Assessment of the Post-Graduate Program at the Faculty of Mass Communication. Case Study[*]

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Abstract

This study evaluates the graduate program of the Faculty of Mass Communication at the University of Sana›a, from the viewpoint of students, faculty and administration, through a survey of a sample of 130 students and 16 faculty and all administration members.

The study reveals numerous shortcomings that plague the program. The most notable from the viewpoint of the students are inadequacies in the physical and academic infrastructure, and various instruction and research drawbacks. The students expressed a "medium" degree of satisfaction with the program, and felt that it has at best met their prior expectations to a "good" degree. Meanwhile, academic staff levelled numerous criticisms at the program, centred on lack of adequate planning and lack of involvement of all faculty members, professionals and practitioners in its design. They regarded the program to be "weak" and indicated a low level of satisfaction with it, calling for its review, so that it may be redesigned on a scientific basis, similar to the latest comparable programs, and in line with recent developments.

I. Introduction

Higher education is currently facing many changes and challenges, which imply a new phase of change and development in this sector (Al Ghamidi, 2008). The contemporary global social discourse reveals that higher education will be an arena of conflict between global powers, especially in a world where people are more interrelated and interdependent (Mohammad, 2009). In addition, the evolution of technology and knowledge has led to an increased demand for high-quality skilled human resources. The nature of the major changes affecting all areas has made the quality of education one of the main concerns in our world. Moreover, one of today›s educational priorities is to control the quality of education by assessing its outputs, monitoring the performance of teachers and institutions, as well as the quality of the educational product and the level of graduates. This is the right way to reach real human development (Mounir & others, 2008). Furthermore, quality assurance in education is one of the most urgent issues to be discussed in a world where information flows intensively, and competition is high among economic and educational institutions. It is needed in order to access this market and educate

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graduates in an assured quality manner (Zimam & Malika, 2009), and to ensure continuous development and competent performance from higher education institutions. This is so they can gain the confidence of the community through their graduates' knowledge on the basis of an internationally recognized assessment mechanism. (Al Khariji & Mahran).

Public, civil and private universities in Yemen are currently introducing post-graduate programs (PhD, Master, and Diploma) in their academic courses, without taking into account the availability of the program's requirements, starting from the infrastructure and ending with the educational programs themselves. These requirements should correspond with the concept of higher education quality, including the functions and activities it implies such as curricula, educational programs, research, students, buildings, equipment and facilities, provision of services to local communities, internal self education, as well as identification of internationally recognized comparable quality criteria (Mohammad, 2009).

The fact is that post-graduate programs in public universities are not designed and based on the needs of the society and the job market for post-graduate specialties. Some of these universities may even launch this kind of program and, after a short period, discontinue it (High Council for Education Planning, 2005 / 2006, p. 71). Hence, the assessment of post-graduate programs is a highly important issue, since assessing these programs is now an integral part of the worldwide educational process and an essential condition set by all academic accreditation bodies for achieving quality assurance. Many intellectuals have described this century as the century of quality, for quality is no longer a luxury, but an urgent necessity imposed by the dynamics of contemporary life and a proof of the survival of the educational institution (Al Hawli, 2004).

The assessment process aims at reaching specific value judgments for the university programs and activities, by using some reference measurements that help to understand and realize the link between all the assessment elements. The assessment is based on specific criteria that govern all the measurable elements of the university's work, so we can judge the university's performance and its ability to fulfil its mission as stipulated in its stated objectives (Abou El Che'er, no date).

Due to the expansion of the university education sector in Yemen, and the rising number of university graduates, post-graduate programs are becoming more popular, as is shown by the increasing numbers of students applying for admission every year, sometimes surpassing the capacity of these programs. For example, 1,104 students were enrolled in post-graduate programs in 2005 / 2006, compared to only 403 in 2002 / 2003 (High Council for Educational Planning, 2005 / 2006, p.72). These growing numbers reveal the need to adopt an overall quality strategy in university education, for overall quality is the driving force towards the community of knowledge (Mohammad, 2009).

Eighteen years after its establishment, the Faculty of Mass Communication at Sana›a University is amongst the faculties that have recently reincorporated the post-graduate program in their curricula. In fact, in the 2007 / 2008 academic year, the faculty started to accept applications for Master›s and Diploma degrees in journalism, radio/ TV, and public relations and advertisement. However, the public relations and advertisement majors were cancelled due to the unavailability of staff in accordance with the stipulated regulations (Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, 2008, p.3). In the following academic year, 2008 / 2009, a «professional diploma» program was launched in this specialization.

The post-graduate program drew the attention of the press[2]. Public opinion on the launching

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[2] The concern of the press regarding the post-graduate program mainly refers to the two weekly-pages published in Al-Thawra newspaper, which is the widest daily publication in Yemen, dedicated to media affairs, including the affairs of the College of Mass Communication. In addition, the majority of enrolled

of the program was divided. The controversy is still going on[3] due to the various problems the program is facing and this needs to be addressed. An assessment should be carried out at several levels in order to determine the extent to which they are achieving their goals, especially in serving the community.

