

Application of Quality Assurance & Accreditation in the Institutes of Higher Education in the Arab World (Descriptive & Analytical Survey)

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Abstract

This is a descriptive and analytical study - intended to survey the applications of quality assurance & accreditation principles in the institutions of higher education in the Arab Region. To come to this end the study has tested the following hypotheses that:

- 1. There is a correlation between quality assurance & accreditation and the objectives of higher education institutes in the Arab world.*
- 2. There is a relationship between the system of quality assurance & accreditation and the degree of quality education offered by higher education institutions in the region.*
- 3. There is a relationship between the application of the standard quality assurance & accreditation and the attainment of goals in colleges and universities in the Arab region.*

After investigation, we have come to the following findings that: Quality assurance & accreditation is important for higher education institutions, as through this mechanism universities can achieve goals by satisfying customers (students, parents or organizations') needs for quality education in the near and long run. The standards of quality assurance & accreditation are good devices for measuring the level of quality educational services. We have also concluded that the application of quality assurance & accreditation system is the secret behind the success of most of higher education institutions all over the world, and so it should be in the Arab Region. Quality Assurance uses benchmarks (indicators) as witnesses of failures which can help to detect problems before they occur during the implementation of the plan. Then we have made some recommendations for higher education institutions to speed up the application of quality assurance & accreditation to reach their goals, achieve further development and attain excellence in education at global level. We have recommended the dissemination of total quality culture awareness among employees by giving them training on TQM in order to reach high level of performance. Universities should seek different ways, to ensure the quality of educational services which they offer to their students to attain excellent learning outcome.

Key words: quality control, quality assurance, accreditation, Arab Education, learning outcome

1.0. Introduction

Higher education institutions have – recently - started looking at quality assurance and accreditation as fashionable philosophy to provide quality education to cope with global developments, in order to provide outputs that satisfy demands in the labor market, at local and global levels, with high efficiencies and excellence in various fields. To confirm these needs we have to search for solutions or management philosophy that can help higher education institutions to develop human resources, as the only way for growth and development.

This is done through the adoption of the strategy and application of total quality management, quality assurance & accreditation which proved to be of great success in helping achieving the goals of many profit making companies, as well as higher education institutions and consequently the community alike. The system of quality assurance and accreditation in the field of higher education is one modern system that helps facing problems by addressing (input - processes - output - feedback) operations and by comparing them with many competitive local standards to achieve the highest possible international level. The continuous assessment drives higher education institutions to re-examine their programs, processes and activities to figure out the points of strengths and weaknesses, in order to develop and improve situations, based on objective data and not on conjecture and speculation, so as to attain quality assurance in higher education in various disciplines.

The labor market is the major external environment for higher education institutions as it absorbs university graduates in different areas, so we have to have great concern with the needs of these environments to meet them since the client's satisfaction has become extremely an end goal; a thing that makes all institutions aspire to do in such a changing world. It is self evident that the more the educational services provided, the more they would meet the customer's satisfaction. Therefore, institutions need to cope with these variables; otherwise they would come out of the labor market. But the main theme behind the selection of this topic is the realization of the fact that higher institutes in the Arab world have poor international reputation worldwide, as they have achieved and still achieving poor status in the international university ranking. There were only two universities that have achieved relatively good ranking in the first 500 top universities. We think this is due to – among other factors - poor management, lack of modern educational and technological knowledge. We believe that Quality control and quality assurance are two strategies that can help to widen the scope of leaders of higher institutions, to adopt new modern world criteria for development and growth.

1.1. Research Problem

The problem of this research stems from the fact that there are too many educational services provided by educational institutions in these days, but all are much similar in form and contents; while these institutions are expected to provide unique services, to enable them compete in the world market. However, this competition will not be unless the quality assurance & quality control systems are adopted by these education institutes. This should be the reason for the application of these higher education intuitions of this system, to achieve goals in the near and far future, as well as seeking the satisfaction of customers, which is the goal of any profit or non- profit establishment, seeking excellence and development. The problem of this research can be summarized in the following questions:

1. Is there any relationship between quality assurance & accreditation and the objectives of higher education institutes in the Arab world?
2. Is there any relationship between the system of quality assurance & accreditation and the degree of quality education offered by higher education institutions?
3. Is there any relationship between the application of the standard quality assurance & accreditation and the attainment of goals in colleges and universities in the Arab region?

