



# Credit Hour System and Student Workload at Alexandria University: A Paradigm Shift

**Saeed Alshamy**

Assistant Professor

Faculty of Education – Alexandria University

Ph.D.; M.Ed; PGCE; SD; PD; BA





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# Context and Rationale for the Study



# Context and Rationale for the Study



- There is **no academic credit system** shared by all African countries.
- Moreover, many higher education institutions in the region are still rather unfamiliar with a credit system purported **to support curricular change and lead the shift towards a student-centered and competence-based higher education.**

# Context and Rationale for the Study



- During the **second general meeting of Tuning Africa Project – II**, a method has been defined for estimating student workload using a questionnaire survey. There has been a **call to develop a country report on credit hour system** in each of the African countries.
- In response to this call, Alexandria University- as a Tuning member - has started surveying both academics and students on student workload in the programme **Professional Diploma in Education** in “**Quality of Educational Systems and Academic Accreditation**” at Faculty of Education.

# Context and Rationale for the Study



- Credit Hour System has been in place in Faculty of Education, Alexandria University, since 2009.
- It is implemented in **the graduate level** whereas the undergraduate level still follows the traditional system (One year composed of two semesters divided into different courses rather than credits).
- The implementation of the **American Credit Hour System** in Egypt varies from one university to another and at the same university from a faculty to another.

However, it is worth noting that there is a misnaming of what is called **credit hour system**.

What is applied is a **teaching hour system** focusing on contact hours.



# Context and Rationale for the Study



**One credit hour is a measuring unit for deciding the weight of each course in the semester, where it equals:**

- 1 hour of theoretical lecture per week.
- Or 2 hours of practical work or laboratory work per week.
- Or 4 hours of field work per week.

The number of credits per year differs from a programme to another.

As far as the programme under investigation is concerned, number of credits per year is **22 credits** (22 teaching hours: **nine compulsory courses** (two hours each) and **four elective ones**, two of which can be chosen and studied across two semesters).



# Context and Rationale for the Study



- Alexandria University wishes to have a **unified credit system** which could facilitate student mobility from one university to another in Egypt.
- **At the continental level**, Alexandria University aims to have a credit system which is **comparable to other African universities** to facilitate harmonization process and student mobility.
- This issue is of paramount importance when bearing in mind that both **Cairo University and Alexandria University have branches in Sudan**.
- Alexandria University is planning to have branches in **Republic of Chad and other African countries**.

# Compulsory and Elective Courses in Professional Diploma in Education in "Quality of Educational Systems and Academic Accreditation"



<b>Compulsory courses</b>	
<b>Code</b>	<b>Course title</b>
1.	Conceptual Introduction to Quality
2.	Philosophy of Academic Accreditation
3.	Quality Assurance Management in Education
4.	Educational Research
5.	Assessment of Quality in Educational Institutions
6.	Professional Development and Educational Quality
7.	Approaches to School Enhancement
8.	Preparing Students for Knowledge Society
9.	Preparing Educational Institutions for Knowledge Society
<b>Elective Courses</b>	
Every student is eligible to choose two elective courses, which equals four hours, from the following courses.	
10.	Readings in Quality Assurance and Academic Accreditation
11.	World Trends in Quality Assurance Systems
12.	Standards of Implementing Quality Management in Education
13.	Social and Cultural Aspects of Quality Assurance



# Aims of the Study



# Aims of the Study



- \* The study aims at **investigating the perceptions of both academics and students on student workload** in credit hour system at Faculty of Education - Alexandria University.
- \* It uses the wider international experience of higher education reform, including **Tuning Africa Project - II**, to propose implications for policy and practice on how the real work hours needed by a student to achieve the learning outcomes specified in the curriculum and to pass a course or module are adequately estimated.
- \* And to **contribute to the definition of the basis of a credit system for Africa.**