II. The problem of the study, its methodology and tools

1. The problem of the study and the rationale
Amid the debate on the post-graduate program at the Faculty of Mass Communication in the newspapers and web pages and among the teaching and administrative staff, there is a need to assess the components of the program from the point of view of the students and the officials in charge, in order to have a scientific basis for addressing the program deficiencies.

a. Importance of the study
The study is important for it:
1) Provides information on the program in the form of positive and negative feedback.
2) Provides the academic decision-makers at Sanaʾa University with a scientific assessment of the program from the point of view of both students and academic staff.
3) Shows the staff at Sanaʾa University the importance of assessing the whole academic process, and the necessity to conduct these assessments on a regular basis.
4) Highlights the importance of scientific planning for these programs and the necessity to involve all the parties concerned in this process.

b. Aims of the study
The main objective of this study is to assess the post-graduate program at the Faculty of Mass Communication, and examine to what extent it meets the requirements of the educational process. The study also aims at:
1) Revealing the reasons behind the enrolment of students in post-graduate studies.
2) Finding out how the students heard of the post-graduate program at the Faculty of Mass Communication.
3) Discovering why the students chose to enrol in this program.
4) Identifying trends and degrees of satisfaction about the program, and determining its strengths and weaknesses, from the point of view of both students and the academic staff.

c. Research questions
The first set of questions asked in the study was directed at the students, while the second was directed at the academic staff. These questions were:
1) What are the most important characteristics of the students enrolled in the post-graduate program at the Faculty of Mass Communication?
2) What are the reasons behind their enrolment in the program?
3) How have the students heard of this program?
4) Why did they choose to enrol in this program?
5) What are the attitudes of the students concerning the program?
6) What are the teaching methods adopted in this program?

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  students in this program either work in the press or are graduates from this college.
[3] The post-graduate program is facing many problems. This resulted in the Rector of San'a University to establish a committee to develop this program.
  http://www.althawra.net/newsdetails.aspx?newsid=53441? access on February 2, 2009.

7) To which extent has the program responded to the students' expectations?
8) What is the students› assessment of and degree of satisfaction with this program?
9) What are the main strengths and weaknesses in this program?
10) How fluent are the internal communication mechanisms in the Faculty of Mass Communication from the students› point of view?
11) Are the enrolled students willing to continue their studies until they obtain a Masters degree?
12) What are the trends of the academic staff concerning the post-graduate program?
13) What is their assessment of and degree of satisfaction with the program?
14) What are the main strengths and weaknesses in this program from their point of view?
15) What do they suggest in order to develop this program?

2. Literature review

Post-graduate programs gain their importance from the fact that they are related to the scientific research process and the preparation of university teachers. Hence, researchers show great interest in monitoring and assessing it.

Many scientific studies have been conducted in this field, such as of Fayad (1994) that tried to determine the extent to which the post-graduate programs at Sana›a University meet the required criteria. This study was conducted through surveying a sample of faculty members involved in the post-graduate programs at Sana'a University and students enrolled in these programs. The main findings of this study were that the post-graduate studies at Sana'a University do not meet 67 criteria related to the goals, content, teaching and learning, and assessment.

A study by Al Tarek (1994) aimed to identify the level of the Sana'a University assessment of faculty performance, through a survey directed to a sample of students from various faculties. The study showed that the overall students' assessment was «medium» in range.

A study by Al Sane'e (2007) tried to determine the degree of satisfaction of the students about the teaching methods adopted. The survey covered a sample of 170 of level 4 students in the scientific departments. The study showed a «very low» degree of satisfaction of these methods.

A study by Al Hawli & others (2004) aimed to assess the post-graduate programs at Gaza Islamic universities, through questionnaires directed to a sample of students from 4 different faculties. The findings of the study were that these programs are highly responsive to the students' needs, the academic supervision is very competent, the teaching methods are very effective, and new types of technology are being used in the teaching process. However, the study showed that the library and the services it provides need to be developed.

The Al Salahi (2008) study aimed to assess the final tests in humanities and theoretical specialties at Sana'a University, during the first semester of the 2004 / 2005 academic year, in order to determine the extent to which they meet the scientific criteria required in such tests. This study was conducted over a sample of 85 test papers, and reached the conclusion that many of these tests disregarded important technical aspects and focused on essay tests.

A study by Uthman (2008) aimed to evaluate the methods of students' assessment at Taiz University by surveying the opinions of the faculty and students, and assessing samples of the tests conducted at the university. The study showed that all teachers focussed their assessment on knowledge, did not follow good standards in test preparation, either at the level of the form of the tests, or at the level of the content. In addition, they relied on essay questions. The Al Aghbari (2007) study depicted a profile of the university teacher in general, and the Arab teacher in particular. It reached the conclusion that the teacher should be trained at the scientific, academic, and educational levels, and should be aware of many sciences related to the teaching profession.

