

**AN ASSESSMENT OF LECTURERS ABILITY IN TRANSFERRING THE
NECESSARY SKILLS IN CLASSROOM- THE COLLEGE OF
TECHNOLOGICAL STUDIES, KUWAIT; AS A CASE STUDY**

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ABSTRACT: *Recently, there is a considerable gap between what is learned in the classroom and the real life context of vocational and technical students' present and future workplace. This problem mostly occur in developing countries where lecturers in vocational and technical education have limited knowledge and experience of the real practice of industry and thus their experience is limited within the boundaries on their institutions. This paper examine whether lecturers take into consideration those skills mostly needed by industry in their classes. In other words, do lecturers know the skills needed for today's workplace? The study also examines the degree of industrialist's involvement with vocational and technical lecturers in determining the types of knowledge, skills and attitudes that need to be stressed in the classroom. The study would consists of: a review of the related literature; a questionnaire that would be distributed to a sample of lecturers at the College of Technological Studies; Personal interviews with the head of the department; dean of industrial liaison offices; and the department trainee's direct supervisors in local industry. This paper would conclude that lecturers must emphasis and develop the mostly needed knowledge, skills and attitudes by industries in their classes, otherwise industries would heavily depend on expatriates for years to come.*

KEYWORDS: Lecturers Ability, Skills, Kuwait

INTRODUCTION

Today's workforce is consisted of a diverse group of individuals. In developing countries and less developed countries, the number of expatriates is highly exceeded the number of indigenous manpower particularly in vital sector such as oil industry and electricity and water. The fact is that workplace requires new and broader knowledge, skills and attitude than ever before. As a result, industries and business have realised that they must have a well trained workforce if they are to cope with the rapid change in science and technology. This situation has forced industries and businesses to increase their on-the job training programs and demanding higher requirements for taking over the job hoping to meet work present and future standard. Recently, industries and business spend billions of dollars every year to employ and train workers in order to increase profitability by reducing costs associated with training, profits, and production errors. (Ferguson 2007) In fact, the Partnership for 21st Century works in the USA is to promote institutions to incorporate 21st century knowledge, skills and attitudes in educational curricula. It stated: "In an economy driven by innovation and knowledge... in marketplaces engaged in intense competition and constant renewal...in a world of tremendous opportunities and risks...in a society facing complex business, political, scientific, technological, health and environmental challenges... and in diverse workplaces and communities that hinge on challenges... and in

diverse workplaces and communities that hinge on collaborative relationships and social networking...the ingenuity, agility and skills of the United States people are crucial to U.S. competitiveness.”(Partnership, 2008, p.1) Indeed, the success of an economy would depend extensively of the optimal utilization of its human resources, as the Economic and Social Research Council (2005) stated “Economic success is increasingly based on the effective utilization of intangible assets, such as knowledge, skills, and innovative potential as the key resource for competitive advantage”. This view was also share by the Commission of Growth and development (2008), when stated that “Investment in the health, knowledge, and skills of the people-human capital-are as important as investments in the more visible, physical capital of the economy”. (p.11)Therefore, vocational and technical education is in the forefronts in seeking new strategies and approaches to preparing the workforce of the future. Much of the vitality of vocational and technical institutions resides in the faculty and how she or he connects with their students. Faculty must have the opportunities to involve and enhance their teaching skills in their classrooms. New teaching strategies and methods should stress active questioning, activities that encourage cooperative learning, and real cases studies and solutions. However, there is a common believe that vocational and technical education is failing to respond to the need of business and industries and thus lack the skills needed in the world of work. Researchers in the field of vocational and technical education has expressed a serious concerned that there is indeed a obvious gap between what industrialist want and what the recipient of vocational and technical institutions expect. (Hanne man & Gardner 2010). This is due to many reasons, among which are: students are not fully aware of course objectives, students are not listening to their lecturer and advisor, lack of machines and tools in workshops, lack of participation in class exercises, and ineffective appraisal scheme. Therefore, employers seem reluctant to hire vocational and technical graduates who lack certain skills. The Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2010, listed those skills mostly needed by employers, in order of importance, “communication skills, analytical skills, teamwork skills, technical skills (as related to major), and a strong work ethic”. (Koc & Koncz,2009) Among the skills mostly require by industries and business were professionalism, teamwork, oral communications, ethics and social responsibility. (Partnership for 21st century Skills, 2008,p.12) Another study, have also revealed that reading and writing skills is not enough for a worker to start a job rather that of critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity.(AMA Survey, 2010, p.2).

