
Evaluating National Standards for Management and Economics Colleges in Iraq through a Performance Matrix Approach

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Abstract:

Purpose: This study examines the practical implementation of national standards (NSs) in management and economics institutions in Iraq, with a particular focus on the Technical College Management/Baghdad (TCMB).

Design/Methodology/Approach: This study uses a performance matrix as a case study to assess the efficacy of NSs in the instructional programs of two college departments: Business Administration and Travelling and Tourism. Documents gathered from these departments were used to inform the evaluation, which was conducted using a checklist developed to examine compliance with NSs regarding quality assurance.

Findings: The findings highlight the severe flaws in using NSs at the Technical College of Management. The key difficulties noted were a lack of financial assistance, insufficient academic instructors and professional staff, and poorly defined responsibilities and procedures for NS application and adherence. These shortcomings have affected numerous aspects of educational program management.

Practical Implications: The recommended changes aim to correct the detected flaws in NS implementation, thereby improving educational programs' overall quality and effectiveness in the evaluated colleges' Business Administration and Travel and Tourism departments.

Originality/Value: The study suggests strategic approaches for resolving certain issues. These include integrating the department's vision and goals with similar institutions, focusing on continental-scale marketing for more community participation, and campaigning for regulatory reforms to strengthen organizational dimensions.

Keywords: Educational programs, national standards, management, performance matrix, quality assurance.

JEL Classification: I23, I28, M10, A22, H52.

Paper type: Research article.

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1. Introduction

Quality assurance (QA) is now a crucial element in higher education that guarantees the efficacy and efficiency of educational programs. As researchers noted, QA includes responsibility and improvement, highlighting the importance of following recognized standards and continuously enhancing educational offerings (Ryan, 2015). The importance of QA relies on its ability to connect theoretical knowledge with practical demands of the professional world (Kayyali, 2023).

National standards (NSs) are crucial for leading educational institutions to maintain and improve acceptable levels of quality. This study investigates the practical implementation of NSs within the setting of management and economics schools in Iraq, with a special focus on the Technical College of Management in Baghdad (TCMB).

This study focuses on two main departments within the TCMB: Business Administration (oldest) and Travelling and Tourism (newest). By evaluating the efficacy of NSs in various departments, this study aims to highlight the obstacles and opportunities associated with complying with these standards, adding to the larger discussion on QA in higher education.

Prior studies have carefully analyzed the aspects of QA in higher education, shedding light on the need for accountability and progress. Schellekens researched the design, development, and evaluation of a digital QA application to improve and ensure the quality of assessment programmers in higher education. Design-based research (DBR) methodology was used to create the application. A literature search and needs assessment of QA stakeholders informed the design of the application to ensure compliance with daily practices and accreditation requirements.

The stakeholders evaluated the application of three different research programs. Module- and program-level dashboards were created as part of application development to provide an overview of the program's outcomes, assessment methods, metrics, self-evaluated quality indicators, and documents. Stakeholders evaluate the application at the module and program levels (Schellekens *et al.*, 2022).

The changing landscape of higher education and growing emphasis on quality were investigated to improve student learning outcomes, institutional reputation, and overall accountability. It explored various quality dimensions, such as academic and non-academic, and their significance in promoting well-rounded educational experiences.

Internal quality control approaches enable institutions to review and improve their educational practices, such as faculty development, curriculum design, self-assessment, and essential tenets and strategies supporting QA (Stalmeijer *et al.*, 2023). External QA, including accreditation, benchmarking, and regulatory

frameworks, are also being investigated to promote greater openness, comparability, and accountability across higher education institutions.

This paper also examines international perspectives on QA in higher education, focusing on regional differences and global initiatives (Kayyali, 2023). One study investigated the impact, added value, and relevance of accreditation to ensure quality at an institution of higher learning in architecture. Before and after certification, academic indicators such as pass rate or weighted average per year were reviewed quantitatively.

