Instructors' co-operation in quality assurance process:

Limiting and motivating factors in preparing Course

Portfolio by staff members

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ملخص الدراسة:

هدفت الدراسة الحالية إلى تحديد العوامل التي تؤثر في إعداد ملف المقرر بواسطة عضو هيئة التدريس القائم على المقرر بما في ذلك العوامل المحفزة و تلك المعوقة. الطريقة: شارك في الدراسة ٤١ عضو هيئة تدريس من قسم علوم التأهيل الصحي، كلية العلوم الطبية التطبيقية، جامعة الملك سعود. تم تنظيم ورشة عمل لشرح كيفية إعداد ملف المقرر تبعاً لنماذج الهيئة الوطنية السعودية للتقييم والاعتماد الأكاديمي. النتائج: كان معدل الإستجابة ٤ ٢١.٪%. و كان من الجيد أن ٧٠% من أعضاء هيئة التدريس اللذين اعدوا ملف المقرر قد اتموا إعداد ملفات لكل المقررات التي يدرسونها. ٢٠% فقط كان لديهم خبرة سابقة و ٩٠% كان يرون ان إعداد ملف للمقرر مهم لجودة العملية التعليمية. كما أظهرت هذه الدراسة أنه لا توجد علاقة بين الخبرة السابقة لعضو هيئة التدريس بملف المقرر و نسبة الملفات التي اعدها (P = 0.234). كما لم توجد علاقة مع اعتقاده بأهمية الملف (P = 0.859). لم يوجد فرق يؤخذ به إحصائياً بين عضو هيئة التدريس اللذي يدرس مقرر واحد و ذلك الذي يدرس أكثر من مقرر بالنسبة لإعداد ملف المقرر (P = 0.807). كذلك كان الحال بالنسبة للرتبة الأكاديمية لعضو هيئة التدريس حيث لم تكن الرتبة الوظيفية عامل مؤثر في إنجاز ملف المقرر (P = 0.459). الخلاصة: لم تثبت أي دلاله إحصائية لأياً من العوامل التي تمت دراستها و التي كان من المعتقد أن تكون ذات علاقة بإقدام عضو هيئة التدريس على إعداد ملف المقرر.

الكلمات الدالة: ضمان الجودة– معيار التعليم و التعلم– ملف المقرر.

Abstract

Course portfolio had been developed since mid 90s because of teaching development. Course portfolio preparation showed many benefits for the instructor, department, and even the students. Current study aimed to explore the factors that interfere with course portfolio preparation by course's instructor. To define the factors that could motivate or hinder the course's instructor to prepare course portfolio. The participants, 41 instructors, received template of course portfolio and they been kindly requested to follow it to prepare the course portfolios for the courses they taught and to accomplish this task within six weeks. The studied factors; including the instructor's previous experience, rank, believes with task importance, time allowance, number of courses, showed no relation to task completion.

Key words: quality assurance- teaching and learning standard- course portfolio.

Introduction

Quality of student learning is often related to quality of courses that instructors provide (Welcome to the CLT Course Portfolio Website). Therefore, instructors must use teaching strategies suitable for different kinds of learning outcomes and participate in activities to improve their teaching effectiveness. However, many creative and effective teaching strategies are, unfortunately ,forgotten or misplaced between semesters, or lost forever. A solution to this problem is using the course portfolio (Handbook for creating course portfolios, University of Wisconsin-Madison) that records information about a course through the collection of subject outlines, student statistics and achievements (Welcome to the CLT Course Portfolio Website).

The first element of a course portfolio is course components, which include all the information necessary to teach the course. Course components include syllabus, teaching materials, support materials, and assignments. The second element of the course portfolio involves critical analyses of teaching and learning (Peer review of teaching, course portfolio initiative. Indiana University). Other relevant material such as course evaluations, or information about other matters affecting the courses should be retained in course portfolios, so reference can be made for such courses as required later (Handbook of Saudi National Commission for Assessment and Academic Accreditation). History of the course portfolio showed that it emerged from the Teaching Development and Quality Assurance Scheme in the mid 90s (Welcome to the CLT Course Portfolio Website).

