Impact of Quality Assurance on Academic Performance

Sameerah T. Saeed[1]

[1] Director of Quality Assurance, Ishik University, Erbil, Iraq
Correspondence: Sameerah T. Saeed, Ishik University, Erbil, Iraq. Email: samira.saeed@ishik.edu.iq

Abstract: Eight years have now passed since the first introduction of the culture and theme of quality in the sector of higher education in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq in 2010. At Ishik University, a private institution established in 2008 and granted ISO 9001:2008, and as part of its strategic planning to enhance the quality of higher education in the Region, new commitments and requirements have been imposed to enhance teaching, learning and research quality and productivity. Throughout these years a few changes have incurred and more processes have been utilized, much of which have not been covered and left unnoticed. Thus, this study aims at identifying the role of quality assurance in improving the academic performance at the University under study. The areas focused on range from teaching and learning to research quality and productivity and ranking. In addition, certain challenges and obstructions encountered are highlighted and strategies to perfect the process are recommended. The paper will outline the level of achievements made, specify the challenges, and provide necessary recommendations. The results demonstrate that the application of the quality assurance process has resulted in a fundamental change and improvement in the running process of teaching, learning and researching at the University, escalating its ranking as a result. The study employs a qualitative content analysis and the results are supported by a survey questionnaire and interviews conducted with the teaching staff.

Keywords: Quality Assurance, Academic Performance, Teaching, Learning, Research, Ranking

1. Introduction

Quality assurance refers to "an ongoing, continuous process of evaluating … the quality of a higher education system, institutions, or programmes" (Vlăsceanu, Grünberg, & Pârlea, 2007, p. 74). Increasingly, in higher education quality assurance is gaining significant attention amongst higher education institutions worldwide. This attention drives mainly from the willingness of these institutions to meet the growing needs for quality in education. Universities around the world continuously and competitively strive to achieve their institutional mission and objectives which guarantee public satisfaction and stakeholders' demands (see e.g. Westerheijden, Stensaker, & Rosa, 2007; Cartwright, 2007; Angappapillai & Annapoorani, 2012).

With its establishment in 2008, Ishik University has been incorporating the system of quality assurance into its Strategic Plan and has taken it as a fundamental tool to achieve its vision, mission and objectives. The process has been under expansion since then, and in 2011, with the establishment of the quality assurance directorate at Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research in the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), more quality procedures were introduced and developed.

The quality assurance system employed by KRG Ministry of Higher Education since 2010, which marked a full implementation in the academic year 2010-2011, makes an interwoven process that involves four programmes: Teaching Quality Assurance (TQA), Continuous Academic Development (CAD), Curriculum Development and Accreditation. Each of these was introduced to monitor the performance of a specific aspect of the higher education system processed by specific procedures and mechanisms designed to suit the education environment in the Region to say the least.

In 2010 the QA process was first implemented as a pilot project in a number of colleges across a few universities. One year later a full implementation of the process was undertaken throughout the governmental Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). As for the private ones, it was and still is left to them whether to apply the process as structured by KRG Ministry of Higher Education or employ an alternative and equivalent process. As a private higher education institution, Ishik University has chosen to employ all the required procedures besides implementing further effective international QA standards.

Taking Ishik University as a case study, and in order to figure out the level of achievements gained so far, it would be very essential to assess the assessment process undertaken as part of the quality assurance process. Such assessment will be a helpful tool to outline the level of achievements and progress made, specify the challenges, make urgent changes and adaptations where necessary, and provide strategic recommendations accordingly. The questions that arise in this regard are: (a) what is the purpose beyond the implementation of quality assurance in KRG HEIs and Ishik University as a case study; (b) what kinds of effects has it achieved and aspects and qualities has it improved, especially with regard to academic performance, teaching, learning, research and ranking; (c) what challenges the implementation of the process has it had and cause imperfection in its practises; and (d) what solutions can be offered to create a more effective way in practicing quality assurance at the University under study.

This paper aspires to discuss these issues and provide an analytical overview of the whole quality assurance framework as operated at Ishik University. The study employs a qualitative content analysis and the results are supported by a survey questionnaire and semi-structured interviews conducted with the teaching staff.