A study by Al Hamadi (2008) aimed to identify problems related to the professional performance of teachers and the obstacles hindering development based on documentary analysis. This study identified many individual and institutional shortcomings concerning the performance of teachers and factors influencing their development.

A study by Mounir & others (2008) showed how to achieve overall sustainable development, through the development of the higher education sector, and the improvement in the quality of higher education leading to the achievement of sustainable economic and social development. The study reached the conclusion that quality in higher education is the way to human development.

3. Methodology

a. Study sample

The population of the study consisted of all 264 students, both male and female, who were enrolled in the post-graduate program in 2008 / 2009 in Diplomas and Master›s Courses, in all three specialties available at the faculty. The study was conducted on a random sample of 130 students, both male and female, who were divided into categories according to their educational level and specialization. This took place during the last week of the first semester of the 2008/ 2009 university year.

b. Study tools

This study used the «questionnaire» method which is considered as the most widespread means of data collection in the survey method, and the most suitable to study public opinion (Abdul Hamid, 2000, pp. 158 - 158). A questionnaire form that included questions related to the discussed issue was designed for the purpose of this study. In fact, the researcher designed two questionnaire forms: one for the students, as they are at a stage that enables them to judge the effectiveness of the teaching method being used with them, according to Remmers (Al Tarek, 1994, p.12), and the other for the faculty staff. The E-mail system was used as a tool for data collection.

III. Higher education at Sana'a University[4]

Higher education is very recent in Yemen. In fact, university education started in Yemen with the establishment of Sana'a University in 1972 and Aden University in 1975 (National Information Centre, 2006). However, today there are now 21 government and public universities in Yemen (High Council for Education Planning, 2005 /2006, p. 3).

The first post-graduate program at Sana'a University was launched at the Faculty of Letters, in the English language major in 1984. The degrees were at first specialized diplomas delivered in some of the university faculties. Then, in 1985, the deanship of higher education and scientific research was established in order to promote higher education studies and to implement the university's plans and projects. And in the early 1990's, the university launched post-graduate programs in more than 10 new specialties, in general or specialized diploma programs, Master's and PhD programs. Today, all the faculties at the university provide post-graduate programs, with the exception of the Faculty of Dentistry. In the 2007 /2008 university year, there were 50 such programs, found in 11 faculties and two specialized centres.

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[4] Statistics cited in this part were obtained from Department of the Higher Studies, Sana'a University.

IV. The post-graduate program at the Faculty of Mass Communication

The Faculty of Mass Communication is amongst the most recent faculties at Sanaʿa University. It was established in 1991 as a media department at the Faculty of Letters, giving Bachelor's Degree courses and post-graduate studies for one academic year. It was designed for individuals who work in the media, even though they may have graduated from programmes not related to media. The program was operational for three years before being closed for restructuring and development purposes. It became operational again in 2007.

The Faculty of Mass Communication was re-established in 1996. It now includes three departments: journalism, radio/ TV, and public relations and advertisement. The faculty delivers a 4-year Bachelorʾs Degree in each of the aforementioned specializations (Faculty of Mass Communication, 1998/ 1999 -A, p.8). The faculty teaching staff consists of 35 members of various academic ranks[5].

The post-graduate program, in its two tracks of Diploma and Master, aims at achieving a number of educational goals. These include providing an opportunity for students to continue higher education studies, meeting the needs of the media institutions, the university and society in general by providing trained individuals who are able to use diverse media techniques, as well as enhancing and developing the level of scientific media research (Faculty of Mass Communication, 1998/ 1999-B), (Faculty of Mass Communication, 1998 /1999-C).

Even though the university had an early experience with post-graduate studies, no lessons were learnt from this experience, and now, more than 15 years later, it appears to be a similar story of just forging ahead. It should also be mentioned that the post-graduate program had been a matter of debate in the faculty since the ending of the first program – the high diploma – in 1994 until the launching of the new one in 2007 /2008. Since its inception, this program has provoked controversy both inside and outside the faculty. In fact, the previous administration opposed the implementation of the program due to a lack of appropriate resources. A new administration decided to reopen the program and advertisements for the program were published in the Yemeni press. 131 male and female students were offered places in the program after having successfully passed the admission and selection procedures. The faculty was again providing post-graduate studies, although little consideration had been given to the availability of the required resources. The program is now operational with varied strengths and weaknesses.

V. Description of the study sample

Students' sample:
The students' sample was composed as follows:
- Males represented 76.9% of the total respondents, while females represented only 23.1%. They were distributed as follows: journalism, 37.7%; public relations and marketing, 34.6%; and radio/TV, 27.7%.
- 66.2% of students were enrolled in the Diploma courses, and 30% in the preparatory Master's courses.
- 65.4% of students were married, compared to 30% who were unmarried; the married percentage of males was higher than that of females (79% v/s 20).

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[5] These ranks include, three professors, four associate professors, 19 assistant professor, two assistant lecturers, and seven instructors, distributed among the three department of the College.