1.2 Research hypotheses

We believe that:

1. There is a relationship between quality assurance & accreditation and the objectives of higher education institutes in the Arab world.
2. There is a relationship between the system of quality assurance & accreditation and the degree of quality education offered by higher education institutions.
3. There is a relationship between the application of the standard quality assurance & accreditation and the attainment of goals in colleges and universities in the Arab region.

The importance of this research stems from the act that it is one attempt for the study of current applications of quality assurance & accreditation in universities. The realization of the concept of total quality management & quality assurance systems & accreditation will contribute to achieving the goals of universities as well as identifying strengths to promote and addressing the shortcomings.

This study is working to provide a model for the development of higher education institutions in our region, to improve performance in order to provide good service and keep pace with modern global developments. It is also expected to help researchers in this field.

1.3. Objectives

This research aims to the following:

- a. To define the concepts of total quality management & quality assurance systems & accreditation.
- b. To ensure that the system of quality assurance & accreditation can be applied to universities and higher education institutes.
- c. To identify the requirements of the application of quality assurance & accreditation in higher education institutions.
- d. To identify the criteria that could be followed to assess the quality of higher education.

1:4 Methodology: The researchers adopted the descriptive and analytical method for testing the hypotheses to draw conclusions and recommendations. We have defined the basic concepts and made historical survey in the literature of the topic.

2.0. Quality Assurances in Higher Education Institutes

Definition of quality assurance

Quality assurance is one modern concept in total quality management. It has become a method for organizations that seek to develop and improve performance. But before getting into the topic we need to define the concept of the total quality (TQ). (TQ) in educational field is the implementation of a set of standards and procedures that aim at constant improvement in the educational product. It also refers to the expected specifications and characteristics in the educational product in processes, in addition to activities through which we can achieve those specifications. Quality assurance is an organization's guarantee that the product or service it offers, meets the accepted quality standards. It is achieved by identifying what "quality" means in context; specifying methods by which its presence can be ensured; and specifying ways in which it can be measured to ensure conformance. (TQ) is a part of quality management, providing confidence that quality requirements (need or expectation that is stated, generally implied or obligatory) will be fulfilled.[1] Quality assurance is a component of quality management and is 'focused on providing confidence that quality requirements will be fulfilled. Quality assurance is also seen as Processes and procedures for ensuring that qualifications, assessment and programme delivery meet certain standards. Quality assurance encompasses any activity that is concerned with assessing and improving the merit or the worth of an intervention with given standards. An overall quality assurance provides integrated tools and techniques to help educational institutions achieve satisfactory results. [3]

Abdeen:(1992), defined it as a set of properties or attributes that accurately reflect the comprehensiveness of the essence of education status, including dimensions (inputs, processes, outputs and feedback), in addition to continued interactions that lead to achieve appropriate desired objectives in a particular community. The Arab Quality and Accreditation Manful (2008), defines quality assurance as mechanisms and procedures applied at the right time to ensure that the desired quality will be achieved, regardless of specifying the criteria of this quality. It is also defined as a means with which the academic standards derived from a concerned party, has been realized and achieved corresponding with consistent standards; whether national or international, and that the level of quality learning and research opportunities and community participation are appropriate to meet the expectations of different types of recipients.

Interest in TQM in educational institutions does not mean planning to make educational institutions, especially university facilities - commercial or industrial that only seek to double their profits by improving their products, but they should use TQM as entrance to education, to develop methods of education management so as to achieve product quality (graduates) in order to double benefit society with all its institutions, groups and individuals in the field of education. We need to spark competition among universities in order to achieve the best results that satisfy all involved parties, Ibrahim:(2003).