The results gained from the analytical discussion and the outputs of the interviews and survey questionnaire reflect a positive demonstration of the QA process. The QA procedures hugely assist the enhancement process as part of the academic performance of the teaching staff, research and ranking. Moreover, there is a significant correlation between academic performance and research and ranking of the University. The higher the staff's performance in teaching and researching, the better the ranking of the University would be. The same is true for QA role in improving learning outcomes and learning process of students. However, a lack of proper knowledge as to the concept of quality and QA procedures has been noticed, especially with regard to QA mechanisms and role in furthering the learning process. This is perhaps due to lack of more solid mechanisms as to QA procedures in learning at the University.

The paper is organised as follows. Section 2 gives a brief account of KRG higher education system and its quality assurance perspectives. In section 3 I present an overview of Ishik, the University taken as a

case study, and all the programmes and procedures implemented as part of the quality assurance process at the University. Section 4 explains the methodology of the study, followed by results in section 5. The data and the research questions, along with the obstacles and recommendations, are discussed and explained in section 6. A conclusion is given in section 7.

2. QA Perspectives in KRG

Kurdistan, the Region covering north of Iraq, has seen a tremendous growth in the number of higher education institutions recently, ranging from 8 in 2006 to 39 in 2018.[1] These are distributed among the cities of Erbil, Sulaimaniya and Duhok, and their subsidiary townships, e.g. Zakho, Soran, Koya, Garmiyan, Ranya and Halabja. Similar to other developing countries, the culture of quality in the education sector has been introduced lately in the Kurdistan Region. The establishment of the quality assurance process goes back to 2010, which has signaled part of the reform process undertaken by Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research in Kurdistan in the period 2009-2012 (Palander, 2013; Ali, 2012). For this purpose a directorate was established at the Ministry of Higher Education-KRG to formalize, implement and monitor the programmes involved in the process amongst the Region's HEIs. This directorate was effective in 2010 with the official appointment of its director. Following the positive results of the pilot project in 2010, a full implementation of the process was undertaken in the academic year 2010-2011 throughout the governmental universities and institutes. Furthermore, the private HEIs were allowed to either follow the Ministry's QA procedures or employ other international QA standards and procedures.

According to Ala'Aldeen (2010), the higher education system in the Kurdistan Region is entitled to accommodate to the progressing endeavour undertaken by the Region in several major aspects and is therefore required to promote the level of education and improve the quality standards of the teaching and learning processes. Thus, the purpose of introducing the process of quality assurance and the establishment of the directorate and as can be detected from the application of its programmes is double sided. On one extreme, it aims to regulate the development of the higher education sector in the Region, and on the other extreme it is to enhance the development of the strategies of the quality system itself in connection with teaching, learning and recently research.

As the concept and knowledge of quality were considerably new in the system, several workshops and training courses were organised and committed staff trained and prepared to embark and communicate the programmes and mechanisms proficiently. Moreover, relevant committees at the ministry, university and college/ faculty level came into existence as were required. A specific budget has been planned and approved to facilitate the accomplishment of such preparations, and to also guarantee the successful ongoing of the process throughout the HEIs in the Region. Most significantly, the introduction of the process called for interactive contribution of all stakeholders involved in the process of education, teaching and learning in the Region, teachers and students being most.

---

[1]Among the 8 HEIs were 5 government universities, 2 government institutes and 1 private university, and among the 39 HEIs are 15 government universities, 14 private universities and 10 private institutes.

3. QA at Ishik

3.1 Ishik University

Ishik University is a private higher education institution founded in Erbil, Iraq in 2008. Ishik University is situated on two campuses, one in Erbil city and another in Sulaimaniya city which was established later in 2014. Erbil campus now comprises 6 faculties and 20 undergraduate programmes, while Sulaimaniyah campus includes two faculties and 5 undergraduate programmes. In 2017 the University had a total of 223 academic staff and 2748 enrolled students. Recently, it has started its joint master programme with two governmental universities in the Region.

The University takes it into its mission to promote the higher education system in the Kurdistan Region and compete internationally. For example, it was awarded ISO 9001:2008 Quality Management Systems Certification by the British Certifications Inc. from UK. Furthermore, as part of its internationalization planning, in 2016 the University has started to embark the accreditation process for its undergraduate programmes and certainly in 2017 the Civil Engineering programme was accredited by the Central Evaluation and Accreditations Agency Hannover (ZEvA). Recently, more undergraduate programmes, such as computer engineering and information technologies, have started their accreditation plans and procedures. In addition, Ishik University, and as part of its formal agreements with high ranked international universities, provides sufficient arrangements to facilitate students and teaching staff exchanging programmes that foster their academic development (Öztaş, Özdemir, & Mart, 2017).