In addition, research on use of portfolios in higher education shows clearly that these documents are useful for a number of purposes (Stanley , 2001). Course portfolio is used to guide the teaching-learning process (Stanley , 2001), and works as a resource exchange of course-specific teaching information that can be used as

evidence for teaching quality and effectiveness of programs (Handbook for creating course portfolios, University of Wisconsin-Madison and Peer review of teaching, course portfolio initiative. Indiana University). Furthermore, departments could use the course portfolio as the basis for focused discussions about teaching and learning throughout the program (Cerbin, 2001) as well as basis for plans for improvement (Handbook for creating course portfolios, University of Wisconsin-Madison). It provides an opportunity to investigate the intersection between teaching and learning to determine relationships between what instructors do in classes, and what students do as learners (Werder , 2000). By course portfolio, teaching can be understood and presented as a form of scholarship, utilizing the accountability through peer review, that already exists in higher education (Peer review of teaching, course portfolio initiative. Indiana University) and it will enable faculty to improve courses through reflective and interactive processes (Welcome to the CLT Course Portfolio Website and Handbook of Saudi National Commission for Assessment and Academic Accreditation).

Developing course portfolios might lead the individual instructor to new discoveries and improvements in teaching (Cerbin , 2001). In addition, it gives direction and meaning for professional development of teachers and administrators (Stanley, 2001). Furthermore, it enables most instructors to get a head start, specifically those who are new to campus, those who are teaching for the first time, or those who receive late assignments and have little time to prepare (Peer review of teaching, course portfolio initiative. Indiana University ; Cerbin , 2001). In conclusion, faculty, administrators, and departments can benefit from course portfolios in several ways (Peer review of teaching, course portfolio initiative. Indiana University, such as….).

It is important to recognize that portfolios, at their best, are more than collections of teaching artifacts (i.e., syllabi, assignments, evidence of student learning). They include analysis and reflection; they put forward an argument, make a case, summarize, and explain an inquiry into teaching and learning (Cerbin , 2001). It will enable instructors to record changes, and the reason for the changes (Welcome to the CLT Course Portfolio Website and Handbook of Saudi National Commission for Assessment and Academic Accreditation). This is especially true because course development is not a static process, but it is something that evolves through monitoring and evaluating student thinking and progress, course materials, teaching acts and assessment, and many forms of evaluation (Welcome to the CLT Course Portfolio Website).