# Student Workload in Higher Education Programmes: The Tuning Approach



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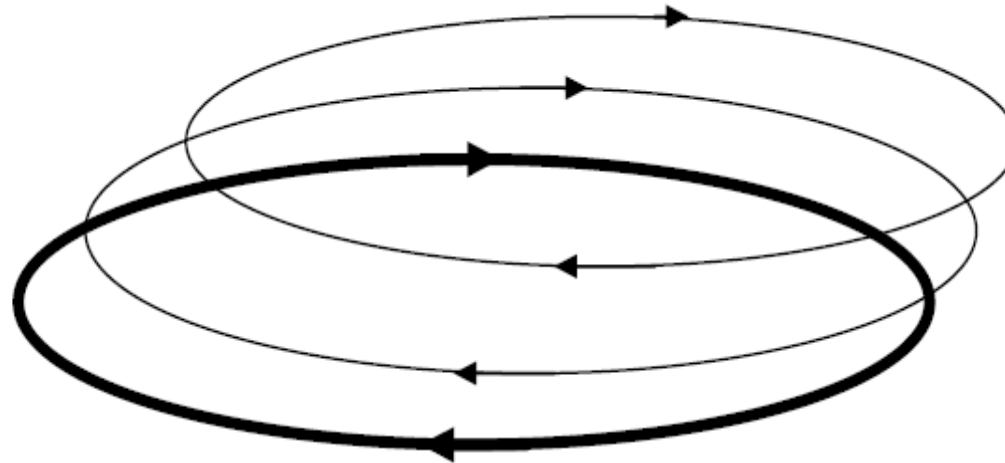
## An approach

I. Module  
(number of credits / student hours)

IV. Adjustment of  
the unit either with  
regard to the  
number of credits  
allocated or the  
educational  
activities

II. Planning  
educational  
activities /  
determining  
student time  
involved

III. Checking of workload by student  
evaluations in terms of real time  
involved



# Student Workload in Higher Education Programmes: The Tuning Approach



- **First**, *introducing modules/course units.*
- **Second**, *estimating student workload.*
- **Third**, *checking the estimated workload through student evaluations.*
- **Fourth**, *Adjustment of workload and/or educational activities.*

\*Julia González & Robert Wagenaar, *Tuning Educational Structures in Europe (2008)*



# Research Design & Procedures





# Research Design & Procedures



- The study is located within a broadly **interpretive methodology**, using a **case study approach** with **questionnaires on student workload** administered to academics and students at Faculty of Education - Alexandria University.
- The data have been collected through questionnaires administered to 176 participants: **11 academics and 165 students**.
- It is worth noting that the study has used the same questionnaires for student workload, which were developed in Tuning Africa Project - II.



