

International or national accreditation in Higher Education Institutes: Towards better understanding serving our real needs

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The trend to enhance higher education goes through either national or international accreditation or could be both, however, the question is which drives more efficiently, or should they go hand in hand together. What value does each of these accreditations, whether national or international could add to our real needs. Are our real needs known, or it is the reputation of international accreditation we are running after? Does being better of gaining accreditation is the goal, or it is one of the means that drives us to the goal. Do international accreditation requirements cover national needs, and if not in what and which areas should the integration be between national and international accreditation. Which drives the institution better towards national requirements to achieve national strategic trends, fruitful HEIs industry link, research promotion, data-driven decisions, systems-based HEIs and higher worldwide rankings

Accreditation requirements usually covers self studying and assessing these following areas: programs and courses in terms of assessment results, curriculum, faculties, students, facilities, research, management and strategic/operational plans, stakeholders' opinions, employability and partnerships (Alhamad, B. & Aladwan, R., 2016). Percentages are distributed among these areas, based on its necessity and how it is essential on maintaining the quality of higher education. Usually, the concentration is on curriculum, teaching and learning, faculty members, and students. Other areas are of less importance, especially when

referring to international accreditation requirements. Nationally, in the developed countries and some of the developing countries, there is a big emphasis on research when undergoing national accreditation, as it drives the economic and future needs of the nation itself. However, in many of the developing countries, the direction of future is missed, and rather than research, there is more emphasis is on the base, governance and the infrastructure of the higher education institutions (HEIs). Being busy in governance rather being busy in research is not a good sign of development. Balancing this direction of gaining national and/or international accreditation is driven by the status of the HEIs, strategic goals and national needs.

The achievement of international accreditation will assist in developing the Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) tools that would contribute to the base of quality assurance systems (Alhamad, B. & Aladwan, R., 2016), however this quality assurance system should be internally driven through defined policies, processes, tools, forms that will enhance the structure to be a sustainable system to a known direction. For International Accreditation requirements, the IQA tools should be defined, however minimally it covers that there should be a system and structure of quality assurance and enhancement. The system would ensure spreading culture, having data-driven decisions, systematic link with industries, research and teaching strategically driven. Moreover, looking into satisfaction of market through surveying alumni and employers, does not reflect the picture of employment strategy in the country, or employability in general, in terms of the country's context (KAROLY, L. A., 2010), and does not consider the future trends of the country's needs itself to maintain the sustainable economic development (Karolak, M., 2012), in terms of research, manufacturing industries and the competitiveness edge of the country.

Following international accreditation requirements puts the Higher Education Institute (HEI) on a recognized level of having good curriculum structure, reasonable teaching and learning capabilities, acceptable and safe facilities, adequate faculty staff members, however all of these areas are required to the minimum level for being successful, and not the expected level to satisfy national needs and strategic trends.

Finally, the international accreditation could be an interim measure or a driver to ensure the effective functioning of quality assurance in HEIs (Al-Alawi, Al-Kaabi, Rashdan, and Al-Khaleefa, 2009), as it was the case in Bahrain. The national trends add important ingredients, which are critical to the success of the HEIs, in specific, to have the direction, and to see the direction that takes the institution towards a defined vision. Being accredited is not the end of the story, but it is a journey towards national goals. Between pros and cons, areas of balancing between national and international accreditation requirements would be highlighted. This speech would enhance understanding this balance that would drive the HEI towards focusing on national trends and latest international practices as well as considering the international status and recognition, through a defined and sustainable processes and systems.

References

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