Current study aimed to determine the factors, that might interfere with the instructor's course portfolio preparation, Which include the motivating and limiting factors.
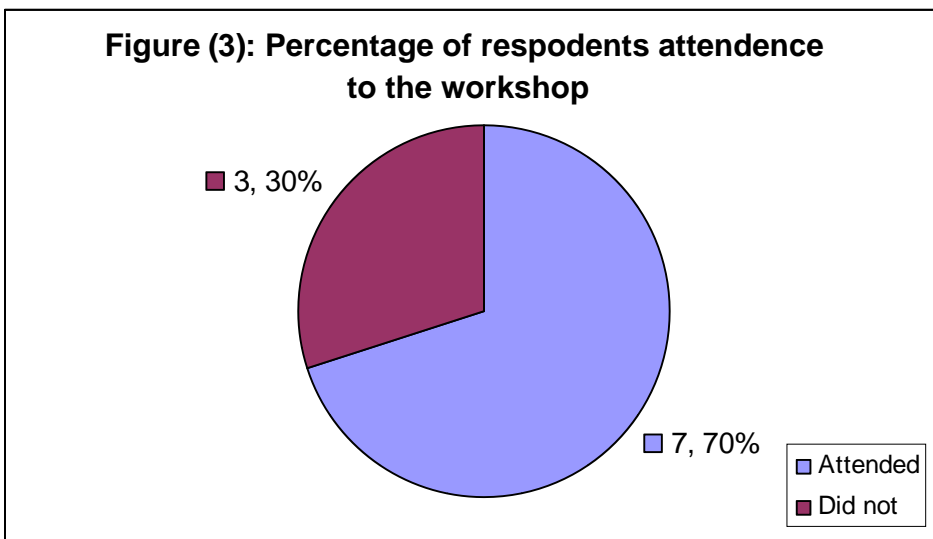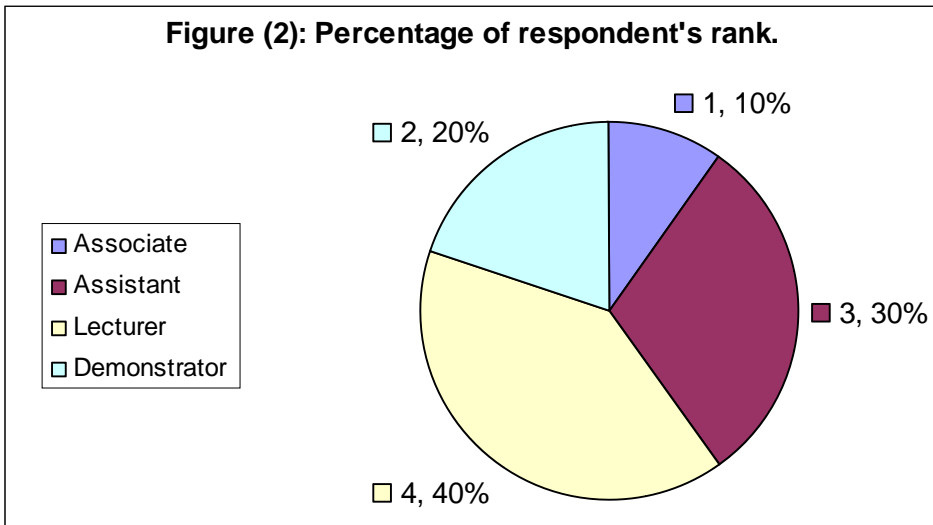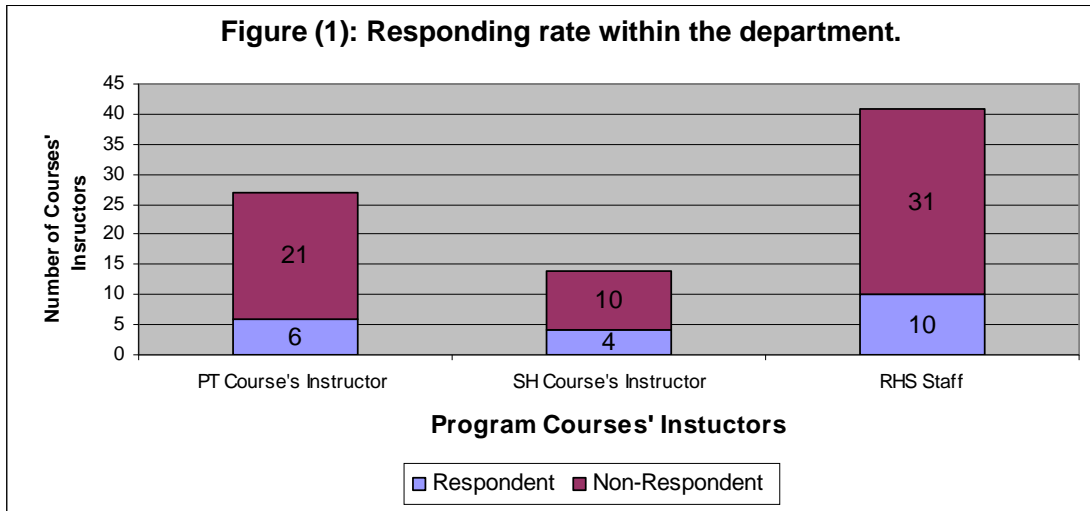
Method