This study focused on a private higher education institution in Peru; however, the methodology and findings may apply to future studies of schools in developing countries with similar characteristics (Acevedo-De-los-Ríos and Rondinel-Oviedo, 2022).

The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) accreditation has been a key theme in the literature, emphasizing its role in encouraging continuous development and the best educational practices (Guth and Stonebraker, 2022). It analyzes the effects of AACSB accreditation on the desires of business education students and its influence on organizational effectiveness. It offers a practical strategy for assisting a successful AACSB Continuous Improvement Review (CIR) visit, emphasizing the importance of understanding and using best practices (Al Shraah *et al.*, 2021).

Despite the variety of studies on QA and accreditation, the use of NSs in Iraqi management and economics universities has received little scholarly attention. This study seeks to close this gap by assessing the actual use of NSs in TCMB's Business Administration and Travel & Tourism departments of the TCMB. The cited challenges, such as funding limits, lack of staff, and procedural uncertainties, underscore the complexities of adopting NSs in Iraqi education.

This study aims to determine how well NSs for educational programs in management and economics institutions are implemented, and the problems and opportunities associated with their actual use. The TCMB finds it difficult to implement NSs in its Business Administration and Travel and Tourism departments. These obstacles include lack of financial aid, limited academic and professional staff, and unclear duties and procedures for NSs adherence. These difficulties have far-reaching consequences for educational program management and require more concentrated analysis and answers.

1.1 Research Problem

Iraqi universities aim to compete in the educational environment of the Middle East and Arabic Nations. These universities wanted to attract international students to study in Iraq. One of the competitive advantages of engaging more international

students is educational quality, including the Iraqi university rankings. Thus, the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MHESR) has motivated Iraqi universities to consider the educational quality in their colleges, depending on international standards.

The Middle Technical University (MTU) in Baghdad is one of the Iraqi universities that began to consider standards of educational quality, including university rankings. The MTU has 17 colleges and institutions, and TCMB is one of them. This college was chosen as a sample to study the application of educational quality, including NSs, in Iraq. The TCMB has six departments: business, finance, banking, quality, Information Technology, and tourism. The current research focused on only two departments: business administration, and travel and tourism. The results of this study will be considered by TCMB, MTU, and MHESR.

A committee of specialists in educational quality in the MHESR translated international standards into local standards, including educational programs. This committee interpreted the international standards applied by AACSB to national standards and Arabic to be applied in the Iraqi educational sector. The committee adopted AACSB standards to be applicable to the Iraqi educational environment.

The committee includes professors and assistant professors from different colleges of economics and management in MHESR. These professors and assistant professors are specialists in quality and have experience in the field of the educational quality.

The committee works for a year to re-design the dimensions of AACSB into INs to be used at the scientific departments of economics and management colleges. These dimensions included 14 items, as shown in Table 1. The dimensions focused on three main groups: educational employees, lecturers, educational leaders, and scientific programs at the departments. For each dimension, several factors were used to collect data, as shown Table 1. The results of the current research and study will be locally generalized at economics and management colleges.

Thus, the research problem is to apply the dimensions of academic standards in the TCMB. The application of academic standards will aid in ensuring the quality of output for students to meet the needs of work in marketing. This will help ensure that the production quality of students matches the demand for marketing.

Measuring the efficiency and effectiveness of academic tasks and activities according to scientific and international standards (INs) is also essential. The efficiency and effectiveness of academic assignments and activities assist the college in facing significant challenges in a competitive environment, including private education and parallel study. Achieving efficiency and effectiveness helps convey development in the developed world.

Therefore, the college does not apply the dimensions of academic standards to bachelor's or master's degrees. Although the MHESR assists universities in ensuring educational quality, colleges believe that several barriers prevent the ability to apply these dimensions. They think that using the dimensions of academic standards will require much work and effort to reach the international level.

Improving educational quality at college level is a significant issue that must be researched and studied. Therefore, the current research aims to answer the following question: "What is the real use of NSs for the programs of management and economics colleges."

