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An Analysis Case Study: Experiences of the Faculty Members during the Program Accreditation Process in Saudi Arabian Higher Education

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An Analysis Case Study: Experiences of the Faculty Members during the Program Accreditation
Process in Saudi Arabian Higher Education

By

Layla Albdr

A dissertation submitted to the faculty of

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An Analysis Case Study: Experiences of the Faculty Members during the Program Accreditation
Process in Saudi Arabian Higher Education

This is to certify that we have read this dissertation and that it is adequate in scope and quality, it is complete and satisfactory in all aspects and that all revisions required by the final examining committee have been made.

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Abstract

The purpose of this dissertation was to understand the experiences of the faculty members during the accreditation process, and the outcomes they have seen in the Early Childhood program at the College of Education at Princess Nourah University (PNU). The research questions developed for achieving the aim of the study were: What are the experiences of faculty members during the program accreditation process, and what outcomes do they see in Saudi Arabian higher education?

The methodology of this study was a qualitative case study, which highlighted the faculty experiences and outcomes of accreditation. The Early Childhood program in PNU was selected for this study, because of its accessibility, and its current state in the accreditation process—having just initiated the process itself. The participants who were interviewed included 12 female faculty members who had an active involvement in the accreditation process in this program at PNU. Data collection in this study consisted of using various methods, namely including document analysis, observation, and semi-structured interviews.

Proper comprehension of the impact of the accreditation processes in Saudi universities demands a combination of theories based mainly on institutional isomorphism and institutional entrepreneurship theories. The findings of this study describe the issues and challenges in adopting the accreditation process in the faculties and their impacts on quality learning. Therefore, these findings infer that faculty members should be consulted and trained before any of these accreditation processes are implemented. However, by adopting accreditation, and enrolling more higher education institutions in accreditation processes, Saudi Arabia can curb many of the criticisms it currently faces with regards to its academic standards and quality of education.

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CHAPTER ONE

The issue of accreditation is an essential element in higher education. In Saudi Arabia, significant efforts have yet to be made to ensure the process runs smoothly at the moment of its embracement. The involvement of various stakeholders in this accreditation process is crucial. The essential stakeholders in higher learning are the faculty members. The purpose of this study was to understand the faculty members' experiences during the accreditation process and the outcomes they have seen at the Early Childhood Program at the College of Education (PNU).

Researcher's Experience

My academic experience started in Saudi Arabia, wherein my first exposure to Saudi university education took place. Upon completion of my first degree in Saudi Arabia, I took the opportunity to study abroad, in America. Studying in the United States broadened my view of post-secondary education, and enlightened me on the different approaches that different institutions take; and, the vast difference in the quality of study in different countries, and in different universities. Sufficed to say, my experience in the United States was immensely different from my previous education in my home country. These differences lie in the teaching outcomes, teaching styles, and educational effectiveness of these two locations. From my experience in the United States, I understood that the systems used in American colleges and universities was not the same (and surpassed) those found in Saudi Arabian post-secondary education. I often found that, in American universities, there was a profound clarity in the teaching and educational standards for enhancing the quality of learning outcomes, simply as opposed to having very rudimentary learning outcomes and practices. This was strange and quite foreign to me, as I had no understanding of who made these standards and criteria for learning

and teaching outcomes; and, how they are enforced, and applied to the learning processes in American institutions. To me, this also raised the question of why such programs and standards were not found throughout Saudi Arabia. This led me to find that these standards and quality initiatives came as a result of the process of accreditation, which was commonplace throughout America. After learning this, I was also interested to see why it was that accreditation was not yet accepted in Saudi Arabia; and, which parties were responsible for this lack of adoption. Following much preliminary investigation, it led to gain great interest, and seek further insight into the experiences and feelings of faculty members during the process of accreditation in Saudi Arabia, as this would allow me to understand why such a critical process has not yet taken place in my country.

Statement of the Issue

It is a fact, the standard of education in Saudi Arabia has critically been questioned, with many holding that it falls below international standards because of non-accreditation across the colleges. The accreditation call of university programs in Saudi Arabia has achieved much ground after the National Commission for Academic Accreditation and Assessment (NCAAA) establishment in 2004. Universities in Saudi have been critiqued concerning global academic standards by global institutions such as ISO for offering sub-standard education and, consequently, received low rankings internationally time and again (Ministry of Higher Education, 2016).

As a result, very few international students are enrolled in Saudi colleges since the quality of the programs, have been in contention (Smith & Abouammoh, 2013). To improve higher education quality, the Saudi government needs to reform the education curriculum by enforcing accreditation and adopting global standards for students' rights and accreditation. The

concept of accreditation is new in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), and so far, only three universities have been accredited by the NCAAA (Ministry of Higher Education, 2016). According to Almansour and Kempner (2015), Princess Nourah University (PNU) is one of the largest universities for women in the KSA. It is one of the universities to undergo the accreditation process. The College of Education at Princess Nourah University was selected for this study because it is the most successful College at PNU. Thus, this study is focused on creating a deeper comprehension of the experiences of the members of the department during the procedure of accreditation, and the outcomes they have seen at the Early Childhood Program at the College of Education at (PNU).

Purpose of the Study

The quality of higher learning in Saudi Arabia has been coupled with problems and questions over its quality. The study aimed to understand the experiences of the faculty members during the accreditation process and the outcomes they have seen at the Early Childhood Program at the College of Education at (PNU). The study acknowledged that accreditation is a new concept in Saudi Arabia, and most educators lack an excellent background or experience in the subject; this reflects that the success of implementing changes in the education system may face challenges. Moreover, the history of Saudi's education system, specifically, the teaching and learning culture has generated resistance and low involvement among the faculty today. However, the accreditation potential in S.A. can improve the quality of education for all institutions that adopt it. A qualitative case study was employed to analyze the finding.

Research Question

The study aimed to find out how Saudi education programs currently implement the accreditation process and how they improve the quality of education in their program. This study

designed to answers these questions: What are the experiences of faculty during the program accreditation process, and what outcomes do they see in Saudi Arabian higher education?

Problem Statement

There is an increasing demand for quality education in the KSA education system, especially among higher learning institutions. This situation follows past criticisms that Saudi students graduating from Saudi universities and colleges, are globally uncompetitive and lack creativity (Smith & Abouammoh, 2013). Although university accreditation is a globally accepted standard of quality assurance in education provision, previous literature indicates a low acceptance level in Saudi (Albaqami, 2015). The current issues regarding global competition and quality education are increasingly in demand, making accreditation the globally accepted standard of measuring Saudi universities. Aside from this, a lack of quality higher education has been a challenge in Saudi Arabia for decades (Almansour & Kempner, 2015). For instance, many colleges have not been accredited to provide quality learning, thus negatively impacting the educational outcome of students.

Significance of the Study

This study intends to contribute to overall and existing knowledge on how to improve the quality of higher education in Saudi Arabia through the accreditation process. The critical significance of this study is not only to identify the impacts of accreditation in Saudi post-secondary instructors and institutions but also to encourage more actions to be taken throughout Saudi Arabia to implement accreditation policies throughout more universities. Besides, this research aims to bring some contributions to the present impact literature. Albaqami, (2015) reported that most universities lack a positive attitude to adopt accreditation standards fully. The challenge of adopting accreditation is aggravated by the conservative nature of KSA society

(Alhareth et al., 2015). For a long time, Saudi society offered an education curriculum that did not cover all of the social aspects of society, such as the level of innovativeness required to steer the society forward (Al-Rawaf a & Simmons, 1991). However, according to the Ministry of Higher Education (2016), the new reforms introduced by the Ministry of Education in 2005 led to various strategies to make the education system more responsive to societal needs, most of which have been implemented in Saudi universities. This study assesses the progress and importance of those changes.

This research aims to contribute to quality education by offering the Saudi point of view on accreditation. Mostly, the current theories on the impact of accreditation of higher education are based on the ideals of Western countries that might not adequately apply to the context of Saudi Arabia (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Besides, this research also aims to contribute insight into the field of education through the identification and full description of the particular benefits and challenges that are accustomed to the implementation of change processes.

This research investigates the experiences of faculty regarding accreditation and its outcomes on the quality of learning (Becket & Brookes, 2008). The experiences regarding accreditation are important because accreditation is to standardize the quality of education in the institutions of higher learning. The significance of the study is that it highlights areas that need streamlining for the process of accreditation to be effective. As viewed by Becket & Brookes (2008), Accreditation, if implemented, will help in determining whether an institution of learning meets, exceeds, or falls below the global standards of quality education.

The Operational Definition of Terms

Accreditation- Miriam Webster Dictionary defines the terminology as to offer recognition as an outstanding and relevant institution. (Miriam Webster Dictionary, 1999)

Faculty members- are all the people who contributed to the fulfillment of quality by being involved in related activities of accreditation are known as faculty members. They are inclusive of the academic staff - the teachers and administrators - such as the Heads of academic departments.

Expectations - the act of looking forward to something that is just about to happen

Experiences- Refers to a collection of events from which an individual or a group of people may gather knowledge, opinions, and skills.

Impact- A significant or strong influence associated with something.

Higher Education- This is education after the secondary education provided by colleges and universities, it is also referred to as tertiary education

International Standard- These are global parameters set to gauge the efficiency of a system.

Innovative Programs -These are course work that embraces new ideas and encourages the adoption of the same.

Global recognition -Is the ability to be acknowledged by the education quality scale as producing valuable graduates by the affiliated higher learning institutions.

PNU- Princess Nourah University

KSA- Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

S.A- Saudi Arabia

CoE- College of Education

Dissertation Overview

This dissertation was culminated from personal motivations to explore the experiences of the faculty regarding accreditation and the impact on the students' learning outcomes. This study

is organized into five chapters (with supporting tables, figures, and appendices), as explained below.

Chapter one contains the introduction, providing an overview of this research. The chapter is also inclusive of the research background, problem statements, the purpose of the research, study question, the significance of the research, definition of terms, and the organization of the research.

Chapter two contains the literature review, explaining the history of education and accreditation, the major programs that have been realized to promote the quality of education in Saudi Arabia, and a concise history of Princess Nourah University in Saudi Arabia. A review of accreditation studies has been done locally and internationally; the second part of this chapter closes by discussing two theories that are critical to understanding the responses of the faculty at PNU. These concepts allow the results and discussion of this research to have a more significant and more comprehensive meaning.

Chapter three is the study methodology that has been used in answering the study question. It entails a description of the interpretive paradigm, the research approach, methods used for the collection of data, data analyses procedures, verifications, limitations, and ethical factors.

Chapter four presents the study findings. This chapter illustrates the responses to the interview questions and relates these to the six critical categories discovered throughout the literature review. It also categorizes these responses in themes and sub-themes so that the responses can be better understood for future review.

Finally, chapter five discusses the findings. It consists of five primary issues: the significant findings of the research, the findings discussion, the study implications, the study limitations, and further study suggestions, and finally, the conclusions.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The concept of accreditation process has been widely studied. However, it is a new concept in Saudi Arabia; most educators do not have any background or experience in the subject, making the success of implementing changes in the education system to have a couple of challenges. Moreover, Saudi's education system, specifically, the teaching and learning culture, has generated resistance and low involvement among the faculty today. However, accreditation has the potential to improve the quality for all Saudi's education system. Relevant studies were discussed to better understand the experiences of the members of the faculty during the process of implementation of the accreditation and the outcomes of the process. This chapter was written in a way to respond to the question: What are the experiences of faculty in the process of accreditation as well as the outcomes they see in Saudi Arabia higher education. The chapter was structured around three sections. In the first section, the tertiary education history in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the quality of higher education and history of accreditation were covered. The next section discussed the accreditation definition, types, accreditation standards, process, outcomes in the Saudi context, and different countries were reviewed. The last section discussed the theories study and its implication used in analyzing the data collected for this research work.

An Overview of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

From the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2016) website, Saudi Arabia remains to be the biggest country in the entire of the Arabian Peninsula. Peninsula, covering a total area of 2.2 million square kilometers, covers the following Asian countries: Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Yemen,

and Oman. On the eastern side, it borders the Persian Gulf and the United Arab Emirates. The western side also borders the Red Sea (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2016).



Figure 1 Saudi Arabia Map

Saudi Arabia [Map]. (n.d.). In *Nationsonline.org*

Riyadh, which is the capital city of the Saudi Arabian Kingdom, has numerous official languages. The capital also has a very high rate population growth of 3.5%, making it one of the highest in the world. It has a population of 34.88 million people (Worldometers, 2020). The majority of the people in Saudi Arabia are young people. It has a youth population under the age of 25, reaching 60% (Smith & Abu Amuh, 2013). The staples of Saudi Arabia's economy are oil production and exportation (Niblock, 2006). Petroleum-based fuels and fossil fuels are, however, not as sustainable as they are non-renewable. Oil reserves will be almost entirely depleted by

050, as reported by experts (Bently, 2002). Due to this, Saudi Arabia has launched a program aimed at transitioning from the oil-based economy to other economies (Osman, 2010).

As indicated by Osman (2010), the significant aspects of this drive are the modernization of the education system of Saudi Arabia as well as the upskilling of the Saudi population. All these are regarded as essential for Saudi Arabia's economic transformation. To ensure that Saudi youth are "equipped for the jobs of the future" (Osman, 2010) in a knowledge-based economy, the government is in pursuit of extensive educational improvements. These include the implementation of updated school curricula that emphasize critical thinking, the re-training of teachers, the construction of brand new schools, as well as the decentralization of Saudi Arabia's inflexible school system (Smith & Abouammoh, 2013).

The majority of the Saudi population follows the Islam religion (Central Department of Statistics and Information, 2010). Medina is the home to the Mosque of the Prophet. At the same time, Mecca has the Holy Mosque. Those are the two holiest Islamic places. The Islamic faith has an impact on all aspects of life in the Kingdom, including culture, beliefs, and customs. The importance of religion is depicted by the fact that constitutional and other legal frameworks are influenced by the Sharia (Islamic law). It is not only legal procedures that are dependent on Islamic teachings, but the education system is also dependent on it. The educational curricula reflect Islamic teachings (Al-Rashid & Van, 2015). Therefore, it is essential to comprehend that the beliefs of Islam place have high significance on education as well as in coercion of its religious followers (Holy Quran 96: 1).

Saudi Arabia's Higher Education system

The information from the Ministry of Education (2016), the Ministry of Higher Learning, was given a mandate of overseeing and developing the KSA higher education systems.

This mandate meant that the Ministry of Education would oversee accreditation implementation in Saudi Arabian schools so that the schools were internationally recognized, the quality of education was internationally recognized, and students were competitive in global markets.

Later, in 2005, the two ministries for education and higher education were merged to form a single ministry known as the Ministry of Education. This ministry was charged with the responsibility of implementing and overseeing the accreditation of higher education in the entire KSA (Ministry of Education, 2016).

The higher learning institutions in the KSA are governed by the Committee of Higher Education, which is headed by Saudi Arabia's King; thus, making education a primary concern to the government (Kips, 2005). Ministers of education are also members of the council members, labor minister, ministers for social affairs, civil services, and minister for economic planning. This council's collective power makes tertiary education—and the accreditation of tertiary education—a forefront concern for the country. The council is responsible for enacting and structuring higher education policies and guidelines. As such, this council has sought for the education system to resemble some of the world's most recognizable and sought-after education systems.

The government of Saudi Arabia has significantly funded the education sector. In 2011, the government spent more than 40 billion dollars on tertiary education and training (Ministry of Finance, 2011). By 2015, the budget allocation for education had risen to 25% of the total annual budget (Kis, 2005). This sizable budget supplements the government's education subsidies and education programs that are already in place.

The educational system of Saudi Arabia has got some unique characteristics. One of its unique characteristics is that education services are free both to the citizens of Saudi Arabia and

the foreigners (Al-Aqeel, 2005). The government also supports students in private institutions by paying their course fees up to 50%. Another unique feature is the free accommodation facilities that are provided for the campus students. These students should, however, come from remote areas of the Kingdom. A monthly bonus is also provided to the students to cater to their needs.

Saudi Arabia universities practice gender segregation where men and women have a different campus, following Islamic law (Tariq & Michel, 2013). Princess Nourah is the best women's University in the Kingdom and the world's largest women institution. PNU formation can be traced back to 1970, when many women's colleges were created in Riyadh (Hassana, 2013), in response to the profound changes in the Saudi education system at the time. However, PNU officially came about following the merger of these various women's colleges at Riyadh (Hassana, 2013). The University aimed to produce qualified teachers for both secondary and elementary schools in response to the great attention developed for women's education (Princess Nourah University, 2017). Later on, the PNU opened several colleges, of which six of them are located at Riyadh. Currently, the University is on the verge of becoming accredited by the NCAAA; however, it is facing many challenges with regards to this. Today, four core objectives guide the University: to endorse quality education practices through scientific and technological advances, offer innovative education programs, improve local and international mobility, and foster collaborative learning between national and international universities (Hassan, 2013).

The History of Saudi Arabia's Accreditation

The development of this Kingdom's Accreditation highlighted the gap in the performance of the nation's education system. This gap stems from a lack of accreditation being present throughout the education system's history. According to information on the Higher Education Ministry (2009) website, the history of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's (KSA's) education

system dates back to 1925 when there were only four private schools throughout the country (Higher Education Ministry, 2009). At the time of their inception, these schools had no form of internationally-recognized, or nationally accepted form of accreditation. Public education became one of the national concerns in the KSA and was formally implemented in 1930, just five years after the creation of a private educational institution. These schools remained without accreditation until the 1950s when the Directorate of Education was created to improve educational standards and create a globally recognized education system. From this, the tertiary school system (namely, universities and colleges) emerged (Al-Rawaf & Simmons, 1991).

From 1954 on, higher education in the KSA has been supervised under the Ministry of Education. Following this, the government's focus on quality education led to two remarkable events. First, 167 students were sent to Egypt to pursue further education; and second, education for women was mandated in 1960 (Al-Rawaf & Simmons, 1991). These developments demonstrated significant progressive changes and developments throughout the KSA higher educational systems, although internationally recognized academic accreditation was still lacking.

The progress of Saudi's higher education dates back to 1957 when a single institution called King Saud University enrolled twenty-one students (Knight, 2007). A rapid expansion of colleges followed this, and in 1982, seven universities had been established with over 63,000 students (Alamri, 2011). The government consequently expanded its expenditure on higher education learning, and KSA's spending per student became the highest globally (Ministry of Higher Education, 2009). Today, KSA is building more universities that need to be accredited for quality assurance. Between the years of 2003 and 2011, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia increased its universities from 8 to 43 (Ministry of Education, 2020). This rapid increase was due

to the youth's increased demand for higher education (Osman, 2010). Many of these demands stem from KSA's history of lack of educational accreditation, and significant gaps in the tertiary education system.

According to the information that was provided by the ministry of higher education website (Ministry of Education, 2006), a national program was initiated in the year 2010 (Ministry of Higher Education, 2010). The main aim of the project was to increase the effectiveness of the tertiary education system of the country. This plan was a deliberate effort as a 25-year plan of increasing determination in education. Before launching the project, optimal standards were set. Scientific methods of assessing the accomplishments were also put in place. This plan was achieved by defining all these requirements in the tertiary education system, desired outcomes from the plan, and the modes of funding. The utilization of economic resources and human capital are the other two intentions of the project. This was encouraged by allocating enough funds for their research and development. Because of this, the students were at the bar with international students as they could get skills of international standards (Ohali & Al Aqili, 2010). Abdullah Bin Abdul-Aziz Al Saud boosted the efforts by establishing a scholarship program under his name. He aimed to ensure sustainability in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's human resources. Through the ministry of education, the government provided its support to this program: The implementation of this program for the international students catered for their accommodation, transport, and necessary living costs. Thus, much of the spending of the Saudi Government has taken place not only to increase the international visibility and enrollment of KSA higher education; but, it has been aimed to implement accreditation in higher education.

Moreover, focus on adhering to the financial needs of the accreditation process (NCAAA, 2009). This means that although the accreditation processes of these universities have been

modeled after universities from the United States, the prevalence of Islamic rules and teachings still restricts much of the progression of Accreditation in KSA. The two main reforms that were implemented as a result of these changes include the creation of research and development programs, as well as the formation of international scholarships. The development of research programs was deemed as one of the most influential forces for ensuring quality strategies towards reshaping education in the KSA. Primary considerations have also been directed towards science and technology with a target of hitting an annual development rate of 2%. Based on this, the Ministry of Education expects significant achievements to be attained by 2025 in the science and technology fields (Ministry of Higher Education, 2016). In addition to this, international scholarships were widely recognized as tremendous developments for the education system. The scholarships provided saw the number of students increasing some of them being enrolled in Masters and Ph.D. programs. This created total systematic changes throughout the Saudi Arabian education system.

