

## Preparing Preparatory Year English Language Learners for Professional Colleges: An Evaluation of Current Placement System

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### Abstract

The present study aims to analyze the pros and cons of both the existing system (English for General Purposes for one year and English for Specific Purposes for six months) and the proposed one (both ESP and EGP for one year) in Preparatory Year Programme (PYP) in Qassim University. It starts with an assumption that if the students are placed on the medical or science track in level-1 instead of level-2, they can be better prepared for the professional colleges after studying ESP for a full year. The study uses quantitative research approach by analyzing the data statistically in a comprehensive way. The complete record of high school grades, Pre-PYP tests and the first semester results of 615 PYP students in the main branch have been thoroughly studied. Likewise, 50 medical male, 50 medical female, 50 science male and 50 science female students have been surveyed on the 5-point Likert scale with 10-items quantitative tool. Major finding is that existing system of placing the students on medical and science tracks in the 2<sup>nd</sup> semester is better as the students get refined and polished due to the competition and hard work in the 1<sup>st</sup> semester of PYP. They remain both intrinsically and extrinsically motivated that despite their low performance on the high school exams, aptitude test and entry test, they still have another chance of being placed on the medical track (the first choice of majority of the students). The study, nevertheless, recommends reforms in the existing system without changing it drastically.

**Keywords:** EGP, ESP, language learners, medical track, preparatory year programme, professional colleges, science track

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Background

Preparatory Year Programme in Saudi Arabia plays a vital role in the academic and professional lives of students. It bridges the glaring gap between the school education and professional colleges' scheme of study. To make the programme dynamic, there is a need to carry out the exploratory research study with the objective of bringing reforms to prepare the Preparatory Year Programme (PYP) students better for the professional colleges in particular and professional lives later in general. In Qassim University, Saudi Arabia, the students are admitted to PYP on the basis of their high school grades and their scores on two tests (aptitude test, entry exam). The marks allocated for their performance on these measures are: 30 marks for school grades, 30 marks for the achievement test, and 40 marks for the general aptitude test.

PYP is divided into two semesters. In Level-1 (the first six months / first semester), the students are made to study general subjects like English for General Purposes (EGP), Statistics, Physics, Computer Science Course (CSC) and Thinking Skills. Their performance on formative and summative assessments in level-1 along with their earlier grades and performances on tests are taken into account to decide for their future field of study. The students with overall better grades are allowed to follow the medical scheme of study (which ensures their admission in the professional medical colleges after the successful completion of PYP), and the rest of the students have to follow the science track. Thereafter, they are taught English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in their respective field (medical and science tracks) only in the second semester—two classes per week with a focus on the technical terms and reading skills.

The admission to the medical colleges is limited to a specific number of seats for different branches. For example, the main branch (the case study for the present research) has 80 seats for the boys, 40 for the girls and 25 for dentistry in the medical field. The students who are selected for the medical track have the choice of entering into five fields later: Medicine, Dentistry, Applied Medical Science, Pharmacy and Nursing. The students who do not qualify for the medical fields have to follow the science track that offers the options of Engineering, Architecture and Computer Science Course (CSC).

The existing system of students' placement on the medical and science tracks in PYP which allows students to study EGP for a year and ESP for six months has been functioning for last three years. In these initial years, many changes have been suggested by all the stakeholders. A major argument emerging now is that the six months training of ESP given to the students in PYP for their higher studies in the professional colleges is insufficient. The proposition is that the students may be allowed to enter in PYP medical and science tracks after they have been scrutinized on three kinds of assessment (high school examinations, the achievement test, and the general aptitude test). These should be considered sufficient enough to decide about the students' future professional training.

As per the newly emerging argument, making the high school grades and the two tests as the criteria, the destination of the students' entry into the medical and science fields should be decided since it may benefit them in many ways. This would lead to a full one year programme in PYP with focused study of ESP along with EGP on the medical and science tracks separately and equip the students with better skills required in the professional colleges thereafter. The

proposed innovation in the existing system may make the medical and science students clear-headed right from the beginning of the PYP session. However, it may snatch from such students the chance to improve their grades and get admitted in the medical field. The students who desire to enter the medical field but have not been able to perform well on the earlier assessment may take the innovation as a barrier to their career building.

Therefore, the present study will analyze the pros and cons of both the existing system (EGP for one year and ESP for six months) and the proposed one (both ESP and EGP for one year) and give the recommendation in the favor of the one which is better and more suitable for the students studying in PYP.

### **1.2 Statement of Problem**

The present system of students' induction on the PYP medical and science tracks has its pluses and minuses. There are some advantages of the present system. First of all, the students who are generally naïve at the outset spend one semester and learn the lessons in maturity. Secondly, this gives a chance to those students who could not perform very well on the earlier three assessments, and they feel more motivated to learn. Thirdly, there is a strong sense of competition among the students in the current scenario to excel and enter into the medical, engineering, architecture, and CSC fields according to their choice.