1.2 Research Aims

- To investigate whether NSs are being applied to management and economics programs in the TCMB.
- To investigate the reasons for the barriers to applying NSs in management and economics programs at the TCMB.

1.3 Significance of Research

This study highlights an essential topic for improving educational quality to match work marketing. The current research assists the college in initiating development in the academic environment worldwide. This depended on the standard dimensions derived from the AACSB accreditation dimensions. These dimensions helped college managers and department heads determine whether they were still behind or close to INSs based on academic INSs. The findings will assist colleges in evaluating the performance of their educational programs regarding the academic INSs dimension.

2. Methods

2.1 Research Design

This study used a descriptive research methodology with a case study technique to thoroughly analyze the practical implementation of NSs in Iraqi management and economics. A special focus was placed on the TCMB. The chosen study design allows for a thorough exploration of the research objectives, resulting in more detailed knowledge of the problems and opportunities related to NS implementation.

2.2 Data Collection Methods

The research employed a varied strategy for data collection, including two personal meetings with heads of departments to guide the researchers where the documents are kept: document analysis, and a purpose-designed checklist. Personal encounters allow researchers to interact directly with essential stakeholders, thereby providing

crucial insights into the challenges of NS implementation. Documents obtained from the TCMB's Business Administration and Travelling and Tourism divisions are key sources that provide a foundation for subsequent evaluations.

2.3 Data Analysis

The analysis was conducted in TCMB's two departments. These departments include business administration, travelling, and tourism.

The first step is to calculate the weight mean through the following equation:

Weight Mean= Total (Frequency X Weight)/Total of Frequencies

This approach makes it easier to calculate the weighted average, allowing for a more detailed understanding of the relevance assigned to the specific criteria.

The second step is to calculate the percentage by the following equation:

Percentage of Accordance = Weight Mean/High Degree of Scale

This step explains the values obtained within the chosen scale, allowing for a comparison analysis.

The last step is to calculate the gap through the following equation:

Gap=1- Percentage of Accordance

This metric measures the discrepancy between the observed performance and specified standards and identifies areas that need attention and development.

3. Results

This section of the study examines and assesses the practical application of NSs in the context of college programs in Administration and Economics in Iraq. The percentage of applying NSs for the Administration and Economics college programs in Iraq was approximately 80% compared to the AACSB. In this study, two departments were investigated according to NSs for the programs. A checklist was used to analyze the Business Administration and Travelling and Tourism departments at the TCMB.

Table 1 provides NSs for the Department of Business Administration and Travel and Tourism. The Department of Business Administration's 75% application for NSs implies that it has been thoroughly and appropriately implemented within the department. The 15% Partial Application of NSs indicates that it has been partially applied, indicating a level of conformity, but with potential for improvement or

refinement in specific areas. 10% No Application of NSs means that NSs have not been used within the Department of Business Administration. These areas require further attention to ensure complete compliance with standards.

Table 1. Depending on standards and points, there are differences between the Department of Business Administration and the Department of Travelling and Tourism

No.	Dimensions	Business Administration Department				Travelling and Tourism Department			
		Applied	Partially Applied	Not Applied	Total	Applied	Partially Applied	Not Applied	Total
1.	Mission, Impact, and Innovation	10	3	0	13	10	3	0	13
2.	Scientific Contributions	6	2	2	10	6	0	4	10
3.	Students' Admission and Graduation	6	1	0	7	4	0	3	7
4.	Efficiency of Lecturers	9	0	2	11	8	1	2	11
5.	Managing and supporting the Lecturers	8	1	0	9	6	1	2	9
6.	Efficiency of Employees	1	2	0	3	0	0	3	3
7.	Managing Subjects and Education Insurance	6	1	1	8	4	1	3	8
8.	Content of Subjects	2	0	0	2	1	1	0	2
9.	Contracting between Students and Lectures	3	0	1	4	3	1	0	4
10.	Level and Structure of Subjects	4	0	3	7	4	0	3	7
11.	Effectiveness of Lecturers	4	1	0	5	5	0	0	5
12.	Students' Scientific and Occupational Activities	4	1	0	5	3	0	2	5
13.	Learning of Executive Managers	2	0	1	3	2	0	1	3
14.	Lecturers Qualifications and Contributions	10	2	0	12	11	0	2	12
Total		75	15	10	100	67	8	25	100

Source: Own study.