The focus on total quality management in universities primarily focuses on the area of evaluating the educational institution in order to develop and improve it; as this is one modern method used in the evaluation of organizations in general and in educational institutions in particular. Employing the principles and ideas of total quality management in higher education systems will benefit universities, because this will lay the foundation stone for a new vision of objectives and mission of university as well as raising the morale of employees. It will give them the opportunity to express and lend their perceptions and attitudes towards the profession and thus this gives the educational environment a new productive climate, Almosawi:(2003) Some theorists believe that total quality means that an education system is positive when it yields good outputs through the inputs that enhance development and growth in community. Some have distinguished between the three aspects of quality: (Output Quality), (Performance quality) and (Design quality) which deals with the design of specifications and characteristics that should be taken into account in the planning of the work. The quality of performance is seen as doing business according to specific criteria, and the quality of output is seen as obtaining educational product and services in accordance with expected specifications. Sameer:(1999)

The previous history clearly explains the modern concept of total quality management in educational institutions, and through these concepts we can become acquainted with the concept of quality assurance. Then what is quality assurance in universities? Khoja:(2004), defined quality assurance as a continuous process, an organized activity to measure quality according to standard criteria. It is intended to analyze identified deficiencies and take necessary actions to improve and develop performance and quality measurement. This will help to determine the extent of improvement that has been made, to ensure compliance with specifications, requirements or standards. Quality assurance also includes identification of indicators for monitoring performance compliant with standards). Zayat (2007) defined quality assurance as a set of activities and actions taken by the institution according to pre-defined criteria for the product or service already accessible on a regular basis. It is the guiding force behind the success of any program, system or course. It always aims to minimize mistakes that lead to failure by developing curricula and conducting an ongoing review of academic programs in addition to the development of incentives to promote competencies of faculty members and employees of the organization. Then, the previous concepts clearly show that quality assurance is procedurally a program, through which universities seek to develop academics and administration within the institution to enable it to offer quality content that meets the aspirations of the labor market.

There is a technical difference between the two terms: (Quality Control) and (Quality Assurance). Quality control is a dimensional process of the product or service aimed at taking a particular action for products or services that are found *after* scrutiny, not at the required level. This may lead to the *rejection* or the *disposal* of these products or services. But this can be followed by procedures to determine the causes of failure and recommendations for correction; while quality assurance is a *pre-procedure* taken *before* submitting the product or the service to consumers. It aims to give the product a preset required quality. The process of quality control does not prevent failure but spots failure. If certain procedures for quality assurance did not succeed in preventing failure, then the institution has to apply alternative procedures that can prevent failure and attain required quantity. Kazaz:(2009), explained that the quality control is a part of quality management that focuses on fulfilling quality requirements, while quality assurance is part of quality management focuses on proving that quality requirements will be fulfilled by the organization.

2.1. Standard Quality Assurance and Development

Quality assurance processes should include all sectors of the institution to integrate effectively with the administrative and planning processes. It must include criteria for evaluating the quality of inputs, processes and outputs with a particular focus on outputs. All processes must be created to ensure that faculty staff and students are committed to developing performance and evaluation on a regular basis. There must be an assessment mechanism of quality as evidence-based performance indicator with high external standards. These must comply with faculty members and other staff involved in the program to develop performance and improve the quality of the program as a whole. There must also be regular assessments of quality in every decision in evaluating the plans, based on sound evidence and appropriate standards. An assessment is also necessary for future plans which have been developed. We allocate importance, primarily to the results of student learning outcome in each session, while contributing to the overall objectives of the program.

Standards of Quality Assurance

Program Assessment	Institutional Assessment
<p>Faculty members must comply with other staff involved in the program to develop their performance and improve the quality of the program as a whole. Regular assessments of quality in every decision must also be run to evaluate the plans based on sound evidences and appropriate standards, in addition to the assessment of development plans which have been developed and implemented. Importance must primarily be allocated to the results of student learning in each session while contributing to the overall objectives of the program</p>	<p>Quality assurance processes should include all sectors of the institution to integrate effectively with the administrative and planning processes. They must include criteria for evaluating the quality of inputs, processes and outputs with particular focus on outputs. The processes must be created to ensure that faculty, staff and students are <i>all</i> committed to developing their performance and evaluation on regular basis. We must also refer to the quality of evidence-based performance indicators and high external standards.</p>
<p>requirements of program to this standard are: 1. Commitment to improving the quality of programs 2. Scope of quality assurance processes 3. Operations of Quality Assurance 4. Use of evidence, benchmarks and criteria 5. Independent verification of assessment.</p>	<p>Requirements for institution on this standard are: 1. Institutional commitment to improving quality 2. Scope of quality assurance processes 3. Operations of Quality Assurance 4. Use of evidence, benchmark and criteria. 5. Independent verification of the assessment.</p>

Both previous standards are used to ensure the quality of products of educational process in higher education institutions.