However, there are some drawbacks too. A major drawback is that the students, who ultimately get a chance to follow the medical and science tracks, get only six months which is not a sufficient time period for them to get acquainted with the basic knowledge and be equipped with the skills required in the medical and engineering studies and the professions thereafter. Moreover, all the students in the first semester remain baffled and anxiety-ridden until their fate is decided. Therefore, there is a need to modify the system. The proposed system suggests that the high achievers and low achievers in the schools on the basis of their performance in the entry tests should be put on the medical and science tracks straightaway when they start their PYP. They should be offered subject specific training including ESP apart from EGP. There is a need to analyze both existing and proposed systems. The existing system focuses on mere EGP whereas proposed system advocates introduction of ESP right from the beginning.

The study at hand tries to address the problem by exploring as how to bring the students' pre-PYP proficiency and performance at par with their 1<sup>st</sup> semester results so as to decide about their entry into medical and science tracks right from the beginning of their PYP journey.

### **1.3 Research Questions**

- A. What are the implications and impact of the existing system (general subjects in the 1<sup>st</sup> semester and specific field based subjects in the 2<sup>nd</sup> one) of students' induction on the medical and science tracks in PYP in Saudi Arabia?
- B. What are the possible implications of the proposed system (specific field based subjects right from the beginning of the programme) of students' induction on the medical and science tracks in PYP in Saudi Arabia?
- C. Which system of students' induction on the medical and science tracks in PYP is better?

## 2. Review of Literature

Assessment for placement is an important but one of the most complex parts of any educational system. Sullivan and Nielsen (2009) point out that “the scholarship about assessment for placement is extensive and notoriously ambiguous” (p-4). Policy makers and educationists remain divided in their opinions on how to build up bridges between the school and college / university education. Many of them favor the remedial courses before the students are admitted to colleges. Vandal (2014) opines that “evidence is mounting that the vast majority of students who are currently placed into prerequisite remedial education could be successful in gateway college-level courses if they receive additional academic support as a co-requisite” (p-1). Hence, there is dire need to reevaluate the current system of students’ induction on medical / engineering tracks in PYP in Saudi Arabia in general and Qassim University in particular. Vandal (2014) further elaborates this point:

Recent research on college placement exams reveals that the exams are unreliable at predicting college success and adding multiple measures like high school GPA only marginally improves predictability. Because of the exams’ poor predictability, there is reason to believe that using assessments to place students into stand-alone remedial education is worse than placing all students into gateway courses (p-1).

This point clearly goes in favour of introducing general subjects first for the sake of orientation and mind making and the specialized subjects later when the gap between the school education and professional colleges’ demands has been bridged considerably. However, there is confusion as where to draw the line— whom to offer pre-requisite and whom to offer co-requisite courses— since the traditional remediation has generated mixed responses (Bailey, 2009; Bettinger & Long, 2005, 2009; Calcagno & Long, 2008; Dadgar, 2012; Hodara, 2012; Martorell & McFarlin, 2011; Scott-Clayton & Rodriguez, 2012).

The current practice at Qassim University is that students get the entry into PYP based on their school grades and two tests conducted by the ministry of education. They spend one semester in PYP as a pre-requisite and 2<sup>nd</sup> semester as a co-requisite where they are bifurcated into Medical and Engineering / Computer / Architecture tracks based on their performance in the 1<sup>st</sup> semester. If both notions of pre-requisite and co-requisite are to be taken along, perhaps the best solution is to add another additional co-requisite semester for the students who have been chosen into Medical / Engineering tracks based on their performance in the pre-requisite 1<sup>st</sup> semester of PYP. Vandal (2014) expresses his candid view that “reforms to assessment and placement practices alone will not dramatically improve college success rates. Instead, assessment and placement should support a fundamental redesign of the system that provides effective support to academically underprepared students while they are enrolled in gateway college—level courses” (p-2). *There are serious concerns shown for the developmental students who are at the cut off score of college readiness* (Bailey, Smith, & Jenkins, 2015, p-135). *A successful co-requisite model is the Accelerated Learning Program (ALP) at the Community College of Baltimore Country* (Cho, Kopko, Jenkins, & Jaggars, 2012).

While the traditional pre-requisite system in PYP, Qassim University can work as WARM UP stage for the students, adding one co-requisite semester can address the

dissatisfaction of the students that just six months of study of the specialized subjects is insufficient for them to exist effectively and smoothly in their professional colleges.

The present system for induction in PYP at Qassim University gives due credit to the high school grades in placing the students on Medical / Science tracks but Vandal (2014) points out that,

the expectation of those adding high school GPA and other data into placement decisions is that multiple measures will improve colleges' ability to identify students who can succeed in gateway college-level courses. Unfortunately, the evidence does not support this approach (p. 2).

In other words, the rationale behind using the high school grades and other data for placing the students on Medical / Science tracks is not valid to such an extent that it may not be challenged or modified. There are some other crucial factors which must be kept in view before making final decisions.

PYP in Saudi universities is a developmental education process and a gateway college level course that prepares the students for the college level study. Creating a placement range that results in the induction of students into PYP allows colleges to assess the readiness of students for college-level content and it is hoped to help in designing appropriate academic support for students who need it. The present study is a step forward in this direction as it intends to enlighten the stakeholders involved to have the clear vision in this regard and make better decisions.