The 41 participants of this study were the academic staff (instructors) of Rehabilitation Health Sciences Department (RHS), College of Applied Medical Sciences, King Saud University Saudi Arabia. They were 27 instructors from the Physical Therapy Program (PT) and 14 from the Speech and Hearing Program (SH). The College's Quality Unit , in association with the departmental academic accreditation and quality assurance committee, held a workshop. During the workshop, the researchers explained basic information about the concepts, definitions, and procedures of quality assurance and accreditation in higher education. They also determined the importance of course portfolio for the quality of educational process. In addition, they explained the items to be included in this course portfolio. These items were the instructor's C.V., course

specification, educational materials, mid-term and final-term exams with their ideal answers, statistical analysis of the exams' results, course report, and any other materials the instructor would like to include in the portfolio as students' assignments. The researcher introduced a practical session of how to fulfill the template of course specification and course report designed by the NCAAA. Department's instructors received the course specification and course report template through their e-mails. The researchers asked them to use these templates for the courses they taught. The department supplied the instructors with the needed resources, computers, printers, folders,and CDs. Furthermore, departmental academic accreditation and quality assurance committee's chair, one of the researchers, provided the instructors with the required explanation and guidance. Instructors had been kindly requested to prepare course portfolio (s) for their course (s) within six weeks. They were free to use either hard or soft copies for the included items in the course portfolio. At the end of these six weeks, the researchers distributed a data collection sheet also by e-mail to the participating instructors to report on the completed items of the course portfolio. In addition, it included questions about the instructor's academic rank, previous experience on preparing course portfolio, their believe on the importance of preparing course portfolio, whether the six weeks were enough time and it they attended the workshop or not. Researchers asked the instructors to return this data collection sheets, physically or by e-mail, after their fulfillment.

Results

The instructors who responded by re-sending the data collection sheets after reporting on the course portfolio task were 10 out of 41 (response rate, 21.39%), as shown in figure 1. Figures 2 and 3 showed the characteristics of those respondents.

Figure (1): Responding rate within the department.

Figure (2): Percentage of respondent's rank.

Figure (3): Percentage of respodents attendence to the workshop

Fortunately, 70% of respondents prepared course portfolios of all courses they taught. However, 10% of them prepared only 25% of their taught courses, figure 4.

Figure (4):Frequency of percentage of completed course's portfolio.
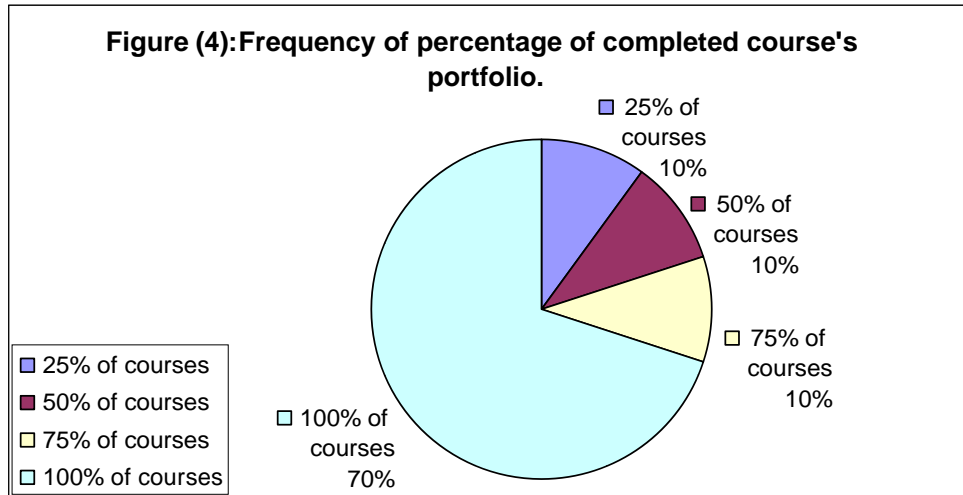
Only 20% of the respondents had a previous experience in this task, while for the majority of them, (80%), it was their first experience, figure 5.

