of Higher Education is interested to apply any recommendations found in other studies that fit with its plans and strategies (Abdul-Hafez & Al-Buhairy, 2006; Al-Hajjar, 2004). Unlike of the findings found in Al-Dhafeeri and Bayan (2014), and Abdul-Hafez and Al-Buhairy (2012) that found differences between students, based on genders, specialization and grade, towards some academic problems, the current study did not find.

The authors concluded that although, the findings of the current study seemed inconsistent with some findings found in some related study, the current study agreed with other thoughts and opinions regarding the enhancing of

education quality (Abbas, 2001; Hurst, 2002; McPherson & Nunes, 2001; Randall, 2001)

SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In the light of the research outcomes, the researcher suggests several procedures that may increase the effectiveness of university education in Basic Education Faculty.

- Designing educational activities that require greater mental and practical effort to develop thinking skills in students.
- Enhancing the quality of scientific, counseling and social services provided by Faculty to students.
- Activating communication mechanisms between faculty members and students.
- Activating the role of scientific associations to comply with the preference and trends of students towards their society.
- Students shall participate in the scientific field researches to acquire the skills of scientific research.

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