Moreover, according to the recent edition of the Webometrics Ranking of World Universities in January 2018, Ishik is ranked 1 among all the private universities in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, 4 among all universities in Kurdistan, 12 among the universities of Iraq and 6049 in the world (details can be accessed via this link http://www.webometrics.info/en/aw/iraq).

3.2   QA Procedures

At Ishik University within the quality assurance process functions two key programmes: Teaching Quality Assurance (TQA) and Continuous Academic Development (CAD). The former serves as a method for the assessment of teaching activity, and the later serves as a support for the enhancement of faculties' knowledge and expertise. While each of these programmes can function at a separate level, they are inter-dependent in the entire process of quality assurance. More on each of these programmes and their procedures are further elaborated below.

To start with, the purpose of TQA, as stated by Ala'Aldeen (2010, p.98), is to "create an environment in which members of society believe in the education, learning and research processes of the higher education system in the Kurdistan Region". The key to fulfil this is to make the education process transparent and its assessment rather accessible to the right people. TQA constitutes a crucial programme in any quality assurance scheme as it guarantees the involvement of students, the main customers in HEIs, in the assessment process of teaching and learning. All students are given the right to assess the teaching methods, course materials and references, academic support and innovation, learning outcomes such as the skills and total experience obtained throughout an academic year.

At Ishik the TQA programme comprises a few assessment procedures. These are student feedback, class observation, teacher self-assessment and external assessment. These are intended to provide a channel to assure the teaching and learning quality and course materials quality and excellence, and suggest improvements where necessary. The student feedback survey is online-based and provided to students at the end of the academic year (for annual-based programmes) or end of a semester (for semester-based programmes). The feedback survey constitutes 12 questions with the answers ranging from 1= poor to 5= excellent. The questions comprise items that measure student satisfaction in connection to course content and subjects, references, methods of teaching, significance and value of course, learning outcomes, lecture time management and pertinence of exam questions and grading. At the end of the feedback the results are reported to the teaching staff to use as a guide to locate their strengths and weaknesses and act accordingly. Also, the results of students' evaluation are included in assessing the overall academic performance of the academic staff, upon which an appreciation letter or warning letter is issued.

The class observation is used to assess the performance of teaching staff inside class. The items included in the class observation form focus on instructor's command level of knowledge and teaching strategies in delivering it effectively. This assessment tool is used for monitoring and academic promotion purposes.

As for the teacher self-assessment process, it has recently been introduced in the system to allow self-assessment by academic staff. Although hard to avoid biasness to oneself, a self-assessment process provides a unique opportunity for teaching staff to be as critical as possible for upgrading purposes.

Furthermore, part of TQA incorporates the appointment of external assessors who are engaged to assess the courses contents, objectives and structure, teaching tools and facilities, exam questions and answers, grading and student evaluation. An external assessor should possess a high professional degree, preferably not less than assistant professor, and be expert in the related specialty. While external assessors are rather desired to be of international status, the external assessors, as it is the case in most KRG universities, are mostly arranged from among national universities in the Kurdistan Region due to difficulties of overseas recruitments and cost effective issues.

The quality assurance system implemented at Ishik University includes also the Continuous Academic Development (CAD) programme. This programme is intended to enhance the professional development of academic staff. The CAD programme functions as a tool to encourage and support involvement in numerous academic activities, examples of which include conferences, workshops, seminars, publications, scientific projects and reviewing processes, in national and international venues. According to CAD programme, and out of these academic activities, teaching staff are evaluated, and it therefore forms a key factor in the overall assessment of the academic performance of the teaching staff member. The CAD results are reported to the heads of department for enhancement and monitoring purposes.

4. Research Method

Based on the study's research questions and objectives, a survey questionnaire and semi-structured interviews were adopted in the study. The questionnaire was distributed to all teaching staff at the

University through the SurveyMonkey tool in January 2018. A total of 103 (out of 223) respondents were collected, three of which were excluded due to their invalidity. As such, the response rate represents 44% of the academic staff. The anonymous survey questionnaire included 10 questions, responses to which were based on a five-item Likert scale (strongly agree = 1, somewhat agree = 2, neither agree nor disagree = 3, somewhat disagree = 4 and strongly disagree = 5). The 10 questions focused on measuring the role of quality assurance in helping develop teachers' professional and academic performance, enabling continuous learning for teachers, motivating teachers to be actively involved in the University activities, helping improve teaching strategies and methods, helping develop curriculums and courses syllabi and contents, increasing workload on teachers, enhancing scientific publications, supporting learning process, improving learning outcomes, and the ranking of the university. The data were then transferred and analysed through the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