However, the Department of Travel and Tourism's 67% application of NSs demonstrated that it has been thoroughly and appropriately implemented across the department. The 8% Partial Application of NSs means that they have been partially applied, indicating conformity, but with opportunity for improvement or refinement in some areas. 25% No application of NSs suggests that they have not been used

within the Department of Travel and Tourism. These areas require further attention to ensure complete compliance with standards.

Table 2. Shows the probability means, percentages for accordance, and gaps for the Business Administration and Travelling and Tourism departments.

No.	Business Administration Department			Tourism and Travelling Department		
	Weighted Mean	Percentage For Accordance	Gap	Weighted Mean	Percentage For Accordance	Gap
1.	1.769	0.88	0.88	1.77	0.88	0.12
2.	1.2	0.7	0.7	1.2	0.6	0.4
3.	1.857	0.92	0.92	1.14	0.57	0.43
4.	1.636	0.81	0.81	1.54	0.77	0.23
5.	1.888	0.94	0.94	1.44	0.72	0.28
6.	1.333	0.66	0.66	0.0	0.0	0.0
7.	1.85	0.92	0.92	1.125	0.56	0.44
8.	2.0	1.0	1.0	1.5	0.75	0.25
9.	1.5	0.75	0.75	1.75	0.87	0.13
10.	1.14	0.9	0.9	1.14	0.57	0.43
11.	1.8	0.9	0.9	2.0	1.0	0.0
12.	1.8	0.9	0.9	1.2	0.6	0.4
13.	1.333	0.66	0.66	0.25	0.13	0.87
14.	1.833	0.92	0.92	1.83	0.91	0.09

Source: Own study.

Table 2 represents the difference between the expected degree of compliance with NSs and the actual level of compliance observed in the Business Administration and Travel and Tourism departments. These gaps were calculated to determine how far each department deviated from full compliance with NSs. Three equations were used to determine the weighted mean, percentage of accordance, and gap as follows:

- Weighted Mean = Total (Weight*Frequencies) / Total of Frequencies
- Percentage for accordance = Probability Mean / Height
- Weight3- Gap = 1- Percentage for Accordance

It shows that dimension 5, "Managing and Supporting the Lecturers," had the highest score compared to other measurements at the Department of Business Administration. However, dimensions 6, "Efficiency of Employees," and 13, "Learning of Executive Managers," scored the lowest compared to other dimensions in the Department of BusinessAdministration.

On the other hand, Table 2 shows that dimension 14, "Lecturers Qualifications and Contributions," had the highest score compared to different sizes at the Department of Travelling and Tourism. However, dimensions 6, "Efficiency of Employees," and 13, "Learning of Executive Managers," scored the lowest compared to other

dimensions in the Department of Travelling and Tourism.

Table 3. The gap between the Department of Business Administration and Travelling and Tourism.

Department	Achievement %	Gap %
Business Administration	76.80	23.20
Travelling and Tourism	66	34

Source: Own study.

Table 4 shows that the Department of Business Administration had more compliance (76.80%) than the Department of Travel and Tourism (66%). This means that the Department of Business Administration better meets the program's NSs. The "gap" data (23.20% for Business Administration and 34% for Travelling and Tourism) show how far each department falls short of full compliance.

Table 5. Suggested matrix for implementation and importance.

Importance	High	Concentrate Here	Keep up the Good Work
	Low	Low Priority	Overkill
Performance		Low	High

Source: Own study.

The vertical axis in Table 4 represents performance, and the horizontal axis represents importance.

