

# Evaluating MA in English Program at Albaydha University from the point of view of the enrolled students

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## Abstract

*This study aims, in the first place, at evaluating MA in English program at Albaydha University from the point of view of the enrolled students who constitute the first batch of the program. Secondly, it aims at evaluating their ability to critically evaluate the program making use of what they have studied in the course "Curriculum and Teaching Methods". The study took place at the end of the first semester of the academic year 2020/2021. The sample of study consists of all the students who joined the MA English program at the English Department, Faculty of Education and Science, Rada'a, Albaydha University. The sample was selected purposefully as the number of the enrolled students is few, i.e. 16. Having studied the aforementioned course, they were asked to write a critical evaluation of the program based on the principles they have learned. The data obtained reveal that most of the enrolled students were able to utilize what they have learned effectively in evaluating the program. The findings indicate that they were capable to identify, enumerate, describe and analyze areas of strength as well as points of weakness. Additionally, they show good efficacy in providing recommendations for the betterment of the program.*

Key words: evaluation, MA English program, curriculum, infrastructure,

## Introduction

Albaydha University, a governmental university in Yemen, was established in 2008 as an independent university. Before that, there were only two colleges as branches of Sana'a University between 1993 and 1996. The two colleges became branches of Tamar University after its establishment. Nowadays, it has two campuses one is in Albaydha and the other is in Rada'a. There are four faculties in the university. They are Faculty of Education and Faculty of Administrative Sciences in Albaydha as well as Faculty of Education and Science and Faculty of Administrative Sciences in Rada'a.

## University vision

To become a leading institution in education, research and community services both nationally and internationally.

## University mission

Preparing well-qualified graduates in response to the community needs by equipping them with high education quality in the various fields of science and research through distinctive educational programs.

## University objectives:

- Elevating the level of education and scientific research to be able to compete nationally and internationally.
- Continues refreshment of the educational process at the undergraduate and postgraduate stages.
- Providing a framework of high quality in education to achieve the university objectives.
- Encouraging cooperation between the university and the local and international universities as well as educational centers.
- Carrying out theoretical and empirical studies to serve the community and contribute in finding out practical solutions for the

economic, political and social problems.

- Developing the university via the use of technology and implementing the practical side.

## University Centers

The Development and Quality Assurance Center was established in 2014 and was called The Academic Development and Accreditation Quality Circle. In 2020 the university established three centers, i.e. Training and Community Service Center, the Center of Water and Environment and Institute of Continuous Education.

## University journal

*Albaydha University Journal*, a quarterly journal, was established in 2019 and five issues have been published up to now.

The website of the journal is ([www.baydaauniv.net/buj](http://www.baydaauniv.net/buj)).

## Postgraduate studies

The Mathematics' Master Program started in 2019 whereas in 2020 candidates were able to join the English, Islamic studies and Executive MBA programs. (The Annual Report of Albaydha University, 2020)

## MA English Program at Albaydha University

The MA English program came, in the first place, as a response to the immense need to qualify the administrators of the English Departments at Albaydha University as they become unable to study abroad because of the current situation. Some of them have spent more than six years waiting to get a chance hopelessly till the program has been initiated. In addition, other students from the surrounding areas could join the program instead of going to other universities that is considered costly for them. Furthermore, it provides a chance for female students, who cannot go to other universities, to pursue their study. By the end of

registration period, 22 files were received and checked for compatibility with the specified requirements. Then an admission test along with a personal interview were administered to the candidates. The date 10/10/2020 is a landmark in the life of the enrolled students as it was the first day of attending the first lecture in their MA English program.

### ***Structure of the program***

The program was prepared by an assigned committee from the English language Department, Faculty of Education and Science, Albaydha University. In preparing the program, similar programs at some national and international universities were taken as benchmarks. The list includes Ibb University, Tamar University, Cairo University, Yarmouk University, Maulana Azad National Urdu University, The University of Texas and Eotvos Lorand University. In addition, the following MA programs have been cited and used in the design of the program:

- MA in English (Literature, Linguistics, Applied Linguistics and Translation), Department of English, Faculty of Languages and Translation, Imam Mohammed Bin Saud Islamic University, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.
- MA in English Applied Linguistics and Translation, Islamic University in Gaza, Palestine.
- MA in Translation, School of Professional Studies, New York University, USA.
- MA in English, Department of English, East Carolina University, USA.