### **3. Research Methodology**

This study compares the existing system (introduction of ESP in the 2<sup>nd</sup> semester) and proposed system (introduction of ESP from the beginning) of students' placement in PYP on medical and science tracks in Qassim University, Saudi Arabia. The complete record of high school grades, Pre-PYP and 1<sup>st</sup> semester results of 615 students has been thoroughly studied. Likewise, 50 medical male, 50 medical female, 50 science male and 50 science female students have been surveyed on the 5-point Likert scale. The comparative analysis of male and female, and science and medical students has been presented through bar charts. The high school record and the entry tests results of all the students in the main branch have been taken into account. The performance of the students in high school examination, general aptitude and achievement tests along with their performance in the 1<sup>st</sup> semester in PYP has been analyzed.

Two working hypotheses emerged as a result: H1: Existing system of induction of the students on medical and science tracks in the 2<sup>nd</sup> semester is better as the students get refined and polished due to the competition and hard work in the 1<sup>st</sup> semester of PYP, and H2: Based on the high school grades and the entry test scores, the students should be inducted on the medical and science tracks right from the beginning of their PYP so that they are better prepared for the professional colleges thereafter. The comparative statistical analysis reveals that both hypotheses have their pros and cons.

The research is basically quantitative and deals with the results of the subjects / students in the Pre-PYP tests i.e. the Achievement Test (IKHTABAR AL TEHSILI), and the General Aptitude Test (IKHTABAR AL QUDRAT), and their results in the PYP level-1 exams. A detailed analysis of the results and their comparison has been carried out with an intention of reaching the conclusion as to whether the results in Pre-PYP exams alone are sufficient enough in providing an insight into the students' capabilities of doing well in Medical track or Science track. Moreover, in order to validate the results, a 12-items survey designed on the five-items Likert scale has been conducted to get the opinion of PYP students about the existing induction and placement system. The survey items address various themes in the following fashion:

- The need for a remedial course before studying specialized courses like ESP: the survey item numbers 1, 2 & 3.
- The reflection on the idea of criteria for admission on medical and engineering tracks: the survey item numbers 4, 5 & 6.
- Support for the inclusion of specialized subjects in Level-1: the survey item-7 and 8.
- Endorsement to segregation of medicine and engineering: the survey item-9 and 10.
- Feedback for changes in syllabi and subjects: the survey item numbers-11 and 12.

In total, 300 students from the current session were contacted for this purpose. However, there were 200 respondents whose survey sheets were complete and thus considered for the research. 50 of these students were males (medical), 50 females (medical), 50 males (engineering) and 50 females (engineering). In order to ensure the valid responses, we translated all difficult words in the given statements in Arabic (students' mother tongue) in the survey.

The sample population comprised of 615 students who graduated from PYP in 2015 (inducted in PYP in January 2015, placed in medical and science tracks in August 2015, on the basis of their performance in the achievement test, and the general aptitude test, and their results in the PYP level-1 exams). These 615 students included 423 girls and 192 boys.

#### 4. Data Analysis

The data was analyzed taking 615 students into account whose complete record of high school grades, pre-PYP tests and the 1<sup>st</sup> semester PYP results was available. Following is the table showing the details of the sample population for the study at hand:

**Table 1** *The population sample*

	Medical track	Science track	Total
Boys	219	204	423
Girls	164	28	192
Total	383	232	615

As the first step, the sample students' pre-PYP results were studied and the average results were found for both boys and girls. These results were compared with their results in level-1 exams of PYP. Following is the comparative Pre-PYP and PYP 1<sup>st</sup> semester averages of all the boys and girls including the medical and science track students in the current session.

**Table 2 Averages**

Average		Medical track		Science track		Total	
		Pre-PYP Result	PYP Level- 1 Result	Pre-PYP Result	PYP Level 1 Result	Pre-PYP Result	PYP Level 1 Result
	Boys	83.9	76.46	81.69	67.95	82.84	72.35
	Girls	84.41	77.56	84.42	72.86	84.41	76.79
	Total	84.12	76.93	82.02	68.47	83.33	73.74

Table 2 shows that the average result of the students in pre-PYP assessment is 83.33% but it decreased to 73.74% in level-1 exams. The boys inducted in level-1 of PYP had the average of 82.84% marks whereas the average for the girls inducted in level-1 of PYP was 84.41%. However, their results in level-1 exams show a decline in their performance – boys with the average of 72.35% and girls with the average of 76.79%. This difference may be due to various factors including the level of difficulty in content and exams, the difference in marking exams which requires another research study. However, for the present research purpose, we consider the fact obvious from the table that the students getting higher accumulative averages have been placed on the medical track whereas the students with lower accumulative averages have been placed on the science track. An interesting observation made in this regard is the reading in the row for the results of girls. The girls placed on the medical track secured an average of 84.41 in pre-PYP exams and the ones placed on the science track had a higher average 84.42. However, they got placed on their relevant tracks mainly due to the difference in their PYP level-1 results. This indicates that even if a student has not been able to score very high in his / her pre-PYP exams, he / she still has a chance to work hard and get higher score in PYP level-1 exams and is able to go to the medical field. Thus, it can be concluded that the students need to be trained in the PYP 1<sup>st</sup> semester as per the current practice. The survey results on the 12-items questionnaire will further throw some light in this regard.