In addition to that, Saudi Arabia's Ministry for higher education conducted a strategic plan between the years of 2005 and 2009. The research was aimed at improving the quality of all the learning institutions. The key areas that were emphasized include; research and development, expansions of universities' capacity to admit more students. It is also offering assistance to the colleges to accredit their programs, encouraging for the provision of scholarships and boosting the relationship and cooperation between tertiary institutions and the private sectors (Alhazemi et al., 2013). Today, the government of Saudi Arabia has initiated milestone reforms that have improved the quality of education in tertiary institutions. As stated by Alghamdi (2016), there is also a significant difference between the national ranking and the international ranking of Saudi universities.

The changes enforced were geared at improving the quality of education offered. The National Commission for Academic Accreditation (NCAAA) was established in 2004 (Alamri, 2004). This commission was charged with the responsibility of establishing standards, rules, policies, regulations, and academic practices that govern certification. It was also required to provide regular assessment and assure for quality and delivery of high-quality educational services. It was also responsible for ensuring promotion and planning of optimal performance in the departments of studies through collaboration with other quality assurances and international partners (Ministry of Education, 2016).

Current Issues in Saudi Arabia

The Saudi Arabia Kingdom has taken various steps to improve the quality of education in its higher institutions over the years to ensure their schools maintain international standards. The reason for the action is because of the perceived low quality of education in the country, which in return affects its graduates. Despite all the Saudi government's efforts to improve the higher education system, it often suffers criticism as having failed to compete globally (Smith & Abouammoh, 2013). Many of these criticisms target the traditional settings of the educational system of Saudi Arabia. For instance, the Saudi curriculum incorporates learning through memorization and repetition, as opposed to experiential learning, or practice-based learning methods.

Furthermore, since the education system is developed around the traditional practices, led to ineffective lessons and learning outcomes. According to Kamel (2016), the teaching methods are teacher-centered, as lecturers and teachers are highly regarded as experts. The learning is not focused on the actual learning achieved by students. The teaching methodologies also lack demonstrations and practical applications, in addition to limited exposure to private research. As

a result, students lack the most critical aspect of learning, which is critical thinking. These constraints of the Saudi educational system explain why the Saudi education system and Saudi graduates cannot compete with global standards.

Furthermore, these traditional practices have led to ineffective management of faculty's duties as they are not precise nor regulated in any detail. As indicated by Abdul Cader and Anthony (2014), in Saudi Arabia, faculty's' rules and regulations produced in 1996 are very flexible; however, there is no clear description of the responsibilities of faculty members in Saudi universities. This situation has led to the ineffective management of the roles of faculty members in positions of academic or administrative responsibility.

The KSA institutions do not take the criteria and standard of NCAAA seriously because (30 out of 33), which is about 90% of all the universities, did not meet the quality assurance standards of NCAAA (Ministry of Higher Education, 2016). The major problem is, even if universities like King Saud are considered the world's largest universities, they were still ranked in the bottom half in the quality assessments of world universities in 2019 (Ahmed et al., 2019). Most notably, King Saud ranks in the bottom half of 1200 global universities in teaching and research. These results, however, are offset by the rather high scores in the industry and international outlooks. Comparatively, the Health Sciences areas at King Saud University rank in the bottom percentiles in terms of research, and rank deficient in industry outlooks. Compared to other universities in the KSA, such as King Abdulaziz University (which ranked in the top 200 world universities), the problems plaguing King Saud have a tremendously negative impact on its global performance and ranking. These results prompt the question of "What is wrong with the Saudi education system?" Furthermore, the World Bank professional evaluation in 2006

indicated that Saudi graduates lack prerequisites such as critical thinking skills for competitive jobs (Knight, 2007)

Defining what Accreditation is

Accreditation is the only means of ensuring the quality and improvement of educational systems. However, there are various implications and comprehensions of what accreditation truly is for a university (Alstete, 2004). Accreditation could be a process of evaluating the programs of an institution critically by external bodies at regular intervals to ensure that the programs comply with some set standards (Bogue & Hall, 2003). It could also be a process of making improvements to an institution to enable it to achieve the set objectives (Bogue & Hall, 2003). For Sanyal and Martin (2007), accreditation is the outcome of the efforts that are made by the government, a parastatal, or any private body in evaluating the quality of tertiary education. Their mandate mainly being ensuring that the programs meet the minimal set standards (Sanyal & Martin, 2007). In any case, accreditation is widely accepted as the measure for quality assurance in learning institutions by providing quality instructions and learning opportunities for students.

There are four essential purposes which accreditation yearns to affect in the higher education system. They include; controlling quality, ensuring accountability, improving quality, and facilitating the movement of students (Sanyal and Martin, 2007). By controlling quality, it will ensure that institutions maintain minimum quality requirements for their programs. Accountability will come in to measure the extent to which the costs that the students and the government incur have been justified. This will ensure that multiple stakeholders benefit from this investment. Precise data on the accreditation process is required to be provided to the public about the institutions' performance. Sanyal (2006) believes that through this, institutions will be

able to identify shortcomings in their programs and provide the required remedial measures. This will ensure consistency in the offered programs. The process of accreditation is also geared at the increasing competition between the institutions, thus promoting quality. It also ensures smooth regional, national and international movement of students in the institutions (Martin & Sanyal, 2006)

The Structure of Accreditation

Various systems have different accreditation procedures (Havey, 2004). Some accreditation procedures are voluntary, while others are compulsory. They can also be conducted at different levels, i.e., at institutional or program levels.

Compulsory Versus voluntary accreditation processes

There are distinguishing features between the two. In compulsory accreditation, institutions or programs are required to have a periodical audit (Martin & Sanyal, 2006). Netherlands, Hungary, and Austria are the countries that commonly use this approach. They ensure that the minimum set requirements are met. The process is done at intervals to recognize the institutions as well as their programs (Sanyal, 2013). Involuntary accreditation, it the managers who decide when they feel their programs and institutions can be accredited (Hence, et al., 2007). Voluntary accreditation seeks to improve the standards apart from just meeting the required minimum standards. They engage in the accreditation process to make them more competitive and hence acquire more students. Nigeria, the United States, and India the three countries that engage in voluntary accreditation (Sanyal, 2013). This partially why universities from these states are ranked among the best in the world. In Saudi Arabia, most institutions undergo compulsory accreditation. Therefore, their rankings are lower when compared with

other universities globally since they only yearn to get to the minimum requirements and not improving on quality as other universities elsewhere.

Institutional Versus Program Accreditation

Accreditation can be in two ways: One that targets an individual program or that which targets the entire Institution (Barsoum & Mryyan, 2014; Eaton, 2012). Institutional accreditation is done when there is a need to assess the entire organization and not just the programs that are offered. This accreditation targets all the fields in the Institution. These fields involve the facilities, services provided to the students, academic programs, finances, governance, mission, teaching staff, and management. They also assess the learning facilities like the library, availability of technology, and the laboratories (Barsoum & Mryyan, 2014). This action ensures that the Institution complies with the missions and goals that ensure the provision of quality services (Zabrie & McCormick, 2000).

Different from institutional accreditation, program accreditation puts its focus on a field of study or a department in an institution. Program accreditation targets the following; assessing staff functions and their standards availability of program resources like the curricula and its contents. Teaching methodology and students' commitments are also assessed. Other considerations include the outcomes of the training, and if the graduates from those institutions are absorbed into the labor force (Harvey, 2004). Skills and students' abilities, as well as professional competencies of the staff, are also assessed (Carter et al., 2013). When the two accreditation procedures are compared, institutional accreditation is more general than program accreditation.

Accreditation in Higher Education around the World

The accreditation process in higher education ensures there is quality learning which meets international standards and global job markets. Prøitz, et al. (2004) assert that every country has its organization governing academic accreditation processes as well as quality assurance. For instance, the “Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education” in the United Kingdom and the “Higher Education Quality Standards Agency” in Australia. According to Dill (2000), in Eastern Europe, academic program accreditation is focused on managing and ensuring quality standards through the external system. Furthermore, unacceptable auditors’ results on assessment might lead to the termination of a specific program or the entire tertiary institution by the accreditation body. In the 1990s, academic policy authorities in Europe conducted a structured analysis of quality assurance in the tertiary institution. Additionally, the internationalization of tertiary education resulted in more excellent knowledge of the obligation to secure the quality of education in Europe (Dill, 2000).

According to Britt Ingham (2009), Americans believe in self-improvement; this activity requires self-evaluation by identifying areas that benefit from enhancement. The manifestation of value is noticed in the expectation that the Institution is likely to demonstrate candor in gauging itself against the international standards when they adopt the accreditation process. The self-study process is not so much a proof exercise in the regional accreditation to demonstrate that the standards are met since they do not need to be met at some level. Here, the institution is capable of an inclination for honest self-assessment and the self-regulation basis for continuous improvement. Americans also believe that, for one to achieve, there must work on self-identified goals. The following example illustrates a series of the United States and how accreditation is utilized, the prevalence of accreditation, and perceptions of accreditation.

Accreditation of the United States' quality assurance has been present since the late 1600s (Britt Ingham, 2009). However, according to Britt Ingham, (2009), internationally recognized accreditation has been in place in American universities since the late 1800s, following the founding of John's Hopkins University. The standards of this accreditation (as an internal process) relies on the honesty and integrity of universities comparing themselves against thousands of other institutions, identifying the strengths and areas of improvement, and guiding the accreditation process to address these concerns.

According to Brittingham (2009), academic Accreditation serves four primary functions in the United States of America. These functions are providing quality assurance to students and the public, allowing federal and state funds access and acquisition, boosting confidence in private sectors, and increasing mobility of the students between institutions. The staff used for the accreditation process or activities are employed by regional organizations, improving accreditation credibility. Most of the accreditation work is done by faculty and staff member of all institutions that are being accredited. A case study on USA accreditation showed the following outcomes by (Brittingham, 2009):

- The accreditation process impacts student learning outcomes by ensuring the availability and accessibility of resources required for learning purposes.
- It impacts the learning outcomes by providing bulk funding by the federal government, which is needed for research.
- Recommendations during the accreditation process are being worked upon by the government, enabling them to know the kind of programs that can be organized to assist students.

- Accreditation enables the faculty to make requests for their needs, which are made available by the government: The Federal government's financial grants are only directed to the accredited institutions.
- Accreditation practices help improve student learning outcomes because it enables the institution to receive assistance from private foundations (Anderson et al., 2000, p: 70-71).

According to Brittingham (2009). Accreditation has continued to grow since its inception in the late 1700s from only 11 institutions being accredited, to over 4,000 being internationally recognized by 2010. This situation was made possible not only by the structures and processes that were in place during the U.S. accreditation process; but also through its developments that are entrenched in American culture (Brittingham, 2009). As indicated by El-Khawas (2001), accreditation has grown in importance throughout America over time (as seen by the increasing number of schools being accredited). It is seen prestigious my post-secondary institutions, and the students enrolled that universities are accredited, so that not only teaching quality is present, but that the students can be competitive in global labor markets. The case of accreditation in America demonstrates that accreditation is not only reliant on structured accreditation processes (such as those provided by the NCAAA); but, it also depends on the societal importance and acceptance of accreditation in the country that it is being implemented in (Brittingham, 2009).

Moreover, according to Leland (2002), in Finland, the Ministry of Education, polytechnics, and universities are being assisted by the Council for Higher Education Evaluation (FINHEEC) on evaluation. The Ministry of Education controls the appointment of FINHEEC as they appoint them on a four-year base. The roles or job description of the FINHEEC is stipulated according to the Decree (1320/1995). Leland (2002) found that the accreditation process in

Finland is designed to promote a higher standard of education, based on the recommendation of national groups such as the FINEECH. However, since Finnish universities independently decide on the education provided within its curricula (Salim & Kinnunen, 2014), accreditation is also based mainly on the university's performance and the degree to which universities are willing to take on the process of accreditation. Based on a case study by Leland (2002) on Finland accreditation, their responsibility is structured to improve and transform the existing quality of education in the country under the processes and information:

- promotion of research and evaluation in tertiary education
- Supporting tertiary institutions as well as the ministry of education
- Direct efforts to accredit polytechnics
- Accepting professional courses that are provided by institutions of higher learning.
- Prompting development of higher education and initiating their evaluations
- Evaluation of higher education policy and assessments of their activities
- Working together with international cooperation in evaluation (Leland, 2002)

Regardless, the outcome of accreditation in Finland is society, and universities widely support one that (much like the United States). It allows universities to alleviate the quality of education as well as the students and thus make them more competitive in the international labor markets.

Accreditation in Saudi Arabian Higher Education

In Saudi Arabia, the accreditation process is a new concept. Most educators do not have any background or experience in the subject, making the success of implementing changes in the education system to have a couple of challenges. Moreover, Saudi's education system, specifically, the teaching and learning culture, has generated resistance and low involvement

among the faculty today. Nevertheless, the potential for Accreditation in S.A. can improve the quality of education for all involved. At the same time, most of the governments in the world are trying to strategize and put up quality assurance systems in place. Saudi Arabia's industrial setup requires highly trained professionals for the economy. The government and the higher learning institutions have, therefore, been making deliberate efforts to produce intellectuals for the market. This has been necessary due to the issues arising from quality assurance qualities that are not standardized. (Zahed, Bafail & Bashir, 2007). According to NCAAA (2009), the ministry of education in Saudi Arabia has streamlined the procedures to be followed by the quality assurers in the country. One of them is to ensure a continuous assessment, support, and measuring of quality of educational services in the tertiary institutions. Students' learning outcomes are also standardized nationally and compatibility with other international standards achieved. To achieve this, the NCAA issued principles and guidelines to the educational institutions. (NCAAA, 2009). It is now a mandatory requirement that is the NCAAA accredit higher learning institutions: This was a directive from the Ministry of Education.

The accreditation system of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's quality assurance has been structured in a way to make it at the bar with international standards: This will also increase its recognition in academics and professionalism among communities. The quality assurance was, therefore, mandated to make educational programs review to ensure quality, equity, and efficiency. Quality assurance tools were developed to improve teaching and learning. (Albaqami, 2019).

These mechanisms can be both internal and external to the institutions. An external mechanism is those that are national or regional and whom evaluations are done on a large scale when assessing students. Internal mechanisms, on the other hand, include self-assessments,

classroom assessment, and staff appraisal. Though different, these mechanisms can be integrated, and they significantly reinforce each other. The integration has gone a long way in ensuring the development of schools through the provision of data about the well-being of the school as well as the general climate of the school. Though this, innovation has been encouraged due to active learning and teaching.

The application for the accreditation process in Saudi is processed by the NCAAA, usually via the Deanship of Quality and Academic Accreditation (DQAA) of the Institution. As indicated by Princess Nourah University (2017), “the Agency for the Faculty of Development and Quality” is to improve the quality practices in the program to achieve its educational programs’ academic accreditation. Saudi universities seek to improve their outputs by providing a positive and supportive environment to achieve and maintain a culture of quality in academic and administrative performance. (Princess Nourah University, 2017). Program leaders should provide leadership that satisfies and ensures compliance within the program with formally established policies (Osman, 2011). Not only this, but this leadership and program administration must be performed by all faculty members to ensure all educational standards and quality practices are upheld. This primarily includes clearly defining the leadership roles and administration roles of all faculty members at Saudi universities. This is done so that key members of the faculty can encourage teamwork and leadership throughout the implementation process and ensure that this process (and its outcomes) aligns with the previously illustrated mission and goals (NCAAA, 2009). In addition to this, the governing bodies at Saudi universities and those faculty leaders in charge of the accreditation process must regularly review it. Not only the effectiveness of the accreditation process, but also the effectiveness of the governing body itself, to ensure that it adheres to the plans, mission, goals, and values of the Saudi Educational

system. This also applies to the integrity of ethical standards of leadership at Saudi Universities, as well as the internal planning processes that are put in place. According to Lazberg (2015), policies and regulations will need to be established while defining the significant responsibilities and administering the program at the college of education.

Accreditation Standards

There is a rising concern about the accreditation process in higher institutions across the globe. Saudi institutions and programs are now demand from the ministry of education to be subject to the standards set by NCAAA (Abou-Zeid & Al Mohaimeed et al., 2012). According to NCAAA (2009), since its inception, it has created standards for 11 areas of operation in the country's higher learning institutions. The accreditation standards are divided into five domains. They help institutions to deliver their services effectively. The accreditation standards creation covers various areas which include:

- The institution's Mission and objectives
- Program of Governance and administration
- Quality assurance management and improvement area
- Strategies for Learning and teaching
- Student administration and support services
- Areas of Learning resources
- Learning Facilities and equipment
- Area of Financial planning and management in the Institution
- Areas of human resource and Employment processes
- Research and development areas
- Organization's Relationships with community

According to Abou-Zeid and Taha (2014), accreditation standards assume groups based on what they address Standards of between 1,2, and 3 are for the contexts about the Institution, teaching, and learning quality for standard 4, standards 5 and 6 for supporting learning of the students while those of 7, 8, and 9 are for infrastructure. The standards of 10 and 11 address contributions from society. Below is a brief description of standard 11.

- 1- Mission, goals, and objectives** The mission is in line and consistent with the Institution. The mission and goals must be related to the program's requirements. It should define the core objectives and priorities and influence the action plan.
- 2- Governance and administration** Program administration must give out functional leadership and effectively demonstrate to the senior management balanced accountability and governors of the Institution offering the program, and pliability to satisfy the program's requirements. Stakeholders such as professional bodies, students, faculty members, and industry representatives are involved in the planning process of establishing objectives, revising, and responding to achieved results. Furthermore, the program quality, in general, should regularly be monitored, and improvements made quickly regarding this feedback.
- 3- Quality assurance management and improvement** Self-evaluation of the program's staff and their performance with commitment must be regularly be conducted to upgrade the program quality and its performance. This must also entail consideration of the external benchmark and performance indicators assessments.
- 4- Learning and teaching.** The learning outcomes of students must be well defined following the national Qualifications Framework in professional practice or employment. The learning standards should be assessed with other relevant reference points, preferable

external ones. The teaching staff should also be qualified in their teaching strategies as well as the responsibilities delegated to them. The teaching strategies that are adopted by the teaching staff should be suitable to the learners. Activities can also be incorporated into the system to ensure effectiveness is realized. Assessment and employer surveys should be conducted regularly to ensure that the education programs are of high quality. Feedback should also be provided as it is the tool for the framework of the improvement scheme.

- 5- Student administration and support services: There should be efficiency in the admission process of the students into the program without bias. The program's information that is required should be made coherent. Such information should be made available to the current and prospective students. Mechanisms for resolution of disputes are clearly outlined and administered without bias. Advice on career choices should also be provided.
- 6- Learning Resources, the resources that are used for learning, and other services should be made available and adequate. They should also be made accessible to the students.
- 7- Facilities and equipment the learning and teaching facilities and equipment that are required for the program should be made available. Their use should be monitored to ensure that they are used effectively. The students, staff, and consultants should also be given access to them.
- 8- Financial planning and management. For successful delivery of the program, there should be enough finances. Institutional budgeting should be done early and adequately. Individual departments should, therefore, present their needs to enable long-term planning. Three years of budgeting is productive. Due to the unforeseen events, active

management should be put in place by providing enough pliability. Flexibility should be ensured by providing proper accountability by developing proper reporting mechanisms.

- 9- Employment processes. The staff should be employed based on the experiences skills they possess. This should be confirmed before they can be appointed. The newly employed staff should be instructed about the program requirements before commencing their work. The assessment of the faculty members on their performance should be systematic. Exemplary performance should be recognized and rewarded.
- 10- Research. Strategies should be made in line with the Institution's mission. The teachers of all the higher learning institutions should participate in scholarly activities. Their knowledge of these breakthroughs should be reflected in their teaching. Sufficient facilities should be stocked to help the students in their undertakings. Besides, the exemplary efforts of the teaching should be appreciated and promotions given to them.
- 11- Relationships with community Donations should be made to the surrounding communities. They should include services that assist individuals around higher learning institutions. The activities should be listed and announced both to the communities and the institutions.

Accreditation Process

The accreditation process must meet specific requirements to make it uniform across the higher institutions in Saudi Arabia. As indicated by (Addas, 2020), the requirements for accreditation of the higher learning institutions are established by the accreditation firms. The goal of these firms is to ensure the quality and uniformity of the educational services that are provided in the country. To achieve this, they assess administrative, academic, and research activities of the programs of an institution. They also ensure that the documents submitted are

genuine. As indicated by (NCAAA, 2009), the NCAAA must be satisfied that the eligibility requirements are met before any program can submit a formal accreditation application. These requirements depend on significant elements of the quality assurance standards and the extent of compliance with the statutory requirements that were set out when the applicant secured the right to operate as an institution of higher education. As indicated by (NCAAA, 2009), program accreditation involves the completion of NCAAA documentation and templates supported by evidence of practice within the program. After submission, an independent external review is undertaken by experts in teaching and quality assurance methods (NCAAA, 2009). However, the accreditation process consists of six significant steps. These steps are:

- The program applies for accreditation
- Workshops for program administrators
- Verifies program eligibility for accreditation
- Making an appointment for NCAAA visit review
- The actual visit review
- The consultation team makes recommendations to the Executive Director to announce the decision

Step 1 The program applies for accreditation by establishing communication with the NCAAA through the Deanship of Quality and Academic Accreditation (DQAA). The DQAA ensures that the program is eligible to apply by reviewing its documents and evidence to check that NCAAA standards are met.