- MA in Translation, Department of Arabic, Faculty of Arts, University of Durham, UK.

- MA in English Language and Literature, Department of English, Faculty of Arts, University of Delhi, India.

- MA in Translation, Department of English, Faculty of Arts, University of Sharja, UAE.

- (Study Plan and Courses for the Master Programme of English in the Department of English Language, Faculty of education and Science, Rada'a, Albaydha University, 2019)

The overall structure of the program consists of two semesters. They include 12 courses (6 courses each) selected from four specialization tracks, namely:

1. Literature Specialization Track
2. Linguistics Specialization Track
3. Teaching Methods / ELE / ELT Specialization Track
4. Research Project

Hence enabling students to choose the area of specialization according to their academic interests and career goals. Having passed these courses, the student registers for the Master dissertation on one of the topics related to the specialization track chosen by him/her. Having satisfied all the program requirements, the student is then granted the Master Degree of English (by coursework and dissertation) on one of the three provided areas of specialization. (ibid)

### ***Study Plan and Courses***

Study Plan and Courses for the MA Program in English, Department of English Language, Faculty of Education & Science - Rada'a includes:

First Semester		Second Semester	
Course	Credits	Course	credits
1. Phonetics and Phonology	3	1. Research Methodology	3
2. Morphology & Syntax	3	2. 20th C. Drama & Poetry	3
3. Eliz. & Jac. Drama	3	3. Semantics & Pragmatics	3
4. 18th C. Drama & Poetry	3	4. Psycholinguistics & Sociolinguistics	3
5. Curr. & Teach. Methods	3	5. Advanced Syntax	3
6. Historical and Comparative Linguistics	3	6. 19th & 20th C. Novel	3
Third & Fourth Semesters			
Writing and submitting the MA <b>Dissertation</b> – 6 credits			

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program making use of what they have studied in the course "Curriculum and Teaching Methods".

### Questions of the Study

The present study aims at answering the following questions:

1. How do the enrolled MA English students at Albaydha University evaluate the program?
2. To what extent those students are able to critically evaluate the program making use of what they have studied in the course "Curriculum and Teaching Methods".

### Significance of the Study

The significance of the study springs from the fact that the findings, obtained from the enrolled students themselves, could be taken seriously to improve the program by enhancing the points of strength and delimiting the points of weakness.

### Literature Review

According to Alsurori and Salim (2018), "university education witnessed large expansion in the last two decades. Nonetheless, poor structures and traditional content characterize university education. The enhancement of university education requires improving its responsiveness to the needs of the society and of development, and its ability to keep pace with the advances in the fields the humanities and applied sciences and with the changes and challenges of the times". In 2020, the representatives of

Study Plan and Courses for the MA Programme in English, Department of English Language, Faculty of Education and Science, Rada'a, Al-Baydha University, 2019)

### Statement of the Problem

Throughout teaching the course "Curriculum and Teaching Method" to the enrolled MA English students, It was observed that they were, to a great extent, unfamiliar with being critical while doing the tasks and assignments they were asked to work on. Perhaps, this could be attributed to the habit of overdependence on memorization as a technique to pass examinations or they were not exposed to such things. Based on such observations, the researcher decided to make a change by including topics that guide them to do so such as program, curriculum and syllabus design, program evaluation, curricula evaluation and course evaluation. In addition, it has been noticed that they were quite unsatisfied with their MA program. Having complete teaching the mentioned topics, it was needed to examine to what extent the students benefited from and were able to make use of what they have learnt.

### Objectives of the Study

The present study aims at:

1. Evaluating MA English program at Albaydha University from the point of view of the enrolled students.
2. Evaluating the enrolled students' ability to critically evaluate the

Besides, giving a detailed description of the definition and importance, basic ingredients, planning of program evaluation, and other considerations in program evaluation, he stated that some major types of program evaluation include:

Goals-Based Evaluation (are your programs achieving their overall, predetermined objectives?);

Process-Based Evaluations (understanding how your program really works, and its strengths and weaknesses); and

Outcomes-Based Evaluation (identifying benefits to clients).

Headley (2010) stated that program evaluation is important because it:

- Provides measurable criteria to assess the progress of programs in meeting established goals.
- Provides meaningful comparisons with discipline-specific standards, peer institutions, and related departments within the university.
- Provides baseline data for the department and University to make well-informed decisions for program improvement and budget considerations". p.10

## **Methodology**

### **Design**

This study is qualitative in nature. The descriptive analytical approach was used to analyze and interpret the data collected.