As the second step, we analyzed the sample students' results in pre-PYP exams in detail. In the following pie-chart, the students have been grouped on the basis of the percentages of their results: 70%-74%, 75%-79%, 80%-84%, 85%-89% and above 90%. The chart reflects that the majority of the students (i.e. 338) got 80%-84%; whereas 160 students secured 85%-89% and 30 students got above 90%.

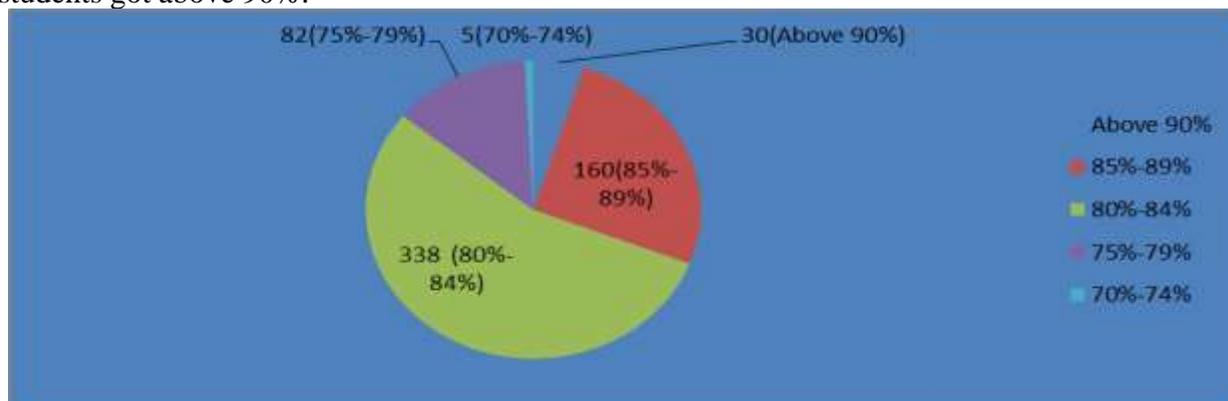
**Figure 1- Pre-PYP Results Pie Chart**

Figure 1 gives some guidelines to bring reforms in PYP students' placement in a logical way. It suggests that 30 students getting above 90% marks may be directly inducted on the medical track right from the 1<sup>st</sup> semester of PYP. In the same way, 160 students getting above 85% marks can be put on the science track. In this way they would have almost a year to focus on their specialized subjects including ESP and be prepared better for their future professional studies. All the rest of the students can either be given a highly standardized placement test or they can be given a warm up training by offering them a pre- specialized PYP semester as per the current practice. Following figure also favours this scenario as the standard curve with scattered results gives space to implement the suggested innovations:

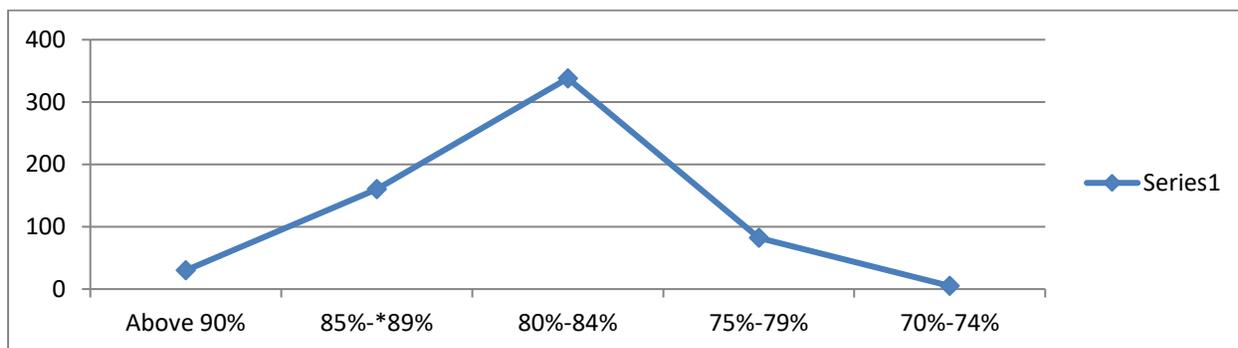


Figure 2- Pre-PYP Results Standard Curve

The curve of the students' pre-PYP performance is quite close to the valid and reliable one. It does suggest that the students' pre-PYP performance can be made a base for their induction on the medical or science tracks right from the 1<sup>st</sup> semester of PYP.

As the third step, we studied the sample students' results in PYP level-1 exams closely. In the following figure, the pie chart shows the number of students grouped together on the basis of the percentages of their results in PYP level-1 exams.