Step 2 The NCAAA offers up to two training workshops for program administrators based on their needs and required areas of questioning. The topics are determined according to the needs of the program.

Step 3 This is a significant step because it verifies program eligibility for accreditation.

The program sends the primary documents to the NCAAA, including the following:

- Self-study report and self-evaluation scales
- Statistical data
- Program files (specification and report)
- Key Performance Indicators
- Results of three questionnaires: these are program evaluation questionnaire, the course evaluation questionnaire, and the learning experiences questionnaire. Also, the program can provide other types of questionnaires, such as a graduate survey and a students' learning experience survey.

On receipt, the NCAAA registers the documents and transfers them to the competent deputy. A consultant is assigned to review the documents to make sure they are complete and verify that the program is eligible for accreditation.

Step 4 An appointment is made with the institution and program for visits by NCAAA specialists. The Accreditation Coordinating Committee selects audit teams for programs, and the Auditors Unit sends invitations and coordinates with the auditors. The NCAAA handles all the logistics for the program review.

Step 5 The actual visit to review the program takes place. Two or three reviewers are assigned, depending on the size of the program.

The visit takes 2 to 3 days, the team is usually accompanied by an NCAAA public relations officer to manage logistics and an employee from the accreditation department to coordinate and supervise the review process. The reviewers submit their reports to the NCAAA with a full visit report and standards compliance table, along with evaluation metrics, which

enable the reviewers to quantify each review, contribute to the judgment on the program, help in comparisons, and extract various statistical data and reports.

Step 6 The consultation team reviews the auditors' reports for consistency and credibility. It makes recommendations to the Executive Director to announce the decision, which is full accreditation, conditional accreditation, or rejection.

As indicated by (Addas, 2020), each of these steps includes a set of requirements that need to be met and supported by evidence. In some cases, guidance will be issued on what steps are needed to enhance education quality and meet NCAAA requirements (NCAAA, 2009). As indicated by (NCAAA, 2009), the program must fulfill 13 requirements to become eligible to apply for accreditation. A summary of these 13 requirements.

- Program Authorization
- Accreditation Application
- Program Specifications
- Course Specifications and Reports
- Course and Program Requirements
- Annual Program
- Student Evaluation Survey
- Alumni and Employer Survey
- Program Advisory Committees
- Program KPIs and Benchmarks
- Program Learning Outcome Mapping
- Self-Evaluation Scales
- Self-Study Report

According to Harvey (2004), each of the requirements listed above is usually allocated to program internal committees, course coordinators, program coordinators, or department heads according to the requirements of each task. Abou-Zeid and Taha (2014) indicated that the Self-Study Report is the most demanding element because it requires time and awareness regarding practices in both the administrative and academic sides of the program. The responsibility for each of the requirements is shared between a range of bodies and internal entities within the department (Harvey, 2004).

As indicated by Alstate, (2004) & Eaton (2012), the institution must meet the stated accreditation requirements applicable to all fields of study. Professional programs should meet the accreditation requirements, and the skills students prefer to pursue. The firms responsible for accreditation can only approve or fail to approve a program upon assessing the institution's capability (Eaton, 2012). Once thriving, the institution is then issued with a certificate. For some firms, accreditation is time-dependent, and periodic review is necessary (Alstete, 2004 and Eaton, 2012)

Outcomes of Accreditation

The Accreditation of a program and Institution can play a critical role in enhancing the learning and teaching process. As viewed by Akhter and Ibrahim, (2016), accreditation is essential as it integrates quality in standards of educational practices and guarantees continuous improvement in the quality of learning. Accreditation can also be sufficient in assessing and improving the quality of learning. Accreditation is an effective way to assess and improve the quality of education. For instance, academic program accreditation emphasizes the effective quality assurance mechanism to save a broad range of constituents from professionals to society; this makes the institution achieve international standards of learning. The growing concern is an

improvement in the academic program, not the achievement of minimum educational requirements; this will bring a significant change in the education system. Accreditation ensures that graduates to be competent in their practice and society. Researches assert that the growing emphasis on accountability and quality assurance. Moreover, the rising concern on the quality of education make accreditation significant in the institutional levels since professionalism has currently become internationally mobile. Academic accreditation refers to recognizing that an institution has met specific standards, therefore, upgrading the institution's status to be qualified to provide higher education (Albaqami, 2015). According to Ulker and Bakioglu (2019), academic accreditation has an immediate impact on the caliber of content delivered by a program. It improves the quality assurance processes in a program or institution. Research conducted by Berry (1999), Ferrara (2007) and Saubier (2013) showed that the of a program and institution could play a critical role in enhancing the learning and teaching process

A case study of Saudi university called Qassim University, the College of Medicine, was involved in an exercise of accreditation by the NCAAA that sought to discuss the impact of the process of accreditation on this University and the educational outcomes of students Al Mohaimeed et al., (2012). This study took place for the duration of the accreditation process at Quassim University, a total duration of two years. This process involved several self-evaluations, assessments of teacher and student performance, assessment of the program (as per NCAAA standards), and many different external party visits to assess the efficacy of the program provide students with positive educational outcomes. It was found that before the accreditation process, Quassim university did not adhere—nor did it meet—any of the NCAAA educational standards, except for a mission and vision of the institution. However, throughout and following this process, Quassim university underwent changes that allowed it to follow all standards set by the

NCAAA, improve faculty performance, and lead to improved student performance (Al Mohaimeed et al., 2012). The outcome of this study does not necessarily present a case study that demonstrates the NCAAA involvement in an institution throughout the accreditation process; instead, it demonstrates how the NCAAA standards and accreditation process impacts all levels of an educational institution. This case study also demonstrates the impact of accreditation in it is the ability to improve educational processes in Saudi universities, leading to the international recognition ability of the Institution and improvement of the student performance so that they can compete in global markets. For Saudi universities, this case study presents promising evidence supporting the idea that the accreditation process (as per NCAAA processes and standards) can improve students' educational outcomes and teaching performance. According to Al Mohaimeed et al., (2012), faculty members had a feeling that professional practice requirements should conform to the learning outcomes. The Saudi universities are also charged with the responsibility of ensuring health to the surrounding communities. (Al Mohaimeed et al., 2012).

Successful Accreditation

The successful accreditation process gives faculty members a chance to understand the importance of quality assurance. It provides a platform for assessing whether Saudi universities can accomplish their aims also gives the faculty members a chance of understanding the role of quality assurance. Through this, Oden (2009) demonstrated that the faculty members are more likely to be accountable and responsible for discharging their duties. Casserly (1987) also described accreditation as a chance that encourages critical consideration through inductive thinking about the role of faculty members in making higher institutions in KSA more globally competitive.

Successful accreditation allows self-evaluation since the faculty members can identify the strength and weaknesses of themselves and the system. Casserly (1987), also indicated that self-evaluation is one's deliberate effort. Occasionally, there exist reforms within a university, but the external audits are there to act as catalysts and increase the speed at which activities can be carried out (Shah et al., 2011). DeSilets (2007) demonstrated how self-evaluation reflects with other programs. For instance, he showed how there exists a reflection between the current program and how they comply with the standards of accreditation. Blyrhman, (2001); Shah et al., (2011). and Casserly (1987) also indicated that the framework provided by the process of accreditation comes with policies that make it easy to identify the strengths and weaknesses of an institution. Through this, an institution gets a chance to re-evaluate their objectives and aims and thus increase their effectiveness.

Successful accreditation leads to self-regulation, cultural competency, and application of the new strategies that make the realization of set goals possible. It is necessary to encourage and support internally to ensure the success of the process of self-regulation (Jones & Schendel, 2000). A successful accreditation in the system will make faculty members know the difference between culture and quality education. They will apply changes without considering what culture dictates but to achieve quality education.

The successful accreditation has support from all the members. Faculty and program leader needs to be aware since this process needs their support and take it seriously to be successful and productive. Dressel (1971) also indicated that the accreditation process' success depends on the happiness of the faculty members. In a study conducted by Alsete (2004), information from the faculty showed that members had not been motivated to be part of the accreditation process. All the members are also encouraged to involve themselves in this process

(Alstete, 2004; Laun, 2005). By involving in the whole process, members will easily understand and join in implementing the accreditation process.

Successful accreditation incorporates technology. Frutarom, as indicated by Alstete (2004) and Laun (2005), suggests that universities should include technology in their internal assessments for storing, controlling, and managing essential data needed for monitoring processes, identifying strengths and weaknesses in order to find solutions and create improvements. According to Addas (2020), Saudi universities lack the database, and this led to failure in this process. Furthermore, these sources demonstrate that technology can aid in the self-assessment and self-regulation during processes of accreditation.

A successful accreditation process must be built in a quality-oriented system: This implies that it should solely target on improving the quality of learning. As viewed by the Akhter and Ibrahim, (2016), in consideration of the mission, the system should provide the decision-maker, and all the stakeholders of the concerned institution with the dashboard of historical trends, current status, and customizable metrics require by KPIs

Challenges in Adopting Accreditation

Faculty members experience challenges in the number of actions and guidelines of accreditation, adopting the duties and responsibilities of the academic teaching staff. According to El-Khawas (2001), there are several actions to respond to the new rules and guidelines brought about by the accreditation process. Some responsibilities are crucial in accreditation and in the process of ensuring quality assurance. According to Akhter and Ibrahim, (2016) there are many challenges of adopting Accreditation. Some of the common challenges are the inability to prepare required forms and documents for the accreditation process properly, lack of commitment among faculty members to the accreditation process, high rate of faculty turnover,

and lack of full support from higher administration or leadership. The participants noticed that the differences between the programs and institution's accreditation are not the problem but the readiness of the program and the institution itself, which is the catalyst for the accreditation process. The findings by Abou-Zeid et al. (2018), illustrate the risk of the added workload on staff members that may lower the priority of teaching and research as members take time filling the accreditation forms and conducting the surveys required. This finding is in line with the findings in this research. The finding by Abou-Zeid and Taha (2014), echoes this finding; the lack of belief in the outcome of the accreditation of the institution is likely to hinder the accreditation process immensely.

A large portion of respondents admitted that the accreditation process is unsatisfactory; this implies that they are not willing to adopt it. These were responses from respondents on their experience. In their responses to the overall experience, 63% (percent) agreed that the accreditation process is an unsatisfactory or lousy experience and had no positive expectations on the impacts of accreditation on their teaching and research activities in the learning institution (Akhter & Ibrahim, 2016). This result confirms the initial claim that many staff members might not believe in the accreditation process as a quality assurance mechanism since the doubt its outcomes on the overall educational systems. There is a high risk that accreditation procedures are then implemented haphazardly just to comply with the regulations, without a clear understanding of their pedagogical functions and how it enhances competencies among members and graduates. According to the opposing participants and other staff members, implementing the regulations is becoming a goal rather than just a way of achieving quality learning and education.

The lack of enough expertise and time also poses a challenge in adopting accreditation. As viewed by Akhter and Ibrahim, (2016) on the obstacles to complete the accreditation requirements, most of the respondents have agreed that the lack of expertise and the lack of time are the main problems. It is worth noting that many of the accreditation mechanisms and procedures are complex to understand through the simple guidance attached to the reports to fill.

Lack of full support from the faculty members and other stakeholders. The expectation is to have committees for supporting the initiate (Rieves, 199; Alstete, 2006). However, according to Addas (2020), until the end of 2017, there was no committee responsible for academic accreditation in most of the Saudi universities. In 2018, the department set up a committee responsible for fulfilling the NCAAA requirements, as previously discussed. The senior members of any institution play a vital role in this process. Through this, the other faculty members can feel motivated to participate in the process of accreditation fully. Faculty members' roles are generally divided among research, teaching, and service (Boyer, 1990). According to (Oden 2009), the faculty s' role in the process of accreditation is to ascertain whether the college should be left operational or not: This is because there is no understanding of it. Their roles were not clear for them as participants in this process. Since, as previously mentioned, there is no transparent system for their roles participation, faculty members feel their involvement is grossly unvalued as they have little say in the decision to pursue accreditation (CAEP, 2015; Head & Johnson, 2011). According to Abou-Zeid and Taha (2014), faculty have stressed that all the activities involved in the process take an enormous effort on the faculty's part. During the accreditation process, volunteers and faculty members move from one department to another, inspecting and evaluating all faculty resources. They evaluate it to see if it meets the standard of the National Agency or Ministry of Education. They inspect the student population in a given

department, the staff, resources (laboratory, library, offices, and others) and see if they all meet the standards required by the accreditation process.

Lack of knowledge and awareness about accreditation. According to Harvey (2004), one of the most common challenges is that faculty has little knowledge about the accreditation process. This situation meant that the individuals in authority failed in preparing faculty to get to know the process of accreditation and what it entails. As indicated by Abou-Zeid and Taha (2014), the challenge is the deregulation of matters such as curriculum design, staff appointment, and students' selection. This deregulation and autonomy have led to increased demand for accountability in the institutions. The increased autonomy at various higher education institutions lacks management of the institution, authorization of finances, and capabilities in strategic planning.

The research findings revealed that, adoption of accreditation associates with time and stress among the faculty members. The faculty members have always voiced their concerns about time and stress, which usually accompanies the accreditation process (Bray, 2010). Faculty members tend to take research more seriously than other duties. According to Aaddas (2020), the most significant challenges faculty members usually encountered during the accreditation process were time-management, finances, and availability of resources. As indicated by Abou-Zeid and Taha (2014), the process usually adds an intense amount of work to the faculty's workload, and many still need to prepare accreditation reports after the whole process. This workload usually adds to their core responsibility as a staff (teaching, research, and other service loads). Besides, most faculty meetings are being postponed, while some may fail to attend meetings. Furthermore, writing may be delayed, class lectures for students may be shifted,

essential data may be entered slowly (Bucalos, 2014). because of their perception of it being a time consuming and unproductive, the faculty is not ready to accomplish this.

Lack of motivation of faculty members who participate in the accreditation process hinders its adoption. In a study conducted by Sabrina (2016), there is no reward to faculty members involved in the accreditation process, and often express overt dissatisfaction because the accreditation requirements and roles often clash with other vital roles like learning. Findings from Sabrina (2016) reveal that teachers value the accreditation process, but dislike the lack of rewards for individual faculties when institutions believe that the accreditation process is essential then. It is more likely to enjoy greater rewards (Sabrina, 2016). The study revealed that faculty members occupying leadership positions insist that there should not be any need to reward faculty members for involving them in the accreditation process. They are all only smaller parts of a more extensive Operation, and this suppresses the accreditation process.

The diagram below (figure 2), summarizes six significant areas in which various studies and sources of literature prelude to being key challenges faculty members face during the accreditation process. The six key challenges are lack of preparation, lack of knowledge, lack of skills and experience, time constraints, limited resources, and unclear roles. There are time constraints between classes and accreditation requirements, resource constraints, level of knowledge of staff members, acceptance levels to take on accreditation on top of their teaching duties, the monetary or intrinsic rewards and of the academic staff need to be clear and to describe their roles in detail.

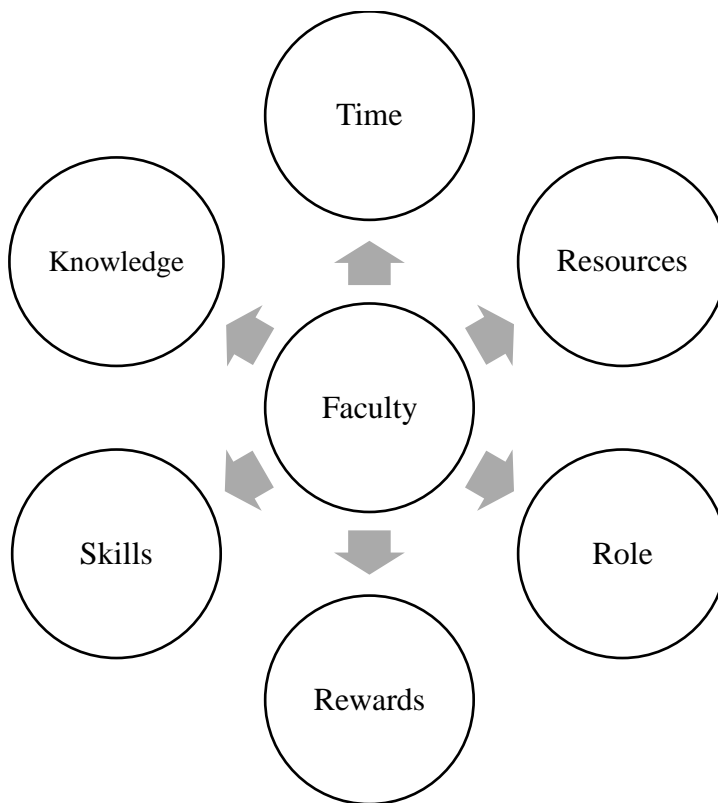


Figure 2: Six Key Challenges Experienced by Faculty during the Accreditation Process.

There are low units of resources per student in higher education because of the increasing number of students, coupled with a constant decline in schools' public funding. This challenge has been worsened by the inappropriate use of the resources that have been available, such as high staff-student ratios and duplication of programs. The presence of these inefficiencies makes it extremely difficult to achieve 'quality education' and accessibility of resources in higher education institutions.

Lack of readiness to adopt the accreditation as it does not favor the majority of faculty members. As indicated by Abou-Zeid and Taha (2014), most of the faculty is not ready to accomplish this process of accreditation. In Saudi universities, the process of accreditation is not favored by the majority of the faculty members. However, El-Khawas (2001) found that due to the evolution of the accreditation process, higher learning institutions have started to see it as a

legitimate mechanism and thus have accepted it. This situation means that faculty members who participated in the initial study that rejected the accreditation process due to the challenges stated previously.

This section reviewed the types of accreditation, the accreditation process, and the perceived outcomes and challenges to the accreditation process in higher education. The next section reviews the theories studied, and their implication in analyzing the data collected for this research study were highlighted.

Theoretical Literature Review

The section discussed the institutional isomorphism, the background, and application of theories of institutional entrepreneurship to the critical issues raised by the study, the accreditation process in Saudi Arabia higher education. I formulated two theories to help in analyzing the findings. The qualitative study was born from this theoretical framework. Before the introduction of the theories, I gave reasons why I selected them and gave their relevance as well

Institutional Isomorphism Theory

DiMaggio and Powell (1983) posited that a crucial characteristic of the institutional isomorphism theory of impact is that social values and beliefs shape an organization and, as such, grant them legitimization for access to resources and survival. DiMaggio and Powell (1983) proposed the institutional isomorphism theory. DiMaggio and Powell also stated that organizations engage in political competitions to gain economic and social benefits (1983). For this study, institutional isomorphism was selected to illustrate various external factors which may influence accreditation. It can illustrate the degree to which external (social) factors influence the adoption of accreditation, and how (for example) the social values and beliefs of Saudi Arabia

impact accreditation. This can be directly correlated to this study. It is demonstrated that the acceptance and perceptions of accreditation were heavily swayed by the social factors, values, and beliefs of faculty members. As such, this is an integral theory to include—and understand—in this research.

According to DiMaggio & Powell (1983), Institutional isomorphism pushes organizations to copy standards and norms from other superior institutions to acquire a competitive advantage in the global market. DiMaggio Powel (1983) explained the three forms of institutional isomorphism. They include, first, coercive isomorphism; both formal and informal pressure, persuasion, or invitations exerted on the organization by fellow organizations. This innovative pressure accumulates due to society's cultural expectations, which stresses the quality of services and products by the institution (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). In Saudi universities, if one institution is coerced not to change, and not to be different, it finds the “neutral, common ground” to appease all other schools and stakeholders.

According to DiMaggio & Powell (1983), in mimetic isomorphism, some organizations seek conformity with other similar institutions, which they consider to be more legitimate and successful. Therefore, emerging organizations will borrow both the technologies and rules to eliminate uncertainties associated with innovation (Boxenbaum & Jonsson, 2008). According to DiMaggio and Powell (1983), in normative isomorphism, the institutional pressures are brought about by inherent legitimization such as licensing or crediting education structures that consequently normalize social practices (Almansour et al., 2015). Furthermore, according to Almansour et al., (2015) in Saudi Arabia institutions isomorphism is a driver of coherence because institutions will inevitably seek to have coherence throughout the entire educational

system such as throughout Saudi, and will achieve this by conforming to one socially acceptable norm that is adopted by other educational institutions (Almansour et al., 2015).

The institutional isomorphism theory also states that small changes within the organization's structures may eventually lead to cumulative effects (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). This implies that more prominent institutions can easily influence the smaller ones to conform to the new standards. Therefore, institutional isomorphism is a sociological phenomenon that transforms the rules of efficiency in the marketplace to institutional constraints (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). However, the adoption of innovations reaches a threshold at which the institution fails to improve its performance.