Furthermore, semi-structured interviews were conducted in person with 10 teaching staff from different departments and of different academic ranks ranging from assistant lecturers to professors. Each interview lasted 45 min to one hour approximately. The semi-structured interviews, although might practically suggest biasness and lack of honesty, provided solid information and various perspectives on the whole QA procedures implemented and intricacies proposed. The purpose of the interviews was to seek direct answers in relation to level of staff's knowledge on QA process and function as a whole and at Ishik University in particular, its impact on their academic performance, teaching, learning, research as well as ranking, existence of any possible alternative systems or procedures to QA in higher education, use of QA for academic promotion, salary increase/reduce and contract renew/termination purposes, and also challenges encountered as part of QA implementation at the University under study.

5. Results

This section presents the results reached as part of the survey questionnaire after being scrutinized through SPSS and the outcomes of the interviews. SPSS is proven to be a very effective software used in qualitative researches to manage data and execute statistical analyses that can generate and support the outcomes of the researches (Hinton, McMurray, & Brownlow, 2014: Huizingh, 2007).

The SPSS analyses of the results of the survey questionnaire reveal the followings. Table 1 presents the mean, median, mode and standard deviation of each of the question items included in the questionnaire. As shown, the most frequent answer in all the items is either 1 (= strongly agree) or 2 (= somewhat agree). These are also reflected well in the mean and median values.

Table 1: Mean, median, mode and standard deviation of the 10 question items

Items	No of answers	Mean	Median	Mode	Std. Deviation
Helps develop teachers' professional and academic performance	100	2.05	2.00	1	1.123
Enables continuous learning for teachers	100	2.25	2.00	2	1.140
Motivates teachers to be actively involved in the University activities	100	2.11	2.00	1	1.222
Helps improve teaching strategies and methods	100	2.31	2.00	2	1.187
Helps develop curriculum and courses syllabus and contents	100	2.30	2.00	2	1.124
Increases workload on teachers	100	2.10	2.00	1	1.087
Enhances scientific production (publications)	100	2.29	2.00	2	1.166
Supports learning process	100	2.30	2.00	2	1.106
Improves learning outcomes	100	2.30	2.00	2	1.087
Improves the ranking of the university	100	1.68	1.00	1	.984

Table 2 presents the respondents' percentage of each question. For example, the participants strongly agree that QA helps develop teachers' professional and academic performance scoring 39%, and that it enables continuous learning for teachers with the highest score representing 43% (somewhat agree) and 27% (strongly agree), making a total of 80% agree. Most importantly, a total of 83% (57% strongly agree and 26% somewhat agree) of the participants agree that QA highly contributes in raising the ranking of the University. Meanwhile, more than 60% of the teaching staff agree that QA increases the workload on teachers making a total of 34% strongly agree and 33% somewhat agree.

Table 2: Respondents' percentage of the survey questions

Items	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
Helps develop teachers' professional and academic performance	39.0	33.0	17.0	6.0	5.0
Enables continuous learning for teachers	27.0	43.0	14.0	10.0	6.0
Motivates teachers to be actively involved in the University activities	41.0	29.0	11.0	15.0	4.0
Helps improve teaching strategies and methods	29.0	34.0	21.0	9.0	7.0
Helps develop curriculum and courses syllabus and contents	28.0	32.0	28.0	6.0	6.0
Increases workload on teachers	34.0	33.0	22.0	7.0	4.0
Enhances scientific production (publications)	30.0	35.0	17.0	12.0	6.0
Supports learning process	28.0	31.0	26.0	11.0	4.0
Improves learning outcomes	24.0	42.0	18.0	12.0	4.0
Improves the ranking of the university	57.0	26.0	10.0	5.0	2.0

Furthermore, the Pearson Correlation measure was applied to detect the strength of association between a few items in the questionnaire, such as staff's academic performance, research productivity and University ranking in relation to quality assurance role in these processes, enhancing academic performance and researching. Table 3 shows that there is a positive correlation of 58.2% between development of teaching staff's professional and academic performance and the ranking of the University. This correlation is significant because the significance of .000 is less than .05. This indicates

that the higher the performance of the teaching staff the better the ranking of the University will be. Likewise, table 4 presents the correlation between scientific productivity and ranking of the University (Pearson correlation = 61.9%). The correlation is significant also scoring (.000), suggesting that more publications raise the ranking of the University.

