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Preparing for External Quality Review: Critical Success Factors for Vocational Institutions

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Abstract

- This paper identifies the critical success factors which have led to outstanding review results for vocational institutions in Bahrain.19 success factors were identified.

- 11 of these success factors relate to institutional achievements and 6 relate to institution processes. At the core of these latter 6 critical success factors was the effective implementation of a learner-centred approach.
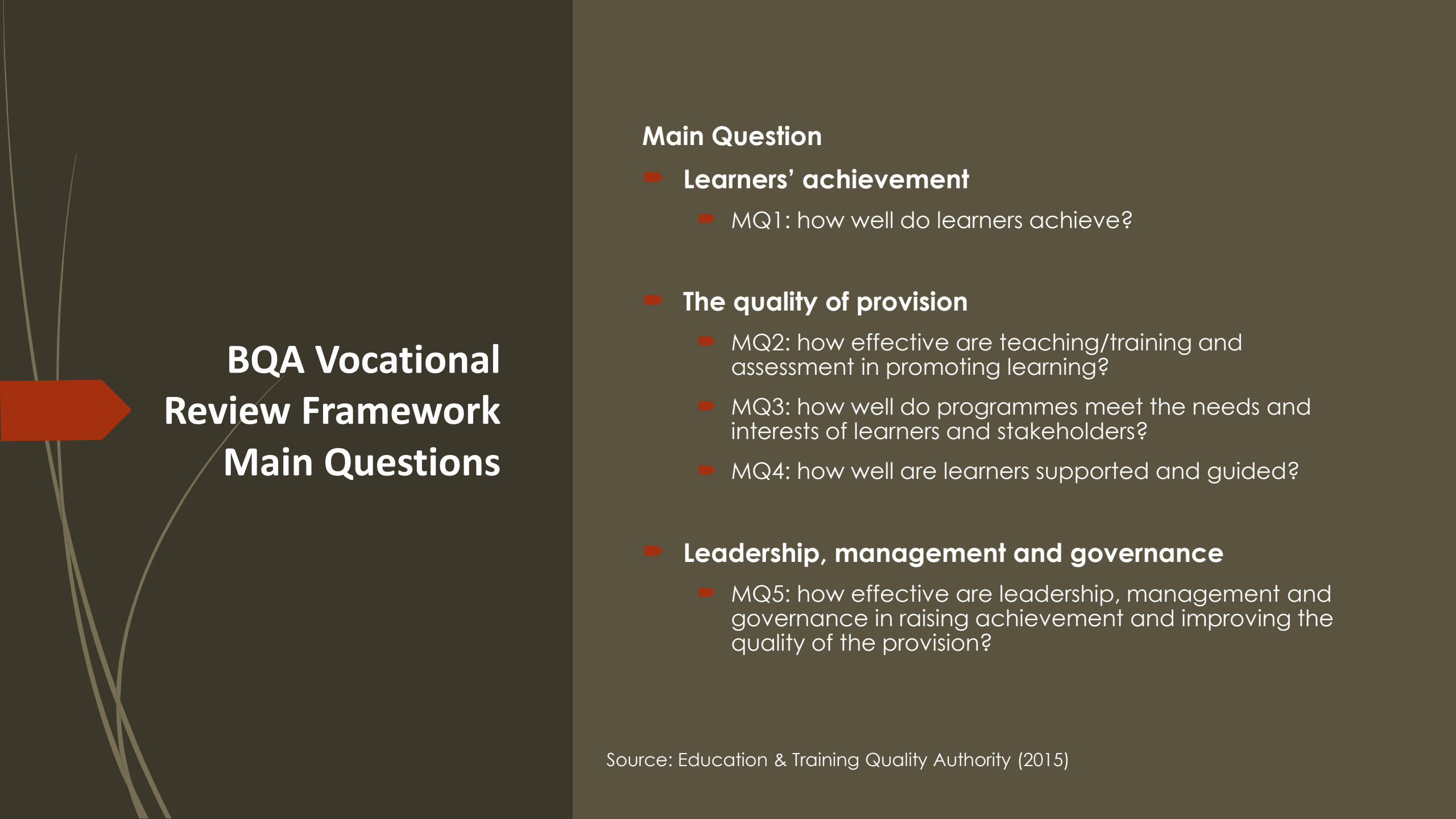
Study Purpose

- To identify the **critical success factors** which have led to outstanding review results for vocational institutions in Bahrain.