- The Faculty of Mass Communication graduates ranked first amongst the students enrolled in the program (30%).
- 77.7% of students were working, compared to 17.7% who were non-working; the percentage of working males was higher than that of females (81% v/s 66.7%)
- 68.5% of students were full-time, compared to 31.5% of part-timers.
- 66.2% of students attend their classes "regularly", while 33.3% attend their classes "sometimes"; females attended more regularly than males.

VI. Results of the survey study

1. Results of the students
a. Reasons behind the enrolment of students in post-graduate programs in general
1) General trends
It can be said that the students showed positive attitudes towards higher education and its importance. Love of studying and the desire for continuous learning were the main reasons they cited (70%), followed by the conviction of the importance of getting a post university qualification (40%).

Even though these results are important, students also mentioned other reasons when asked about their enrolment in the program. In fact, the reasons ranked 3 to 9 (with the exception of the ranked 5 – 28.5% - and ranked 8 reasons -13.8% - relating to the activation of the educational memory and the cheap tuition fees to enrol in the post-graduate studies), were about the expected higher revenues they would receive following successful completion of the course. The desire to improve their financial situation ranked 3 (32.3 %), followed by the desire to achieve a better social status (29.2%), then the desire to achieve a better position at work, the desire to get a promotion, or a bonus, the desire to obtain a higher education degree, the desire to get a job, and finally the desire to fill their time with a fruitful activity.

2) Gender differences
The percentages of the above-mentioned reasons were very close for both sexes. However, for eight of the reasons, the percentages of males was higher than those of females, such as getting a promotion or a bonus after having obtained the degree. The females stated three different reasons than males, such as the desire to fill their time with a fruitful activity and reasonable tuition fees. The percentages were similar concerning one reason, i.e. the necessity today to have a post-graduate degree.

b. Means through which the students knew about post-graduate programs at the Faculty of Mass Communication.
1) General trends
The answers given by the respondents highlighted the importance of personal communication in the context of this study. Word of mouth communication ranked first amongst the means through which students knew about the program. In fact, friends and co-workers were classified as number 1 (62.3%) in relaying information, followed by the advertisement published in the Office of Higher Education at the university (26%), then the advertisements published in newspapers (23.8%). This last means can be explained by the fact that Yemeni newspapers are not very widespread; for example only 35,000 copies of «Al Thawra» newspaper, which is the most widespread in Yemen, are published everyday (Central Statistics Body, 2004, p.301)
2) Gender differences
The three means mentioned above about knowing about the post graduate programs were

cited by both males and females. However, the percentages of these reasons varied according to gender: 70% of females heard from friends and co-workers, compared to 60% for males. As for the percentage concerning the advertisement published in the Office of Higher education, the response was 27% from males and 13.3% from females. The percentages for the other reasons were almost identical.

c. Reasons behind the enrolment of the students in the post-graduate program at the Faculty of Mass Communication.

1) General trends

Amongst 50 other programs offered by Sana'a University, the first reason given by students was their desire to study a different major than the one they studied previously at university (38.5%), followed by their need for this major in their current job (33.8%), and then the fact that they are Mass Communication graduates (31.5%). This reason was only rated third because the students enrolled in this program are not all Mass Communication graduates, and this was provoked complaints from Mass Communication graduates. Some of the respondents said that the program *increases the chances of students from other faculties at the expense of Mass Communication students in this field of expertise. This was said to be especially true in the preparatory year for Master's degree, and allows other faculty graduates to work in their field of study*. Other respondents even stated, while talking about the weaknesses, that the program's *focus on theory provides students from other faculties with an unfair advantage, and at the expense of Mass Communication graduates and people working in the media and journalistic fields*. The importance of media studies today was ranked 5th amongst the reasons stated by the students to explain their enrolment in the program, followed by the desire to work in the media field, and the desire to obtain necessary information about their field of specialization.

2) Gender differences

Responses on the enrolment in the post-graduate programs varied with gender. The percentages of females were higher than those of males concerning the following reasons: the desire to study a major different from the one studied previously at university; the requirements of their current job; the importance of media studies today; the desire to obtain necessary information about this program; and the requirements of the Yemeni job market. However, the percentages given by males exceeded those of females regarding other reasons, even though the differences were slight, with the exception of the first reason (56.7% v/s 33%).

The respondents also cited among the reasons the fact that they were unable to enrol in the post-graduate programs offered by the faculty they graduated from because: they do not have the necessary financial means, their major is not required by the job market, the faculty they graduated from does not offer post-graduate studies, or the Information major is the one which was most related to their previous major.

d. Students' trends concerning the post-graduate program at the Faculty of Mass Communication

The «agreement» trends were higher than other trends for 15 out of 19 measurement statements, while «disagreement» trends surpassed the «agreement» trends in 2 statements only: *the program does not respond to the students' media interest, and the program focuses on practice more than theory* - with percentages reaching 51.5% and 43.1% respectively. The «neutral» trends were dominant in one single statement – *the central library at the university does not offer the students the required services* (39.2%), while the «agreement» and «disagreement»

trends were equal in another – the central library at the university provides the students with the necessary books to conduct scientific research – with a percentage of 37.7%.