Table 3: Correlations between items 1 and 10

		Helps develop teachers' professional and academic performance	Improves the ranking of the university
Helps develop teachers' professional and academic performance	Pearson Correlation	1	.582[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	100	100
Improves the ranking of the university	Pearson Correlation	.582[**]	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	100	100

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 4: Correlations between items 7 and 10

		Enhances scientific production (publications)	Improves the ranking of the university
Enhances scientific production (publications)	Pearson Correlation	1	.619[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	100	100
Improves the ranking of the university	Pearson Correlation	.619[**]	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	100	100

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Tables 5 and 6 show the positive correlations between improvement in teaching strategies and methods with learning process (Pearson correlation = 73.7%) and with learning outcomes (Pearson correlation = 63.2%), respectively. Both correlations are significant because the significance in both is .000 which is less than .05. This demonstrates that the role of quality assurance in enhancing the teaching process leads consequently to better learning process and outcomes.

Table 5: Correlations between items 4 and 8

		Helps improve teaching strategies and methods	Supports learning process
Helps improve teaching strategies and methods	Pearson Correlation	1	.737[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	100	100
Supports learning process	Pearson Correlation	.737[**]	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	100	100

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 6: Correlations between items 4 and 9

		Helps improve teaching strategies and methods	Improves learning outcomes
Helps improve teaching strategies and methods	Pearson Correlation	1	.632[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	100	100
Improves learning outcomes	Pearson Correlation	.632[**]	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	100	100

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

In addition to these, the results of the semi-structured interviews, and based on the questions, have revealed interesting feedback as to the level of QA knowledge by Ishik teaching staff, staff's perspectives on QA significance, existence of alternative procedures to QA, rationality in using QA for motivation and retribution purposes and the types of challenges suggested as part of QA implementation.

When asked about their knowledge of quality assurance in higher education, the teaching staff highlighted two important aspects: teacher's performance and student feedback. Other remarkable answers included the fact that QA is a process that is used to assure standards of higher education are met and satisfied. Moreover, QA is a tool used to follow the standards of accreditation and raise standards and quality of education in the institution. However, two of the 10 interviewees did not have very clear straight information as to the concept of quality assurance and its actual function.

As to the significance and role of QA in enhancing academic performance of teachers, teaching, learning, research and ranking, a unanimous answer was recorded in all interviews that QA plays a very essential role in improving the teaching process at the University, increasing quality and quantity of scientific publications, and upgrading the ranking of the University. However, not many were certain how would QA procedures help support the learning process and improve learning outcomes. The aspects highlighted included student feedback results and teaching practices.

When asked about any alternative procedures to QA, they find it very difficult to think of any. A few answers recorded included: daily basis monitoring, regular observation for individual performance, financial support, increasing salaries, and providing sufficient time for researching and sources. Overall, the majority found it hard to think of a systematic or institutional mechanism that resembles quality assurance in higher education without resorting to call it quality assurance.

As to utilizing QA for motivational purposes, for example, scholastic promotion, increase/reduce of salary and extension or cancellation of contracts, most of the interviewees concurred as to its relevance and applicability for advancement and contract issues, yet not salaries due to its affectability. In general, using QA performance results for motivational purposes like promotion and salary increase would help enhancing the staff's performance, but using it for severe retribution in the form of pay reduction would lead to unwelcome consequences such as the possibility of staff quitting. Meanwhile, two interviewees have accepted its use for affecting salaries since it is a private higher education institution as that would determine the types of teaching staff the University would aim to preserve. However, they explained that these regulations should be clearly stated in the contract as to the QA performance effect on one's salary.

Finally, examples of challenges encountered as part of QA implementation as reported by the interviewees focused on workload, many paperwork, lack of sufficient sources and database for publishing purposes, low salary in comparison to quality requirements and standards and lack of proper quality assurance knowledge.

6. Discussion

The aim of this paper was to investigate the impact of quality assurance on the whole academic performance at Ishik University. The areas focused on in the study included the processes of teaching and learning as well as researching and ranking of the institution. The results obtained out of the survey questionnaire and the semi-structured interviews have shown an actual positive impact of the quality assurance procedures in the enhancement process of the University in these areas. Quality assurance is taken as a successful mechanism to help developing the professional career of the teaching staff because

it provides different channels and opportunities that enhance continuous learning and improvement. Also the results obtained out of the University online student feedback system help upgrading teaching methods and strategies and further improve the course contents and subjects. Consequently, QA helps improve the learning process and learning outcomes. However, at Ishik University, and based on the interviews outcomes, a lack of comprehensible QA procedures in learning is observed, an area that the University is highly recommended to improve.