Study Questions

- This study aims at **answering two questions**:

  - What are the **critical success factors** which lead to an outstanding grade in relation to vocational institutions reviews by BQA?

  - Do the success factors relate to institutions' **processes** and **results**?

BQA Vocational Review Framework Main Questions

Main Question

- **Learners' achievement**
  - MQ1: how well do learners achieve?

- **The quality of provision**
  - MQ2: how effective are teaching/training and assessment in promoting learning?
  - MQ3: how well do programmes meet the needs and interests of learners and stakeholders?
  - MQ4: how well are learners supported and guided?

- **Leadership, management and governance**
  - MQ5: how effective are leadership, management and governance in raising achievement and improving the quality of the provision?

Source: Education & Training Quality Authority (2015)

The Development of the Checklist for BQA Review Preparation

- The checklist for BQA **review preparation** was designed for use by vocational training institutions in Bahrain that are about to undergo BQA reviews.

- It focuses on **evidence** that the BQA review team seeks during the review process.

- This checklist consists of **22** categories and **115** elements which are mapped to BQA's five main questions.

There are two places that need to be completed in relation to each element.

The first relates to an institution's **policy and procedures** that apply to the targeted element.

The second focuses on the **evidence of implementing** the related procedures effectively

Checklist for BQA Review Preparation

MQ2 The quality of provision
How effective are training and assessment in promoting learning?

Category	Element
Learning Strategies	Policy and procedures
	Lesson observation - recommendations and follow-up activities
	Pre-entry assessment
	Examples of effective lesson plans
	Use of pre-entry assessment results to enhance training practice
	Learner-centred approach
	Examples of meeting diverse needs of learners

Data Collection

The following procedure was used to collect data for this study.

1. Design the **checklist for BQA review preparation** in 2012. This checklist was developed according to BQA review team enquiries.

2. The checklist for BQA review preparation was used in **six vocational institutes** as a gap analysis tool. The outcomes were used to develop improvement plans to enhance the institutes' practice.

3. The checklist for BQA review preparation was used **several times to measure progress** made by the institutes and ensure that each institute was ready for BQA review.

4. The data gathered for the six institutes was analysed **to identify critical success factors** that lead to an outstanding grade.

Data Collection

- The project's duration for the six institutes ranged between 4 months to 2.5 years.

- After implementing the improvement plan, one institute received 'Outstanding', three institutes received 'Good' and two institutes received 'Satisfactory'.

Study Limitation

- This study is limited to:

  - The **elements** that are included in the checklist of BQA review preparation.

  - The **six vocational institutes** that participated in this study.

  - The **period** over which this study was carried out.

Definition of Terms

- Three key terms of this study were defined as follows:

  - **Learner-centred approach**: One in which the focus is on the trainee rather than the trainer, with the intention of facilitating the learning of the trainee and having the trainee actively involved in the training process and appreciation of its outcomes.

  - **Process:** The linked activities with the purpose of producing products and services for intended users and evidence for internal and external stakeholders (including regulatory authorities).

  - **Results:** Outputs and outcomes achieved by an institute.

Baldrige Performance Excellence Program (2017)

Study Findings

- As indicated by American Society for Quality, too often organizations ignore **successes** while they focus on problems that need immediate attention.

