



هيئة ضمان جودة التعليم و التدريب
Quality Assurance Authority for Education & Training

Vocational Review Unit

Review Report

Talal Abu Ghazaleh Training Group (TAGI)
Manama, Kingdom of Bahrain

Date reviewed: 23rd -25th March 2009

Table of Contents

The Vocational Review Unit	1
Introduction	2
Description of the provision.....	2
Scope of the review.....	2
Overall judgement	3
Effectiveness of provision.....	3
Capacity to improve	4
Summary of grades awarded.....	4
Main judgements and recommendations	6
Strengths	6
Areas for improvement.....	6
Recommendations	7

The Vocational Review Unit

The Vocational Review Unit (VRU) is part of the Quality Assurance Authority for Education and Training (QAAET), an independent body set up under Royal Decree No.32 of 2008 amended by Royal Decree No. 6 of 2009. Established to raise standards in vocational education and training, the VRU is responsible for monitoring and reporting on the quality of vocational provision, identifying strengths and areas for improvement, establishing success measures, spreading best practice and offering policy advice to key stakeholders, including the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Education.

Reviews are based on the VRU's *Review Framework*, and carried out on providers' premises by teams of carefully selected and highly trained reviewers. All providers are invited to nominate a senior member of their staff to participate in the planning of the review, and to represent them during review team meetings. Reviewers examine a range of evidence before arriving at a series of judgements and awarding grades for the quality of the provision.

Review grades are awarded on a five-point scale:

Grade description	Interpretation
1: Outstanding	This describes provision or outcomes that is/are at least good in all or nearly all aspects and is/are exemplary or exceptional in many.
2: Good	This describes provision or outcomes that is/are better than the basic level. Practice will be at least sound and there may be some particularly successful approaches or outcomes.
3: Satisfactory	This describes a basic level of adequacy. No major areas of weakness substantially affect what learners, or significant groups of learners, achieve. Some features may be good.
4: Below satisfactory	This describes situations where major weaknesses in some areas affect the outcomes for learners and outweigh any strengths in the provision.
5: Very weak	This describes situations where there are major weaknesses in all, or almost all, areas and where, as a result, learners are very poorly served.

Introduction

Description of the provision

Talal Abu Ghazaleh Training Group (TAG) is a subsidiary of Talal Abu Ghazaleh International Group (TAGI). The training services at TAGI are run by Talal Abu Ghazaleh Training Academies; currently there are nine such academies around the world. The Bahrain office, which started its operation in 1976, reports to the regional office in Jordan. The regional office designs the course materials and selects the trainers. The daily management of the Bahrain office is handled by two employees, who carry out this role in addition to their core duties for other TAGI-Bahrain services.

TAG offers a wide range of very short and non-accredited courses in 13 areas of management, business, information technology (IT), finance, law and soft skills. TAG trained 76 learners in 2007 and 134 learners in 2008. Nearly all learners are employed, and the vast majority come from various government agencies.

Scope of the review

This review was conducted over three days by a team of four reviewers. During the review, reviewers analysed data about the qualifications learners achieve and the courses they complete and talked with trainers, administration and support staff, learners and employers.

This report summarises reviewers' findings and their recommendations about what TAG should do to improve.

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Grade 4: below satisfactory

Although the quality of programmes, support and guidance offered to learners by TAG are satisfactory, the effectiveness of training and the leadership and management of the company are below satisfactory. There was insufficient evidence to enable a judgement about learners' achievement.

Retention is good, and has exceeded 95% over the past two years. All TAG's courses are of short duration. TAG does not use effective methods to monitor learners' achievement and skills development. Managers do not keep adequate records of learners' progress. Although many learners acquire very basic vocational skills, these skills are often not at a high enough level to be useful in the workplace. Learners' attendance and punctuality are not regularly logged or monitored.

Trainers know their subjects well and are experienced in the field of business they teach, but this experience is not utilised to enrich training materials with relevant practical exercises and examples. Initial assessment is not used to plan training effectively and to ensure that learners' varying needs are met. Course outlines are shared with learners, and TAG prepares a simple internal lesson plan based on the topics to be covered in each course. This plan is not detailed enough. It does not cover learning objectives, how the content will be delivered and what techniques will be used.

TAG offers an adequate range of non-accredited programmes. These are used extensively by government organizations. There is very little enrolment from the private sector. Training materials are wide-ranging, rich in theoretical knowledge and updated regularly by the regional office in Jordan. However, they do not fully take account of Bahrain's local labour market needs. TAG's managers do not research employers' requirements, and their approach to gathering employers' feedback after each course is haphazard. Learners' and employers' feedback is not used to improve provision.

