


Chapter 4

The Role of Accrediting Agencies: GCC Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Accrediting agencies are autonomous bodies commissioned mainly to grant accreditation to academic institutions that meet the prescribed quality standards. The accreditation process takes through a detailed systematic procedure that considers reviewing of the academic institution operations, whether teaching and learning offered to meet the quality standards, and encourages improvement to international standards. All accreditations offered by accrediting bodies call for institutional accreditation before any other type of accreditation is granted. Accreditation can be classified as international and national, where the process in both the methods have some common and different steps. Each accrediting body under the designated government authority has prescribed procedures, terms, and conditions to be fulfilled by institutions for the accreditation process. OAAA, CAA, and the NCAAA are the more active accrediting bodies operational in the GCC region commissioned in Oman, UAE, and KSA, respectively.

INTRODUCTION

Every academic organization including the higher education institution is currently embarking to improve the provision of quality education and achieve academic excellence. In the present century, as education is increasingly becoming more affordable to the masses, there is tremendous growth and raise in the educational sector from the growing demand. In the upfront, the provision of quality education is also crucial to academic institutions to sustain the competition within the global market. Importantly

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The Role of Accrediting Agencies

accreditation is one such mechanism to facilitate academic institutes to provide quality education by following through a set of criteria standards brought out by accrediting agencies.

According to Blauch (1959), accreditation is the “*recognition accorded to an institution that meets the standards or criteria established by a competent agency or authority*”.

In such a context, accrediting agencies play a crucial role in serving the purpose of evaluating the academic institutions from their performance against the quality standards to approve them as centers for excellence. Not to mention, all academic organizations are deemed to satisfy the quality criteria standards and remain approved by a regional or international accrediting authority as a benchmark for global recognition.

Background Literature

Accrediting agencies are at the forefront of bringing improvements to academic institutions through enforcement and improvising quality in education which is very important for assuring quality education to all. With increasing global competitiveness and to improvise the quality of teaching and learning in higher education, governments in many countries are emphasizing the need for accreditation (Hou, 2011). On the other hand, accrediting agencies act as links between education and industry in creating more employment opportunities for students, fostering assurance to employers and stakeholders on providing standard quality of education. While accrediting agencies provide a supportive role to academic institutes to maintain acceptable academic standards improving the overall capability to offer quality education at every level, they, in turn, deliberate accreditation as an essential component to help meet global recognition. Academic institutions with good accreditation always stand ahead as a top choice of preferences for education. According to Teixeira and Maccari (2018) accreditation of institutions confirms quality education offered by institutions and also offers global recognition. Likewise, Al Busaidi (2020) reports that accreditation provides a significant benefit in augmenting graduate employability and student retention rates in HEIs that offer engineering programs in GCC countries.

Higher education institutions in pursuit of excellence in education are granted accreditation by the agencies at institutional and program levels for compliance to quality and standard curriculum. Likewise, accreditation at institution and program levels are initiated with the motive to provide technical support and capacity building for institutions to improve meet global standards and to enhance the optimization of resources for education which are seen as performance models mainly in the European higher education system (Jung & Latchem, 2012). Moreover, institutional accreditation is also viewed as an important process to review and standardize curriculums offered to meet quality standards, which is a way of pledging commitment to employers and stakeholders on the assurance of qualified graduates. Moreover, Alkhateeb et al. (2018) highlighted the paucity of having a national accrediting agency for pharmacy education in the GCC region which led the HEIs in pharmacy to adopt international pharmacy accreditation (IPAC) in KSA.

Purpose and Objectives

From the growing population and rise in demand for formal education worldwide, the higher education institutions essentially should take cognizant of the role of international and regional accreditation agencies, their functions, process, and categories/standards, and how the accreditation process will benefit the institutions. Fortunately, with the advent of education transformation and reforms that have taken

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