As indicated by DiMaggio and Powell (1983), the main implication of the institutional isomorphism theory is that institutions tend to borrow norms and structures from other institutions to improve their service quality. The accreditation is both an innovation and an educational norm that universities in the KSA must adopt to improve their quality of education. Therefore, the universities will borrow the accreditation practice as an innovation, from other successful organizations, to improve the quality of their education. As indicated by DiMaggio and Powell (1983), institutional isomorphism theory also gives rise to the adoption of innovation such as new technologies as societies evolve and change, organizations within these societies must lead this change, and adopt strategies to handle this continuous change. The critical example of this is Saudi universities because they have been able to consistently adopt new technologies, and be drivers of change in Saudi Arabia, resulting from the external forces and factors at play in Saudi Society. Although they still conform to Islamic rules and practices, they are still able to use societal forces to develop, as seen through their adoption of accreditation. The adoption of new technologies is also caused by political influences, which therefore bring

about rapid transformation in many organizations (Almansour et al., 2015). In the same manner, the institutional isomorphism theory explains why global forces are pressuring Saudi schools to engage in the accreditation (Alstete, 2004). Saudi universities are an example of the educational institutions that experience both the national and international pressure to adopt the accreditation (Alstete, 2004). According to DiMaggio and Paul (1983), from the mimetic perspective, Saudi universities are forced to imitate the standards from successful institutions to improve their efficiency. Social development leads to technological development leads to the adoption of new tech in a program that leads to the development of the institution leads to new beginnings that stem from societal pressures and changes.

According to DiMaggio and Paul (1983), the institutional isomorphism theory assumes that it is irrational for any other institution or organization to fail to adopt the innovative structures. Since most Saudi universities have not been accredited, they have remained uncompetitive based on global standards and, consequently, suffered the lower academic ranking. Thus, the use of coercive, mimetic, or normative pressures in adopting the new standards increase both the legitimacy and the power to compete effectively on the global fraternity (Boxenbaum & Jonsson, 2008). In addition to this, DiMaggio and Powell (1983) explained that since the innovations usually conform to the cultural expectations of society, adopting them have positive rewards. In this sense, Saudi universities' implication for adopting the accreditation is that it improves not only the quality of organizations but also their recognition by other institutions. It means that if Saudi universities perform the accreditation of their educational programs, they will earn global recognition. Aside from this, there will be increased mobility and the value of both the lecturers and the students. Furthermore, graduates will become more globally competitive (Ministry of Higher Education, 2011). However,

Alghamdi (2016) indicated that if the accreditation is carried out just to copy other institutions, it only becomes burdensome and costly (Alghamdi, 2016). For the accreditation to work well for Saudi universities, it will be pursued with a positive attitude to eliminate the possible uncertainties.

Institutional Entrepreneurship Theory

DiMaggio (1988) developed the institutional entrepreneurship theory, which denotes those activities, that "act with interest in a certain arrangement" of an institution and try to leverage available resources to establish new institutions or transform existing institutions. New institutions usually rise where organized actors have sufficient resources and use them to fulfill the interests they regard so much. According to Garud, et al. (2007), institutional entrepreneurs establish new systems of meaning that link together the functions of a disparate set of institutions. The concept of entrepreneurship in institutions brings agency, power, and interest in institutional operations that give entrepreneurs mechanisms of shaping their institutions from within. Institutional entrepreneurship emphasizes organizational processes and ways creative entrepreneurs shape institutions by bringing about desirable change.

Battilana, Leca, and Boxenbaum (2009) argued that entrepreneurs of different institutions enforce changes through the establishment of visions that mobilize the resources and thus motivating others to accomplish and maintain the change. This theory can be used to ascertain whether the faculty at Saudi universities of education is transformational; leaders who can use it initiate the desired change towards the institution's accreditation. According to Maguire, Hardy, and Lawrence (2004), institutional entrepreneurship involves the ability to imagine alternative possibilities and the capability to conceptualize past commitments and projected best practices with the contingency of the moment to transform existing institutions or create new ones.

The theory of institutional entrepreneurship was selected among other theories for this study for its relationship and ability to illustrate how an institution can utilize the resources which it has readily available and utilize these resources to create, motivate, accomplish, and maintain change within an organization. In other words, this theory was selected because it can clearly illustrate some of the critical internal factors (leadership, entrepreneurialism, acceptance of change, and the power of individuals to facilitate change) that take place within an institution during the accreditation process. More specifically, this theory can be related to the change processes which occur at Saudi universities, during the process of accreditation. Not only this, but it illustrates how the individual faculty members can utilize the resources which are readily available to them and use these resources to facilitate change within the faculty. The application of this theory proves essential in later sections of the review when it is illustrated how leadership and faculty involvement in the accreditation process impacted acceptance and use of accreditation. This theory applies to the ability of faculty members to leverage their available resources; but, it demonstrates the entrepreneurial capacity of many of the faculty members at Saudi universities and how they could utilize the concepts within this theory to provide a foundation of leadership promotion accreditation to take place.

As indicated by Addas (2020), faculty in Saudi universities can use their professional experiences in curriculum development as past commitments that are important in projecting the best practices required to implement and sustain the desired change. Accreditation in Saudi universities does not require the creation of new institutions but a transformation of the existing one to attain quality standards of educations that can enable it to compete with other leading global institutions of higher learning. Saudi's faculty can utilize institutional entrepreneurship to adopt accreditation. As indicated by Addas (2020), faculty in Saudi universities can leverage

their strengths as leaders and entrepreneurs to understand and adopt the accreditation process and the changes in accreditation.

According to DiMaggio (1988), to qualify as an institutional entrepreneur, one must break away from existing rules and practices that promote dominant institutional routine logics (DiMaggio, 1988). Instead, one should start championing alternative rules and institutionalize logic that seeks to transform existing institutions and creating new ones (Battilana, Leca, & Boxenbaum, 2009; Greenwood & Suddaby, 2006). Like the changes required in Saudi universities towards accreditation, institutional entrepreneurship emphasizes the establishment of new strategies and embedding them into the existing institutions to trigger a transformation.

In Saudi universities, the institutional entrepreneurship theory is ever-present among staff, both in the leadership that occurs in the accreditation process and how accreditation perspectives are reframed, as the process takes place. As indicated by Addas (2020), faculty members in Saudi universities need to adopt leadership and entrepreneurial roles to facilitate the adoption of accreditation and use these leadership roles (following the institutional entrepreneurship theory) to ensure the motivation to acceptance of this change, and the maintenance of this change. It is also present throughout the shifts in perspectives of faculty members towards accreditation. As faculty members apply this theory of entrepreneurialism, their perspectives shift to accept the accreditation process, as it is no longer deemed a burden or challenge. Instead, this theory of entrepreneurship demonstrates a shift in faculty member's perspectives towards one that sees the benefits of accreditation and understands that accreditation is for the betterment of the school and its students.

According to Al-Essa (2010), Addas (2020) and Alghamdi (2016), within this review of literature, the institutional entrepreneurship theory relates to many of the topics which have

discussed how accreditation is adopted. Firstly, this theory is present throughout the history and adoption of accreditation in Saudi Arabia. This comes because many faculty members and institutions utilize the resources available to them (given an unfortunate history of academic quality and advancement in Saudi Arabia) to promote accreditation. In other words, given the fact that Saudi Arabia's history of educational reform and the lack of accreditation that has taken place in Saudi Arabia. Faculty members and academic institutions have had to utilize institutional entrepreneurship to become leaders within Saudi universities, to facilitate the process of accreditation. In addition to this, institutional entrepreneurship theory is present in the case studies of how other countries have adopted accreditation. That is, universities within the United States are independently responsible for their processes of accreditation taking place. Without institutional entrepreneurship, the faculty members and administrators within these universities would not be able to leverage the resources available and motivate the faculty, staff, and students to move the institution towards accreditation.

In short, this review of the literature and the institutional entrepreneurship theory review demonstrate that the faculty members within universities must undertake entrepreneurial leadership positions within a university to motivate, establish, and maintain within a university. For Saudi universities, this means that those faculty members who commonly discussed instances of entrepreneurship in their responses to the research questions are the individuals who were demonstrating the application of the institutional entrepreneurship theory. This situation allows accreditation to take place because they could create change within their organization.

Chapter Summary

In Saudi Arabia, most educators do not have a good background or experience with the accreditation process making it a new concept. The implication is that the success of implementing changes in the education system must have challenges due to less experience among those who should implement it. Moreover, Saudi's education system, specifically, the teaching and learning culture, has generated resistance and low involvement among the faculty today. Nevertheless, the potential for accreditation in SA can improve the quality of education for all involved. Relevant studies were discussed to better understand the experiences of the members of the faculty during the process of implementation of the accreditation and the outcomes of the process. This chapter had also demonstrated how accreditation had impacted the Saudi education system throughout history (i.e., when accreditation first took place, and the impact it has had on the international visibility and development of the Saudi education system). Moreover, how accreditation has evolved to take its current form, within Saudi society. To provide perspective on how accreditation has impacted Saudi Arabia's education systems, and to provide understanding on where Saudi's education stands on a global platform, this chapter has also presented case studies from other countries, which depict the significantly higher prevalence, and tolerance towards accreditation in other countries around the world.

The latter section of this chapter sought to further this framework of understanding regarding accreditation by illustrating the (two) critical theoretical literature that plays a significant role in this study. These theoretical developments provide this study greater context and a more comprehensive lens in which the internal and external factors affecting accreditation in Saudi Arabia can be understood. Collectively, these two sections of this chapter provide a framework of knowledge through a review of literature, as to how the perceptions of faculty

impact the accreditation process, how these perceptions changed, and how these perceptions (and the accreditation process as a whole) impact the educational outcome of students in Saudi universities.

The Gap in the Literature Review

Several gaps appear in the literature on the faculty member's experiences in the accreditation process and how they contribute to the success or failure of accreditation. From the review, there are limited studies on the accreditation in Saudi Arabia, and the accreditation remains unfamiliar with faculty in Saudi Arabia. Thus, several studies should be carried out to find out the reasons behind the successes and failures associated with adopting accreditation. The literature highlights that concerning Saudi Arabia, recently, accreditation has been implemented as an essential tool for change and reform in the transition of programs by faculty members. As such, there are few pieces of literature on faculty members' experiences the process of accrediting and its effects on the activities of the higher education's various aspects. The theories in this study on the impact of accreditation of higher education are based on the ideals of western people, which, when applied to the Saudi Arabian people, will not be sufficient. However, the results of this research give other ways to new fields, which can be used as a reference to future study and research on the accreditation process in Saudi Arabia.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

The qualitative approach was essential in this study since it discovers the meaning that people give to events they experience. The qualitative studies revealed how best it fits with the situation of faculty members' experiences in the process of program accreditation and the outcomes they have seen in Saudi Arabian higher education. The design of this study included the selection of participants and collection of data as well as analysis of the collected data. The other sections covered the reliability, and the ethical considerations relevant to this study were highlighted, including the institutional review board process.

Qualitative Approach

This research examined the faculty members' experiences during the accreditation process and the outcomes they observe in Saudi Arabian higher education. In Saudi Arabia, most educators do not have a good background or experience with the accreditation process making it a new concept. The implication is that the success of implementing changes in the education system must have challenges due to less experience among those who should implement it. Moreover, Saudi's education system, specifically, the teaching and learning culture, has generated resistance and low involvement among the faculty today. Nevertheless, the potential for accreditation in SA can improve the quality of education for all involved.

The use of the qualitative method best fitted the type of research respondents that is the faculty members. Phenomenologists use qualitative methods like direct observation as well as in-depth questioning and other methods that provide descriptive data. Taylor and Bogden (1998) made a summary of the history of qualitative study and showed that this strategy ultimately arose as a result of positivism through social sciences. They realized that the focus tends to find out

incidences that occur in social phenomena. Bogden and Taylor (1998) adopted a posterior angle to understand from the eye of an actor on how to experience the world. According to Taylor and Bogden (1998), research methodology is related to a way to see problems and solve them. The qualitative method is a respected and legitimate method of data collection in research. The researchers pay close attention to people's responses both in spoken word as well as in writing.

I found that this qualitative methodology and case study research was best for my study because it was the best way for me to understand the experiences of the faculty members during the accreditation process (Creswell, 2014) regardless the approach taken in qualitative research, each approach has characteristics like the desire to understand the meaning, use of the researcher as the primary source of data collection and analysis, fieldwork practices, descriptions, and results. During my research into the phenomenon, I understood the faculty members' experiences during the accreditation process and the outcomes they have seen in Saudi Arabian higher education. I heard and observed them share their experiences in this process; their responses revealed which aspects of their experiences are essential. They agreed on the approaches they were taking to keep their program successful throughout the accreditation process. The qualitative research process was a moment of discovery, reflection, and wonder during my studies. I took care of my participants' intuitive knowledge and tried to understand how they experienced the concept of accreditation and how it impacts student learning outcomes. I asked the population precisely and to obtain a complete overview of every case of the study. I came up with ideas and patterns. On noticing a comment, I interpreted it, making a keen consideration of the respondent. I also re-examined patterns of the comments throughout the study. I was, therefore, able to identify patterns and themes. This study design gave me a practical experience

during the accreditation process, and faculty members have seen a better understanding of the outcomes in Saudi Arabian higher education.

Research Design

The qualitative case study research served as the primary methodology for this study. The findings by Stake (1995) assert that case study methodology allows the researcher to explore individual in-depth a program, event, activity, and processes. For this study, the matter under observation was faculty members' experience with the accreditation process and its outcome on the quality of education. The study was carried out in Saudi Arabia since the accreditation process is less prevalent in Saudi Arabia than in other countries such as the US. There was a concern to explore the reasons behind it. Most educators in Saudi do not have a good background or experience with the accreditation process making it a new concept. The implication is that the success of implementing changes in the education system must have challenges due to less experience among those who should implement it. Moreover, Saudi's education system, specifically, the teaching and learning culture, has generated resistance and low involvement among the faculty today. Nevertheless, the potential for accreditation in SA can improve the quality of education for all involved. This study was to understand the experiences of the faculty members during the accreditation process, and the outcomes they have seen at the Early Childhood Program at the College of Education at (PNU). The research question that was developed to guide this study was what are the experiences of the faculty during the program accreditation process and what outcomes do they see in the Saudi Arabian higher education.

According to Creswell (2014), a case study collection of multi details sources which provides an in-depth exploration of a system that is bound. The case may be bounded both by the time as well as the place; it may be a program, community, or some incident or occurrence. The

case was examined in detail, and its authentic contexts, like the boundaries between the occurrences and the context, may not, at times, be recognizable. By narrowing the case (s), the investigator throws up an extensive network to conduct a comprehensive investigation. The case brings flexibility in the process of qualitative research. Case studies are chosen for their uniqueness, i.e., the information it has about an occurrence. The case study increases agility by funding numerous research paths. According to Merriam (1998), by comparing surveys, historical studies, and experiments concluded that case studies do not conform to a strict method of acquiring data or analyzing data. Any data collection method can be used even though some techniques are more used when compared to others.

Review of Institutional Board

I carefully followed the guidelines and reviewed research on humans at my university. This included training for the design and ethical considerations as well as the selection and recruitment of volunteers. I sought support from other documents and publications to be approved of the study. Upon the grant of the permission, I selected and recruited participants then followed the protocols of the institutional review board. This action ensured the protection of the respondents in terms of their well-being and consent. Finally, I ensured that the rights to privacy of the respondents were respected by ensuring congeniality. The study included adults in professional authority and power positions during the accreditation process and had no relationship with me. Based on these considerations, the study flowed smoothly to the process of review. I applied human research protocols carefully as well. Signed consents were done before the commencement of any interview. The pseudonyms replace the names of the participants to protect the identity of the participants all along. Confidential data, research reports were saved

with devices with passwords and kept confidential. I was the only person to access the information at any given time.

Participants

Purposeful sampling was employed to select faculty members for personal interviews and was a careful design to ensure flexibility. To allow for features that allowed for guidance in the research design, was more applicable to the recruitment and selection of the participants. According to Merriam (1998), a specific sample starts with the selection of participants that can provide comprehensive data about the occurrence of study. In my study, I, therefore, chose representatives experienced in matters about the faculty during the accreditation process of Saudi Arabia. Participants were chosen based on how best they responded to the questions. I also stratified potential respondents. Stratification means that a sample represents specific desirable characteristics (Creswell, 2014). Creswell stated that not at all times do we have all these characteristics. They may be lacking in some samples. I selected people who met the purposeful sample.

To compile a group of participants potential, the purposeful sample used for this study had these participant inclusion criteria, those who were in the institution previously, as well as during the accreditation process and had at least three years of experience in the program and involved in the accreditation process. The process I used in my sample selection was as follows: first, I collected information on the PNU website. Next, I looked for available public data that included names and contact information for teachers working in the PNU's Early Childhood Program. Finally, the sample was 12 faculty members of the early childhood program at PNU. The size of my sample and the continuous review of the data helped me achieve saturation. My sample included the only female faculty because PNU is a purely women's university. I chose

this program because, unlike other programs, this program's outcomes are based on the outcomes and teaching of international organizations in the early developmental years for children—making it an important program to focus on—and, it was also in the process of accreditation because it shows progress on quality practices. This study was seeking to understand the faculty's experience in the accreditation process for the early childhood education program in Saudi Arabia. Table 1 introduces the pseudonyms of participants, level of education, and years of experience.

Table 1 : Details of the participants

Pseudonym	Experience	Education
F1	8 years	PhD
F2	15 years	Master's Degree
F3	6 years	M.A.
F4	7 years	PhD
F5	13 years	PhD
F6	8 years	PhD
F7	16 years	PhD
F8	11 years	PhD
F9	5 years	Master's degree
F10	6 years	PhD
F11	6 years	Master's degree
F12	8 years	PhD

As Table 1 showed, all the names of the participants were replaced with pseudonyms. The average years of participant experience in this study are 9 with 8 Ph.D. holders and 4 master's degree holders.

Data Collection

A well-conducted case study benefits from having multiple sources of evidence and ensuring a robust and possible study. In a case study, it is essential to converge sources of data; the triangulation, to ensure comprehensive reflection on the participants' understandings and experience. Qualitative researchers rely on data from primary sources. These sources include interviews, documents, and direct observation Creswell (2014). Due to the diversity of information sources, the case study narrows into a smaller context. The purpose of collecting data was to ensure naturalistic research with less bias and personal ideas, and the collection was to support the need for a change in the learning process and to demonstrate compliance with regulations and the strategies in adopting the change. The data from the respondents gave an insight into the experience of faculty members' responses to the challenges, changes, and results of adopting accreditation.

However, there were some challenges in data collection; for example, I emailed 30 faculty members of the program, and only four agreed to participate in this study. The rest could not participate. The interviews were conducted between October 2018 and January 2019; this was the first period of data collection, but the data was insufficient because accreditation was unknown to many of the faculty members—so not enough data could be collected. Then I waited for almost eight months and then contacted the previous four participants and emailed over 18 members of the program faculty. Eight of them were able to participate; the rest could not participate in this study. This second interview period was conducted between October 2019 and

January 2020 to collect more detailed data, and the total sample was 12. I decided to collect more data about what the last interview period was. I contacted all participants to see if there were any changes or if they would like to add additional information to support this study.

Interviews

In this study, I collected the data mainly through interviews since it was a small group of participants on a broad topic under study. The interviews help, explain, understand, and explore participants' opinions, behaviors, feelings, experiences, and the phenomenon under study (Patton, 1987). According to the Merriam, (2002), the qualitative interview is appropriate when studying people's understanding of their lives. The interview helps to assess individual minds. As viewed by Patton (1987), the interview reveals what cannot be observed by people. Finding from qualitative data (interviews) provide a thick description of the phenome that being studied. Finally, interviews allow for triangulation of information from other sources, increasing the credibility of study findings (Merriam, 2002).

In this study, I used a semi-structured interview approach. In the first interaction with participants, I made an introduction about myself as a researcher and provided a summary of the study. The self-introduction helps to establish rapport and gain their trust (Patton, 1980). The first interview was conducted with the faculty head of the accreditation committee, as described by the program administrator. She was a member of the accreditation and quality committee. This faculty handled the rest of the interviews by providing me with phone numbers that were not available on the PNU website.

I interviewed 12 faculty members at the Early Childhood program location in PNU. Most of them were through Face-to-Face, and one was over the phone. Interviews with faculty were conducted in the program's meeting room except for the telephone interviews. I planned 60

minutes with the participants, but the interviews lasted between 45 and 60 minutes. After I identified a potential sample, I contacted the Early Childhood program administrator and planned an interview visit with participants.

I adhered to the necessary protocols through interviews. For instance, I explained about the recording and transcription of the interviews. I followed the research guidelines for human subjects by informing participants of their rights not to answer questions and that they can at any time withdraw from the study.