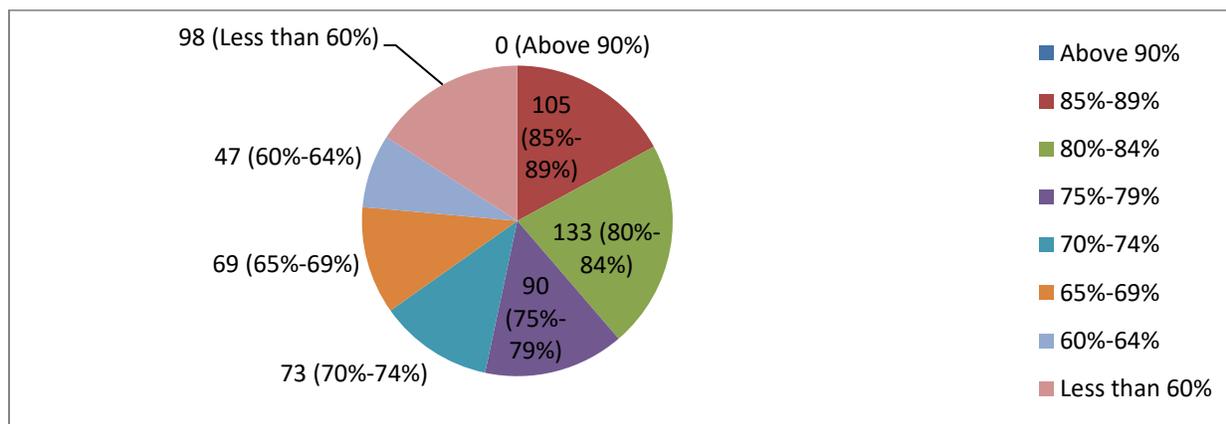
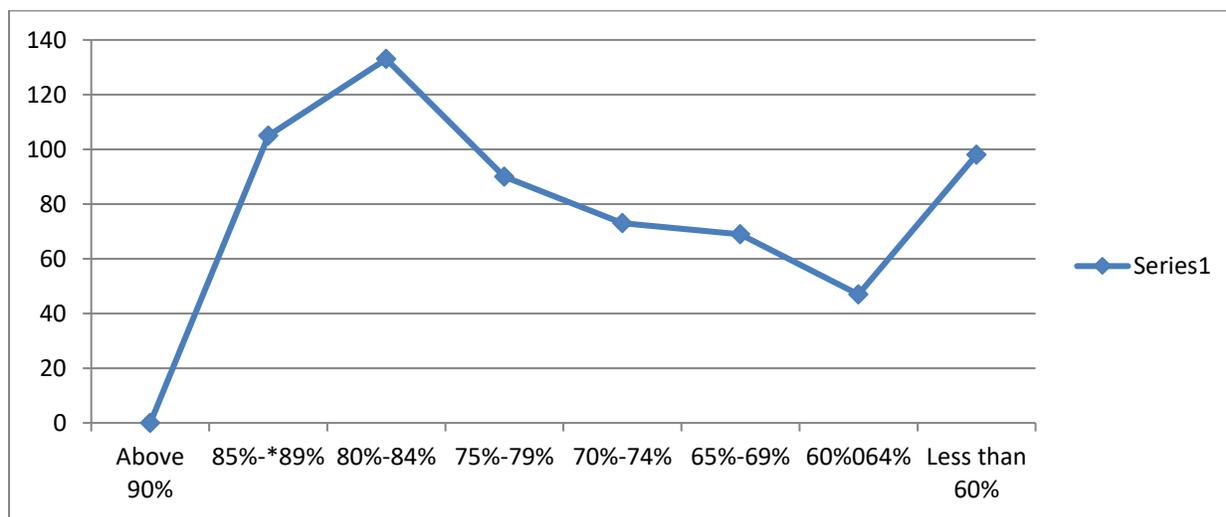


Figure 3- Level 1 Results Pie Chart

Figure 3 clearly shows the reliability and validity of PYP 1<sup>st</sup> semester results. However, the scattered results of the students suggest that there is a mismatch between the students' pre-PYP training in high schools and studies in PYP. It also points out the

importance of 1<sup>st</sup> semester general study for the students before starting their proper / specialized study including ESP in PYP. It clearly shows that the majority of the students who obtained above 80% marks in their pre-PYP exams have not been able to obtain that high percentage in their PYP level-1 exams. Therefore, it indicates that the students require this coaching and teaching in general subjects including EGP to reach the level at which they might get ready to study the specialized subjects including ESP in level-2 of PYP.



**Figure 4- Level-1 Results Standard Curve**

The standard curve for level-1 results of PYP students is quite reliable and acceptable. This clearly indicates that the present system of students’ placement has its own worth as it gives a chance to the students to work hard and get a place on the medical track, especially the ones who are really motivated to study on the medical track but due to some reasons were unable to score very high in the pre-PYP exam and therefore might not have been able to study the subjects of their choice if the induction had been on the basis of the pre-PYP exams results only.

However, if the fruits of both the existing system and the proposed one are to be reaped, the better idea is to introduce a pre-PYP semester for the students where students study subjects of general nature and then enter into PYP for the study of their specialized subjects including ESP so that they may have a longer span of training for their specialized area and are better prepared to meet the challenges in their future professional colleges.