Figure (5): Staff previous experience.
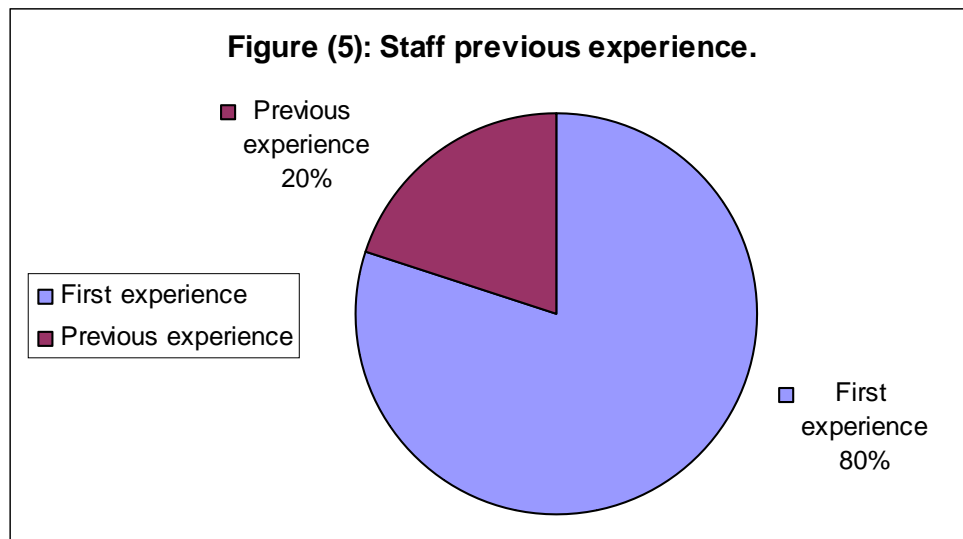
Almost all, (90%), of the respondents reported that they perceived the task of preparing a course portfolio for each course they teach as a beneficial procedure for the quality of education, figure 6.

Figure (6): Perception of the staff to the benefite of course's portfolio.
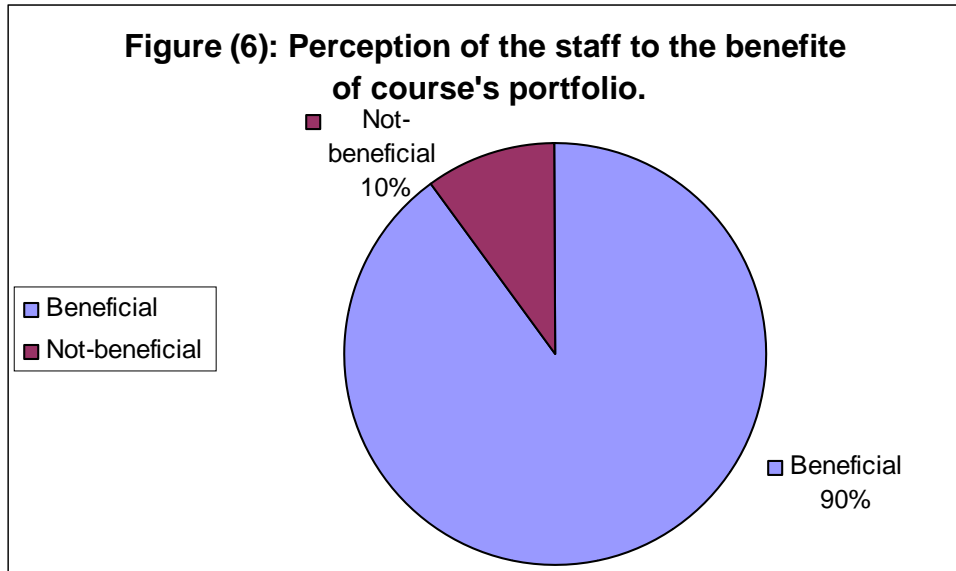
Moreover, 40% of instructors reported that the time allowed for preparing the course
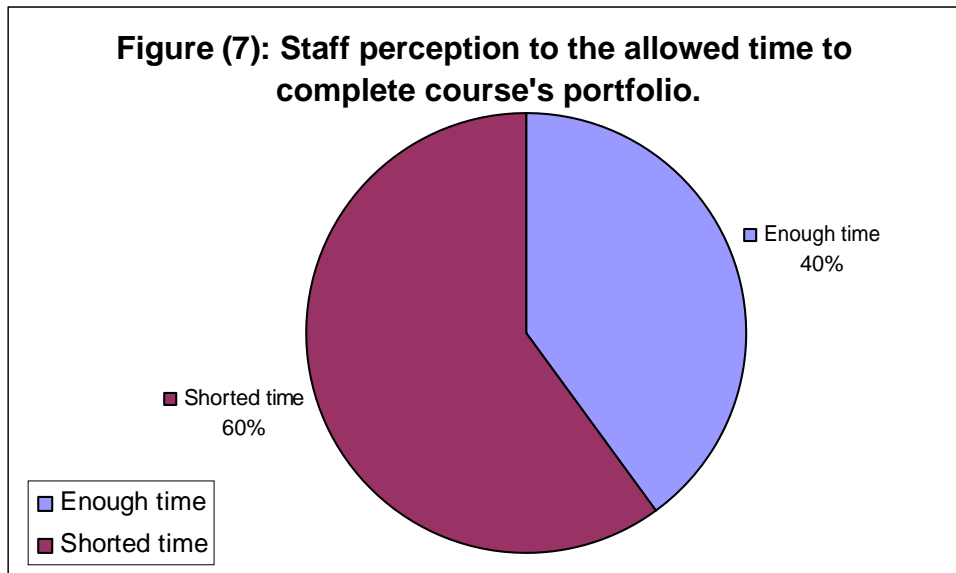
portfolio was enough, figure 7.