# Findings and Discussion



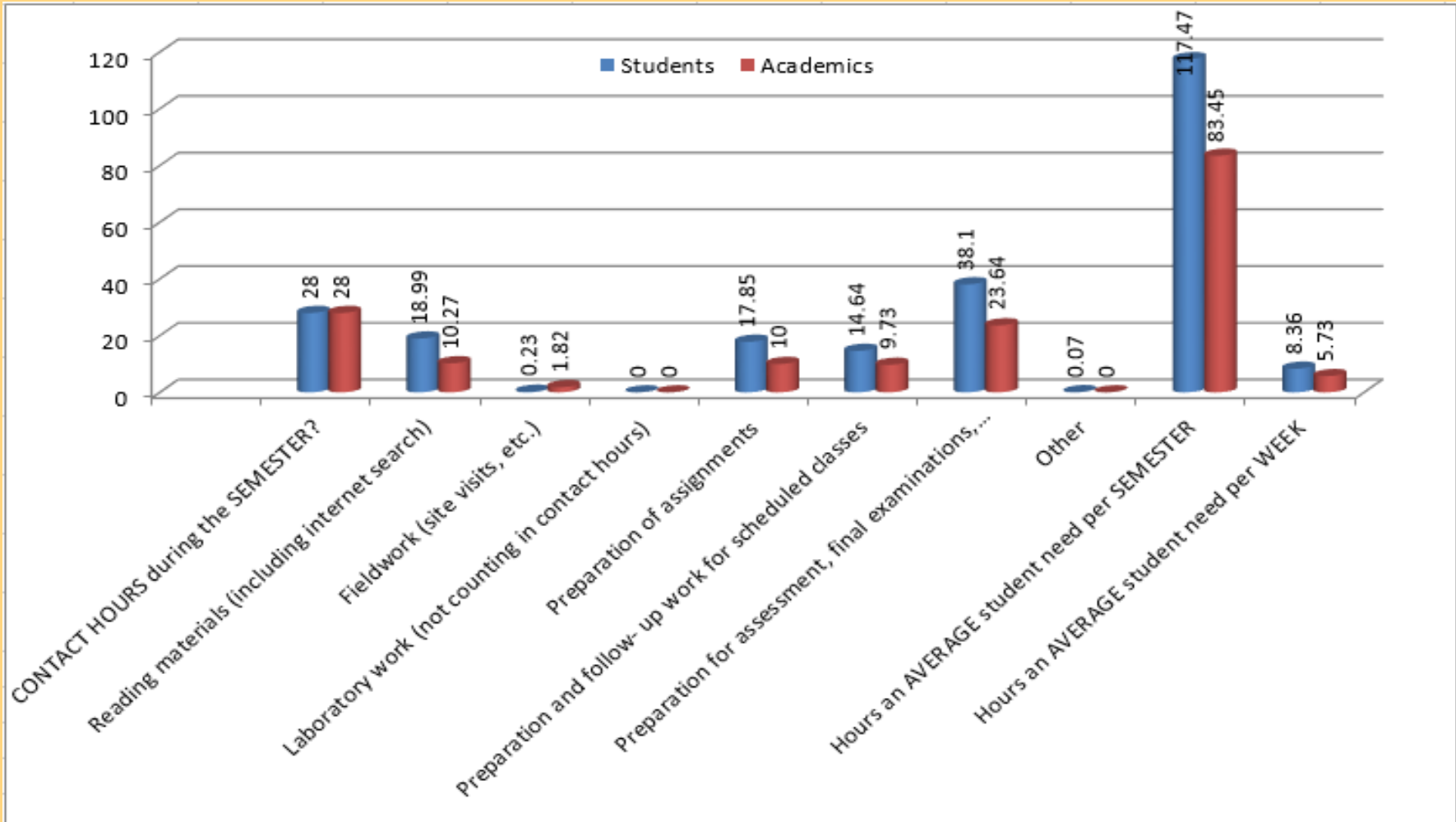
# Findings and Discussion



- The main findings show **significant differences between the perceptions of academics and students on student workload almost across all courses** of the programme under investigation.
- **Students' estimation** of the number of hours needed to complete the independent work across all courses during the semester **were much higher than that of academics** except for fieldwork (site visits).

# Findings and Discussion

## Students and Academics' perceptions on the estimation of student workload



## Findings and Discussion



- Significant differences were found between the perceptions of students on **the number of hours required for each different type of independent work** across different courses,
- **The highest average of estimations** of the number of hours was given to **course No. 11**, whereas the lowest average was given to **course No. 5** across all different types of independent work except “preparation and follow-up work for scheduled classes”.

# The perceptions of students on the number of hours required for each different type of independent work across all courses of the Professional Diploma in Education Using Friedman Test



No.	Courses Survey Questions	Course 1	Course 2	Course 3	Course 4	Course 5	Course 6	Course 7	Course 8	Course 9	Course 10	Course 11	Friedman Test	
		Students Mean											Chi-Square	Asymp. Sig
11_a)	Reading materials (including internet search)	25.47	19.6	15.6	13.3	0	11.6	21.47	20.13	25.87	23.07	32.87	76.474	.000
11_b)	Fieldwork (site visits, etc.)	0	0	0	0	0	0.67	0	0	0	0	1.87	15.333	0.120
11_d)	Preparation of assignments	18.6	20.4	15.47	0	0	12.9	24.07	27.53	25.33	23.8	28.33	96.170	0.000
11_e)	Preparation and follow-up work for scheduled classes.	19.47	18.93	5.87	6.93	16.4	8.8	20.53	20.53	14.53	14.27	14.8	66.004	0.000
11_f)	Preparation for assessment, final examinations, tests, etc. (summative assessment).	43.47	44.47	43.27	33.9	34.8	31.8	35.27	40.47	40.33	35.4	35.87	17.752	0.059
11_g)	Other	0.4	0.4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	10.000	0.440
12-	How many hours does an AVERAGE student need to complete all the requirements in this SEMESTER	134.5	129.9	108.3	80.3	79.3	93.7	129.3	136.7	133.9	124.5	141.7	83.886	0.000
13-	How many hours does an AVERAGE student need to complete all the requirements per WEEK	9.8	9.33	7.67	5.73	5.67	6.73	9.07	9.73	9.47	8.87	9.93	83.534	0.000