On the other hand, do lecturers know the type of knowledge, skills and attitudes needed for today’s and tomorrow’s workplace? Are lecturers capable of monitoring the change of skills in their classrooms? And how? Hite, Fletcher, Bruening, Durr, Yontz, Zatezalo et al. (2009) pointed out: “Not only do education faculty have to understand and convey their content, and know and use effective teaching methods, they also have to be able to explicitly explain and reflect on their own teachings so that teacher candidates are able to see the instructional decisions and productive reflection that must continually take place”. (p. 86) In this respect, Brophy, Klein, Portmore, and Rogers (2008) has stress on the need to change and develop the methods used by lecturers in teaching students certain skills in classroom in order pin point their inability to successfully transfer concepts. Thus, it is essential for future to workers to be able to transfer their knowledge, skills and attitudes to

new situations efficiently. Indeed, employers are keen to employ those graduates from certain institutions that teach students beyond basic knowledge and provide and prepare their graduates to be with "successful and contributing members of today's global economy". (Hart, 2006, p.1)

In Kuwait, the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAE&T) has been established to respond to the urgent need for skilled and semi-skilled national labor. The PAAE&T consists of the College of Technological Studies, the College of Business Studies, the College of Business Education, the College of Health Service, the High Institute of Energy, the Sabah Al-Salem and Shweekh branches of the Industrial Training Institute, the Institute of Nursing, and the Higher Institute for Communications and Navigation. "The College of Technological Studies established an educational philosophy in order to achieve a strategic national objective; that is, to invest in Kuwaiti people in building a productive future for Kuwait. The role of the college is to design and offer study programs, to develop the graduate with executive capabilities and grant academic credentials from vocational licenses to scientific degrees". (The PAAE&T main Website) In Kuwait, the need for skilled and semi-skilled national workers is the highest government priority in national human resource development. Expatriates form 69% of the total workforce. In fact, the World Bank report has classified Kuwait as having the fourth smallest ratio of national to expatriate workers in the world. However, Kuwait is currently one of the top countries in terms of financial transfer to expatriates' countries of origin (AlRai Newspaper, Kuwait, 2010). The domination of expatriates is visible in most sectors, especially manufacturing, construction, transportation, storage, communications, financial insurance, real estate and business services. The variation of national labor and expatriates is also noted in occupational groups. In 2008, there were 22,825 non-Kuwaitis among medical and science technicians, compared to 7,028 Kuwaitis, 120,438 non-Kuwaitis in the production sector, compared to 8,986 Kuwaitis and 24,313 non-Kuwaiti engineers, compared to 6,741 Kuwaitis (Ministry of Planning, Annual Statistical Abstract 2009).

Research Objectives

- a. To identify and examine lecturer's awareness of the type of knowledge, skills, and attitudes set in their course objectives.
- b. To identify and examine the types of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that have been transferred to potential students.
- c. To measure student's perception and expectation of the standard of teaching, level of knowledge, skills, and attitudes acquisition.
- d. To measure students perception towards the quality of workshops, laboratories safety and health procedures.
- e. To measure students perception towards the effectiveness of industrial training programs.
- f. To measure industrial involvement in determining the require knowledge, skills and attitudes mostly needed by the recipients of the college's graduates.

The anticipated outcomes of this research would indeed help decision makers, particularly at the College of Technological Studies, in reforming a new strategy and plan

that ensure the preparation of an appropriate learning environment for both students and lecturers. As well as, setting guidelines for both the College of Technological Studies and related industries in enhancing students knowledge, skills and attitudes that meet industrial present and future requirements

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study would consist of: a review of the related literature; a questionnaire that would be distributed to a sample of lecturers at the College of Technological Studies (6 lecturers in each of the three departments chosen for the purpose of this study); Personal interviews with the heads of three departments (those departments dealing with the oil sector and electricity power stations); dean of industrial liaison offices; and the department trainee's direct supervisors in local industry and electricity power stations. Research Sample: A stratified (6) lecturers sample would be chosen for the purpose of this research in each of the three selected departments. The selection of the departments would be based on that department serving the oil industry and electricity power stations due to their vital role in enhancing the country's economy. A personal in depth interview would be also conducted with the heads of the three selected departments, dean of the college, assistant academic affairs, head of the industrial training programs, and graduates direct supervisor in the industrial sector. The data collected would be analysed by using frequency and cross-tabulation (SPSSX) to answer the research objective raised.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

The Characteristic of the Research Sample.

A questionnaire was sent to a sample of 300 students in each of the three selected departments at the College of technological Studies, and 245 completed questionnaires were received. This represents 81.6% of the total sample. The percentage of male students was 65.8% compare to 34.2% female students. Kuwaiti students formed 94.5% of the total selected students.