After acquainting myself with participants, I also assured the participants during the interview that it was my role to listen because I wanted to understand their experiences and analyze how they feel about the change. I started the interviews with some simple and general questions that were open to get to know about the personal and professional interests and background of the respondent. I asked questions about members' reaction to the issue of accreditation. I asked the participants to tell me more about their experiences during the accreditation process. I asked additional questions related to their roles during the accreditation implementation (see Appendix A) and other essential concerns during the accreditation process to explore into detail their roles and whether they ready for the task. I examined the reactions of the participants during the program change by enquiring from them on what they thought about something or how they felt about adopting some new techniques to assess whether the implementation of accreditation is likely to be successful since the respondents are the primary stakeholders at the implementation stage. Participants were also allowed to ask questions concerning the research. As viewed by Merriam (2002), the semi-structured interviews and a set of open-ended questions usually obtain participants' demographic information, perceptions, and experiences with the accreditation process to improve the quality of learning. I found that

interviews are the most comprehensive means of collecting data. Therefore, their perception of the process directly affects its success. Moreover, participants' reflections often generated vivid anecdotal depth information about what had happened during implementing the accreditation and how the faculty responded to the accreditation process. I asked more to know if the accreditation process has had any impact on learning outcomes.

Documents

I checked the information on the PNU, NCAAA websites, and public information. I assumed that all the documents available were original and thus viable for use. Creswell (2004) discovered and therefore advised researchers to use protocols when recording observations. The documents created by the researchers may include observation guidelines that enlist characteristics to be addressed in that observation (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006). Additional documents, like interview notes, records, and diagrams, can also be created. I treated all materials confidentially and followed ethical practices.

Field Notes

These are the notes I took while at the interviews at PNU. Field notes are the most frequent aspects of qualitative research. They enable the researcher to improve portability by composing full descriptions (Earlandson et al., 1993). Field notes are used by researchers to record interviews and present observations. They are also used in processing in real times and recording of phenomena.

Transcription and Translating

Using digital dictation machines was simple, and the sound quality was right, I transcribed multiple interviews, but I was unable to use a software program to transcribe or analyze the text data because the texts were written in Arabic. After each interview, I copied the

voice file from my recorder to my PC, saved individual digital voice files using pseudonyms to maintain confidentiality and hard copies of files on a portable hard drive for security reasons. Then I loaded the language files for transcription, as required by the data, I listened to audio recordings and transcribed verbatim what was said in the language of the individual interviewee (Arabic). This phase was significant and required my careful attention to translate the verbal meaning exactly into the written text and to maintain the voice and tone of the participants. Some participants' speeches did not match the repeated words, the Arabic proverbs to describe the situation, or to emphasize the intended meaning that was important for this research. Some participants had filling expressions and long pauses in their speeches when they considered the interview questions challenging to answer. I saved Word files with the same pseudonyms and copied the Word files to the portable hard drive. I compared the recordings with my transcripts several times before starting the translation to ensure the accuracy and to ensure that I did not miss anything. I have only translated the information according to subjects, considering the differences in Arabic language structures and English. I have reorganized my data according to significant problems or challenges that occurred during the coding process. During the translation process, I paid close attention to the content of the conversation and the participants' voices to understand the intended meaning while skipping repeated words and some irrelevant discussions that made my coding more accessible.

Data Analysis

Analysis of qualitative data is not a single event but a process that is continuous by making comparisons (Earlandson et al., 1993). The analysis followed prescribed steps from Data collection. There was an attempt to figure out the patterns during the comparison without premature judgment. I was primarily listening to participants' stories to understand the

importance of their experiences during the accreditation implementation process. The main issue is that most educators in Saudi lack an excellent background or experience with the accreditation process making it a new concept and difficult to implement. The implication is that the success of implementing changes in the education system must have challenges due to less experience among those who should implement it. Saudi's education system, specifically, the teaching and learning culture, has generated resistance and low involvement among the faculty today. Nevertheless, the potential for accreditation in SA can improve the quality of education for all involved. Understanding the respondents' experience with accreditation was to assess the extent to which it can be successful since they are the people to implement it.

Data analysis opens ways on the study plan and makes a researcher ponder and concentrates only on the essential aspects of the study. Miles and Huberman (1994) demonstrated that early analysis guarantees better on-site work since it triggers thinking on the existing data and thus enabling the generation of strategies to collect more data. The additional data provides a remedy to blind spots where there is less literature review: This is the same approach that was used by Miles and Huberman. They could first collect data, analyze it then collect more data; this helped them to identify more patterns in the collected data. They were thus able to derive more general topics, which are referred to as memoranda together. To analyze my data, I allowed my first impressions and maintained a more in-depth categorization of the data. I developed more straightforward comments from those collected from the interviews. Sometimes, if possible, I marked particular interest points without disturbing the flow of the narrative environment. The coding took shape. I mainly delayed the in-depth analysis to complete all the planned interviews first. I avoided making premature judgments. I also tried to develop the participant's feelings in the comments. This helped me to identify emerging patterns.

Qualitative data analysis is a long, iterative process with an inductive approach. It is used to develop theories by acknowledging empirical pieces of evidence. I have taken the following steps to prepare, analyze, and interpret the data:

1. I listened to the recorded texts several times and checked the written texts several times before I started coding.
2. I started coding line by line in Arabic to save time. If I began translating first without coding and identifying topics, I might have to explain irrelevant information or repeated questions or problems. The whole data analysis process would take longer. I went back. I read the transcripts and my notes several times and wrote preliminary codes on the margins and described in my diary what I found in the data. Coding was the primary categorization strategy (Maxwell, 2013) in that written texts were broken down by topic or category to develop theoretical concepts or to organize data into broader questions that would arise during coding. I searched for new topics, tagged the questions with a word or phrase that respondents used, and then highlighted words, phrases, or sentences by color in the transcribed text.
3. Group the data by topics identified as the result of coding the written text. At that point, I reread the data and checked the information's importance through the lens to answer my research question. It helped me sort and separate information that was not relevant to accreditation or my research problems.
4. I wrote notes or my thoughts regularly. Maxwell (2013) reaffirmed the importance of memoranda for data analysis. He suggested that they not only "capture your analytical thinking about your data, but also facilitate that thinking and stimulate analytical ideas." It was not easy to create a system to organize my data.

Finally, I, therefore, organized the data into five main categories:

1. Challenges in Adopting Accreditation
2. Driving the Program Change
3. Teaching and Learning Strategies
4. Tools to Improve Teaching and Learning
5. Program's Outcomes

After completing these categories, I created a table to record subthemes related to each theme. Upon completion of the organization of data, I formulated two theories to help in interpreting the collected data. The first theory was the institutional isomorphism theory (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983) to understand the significance of faculty members' experiences during the program accreditation process and the outcomes they have seen. From the faculty members' experiences, I applied this framework to people and their experiences of change to illustrate various external factors that may influence their view on the accreditation process in KSA. This theory illustrated the degree to which the adoption of accreditation is influenced by external (social) factors, and how the social values and beliefs of Saudi Arabia impact the adoption of accreditation. The institution must be able to not only utilize the readily available resources, but also to utilize these resources to create, motivate, accomplish, and maintain change within an organization. The institutional isomorphism theory gives rise to the adoption of new beginnings and new systems. As societies evolve and change, organizations within these societies must lead this change and adopt strategies to handle this continuous change. The critical example of this in Saudi universities is PNU because they have been able to consistently adopt new systems and be drivers of change in Saudi Arabia. This is as a result of the external forces and factors at play in the Saudi Society. Although they still conform to Islamic rules and

practices, they are still able to use societal forces to develop, as seen through their adoption of accreditation.

Additionally, I adopted DiMaggio's (1988) theory of institutional entrepreneurship. I referred to the new organizational identity framework to hone in on the purposes of accreditation, and the faculty members' experiences during the accreditation process, particularly concerning their perceptions of the outcomes on the selected higher education program. This theory was applied to clearly illustrate some of the critical internal factors - such as the power of individuals to facilitate change - that influence an institution's accreditation process. This theory applied to the ability of faculty members to leverage their available resources and how they could maintain the changes appropriated by the accreditation process.

Research Experience and Bias

Qualitative research is interpretive research; the interlocutor usually participates in a sustained and intense experience with the participants. Due to the qualitative researcher's connection to the research, the study design must consider the researcher's place in the study. Researchers explicitly identify their personal biases, values, and backgrounds in a thoughtful way (Creswell, 2014), and consequently attempt to address several strategic, ethical and personal problems to ensure that the work produced is credible and valid. The interlocutor will show an individual's role in the study as well as one's experiences, culture, and background. For example, issues that drive faculty and the importance they attach to their job. Apart from influencing the direction of the study, they also help in promoting values and biases in the study. (Creswell, 2014). I had experience in Saudi Arabia educational student because I graduated from PNU. As a graduate of PNU and my experience while studying in the US helped me to understand the importance of the accreditation process in the quality of education. Due to the separation, I had

both emotional and cognitive cushion. This much helped me in reducing bias. Since I was also separated from the field, I was able to avoid prejudice. The distance also gave a better understanding of the faculty's feelings on the same.

There was no impose of expectation on the participants. However, Active listening was a great advantage on my side. The participants were able to earn comfort that strategy and were able to share more through their stories. By avoiding intrusion, I carefully redirected on the topic whenever respondents went astray. In the introductory chapter, I had identified the interests of the subject as well as from my experiences as an undergraduate student in Saudi Arabia. This experience helped in shaping ideas and memories of my four years of being an undergraduate at PNU. I put these memories and related feelings aside to reduce the impact of these experiences on my research. I have tried to use most of my previous experience in my research. I tried to prevent myself from prejudice on observations and interpretation. I used reflections of the reactions and conceptualizations. Since I was a beginner, I took the chance to learn from experts' members who had more knowledge and skills on this issue. I stayed open to allow multiple perspectives from different participants and was aware of my views, prejudices, subjectivity, and beliefs and kept them under control and separate.

Reliability

Consistency and replicability over time in the most crucial thing in the research; Lincoln and Guba (1985) promoted qualitative research methods. By establishing checks and balances, reliability is increased. The techniques are Exams of members, peer reports, triangulation, long-term commitment and keen observation, and independency of review of processes (Lincoln & Guba). I was able to determine the reliability of my study results based on the evidence obtained from the data collection and analysis process. An interpretive researcher interacts directly with

the study participants in their natural environment over an extended period to understand their opinions better and produce high quality, rigorous, and reliable research. I found that the member verification approach effectively validated the accuracy of the data.

The results interpretation and questions related to the data analysis process can easily be shared with the participants via phone calls or social media, easing communication with participants and check if my interpretation and check the consistency. I also dealt with Peer Verification, a doctoral faculty from Saudi Arabia who understood the context of my research because she is at a different public university in Saudi Arabia, and she is involved in the accreditation committee at her program, read my results, and gave her feedback. I tried to alleviate the prejudices from the study. This helped me to embrace values and be honest in the study.

Reliability is key to qualitative research since it advocates for a good study design, which follows the procedures explained and which corresponds to the reality expressed by the participants and determines results that match the collected data (Merriam, 1998). I then carefully worked with my supervisor, who helped in making reflections on my progress regularly. This strategy helps to process information and also to boost efforts avoiding prejudices from my prior experiences. Reliability means a certain level of trust. The value of qualitative research is dependent on it. Reliability has four pillars: design, credibility, transferability, reliability itself, and conformability. It is credibility that increases an investigator's participation in an investigation, particularly in the surrounding area where the investigator has to clarify or account for disparities in the data. It is credibility that increases an investigator's ability in the investigation, especially in areas that require clarification for disparities in some data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Keen observations also increase credibility. It is also essential

for the researcher to find the time and adjust to essential peculiarities. The findings, interpretations, and recommendations ensure creditability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In the research design section, I had described the essential aspects of the study.

To verify the data, I used numerous sources. All these efforts were geared toward increasing the reliability of the research. The external examiners also checked on the processes and the components of the study to ensure that they add up. This boosted my conformability due to increased reliability. The techniques such as triangulation, member examinations, and negative case analysis, and peer surveys have the potential to increase the credibility of studies. They promote data reliability, which suits review and analysis. The techniques also help in checking for the consistencies when writing the final reports. The interview took more than two years and continues to compare the emerging results with the literature and the interview. Portability offers more excellent reliability for the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Audits represent the investigation and the product, i.e., the results of reliability. A careful research design guarantees the perfect execution of research.

Ethical Considerations

They engulf aspects of the research and researcher. I formulated a bright research design before the commencement of the study and adhered to it. This much helped me to proceed with integrity at the same time without forgetting any item. I followed the established guidelines for the protection of people and the IRB regulations. I respectfully and professionally considered the data I collected from my participants. Since I knew ethical issues could arise, I ensured I meet the ethical standards.

Miles and Huberman (1994) provided suggestions on how to become aware when doing research. As a researcher, you should anticipate problems and be prepared for the worst. Before

commencing the exercise, the researcher should ensure that consent documents are signed and adhered to. The researchers should also do a review of routines. This will enable them to negotiate for study procedures and participants' expectations to avoid ethical issues when studying. During my research experience, I gained awareness as a researcher. I, therefore, conducted interviews with honesty and respect.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, the research method for collecting and analyzing data was examined. The approach that was used in this work, as well as the case study, was described and justified. Sampling techniques and the recruitment process were explained. This chapter also described the data acquisition process and the planned data analysis. Ethical considerations relevant to this study were highlighted, including the institutional review board process that approved the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) requires all institutions of higher education in the country to get accredited by the National Commission of Academic Accreditation and Assessment (NCAAA). This requirement serves to standardize the quality of higher education and increase the reputation of Saudi Arabian graduates internationally. The accreditation is a new concept in Saudi Arabia since most educators in Saudi do not have a good background or experience with the accreditation process. The implication is that the success of implementing changes in the education system must have challenges due to less experience among those who should implement it. Moreover, Saudi's education system, specifically, the teaching and learning culture, has generated resistance and low involvement among the faculty today.

Nevertheless, the potential for accreditation in SA can improve the quality of education for all involved. This qualitative case study aimed to understand the experiences of the faculty members during the accreditation process, and the outcomes they seen at the Early Childhood Program at the College of Education at (PNU). These research questions formed the study: What are the experiences of faculty during the program accreditation process and the outcomes they see in the Saudi Arabian higher education? The research results in this chapter were based on the analysis of the data sources such as semi-structured interviews and the researcher's observations on behaviors of participants.

Overview of Participants

Participants had different academic ranks in the program. Two of the faculty members were at the senior lecturer level; three professors; two associate professors. Some participants were at the junior level; five were assistant professors. Participants were diverse in terms of

nationality. Therefore, they had different histories and backgrounds regarding their quality of education. Some graduated from Saudi Arabian universities while others were from Arab universities.

Furthermore, most participants had only experienced this program; however, a few worked in other Saudi Arabian universities. Besides, due to a shortage of teaching staff in the EC program, the majority of the staff was already suffering from work overload. On top of this, they had accreditation duties placed on them, including membership of committees in the department, faculty, and institution, and the need to produce scientific research. Participants held multiple positions at the same time. For example, the accreditation committee's chair was also a teaching staff member. Besides, the head of the program was also a teaching staff member and was involved in student advising.

Thematic Analysis

Five themes emerged from the collected data:

- Challenges in Adopting Accreditation
- Driving the Program Change
- Teaching and Learning Strategies
- Tools to Improve Teaching and Learning
- Program's Outcomes

Even though the themes were discrete, there was much overlap among them. Moreover, the responses from participants addressed more than one theme, but the data were described where they best fitted logically.

Various sub-themes were identified under each broad theme for a detailed analysis of the findings. These sub-themes were derived not only from the participants' responses to research

items but also from the researcher's objective observation field notes and documents. The findings were from these sources include interviews, documents, and direct observation (see Figure 3).

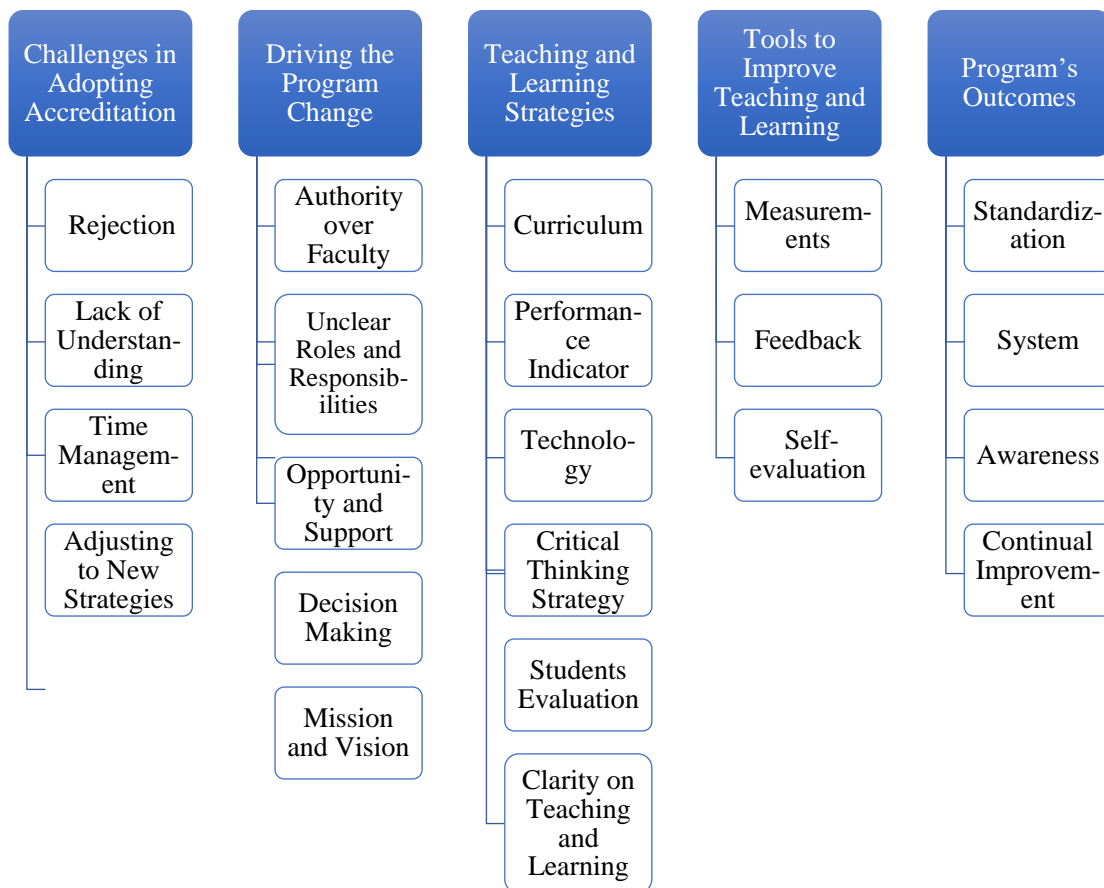


Figure 3: Themes and Sub-themes of the Study Findings

Theme 1: Challenges in Adopting Accreditation

Many challenges were encountered in the process of adopting accreditation. Initially, the faculty had mixed reactions. Many of the members of the faculty were not aware of it and did not know how it would affect their routine duties. This theme was further divided into subthemes as follow,

Rejection

When the discussion of accreditation first came forth, it received mixed reactions. Some argued whether the process would be beneficial to improving the quality of education delivered in the program. The majority of the faculty members, however, resisted accreditation of the early childhood program initially. A significant number of participants said that they were suspicious of the “new way of doing things” prompted by the accreditation because it was asking them to engage in teaching practices way beyond what their daily routines allowed. However, the staff willingly accepted the process when they began to experience the benefits of it. Eight of the twelve participants mentioned that they were being asked to carry out more duties “*with no compensation*” under the new system. They regarded that notion as “*absolutely unacceptable.*”

Furthermore, many faculty members believed that the institution was being “*influenced by foreign countries*” to adopt the accreditation process that introduced western standards of education into their curriculum. F5 explained that “*it is difficult to convince members on the importance of accreditation:*” This is because they believed that “*it is a scheme into unacceptable western practices as standards for instruction and testing.*”

Out of the 12 participants, only one was an expert on accreditation and working in the quality committee. This situation means that most of them were struggling to cope with the requirements of the accreditation process. While there was a consensus among the participants on the need for accreditation, they expressed some challenges that reduced its acceptance and adoption.

From the interviews, the majority of the participants acknowledged the initial resistance to the changes introduced by the accreditation process. They resisted its adoption, terming it a foreign imposition on their competent education curriculum. This matter is exemplified by F6,

who stated that the *“curriculum is quite fine where it is at now.”* F6 went on to say that they *“do not appreciate the foreign culture being forced”* onto them.

The participants assert the negative impacts of accreditation on the essential activities in the institution, such as restricting their academic practices by attending to it”. Participants were aware that they struggled with their inability to implement accreditation to the same scale as other international institutions because they thought they have a different culture.