2.2. Indicators of quality assurance in universities

Quality assurance indicators can be summed up in the following themes.

1. Strategic Management: The strategic manager should ask the following questions:

- Where are we now?
- Where we want to go?
- How to get what we want?

Institutions plans should include the vision, mission and educational objectives of the institution. Rashad:(2007)

2. Type of management quality: This indicator examines the ability of the institution to provide the service that meets the expectations of the recipients of the educational institution (students, teachers, labor market, etc.)
3. Marketing and customer care: This indicator seeks to identify the needs of the labor market and students to provide effective training and education to the satisfaction of students' needs of and the needs of the labor market and society as well.
4. Human Resource Development: This indicator includes continuous training of human resources to perform work efficiently and effectively for high productivity.
5. Equal Opportunities: Opportunities must comply with the educational institution and the labor market so as to increase satisfaction that leads to improved productivity.
6. Health and Safety: Ensure a healthy and safe environment for all employees, students and beneficiaries of the educational institution.
7. Contact management: This indicator provides the institution managers to meet the needs of students, staff and the transmission of information flow at horizontal and vertical levels.
8. Counseling services: This index focuses on the institution administration to identify the needs of different learners and students (psychological, academic and social) and work to achieve them.

9. Design and implementation of the program: Learning outcomes of the programs should be built on the requirements of the labor market as well as focusing on the students' needs.

10. Rating certification: This indicator confirms that students who achieved the requirements should be granted qualifying certificates.

*The integration of all previous criteria and indicators is a scientific methodology for quality assurance in universities to achieve objectives in the long run; with high quality expectations from society and the labor market to gain customer satisfaction.

3.0. Accreditations

3.1. Accreditation

It is one of the activities that lift up higher education institutions through the upgrading of programs and performance. Universities usually make their fame through certificates. This will ensure the quality of their products (graduates) provided to the labor market. Theorists hold different concept of accreditation, but they all agree on the elements that clearly define this concept. Accreditation has been defined as: a corporate scientific-oriented event directed to the advancement and upgrading of higher education institutions universities, colleges and programs. Then accreditation in this sense is together a supervisory and legal process that gives the educational institution or a program recognition certificate to indicate that an institution does possess specific criteria of quality education. So accreditation in education is the recognition that a particular educational program or institution has reached a specific required standard, Abdaulbagi:(2005). The Saudi Manual of Standards of Quality Assurance & Accreditation in Higher Education :(2009), defined accreditation as an official certification granted by a recognized body to confirm that the program or educational institution met the required standards. Accreditation is the formal declaration by a senior agency official that an information system is approved to operate at an acceptable level of risk, based on the implementation of an approved set of technical, managerial, and procedural security controls (safeguards). But accreditation is seen as both a status and a process. As a status, accreditation provides public notification that an institution or program meets standards of quality set forth by an accrediting agency. As a process, accreditation reflects the fact that in achieving recognition by the accrediting agency, the institution or program is committed to self-study and external review by one's peers in seeking not only to meet standards but to continuously seek ways in which to enhance the quality of education and training provided.[5]

3.2. Types of Accreditations

There are two basic types of educational accreditation: “institutional” and “specialized” or “programmatic.”

3.2.1. The institutional accreditation

This is defined as the accreditation of an institution as a whole, according to specific criteria about the adequacy of facilities, resources, including staff organization and provision of academic services and student support, curriculum, levels of student achievement, academic and other components of the educational institution. Institutional accreditation is an evaluation of an entire [institution] and is focused on verifying the administrative policies, procedures and stability. In U.S Institutions must be institutionally accredited by an accrediting agency recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education for the students of that institution to be eligible for the title programs. [6]

3.2.2. Specialized or programmatic accreditation

This normally applies to programs, departments, or schools that are parts of an institution. Programs such as law, medicine, pharmacy, engineering, and business are examples of programs requiring specialized accreditation.[7] But Program accreditation (specialized accreditation) is defined as the evaluation of the institution program to ensure the quality of these programs, and how they fit with the level of the certificate granted.