### **Participants**

The sample of this study consists of all the successful candidates enrolled in the MA in English program, English Department, Albaydha University. The sample was selected purposively as the number of the whole population is small, i.e. 14 students (8 males and 6 females).

### **Instrument**

The participants were asked to write a critical evaluation of their MA program in the light of they have

56 public and private universities participated in the productive workshop held in Sana'a for the leaders of quality assurance at the Yemeni universities (The Council of Academic Accreditation Report, 2020). This expansion includes master and doctoral programs in all fields in general and education in particular. However, that expansion was accompanied by several challenges in both facilities as well as academic affairs (Al-Mutawakil, 2002 cited in Alsurori and Salim, 2018, Education Status Report, 2010).

Having reviewed the related literature, certain terms need to be defined and related issues as well as previous studies need to be presented. The term 'program' in the context of the study, as defined by the researcher, refers to both the course of qualifying the enrolled students and equipping them with the required knowledge and competencies to achieve the determined objectives within the time specified and the facilities assisting to do so. The term 'program evaluation' refers to obtaining information about a program to diagnose the points of strength and weakness and the degree of correspondence between the stated objectives and the program outcomes.

Program evaluation is of a vital importance for both profit and non-profit institutions. As a result, many writers and researchers (Astramovich and Coker, 2007; Dunsworth and Billings, 2012; Fitzpatrick, Sanders and Worthen, 2004; Harrell, Burt, Hatry, Rossman and Roth, 1996; Melvin, 2003; Oetting, 1982; Royse, Thyer and Padgett, 2006; Wholey, Hatry and Newcomer, 2010) have tackled the issue extensively. In addition, workshops and conferences related to program evaluation were held and many guides have been designed. McNamara's (1998) basic guide to program evaluation is a typical example of such contributions.



- The program is designed based on the experiences of an expert team who also relied on similar national and international programs.
- The program provides opportunities that meet the needs and interests of the students.
- The program is comprehensive and accurate covering the three specializations, i.e. literature, linguistics and ELT.
- The program equips students with the skills they really need.
- The program is designed based on universal standards.
- All the elements of the program are organized in a coherent pattern.
- The program is well-planned by specialized people with clear objectives, specifications and outcomes.

#### **Goals**

- The program's main objectives tend to focus on the general growth and overall development of its students maintaining clear alignment between its components.
- The objectives are realistic, applicable and consider society, culture, needs and interests.
- The program aims to develop skills in critical thinking, textual interpretation, rigorous research and analytical writing.
- The program aims to prepare candidates to serve as curriculum leaders and effective teachers and researchers.

#### **Outcomes**

- The program identifies the expected outcomes.
- The body of courses described will lead to great outcomes.
- The outcomes prepare a student to become a self-learner and a good researcher.
- The program outcomes seek to provide a group of specialists in English language and education.

studied. This took place by the end of the first semester of the academic year 2020/2021.

#### **Procedures**

Having identified the study problem, objectives and questions, the sample of the study has been selected as mentioned above. The respondents were provided with the specifications of their MA program and asked to critically evaluate it based on what they have studied. They were given sufficient time to submit their reports and their responses were analyzed. Finally, the analyzed data was presented and discussed and some recommendations were addressed to the stakeholders.

#### **Data Analysis**

The obtained data was analyzed in two stages. In the first stage, the responses to the first question of the study were analyzed to know how the respondents, the selected sample, evaluated their MA program. In the second stage, the respondents' evaluation was evaluated to find out to what extent they have benefited and made use of what has been learnt so far in the aforementioned course taught by the researcher. The guide proposed for program evaluation by Carter McNamara (1998) was adopted as a model.

#### **Data Analysis Regarding the First Question**

The responses to the first question, i.e. 'How do the enrolled MA in English students at Albaydha University evaluate the program?' reveal the following:

#### **Program design**

- The program fulfills the broad sense of curriculum as a program and has the features of practicality.
- The program is well-designed specifying clearly the targeted students, courses of study, time, expected outcomes, etc.

- There is a lack of having well equipped hall, library and so on.

#### **Infrastructure**

- The capacity of the buildings and availability of means and resources are questionable in the MA program.
- All the infrastructure of the university as a whole is poor.