Most importantly, it is highly noted that QA plays a significant role in enhancing research productivity process at the University through the incentive financial system implemented and also in the ranking of the University. The statistics show the increasing number of papers published by Ishik staff since its establishment. For example, as cited from Ishik official reports, the number of articles published in 2013-2014 was 11 and has increased to 52 in 2016-2017. Consequently, it has hugely affected the ranking of the University, being 9288 in the world in July 2017 and jumping up to 6049 in January 2018 according to the Webometrics Ranking of World Universities which takes into account size of the main webdomain of the institution (presence 5%), number of external networks (visibility 50%), number of citations (transparency 10%) and number of papers (excellence 35%). However, there are a few aspects where the procedures of QA, although proving very essential, impose challenging demands and burdens. For example, a large number of teaching staff agree that QA causes workload due to the documentation issue required for evidence purposes. Also, due to lack of proper knowledge and awareness of the QA concept and significance, a few teaching staff find it problematic to recognize the role of QA in the whole education process.

On this basis, and for improvement purposes of the process, a few actions and procedures are recommended. These include: organizing more training courses and seminars to expand the values and principles of the quality assurance process among the staff; and creating an e-system to run all the QA programmes, especially for the CAD and teaching portfolio, which can help managing the documentation burden and thus reducing the workload. Moreover, the University needs to secure more teaching staff in order to help decrease the teaching workload and provide more sufficient time for other academic activities. Also, the University should provide more necessary facilities and references for publication purposes.

7. Conclusion

This paper presented the impact of quality assurance on the whole academic performance at Ishik University as a case study. A survey questionnaire and semi-structured interviews have been used to measure the level of impact the QA procedures is making at the University. The areas focused on included teaching, learning, research productivity and ranking. Interestingly, evidences presented in the paper have shown a huge development in the education system of the Kurdistan Region exemplified in the status of the University under study. Overall, it has considerably and ominously improved the running process of higher education in the Region at all Kurdistan Higher Education Institutions – the move from traditional methods of teaching and learning to more modern effective strategies.

More specifically, at Ishik, quality assurance has had a massive effect mostly in enhancing the academic performance and teaching of the staff, promoting research quality and productivity and upgrading the ranking of the University. For example, the results have shown a positive correlation between academic performance and research and ranking of the University. This imposes the necessity of quality assurance as a system to guarantee better performance for better outcomes. While remarkable achievements are realized in terms of teaching and research, not many can be witnessed as to learning process and outcomes, an area that requires further attention. In addition, the University needs to increase the number of teaching staff, employ a QA e-system and provide scientific databases that promote the overall academic and production performance.

Acknowledgment

References

Ala'Aleen, D. (2010). Kurdistan: A higher education evolution that cannot fail. *University World News: The Global Window on Higher Education*, 20 February, 2011.

Ali, S. O. (2012). Quality assurance and effectiveness in Kurdistan higher education: The reform process. World Academy of Science, Engineering and Technology. *International Journal of Social, Behavioral, Educational, Economic, Business and Industrial Engineering*, 6, 1308-1311.

Angappapillai, A. B., & Annapoorani, C.K. (2012). Quality in higher education: An empirical investigation. *Afro Asian Journal of Social Sciences*, 3 (3.4), 1-11.

Cartwright, M. (2007). The rhetoric and reality of "quality" in higher education, an investigation into staff perceptions of quality in post-1992 universities. *Quality Assurance in Education*, 15(3), 287-301.

Hinton, P. R., McMurray, I., &. Brownlow, C. (2014). *SPSS explained*. 2nd edn. New York: Routledge.

Huizingh, E. (2007). *Applied statistics with SPSS*. London: Sage Publications.

Öztaş, A., Özdemir , M., & Mart, C.T. (2017). Perspectives on quality assurance in higher education in Iraq: A case study at Ishik University. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 7 (9), 268-272.

Palander, N. (2013). *Higher education policy-building in Kurdistan Region of Iraq: Perceptions of university representatives*. MA Thesis, University of Toronto, Canada.

Vlăsceanu, L., Grünberg, L., & Pârlea, D. (2007). *Quality assurance and accreditation: A glossary of basic terms and definitions*. Bucharest: UNESCO.

Westerheijden, D. F., Stensaker, B., & Rosa, M. J. (eds). (2007). *Quality assurance in higher education: Trends in regulation, translation and transformation*. Dordrecht: Springer.