Faculty found innovative ways to incorporate the requirements of accreditation into their routine practices. Despite this strong initial rejection, most participants understood the importance of accreditation and began to spearhead its implementation: This took place after two years of attempting to understand its requirements and why they should adopt it. Their acceptance of the process as part of their routine work was very gradual. However, at the end of the study, some were still unhappy with it because they believed it was a strategy for some to get a promotion by adding extra loads to others. Given that majority had understood its requirements, they were determined to adopt its standards and incorporate its standards into their teaching approach. One participant, F2, a senior lecturer in the early childhood program, regarded the program as *“enjoyable”* and went on to say that the faculty members *“have taken it as part of the daily duties because [they] want to be the change agents for the realization of this wonderful program.”*

Lack of Understanding

Accreditation refers to the act of proving that an institution meets a certain quality standard. The interviews conducted revealed a striking lack of understanding of accreditation among faculty members. The majority of the instructors stated that *“only a few faculty are knowledgeable of accreditation”* before the process. F9 similarly stated that *“only two faculty*

members were an expert in accreditation.” F9 captured the thoughts of many of the faculty members by stating that they were *“not sure what to say because [they] were not aware of accreditation and had no background information on its requirements.”* The lack of knowledge among most participants was represented by F3, who said that accreditation *“is all about international rank.”*

Other participants initially believed the accreditation process was an unnecessary addition of work to their already burdensome workload. Seven out of the twelve participants admitted that they were convinced the accreditation program was *“demanding more”* than their typical daily duties. The participants found this difficult to cope with and regarded the program as *“a completely new program”* whose requirements added stress to their schemes of work.

Besides, the faculty members did not know how to write reports and fill out the relevant forms. The majority of the respondents expressed that they did not understand the exact documents, methodology, and the tools required for the accreditation process. They did not know how to complete the required forms and documents to the desired standard. This lack of knowledge compounded their lack of knowledge of the overall process. Faculty members were *“struggling with the intended learning outcomes”* and *“did not fully understand the accreditation requirements.”* F3 communicated the experience of many of the educators in the response,

“I felt I failed to link the course learning outcomes with program learning objectives.”

Nine out of the twelve faculty members interviewed had challenges completing NCAAA documents and forms, identifying the proper evidence, designing action plans, and writing self-study reports. Numerous respondents explained that forms and documents were not explicit in language and requirements.

As a result of the lack of knowledge among the faculty members, they expressed that there is “*need to have workshops*” that will equip them with knowledge of the ways to “*design course assessment tools and evaluate student learning,*” which are essential to the faculty. F9’s suggestion to host workshops on “*mapping course learning outcomes where they need, class learning activities, student outcomes, and assessment tools*” perfectly encompasses the suggestions made by a majority of the respondents.

Time Management

Time management between teaching responsibilities and accreditation requirements was a significant challenge for most faculty members. As a result of the increase in workload, faculty found it “hard to balance” these two aspects of their work. For example, F6 stated,

“It was hard to manage the different tasks, and that affected the quality of my work. It also became confusing. I began to enjoy the state of jobless, as I did not see the value of the tasks I was doing.”

As evident from the above, the worst fear associated with the accreditation process is its time-consuming nature. Some argued that much time consumed could impede the quality of essential work of the scientific subject. For instance, the new practices introduced, such as testing methods, require much time to implement. The exciting part is that most faculty members agreed that accreditation is a positive paradigm shift in the KSA educational system. Their chief complaint was on time it was consuming and the lack of resources to effectively implement the system. Thus, to fully integrate accreditation, the above obstacles must be addressed.

Adjusting to New Strategies

Faculty members found it difficult to adjust to the new culture of their workplace. After years of being in the previous environment, they had gotten used to doing things a particular

way. Many also believed they were able to teach effectively without the many standards and evaluations. The response of F4 perfectly summarizes the responses of a majority of the interviewees,

“We used to work, depending on our preferences. There were no standards and strict rules to follow”.

Participants found it hard to be open-minded towards their colleagues. The professor, for example, enjoyed a prestigious social status, and it was often difficult for her to accept criticism easily. Additionally, senior faculty members considered teaching operations their prerogative. They proudly pointed out that they had *“been in this field for one or more decades.”* F6 went on to state that she *“would not follow a given syllabus”* if given but would instead teach at her *“own discretion.”*

However, some participants had participated less in changing the culture. This was because of their belief that the school culture should change, but instead, the program should adapt to the school’s culture. For example, F4 communicated that *“the school culture should remain the same. If anything, the program should be adjusted to fit our culture.”*

Theme 2: Driving the Program Change

Leadership has many implications in the accreditation process. These include power over faculty, decision making, and mission and vision. The journey of accreditation at the College begun with the formation of two committees that is the accreditation and quality assurance committees to oversee the self-study process and the strategies. The use of qualitative data confirmed that the Committees had planned and implemented supportive accreditation process activities at the EC Program was employed. One of the committee members established the structure of the Committees. Some of the primary responsibilities of the committee were to

“provide support, advice and planning” in order to ensure the success of the accreditation process.

Authority Over Faculty

To enforce the new changes, the program coordinators were not accepting student grades without duly completed the required documents. Participants felt like their leaders “forced” them to do tasks that they disliked. At the end of the semester, for example, the strict leaders demanded that the documents and forms required by accreditation before course reports were accepted. F6 mentioned that *“most of the accreditation process’ pedagogical requirements are mandatory.”* Similarly, F4 said that *“everyone is forced to engage in quality assurance.”* However, all participants confirmed they were supported in the process by receiving assistance from the accreditation committee.

Unclear Roles and Responsibilities

The majority of the participants described their roles during the accreditation process. Participants indicated these roles “teaching, writing accreditation documents and forms, collecting evidence for accreditation, and encouraging students to participate in surveys.” Faculty members were able to describe their roles during the accreditation process, but they could not identify their specific roles. The majority of the respondents stated that they knew they contributed to the accreditation process. However, as expressed by F7, they were unsure of their *“exact roles and responsibilities apart from teaching,”* This means participants in the accreditation processes were aware that they had responsibilities. However, these responsibilities were not clear to them. For example, F8 declared that *“no planning took place before the process began so [they] did not know what [they] were supposed to do in a given time.”*

However, Participants offered varied opinions on how they had participated in the accreditation process to improve the program under review. All the participants had actively participated in the program and ensured that learning outcomes were improved. Most participants believed that they had participated in the accreditation process in some way. Additionally, most of them believed in different approaches to problem identification leading to its lower rate of improvement compared to other areas. Therefore, all the participants were taking an active role in the accreditation process, whether they were aware of it or not.

Opportunity and Support

Participants stated that the accreditation process posed an opportunity for them to develop themselves and their skills. Participants indicated that they supported by the current program leaders. F2 indicated that leaders in the program “ensure that resources were readily” made it available to serve as a “motivation to try new things” for the faculty members. Many faculty members stated that they appreciated the support received from those in authority and felt that the process helped them to “better” themselves and their competence. For example, F5 explained,

At first, it seemed daunting to take on this whole accreditation process, but we received much support from the agents, and that made the transition a little better. For instance, one day, I was not able to fill out an accreditation form, and the head of the accreditation helped me to get it done. Now I can do it on my own.

Decision Making

Most faculty members said the accreditation process made them realize their role in improving the education program. They became part of the decision-making process, and this made them felt like their opinion was valued. For example, F9 said,

“This process has motivated me to continue improving. I feel like my feedback is valued, and this allows me to perform better.”

Through the accreditation program, participants noted that the program head was providing the opportunity for faculty members to make sound suggestions on suitable teaching pedagogy for maximum learning outcomes. It integrated the suggestions into a well-organized and identical teaching methodology. This ensured standard outcomes because the documentation, teaching requirements, and assessment of the content were standardized by the accreditation process and supervised by NCAAA. A program committee member responded as;

“The NCAAA, of course, gives us that enough latitude to adjust the program to different learning environments while maintaining its teaching framework.”

Mission and Vision

Mission statement and objectives had to be established under the accreditation process to These statements served as “guiding principles” for all the stakeholders of the program. The vision was relatively new to them as it was not established before the change. However, the respondents expressed how much it helped them with identifying their purpose. F 6 mentioned, *“the program goals helped me to improve my job performance.”* F11 expressed these sentiments in response,

“The mission and vision of the program and institution helped us to drive the change.”

The Faculty expects the student course learning outcomes to reflect the vision and mission of the College and assessed the international standards initiated by the accreditation program.

The expounds on how faculty experienced the new culture and how participants thought about themselves, the way they were viewed, and characteristics that defined them: qualities,

beliefs, personality, and attitude towards the accreditation process. The responses showed that the experiences of the faculty members on the accreditation process, it emerged that the faculty culture has been changed. Notably, it changed their behavior, values, morals, as faculty. Responses revealed increased awareness and fairness, which is a new culture that is cultivated within the faculty. Participant's responses informed a change in the way of life of the faculty. F3 explained: *"Awareness and orientation is the other factor which supports the implementation and development of quality assurance."* F12 confirmed that *"we used different methods and strategies to educate our staff, faculty, students, and stakeholders about the quality to be part of our culture."*

Theme 3: The Teaching and Learning Strategies

The accreditation process has dramatically changed the way teaching is carried out in Saudi Arabia. The early childhood program has changed its teaching methods from traditional didactic to modern student-centered strategies. This shift has significantly improved the quality of learning/teaching within the program. This is the core of the accreditation process. It places much emphasis on utilizing teaching methods with technology and blackboard. Furthermore, the teaching strategies focus on critical thinking and research. Engaging with potential employers and structuring the courses to fit the job market demands.

Curriculum

There is a process faculty had to follow in order to change an established curriculum. A request for a change in the curriculum must be based on evidence for the needs of change. It also goes to multiple committees for *"review and approval"* to make sure quality is produced. Therefore, this curriculum change was based on evidence gathered from test results and students' evaluation. It was done so the organization can improve to achieve the quality they desire. F8, a

member of faculty, perfectly expressed the views of the majority of the interviews in the response,

“For each course, there was a coordinator whose job was to review the course description and learning outcomes, which should be no more than 5-7 outcomes because each outcome must be measured and aligned to the NCAAA quality standards. Later, this coordinator, sent the reviewed course to the quality committee for further review. The quality committee sent this to the program committee to approve the changes.”

Thus, with the implementation of the accreditation process, the curriculum has been developed in a manner that facilitates the delivery of high-quality learning process, producing highly competitive graduates both locally and internationally. This shows that the accreditation process births a new program as captured by participant’s responses: “... *improve the learning that, in turn, impacts graduates produced*”.

Performance Indicator

Participants believe that the first impact of the accreditation program is its influence on the individual student courses taught. NCAAA requires that course learning outcomes need to follow the standards of accreditation. “*NCAAA has given us the 11 standards on quality teaching that were narrowed down to 6 for our program and the 36 Key Performance Indicators. They support us right from teaching methodology to research standards.*”

The accreditation process through the NCAAA offers performance indicators for the faculty to assess the quality of education offered. A participant described the standards as; “*a guideline on efficient task accomplishment...*” Similarity F2 confirmed

“*The NCAAA standards helped me in preparation for my teaching materials to ensure success in the academic goals of the program.*”

As shown in the above assertion, faculty members strive to report the most significant changes that have happened in their teaching since NCAAA accreditation. From the interview results, every faculty member appears to present her version regarding how NCAAA has influenced her teaching and academic program.

Critical Thinking Strategy

The program has changed from the “*traditional teaching setting*” to a more “*research-based curriculum*.” Instructors are required to “*spoon-feed students less*” and implement the “*critical thinking*” strategy. The new strategy consists of students having more “*discussions in class*” and doing “*more reading and research*.” A member of the Quality committee admitted that “*this program does not emphasize memorization of content through repeated reading but through practical activities which are new to our students’ learning strategies*.”

Technology

The introduction of modern teaching methods, as opposed to traditional methods, has been central to improving the quality of education. New modern learning strategies and methods are increasingly being adopted to achieve better outcomes. A learning culture that ensures the production of quality graduates is central because it escalates the competitiveness of graduates locally and internationally. The majority of the faculty members that participated in the study indicated that they used smartboards and other technology. These technological tools were utilized to “*improve [their] teaching*” and better “*students’ understanding*” of the lessons. Furthermore, staff members reported that their use of technology made classes more interactive and kept students engaged for more extended periods than traditional teaching strategies. For example, virtual classes for kindergarten helped students to imagine the reality of kindergarten classes so students will be more knowledgeable.

However, the Participant has expressed the fact that they had to unlearn and relearn new methods and strategies for teaching. Participants indicated that their teaching practices were changed in the new ways of teaching and the preparation of required documents. The faculty no longer teaches the course according to their structure. They are required to apply technology and prepare some documents such as learning objectives, course description, course evaluation criteria, required hours, and standards, among others. Teaching practices adhere to the standards set by NCAAA accreditation to ensure quality teaching.

Students Evaluation

The majority of the participants stated that, since the implementation of the accreditation program, they had different tools to assess students. These tools include “*research, tests and projects,*” which were used to measure and monitor students’ learning progress. The response of faculty member F5 conveyed the perspectives of most participants;

“We now have a diverse plethora of options for assessing our students.”

Clarity on Teaching and Learning

The program had the clarity of the procedures of evaluation for each student. The majority of the participants indicated that the accreditation program implements rubrics which “*improve the clarity*” of the procedures involved in evaluating each student. Numerous participants expressed that rubrics simplify the assessment process by providing a standard scale on which to measure the quality of work produced by students. Nine out of the twelve participants mentioned that students could “*see exactly how they can improve their performance in future assessments.*” The accreditation process placed much emphasis on faculty utilization of rubrics in marking assessments. Furthermore, most interviewees expressed that grading assessments was “*much easier*” under the accreditation program. F5 expressed the views of the

majority of the interviewees by stating that *“I have something that I can use to monitor students’ performance when making assessments.”*

The majority of the participants indicated that they used “syllabus,” and it *“gives clear-cut instructions on teaching and learning objectives.”* The majority of participants expressed that the “syllabus” serves as the *“course description”* to make sure *“students are more aware of what to expect from the course.”* It was reported by participant F3 that *“students received details of the course before starting the class.”* Additionally, it was found that this syllabus helped students better understand the requirements, and students were *“more prepared”* for each class.

Theme 4: Tools for Improvement of Teaching and Learning

Many tools were utilized in the process of enhancing teaching and learning experiences. These tools include feedback, self-evaluation, and measurements that provide data on strengths and weaknesses. The data gathered may then be examined to upgrade teaching and learning strategies.

Measurements

To improve the teaching performance, participants recalled using different tools to measure their teaching and curricula. These tools include *“matrix and graphs.”* The curves utilized include *“individual curves and aggregate curves.”* These graphs are analyzed, and the results are taken out to improve weaknesses. Furthermore, a few participants mentioned using *“SWOT Analysis for analyzing strengths and weaknesses.”* This helps in *“suggesting improvements for the following semester.”* F8 mentioned using a *“test matrix for each question in the test.”* The matrix measures a specific learning outcome in the course description. Additionally, the questions in the test are divided into analysis and knowledge. This allows for the computation of how many of the learning outcomes are achieved.

Feedback

The majority of the participants confirmed that “*we gather feedback.*” The participants believe that the feedback is necessary “*to improve our quality system,*” foster informal assessment of the program, and support the quality of student outcomes and teacher’s delivery systems. One faculty explained that “*student feedback is helping us.*” The feedback comes from staff, students, and faculty and is used to identify gaps and limitations that can be addressed to improve the curriculum. Participant F5 said, “*the feedback helps us to improve the areas of need in the curriculum.*” Additionally, the majority of the participants expect the feedback mechanisms to not only improve the curriculum but to improve the overall “*quality of teaching.*”

Self- Evaluation

During the interview, participants reflected on “*self-evaluation mechanisms*” introduced by the accreditation process. Most participants believed that the “self-evaluation reports” help them assess their competence and compliance to the NCAAA standards. Several participants appreciated the self-report and expected them to “*improve self-weakness.*” The response of participant F4 expresses the views of these participants,

“Self-study report helped us to know our weakness and motivated us to improve those areas specific to teaching. It informs us about the importance of self-learning to improve our knowledge and practices.”

Faculty members who participated in the self-evaluation viewed accreditation as a representation of their internal process for purposes of evaluating the performance of the institution. It had to evaluate whether the institution has adored shared standards. In the process, we utilized the instrument provided by the NCAAA. The instrument provides us with the self-

evaluation scales. In the process, we had to rate that instrument ourselves, which allows us to relook at it internally.”

“so the NCAAA’s self-study review is our internal performance checking mechanism. It has friendly scales that we hope to use and expect to spur the quality of the education delivery system.”

Therefore, participants agreed that the program is experienced positive improvements to their job performances.

Theme 5: Program’s Outcomes

Standardization

Several senior faculty participants expressed that *“standardization of outcomes”* was achieved through *“standardized evaluation”* in which the course outcomes for all the units were aligned towards the program mission and objective and the evaluation done through an internationally recognized metric. This involves all students registered in the same course, even though they had different instructors, they had the same recommended textbooks and received the same examinations. Another faculty member explained;

“the NCAAA standards are measured and documented on a uniform framework leading to a standardized evaluation of teaching impacts on student outcomes.”

System

In terms of the systems, the faculty expressed that most of their data were being processed in an automated as opposed to manual fashion. The majority of the faculty participants expressed that *“everything is electronic as the program now utilizes a system for everything.”*

Faculty member F4 expressed the benefits of this change by saying that *“there are no papers for*

documentation, and the procedures have become clear.” Other participants went on to say that *“the system change has made [their] job a little less complex and a little more manageable.”*

The system provided clarity on teaching procedures and learning outcomes. As the accreditation was carried out, clarity was required on the implication of each process in the program. Participants believed that the clarity was vital because it *“improves connection and engagement”* by increasing trust and transparency. Others observed that it paid attention to the speed of taking corrective actions. One faculty member said that *“it pays special attention to teaching tools and speed of taking action.”*

Continual Improvement

Participants stated that *“there are three lines of evaluation known as the NC-Triple A – course evaluation, program evaluation, and student assessment surveys.”* Regular evaluations were a significant tenet of the accreditation program. Many of the faculty members said that the evaluation helped them to *“identify weaknesses in teaching, curriculum,”* and so on. Evaluation served as a method of gathering data to seek ways to continue improving the curriculum and teaching. Faculty, though initially skeptical, became appreciative of these evaluations as they allowed them always to find ways to better the teaching-learning experience. F7 expressed that,

“The evaluations are constructive. They keep us on our toes and makes our job more dynamic as we always have to be searching for ways to enhance our teaching strategies and other aspects of our jobs.”

Participants believed that in order for graduates to meet the labor market demands and join the labor force, the department engaged employment agencies and demonstrated to them the competence of the graduates’ courtesy of the standards maintained throughout the study period.

The faculty, through the teaching pedagogy of the accredited program, urged graduates to demonstrate knowledge and skills at their workplace. Also, they had a survey for both the graduate student (alumni) and the employment agency to assess the impact of the program on the skill set of the graduates after graduation. Furthermore, participants expressed that “*there is an evaluation of employment agencies.*” The evaluations were carried out “*through applying questionnaires with employment agencies and the job market.*”

Awareness

Participants expressed that the program created the quality through their “*daily practices,*” and they became aware of its meaning and its outcomes. Eleven of the twelve participants said that they felt the overall outcome of the accreditation process was quality. The quality of their teaching and students’ learning outcomes improved. Additionally, the program improved in numerous other ways, including: “*clarity of the procedures,*” “*public announcements of all aspects of the program,*” “*fairness,*” as well as “*knowledge of faculty, staff and students’ rights.*”

Students and faculty satisfaction had been granted. Both parties were honestly communicating likes or dislikes. One member of the program said,

“The accreditation program has given us our voices back. We believe our concerns matter and will be addressed if we voice them in this system.”

Participants also expressed that students benefited immensely from the program. Many instructors stated that the “students are now able to exercise their right to voice any concerns they had about grades and make complaints.”

Participants confirmed that faculty, students, and staff became “aware of their rights,” and their voices heard by feedback and surveys, and this helped in made modifications to improve the quality in the program.

It was clearly articulated in participants’ perspectives, delineating the way faculty members conducted themselves, responded to the teaching modernization, and adjusted from traditional strategies. Participants believed the accreditation developed them and their routine practices. The faculty hoped to continue quality practices in the future. This was conveyed in a senior faculty member’s statement: *“We have the quality committee which is for long term seeking to perpetuate the quality culture within the organization, but the accreditation is temporary only for getting approve from NCAAA.”*

Chapter summary

This chapter analyzed data from the 12 interviews conducted with members of the faculty to understand the new concept, that is, accreditation in Saudi Arabia. Most educators lack background or experience with the accreditation process subject, meaning that the success of implementing changes in the education system may pose challenges to faculty members. Moreover, Saudi’s education system, specifically, the teaching and learning culture, has generated resistance and low involvement among the faculty today. However, the potential for accreditation in SA can improve the quality of education for all involved. The chapter outlines the characteristics of the participants and used thematic analysis to categorize the raw data into broad themes for analysis following the research questions.