In respect to instructor's sample, 6 lecturers were selected from each of the following departments: Manufacturing Engineering, Petroleum Engineering, and Electrical Engineering. All selected sample were male and 57% were Kuwaiti and 43% were non Kuwaitis. In respect to qualifications, 71% of selected sample hold Ph.D. degree, 5% hold Master degree, and 24% hold bachelors degree. In regards to teaching experience, 67% of the selected sample has more than 18 years teaching experience, 14% between 12-17 years, 14% between 6-11 years, 5% between 1-5 years of teaching experience. However, when asked to indicate number of years working in industry, 29% of the selected sample has no working experience, 14% has less than 1 year experience, 43% have between 1-5 years working experience, 10% have between 6-11 years working experience, and 5% has more than 18 years of working experience. Selected industrialists (3) students' direct supervisors were also interviewed to establish their opinions on the quality of the graduates and the efficiency of the industrial training programs. The selected industries were in the Oil Sector (Kuwait Oil Company, Kuwait National Petroleum Company, and Petrochemical

Measuring lecturer's awareness of the type of knowledge, skills, and attitudes set in their course objectives.

Lecturers were asked to indicate whether course objectives have included specific knowledge, skills, and attitudes. The findings were shown in table (1) below.

Table 1: Types of knowledge, skills, and attitudes included in course objectives.

Elements	Yes	No
Communications skills	75	25
Analysis skills	80	20
Team work approach	95	5
Technical skills	95	5
Ethical skills	100	0
Work commitment	100	5
Writing skills	65	35
Creative thinking	62	38

Lecturers were found aware that course objectives included essential competencies that students need to satisfy industrial requirements. Among which were ethical skills, work commitment, team work approach, and ethical skills. As a result, lecturers ensured to transfer various skills in classroom which were considered significant in upgrading the quality of graduates. Table (2) shows the skills that lecturers transferred to students in classroom and thus have been confirmed by the majority of the selected lecturers.

Table 2: Types of skills that have been transferred to students.

Elements	Yes	No
Communications skills	81	19
Problem solving techniques	100	0
Team work approach	100	0
Technical skills	67	34
Ethical skills	100	0
Work Accuracy	100	5
Writing skills	85	10

Creative thinking	90	10
Time management	100	0
Listening skills	71	29
Respecting Collogues	75	25
Work confidentiality	90	10
Health & safety procedures	85	15
Follow Rules	80	20
Work loyalty	70	30
Work Excellence	100	0
Respecting superior	90	10

Measuring student's perception towards lecturer's competencies.

An attempt has been made to measure student's perception and expectation of the standard of teaching, level of knowledge, skills, and attitudes acquisition. This would include clarifying course objectives to students, defining evaluation system, encourage team work approach, enhancing student's communications skills. The results were shown in table (3) below.

Table 3: Measuring student's perception towards lectures competencies.

Elements	Agree	Disagree
Defining Course Objective	89	11
Defining Evaluation Methods	86	14
Encouraging Team Work	70	30
Encouraging Innovation Thinking	40	60
Enhancing Verbal Communication	74	26
Enhancing Writing Skills	79	21
Problem Solving Methods	50	50
Work Loyalty	66	34
Respecting Superior	55	45

Respecting Colleagues	92	8
Encouraging Work Accuracy	89	11
Work Confidentiality	75	25
Coping With Work Pressure	35	65
Health and safety Procedures	81	19
Respecting Work Time	35	65
Encouraging Work Initiative	76	24
Time Management	25	75
Applying Practical Cases	45	55
Participating in Problem Solving	76	24
Recognizing Students Differences	72	28
Inviting Lectures from Industry	20	80
Curriculum Development	55	45
Work Ethics	30	70

The above findings showed that lecturers have stress on some essential issue during the academic course and regrettably have ignored other main academic skills. Among the issues that lecturers have taking into consideration were: defining course objectives on the beginning of the course and that supported by 89% of the selected students, clarifying the evaluation system to students (86% agreed), encourage team work approach (70% agreed), enhancing writing skills (79% agreed), encourage work accuracy (89% agreed), recognizing students differences (72% agreed). On the other hand, the research revealed that there are other essential issues that have been either neglected or forgotten by lecturers. Among which were: encouraging innovation thinking (60% disagreed), problem solving skills (50% disagreed), respecting superior (45% disagreed), copying with work pressure (65% disagreed), time management (75% disagreed), applying practical cases (55% disagreed), inviting lecturers from industry (80% disagreed),, and work ethics (70% disagreed).