4. Discussion

The results of the achievements of the two departments and gaps occurred because the Department of Business Administration is older than the Department of Travelling and Tourism. Although both departments have thinking contributions, such as lecturers' and students' research, these thinking contributions have no impact on the performance of the departments, theoretically or practically.

These thinking contributions, such as lecturers' and students' research, are in the boxes of department offices. Neither department has support for lecturers in saving their thinking contributions that are of high quality (Ahmad *et al.*, 2014). The results revealed a lack of financial strategies and distribution to improve educational quality and achieve departmental missions. Neither department can establish buildings corresponding to their scientific activities because of the lack of independent financial resources. None of the departments have funding to support students'

cultural and recreational activities. Neither department has sufficient resources to help students with cultural and recreational activities (Fuertes *et al.*, 2020). There is also no support for students' psychological needs because of limited financial resources.

On the other hand, lecturers in departments receive minimal funding to work on learning programs such as intonation, creativity, and sustainability. These difficulties arise from the college's reliance on MHESR for funding (Coman *et al.*, 2020).

At the University of Middle Technical, admissions to both departments were handled centrally. Students do not want to choose their majors at university. As a result, the dimension was of a low rank. Admission to the University of Higher Education and Scientific Research does not correspond to marketing requirements but must go through a series of procedures.

These procedures do not require students to obtain a university bachelor's degree unless they are admitted. Students' lack of expectations results in unexpected educational activities at universities. The college has sufficient lecturers in both departments depending on their discipline. The college also relies on its lecturers to complete the subjects.

However, the departments are responsible for determining the discipline requirements for lecturers, and the MHESR and Ministry of Finance are responsible for hiring lecturers at the university. The college has many lecturers and monitors and encourages their advancement. These lecturers have scholarships, fellowships, or study leaves (Rutman, 2023).

However, the departments lacked a clear, aggregated, or limited plan for implementing these scholarships, companies, or study leaves that aligned with the department's vision and mission. The goal of scholarships, fellowships, or study leaves is for the lecturer to obtain a high degree without any plans within the departments. Several professional technicians supported the educational programs and workshops in both departments. However, the number of technicians seems insufficient to meet the capacity of academic tasks and development. Consequently, their educational contributions had little or no impact (Carstens *et al.*, 2021).

The two departments are concerned with teaching subjects and their content, but they are not worried about changing or updating the range of issues. Departments fail to meet stockholder expectations in the labor market. Organizations that assist alums in finding work are also disappointed with teaching subjects to their students. The issue is that there is no match between job market requirements and the topics and materials in departments (Islam, 2019).

This issue arose because both departments relied on the university's procedures and decision-making. Typically, the content of teaching subjects is not aligned with the

expectations of social and work marketing, or stakeholders. As a result, alums cannot engage in the labor market because they lack skills such as social communication, social responsibility, and the ability to work in different cultures and environments (Poláková *et al.*, 2023). Although there is interaction between students and lecturers, this interaction does not include sharing in developing or changing the syllabus.

A limited-time teaching program is available to supplement the subject teaching. The students were also given exams to assess their knowledge. The examination results compare students' degrees from TCMB departments to those from other economic and administrative colleges (Goss, 2022). The department is responsible for educational quality to guide students through graduation. It is the responsibility shared by all departments at other colleges with similar programs.

This procedure was carried out using a protocol to support all programs at the Colleges of Business and Administration. The University of Middle Technique must confirm this protocol within the QA framework. This dimension sparked interest such that departments could develop policies and procedures to support the effectiveness and efficiency of lecturers, academics, and professional staff.

This dimension necessitates an annual evaluation of the performance of lecturers and academic staff. However, the findings of this evaluation do not appear to support teaching programs (Llopis-Albert *et al.*, 2023). Train lecturers adequately teach and prepare for other academic work, which is essential for teaching and completing other academic work.

However, lecturers and academic staff rarely participate in training programs to support their abilities or when they want to improve or develop themselves. These improvements and developments will be made with their own money, because there is no financial support for their activities through university purchases (Anjum, 2020).