TAG's trainers are generally supportive to learners. However, although TAG has a structured website, learners cannot easily search through to select courses that fulfil their requirements. The courses mentioned on the website do not have enough details about the course and about the trainer. Sufficient health and safety equipment is in place, but learners are not made fully aware of the relevant procedures to follow if an incident occurs.

TAG's planning does not focus enough on improving learners' achievement or the quality of provision. The TAG regional office provides clear mission and policy statements, but these do not reflect the specific needs and context of Bahrain. The organisation has insufficiently robust systems to monitor the performance of trainers. Performance monitoring is unsystematic and does not result in useful feedback for trainers.

Capacity to improve

Grade 4: below satisfactory

TAG has well-advanced plans to improve its physical resources. The Bahrain office is currently making the transition from training office to training centre and is preparing to move to bigger and better-equipped premises. There are too few staff to meet current requirements, however. Managers plan to recruit a training manager and full-time trainers, but have not yet done so. The organisation has expanded its range of programmes only slightly over the last few years. In 2008, in collaboration with an international university, it introduced an IT skills diploma. The rationale behind the introduction of this particular programme is unclear and, as demand for it has so far been very low, it has not run yet.

The company lacks information vital to quality improvement. Learners' achievements are not effectively monitored. Learners' and employers' feedback is not systematically gathered and used to bring about improvement. There is no formal system to monitor trainers' performance and provide them with developmental feedback. No specific strategic plans or objectives have been developed for the Bahrain office. TAG does not effectively meet requirements identified at regional level, for example, for local offices to conduct a market research analysis before preparing their annual training plans.

The self-evaluation form (SEF) prepared for this review was not rigorous, gave over-estimated grades and did not identify key areas for improvement. The SEF was prepared by staff in the Bahrain office only. The staff in the regional office, despite having direct roles in the training activity in Bahrain, were not involved.

Summary of grades awarded

Overall judgement	Grade
Effectiveness of provision	Grade 4: below satisfactory
Capacity to improve	Grade 4: below satisfactory
Review findings	
How well do learners achieve?	Insufficient evidence to grade
How effective is training?	Grade 4: below satisfactory
How well do programmes meet the needs of learners and employers?	Grade 3: satisfactory
How well are learners guided and supported?	Grade 3: satisfactory
How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	Grade 4: below satisfactory

Main judgements and recommendations

Strengths

No key strengths

Areas for improvement

- **Measures used to assess learners' achievements.** TAG does not track learners' progress or measure their achievement. Courses are not accredited, and learners are judged to have achieved if they attend more than 75% of the course sessions. This is not a sufficiently rigorous method, and does not demonstrate whether learners have gained the required skills.
- **Initial assessment.** TAG uses no initial assessment before a course starts to determine the learners' prior knowledge and skills. A minority of learners do not have the basic skills required for their programmes.
- **The lack of useful and relevant practical exercises to enrich training.** In the sessions observed, trainers relied too much on lecturing and gave learners few opportunities for practical exercises. Sometimes, necessary equipment is not available. The range of practical activities used is too narrow to enhance the theoretical knowledge developed by learners and, in some cases, is not relevant to learners' needs and job requirements.
- **The methods for surveying employers', learners' and market needs.** The system of surveying employers' and market needs is neither systematic nor documented. TAG does not carry out purposeful research on market needs nor does it seek employers' feedback after courses in order to improve what is offered, other than through casual visits. Although the regional working procedures require that local offices analyse local market needs and inform the regional office of the results when preparing their annual training plans, this has not yet been done. Learners' feedback is collected through post-course evaluation forms, but these forms are not systematically analysed, aggregated or used to plan improvement.
- **Strategic planning.** TAG lacks robust strategic plans that focus on improving the quality of training and learners' achievement. Learners' achievements are not consistently or effectively monitored and analysed. There are no written plans that focus directly on the quality of training.

- **Monitoring of trainers' performance.** the performance of trainers in Bahrain is not sufficiently or systematically monitored. TAG lacks a session observation scheme to monitor and improve the quality of training. Occasionally, managers visit training sessions, but this is not done systematically. Trainers who have been visited are not subsequently provided with helpful feedback so that they can improve. The appraisal of staff performance is not directly linked to targets or plans for improving the quality of training and learners' achievement, and is based solely on the achievement of financial targets.

Recommendations

In order to improve, TAG should:

- develop robust systems for ensuring that learners' progress is closely monitored, assessed and recorded
- introduce initial assessment to gauge learners' prior knowledge and skills before all courses start
- enrich the training programmes with more useful practical exercises, relevant to learners' and local employers' needs
- develop a system for analysing the local market and employers' needs and use the outcomes to shape the range of courses on offer
- develop a robust and well-grounded strategic plan
- devise a formal system for observing training sessions and provide them trainers with effective feedback.