## Findings and Discussion



- Only **36.4% of academics** have taken students' feedback on workload into consideration when planning the workload for their courses.
- It was also found that **92% of students were not informed about the number of hours planned for independent work** at the beginning of the course.
- In addition, **88% of students were not given the opportunity to express their feedback** about workload.

# Findings and Discussion

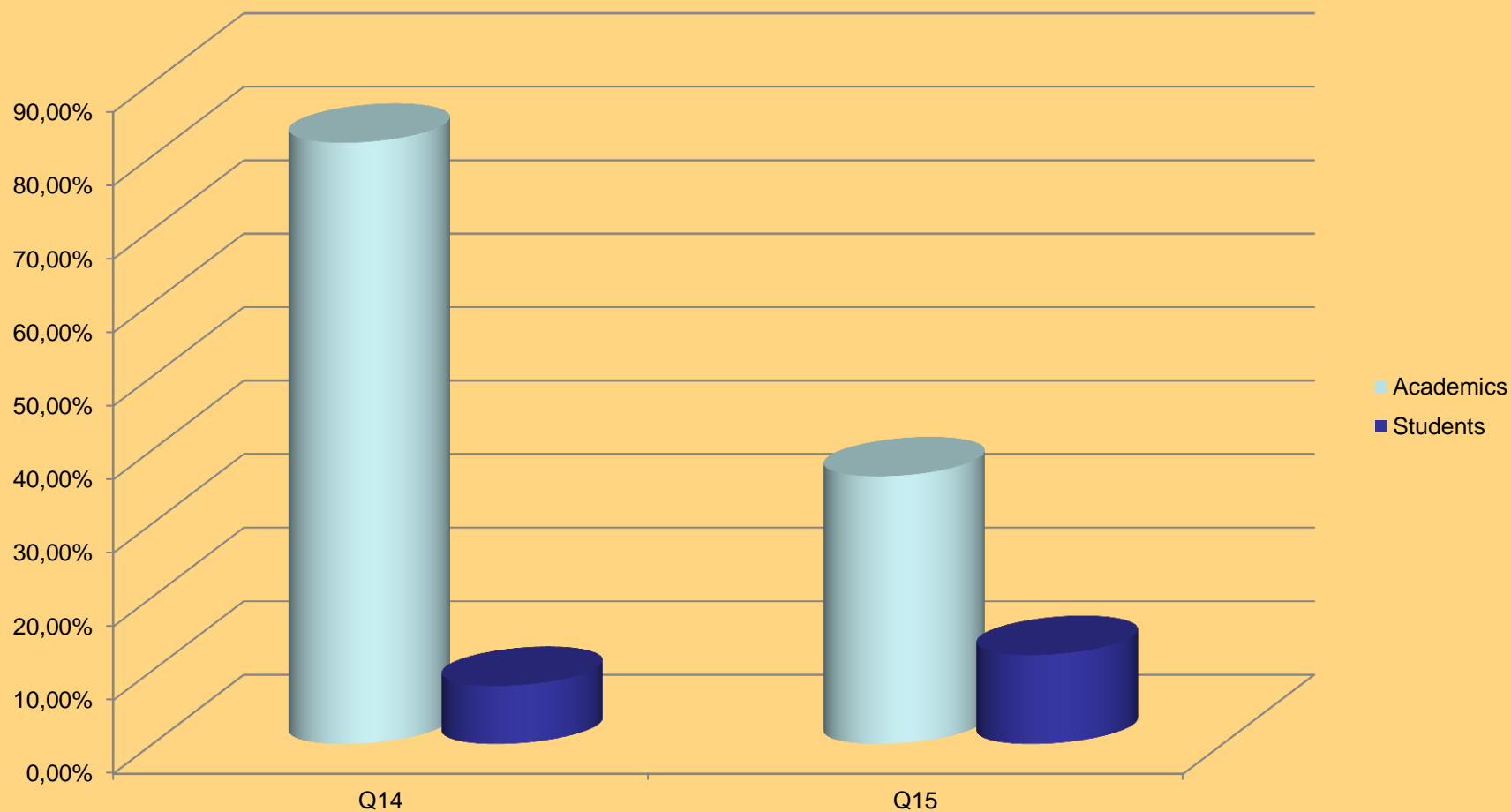
Responses of Academics and Students to Questions 14 and 15