Measuring student's perception towards the standard of workshops and Laboratories.

An efforts has been made to identify and examine whether students views towards the standard of workshops and laboratories. The findings are shown in table (4) below.

Table 4: Measuring students' perception towards the standard of workshops and Laboratories.

Elements	Agree	Disagree
The availability of updated machines and tools	48	52
The correspondence of machines and tools with course objectives	77	23
The availability of the right number of machines and tools	58	42
The availability of raw materials	77	23
Health and Safety procedures	78	22
The correspondence of machines and tools with market requirements	89	11
The availability of healthy working environment	58	42
The competence of trainer	79	21
The diversity of practical cases	86	14
The availability of working manuals	86	14
The competence of trainers in solving problems	80	20

The above findings revealed that despite the vital role played by workshops and laboratories in shaping students skills, students have noted the absent of recent machines and tolls (52% disagree), the availability of the right number of machines and tools (42% disagreed), and the availability of healthy working environment (42% disagreed). On the other hand, students have noted the correspondence of machines and tools with course objectives (77% agreed), the availability of raw materials (77% agreed), the availability of health and safety procedures (78% agreed), the correspondence of machines and tools with market requirements (89% agreed), the competence of trainer (79% agreed), the availability of working manuals (86% agreed), and the competence of trainers in solving problems (80% agreed).

Measuring student's perception towards the standard of industrial training Programs.

An attempt has been made also to examine student's views towards the standard of industrial training programs in related industry. The findings are shown in table (5) below.

Table 5: Measuring students' perception towards the standard of industrial training Programs.

Elements	Agree	Disagree
The suitability of duration of industrial training programs	80	20
The use of machines and tools	75	25
College Trainers competences	83	17
Industrial trainers competences	81	19
The availability of health and safety procedures	87	13
The availability of update machines and tools	77	23
Enriching students knowledge and skills	83	17
Acquiring skills in problem solving	75	25
Diversity in cases studies	83	17
The availability of work manuals	66	34
Stressing on work ethics	75	25
Enhancing writing skills	72	28
Suitability of evaluation system	81	19
Enhancing communication skills	79	21
Encouraging team work approach	83	17

The above findings showed that majority of students have "agreed" on all the issue raised regarding industrial training programs. For instance, students have agreed that industrial training programs have enrich student's knowledge and skills (83% of total students), contain different cases studies (83%), encourage team work approach, and indeed take into consideration health and safety procedures (87%).

Measuring lecturers perception towards the quality of teaching

An effort has been made to examine lecturer's opinions towards the quality of teaching. The findings are shown in table (6) below.

Table 6: Measuring lecturer's perception towards the quality of teaching

Elements	Yes	No
Clarifying course objectives to students	100	0
Course objectives are suitable to course contents	100	0
Course objectives meet industrial requirements	90	5
Whether industrialist participate in setting course objectives	80	20
Updating course objectives	87	13
The availability of update machines and tools	81	19
Defining skills require by industry	95	5
Whether course objectives require specific machines and tools	76	24
Whether machines and tools are available in the department	52	48
Defining the methods in transferring knowledge and skills to students	90	10
Ability in defining students needs	76	24
The use of different teaching methods	76	24
The use of real case studies	90	10
The use of proper evaluation method	81	19
Maintaining machines and tools	81	19
Ensuring healthy learning environment	100	0

The above finding indicated without any doubt that lecturers have taking positively into account those issues related in enhancing student's knowledge, skills and attitudes. For instance, lecturers have ensured that course are designed to meet industrialist requirements and thus specified the types of machines and tools require meeting such objectives. In addition, lecturers have taking into consideration student's differences and use several cases studies to raise the quality of learning. It is worth mentioning at this point that 80% of the selected lecturers have indicated that they have involved industrialist in determining and updating course objectives. Surprisingly enough, 52% of the selected lecturers have voiced complain that their department lacks recent machines and tools.

Measuring the degree of collaboration with industry

Lecturers were also questioned whether they have a link with industry and 71% gave positive answer. Table (7) shows the area of collaboration between the selected lecturers and local industry.