Figure (7): Staff perception to the allowed time to complete course's portfolio.

Experience	Table (1): Relation between the respondents' experience and percentage of completed portfolios				
	Percentage of completed portfolios				
	25%	50%	75%	100%	Total
First		1	1	6	8
Previous	1			1	2
Total	1	1	1	7	10
P	0.234				

This study also showed that there is no relation between the instructors' previous experience and the percentage of course portfolios they prepared (P= 0.234), (table 1), as six out of the eight respondents who had no previous experience, carried out course portfolio for all of their taught courses. While one out of two of the instructors who had previous experience conducted the course portfolio for the all taught courses but the other one did only 25%.

| Perception	Table (2): Relation between the respondents' perception of importance of course portfolio and percentage of completed portfolios				
	Percentage of completed portfolios				
	25%	50%	75%	100%	Total
Benefit	1	1	1	6	9
Not			1	1	2
Total	1	1	1	7	10
P	0.859				

In addition, the instructors' perception of importance of course portfolio showed no relation (P= 0.859), table 2. It was interesting that the one, who did not believe in the importance of the course portfolio, conducted them for the whole courses she taught.

Time Allowed	Table (3): Relation between the respondents' perception of time allowed and percentage of completed portfolios				
	Percentage of completed portfolios				
	25%	50%	75%	100%	Total
Enough		1		3	4
Short	1		1	4	6
Total	1	1	1	7	10
P	0.273				

Although those six respondents reported that the six weeks time allowed to complete preparing course portfolio task for the taught courses was not enough, four out of them completed the course portfolio for all courses. Such result indicators that the factor of perception about the efficiency of available time was not an affecting factor for their response, table 3.

Number of courses	Table (4): Relation between the respondents' perception of number of courses and percentage of completed portfolios				
	Percentage of completed portfolios				
	25%	50%	75%	100%	Total
One course				2	2
Two courses		1	1	2	4
Three courses				1	1
Four courses	1			1	2
Five courses				1	1
Total	1	1	1	7	10
P	0.807				

There was no significant difference between the course instructors, who teach one or more course regarding their completing the course portfolios for their courses (P= 0.807), table 4. The rank of the course's instructor was not a significant factor that affect the completion of the task (P= 0.459), figure 8.