Accreditation is carried out by accreditation bodies based on specific criteria according to evidences that the institution has met the minimum standards, and consequently certified for a specific time period. Therefore, accreditation is a permission certificate proving quality assurance, which is an indicator of the institution in its relations with students, parents, teachers and the donors, the labor market and community.

So we can conclude from previous points that the academic accreditation of all kinds is a legal supervisory process in which the educational institution is given a certificate proving that, this institution has reached a limit standard, regionally or globally recognized in the field of one specific educational program that it offers to learners. This recognition is a guarantee of the quality of the output of that specific institution, thus giving it an international reputation.

3.3. Significance of accreditation for universities

The importance of frequent accreditation stems from its application on many categories such as:

1. Society: that the institution of higher education is doing its best efforts to afford to attain a required level of society needs.
2. Students: that the institution they belong to is providing them education, knowledge and experience they need.
3. The graduate of higher education is accepted to be qualified and has the capacities that fit the nature of the job.
4. Labor market establishments: They are expected to support the higher education institutions by recognizing certificates and by taking the right decision.
5. Competition: to raise the spirit of competition by paying attention to quality higher education institutions.

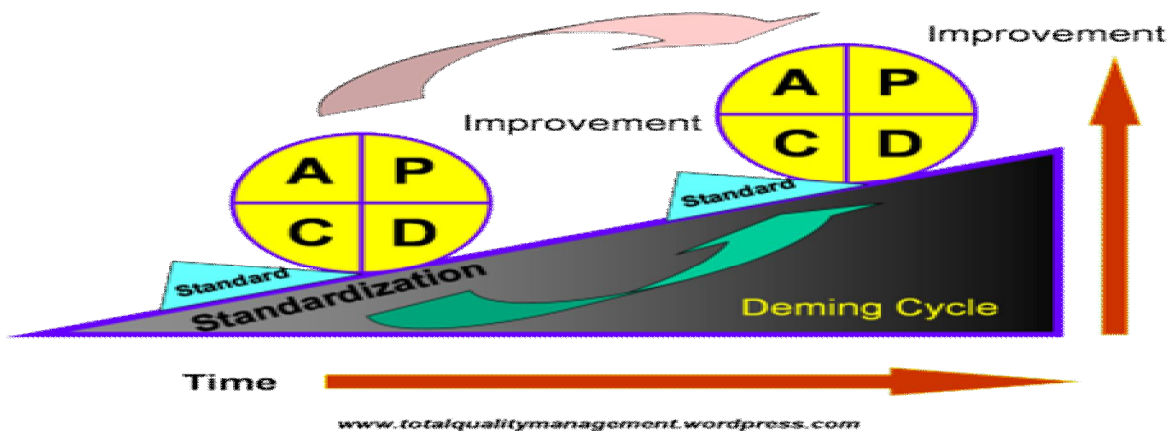
The previous points show the importance of accreditation for universities, but the integration of these different aspects to lead to the development of higher education institutions, is completed *only* by ensuring the quality of output that leads to the development of human resources at local and international levels.

3.4. Objectives of accreditation

These objectives can be traced in the following (a):

1. Graduates of these programs are expected to be with high efficiency.
2. Evaluation mechanism of students' learning programs is correct and consistent.
3. Continuous improvement of programs.

The improvement and continuous evaluation of educational programs is an important principle that higher education institutions seek to achieve in all operations and outputs which (Deming) pointed as a key to the success of the educational process, through what is known as the cycle of continuous improvement. (See the diagram). The essence of continuous improvement lies in employee's involvement. This happens when employees improve their process, product or services by applying creative faculties on their work related problems and routine jobs. According to Deming, (see diagram) we have to provide a simple yet highly effective technique that serves as a practical tool to carry out continuous improvement in the workplace. This technique is called PDCA Cycle or simply Deming Cycle. PDCA is acronym of Plan, Do, Check and Action. Deming's Cycle provides conceptual as well as practical framework. [8]



In the diagram:

1. (A) stands for ACT.
2. (P) stands for PLAN.
3. (C) stands for CHECK).
4. (D) stands for DO.