Next, we compared the three situations: students’ pre-PYP results, their PYP level-1 results and their accumulative scores on both pre-PYP and PYP level-1 exams. The following bar chart shows this comparison:

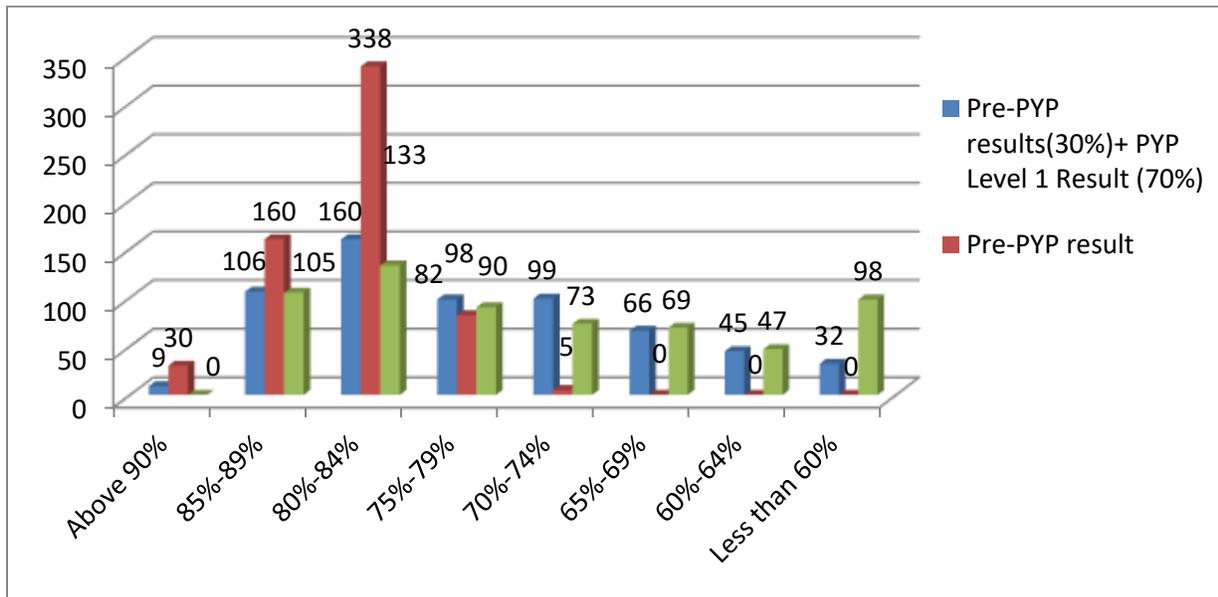


Figure 5- Comparison of Existing System vs. Pre-PYP vs. Level-1 PYP Results

In figure 5, it can be observed quite clearly that level-1 results rationalize the existing system of students' induction into PYP and their Pre-PYP results. The scattered results in level-1 grade the students into high-achievers, average-achievers and low achievers which in turn helps the decision makers in placing them in the professional colleges. In this way, the spirit of competition and the passion of working hard to excel are inculcated in the students. Such a spirit makes a programme dynamic and progressive. However, the problem persists that the students get less time to study specialized subjects like ESP- for six months only. That favours the argument that it is not a sufficient time period for preparing students for their future study in the professional colleges.

To gain further depths in understanding the issue at hand, a 12-statement survey with 5-items Likert scale (strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree) was administered at 200 students in the current session. 50 of these students were males (medical), 50 females (medical), 50 males (engineering) and 50 females (engineering). Their responses are presented as following:

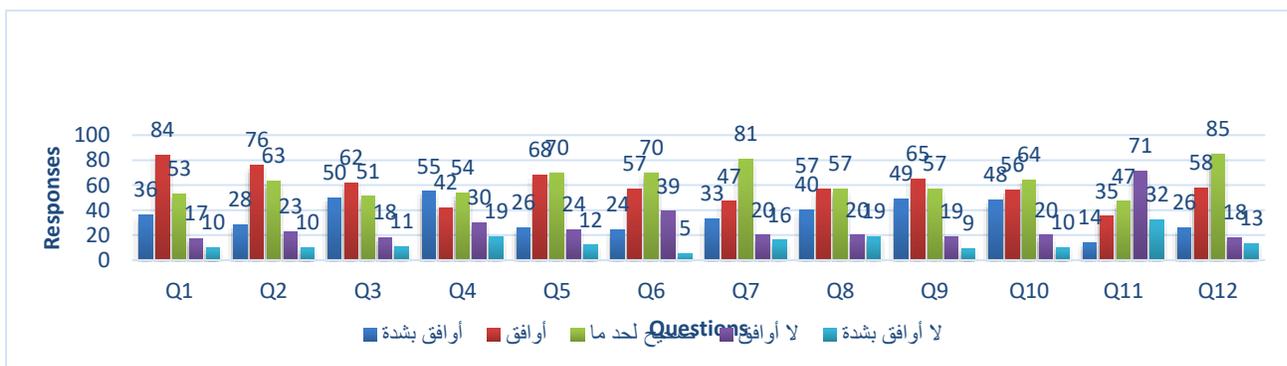


Figure 6- Overall picture of all 200 responses from the students

The responses of the students to the survey items show that majority of the respondents consider the existing system of students' induction in PYP and their placement on the medical track in level-2 of PYP good enough. Majority (more than 50%) believes that six months of training given to the students in PYP in Level-2 (2<sup>nd</sup> semester), for their higher studies in the professional colleges, is insufficient. However, their responses to many statements related to their earlier studies and the pre-PYP exams reflect their dissatisfaction with their earlier studies and pre-PYP performance measures due to many reasons. First of all, the students think that the existing practice develops them intellectually and makes them mature enough to study the specialized subjects in level-2 and later in their professional colleges. This kind of response raises questions about the students' earlier school education. This indicates that the students think that their earlier school education was not good enough in terms of quality or time period to prepare them to study the specialized subjects. Therefore, they deem it necessary to study the general subjects like EGP in PYP before being able to focus on specialized subjects like ESP.

Secondly, the students clearly agree that the subjects they study in level-1 of PYP (EGP) are of great importance in preparing them to better understand the technical specialized subjects-based knowledge and skills, especially ESP, which they tend to study and acquire later in level-2 of PYP. This opens another area of research, i.e. what is missing in the curriculum these students study at school level and why so, since even after getting above 80% of marks in their high school exams, they still need to study EGP in PYP first to be able to focus on the technical knowledge and skills in ESP later.

Thirdly, there are many students who think the grades they obtained earlier are not good enough to enable them to go to the field of their choice, and therefore, they find level-1 of PYP as a chance to improve their grades and be able to get into the field of their choice—that is in most of the cases the medical track. However, almost 26% of the respondents chose the option of neutral to the relevant statement on the survey. They represent the group of students who are confused about the role of level-1 studies in improving their chances in their future progress in academic / professional life.

Finally, the majority of the respondents think that the pre-PYP test / assessment tools like the achievement test, the general aptitude Test and high school grades do not measure enough the students' capability to go in medical / engineering fields. They still ask for more improvement in their abilities and require more professional skills and guidance to come at par with the high achievers. In other words, the majority of the students seem to reject the idea of placing students on the medical or science tracks on the basis of their performance in the pre-PYP assessment on two grounds: first, they think the curriculum taught at schools is not sufficient enough to enable them to study the specialized subjects right after completing their school education, and secondly, the pre-PYP assessment tools are not valid enough to measure the strength and the aptitude of the students; therefore, the results on these assessment tools are not reliable and cannot be taken as standards for the students' placement on the medical or science tracks for their higher professional studies.

However, when these respondents were asked if the students' assessment on PYP level-1 general studies (EGP) exams could help decide about the students' placement on the medical or science tracks, the responses were quite varied. These varied responses raise questions about the

absolute usefulness of the PYP level-1 subjects. Almost 47% of the respondents believe that the students' scores in Level-1 (1<sup>st</sup> semester) give a good measure of their capability for their admission in medical and engineering colleges. This group seems to represent those students who could not score so well in the pre-PYP assessment so that they could be directly placed in the medical field (the choice of the majority) and find PYP level-1 a chance to improve the grades and enter the field of their choice. However, 35% of the students showed uncertainty about this. This uncertainty reflects on their dissatisfaction with the remedial education up to level-1 only since they still ask for more improvement in their abilities and require more professional skills and guidance to come at par with the high achievers. Almost 18% respondents opine that the PYP level-1 scores are not sufficient measure of students' strength to help decide about their placement on the medical or science tracks.

It is quite strange to find that the respondents in the research showed varied opinions even about the notion that the scores in level-1 (1<sup>st</sup> semester) as well as scores in the earlier tests collectively give a good measure of the students' ability to study medicine or engineering. There are almost 40% of respondents who endorse the existing system of placement. However, 35% showed uncertainty about it, and 22% rejected the idea. These are the students who want some change or reforms to improve the system to satisfy all stakeholders by ensuring that the students entering professional colleges after completing PYP have gone through a valid placement procedure and have acquired required technical skills and knowledge (ESP). When asked if there should be drastic changes in the syllabi and subjects taught in PYP right from level-1 (1<sup>st</sup> semester) to match the needs of future professional colleges of the students, more than 50% of students agreed, very few (only 15% disagreed) and more than 26 % showed uncertainty.

One suggestion in this regard is to place the students on the medical or science tracks on the basis of their performance in the pre-PYP assessments. Almost 41% of the respondents liked the idea. But 18% of them rejected the suggestion and almost 41% showed uncertainty about it. This uncertainty may be because they do not have the experience of content based teaching and learning that enhances an ESL learner's professional knowledge to build his or her specialized base (Evans, 1996). This segregation of the students, right on the onset of PYP, can render many benefits. More than 57% of respondents believe that it may help learners study their specific areas with more focused approach and clear the uncertainty. Almost the same number of respondents believes that the placement of the students on the medical or science tracks at the onset of PYP would help students study the basics of their specialized areas for a full year and better prepare them for study in the professional colleges.