Faculty members initially resisted the accreditation process but later accepted it. Consequently, the institution's stakeholders were able to reap numerous positive outcomes from the process. The accreditation process enabled faculty members to improve on their

shortcomings and identify their strengths. Their teaching strategies were also enhanced as the technology was incorporated in the classroom, rubrics were followed, critical thinking and research were done extensively, curricula modified based on the market needs and exams standardized. Students also benefited from the change. The assessment was aligned to lesson objectives; therefore, students knew what to expect on assessments. Overall, the program granted satisfaction to all stakeholders. The quality of education was upgraded, so students became more critical thinkers who were aware of their rights. Furthermore, regular evaluation and feedback allowed for continual improvements.

CHAPTER FIVE

THEORETICAL ANALYSIS

The accreditation is a new concept in Saudi Arabia since most educators in Saudi do not have a good background or experience with the accreditation process. The implication is that the success of implementing changes in the education system must have challenges due to less experience among those who should implement it. Moreover, Saudi's education system, specifically, the teaching and learning culture, has generated resistance and low involvement among the faculty today. Nevertheless, the potential for accreditation in SA can improve the quality of education for all involved. This qualitative case study aimed to understand the experiences of the faculty members during the accreditation process, and the outcomes they seen at the Early Childhood Program at the College of Education at (PNU). These research questions formed the study: What are the experiences of faculty during the program accreditation process and the outcomes they see in the Saudi Arabian higher education? The

This study adopts the theories of institutional isomorphism (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983) and institutional entrepreneurship Theory (DiMaggio, 1988) in such a way to better understand and analyze the experiences of faculty members during the accreditation process. That is, these theories demonstrate the external and internal factors which have shaped and formed the experiences of faculty members during this process. The initial utilization of these theories is to understand the experiences of faculty members during the process of accreditation. By illustrating each of these theories, providing an overview of the implications of these theories, these impacts and experiences can be better understood.

However, these same theories can illustrate the outcomes of accreditation that are experienced by faculty members at the Early Childhood program at PNU. These implications and

interpretations of these theories also lead to provide greater understanding and insight into the responses of many of the faculty members. They relate to the experiences and outcomes of accreditation processes at PNU. By highlighting the internal and external factors which impact these experiences and outcomes, this theoretical analysis succinctly provides a greater understanding of the theories mentioned in previous chapters. So to aid in the future accreditation of Saudi universities, for the betterment of global student competitiveness; and, the learning and teaching outcomes in higher education.

Institutional Isomorphism Theory

Institutional isomorphism theory, as discussed by DiMaggio and Powell (1983), focuses on the impact that social values shape an organization. Moreover, it leads to the legitimization of these values. Furthermore, these authors demonstrate that the isomorphism theory is one which illustrates how (and why) it is that institutions will ‘copy’ the cultural, social, and economic standards of other successful organizations, and adopt these practices as their own. As such, this theory heavily relies on the influence of external factors, too—in this case—illustrate the various influences on accreditation. As discussed previously, an integral theory to understand and apply to this study; because it demonstrates the various external impacts that impact the experiences of faculty members during the process of accreditation. There are also various sociological implications of this theory, in this chapter, that demonstrate how this theory truly impacted the collective experiences of faculty members at PNU.

Implications of Institutional Isomorphism Theory

As stated in previous chapters, the key implication of this theory is that many academic institutions tend to ‘borrow’ the social and economic values and structures, in order to create value-driven structures in their institution. This study found that the adoption of most of these norms and values were from American universities; because, these universities have—in the

past—been able to implement accreditation successfully. As such, accreditation in Saudi Arabia leans on the institutional isomorphism theory because it implies that Saudi universities have collectively aimed to adopt the innovative, sustainable, and value-driven accreditation structures and process. Despite this, there may still be apprehensions upon adopting these foreign strategies because they do not always mesh with local cultures, values, and structures. Thus, this theory implies that although the American and external factors influencing accreditation in Saudi Arabia will lead to more globally competitive graduates (Ministry of Higher Education, 2011), and increase the global standards of Saudi Universities (Boxenbaum & Jonsson, 2008).

However, as found in the results, this theory also implies that there will be natural friction amongst faculty members, and the process of accreditation will be fraught with challenges if it is carried out in such a way that simply copies other accreditation programs (Alghamdi, 2016). Many faculty members initially shared this experience, stating that they “[did] not appreciate the foreign culture being forced” on them; and, they were unsure of “American” practices in their program. However, this theory also implies that if PNU can structure its accreditation processes in such a way that meshes with local traditions and values, it will be able to successfully implement ‘Americanized’ accreditation and reap the benefits, while maintaining a Saudi identity. What this theory also implies is that these external factors also shape the outcomes experienced by faculty members. That is, many respondents highlighted the fact that: once the various challenges of adoption were overcome, the teaching and learning outcomes were vastly improved.

Institutional Entrepreneurship Theory

DiMaggio (1988), similar to the institutional isomorphism theory, developed the institutional entrepreneurship theory; which, focuses on leveraging various resources and internal capacities and factors—as opposed to leveraging and copying external structures from other

organizations. This theory illuminates how entrepreneurs within an organization or institution will leverage resources available to them, and imagine alternative possibilities (Maguire, Hardy & Lawrence, 2004) to create new best practices, and to create new and useful processes that can help develop the organization as a whole.

This theory is pivotal to this study; because it contrasts the isomorphism theory and focuses on the internal factors which have impacted faculty experiences during the process of accreditation. Namely, however, this theory can highlight how individual faculty members became ‘entrepreneurs’ within the institution and utilized the resources which are made available to them in order to create, motivate, accomplish and maintain the changes associated with accreditation in the university. In other words, this theory points out how faculty members were able to leverage resources, to develop internal structures and changes, to benefit teaching and learning outcomes associated with accreditation. Much like the isomorphism theory, however, there are also various implications of this theory.

Implications of Institutional Entrepreneurship Theory

The implications of this theory—according to Addas (2020)—are namely that faculty and staff members can use their own professional experiences as one of the chief resources that allows them to create change, and adopt accreditation in Saudi Universities. That is, external changes and structures (and the copying of American models) is entirely unnecessary; and, often leads to more significant challenges, than it does benefits. This way, faculty members can leverage their strengths as entrepreneurs to create the changes required for accreditation. This situation more seamlessly allows faculty members and programs to adopt accreditation because this theory implies that there is often a ‘champion’ of the change, a person promoting changes in cultures and attitudes amongst other faculty members.

The discussion will be in the following sections, is integral to overcoming many of the challenges faced. For example, participant F4 states that many participants “felt like their leaders forced them” to adopt changes. However, the institutional entrepreneurship theory implies that: should a faculty member begin to create the change internally and inspire others to adopt the changes which accompany accreditation. There will be far more excellent reception—and the collective experience of staff members will be improved. This change (following the implications of this theory) is demonstrated in the statement from F4: “The accreditation program has given us our voices back. We believe our concerns matter and will be addressed if we voice them in this system”. Simply put, this theory implies that the internal change experienced through entrepreneurship (a common theme and value among the majority of faculty members) is a way in which accreditation can be adopted. Not only to improve learning and teaching outcomes but also to improve the experience of faculty members during the accreditation process.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The goal of this study is to understand the faculty members' experiences during the accreditation process and the outcomes which are experienced by faculty members in this program. This qualitative study explored how most educators in Saudi Arabia do not currently have a good background or insightful experience with the accreditation process: This, in turn, makes accreditation a new concept to many of the faculty members in this program.

Subsequently, this fact implies that the success of implementing accreditation (and the positive faculty and student changes which accompany it) in the higher education system in Saudi Arabia must face tremendous challenges. Merely due to more significant inexperience among the faculty members who should be implementing it. Moreover, Saudi Arabia's education system; specifically, the teaching and learning culture has generated resistance and low involvement among the faculty today towards accreditation. This situation has added further challenges to the tumultuous environment in which accreditation must be implemented in Saudi Arabia's education system.

Nevertheless, the potential for accreditation in Saudi Arabia can vastly improve the quality of education for all involved; and, improve the teaching outcomes for many faculty members as well. Thus, with the ability to improve the global competitiveness of graduates, and improve the performance and abilities of faculty members, accreditation is a process that is highly sought after—yet relatively unknown in Saudi Arabia. This study aimed to explore the experiences of the faculty members during the accreditation process. The outcomes they have seen at the Early Childhood Program at the College of Education at PNU. The research was conducted by first reviewing scholarly literature on the topics of inclusion, which offered

valuable insight into the topic of accreditation in Saudi Arabia and highlighted many of the existing gaps in the system. In addition to this, a case study design utilization to investigate faculty members' experiences of the accreditation process in Saudi Arabian universities and the impact of the process on institutions through the use of document analysis observation and the interview of 12 faculty members at this institution. As such, this chapter will seek to focus on various areas of understanding, to provide greater insight into this topic. First, this chapter highlighted the themes which are present throughout the research and the responses of the faculty members. Following the implications of the findings on faculty experiences during the accreditation process, and the outcomes they have seen in the program. These implications were essential to understanding the future use and importance of this study. Following this was a presentation of recommendations that were targeted towards policymakers, government, and other educational stakeholders; that focus on improving the plight of implementing the accreditation process and involved those faculty.

Summary of the Results

The study's findings revealed that the accreditation process usually impacts an institution's organizational structure, procedures, and policies because of the need to comply with the accreditation agency's laws and requirements. Faculty members may resist the changes that result from accreditation. This resistance is due to the faculty members' lack of awareness of that this process is of great importance to the improvement of the institution and its programs. Their lack of knowledge resulted in them perceiving the process as an inconvenience. According to the findings, the accreditation program received initial resistance as most faculty members were not knowledgeable about its benefits. There was also insufficient prior training on the accreditation process, forcing participants to be reluctant to implement the changes. Faculty

members saw accreditation as an added work load that they should be compensated for and did not realize the impact that the process could have on the institution. The finding showed that the faculty members had a traditional way of performing their duties, such as their method of teaching, giving assignments, and measuring students' effectiveness. The existence of a traditional way of disseminating knowledge initially led to the resistance to modern learning strategies and methods. Leadership persistence was noted to be an important factor in the transmission of the new method of teaching.

The accreditation process had a positive impact and provided exposure to innovative teaching strategies. Participants developed expertise as teachers and instructors to ensure that they provided students with the skills they needed to be competitive in the local and international workplace. Modern learning strategies and methods were adopted to achieve better outcomes and contribute towards teachers' professional development, emphasizing the importance of promoting quality learning. Participants expressed that the accreditation was initially rejected because it was time consuming but it presented exposure and opportunities, which caused them to eventually accept the changes.

Participants expressed that they were forced to write reports and fill out forms, however, the support they received from program leaders made it easier for them to complete these tasks. Participants described the standards, policies, process, and measures that were introduced by the accreditation program, though temporal, to positively impact and improve the quality of education. The responses showed that there was improvement in quality in terms of teaching, student learning outcomes, and faculty activities. Participants indicated that they resisted the requirements of accreditation for teaching, but acknowledged that quality is evident in teaching as the tools used to improve the learning were first-rate. While the accreditation program is

temporary, it had a positive impact because quality assurance practices that it brought about are lifelong and incorporated into the university teaching practices. The accreditation program was, therefore, developed according to internationally recognized quality assurance practices for improving student learning outcomes.

Research Themes

1. Challenges in Adopting Accreditation
2. Driving the Program Change
3. Teaching and Learning Strategies
4. Tools to Improve Teaching and Learning
5. Program's Outcomes

Theme 1: Challenges in Adopting Accreditation

A significant number of participants alluded that they were suspicious of the new way of doing things prompted by accreditation, because it required them to engage in teaching practices that were beyond what their daily routines usually allowed. The findings illustrate that the lack of belief in the outcomes of the accreditation of the institution (and its faculty members) is likely to hinder the accreditation process immensely. Besides, Ingham (2009) demonstrates that accreditation is representative of American, cultural, beliefs in self-improvement; which, requires self-evaluation by identifying areas that benefit from enhancement. Ingham also finds that the values created by these processes (of self-improvement and evaluation) demonstrate the honesty of faculties and faculty members, which often accompanies the accreditation process. These institutional changes demonstrate that: as faculty members begin to accept accreditation, they will begin to engage in self-improvement processes on their own accord, altering and improving the culture of the faculty and organization for the better.

Succinctly, Ingham demonstrates that academic institutions have the capacity for continuous improvement (via the concepts and processes presented by the institutional isomorphism and entrepreneurship theories). Because the faculty members are the individuals who initiate and sustain change within the organization; and, are more inclined to be involved in self-assessment and self-regulation, to manage the cultural shifts that accompany these changes during the accreditation process. These two processes are essential to the formation of effective academic practices; and are fundamental to the accreditation process. Ingham also illustrates that many American institutions also believe that achievement is founded in self-regulation and setting goals for one's self. Thus Ingham (2019) demonstrates that accreditation can aid academic institutions in Saudi Arabia to improve their academic outcomes because they are more prone to be involved in self-regulation and goal setting.

Moreover, Ingham illustrates that the Saudi culture (in the opinions of many faculty members) in teaching and learning does not reflect the accreditation outcomes and process. Because faculty still preferred their traditional setting, methods, strategies, and they did not believe in accreditation as this represents the culture of their teaching and learning. However, as Jones and Schendel (2000) suggest, faculty members must understand that accreditation does not promote or infer cultural differences; instead, the process and theoretical concepts of accreditation may lead to the betterment of culture and educational outcomes. These outcomes are not to overpower one culture to another but meant to promote the betterment of academic and learning cultures. The cultural shift which so many faculty members were afraid of does not come in terms of shifting their social cultures; instead, it occurs merely by improving the outputs of traditional educational practices. Jones & Schendel illuminate how shifts in cultural competency, self-regulation, changes in organizational structures, and the application of new

strategies come as a result of accreditation. In other words, accreditation often leads to a strategic plan and organizational changes, following the theory of institutional entrepreneurship. In other words, once the accreditation process has been initiated (by members of the faculty taking on entrepreneurial roles), faculty members will generally apply changes without considering what culture dictates but to achieve quality education.

Another theme that was present throughout this study was that many faculty members believed that accreditation was a fruitless endeavor that increased their workload. To demonstrate this, participant F3, who said that accreditation “is all about international rank,” showed that negative attitudes held amongst faculty members, with regards to accreditation. Other participants initially believed the accreditation process was an unnecessary addition of work to their already burdensome workload. Seven out of the twelve participants admitted that they were convinced the accreditation program was demanding more than their typical daily duties. These findings and beliefs agree with The findings by Abou-Zeid et al. (2018), which illustrated the risk of the added workload on staff members that may lower the priority of teaching and research as members take time filling the accreditation forms and conducting the surveys required. In short, these findings illustrated that faculty members were not ready to be involved in the process of accreditation because they were unaware of the results and benefits that would stem from an increased workload.

Participants confirmed that only two faculty members were experts on accreditation and working in the quality committee: This meant that most of the faculty members were struggling to cope with the requirements of the accreditation process. While there was a consensus among the participants on the need for accreditation, they expressed challenges that reduced its acceptance and adoption. Participant F3, for instance, communicated that many faculty members

did not fully understand the requirements of accreditation. In addition to this, this faculty member stated that “I felt I failed to link the course learning outcomes with program learning objectives” and, “... nine out of the twelve faculty members interviewed had challenges completing NCAAA documents and forms”. The conclusions brought forth by these participants illustrated (and supported) the overall lack of expertise and the fact that time also posed a challenge in adopting accreditation. As viewed by Akhter, and Ibrahim, (2016) on the obstacles to complete the accreditation requirements, most of the respondents have agreed that the lack of expertise and the lack of time are the main problems. It is worth noting that many of the accreditation mechanisms and procedures are complex to understand through the simple guidance attached to the reports to fill, which means that faculty should prepare for this process before being involved in this process. On this note, it was also found that there was no training for faculty members, meaning that the lack of faculty preparing would pose a tremendous challenge. The researcher found that this led to the stark realizations that there was no readiness preparation or skills support for faculty members. This, in turn mean that faculty members were not well-prepared for the accreditation process; and, thus initially rejected the process entirely. It is common for people to reject change, especially when they are entrenched in tradition and culture—such as in the case of PNU. Thus, the researcher found that faculty members should have received prior notice, training, and awareness with regards to the workload and outcomes of accreditation, in order for it to be a smoother transition. Thus, there was an overall lack of readiness to adopt the accreditation because it did not favor the majority of faculty members, as indicated by the results. Furthermore, Abou-Zeid and Taha (2014) further support these conclusions (and subsequent recommendations) by having demonstrated that the faculty was not ready to accomplish this process of accreditation, because of a lack of awareness, training, and

readiness. In Saudi universities, the process of accreditation does not get favored by the majority of the faculty members.

Moreover, As expressed by participant F7, faculty members were unsure of their exact roles and responsibilities apart from teaching, thus making acceptance difficult. The argument is in agreeance with Abou-Zeid and Taha (2014), who also stated that the faculty s' role in the process of accreditation is to ascertain whether the college should be left operational or not: because there is no understanding of it. That is, the roles were not clear for them as participants in this process. It also meant the program needed to manage the roles and clarify the responsibilities for the faculty members to improve the effectiveness of their involvement. This is a significant issue in the program, as faculty members know what their roles are; and, they know what their workloads are. However, it was found that as more staff became aware of their workloads and roles, the responsibilities and changes brought about much less confusion. Thus, the researcher found that—in accordance with relevant pieces of literature, and the responses in the study—that as the process carried on, and as awareness improved, there was greater clarity among faculty members.

Furthermore, time management between teaching responsibilities and accreditation requirements was also a significant challenge for most faculty members. As a result of the increase in workload, faculty found it hard to balance these two aspects of their work. This viewpoint has been supported by Akhter, and Ibrahim, (2016), who illustrates that a lack of expertise and time poses a challenge in adopting accreditation. These authors also provide insight into the obstacles to complete the accreditation requirements; and state that most faculty members agree that a lack of expertise and a lack of time are the main problems. For this study, this meant that there was significantly more time needed for the accreditation process; and, that a

breakdown of requirements and a simplification of the training and expertise involved in the process was also needed.

However, El-Khawas (2001) found that due to the evolution of the accreditation process, higher learning institutions have started to see it as a legitimate mechanism and thus have accepted it. This situation means those faculty members who participated in the initial study that rejected the accreditation process due to the challenges they faced. This rejection meant that the shift of acceptance these changes resulted after the outcomes faculty have seen, so they value it and then felt acceptance of the accreditation process. The statement is also supported by respondents of particular faculty members, who stated that participation was rejected because of the lack of acceptance, and high levels of ambiguity found throughout the process. Despite this strong initial rejection suggested by these challenges, most participants understood the importance of accreditation and began to spearhead its implementation. It is indicative that accreditation took place after two years of attempting to understand its requirements and why they should adopt it and overcoming the challenges. The faculty's acceptance of the accreditation process as part of their routine work was very gradual—yet eventually paid off. This lengthy process simply involved faculty members overcoming the challenges listed in the previous sections. Both respondents and studies have suggested that time, experience, and workload are the key challenges which faculty members had to overcome, in order for the accreditation process at PNU to be successful. Furthermore, the researcher found throughout this study (upon analysis of responses and literature) that for accreditation to be successful, both the faculty members and the program need time to accept, and fully understand, accreditation. Time is an important asset for many, as people often take time (especially in situations of learning and change) to gain experience, and gain new insight on potential changes. Such is the case of faculty

members and the program at PNU. Thus, time is an important factor for accreditation to be successful.

Theme 2: Driving the Program Change

Throughout this study, it was found that: in order to enforce the new changes, there were specific duties and tasks which the faculty members had to accomplish. These accomplishments would aid in creating the foundation for accreditation to take place; and, would allow improved academic performance to ensue. Throughout the study, it was found that many of the program coordinators and faculty members were not accepting student grades without duly completed required documents. It is a fundamental principle of (NCAAA) accreditation, which is essential to the betterment of student performance and academic outcomes. However, it appears this was one area that needed to change in order to drive the processes of accreditation. Many of the participants felt like their leaders forced them to do many mundane and tasks that they disliked, and take on additional tasks such as completing paperwork that added tremendous workloads. In addition to this, F4 said that “everyone is forced to engage in quality assurance”, which it would turn out was something that—as illustrated previously—was a tremendous challenge.

These respondent conclusions also agree with those brought forth by Akhter and Ibrahim (2016). They state that there is a high risk that accreditation procedures are then implemented haphazardly to comply with the regulations, without a clear understanding of their pedagogical functions and how it enhances competencies among members and graduates. This source demonstrates that: although the processes and requirements of accreditation are essential to the betterment of student outcomes, they are often disliked by faculty members because they are deemed as unnecessary; and, the needs of such requirements are not conveyed to faculty members. This uncertainty leads to many faculty members rejecting accreditation as a whole. Akhter and Ibrahim (2016) go on to illustrate that opposing participants and other staff members

find that implementing the regulations is becoming a goal in itself rather than just a way of achieving quality learning and education. In other words, demonstrating and implementing regulations and requirements is essential for faculty members, and should be viewed to be as important as the actual completion of these requirements.

