



Internal Assessment of the Nutrition Department of Kermanshah University of Medical Sciences (2018)

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Abstract

Background: Internal assessment plays a key role in improving the quality of education.

Objectives: The present study aimed to internally assess the nutrition department of Kermanshah University of Medical Sciences (KUMS), Iran.

Methods: This cross-sectional study was carried out in the nutrition department of KUMS. Data were collected using the internal assessment questionnaires based on the guidelines and framework of the ministry.

Results: The main factors involved in internal assessment included goals, organizational position, management and organization, faculty staff, students, and educational facilities and equipment, which had a favorable status. In addition, the educational courses, curriculum, and teaching/learning strategies had a relatively favorable status, while graduates had an unfavorable status. In general, the mean of all the internal assessment factors was considered favorable.

Conclusions: Although the internal assessment indicated the favorable status of the nutrition department of KUMS, special attention should be paid to the graduates in this regard.

Keywords: Kermanshah Medicine, Internal Assessment, Nutrition Department

1. Background

Universities are the most valuable institution for the progress and development of societies. With the increasing number of universities, special attention has been paid to the control and enhancement of the quality of education. Assessment is an inherent element of the quality assurance in every educational system. Internal assessment plays a key role in improving the quality of education, and its importance is doubled in medical universities given their pivotal role in the education of capable human resources for the promotion of health care and medical services (1).

Internal assessments shed light on the strengths and weaknesses of educational departments. In addition, regular and continuous internal assessment could be considered a criterion for the evaluation of educational programs and decision-making in educational departments.

2. Objectives

The present study aimed to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the nutrition department of Kermanshah

University of Medical Sciences (KUMS), Iran.

3. Methods

This cross-sectional study was conducted at the nutrition department of KUMS in 2018 in accordance with the principles of writing internal assessment reports. The participants included the head of the department, all the staff, all the students, and randomly selected graduates. The study protocol was reviewed and approved by the Ethics Committee of KUMS (No. IR.KUMS.REC.1398.303).

Based on the internal assessment framework, the head and staff of the department were introduced to internal assessment, and the members of the internal assessment committee were selected. Afterwards, the categories of internal assessment factors were evaluated based on defined criteria and indicators; the main factors included goals, organizational position, management and organization, faculty staff, students, teaching/learning strategies, training courses and curricula, educational facilities and equipment, and graduates.

Analysis was started with the indicators, and the score of each indicator was calculated based on the related items of the questionnaires on a Likert scale as unfavorable (+1), relatively favorable (+2), and favorable (+3). Moreover, the score of each criterion was calculated based on the mean scores obtained from the indicators of the same criterion, and the score of each factor was determined based on the mean scores obtained from the criteria of the same factor. The criteria and factors were assessed on three levels of unfavorable (scores 1 - 1.66), relatively favorable (scores 1.67 - 2.32), and favorable (scores 2.33 - 3). Data analysis was performed in SPSS version 16 using one-sample *t*-test.

4. Results

The mean scores of the criteria for the internal assessment factors are shown (Table 1). Among the indicators of the goals, organizational position, management, and organization factor, the academic rank of the head of the department had the lowest score. The faculty staff factor was considered favorable, and all its criteria were also favorable (except the number of taught credits). The factor of students was relatively favorable, and the lowest scores belonged to the criteria of the admission/academic achievement of students and students' interaction with faculty member.

Among the indicators of the teaching/learning strategy factor, using various teaching and learning methods had the lowest score. The facilities and equipment factor was considered favorable, and the criterion of the rate of scientific visits had the lowest score. Among the indicators of the training course and curricula factor, graduates' entrepreneurship had the lowest score. The mean of all the factors indicated that the score of internal assessment was 2.4 (favorable).

5. Discussion

The internal assessment in the present study indicated the favorable status of the nutrition department of KUMS. Internal assessment plays a key role in improving the quality of education, and its importance is doubled in medical universities given their role in the education of capable human resources for the promotion of health care and medical services (1).

According to the current research, the academic rank of the head of the nutrition had a low score; notably, he was quite young. However, he took the satisfaction of faculty staffs and students into account in his decision-making, which is the strength of this department. On the other hand, the small number of taught credits was considered a weakness of this department, which is due to the presentation of only one discipline of the master's degree in nutrition. Given the potential and educational facilities of this

college, this problem will be resolved over time by launching other courses, such as bachelor's degree and PhD in nutritional sciences. Furthermore, most of the faculty members are young, which could be considered an opportunity to train efficient human resources for various educational groups in the country.

Although the nutrition department had a relatively favorable status in terms of the students' interaction with the faculty members, faculty interaction with the students should be promoted given the presence of young professors and a sufficient number of faculty members. This could be easily achieved by involving students in classroom activities, workshops, and researches. Our findings indicated that teaching methods and educational resources were relatively favorable, while educational spaces, libraries, and computer facilities had a very favorable status. In the internal assessment of Qom University of Medical Sciences, the midwifery department did not have separate educational facilities and equipment, and the lack of separate financial credit was defined as the weakness of this institution, affecting dimensions such as equipment and educational facilities (2). Therefore, the favorable status of equipment and educational facilities in the nutrition department is a valuable opportunity for faculty members to improve the status of teaching/learning strategies.

It seems that graduates are the most significant challenge for the department of nutrition of KUMS based on the internal assessment since this factor had lowest score and rank in the present study. The scientific works of the graduates had a relatively favorable status, which is in line with the relatively favorable status of training courses and curricula. In terms of continuing education, the graduates' employment and relationship with the department was rather unfavorable after graduation. Our findings in this regard are consistent with the results of previous studies (2). In the studies by Aghababaie et al. (3), Ahmari et al. (2), Kavoussi et al. (4), and Jalalvandi et al. (5), the results of an internal assessment indicated the favorable status of these educational groups in the factors of students, training courses and curricula, faculty members, and educational facilities/equipment. On the other hand, the factor of graduates (especially graduates' occupation status) was reported to have an unfavorable status. This finding reveals the role of various external factors in this regard, such as the lack of basic planning by the Ministry of Health in proportion to students' attraction to the labor market.

5.1. Conclusions

This study indicated that although the internal assessment indicated the favorable status of the nutrition department of KUMS, more focus must be placed on the graduates of this university.

Table 1. The Results of Internal Assessment Factors from Nutrition Department.

Factors	Score	Status
Objectives/organizational position/management/organization	2.9	Favorable
Faculty staff	2.65	Favorable
Student	2.41	Favorable
Teaching/learning strategies	2.22	Relatively Favorable
Training courses/curricula	2.07	Relatively Favorable
Educational facilities/equipment	2.9	Favorable
Graduates	1.59	Unfavorable

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Footnotes

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