Figure (8): Staff's rank and % of completion of course portfolios
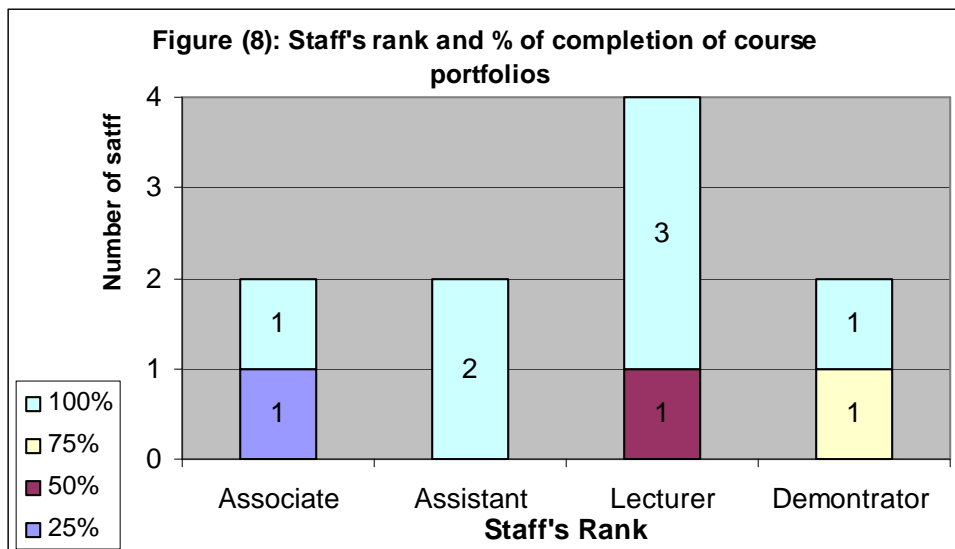
Discussion

Respondents who reported that preparing the course portfolio is beneficial for the educational quality mentioned that this is because, 1- It helps preparing the course materials. 2- It reveals the size of effort that each faculty member had done during his /her teaching experience. 3- It helps in the continuous improvement of the course

as well as the curriculum. 4- It offers a good opportunity for the new instructor to get the benefit of the previous instructors' experiences. 5- It makes the instructor keeps track of the course he/ she is teaching. 6- It definitely needs to improve and reinforce the educational quality. 7- It specifies and gives details about the course topics. 8- It gives feedback and most importantly outcomes of the course. 9- It keeps a record of the course information. 10- It keeps track on performance. Moreover, 11- It explains the plane of teaching, teaching methodology, and evaluation process which all facilitate the teaching process.

Langsam(1998) added that moving from informal or episodic reflection to more sustained and systematic inquiry leads to deeper understanding of instructors' teaching and this would affect student learning. Mignon(1998) mentioned that an English professor suggests that portfolio development influenced his concept of teaching.

The only one respondent who perceived the course portfolio as a non-beneficial procedure, mentioned the following causes as reasons for her perception; 1- It is just paper work. 2- It does not asses the educational process itself. 3- There is no one who can evaluate the actual instructor's performance inside the classroom through a course portfolio. Although this respondent attended the workshop, in which it was clearly mentioned that quality and accreditation in higher education is not by any means a paper work instead it is a believe, behavior, attitude, and culture of good practice, it is obvious that this instructor missed the message and did not digest this concept of quality assurance.

On the other hand, if we considered the course portfolio as an evaluative measure, we should treat it as a self-evaluation for the course's instructor. However, it is better to see the course portfolio as a trial to standardize the language we all speak in the

educational academic field, as well as source of data. This can help to improve the quality of education. Cerbin (2001) mentioned another important point; he stated that there are always gaps between instructors' goals and students' performance, and gaps between instructors' goals and their own teaching practices. These gaps between intentions, teaching practices and student learning provide problems.

 Good course portfolios do not stop with analysis of these problems but also provide the instructor with possible solutions, allow him/her to implement changes and assesses those changes. Moreover, the portfolio, as a document, can prove the achievement of good practice in the teaching and learning standard which is one of the standards educational program should accomplish for deserving the accreditation.

Those results could indicate that the goals of course portfolio was not quite clear during the workshop, and it gives document that environmental preparation is the first step for co-operation and understanding the core of quality assurance.