Deming/PDCA Cycle: The four steps Plan, Do, Check and Action should be repeated over time to ensure continuous learning and improvements in a function, product or process. This can be explained in the following steps:

1. The (PLAN) stage involves analyzing the current situation, gathering data, and developing ways to make improvements.
2. The (DO) stage involves testing alternatives experimentally in a laboratory establishing a pilot process, or trying it out with small number of customers.
3. The (CHECK) stage requires determining whether the trial or process is working as intended, whether any revisions are needed, or whether it should be scrapped.
4. The (ACT) stage focuses on implementing the process within the organization or with its customers and suppliers.

Once all these stages are completed to the fullest satisfaction, the improvement is standardized. The standardized work or product is the result of improvement initiative but it is not stopped here. With the changing circumstances or new techniques this standardized work, process, product or service is again subjected to further improvement thus repeating the Deming Cycle again and again. [9]

4.0. Accreditation at international level

The general trend in today's businesses is the search of organizations and individual persons for recognition from accredited and authenticated sources or boards that give certificates as evidences of excellence of one specific commodity or service. Most profit and non-profit institutions seek proofs of excellence from external reliable boards to witness and certify that, that one specific institution is excelling in its specialist field or trade. These accreditation bodies are becoming authoritative and referential boards at local and international levels. Individual persons as well as independent organizations seek authentication from such boards to certify their performance and to recommend them to customers at local and global levels. In education, accredited colleges are more likely to offer degrees that employers and recruiters recognize. Companies always want to know that [someone] has a quality education and that [s/he] will have something to bring to the table when joining their team. For this purpose, accreditation enables companies to filter those individuals who have obtained a degree from an accredited institution from those who have not.[10]

Here we can trace some international experiences from different places.

USA: According to Eaton (2007), the United States, educational accreditation is performed primarily by private nonprofit membership associations, the legitimacy of which is validated through recognition by the United States Department of Education (USDE), the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) or both. USDE and CHEA recognize many of the accrediting organizations, but not all. Accreditors seek USDE or CHEA recognition for different reasons: USDE recognition is required for accreditors whose institutions or programs seek eligibility for federal student aid funds. CHEA recognition confers an academic legitimacy on accrediting organizations, helping to solidify the place of these organizations and their institutions and programs in the national higher education community. The U.S. Department of Education does not have the authority to accredit private or public elementary or secondary schools. However, it recognizes accrediting bodies for the accreditation of institutions of higher (postsecondary) education. [11] The Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) is a United States organization. It identifies its purpose as providing national advocacy for self-regulation of academic quality through accreditation in order to certify the quality of higher education accrediting organizations, including regional, faith-based, private, career, and programmatic accrediting organizations. [12]

The organization has approximately 3,000 academic institutions as members, and currently recognizes approximately 60 accrediting organizations. It maintains an International Directory which "contains contact information about 467 quality assurance bodies, accreditation bodies and Ministries of Education in 175 countries.

UK: In UK the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) is the body entrusted with advising the Privy Council on which institutions should be granted degree awarding powers and the right to be called a university. Since 2011 (QAA) has been designated by the UK Border Agency (UKBA) to conduct educational oversight of higher education providers, to enable them to apply for 'highly trusted sponsor' status under UKBA Tier 4 regulations. Providers having, or acquiring, this status are entitled to recruit overseas students into the UK. (<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Pages/default.aspx>). The QAA's job is to safeguard quality and standards in UK universities and colleges, so that students have the best possible learning experience.

Hong Kong: We have noticed that most of higher educational institutes in the Arab World try very hard to have accreditation from one European or American accreditation board, while they can seek this accreditation from Boards in such countries such as China, Australia, India or Hong Kong. These countries have attained high level in education and gained recognition worldwide. For example, The Hong Kong Council for Academic Accreditation (HKCAA), is a statutory body established under the HKCAA Ordinance (Chapter 1150) in 1990. The HKCAA conducted accreditation exercises for institutions which later upgraded as universities in 1994. In addition to statutory roles, the HKCAAVQ performs other functions in connection with academic and vocational accreditation, education, training and quality assurance. [12]