- The **success and effect** diagram was adopted to analyze successful factors for vocational institutions in Bahrain to meet BQA expectations for an outstanding grade.
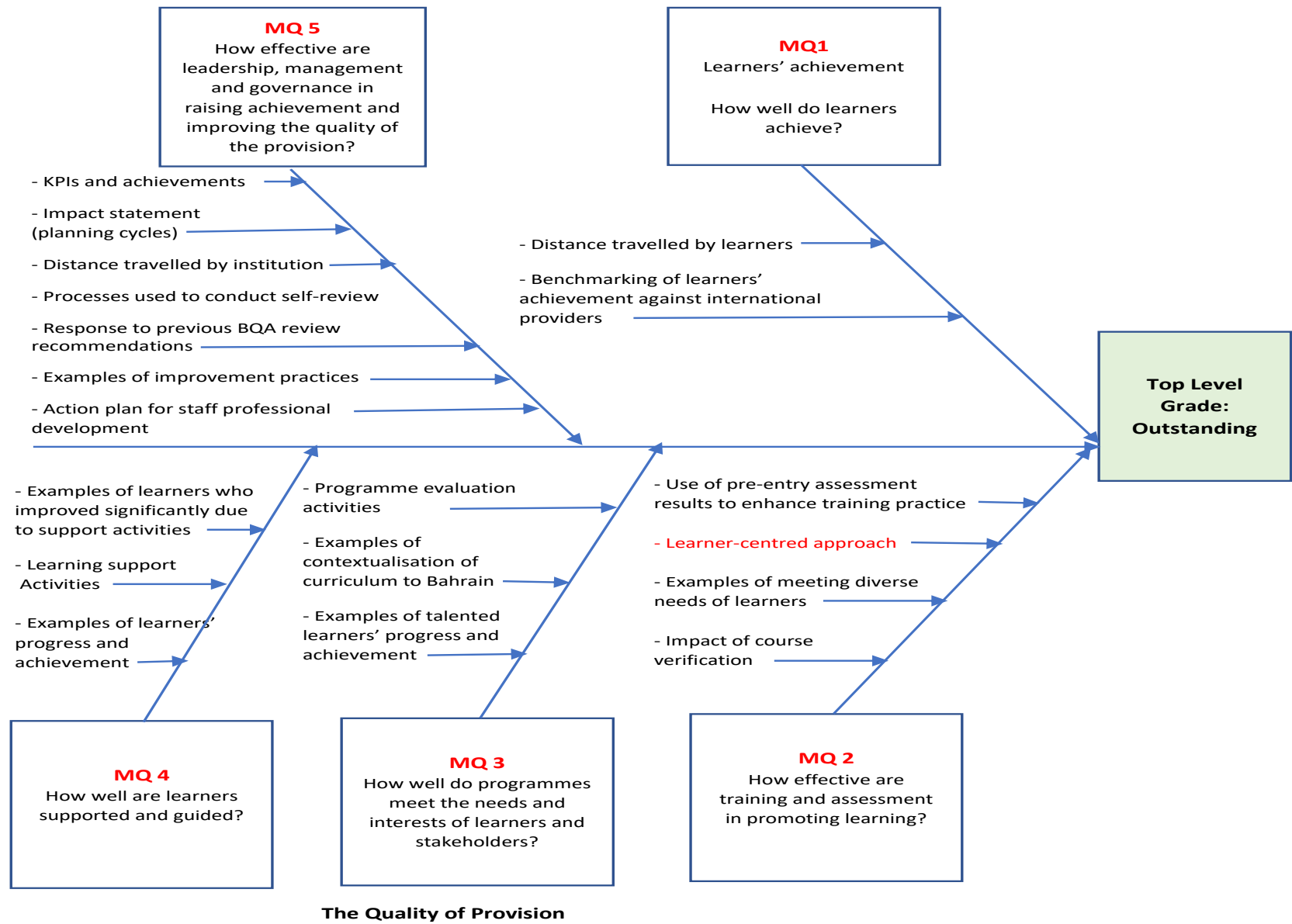
American Society for Quality (2017)

Figure 1: Success and Effect Diagram for the 19 Critical Success Factors of Vocational Institutions

The Top Five Success Factors: Results

| Distance travelled by learners	Benchmarking of learners' achievement against international providers	Examples of meeting diverse needs of learners	Impact of course verification	Examples of talented learners' progress and achievement	Examples of learners who improved significantly due to support activities
Examples of learners with learning difficulties progress and achievement	Key performance indicators and achievements	Impact statement related to planning cycles	Distance travelled by institution	Examples of improvement practices	Response to previous BQA review recommendations