The «agreement» trends were dominant regarding deficiencies in the faculty library and the central library (working hours, services, and references), the insufficient advertisement for the program in the media, the program provision of new media and communication skills to students, the scientific benefit of the program, the program response to the media learning needs of the students, the easiness of the registration and enrolment operations, the lack of cooperation between students and teachers, the lack in the provision of the required research skills for students, the deficiencies of the program at the research planning stage, and the transparency and fairness of the selection procedures among those willing to enrol in the program. The «agreement» percentages varied between 35.4% at their lowest levels to 72.3% at their highest. After having reviewed the weighted mean values, it was clear that it outweighed the «agreement» trends over other trends in four of the measurement statements: *the working hours of the faculty library do not suit the students› schedules, the program provides me with new media and communication skills, the program provides me with great scientific benefit, and the advertisement of the program in the media was not sufficient*. The coefficient value of these statements was 2.73, 2.61, 2.58, and 2.54 respectively. The «neutral» trend was dominant at the level of the other statements, taking into consideration that the highest value of this coefficient reached 2.5, while the lowest value was 1.70.

e. The students' assessment trends regarding the teaching methods

Data revealed deficiencies in the teaching methods used by the instructors. The percentage concerning the methods used by «some of the teachers» was dominant for all 9 statements, with 76.9% of the respondents saying that «some of the teachers» clearly state the goals of the academic courses. These results match those reached by the Fayad (1994, p.86) study which states that the post-graduate program at Sana›a University does not meet the criteria concerning informing the students about the plans of the courses, so they can understand the objectives, content, assessment mechanisms and references. No specific, clear, and achievable goals are stated by either the faculty or university.

The shortcomings in the educational process were also confirmed by the response of more than 70% of the students who affirmed that some teachers do not present the content of their courses in an organized and comprehensible way. In addition, they use teaching methods that do not promote thinking in students. 67.4% of the respondents also mentioned that "some teachers" encourage discussion and dialogue, which matches the results of the Fayad (ibid.) study concerning a lack in the use of discussion to achieve interaction between the students and teachers. Further, 59.8% of the respondents said that "some teachers" connect the content of their courses with the situation in Yemen whenever it is possible. On the other hand, few teachers take into consideration ability differences among students. The use of modern technology in teaching is absent, whatever teaching method is used. These two observations are in line with the results of the Fayad (Ibid.) study.

The weighted mean values confirmed the opinions mentioned above, because all these values were in line with the "some of the teachers" trend and varied between 2.30 and 2.9, with the exception of the statement concerning the use of dictation as a teaching method which had a value of 2.74, indicating that this is the most widespread method of teaching in the post-graduate program. The overall results indicate that instructors should reconsider their current teaching methods, and the university management should work to provide modern technology.

f. The extent to which the post-graduate program responds to students› expectations

1) General trends

Concerning the extent to which the post-graduate program at the Faculty of Information responded to students' expectations, prior to their enrolment, the highest response was "medium", with a percentage of 44.6%, then "high" (26.2%), and third "weak" (11.5 %), while the percentage showing a "very high" degree of satisfaction was low.

2) Gender differences

Females' dissatisfaction with the program fulfilling their expectations was greater than for males. None of them classified this fulfilment as "very high", while 20% described it as "very weak". There was also a low response to the first option amongst males (9%). Males and females responded to the "medium" option (49%).

3) Majors' differences

Results showed that "high" student satisfaction of the program›s fulfilment of their expectations was low in the three majors. The public relations and advertisement courses proved to be the best in meeting expectations, with 51.1% of the respondents giving a "high" response, while 28.9% described it as «medium», 11.1% as "very high", and 2.2% as "very weak". For the journalism and radio/TV majors, the students' ranking was almost the same with just slight differences in percentages.

g. The extent to which the students are satisfied with the post-graduate program

1) General trends

The highest response on the degree of satisfaction with the post-graduate program at the Mass Communication faculty was "medium" at 56.2%. This was followed by "dissatisfaction" (12.3%), "low degree of satisfaction" (11.3%), "very high degree of satisfaction" (10.8%), and "complete dissatisfaction" (5.4%).

2) Gender differences

Males and females expressed the same degrees of satisfaction from ranks 1 to 3. In fact, the "medium degree" of satisfaction ranked first for both sexes, with 61% for males and 40% for females, followed by "dissatisfaction", with 10% for males and 20% for females, then "low degree of satisfaction", with 10% for males and 16.7% for females. Gender variations were noticed at the level of other degrees of satisfaction.