In short, however, it was found that there is a general lack of interest among faculty members for accreditation; because the requirements are unknown, and faculty members do not widely understand the goals of accreditation. This lack of interest also stems from an absence of a common goal and vision, with respect to accreditation. This lack of knowledge and understanding of the accreditation comes as a result of many Saudi faculty members and the Saudi educational system as a whole. As illustrated in chapter 2 of this study, it not being exposed to and not fully comprehending the function and gravity of accreditation. Instead of forcing the faculty, however, coordinators and universities should be more aware of the importance of helping faculty members understand the outcomes, requirements, and obligations required by accreditation. Utilizing standards and norms from accredited institutions would make Saudi universities successful if they effectively implemented internal changes, and truly believed in the value of the change. In other words, Saudi universities must not only understand and implement the changes they find (under institutional isomorphism and entrepreneurial theories); but, the faculty and institution must also believe in the benefits of these changes. This belief then leads to the necessity of having acceptance and coherence among the faculty, students, community, and the entire Saudi educational system. However, these changes start simply with one individual faculty member, taking the initiative to implement the changes involved in accreditation (under entrepreneurship theory). The findings in this present study also suggest that shifting faculty's habits and routine of work was challenging. However, by utilizing the tools

made available to them, individual faculty members could become influencers of sorts, and lead the change towards better teaching and learning outcomes in the program. This statement implies that faculty members that actively create meaningful change within the program can be innovative leaders can improve the learning and teaching outcomes. Furthermore, it was also found that faculty members must share common motivations—as illustrated by the institutional entrepreneurship theory—as leaders in the program, in order for accreditation to be successful.

Theme 3: Teaching and Learning Strategies

Throughout this study, it was found that the Early Childhood Program has changed its teaching methods from traditional didactic to modern student-centered strategies. This shift in teaching styles and operational methods demonstrates that the accreditation process gives rise to new programs and opportunities. Furthermore, this also demonstrates that there was a shift in the strategies that were utilized in order to allow accreditation to take hold in the Early Childhood Program. These strategic changes, subsequently, are captured by participant's responses, including "... improve the learning that, in turn, impacts graduates produced" and "The NCAAA standards helped me in preparation of my teaching materials to ensure success in the academic goals of the program".

Furthermore, the majority of the participants indicated that the accreditation program implements rubrics, which improve the clarity were also used as a syllabus because it gives clear-cut instructions on teaching and learning objectives. In addition to this, many of the faculty members expressed that the syllabus could be used as the course description to make sure students are more aware of what to expect from the course. What these faculty responses indicated was that: not only was there a shift from more traditional Saudi teaching styles—in teaching and learning strategies. Nevertheless, many of the documents and resources provided by the accreditation programs (NCAAA requirements, university accreditation requirements.) were

also being used to guide and shift teaching and learning strategies in the Early Childhood Program.

However, these outcomes generally disagree with the findings of Kamel (2016), who state that teaching methods are often teacher-centered, as lecturers and teachers are highly regarded as experts. That is, faculty members did not utilize accreditation outlines and syllabus documents to shape their teaching strategies. Furthermore, Kamel (2016), illustrated that learning strategies are focused on the outcomes of learning, not the actual process of learning itself. These responses, however, demonstrate that learning strategies are grounded in the actual learning processes provided by a course syllabus. The teaching methodologies also lack demonstrations and practical applications, in addition to limited exposure to private research.

In short, this infers that the program achieved the purpose of the accreditation and shifted the program to form a more traditional, teacher-centered strategy as is found mostly throughout Saudi Arabia, into a more student-centered strategy. In other words, faculty members are better prepared to enhance both teaching and learning outcomes through the development of their skills, use of technology, and improved student engagement. Thus, instead of simply memorizing and relearning (or, re-teaching, for that matter) generic content, teachers—under accreditation—focus on critical thinking, research and problem solving; thus, improving learning outcomes. That takes into account studies learning needs, and how both teaching and learning processes lead to better outcomes.

Although disagreeing with Kamel (2016), these findings of more student-centered teaching and learning strategy are agreed upon by Ulker and Bakioglu (2019) These authors discuss that academic accreditation has an immediate impact on the level of content delivered by a faculty member, or program. It improves the quality assurance processes in a program or

institution. Furthermore, research conducted by Berry (1999), Ferrara (2007), and Saurbier (2013) showed that the program, institution, and faculty could play a critical role in enhancing the learning and teaching process. In this study, respondents demonstrate these conclusions by showing that using accreditation materials (course syllabus) to create a more student-centered learning environment. By using these documents as learning outcomes, teaching outcomes, course outlines, and course takeaways were more beneficial to the overall performance of students and the faculty alike: This also meant that accreditation was an effective way to assess and improve the quality of education in this program.

Theme 4: Tools for Improvement of Teaching and Learning

Prior to accreditation, there were no tools for students to share feedback, or evaluate quality of instruction. In addition to this, there were no tools in place for improvement of curriculum content, nor were there any tools available for self-evaluation (and self-improvement) for faculty members. This means that there were many gaps in the teaching and learning systems and outcomes. However, throughout accreditation, these tools were made widely available for faculty members and students alike; enhancing the quality learning outcomes for students, and teaching outcomes for faculty members. Many tools were utilized in the process of enhancing teaching and learning experiences. Namely, these tools include feedback, self-evaluation reports, and various self-evaluative measurements that faculty members could use to provide data on the strengths and weaknesses of the teaching and learning processes in the Early Childhood Program. The data gathered illustrated below may then be examined to upgrade teaching and learning strategies of faculty members. These pools of data illuminated that most of the participants believed that the self-evaluation reports help them assess their competence and compliance to the NCAAA standards. It is an essential component of the accreditation process; because, having faculty members understand the processes and process requirements is essential

to the success of the accreditation. Several participants appreciated the self-report and expected them to improve upon their weaknesses. These statements agree with the conclusions brought forth by Casserly (1987), who also indicated that self-evaluation is one's deliberate effort; and, aids in the success of accreditation, by improving the awareness of various performance metrics. Moreover, it allows faculty members to establish useful tools for teaching and learning improvement based on their knowledge. Occasionally, there exist reforms within a university. However, the external audits show that these reforms act as catalysts and increase the speed at which certain academic activities can be carried out (Shah et al., 2011). It demonstrates that these evaluations sheets are useful tools to improve teaching and learning outcomes because they allow for substantive and meaningful change to take place. DeSilets (2007) also demonstrates how self-evaluation reflects with other programs. For instance, he showed how there exists a reflection between the current program and how they comply with the standards of accreditation. It means that the program was on the right track to develop and improve the students learning outcomes if it can use tools such as the self-evaluation forms. Successful use of these forms in the accreditation process presents as an opportunity to identify the strength and weaknesses of faculty members and the faculty as a whole; thus, improve the efficacy of teaching and learning strategies employed.

Theme 5: Program's Outcomes

Several senior faculty participants expressed that the "standardization of outcomes" was achieved through standardized evaluation; in which the course outcomes for all the units were aligned towards the program mission and objective and the evaluation done through an internationally recognized metric. The process involves all students registered in the same course, although they had different instructors, they had the same recommended textbooks and received the same examinations. The outcomes of this, however, would simply mean that faculty

members could better understand the impacts of accreditation and how their teaching strategies would benefit the learning outcomes of students.

The majority of the faculty participants expressed that “everything is electronic as the program now utilizes a system for everything”. For instance, faculty member F4 expressed the benefits of this change by saying that “there are no papers for documentation, and the procedures have become clear”. It is a clear distinction showing that the tools used and standardization of teaching and learning outcomes aid in the development of program outcomes. This conclusion, however, also agrees with the conclusions stated by Alstete (2004) and Laun (2005). They collectively suggest that universities should include technology in their internal assessments for storing, controlling, and managing essential data needed for monitoring processes, identifying strengths and weaknesses in order to find solutions and create improvements. Not only would this be in alignment with the needs and strategies of PNU faculty members, but it would aid in improving the program outcomes for students. In addition to this, the continuous finding of creative solutions, and improvements sought by (and managed by) faculty members demonstrates the application and presence of the theory of institutional entrepreneurship. That is faculty members, upon overcoming the challenges faced by accreditation, come up with new monitoring processes, and new ways to improve academic outcomes—for the betterment of the institution.

According to Addas (2020), Saudi universities lack essential tools, technology, and databases to make this a reality; and, this has led to failure in this process in many universities. Furthermore, these sources demonstrate that technology can aid in the self-assessment and self-regulation during processes of accreditation. It means that if Saudi programs improve their systems and databases and technologies used, they could substantially leverage their strengths,

and overcome challenges associated with learning and teaching outcomes. These systems can also increase the transparency of universities, aiding in the self-assessment and self-regulation during processes of accreditation.

Participants stated that “there are three lines of evaluation known as the NC-Triple A – course evaluation, program evaluation, and student assessment surveys.” It is, in fact, these surveys which—as participants suggest—aid in the outcomes of learning. Regular evaluations were a significant tenet of the accreditation program, with many of the faculty members stating that the evaluations helped them to “identify weaknesses in teaching, curriculum,” as well as providing various other benefits. The evaluation also served as a method of gathering data to seek ways to continue improving the curriculum and teaching. Faculty, though initially skeptical, became appreciative of these evaluations as they allowed them always to find ways to better the teaching-learning experience.

These findings from participants also agree with the impact of the process of accreditation on this university and the educational outcomes of students, stated by Al Mohaimeed et al. (2012). This process involved various self-evaluations, assessments of teacher and student performance, assessment of the program (as per NCAAA standards). In addition to this, Casserly (1987) indicated that self-evaluation is one’s deliberate effort, leading to improved program outcomes. Collectively, these sources and responses show that with improved technology and databases (and evaluation frameworks), faculty gets a chance to re-evaluate their objectives and aims and thus increase their effectiveness. Successful self-evaluation also aid in the accreditation process, since the faculty members can identify the strength and weaknesses of themselves and the curriculum; and, leverage these accordingly. It can entirely simply be summarized by the response of the interview: “The accreditation program has given us our

voices back. We believe our concerns matter and will be addressed if we voice them in this system". In short, the technology, tools, and other themes presented have allowed faculty members to overcome the challenges of accreditation in order to improve both teaching and learning strategies; to create effective and sustainable program outcomes for years to come.

Implications of the Study

The findings of this study can be used to improve the implementation of the accreditation process in Saudi Arabian universities: This, in turn, can have immense outcomes in improving both the quality of instruction, and student academic outcomes in Saudi Arabia, making Saudi students more competitive in international positions; and, making Saudi schools more attractive. The findings of this study can first and foremost be used to refine faculty practices in implementing the accreditation process based on the faculty's experiences and perspectives to improve their understanding of its value and benefits. Saudi universities and programs could create these benefits by borrowing the standards and norms from other (American) universities.

The second implication of this study is that in order to create meaningful opportunities, which can maximize students learning outcomes. Following a variety of quality assurance practices that can be examined via strategic instructor assessments, there must be substantial changes to teacher-training programs, curriculum materials, evaluation systems, and development strategies (Dunn et al., 2009).

This study also demonstrates the implication that the challenges in adopting accreditation expose Saudi leaders to a collection of faculty who can collectively develop a range of skills necessary for adopting the accreditation process. Both of which, as is demonstrated throughout this study, are critical to the importance of accreditation, and student success. In addition to this,

these findings can be used to refine the accreditation process based on the faculty's experiences and perspectives to improve students learning outcomes in such a most effective way.

The researcher, however, considers the implications of the findings of this study for the accreditation process more widely. While the results of this study directed empirical support to research on the multidimensional accreditation process nature, the researcher had the ambition of identifying the intrinsic tensions in this kind of complexity and possible balances between various practices in the accreditation process.

The results of this study were not conclusive on this aspect since the negative connection between faculty and universities organization was sensitive to model specification, and only this university, students, and professor. The presence of malicious causal links in the program raises concerns about the relative advantages of encouraging an effective accreditation process where faculty supported in understanding this process and giving clear responsibilities and roles are a priority in the accreditation process. However, researchers find that this study implies that the faculties in Saudi Arabia are hesitant to adopt accreditation because of the many challenges that are associated with the process of accreditation. These challenges can be overcome, however, thus changing the perception and experiences of faculty members.

Limitations of the Study

The previous sections consisted of the many benefits of this new study. However, this study also has numerous limitations. The most obvious limitation of this new study is that in one program at the university, data collection occurred solely among female faculty members. As women faculty members are only a small portion of the entire population of faculty members in Saudi Arabian universities, it leaves the findings of this new study incomplete or even skewed.

Besides, the findings of the study were gathered solely from observations and interviews with these female faculty members.

Suggestions for Further Study

Future research on the accreditation process should: (1) employ quantitative research methods—such as a survey—to emphasize objective measurements, (2) include students, colleagues, and other faculty members (both professorial and not), in addition to male and female faculty, and (3) use more participants from various Saudi institutions and departments. Implementation of one or more of these suggestions would result in findings from research that would be robust and generalizable among a more diverse population of people within academic settings.

Recommendations for Accreditation Process

This qualitative case study examined the experiences of the faculty members of the Early Childhood program at a public Saudi Arabian university during the program's accreditation process. These experiences were presented in the findings. The study found that generally faculty and staff are overwhelmingly unaware of accreditation processes. This lack of knowledge has generated a perception of accreditation as an impossible or worthless process. However, in the Early Childhood program, faculty and staff members positively perceived the accreditation process and the changes it rendered in the program. Even with positive faculty perceptions, the accreditation process was inhibited by resistance to change and lost time due to lack of knowledge.

Based on the results acquired from this study, the researcher recommends the following as best practices for university departments undergoing accreditation processes in Saudi Arabia:

1. Departmental faculties should pursue accreditation with a positive attitude developed through a series of faculty training program that address any questions, concerns, or anxieties stemming from the impending accreditation process. The program should, first and foremost, produce stakeholder investment by making faculty members and other institutions aware of the benefits that accreditation creates. When faculty and institutional stakeholders are invested in the process, they are more likely to approach accreditation with a more positive demeanor and will be more receptive to participating in the process, contributing insights and knowledge with other members, and working collaboratively towards the goal of accreditation. This recommendation encourages active faculty engagement in the various training and information programs in such a way that they become aware of the opportunities and possibilities of accreditation so that they can approach it with greater positivity. The researcher further recommends the following about training practices:
 2. Faculty members should be provided with in-person, practical information training before they become involved in the accreditation process. This training will need to explain what the accreditation process requires, how faculty contribute on the individual level and as members of the faculty body, what results will occur, and how those results will benefit students, faculty, and the department. Training comprised of these components will produce a more prepared and more enthusiastic faculty.

3. Faculty and staff trainings about the accreditation process should occur well in advance of the accreditation process implementation. Faculty should receive training materials, which are discussed further in the next bullet, at least one month prior to training. The training should occur the semester prior to the initiation of the accreditation process. This timeframe will precipitate necessary conversations, planning, and development prior to the actual beginning of the process.
4. Training should include a variety of materials that will assist and instruct faculty and staff in accreditation procedures and practices. These materials should be collected from international universities that have recently completed accreditation processes. The provided materials must represent the assortment of documents and materials that comprise the accreditation process, including descriptions of accreditation process steps, requirements of courses and curriculum from international programs recently accredited, and tools and evaluative measures that occur as part of the process. Some examples of process materials include program specifications, annual program reports, and accreditation eligibility requirements. Course materials include course syllabi, course descriptions, and course reports.
5. Faculty should also receive training on how to use these documents, tools, and other materials in their assigned tasks. The training must facilitate faculty knowledge that includes how to use the documents. By the end of the training regiment, faculty and staff should be prepared to take on specific tasks, such as providing constructive feedback, integrating feedback into course and

curriculum, and consulting complex information about accreditation and requirements, among others. Additionally, they need, from their training, to be capable of incorporating accreditation principles into their own courses, through the use of syllabi, course design, and learning objectives.

6. Prior to beginning the accreditation process, a faculty member who has completed all the accreditation trainings should be appointed as a departmental resource for receiving, researching, and answering faculty questions related to all requirements of accreditation. This individual should be highly invested in and supportive of the accreditation process. The researcher recommends that departmental faculty select this individual by announcing nominations for this role. The participating faculty will vote for the candidate they feel is most qualified to assist them and other faculty as the process occurs.
7. Departmental leadership should clearly and fairly divide the labor required of the accreditation process. Because the accreditation process requires an enormous amount of work, all involved faculty and staff will experience increased workloads. Faculty and staff are more likely to invest when they feel the work is shared. Likewise, for accreditation to be accepted and championed by faculty members, and for specific faculty members to adopt entrepreneurial positions and implement these changes, departmental leaders must clarify faculty roles and responsibilities before accreditation commences.
8. Further, departmental leadership should provide faculty and staff members with a document that delineates the new responsibilities he/she will be

required to undertake in the accreditation process. Such a document will streamline the process by making them aware of the additional requirements on their time that result from accreditation tasks. The document will allow faculty to better manage their schedules and adapt their daily routines.

9. Faculty members must receive assistance in the early stages of the accreditation process, as well as throughout the remainder of the process. This support will come in the form of meetings and guidance from the accreditation experts (or appointed quality assurance experts), whose role will be to ensure that all faculty members are up keeping their daily activities to create an overall better learning experience and to ensure the success of accreditation.

Chapter Summary

In Saudi Arabia, most educators do not have a good background or experience with the accreditation process, making it a new concept for many. For those who know of the process, however, they are generally unaware of the requirements and implications of the concept. Thus, this means that accreditation is a foreign concept to many in Saudi Arabia. The implication of this concept is that the success of implementing changes in the education system must have challenges due to less experience among those who should implement it. Moreover, in Saudi's education system, the teaching and learning culture has generated resistance and low involvement among the faculty today. This is largely as a result of poor application of theories of institutional isomorphism and entrepreneurship because of the fact that so many faculty members are unaware of the challenges, and feel as though many of the challenges associated with accreditation are insurmountable in their current positions. Nevertheless, the potential for accreditation in Saudi Arabia can improve the quality of education for all involved. That is, it can

systematically improve the teaching and learning outcomes in academic institutions dramatically. This study aims to explore the experiences of the faculty members during the accreditation process, and the outcomes they have seen at the Early Childhood Program at the College of Education at PNU. The researcher employed a case study design in which interviews, document analysis, and reviews were used to collect the required data. To address the purpose of this study, two theories of impact were utilized as the theoretical framework for this study. These models are institutional isomorphism and institutional entrepreneurship theory of impact. Each of these two frameworks has a distinct set of assumptions about the why, what, how, and targets of impact.

The findings of this study revealed that most participants at the faculty had positive perceptions about the accreditation process. Although there were significant challenges that were necessary to overcome. They indicated that the accreditation process was a worthwhile exercise, as it had forced them to evaluate and revamp their programs and policies. The evidence presented in this study also revealed that the accreditation process has positive impacts and led to improvements within faculty, including the development of the program conceptual framework, and the core proficiencies that each student is expected to demonstrate upon graduation. Moreover, the process helped the faculty develop a systematic assessment approach for data gathering and analysis to assess program performance. It also increased collaboration among faculty members, increased members' participation in the decision-making process, and improved cooperation between the faculty and their relevant stakeholders.

The findings also revealed that the accreditation process in the faculty was facilitated by external influence, modifying their organizational structure to include technological improvement, which is responsible for quality assurance and development procedures. Ensuring

that resources were made available was also considered as an essential factor that facilitated the implementation of the accreditation process. However, the accreditation process in the faculty was inhibited by several factors, including faculty members' resistance to change and identification of lost time. Nevertheless, these external influences allowed internal faculty members in accordance with the two theories of institutional isomorphism and entrepreneurship to come up with unique solutions to these challenges, so that accreditation could take place.

Moreover, this study draws attention to the significant impact of some aspects of institutional isomorphism and institutional entrepreneurship theory on the success or failure of accreditation implementation. While it is evident that research exists in Saudi Arabia concerning accreditation in higher education, this study is unique in that it consists of an examination of the impact that results from accreditation in the Saudi context. This study and its findings provides unique insight into the experiences of faculty members within Saudi Arabia; and, allows for future studies to take place, to further study the impacts and outcomes of accreditation, and the immense benefits it can create, for Saudi universities, and Saudi students.

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APPENDIX A

Interview Questions

1. What roles did you play?
2. How do you feel about your contribution and learning?
3. What are some of the improvements you have witnessed at the departmental level? Please explain the benefits of the improvements to the PNU community.
4. What are the reactions of faculty towards the implementation of accreditation?
5. What challenges do you face in implementing the accreditation standards at your college/courses? Please explain.
6. What will be the desirable and non-desirable outcomes of accreditation upon implementation
7. What are the observed changes that you like after accreditation to the College of Education?
8. What facts make you embrace accreditation?
9. What will be the benefits of accreditation to departments interlinking?
10. what do you know about accreditation?
11. What opinions you have about the accreditation process going on?
- 12- what expectations do you have of impact on education quality as a result of accreditation?
- 13- What are some of the positive and negative impacts of accreditation?

Thank you for participating in this study