4.1. At any cost!!

Higher education institutes in our region are lagging behind world universities, so they fight to attain international recognition. This, in some respect is a positive phenomenon but from another side it is not, as we can see later in this chapter. We have noticed that there were only two universities both from- Saudi Arabia- have lately claimed places to be on the 500 top ranking universities in the last two years. This aspiration to global positioning has urged many higher institutes to seek recognition from accrediting boards in USA or Europe at *any cost or effort*. Some institutes have said to have paid very big money to improve its image. They worked very hard to satisfy accreditors by showing evidences and efforts to attain recognition as international education institute. Some academic institutes in some Arab countries have even ranged too far to recruit (names) of international staff on part time bases. Foreign researchers were recruited to be listed as affiliated members to universities, that they were not legally or practically engaged with as regular faculty or research members. We can recall the case of (Science Magazine- Dec.9 2011) where some American and European researchers accepted to be on the list of two Saudi universities regardless of whether they were involved in any meaningful collaboration with local researchers. According to (<http://www.sciencemag.org>), academics; both inside and outside Saudi Arabia warned that such practices could detract from the genuine efforts that Saudi Arabia's universities are making to transform themselves into world-class research centers. Such practices were due to the fact that some higher education institutes are trying very hard to achieve academic prestige despite their poor research performance in the world of scientific research. We believe that looking for achieving genuine and quality education by applying international standards of quality assurance is more useful for these institutes than to run after international recognition, without exerting real academic and administrative efforts.

4.2. Regional Accreditation Boards in the Arab World

Nowadays, we can easily notice the efforts which are exerted by individual persons, organizations, governments and states in applying (TQM) in their intuitions. There are good efforts which have begun to yield positive results. We can here trace some of these efforts at regional level in the Arab world.

1. United Arab Emirates: In the UAE, the Commission for Academic Accreditation (CAA), was established to ensure that the colleges and universities of the United Arab Emirates operate at international standards of quality, the Commission for Academic Accreditation of the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research conducts a program of licensure of institutions of higher education and accreditation of each of their academic programs. The CAA released a new edition of the Standards for Licensure and Accreditation in 2011. [13]

2. Oman: The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority (OAAA) is charged with assisting in the development of the Omani higher education sector through institutional and program accreditation processes. Also, in collaboration with the Ministry of Higher Education, it has responsibilities for assuring academic standards, and providing training and networking opportunities. [14]

3. Saudi Arabia: The National Commission for Assessment and Academic Accreditation (NCAAA) was established at the commissioner's decent approval, 1424 AH, on the resolution of the Higher Education Council decreeing the establishment of such a commission. This authority has moral personality, administrative and financial autonomy under the supervision of the Higher Education Council, the authority which is responsible for academic accreditation in higher education institutions beyond the secondary education, except the military education. The National Commission for Assessment and Academic Accreditation (NCAAA) aims at upgrading the quality of private and governmental higher education to ensure clarity and transparency, and to provide codified standards for academic performance. [14]

4. Palestine: The Accreditation and Quality Assurance Commission (AQACT) is an autonomous body under the umbrella of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, responsible directly to the Minister. The Commission has a full-time Director, a group of professional and support staff, and a Board of 12 professionals whose mandate is to take final decisions—which get ratified by the Minister—about its areas of responsibilities. Their mission is to safeguard the public interest in sound standards of higher education qualifications and to encourage continuous improvement in the management of the quality of higher education. This is done by working with higher education institutions to define academic standards and quality, and we carry out and publish reviews against these standards. [15]

5. Bahrain: The Quality Assurance Authority for Education and Training (QAAET) was formally established by Royal Decree No32 in 2008. The QAAET is an independent national body; it operates under the direction of a Board of Directors which has the overall responsibility for the conduct and strategic direction of the organization. This Authority is attached to the Council of Ministers and will be supervised by the Minister chairing the board. The main objectives of the QAAET are to:

- Develop indicators, processes, mechanisms and guidelines for measuring and reviewing the quality of performance of education and training institutions.
- Develop and carry out national examinations to assess performance levels for key stages of primary intermediate and secondary education stages.
- Review the quality of the performance of education and training institutions in light of the guiding indicators developed by the Authority.
- Emphasize transparency and accountability by publishing reports on the general status of the education and training system in the Kingdom and the performance and outcomes of the individual institutions. [16]

But we need to mention here that all these efforts are just an unsteady beginning; as total quality management and quality assurance and accreditation are new trends in the Arab world education. So, this situation presupposes new generation of leaders - who are aware of the high technological and technical change in the world of today. These leaders are expected to take over the lead. These leaders should be equipped with modern knowledge, leadership sprits and wide imagination. Quality assurance and accreditation processes are still seen by some old leaders as waste of time, efforts and money.