Table 7: Measuring the degree of collaboration with industry

Elements	Yes	No
Curriculum development	73	27
Research and development	73	27
Problem solving	64	36
Industrial training	73	27
Determining level of knowledge and skills	67	33
Invited lecturers	79	21
Providing consultations	80	20
Updating machines and tools	53	47
Updating workshops and laboratories	50	50
Health and safety procedures	73	27
Enhancing work ethics	80	20
Enhancing work loyalty	64	36

Measuring industrial perception towards the quality of graduates

At effort has been made to interview graduates direct supervisor in the oil sector and Ministry of Electricity and Water. The aim was to measure the perception of direct supervisor to various aspects related to the quality of graduates from the College of Technological Studies. Among the issue discussed, were work commitments, degree of graduate's initiative, level of knowledge, level of skills, respecting direct supervisor, following health and safety procedures, links with the College of technological Studies, and overall evaluation. In the Oil sector, an interview have been made with four senior supervisors in different departments, who rate graduates work commitment are "good" as far as there is a penalty imposed on those who fail to attend work on time. In respect to work initiative, all supervisor stresses on the need to push graduates to complete the work assigned and ensure such allocated task finished on time. Graduates were also found, in some cases, to either forget or ignore order from their direct supervisor, especially if his direct supervisor in not Kuwaiti nationality. Surprisingly enough, all direct supervisors notice the lack of level of knowledge and skills for those graduates from the College of technological Studies. This was also worsening by the unfamiliarity of graduates with the type of machines and tools used in oil industry. Selected direct supervisor gave a "negative" answer toward whether if they have collaboration with the College of technological Studies. In fact, they seem eager to provide assistant to the college management and staff, however, they feel that they have been either forgotten and/or

ignored. It is worth mentioning at this point, that graduates direct supervisor in a strong favor of employing non Kuwaiti manpower and thus not supporting to some extent the concept of relaying on Kuwaiti manpower.

In respect to measuring the perception of graduates direct supervisors in the Ministry of Electricity and water. Interviews with six graduate's direct supervisor were conducted in Doha Power Station and Al-Zoor Power Station. All interview graduates direct supervisor rate graduates attendance at work on time as "good". When asked to rate graduates work initiative graduates direct supervisors were vary in their answers. Only two graduates supervisor who rated as "very good", compared to four supervisors who have rated as "good". Despite such rating, all supervisors agreed that graduates must by encourage and in most cases forced to complete the work assigned by themselves without the interference from the direct supervisors. In respect to obeying direct supervisors orders all selected supervisors gave rated "good". Graduates seem to follow well health and safety procedures and thus rated "very good". Surprisingly enough, all selected supervisor have rated the level of graduates knowledge and skills in their filed as "very poor". Selected supervisors stress to the need that graduates must absorb the concept of respecting and liking the type of work that they performing. They added "graduates dislike the type of work and must be trained on how to cope with working with machines and tools and expose to high temperatures". Again, selected supervisors found rejecting the idea of replacing Kuwaiti for non-Kuwaitis in such vital sector. They all agree that the majority (90%) of graduates dislike the type of work, but also unable to show a sincere willingness to continuing working for long period in such type of work.

In respect to collaborations with the College of Technological Studies, all selected supervisors have indicated that they have no contact with the College of technological Studies. In fact as one of the interviewed supervisor stated "we hope to have some sort of contact with the College so that we can work together to improve the standard of graduates. We received graduates not only lack the necessary knowledge, but also with little or no skill to deal with related machines and tools that supposed to be trained for in his college".

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

An immediate imperative is for vocational education to be significantly more responsive to the actual needs of industry. In fact, vocational education is considered invalid if it fails to meet the needs and expectation of students, instructors, government and industry. In developing countries (e.g. Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates), the need for skilled and semi-skilled national manpower is one of the main government priorities aimed at overcoming and/or reducing dependence on expatriates. This would imply, from the point of view of vocational educators that students need quality education and training in order to satisfy the competency levels required by industry.

Vocational and technical education has unique characteristics since it is differ from other type of education like universities. In fact, such type of training and education institutions requires that lecturers must maintain a special knowledge, skills and attitudes that

correspond to industrial requirements. Falling to acquire a special skills and competencies would widen the gap between what is being taught in vocational and technical institutions and related industry.

Lecturers seemed to stress on some essential issues related to course contents and may forget or ignore other significant issues, especially those skills related in enhancing students skills that mostly needed by industry. For example, the lack of recent machines and tools would indeed poses a threat to the quality of the graduates from college of technical studies. This was confirmed by more than a half of the selected lecturers and students. In fact, another problem was the availability of the right number of machines and tools that match the number of students in either workshops or laboratories. Such inconvenient situation would indeed hinder the transformation of the needed skills to students. On the other hand, it seems that lecturers are well aware of the need to include significant skills in course objectives such as communications skills, technical skills and ethical skills which would be expected to reflect on the behavior of those students working in a specific industry. The management of the college of technical studies must keep close contact with related industry so that can obtain its setting objectives. Winding the gab with crucial industry such as the oil industry and ministry of electricity and water would force such industry to rely on expatriates for years to come.

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