#### **Conclusion**

- The program proves to be excellent and the areas of weakness are minor and do not interrupt the overflow of the program.
- It is an effective program that covers all the aspects and lists all the items systematically.
- MA in English program is well structured to provide students with the required skills.
- It enables students who cannot travel to other universities to pursue their higher studies.
- The program corresponds with the requirements of labor market.
- The program is ideal particularly in such a situation.
- There are many challenges and obstacles but we have a magnitude trust in our well-qualified teaching staff.

#### **Points of weakness**

- The program does not include units topics of study.
- All the prescribed courses are compulsory.
- It does not involve courses on translation, academic writing, literary criticism and measurement and evaluation.
- It does not show a full understanding of the learners' needs.
- There is a lack of correlation between some aims and outcomes and between literature specification and the contents stated in section three.
- There is no balance between the number of courses in each track.
- There are only 2 ELT courses.
- The program specifications include university vision, mission and

- It qualifies candidates to carry out more responsibility in the various fields of education.

- Outcomes are clear and logical.

#### **Staff**

- The MA program in Albaydha University features a respectable and effective teaching staff.
- MA teaching staff is unique, well qualified and competent, however, some doctors evaluate students' answers in the light of memorization and quantity of answers.
- All the teaching staff members are academically qualified, associate professors, and supervise MA theses at other universities.
- All of them seem to present all what they have in an honest way.
- Being too much helpful leads to laziness, carelessness and absence.
- Most of the professors stick to the standard of a higher study program especially in dealing with the program's enrolled students as scholars.
- It might not be the best idea to start an MA program before securing contracts with specialist teaching staff members to cover all the courses.
- Some professors cover multiple courses and they are not related to their specialization, which might affect the outcomes.
- The teachers deal with us as brothers and consider the difficult situation in which we live.
- Simplified style is used by some of the teachers while some courses are rich with high quality academic content. Some tend to repeat the exact BA content.

#### **Facilities**

- The use of projector is the only technological or teaching aid provided with shortcomings when it comes to power supply.
- Fees are less comparing to other universities.

- The program requires some modifications to avoid the shortcomings and to become a competitive program.
- There is an immense need for a translation course.
- There should be a precise syllabus that takes into account the possibility of covering all the topics within the allotted time.
- The program should have a specific hall, electronic library, internet connection, etc.
- The program should be revised systematically.
- Up-to-date courses and topics should be included and the imbalance between tracks should be removed.

#### **Data Analysis Regarding the Second Question**

The ability of students to evaluate the program based on what they have studied is presented in the following table:

stud ent	desi gn	Go als	outco mes	sta ff	facili ties	infrastru cture	conclu sion	weakn ess	Recommen d-dations
1	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2	✓	✓	×	✓	×	×	×	×	×
3	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
4	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	×	✓	✓
5	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
7	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	×	✓	×
8	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
9	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
10	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	×	✓	×
11	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	×	✓	✓	×
12	✓	✓	×	✓	✓	✓	×	✓	×
13	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
14	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	×	✓	×
Total	14	14	12	14	13	12	6	13	8

The above table shows that the enrolled students, to a great extent, were able to evaluate their MA program and cover all the aspects but with different rates. All of them (100%) evaluated the design, goals and

objectives which are not relevant or important.

- It is difficult to cover the Jacobean and Elizabethan eras in one semester.
- Though we are living in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we are still studying 15<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> centuries literature.
- Most of the teaching staff in our faculty are specialists in literature though the number of linguistics subjects overweigh the others.
- There is a considerable lack of the basic facilities.
- The infrastructure available is very poor.

#### **Recommendations**

- Making a detailed syllabus that covers courses, units, topic and elements of study.
- Addition of new courses based on needs analysis that determines what to be added or deleted.

staff; 93% evaluated facilities and points of weakness; 86% evaluated outcomes and infrastructure; 57% made recommendations and 43% wrote conclusions.



## Conclusion

This study reveals that the enrolled students at MA in English program generally have positive attitudes and optimistic views towards their program. This is reflected in highlighting the points of strength and praising the teaching staff. The findings indicate that the program possesses many points of strength, however, it has other points of weakness that needs to be revised and modified. Moreover, it is found that the majority of students were able to evaluate the program making use of what they have studied effectively. Additionally, they show good efficacy in providing recommendations for the betterment of the program. It is hoped that the decision makers will make use of the findings to enhance the points of strength and get rid of the points of weakness to improve the MA in English program at Albaydha University.

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