Source: American Society for Quality (2017)
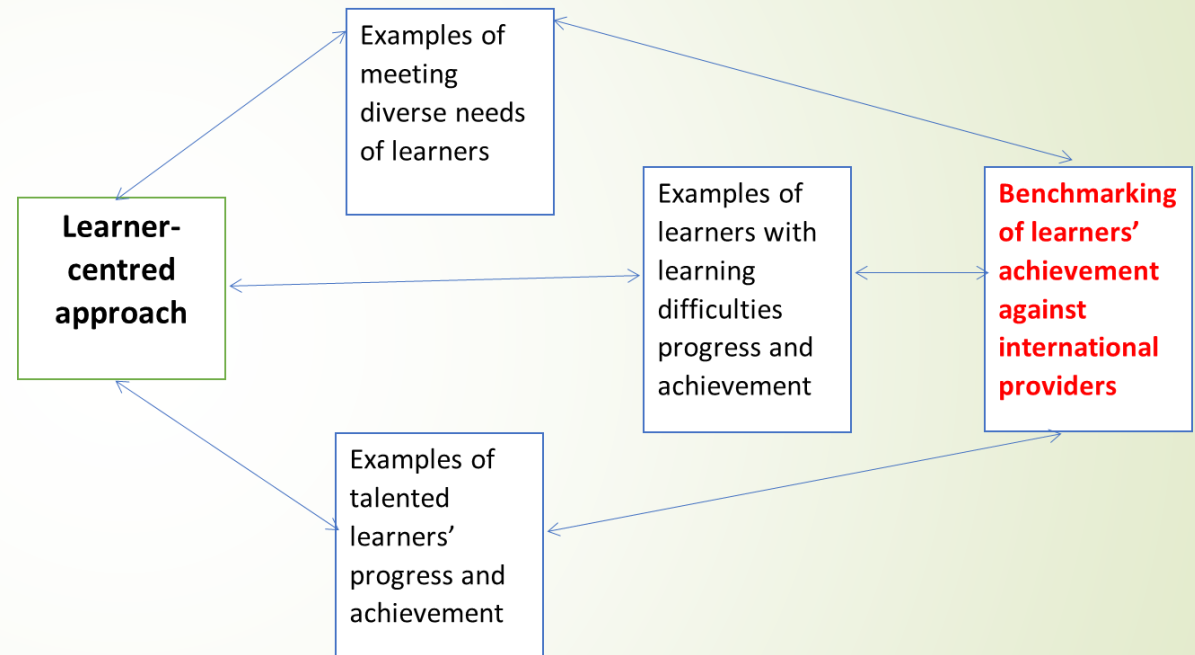
The 19 Critical Success Factors Categorized as Process and Results

Main Question	Critical Success Factors	Type
MQ1 **Learners' achievement** **How well do learners achieve?**	- Distance travelled by learners	Result
	- Benchmarking of learners' achievement against international providers	Result
MQ2 **The quality of provision** **How effective are training and assessment in promoting learning?**	- Use of pre-entry assessment results to enhance training practice	Process
	- Learner-centred approach	Process
	- Examples of meeting diverse needs of learners	Result
	- Impact of course verification	Result
MQ3 **The quality of provision** **How well do programmes meet the needs and interests of learners and stakeholders?**	- Programme evaluation activities	Process
	- Examples of contextualisation of curriculum to Bahrain	Result
	- Examples of talented learners' progress and achievement	Result
MQ4 **The quality of provision** **How well are learners supported and guided?**	- Examples of learners who improved significantly due to support activities	Result
	- Learning support activities	Process
	- Examples of learners' progress and achievement	Result
MQ5 **Leadership, management and governance** **How effective are leadership, management and governance in raising achievement and improving the quality of the provision?**	- Key performance indicators and achievements	Result
	- Impact statement related to planning cycles	Result
	- Distance travelled by institution	Result
	- Processes used to conduct self-review	Process
	- Response to previous BQA review recommendations	Result

Conclusion

Four of the five top success factors in relation to the <u>institutional results</u> are related to the **learners**. This indicates that BQA strongly focuses on **classroom practice** and its **results**.

Five of the six top success factors relate to the **institution's results**. This indicates that vocational institutions need to achieve **robust results** to receive high grades.

Conclusion

To achieve the top six success factors, vocational institutions need **ongoing dialogue** among internal and external stakeholders and an ability to find **pockets of enthusiasm** within their organisations that are exemplars of quality accountability and improvement, and to use this expertise to support the **widening** and **deepening** of such pockets.

The intention is to have organisational units and individuals <u>own a quality review framework</u>, and a quality system overall, instead of seeing it as something that is imposed, and treated as no more than a matter of **begrudging compliance.**

Source: Hasan(2015)

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Thank you