3) Majors' differences

Most of the students in all majors expressed a "medium degree of satisfaction", varying from 44.4% to 63.3%, while variations were noticed among the other degrees of satisfaction. The journalism students seem to be the least satisfied with their program, for "dissatisfaction" occupied the second place (14.3%), followed by "low degree of satisfaction", and "complete dissatisfaction" (8.2%). The radio/TV students expressed "low degree of satisfaction" with a percentage of 22.2%, which means that this degree of satisfaction ranked 2nd, followed by "dissatisfaction" (13.9%), "very high degree of satisfaction" (11.1%), and "complete dissatisfaction" (5.6%). Public relations and advertisement students showed higher degrees of satisfaction, for the "very high degree of satisfaction" ranked 2nd (20%), followed by "dissatisfaction" (11.1%), "low degree of satisfaction" and "complete dissatisfaction". This is mainly due to the fact that there was a better designing process for the "professional diploma" courses than that for the journalism and radio/TV majors' courses.

h. Students' assessment of the post-graduate program.

1) General trends

The highest response of students to the post-graduate program at the Faculty of Mass

Communication was «good» (44.6%), followed by «very good» (25.4%), then «weak» (14.6%), «excellent» (6.9%), «very weak» (5.4%), and finally «undetermined».

2) Gender differences

Both males and females describing the post-graduate program put «good» in first place (48% for males and 33.3% for females). However, there were percentage variations at the level of other assessments, with males giving higher percentages than females. These assessments were of the same order as in the «general trends» paragraph, with females evaluation of the program as «weak» ranking 2nd (23.3%), followed by «very good» (16.7%), «very weak» (13.3%), and «excellent» (6.7%).

3) Majors' differences

The «public relations and advertisement» major was the most appreciated by students with 42.2% of them describing it as «very good», 33.3% as «good», 15.6% as excellent, and the rest as «weak», then «very weak». As for the two other majors, students ranked «good» in first place, with 51% for journalism and 50% for radio/TV. However, there were variations at the level of other assessments.

i. Main strengths of the post-graduate program from the students' perspective

The students were able through this question to express their opinions of the post-graduate program at the Faculty of Mass Communication in its three components: the curriculum, the instructors, and the teaching process. Many digressed on this subject, and some were so disappointed that they accused the program of having no strengths. Others even mentioned teachers by name and talked about specific courses, both positively and negatively, which revealed some of the real problems that students were suffering from and needed to be addressed.

1) Strengths:
- The very launching of the program in the faculty
- The availability of Yemeni specialized teaching staff, as well as the competence and commitment of some teachers.
- The diversification, concentration, and specialization of the courses, and the conformity of some of these courses with the latest developments in the teaching field.
- The program helps to understand the situation of the media in Yemen, and to be aware of other countries experiences.
- The program depends on the students› efforts even though most of them have other occupations.
- The program stimulates the students to seek information on new communication techniques and other issues.
- The program rectifies some wrong practices in the workplace.

2) Weaknesses:
- The curricula are old or outdated, they do not keep up with technological developments, they suffer from improper terminology, and include courses unrelated to the media. These results are in line with those found in the Fayad (1994, p.86) study which revealed that the terminology does not conform to the goals of the post-graduate program at Sana›a University, nor achieves the standard required for the terms included in the latest scientific developments.
- The semester is too short given the extent of the curricula and the large amount of assignments.
- Teachers do not comply with the lectures' schedule, some display inappropriate

behaviour with the students some lack appropriate qualifications, and some do not exercise the necessary control.

- No specific mechanism for post-graduate studies is available at the faculty, nor clear and fair regulations, to allow differentiation between amateurs and specialists.
- No system of library hours is available, and the library does not provide the books and booklets on a fixed date.
- Some Bachelor's Degree courses are also being taught at Master›s degree level, and some topics are repeated in more than one course.
- A studying environment is absent.
- The number of teachers is insufficient, particularly those with higher degrees.

j. Students' opinions on the smoothness of the internal communication mechanisms.

1) General trends

According to the students the smoothness of the internal communication mechanisms at the faculty that teach communication skills and the students training on how to use them effectively are «good» (32.3%), «acceptable» (21.5%), «weak» (20%), «very good» (13.1%), and «excellent» (7.7%).

2) Gender differences

Females showed less satisfaction on this issue than males. In fact, females classified those mechanisms as «acceptable» and «weak» in first place with 26.7%, followed by «good», «very good», and finally «excellent» with very low percentages. The males› classification was similar to the one appearing in the «general trends» paragraph, indicating that the internal communication mechanisms are more responsive to the needs of males.

k. Level of the students' desire to continue with their Master›s Degree studies

1) General trends

Most of the students are willing to continue their post-graduate studies, with a percentage of 86.2%, compared to only 5.4% who were not willing.

2) Gender and majors' differences

90% of males were willing to continue their post-graduate studies while only 73.3% of females willing to do so. There were high percentages of agreement in the three majors offered by the faculty. «Journalism» students ranked 1st with 89.8%, followed by «radio/TV» students with 86.1%, and «public relations and advertisement» (80%), which indicates that the students enrolled in the professional diploma are not well informed of the goal behind the launching of this diploma.