4.3. Why do we need to speed up the application of quality assurance & accreditation?

1. To establish integration and harmony within university community at different levels (university administration, faculty, students, parents).
2. To clear ambiguity of objectives among workers in universities and institutions of higher education in general.
3. To help stop poor educational performance in the early stages, due to poor educational content.
4. To identify strengths and weaknesses in the areas of university performance in all elements so as to improve outputs to ensure obtaining a certificate of quality and accreditation.

5. To get feedback and assessment of services provided to recipients to allow these institutions modify strategies of improvement and development.
6. To reach customer satisfaction.
7. To establish a level of cooperation and coordination between universities and the local communities.
8. To allow more space for decision-makers and to raise funding for projects. (Arabic Manual: 2009)

4.4. Principles underpin the process of the application of quality assurance and accreditation

1. Focusing on the basic needs of recipients (student, community, labor market)
2. Leadership (by unifying visions, goals and strategies in the educational community).
3. Involvement of individuals (by promoting active participation, and attaining equality of all without discrimination as well as allowing opportunity; as this will motivate them to use their full potential to benefit educational institutions and society).
4. Focusing on processes (by paying attention to operations, methods, product and output)
5. Create mutual interest and satisfaction among recipients (following specific advices of various participants of *reviewers, students and community in general to maximize development and transfer knowledge and skills*).

4.5. Elements for success of quality assurance & accreditation in Arab Universities

1. Promoting culture of quality and academic accreditation among workers in the enterprise: This can be achieved through the development of community awareness of the value of quality; and through the striving to raise the desire of individuals to achieve the highest levels of performance.
2. Dissemination of other supporting cultures among all personnel in the institution such cultures as: knowledge of networking, culture of reward and punishment, culture of honesty with one's self, productive work & achievement culture, culture of merit and aptitude.
3. Adoption of standard of competence, experience and devotion should be the only criteria in the selection of leaders working to ensure quality performance.
4. Developing training plans to educate workers within the institution on assessment and self-assessment and a degree of seriousness to do so.
5. The involvement of deans, heads of departments and centers in the selection processes of all operations.
6. Investigating employees' attitudes towards the application of quality by:
 - Surveying workers' attitudes toward the application of quality.
 - Studying the situation of workers in the university and the possibility of application.
 - Studying the regulations and the basic rules governing the work of the university.
 - Realizing material and human resources.

5.0. Conclusions

We conclude this research with the following findings and recommendations:

Results

- Quality assurance & accreditation is important for higher education institutions, because it can help universities achieve goals and objectives to satisfy students and society in the near and long run through this mechanism.
- Standards of quality assurance & accreditation are good in measuring the level of quality of the educational services that are provided by these institutions.

- The application of quality assurance & accreditation is the secret behind the success of most of the higher education institutions all over the world.
- Quality Assurance is a perfect mechanism for predicting failures and detecting problems before they occur during the carrying out of the plan in the educational organization.
- The certification from recognized international accreditos can be a positive motivation towards achieving excellence and further improvement of performance.

Recommendations

1. Higher education institutions should adopt quality assurance & accreditation as an instrument to achieve goals to reach standards at global level.
2. We recommend dissemination of awareness culture of total quality among employees through training on TQM programs and by providing studies in this area.
3. Universities should seek variety of means to ensure the quality of their educational services which they offer to customers.
4. Continuous improvement is basic to achieve high level of independence, stability and creditability of the education institution as long as possible.
5. We also recommend the development of strategic plan, with clear vision of quality assurance & accreditation so as to discover strengths and weaknesses in the educational organization.
6. Accreditation is the best way to check the quality of educational services which is offered by institutions of higher education. It is also the way to get recognition offered by universities at local, regional and global levels. These services are expected to serve the practical needs of students; for access to an education that can improve their understanding of the world, improve their critical thinking and equip them with tools that can help them solve their problems.

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