Furthermore, there is a need for more than one workshop to raise the awareness of the quality culture and interest of the courses' instructors to engage more positively in the quality assurance process. The following statement is very convincing to the instructors who did not believe in course portfolio "many of the items that could be in your course portfolio are things that you already have. You just need to collect and organize them. The portfolios may not be complete, but every bit will help the next instructor or help you the next time you teach the course. Additionally, by having course portfolios from previous semesters, instructors can spend more time developing new material for their course to supplement and enhance the previously collected material (handbook for creating course portfolios, University of Wisconsin-Madison)." And If, as Shulman (1998) contends, teaching entails an extended

process of vision, design, interactions, outcomes and analysis, then where is teaching documented so that we can study it, discuss it, learn from it, understand it, replicate it, build upon and improve it. In other areas, our scholarly investigations evolve into manuscripts, articles, chapters, and monographs. What is the pedagogical equivalent of the research manuscript? Therefore, there is a need for something equivalent to a "manuscript in progress" that explicates the vision, design, interactions, outcomes and analysis of teaching. A type of teaching portfolio-a course portfolio- was nominated as a viable candidate to fill this void.

It was important to analyze the factors that affected the accomplishment of the task of preparing the courses' portfolios. Is it the instructors' previous experience? , the instructor's believe that this task is important?, time allowed to carry out this task which was six weeks?, number of courses the instructor is responsible about?, or the rank of the course's instructor? The result of the study showed that none of the previously mentioned factors is working as affecting factor on the instructors' completion of the task of preparing course portfolio for their courses.

Although previous experience of the instructor seems to be a logic factor that might affect the task completion as it could reflect on the instructor's familiarity with the task and consequently shorten the time and effort needed to do it, and this could motivate the instructor to carry it out. Nevertheless, this not the case in this study.

It is common that when people believe in something, they will be welling to conduct it. However, the results showed that both respondents who believed or did not believes in the importance of the course portfolio responded without significant difference.

The same situation applied to the factor of time available. Some instructors might be hesitant to put together their own course portfolio because they are concerned about the time involved. However, by using course portfolios from previous semesters, new

instructors can provide students with some immediate materials that worked well in the past, thus enabling students to learn more easily, while the instructor can take more time to prepare effective materials for future sessions. With course portfolio, instructors will have more time to focus on teaching techniques, curriculum revisions, or learning styles of the students. In addition, the cumulative nature of the course portfolio helps the instructor avoid previous mistakes and identify common difficulties that student's experience (handbook for creating course portfolios, University of Wisconsin-Madison).

Number of taught courses showed no significant relation with the percentage of the completed course portfolios. This could indicate that the numbers of taught courses are not a burden factor that can restrict the conduction of course portfolio. Instructors, who completed 100% of their course portfolios, were with different ranks. Therefore, we can say that there is no difference between seniors or juniors in their response to the task of carrying out course portfolios.

Conclusion

Although of the importance of course portfolio preparation for the educational process, the response of instructors to this task was vary. None of the factors that had been suggested to affect the responding rate, which included; the instructors' previous experience, the instructor's believe that this task is important, the time allowed to carry out this task , the number of courses the instructor is responsible about, and the rank of the course's instructor, showed any relation to that responding rate.

Therefore, current study could not define the factors that could motivate and/or limit the response and completion of courses' instructors to their course portfolios. This may indicate the need to involve more subjects' number in next studies or include

other factors to be studied. However, this study approved that there is dispirit need to work on the instructors, the human resources of the quality in higher education. Instructors are the engine of any successful quality procedures.

To ensure, assure and improve educational quality we do not only need to assign a large budget and other physical resources, organize committees and units, and conduct seminars and workshops, but we also need to ensure people's motivations, assure their co-operation and improve their active participation. Quality assurance is the responsibility of all instructors, not only members of quality committees or units in the educational institutes. That is why every effort should be done to motivate them to participate actively. In addition, the limiting or restricting factors should be solved and treated before any improvement can be accomplished.

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