Teaching subjects were prepared to teach students a variety of strategies. However, there are still few opportunities for students to be educated. These educational systems are critical for expanding students' knowledge (Darling-Hammond, 2008). These strategic educational methods can enable students to communicate with organizations and businesspeople from various fields. This dimension is optional for the managers.

However, this dimension is only relevant when managers (department heads) are involved in their departments' visions, missions, strategies, and learning activities (Sonmez Cakir and Adiguzel, 2020). College lecturers only have academic qualifications and no professional experience outside the university. Consequently, this college requires academics with professional work experience. This experience will be beneficial for a college's academic education.

However, the MHESR has a rule that academics cannot transfer from other ministries to the MHESR (Chan, 2018). There is a decrease in the number of lecturers and academic staff in departments who can meet their needs for academic subjects and contributions in academic fields. This reduction is because the MHESR makes hiring decisions (Harb, 2008).

According to the results, The Department of Business Administration had a more significant percentage of compliance (76.80%) than the Department of Travel and Tourism (66%). This means that the Department of Business Administration better meets the program's NSs. The "gap" data (23.20% for Business Administration and 34% for Travelling and Tourism) show how far each department falls short of full compliance.

The checklist showed that there was a need to form a professional team for improvement. This group will assist in developing a strategy for improving dimensions that have not yielded satisfactory results.

The plan should be completed within a time frame for implementation based on the results shown in Table 4. It describes the vertical axes, which represent implementation, and the horizontal axes, which represent importance. Weak points exhibit zero performance and require high priority. It also requires high significance and implementation, meaning that it must be performed immediately.

These results will be available during the first quarter of the year, and between the first and third months. Weak points ranged between 16.65 and 33.33 for implementation, with high priority required. However, it does not require high importance or performance, which means that it is ready to go. These results are available during the second quarter of the year, which is between the fourth and sixth months of the year.

Although weak points received an average of 66.65 for implementation with high importance, it did not require immediate implementation, implying that it will be implemented in the future. These results are available between the seventh and ninth months of the third quarter of the year. Despite the weak points having an average of 83.33 for implementation with unnecessary importance, it does not require urgent performance, implying that it should be implemented later. These results are available during the fourth quarter of the year, which is between the tenth and twelfth months of the year.

5. Conclusion

The current research emphasizes the inadequate financial resources available to improve educational quality and achieve a college's mission. The selection of students and college input were performed at random. This inefficient process has a negative impact on educational activities as well as the mission and plans of the college. There is

no comprehensive, precise, or limited plan at the college for allocating and managing lecturers. There are not enough professional or academic employees on campus. Stakeholders, the college community, policymakers, and students were ignored.

The results showed a lack of engagement with societal expectations, stakeholders, content marketing, and teaching subjects. Students have no way in creating and modifying content or teaching subjects. Failure to complete teaching programs to obtain educational degrees is common.

Academic, professional, and technical staff members did not consider annual performance evaluations. There is a divide between the integration of academic and professional students. Lecturers, employers, and trainers with theoretical and practical experiences are scarce.

5.1 Recommendations

This research provides essential insight into creating a vision and mission statement that aligns with the plans of each department. These visions and missions can be aligned with those of similar management colleges at other universities. Connecting with communities and stakeholders and working in marketing on a continental scale are necessary.

This link will also aid in developing new educational programs that benefit communities, stakeholders, and job marketing. There is a need to work on correcting the departments' policies and procedures by matching them (policies and procedures) with improved and developed dimensions.

5.2 Future Recommendation

It is recommended that funds be distributed wisely, and colleges should prioritize strategic planning. Academic greatness requires a systematic student-teacher selection process. A thorough lecturer management and allocation plan that engages stakeholders and students will improve educational outcomes. Regular staff assessment, integrating theoretical and practical knowledge, and empowering students to create content are crucial.

Focusing on program completion, NSs boosted the college's reputation. Growth requires community engagement and marketing.

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