	Q.14		Q.15	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Academics	81.8%	18.2%	36.4%	63.6%
Students	7.9%	92.1%	12.1%	87.9%



# Findings and Discussion

## Responses of Academics and Students to Questions No. 14 and No. 15.





# Concluding Remarks



## Concluding Remarks



- The findings of the study indicate that there is **no unified system among academics** to the estimation of student workload.
- It is also made clear that the process of estimating student workload in credit hour system at Alexandria University is **staff-centered** rather than **student oriented** as most academics never took students' feedback on workload into consideration when planning their courses.

## Concluding Remarks



- It is also enunciated clearly that **there is marginal coordination between academics** teaching in the same programme.
- It can be concluded that **student voice** about their workload **is neglected** as their feedback is not taken into consideration.
- This can be interpreted in light of **the absence of a “paradigm shift” from staff-centred to student oriented approaches** to the estimation of student workload.



# The Way Forward: Implications for Policy and Practice



# The Way Forward: Implications for Policy and Practice



- There is an indication that **effort and intentional strategies needed to be put in place** to minimize the gaps between the perceptions of academics and students on student workload.
- This calls for the adoption of a “**paradigm shift**” from input and staff-centered programmes to output and student oriented ones.

# The Way Forward: Implications for Policy and Practice



In order to achieve such a “*paradigm shift*”, several actions concerning policy and practice should be promoted. Among them, the study proposes:

- There should be **a unified credit system** which could facilitate student mobility from a university to another in Egypt and to provide transparency and fairness to students. It should be **comparable to other African universities** to facilitate the compatibility and harmonization process and student and staff mobility at the continental level.

# The Way Forward: Implications for Policy and Practice



- Moving from **credit (teaching) hour system** to a **credit system similar to ECTS** where the focus is on the student workload required to achieve the objectives of a programme, objectives specified in terms of the **learning outcomes and the required competences**.
- There should be **coordination and cooperation between academics teaching in the same programme** in terms of determining student workload.



# The Way Forward: Implications for Policy and Practice



- Rethinking about the revised programme taking into account **the necessity for informing students about the number of hours planned for independent work at the beginning of the course**, taking their feedback and making decisions on and adjustment of the student workload accordingly.
- The study proposes using **the two forms offered by the Tuning Approach** for determining student workload in Higher Education programmes for that purpose.
- **Students, alongside academics, should have a crucial role in the monitoring process** to determine whether the estimated student workload is realistic.

# The Way Forward: Implications for Policy and Practice



- The proposed implications for Policy and Practice provided for the researcher's own university might be of relevance for other universities in Egypt and for other countries having similar educational context.
- Finally, **working according to a new paradigm or coping with a new paradigm requires time and effort** but the outcome would be worthwhile, hopefully in respect of enhancing the process of determining student workload in Egyptian higher education and at the continental level.



Thank You!

**Saeed Alshamy**

Ph.D.; M.Ed; PGCE; SD; PD; BA

[Saeed.alshamy@edu.alexu.edu.eg](mailto:Saeed.alshamy@edu.alexu.edu.eg)

Alexandria University

Alexandria, Egypt