3) Education level differences

The answers given by the students were in line with their previous responses concerning their will to continue their post-graduate studies, whether it was from the gender perspective or from the specialization and educational level perspectives. 87 % of the students enrolled in the professional diploma expressed a desire to continue their studies, followed by their colleagues in the preparatory year for Master's Degree (84.6%), then by those who has completed the preparatory year.

The students insisted in their answer to the open question at the end of the «questionnaire», that there must be a serious will to preserve and improve this program, and to address the related deficiencies. The main issues raised by the students were:

- The necessity to review the program, starting from redesigning it according to the latest developments, explaining the criteria for students' success, and establishing regulations that clarify admission criteria and enrolment conditions.

- Giving special attention to the concentration of the specialized courses and to their application.
- Launching the «Master's Degree» program in the «public relations and advertisement» major.
- Keeping the faculty library open for longer hours.

2. Results of the faculty staff
a. Faculty staff trends concerning the post-graduate program

Faculty staff' attitudes concerning the post-graduate program were all against the program, particularly with regard to the Masters degree. Their attitudes were negative toward the planning and design of the program, the availability of the required resources, the implementation mechanisms, and the staff performance. More than 90% of the respondents "agreed" that the program is facing various administrative problems, and that the faculty is not equipped with adequate classrooms. More than 80% of them also "agreed" that the program suffers from a lack of adequate pre-planning, a non conformity to the admission criteria, a lack of practice training, poor distribution of the disciplines according to the teachers' fields of specialization, a lack of references in the library, and a lack of objectivity in the test questions. This result is in line with that reached by the Al Salahi (2008, p.275) study concerning the non-conformity of the tests conducted at Sana'a University in humanities with regard to the diversification of the questions and the different thinking levels.

50 - 70% of the respondents "agreed" on the following statements: it was important to launch a Master's degree program at the faculty; the program suffers from a lack of adequate pre-planning; the program suffers from various scientific shortcomings; the program does not address the needs of the media job market in Yemen, or the needs of Yemenis to study media and communication in their communities; the program does not achieve the scientific goals stipulated in the regulations; an appropriate scientific library is not available in the faculty; and the tests suffer from various deficiencies.

The weighted mean value was also in line with a number of these attitudes, for it outweighed an «agreement» attitude in 21 statements with values varying between 2.56 and 2.88, while it outweighed n «neutral» attitude in 23 other statements with values varying between 1.50 and 2.50, and an «opposition» attitude in one «statement» only.

Hence, it can be said that the deficiencies in the post-graduate program have resulted from a lack of adequate pre-planning by professionals and experts. If the planning stage is dealt with seriously, the program and output of the program will be of good quality which will enable graduate-holders to help tackle the burdens of their community.

b. Assessment of the faculty staff of the post-graduate program

The assessment of faculty staff of the program was in line with their previous attitudes. In fact, they described the program level as «weak» or «very weak» (33.3% for both options), and finally as «good» with a response of 25%. However, none of the respondents classified the program as «very good» or «excellent», which revealed the poor scientific and academic levels of the program.

c. Degree of satisfaction of the faculty staff of the post-graduate program

The expressed degrees of satisfaction concerning the program were a natural result of the previous assessment operation. In fact, results revealed dissatisfaction in all its degrees, with «complete dissatisfaction» ranking first (50%), followed by a «low degree of satisfaction», which highlighted the clear weakness of the program.

d. Main strengths and weaknesses of the post-graduate program

Most of the faculty staff mentioned various strengths and weaknesses in the program, and agreed on a number of them. The answers given by students and faculty staff, were almost the same concerning the strengths of the program. In fact, some respondents said that the program had no strengths at all, and others rejected the view that some of the instructors are outstanding; while others considered that the very launching of this program at the faculty is one of its strengths.

The weaknesses stated by both students and faculty staff were an unclear vision concerning the goals and usefulness of the program; a similarity between some of the other courses. This similarity related to the professional diploma degree and the Master's degree, while for students it covers graduate and post-graduate studies. The results are in line with those found in the Fayad (1994, p.85) study which revealed that the post-graduate program at Sana›a University does not meet the standard of setting clear, specific and achievable goals at the faculty and university levels.

However, the faculty staff had divergent opinions on the curricula and the faculty members. Some of them described the curricula as modern, and that it conforms to «the latest media curricula in Arab universities», in line with «new communication and teaching technology», and is responsive to the students needs. However, others described the curricula as "old and non-corresponding to the Information Age", and rejected the idea that "there was an availability of a clear curriculum similar to the post-graduate programs' curricula at other Arab universities".

As for the faculty members, some respondents stated that the faculty has appropriate staff for this program, such as «young professors who have the will, the capacity and the conviction to make the program successful», and "who have the complete belief" in making it succeed; while others said that the faculty does not have appropriate staff for the «Master's» program in all its sections and majors, in addition to their "lack of experience in this domain", the "academic weakness of some of them" and "that weakness of the whole teaching staff". Moreover, it was stated that the number of professors who have the right to supervise Master's and PhD theses is limited.