Another suggestion presented is that the specialized subjects (including ESP) may be taught right from level-1 (1<sup>st</sup> semester) in PYP along with the other required basic subjects and skills (EGP). The majority of the respondents agreed with the idea. The favorable responses correlates with Evans' (1996) proposition and case studies that content based approach and topic approach through language centers can integrate "language learning with content areas in the mainstream curriculum" (p-180). The important point is to "transform remedial education" and "recalibrate their (students') measures of success" (Vandal, 2014, p-1). However, if the curriculum and syllabus of PYP is designed around the co-requisites and specialized areas of the students' prospective tracks, it can greatly benefit and equip the students for their future

endeavors. Again, there were more than 25% of the respondents who showed uncertainty about it and 20% of them disagreed with the idea.

A lot of uncertain responses from the survey participants point towards the room for reforms and innovations in the existing system. The uncertainty of PYP students in their responses reflects on their dissatisfaction with the remedial education up to level-1 only since they still ask for more improvement in their abilities and require more professional skills and guidance to come at par with the high achievers. Overall, the responses express that there is no need to bring the drastic changes, but only the reforms to bring improvement in the existing system. Therefore, if the curriculum and syllabus of PYP is designed around the co-requisites and specialized areas of the students' prospective tracks, it can greatly benefit and equip the students for their future endeavors and successful and dignified existence in their professional colleges.

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Continuous innovations and reforms play key role for the success of any academic programme. Drastic and unmindful changes can prove to be counter-productive as they bring chaos and disorder in the system. Willingness to bring evolutionary and planned changes can make PYP dynamic, progressive and productive. The present study analyzed the pros and cons of both the existing system (EGP for one year and ESP for six months) and the proposed one (both ESP and EGP for one year) for the overall benefit of all the PYP stakeholders: students, teachers, administrators, policy makers and decision makers. The analysis presented in this study can prove to be beneficial to all such contexts in other parts of the world as well where efforts are being made to give right directions to the students by placing them in the educational programmes like PYP in a planned way addressing all the surrounding complexities and niceties. In the light of the discussion in the data analysis part, the following conclusions and recommendations can be made:

- A. The present system of students' induction on medical / science track needs some innovations and reforms to make it more productive and beneficial for the students and for the betterment of existing system. However, the research in the present study does not favor the drastic change in the system. The students' performance in the level-1 / 1<sup>st</sup> semester of PYP divides them into the high achievers, average ones and low achievers which suggest that the existing system of students' induction on medical and science tracks after the 1<sup>st</sup> semester of PYP can sustain successfully. This implies that the students enrolled in PYP initially need training in EGP and other subjects of general nature, and once the academic momentum has been caught, they should be taught English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and other specialized subjects with full focus to prepare them thoroughly for the professional colleges.
- B. Majority of responses are in favor of level-1 as a general part of the remedial course leading to specialized level-2 part as is reflected in the responses to the survey item numbers 1, 2 & 3. All in all, research recommends bringing reforms in the existing system of PYP students' induction on the medical and science tracks without changing it altogether.
- C. The poor outcomes in the remedial courses may also point towards the disparity in the content taught in the remedial courses and the ones required in the college-level courses

(Jaggars&Hodara, 2013). The proposed system of placement of the students on the medical or science tracks might prove a step in the right direction by bridging up the gap and aligning the content taught and required. However, the results obtained in this research reflect the importance of the remedial course (EGP) taught in level-1 for the students. Therefore, it is recommended that the existing system of students' induction in the PYP may continue but at the same time, some reforms should be added that may help improve the students gaining professional and technical knowledge and acquire skills required in their future studies in the professional colleges.

- D. At Qassim University, the students are placed on the medical or science tracks in the level-2 of PYP on the basis of their grades in level-1, and prior to that on the basis of their high school grades and their performance on the standardized aptitude test as well as the entry test. It is in the level-2 (i.e. after six months) that they are given ESP training for their relevant fields, which is probably a very short time span to study ESP. The divided opinion does not prefer exclusive and radical replacement of existing system with the proposed model but suggests parallel coexistence of both systems. However, the poor performances in the remedial course require alternative models, and the *co-requisite model of remediation* is becoming "increasingly popular" (Ladd & Goertz, 2015, p. 647).
- E. It is strongly recommended that the high achievers may be segregated from the very start and may be placed for the intended and specialized fields with co-requisites while the average and low achievers may be enrolled for remedial courses in pre-PYP semester. The recommendation may be supported with the reforms in Connecticut and Florida introduced on the "assumption that most or all developmental students could be successfully served either in a co-requisite model or a one-semester remedial course. Co-requisite model is being considered a "game changer" that would improve the success rate of underprepared undergrads. Thus, it would be a wise step to conduct the placement test at the beginning of PYP, put the low achievers in a pre-PYP semester, and let high achievers continue in the regular PYP semester. For this to be a successful practice, it is very necessary to screen out the existing syllabus taught in the 1<sup>st</sup> semester. Reforms need to be brought to such an effect that very basic things should be moved to the pre-PYP semester and scheme of the study should be made more forward looking.
- F. It is a common misperception that EGP and ESP are in conflict with each other and are striving to replace each other. In fact, they complement each other and are integral part of each other. What is recommended in the light of present research is that ESP should be given more consideration by allocating more teaching hours for it side by side the teaching of EGP.

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