Although the respondents have cited various weaknesses and strengths in the program, the main problem lies in the weakness of admission criteria and the high number of students admitted to the program. This is a fact on which almost all of the respondents agreed, with some describing it as «absurd», and others as «awful» and «inconsistent with higher education requirements». All this is due to the weakness of the admission mechanism, and the high number of students admitted. In fact, the admission mechanisms "do not set rigorously the number of students to be admitted, according to the by-laws». The admission system is not based on «strict scientific criteria», such as a university evaluation, as some students with a «low» classification, rather than the required «excellent» or «very good» are admitted.

The following are some of the most important statements given by the respondents concerning this matter:

1) Strengths
- The program encourages scientific research and higher education in Yemen.
- Scientific research is conducted by the students, and the themes of the Master's theses are diverse. This result is in line with that of the Fayad (1994, p.85) study concerning the students' preparation of research and articles that deepen their knowledge of the discipline.
- Enhances the scientific position of the faculty among media institutions and other faculties at the university, and increases its competitiveness with private universities.

- Creates scientific competition between faculty members, which stimulates some to develop their scientific skills.
- The research gives priority to the study of Yemeni media.
- Gives personnel in the Yemeni media the opportunity to pursue post-graduate studies.
- The teachers are enthusiastic and the university administration is providing the necessary support.
- Some of the enrolled students are enthusiastic and willing to conduct the required research.

2) Weaknesses

- The program infrastructure is weak, the technical, administrative and financial requirements are unavailable, the faculty is not equipped at all levels, and the building is too old.
- The departments are not being integrated in the process of putting in place an overall vision of the post-graduate program, their decisions are not respected and they are not consulted on matters related to the program.
- The program lacks organized management, and it has been adopted in a rush without organizing any discussion workshops which involve people working in the media, academic personnel from the faculty and from other faculties.
- The attendance of students is not well controlled.
- The time dedicated to practical training is insufficient.
- The by-laws are weak and unclear, and there is no commitment to their implementation.
- Some faculty members do not respect the description of the academic courses.
- The study hours set in the program are not respected, taking into account the working conditions of some students.
- The teachers do not receive adequate financial and moral returns for their work.
- The faculty members do not enjoy all their rights, and face delays in payment of their salaries.

e. Ways through which the post-graduate program can be improved from the perspective of the faculty staff

The respondents made several suggestions to address the program deficiencies. Some of these suggestions were concise, such as «to eliminate deficiencies», while others were straight forward, such as «to stop the program, involve all faculty members in its development, and invite a group of experts to participate» in this specialized scientific work. One of the respondents even suggested to study and scientifically evaluate the current situation of the faculty, in order to determine its capacities and identify the necessary requirements on how to launch a post-graduate program.

1) Suggestions concerning the administration, and the provision of the necessary requirements:

- Establish an organized and adequate regulation for the program, in line with the levels of higher studies in other countries.
- Ensure an effective, decisive and competent administration, capable of implementing the by-laws and overcoming all difficulties.
- Provide the faculty with a new building and equip it with modern teaching means and communication techniques.
- Provide the program with the necessary requirements, especially the establishment of a specialized library where references and internet service are available, and open it during evening hours.

- Provide the program with all necessary scientific and technological conditions, and facilitate administrative procedures and overcome all difficulties to improve the program and make it successful.

2) Suggestions concerning admission procedures
- Accept a limited number of candidates, as do the faculties of Mass Communication at other Arab universities.
- Apply the admission criteria stipulated by the higher studies regulation on all candidates, and avoid double standards and exceptions.
- Be stricter in the application of the admission criteria, and only accept candidates with "very good" and "excellent" scores.
- Oblige higher studies candidates to study full time and to attend the classes.

3) Suggestions concerning curricula, the teaching and the supervision processes:
- Conduct a comprehensive scientific study of academic courses, the related terminology and teaching methods, and identify their negative aspects.
- Benefit from the experiences of other countries in this field, and redesign the program according to the latest specialized scientific programs in the media and communication fields adopted in international or Arab universities.
- Place faculty members in the appropriate courses, according to their academic specialization and the effectiveness of their performance.
- Review the assessment and examination instruments adopted in the program.
- Invite some visiting professors from other similar faculties.
- Benefit from the associate professors and professors, and respect the rules organizing the academic process.
- Give special attention to the teachers, invite them to participate in refresher sessions, pay them all their dues, and raise their allowances for teaching hours.
- Control the students' attendance, warn those who are absent, and regulate their registration according to the rules.
- Set a strict time schedule and oblige all students to comply with it. If not, the program should be interrupted to preserve the reputation of the university.
- Only allow teachers who hold the title of «Professor» to supervise the Master's theses.
- Assess the program on a regular basis.

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